A Cry for help;

The perspective and experiences of Primary school children with challenging behaviour within the Cottonera Area.

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Abstract

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As a class teacher myself, I believe that as educators we seek to listen to our pupils. I hope that this study offers the reader the opportunity to listen to pupils manifesting challenging behaviour. It offers an insight into their perspective and experience and various aspects of themselves and their lives that they might be influencing their behaviour. The children's perspective is presented in this study in order to provide a teacher and other professionals an opportunity to simply listen. I believe that through dedicating time to listen to children who are manifesting challenging behaviour helps us understand them more and thus cater for their needs. Ironically, this cry for help often takes the opposite form and comes out as antagonism, rejection or withdrawal from the people who are best place to help. In these instances the child is sometimes pushing those around him/her to the limit of tolerance and patience; this might be due to the fact that experience had taught them that everyone ultimately rejects them.

This study is for anyone who wants to hear the perspective of children with SEBD and believe that they have something worth saying. Pupils with SEBD (Social, Emotional, Behavioural Difficulties) are often misunderstood and frequently labelled as subversive, over-represented and often excluded (Cefai & Cooper 2006).

Tutor: Prof. Carmel Borg   September 2009

To my Daughter;

Jade Mei-Lin

A gift given from God,

For us to love.

Can't wait to see you grow,

from your head

to your

little toe.

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Introduction

The main purposes of the work

Literature and research suggests that over the past decades there has been an increase in the frequency of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties within our schools (Cooper et al., 2000, Rutter and Smith, 1995). Cooper (2006) states that these children are often misunderstood and labelled as subversive within our school and are often excluded. This research will try to determine whether this is happening within a school situated in the Cottonera area; to determine whether these children are being excluded and to find out how they feel about their educational experience. The main aim of this Research Project is to give the children manifesting challenging behaviour a voice, understanding the messages they try to convey through challenging behaviour, thus understanding their frustration, rebellion, anger, loneliness and feelings. The research will present these children's concerns and feelings in order to help build positive relationships and try to portray ways to understand, engage and support pupils with SEBD. This research will help us learn more about the children's experiences and perspectives, and discover what they really want.

This project will focus on Primary school children manifesting challenging behaviour within the Cottonera area. I will observe their behaviour and the relationships these children have with their teachers and peers. Through qualitative research I will try to determine what reinforces positive as well as negative behaviour and how the relationship of the child with the teacher affects Classroom Management and behaviour. This would also determine whether children's positive and healthy relationships within the classroom would reduce frustration, anger and rebellion and hence improving classroom management and behaviour. Using different data-collection strategies, this research will determine whether Primary school children with SEBD within the Cottonera

area are being understood and whether their cries are being heard and catered for.

Importance of the research

This research will try to determine whether children with SEBD are being excluded and to find out how they feel about their educational experience. I will try to investigate positive alternatives to exclusion, keeping in mind that the absence of formal exclusions does not automatically imply inclusion (Cooper et al 2000). This research will also try to present the importance to celebrate diversity rather than discourage it, t he importance of including rather than excluding and present how to engage these children rather than alienate or ignore (Cooper 2006). This project will also try to answer various questions that educators might ask when educating children with SEBD and try to determine why the children engage in undesirable behaviour and disengagement from learning. The research will present the definition of SEBD and mention its main symptoms. I will also focus on a particular school situated in the Cottonera area and will try to portray the experience of children with SEBD within this school, as well as look at the importance of the role of the teacher and the school. It will also focus on the pupils' experiences and perspectives and try to determine the reasons for problem behaviours.

Main results of the project

This Research project will present what children with SEBD think about their experiences at school and what messages these children are trying to convey in order to understand better children with SEBD. After making an analysis of the findings, this project will try to determine how to support children with SEBD and how to provide an inclusive setting within our schools for these children. In order for our schools to be inclusive and for the children's voice to be heard,

educators need to identify these children's needs and interests. Even though schools cannot overcome all social, emotional and behavioural difficulties this project will try to show that they play a crucial role in promoting positive reengagement. After analysing the field, the researcher will also try to determine how to promote positive behaviour amongst children with SEBD as well as what reinforces undesirable behaviour. After analysing the findings the researcher will suggest strategies for behaviour management and guidance. The researcher will also try to determine factors that influence the children's behaviour and how to reduce challenging behaviour through support rather than punishment. The project will also investigate the effectiveness of individual interventions as social and emotional teaching strategies. The conclusion will also highlight the importance of supportive environments and positive relationships when working with children with SEBD.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2. The Nature of SEBD

SEBD is not always easy to define (Cooper et al 2000). In order to understand fully the nature of SEBD we must pay close attention to values and exceptions. It is evident that many children to whom the term is applied have complex difficulties, thus placing them at risk of exclusions (Cooper 2000). Children and young people to whom the term SEBD is applied might have complex difficulties which place them at risk of school and other social exclusions (SEBDA 2006 pg1). SEBD is best defined as a dynamic, multi-layered phenomenon that results from a wide range of influences which might be internal and external to schools and might create an increasingly cumulative effect (Cefai & Cooper 2006). SEBD is most obvious when it appears in the form of disruptive behaviour in schools and this interferes with the teaching and learning process. It is estimated that between 10 and 20 percent of school-aged children in the UK and USA experience such difficulties during their schooling (Morag Hunter-Carsch et al 2006 pg 1).

The most cited forms of challenging behaviour in the classroom take the form of unauthorized pupil talk, hindrance of other pupils from working and various other behaviours that interfere with the teaching and learning process, such as the use of verbal and non-verbal interventions (DES 1989). Sometimes the behaviour might escalate to hyperactivity, bullying, problem sexual behaviour and damage of property (Cooper P. 2005 pg 10).

SEBD might range from social maladaption to abnormal emotional stress which could tend to manifest learning difficulties, and could also manifest themselves in different forms and severities. Symptoms of SEBD might be manifested through withdrawal, passiveness, depression, aggressiveness and self-injury tendencies and can have various causes which can be correlated with school, home environment, physical or sensory impairments. A child could be judged to have SEBD depending on the nature, frequency, persistency, severity or cumulative effect of the behaviour in context, compared to normal expectations for a child of the age concerned. (SEBDA 2006 pg 1).

SEBD might be manifested on a:

Personal Level – through anxiety, self-image, depression, withdrawal, resentment, vindictiveness or defiance.

Verbal Level – through silence, threatening, interruptions, arguing or swearing.

Non-Verbal Level – through truancy, difficulty to observe rules, disruptiveness, destructiveness, aggression and violence.

Work Skills Level – through an inability or unwillingness to work without direct supervision, to concentrate, to complete tasks and to follow instructions.

<div align="right">(SEBDA 2000 pg 1)</div>

2.1 Gender and SEBD

SEBD is more frequent to affect boys than girls and it is approximately three times as common with boys than girls. On the other hand, girls might be under-represented in these figures since they tend to internalize rather than externalize. Rutter and Smith (1995) suggest that there has been an increase in externalizing difficulties in girls rather than boys. Girls are also more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and eating disorders and commit self-harm. However there has also been an increase among boys presenting such difficulties (Morag Hunter-Carsch et al. 2006 pg 2). Research suggests that males continue to dominate the crime and anti-social behaviour statistics. In drug dependency ratios males to females by 2:1 and 4:1, suicidal behaviour ratios are between 2.5 and 3 males to 1 female (Smith and Rutter as cited in Cooper 2005 p. 12).

2.1.1 Main Symptoms/Manifestations

SEBD incorporates different ranges of behaviour that might include 'acting out' behaviour such as aggression, violence, defiance, vandalism and bullying, to 'acting in' behaviours such as social withdrawn, depression, passivity, anxiety, self harm substance abuse and eating disorders. In schools acting out behaviour tends to get more attention from teachers, parents and the wide community, whilst acting in behaviour is more likely to be hidden and is usually concealed by an individual (Cefai & Cooper 2006). It is important that what seem to be minor problems in schools are tackled rather than ignored in order to handle the situation rather than escalating into a more serious one. Children with SEBD present difficulties between behaviour which challenges educators and they might behave unusually or respond in an extreme fashion to a variety of social, personal, emotional or physical circumstances (Cooper 2000). In the classroom SEBD usually takes the

form of disruption, such as talking out of turn, hindering other pupils, off task behaviour and rudeness (Cooper 2006). Such children might also find it very difficult to build trusting relationships with their peers or with adults.

Cooper (1996) affirms that it is necessary to become aware of potential problems that can arise if we label pupils based on their behaviour. The problems experienced by SEBD children are diverse, thus the approaches and interventions used to support them must not be based on polarized or oversimplified theoretical starting point (Wise 2000 pg 1). Cooper (1999) states that given the diversity of the problems experienced by children with SEBD, diverse approaches are needed. The array of manifestations SEBD might fall into is wide ranging. Children with SEBD might manifest their emotional difficulties through engaging in attention-seeking behaviours, which might include activities that attract both positive and negative attention of others, and behave in such way in order to attract the negative attention of their teacher, since to the attention seeking child negative attention is a desirable alternative to no attention at all (Cooper P. 2005 p.10).

2.1.2 What causes SEBD?

Often popular opinion seems to place the blame for SEBD on factors such as poor parenting, poor teaching and discipline, biological predispositions, influence of TV and media. Although there has been research that shows evidence that links some of these factors with emotional and behavioural problems, researchers were not able to establish relationships between any of these factors and SEBD (Morag Hunter-Carsch et al, 2006 p.2). Keeping this in mind it is important to take into account empirical and theoretical literature in order to identify

powerful approaches in understanding the development of SEBD and in order to provide intervention. Effective approaches that help us understand better SEBD are social, psychological and biopsychosocial approach that helps us defining and constructing SEBD.

ADHD is perhaps the most problematic disorder among 'behaviour disorders' and it shows how the issue of co-occurrence tends to be a confounding factor (Clough, Garner, Yuen & Pardeck 2005 p.50). Children with ADHD in class tend to be disruptive, anti-social and might even be confrontational.

2.2 What theories help us understand SEBD?

When dealing with SEBD educators and researchers have moved from the traditional medical and therapeutic disciplines to the community in general, especially our schools. Cooper (2005) affirms that recent evidence proves that schools do influence behaviour patterns and this shows the importance of the school's role in dealing with behavioural difficulties (p.28).

The Systematic and Ecological Approach is concerned with the context of behaviour, the systems in which the individual lives, and particularly the way in which these systems interact with that individual and thus influence the child's behaviour. These approaches emphasize the importance of the child's environment to his or her behaviour, and not focusing only on the individual (Wise 2000 pg11). These approaches do not focus on behaviour of a pupil as being a result of an inner problem or conflict or as being a product of social learning. These approaches encourage that challenging behaviour can lie within the systems surrounding the pupil, not only looking at the child but also at the

environment itself and the individuals who are involved with the child (Wise 2000 pg 11).

The Systematic Approach suggests that pupil behaviour is often a function of teacher behaviour and if the teacher wants to change the behaviour of the pupils they need to reflect on whether it is a product of the class and school environment as well as look at their own behaviour (Cooper 2005 p.16). This explains that problem behaviour does not originate within the pupils but from the relationships and interactions between pupils and teachers. This might lead to a circular chain if negative interaction is present, thus the more pupils misbehave, the more negative teachers become, the more negative they become them more the pupils misbehave (Cooper 2005 p.25)

A well known theory that helps us understand better the nature of SEBD is Maslow's hie rarchy of needs, and revolves around the concept of human needs. This theory helps us understand how SEBD might be present due to failure to have crucial basic needs met (Cooper 2006 p 30). If children do not have these basic needs met, they might experience profound insecurity which is likely to interfere with the children's ability to relate to peers and adults. Maslow categorises these basic needs into five categories,

- Self-Actualisation,
- Self-esteem,
- Affiliation/Belongness and Love needs,
- Safety
- Biological and Physiological needs (Cefai & Cooper 2006, Chapman 2001 p 31).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Self-actualisation
Individualism, personal growth and self expression

Self Esteem
Need of respect from others, reputation, status, achievement

Affiliation
Belongness, Love need the need of connection with others, relationships, security

Safety needs
Need of emotional and physical security, protection, stability, rules etc.

Biological and PhysiologicalNeeds
Basic survival needs- food, drink, air, shelter, warmth, sleep etc.

Figure 3.1 explains Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Glasser's (1993) 'Control Theory' also presents a hierarchy of needs and is defined in terms of needs to:

- Play and have fun

- Be free and make own choices

- Exercise power and influence

- To feel belonged and to love others

- Survive

(Morag Hunter-Carsch et al. 2006 p.6)

If a child encounters difficulties in one of these needs may lead to unwanted or coercive behaviour.

2.2.1 Behaviourism

Behaviourism attempts to understand and deal with emotional and behavioural difficulties in educational contexts. Its principles are simple

and states that all behaviour, including unacceptable behaviour takes place because it is reinforced. This means that when behaviour difficulty arises within a school, it is essential to examine the classroom environment, the teacher and the pupils' behaviour and try to determine what kind of behaviour is being reinforced. Unfortunately teachers in class tend to dedicate more time dealing with misbehaviour rather than focusing and pointing out good behaviour. The attention gained by the child when the teacher is dealing with bad behaviour might also be reinforcing and even strengthening the bad behaviour that is intended to be eliminated (Cooper 2005 p.16)

2.2.2 The Biopsychosocial Interaction

Uta Frith's (1992) biopsychosocial model helps us understand better the relationship between biological causes and behavioural difficulties. This theory explains how biology and environment can interact (Cooper 2006 p.32). This model suggests biological factors alone do not predict behaviour in a straightforward and lineal way. Other factors affect behaviour such as:

- Social environment
- Interpersonal relationships
- Educational interventions
- Individuals' attitudes
- Beliefs and attributions

Morag Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006 p.6)

A Biopsychosocial model (based on Frith 1992)

Biological Causes
Such as genetic inheritance

↓

Brain Abnormalities
Dysfunctions of particular neurosmitter system

↓

Cognitive Deficits
Problems with executive functions

↓

Core problems
Problems such as lack of concentration and impulsiveness.

↓

Mediating factors
Includes maturation, experience, compensation and motivation

↓

Behavioural Manifestations
Example highly disruptive or manageable behaviours

Figure 3.2 shows the interaction between biological, cognitive and social influences in developmental disorders (Morag Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006, Cefai & Cooper 2006 based on Frith, 1992)

The main theory of this model is that experience, maturation and compensation act as mediators between biological characteristics and actual behaviour (Cooper 2006 p.32). The biopsychosocial perspective draws insights gained from research in social approach helps us understand how genetics, cognitive neuroscience and biology intermingle with social and socio-biology (Cooper 2006). This approach helps us

understand and help educators tailor an intervention when dealing with SEBD since it is not the same as traditional medical models. On the other hand the Department of Education in Britain made it clear that medical opinion is still important but decisions about special education were first and foremost an educational matter rather than a medical one, assuming the responsibility for suggesting what special education is needed and where it should be provided (Cooper, Smith & Upton 1994 p.37). Social and emotional difficulties are best seen as a loose collection of characteristics, some of which lie within the child, and others include disorders of the environment in which the child operates, including the school and the family. The other factor is the interaction between personal characteristics of the child and environmental factors (Cooper 2005 p.10).

2.2.3 Attachment Theory

John Bowlby's (1975) Attachment theory provides a theoretical source in understanding how and why SEBD might develop. His work is rooted in a psychodynamic tradition and asserts that the children's early experience have deep implications for the child's later life. This theory suggests that a major source to such problems might dwell in the child's early life experience and with the difficulties this child might have met in forming secure emotional attachment with their primary carer. This early experience will give rise to problems and result in an 'attachment disorder', which might be characterized with severe difficulties in forming relationships (Morag Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006 p.5). Bowlby highlights need for secure relationships and if this is not taking place with our children we need to help them build attachment with us in groups. Through this attachment the children will then start to build relationships.

Bowlby saw attachment as the building blocks of children's development. There are 4 types of attachment:

1. Secure

2. Avoidant

3. Ambivalent

4. Disorganized

Through a positive reciprocal relationship children are able to develop a secure base from which they can explore their physical and social environments. If a child does not feel secure or safe he/she might find it difficult to access learning in a busy classroom (Hart A. 2008). Insecurely attached children might feel lost and unnoticed within the classroom and might look at themselves as worthless. They might feel uncared for and might provoke unresponsive or hostile reactions from other adults and children which reinforce their feelings of self-doubt and insecurity. In schools, we need to make insecure children feel safe and that adults are reliable and responsive. It is important that we identify their needs and respond to them, adults that have time to respond to them and are sensitive to the child's signals. It is also essential to establish clear boundaries, consistencies and routines.

2.3 Social Factors; The school and the family

In the social learning model Petterson et al.(1992) describe how life course effects them socially. This study illustrates how anti-social individuals manifest common features through the course of their lives which included:

- social disadvantage

- ineffective parental discipline and lack of supervision

- parental use of physical punishment

- parental rejection

- peer rejection

- a member of deviant peer goup

- academic failure

- low self-esteem.

(Morag Hunter-Carsch et al 2006 p. 4)

Petterson et al.'s (1992) theory is interesting since it looks at how these factors appear to have interacted in the lives of children in their future. The theory categorises the process into four stages:

Stage 1 Basic Training; This takes place during the pre-school years and the child is trained in coercive behaviour within his/her home settings. At this stage the parents and the family members are the ones who are the models.

Stage 2; The Social Environment Reacts; behaviours that were functional for the child at home are challenged when the child starts school. If a school attempts to challenge the child's behaviour through punishment or coercion, or unsuccessful attempts at remediation, then the child's coercive behaviour will escalate. This might cause further conflict and the child might be rejected by the school, peers and parents.

Stage 3; deviant peers and polishing anti-social skills; After experiencing rejection and affiliation of needs the child will now seek like-minded peers and might form a deviant peer group. Here coercive behaovur will be further reinforced and developed. This person might be at risk of mental health, substance abuse, criminality and imprisonment.

Stage 4; the career anti-social adult; the child is now an adult and is socially marginalized. This person might experience disruption in his/her relationships and has difficulty in securing and keeping employment.

(Morag Hunter-Carsch et al. 2006 p.4)

Patterson's study shows how the family and school might interact, leave a negative impact and aggrevate SEBD. Various research conducted in schools throughout the years point that the school has a vital role in creating and promoting deviance (Shelvin and Rose et al. 2003, Schostak 1982, Cooper et al., 2000). Various studies presented that a number of pupils felt that school is demoralizing, demotivating and dehumanizing (Morag Hunter-Carsch et al.,2006 p 5).

2.3.1 The role of the school

A number of researchers and theorists observed that the school actively contributes to the social construction of deviance and demonstrate the extent institutional factors appear to deeply ingrain features of school systems. Most of these researchers present that manifestations of SEBD can sometimes be understood in terms of rational and reasonable responses by children to often taken for granted negative features of school and schooling (Cooper 2006 pg.17). Schostak (1982) conducted studies within schools and states that the commonest reason to negative exeriences at school was hatred to the school, lessons and teachers. The major problems children highlighted in Schostak's studies were boredom with lessons, examination pressure and poor staff-student relationships. Other studies conducted by Marsh, Rosser and Harre (1978) with delilquent youths researched on the students' own perceptions of what affects their behaviour within the class and discovered that teachers' attitude and behaviour in class was a key factor. Teachers' negative

behaviour these youths mentioned as affecting behaviour within the classroom included:

- Not treating pupils as individuals
- Unfairness towards pupils
- Redeness towards pupils
- Being incompetent or weak
- Conducting boring lessons and being boring.
- Rudeness towards pupils
- Being contemptuous and treating them as young children.

(Cefai & Cooper 2006 pg19)

In Reid's (1985) research students also identified what needs to be present in their school experience and presents that:

- Teachers need to be strict but fair.
- Teachers give individual attention to every student.
- Teachers help their students on a personal basis, even with their personal problems
- Teachers should have a sense of humour.
- Teachers should provide students academic and remedial help.

Tatum's study carried out with disruptive students also portray a similar outcome and categorises teacher provocation into five categories

- Teacher being disrespectful
- Failure of teacher's sense of humour
- Inflexible and unreasonable school rules
- Inconsistency
- Teacher's fault.

2.3.2 Teachers and Teacher training

Children's behaviour is also affected by the teacher's feelings especially if the teacher feels powerless, frustration and rejection (McNamara 2006 pg. 27). McNamara also stresses the importance of helping teachers to dedicate time to spend on the relationships between pupils and the communication skills of all the pupils, as well as teaching the children the curriculum, thus emotional literacy. This will help the teacher teach the content more effectively to many pupils.

As Cooper, Smith and Upton (1994 p15)show, behaviour problems in the classroom create a threat to that responsibility and may be seen as reflecting poorly on teacher's professional skills and status in the eyes of colleagues, parents and pupils. This could be the reason some teachers react negatively to challenging behaviour. Challenging behaviour in our schools sometimes reflects emotional difficulties which are due to various factors that might be home environment, physical abuse and sexual abuse. Teachers might be facing difficulties in creating effective learning environments and at the same time recognizing and catering for the pupils' individual needs as well as dealing with discipline problems (Cooper 2005 p.15). Britain is aware of these difficulties teachers are facing and so created the official Committee of Enquiry chaired by Lord Elton in order to recommend action to the Government, local authorities, voluntary bodies, governors, head teachers, teachers and parents aimed to provide an adequate atmosphere in school for effective teaching and learning to take place (DES 1989a, p.11) It is important that teachers are trained in the area and begin to examine their own institutions from their own vantage points, thus taking a more active role in trying to understand

behaviour problems and to develop and adapt intervention approaches that are compatible with the ethos of schools (Cooper 2005 p.29).

Royer E. (2006 pg 30) states that it is not easy to teach children who present difficult behaviours especially when teachers have received little training with dealing with SEBD. Training teachers in dealing with SEBD can more effectively manage disruptive behaviours within their classrooms and use strategies to improve children's behaviours such as:

- Establishing clear rules and directions
- Provide positive and corrective feedback for adaptive behaviour
- Using reprimands
- Time out
- Response cost or token to decrease problematic behaviour.

(Rover E. 2006 pg 30)

Rover (2006) also states that through his 15 years experience of in-service training and seminars on school interventions with SEBD worldwide he concludes that the field is deficient in terms of pre-service and in-service teacher training in educating SEBD children, and that the relationship between research and practice is also challenging. There are various important factors a teacher needs to keep in mind when working with SEBD pupils in order to improve the teaching and learning process. It is important that the teacher address the child as a whole and the school adapt a whole school approach based on collaboration. According to Ruhl and Berlinghoff (1992) academic achievement is also an important intervention goal with SEBD children. It is very important that these pupils develop academic skills since there is a definite connection between school achievement and behaviour disorders. The first intervention given when faced with SEBD should not be repression but

try to improve the child's environment and the school's disciplinary practices. Skiba and Petterson (2000) also mention various strategies when working with SEBD which include:

- Conflict management
- Classroom strategies for disruptive behaviour
- Parental involvement
- School wide discipline
- Behavioural planning
- Functional assessment
- Individual Education Plans.

It is important for a school to set limits and have positive expectations, especially when dealing with SEBD pupils in order to be successful. Visser (2002) also points out factors that are important, core factors which should be present in interventions with children with SEBD are maintaining good communication, setting boundaries and providing challenges.

2.3.3 The Family

The family is the major source of experience for most children. Although school is commonly the public site for manifesting SEBD the same problems occur often less publicly in the family situation, and the child and family often get caught in whole day cycle of conflict (Cooper P. 2005 p.6). Parents too might feel incompetent and might feel ashamed of their failure to cope with their child and their children might be more at risk since they might become the object of dislike and resentment to those around them (including parents and teachers).

It seems that children to be defined as 'defiant' have a greater tendecy to have experience of adverse family circumstances. Such circumstances might include:

- Unsatisfactory parental skills
- Economic/material depravation
- Severe emotional tension within the family (especially parents)
- Delinquent parents

(Cooper P. 1993 p.9)

It is important to keep in mind that not all children who experience an adverse family show unwanted behaviour. Research also indicates that behaviourally disturbed children have a greater tendecny to lack of parental interest in their schooling (Reid 1885). Parents of such children might also have inconsistent and ineffetive parental discipline as lack of parental affection. Violent displays by parents and corporal punishment are also of a greater tendecy with behaviourally disrupted pupils (Cooper P. 1983 pg12). Some parents also find it difficult to provide the child a sense of warmth and security when they themselves feel deprived of these comforts (Cooper P. 1983 p.12). Reid (1987) says that when children become problematic in class and at school, teachers and social workers tend to seek explanations in the home environment. This is unhealthy and schools sometimes tend to seek explanations which avoid challenges to our self-image and tend to attribute our own problem behaviour to exteranl factors outside our control (Cooper 1983 p12).

2.3.4 The importance of Relationships

"Human relationships and the effect of relationships on relationships, are the building blocks of healthy environment. From the moment of our conception to the finality of death, intimate and

caring relationships are the fundamental mediators of successful human adaptations".

(National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2008).

When dealing with SEBD in schools it is evident that the intervention does not only look at the pupil, but also focus on the teacher, the school and the family in the generation and maintenance of behaviour patterns. It is important that attention is given to all the various factors that might be impacting the behaviour of the child.

2.4 Rise in School Exclusions

It is necessary to address the issue of school exclusions, considering the changes and developments that have taken place over recent years in the circumstances and condition affecting vulnerable children (Cooper 2005 p. 28). Exclusion has become an issue of significance when working with children with SEBD. In the 1990s exclusion became a growing concern to educationists because of the increase in numbers of children who were being excluded from mainstream schools. This was supported by statistics which show that in 1991/92 3833 children were permanently excluded from schools in England and Wales. This showed an increase of 25% since the previous year. By 1996 the figure got to an alarming 13,581 children and young people, which represents an increase of over 300% since 1991/92 (Cooper 2005 p.28). The excluded pupils most often are the most vulnerable and already disadvantaged children in our society. Since most of the children and young people excluded are already vulnerable, their exclusion can be disastrous since it will hinder their already education progress. Exclusions might also put these children at a greater risk of becoming criminals or being put in 'moral danger' (Parsons et al. 1994 as cited in Cooper 2005 p.29) Goverment reports in the U.K. stress the importance of whole-school policies and the

classroom managment skills of teachers in preventing and dealing with SEBD in schools.

2.4.1 From Exclusion to Inclusion

Schools need to understand the complexity of SEBD in order to include these children rather than exclude them. In order to do so we need to be able to conceptuatlise the categories we utilize in as inclusive. It is important that a school looks at the four different perspectives which are:

- The educational perspective; aspects that might interfere the child's learning, these problems might include the child's behaviour or emotional state.

- The psychological perspective; refers to problems of the child's way of experiencing the world. These children might have cognitive deficits or distortions such as irrational fears or coercive social style.

- The social perspective; is the problem the child finds in the interaction with the social environment and this usually gives rise to reactions that are interpreted as SEBD.

- The medical perspective; is rooted biologically, and is often within the pupil. Neurological dysfunctions that might influence a child's behaviour such as ADHD and Autism fall under this category.

(Cooper 2006 pg 9)

In order for inclusion to have effect the school needs to recognize serious tensions between the four different perspectives.

2.4.2 Intervention
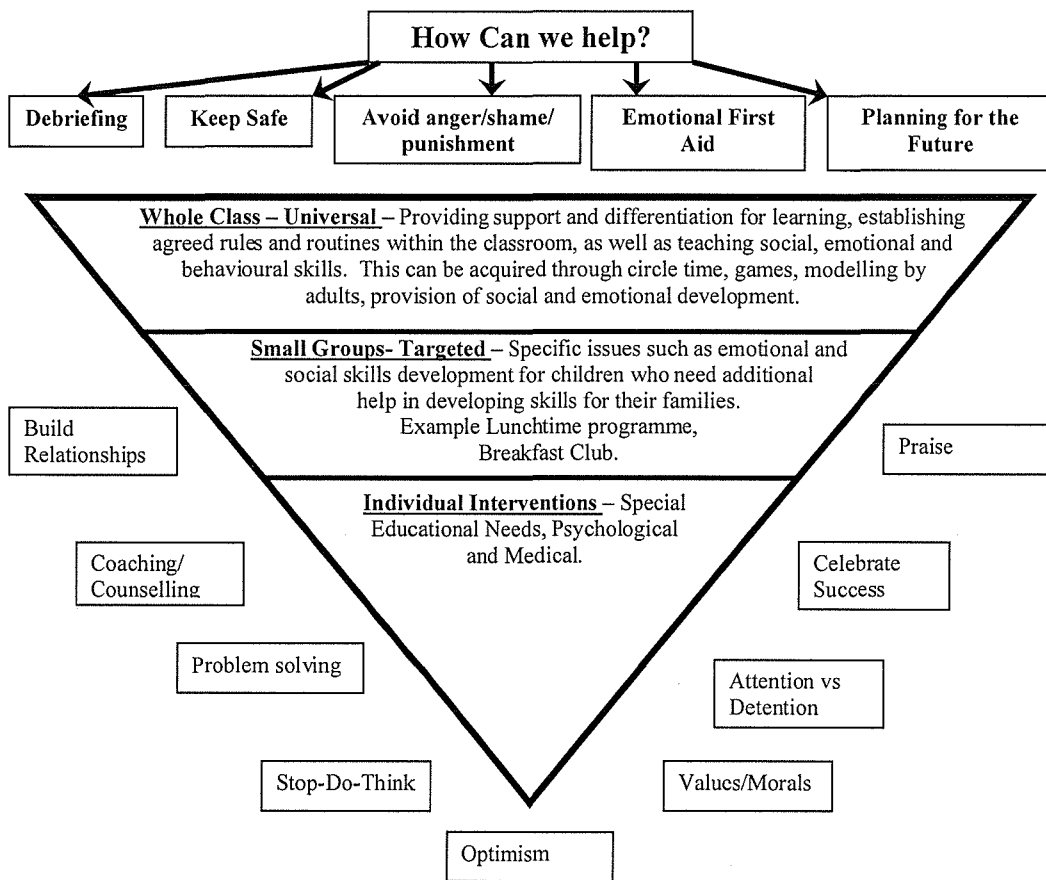
Figure 3.3 Adapted from "Emotional Coachin" Robyn Hromack

Children manifesting emotional and behavioural difficulties present challenges to parents, teachers and other professionals. In the school setting an intervention is required since SEBD can be linked to special educational needs as they interfere with the learning process (Cooper, Smith & Upton 1994 p.5). SEBD often manifests itself within the class in the form of defiance, non-cooperative or oppositional behaviour and so

presenting threat to authority and sense of competence of the teacher. The threat posed by the child might become a major source to a teacher and unfortunately this might lead to circumstances that worsen the original difficulties and result in failure. It is important when dealing with SEBD to pay attention to the needs of the teacher as well as those of the child.

SEBD is fascinating since it forces us to seek answers to questions about how human beings operate and what influences our behaviour. Morag Hunter-Carsch et al.,(2006) state that it is easy to judge the effectiveness of intervention in terms of the extent to which it relieves the effects of SEBD on the families, classrooms and other settings which are disrupted by a child with SEBD. It is important that when dealing with SEBD to see whether the child's needs are being met on an individual level.

Cooper, Smith & Upton (1994) state that in order for an intervention to be successful when working with emotional and behavioural problems in the school, family and clinical setting it depends on the appreciation of this complex interplay of personal and social factors. Often these children's cry for help is misinterpreted and is at risk since they are rejected from the people who are best placed to help. At times this takes place since the child is being difficult and pushing those around him/her to the limit of tolerance and patience. These children then ultimately get used of the rejection and behave in a way in order to get it over now rather than to run the risk of forming any form of attachment that will end in disappointment and rejection (Cooper, Smith & Upton 1994 pg 11). Thus successful intervention consists of creating the circumstances in which such attachments and connections can safely be made. The intervention should look at what needs to be adjusted in the child's environment and

changing the ways in which significant others see and interact with the child but also to help the child see himself/herself and others in new ways. This could be achieved through developing the child's social and cognitive skills.

2.4.3 Assessment

Assessment is crucial and is a direct component of intervention. Developments in functional analysis sustain the importance in tailored interventions for children with SEBD. In order for such interventions to be successful it is important to determine the functions of behaviour to teach the children replacement behaviour (Morag Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006 pg. 31).

As stated by Royer (1995) the ethos and good practice within a school are important when working with SEBD, and that good schools appear to be a great place to learn and their philosophy is to support positive development of the children and staff. Our schools need to promote positive behaviour as well as differentiated teaching by enhancing staff skills and problem solving abilities. Behaviour policies also help the school and pupils not only to learn but also maintain positive social behaviours (Bullock 1999 as cited in Morag Hunter-Carsch et al.,2006 pg 32)

When working with SEBD pupils it is also essential that an individualized intervention is tailored for the pupils in order to make education happen. It is important to assess SEBD pupils and conduct a careful functional analysis and multi-environmental intervention which should be planned and tailored on the child's individual needs. Each child is an individual and a carefully designed intervention is important.

According to Skiba et al.,(1997), many teachers continue to choose less effective methods because the impact of introducing research-supported interventions is not immediately visible to them. It is sometimes difficult for teachers to change their practice and another impediment is time since teachers sometimes become reluctant to implement certain practices since they take too much time, regardless of their promising results (Vaughn et al., 1998).

Assessment is crucial since it formulates an account of social, emotional and behavioural functioning in relation to the difficulties being presented. This information is then used to intervene and resolve these difficulties. It is important that assessment is an ongoing process and also constant (Cooper 2006 p.41). It is essential that assessment is a holistic process and the child's behaviour and functioning should always be considered within the developmental, social and interpersonal contexts in which they take place, and the wider the range of evidence the better is the picture we get of the child in case. (Cooper 2006 p.41).

Assessment should be both formative and summative, and is important when working with SEBD pupils since it helps to identify influences that might be residing within the child and find out what is influencing in creating and maintaining the difficulties rather than looking what's wrong with the individual. Assessment also helps the educator to get to know about the child's interests and this should always be the centre of the assessment process. When assessment is conducted is it important that all professionals are working collaboratively for the benefit of the child with SEBD. This is important since SEBD is complex and requires knowledge of more than a single professional or profession (Cooper 2006 p.42).

A useful form of assessment is the hierarchy of Systems Analysis since it helps a teacher look at all the influences of aspects of the educational environment and seeks to address these before looking within the child. Figure 3.4 explains the levels of analysis in order of consideration.

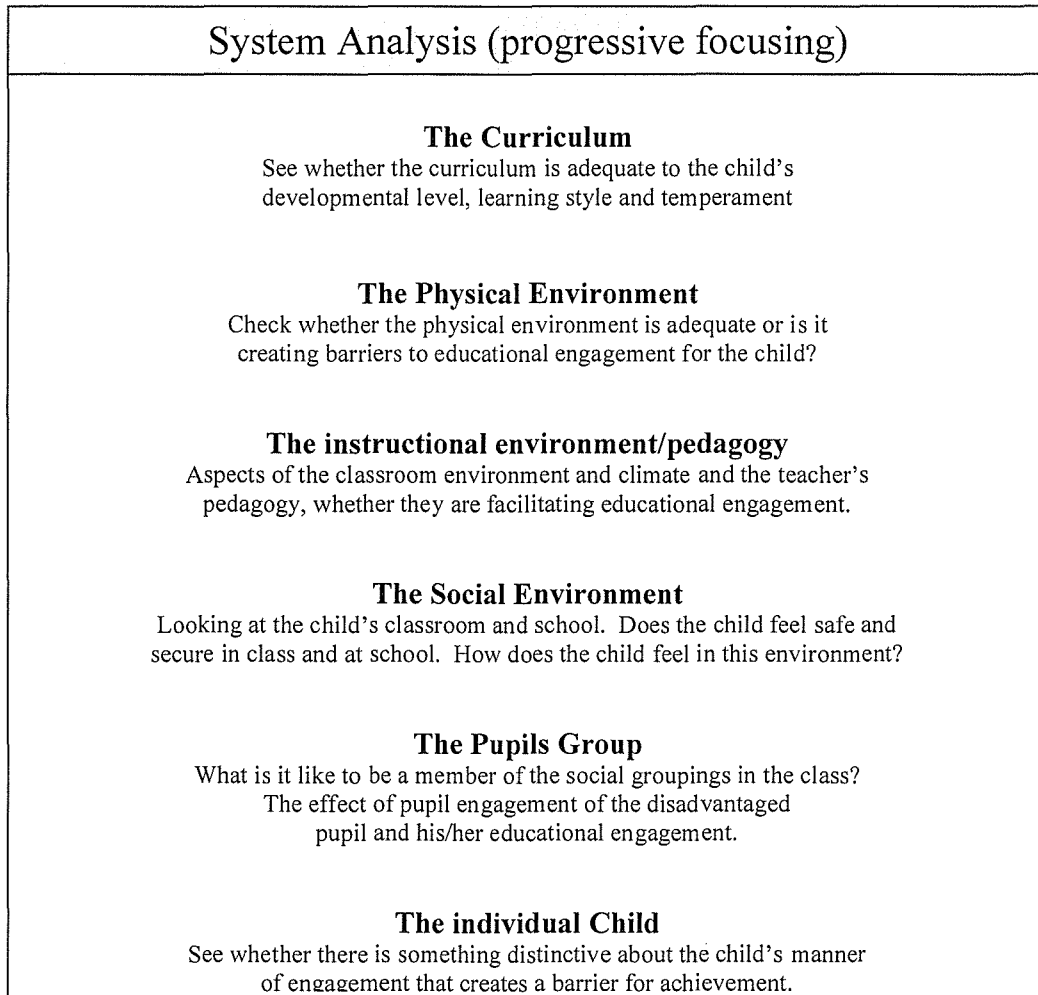| System Analysis (progressive focusing) |
|---|
| **The Curriculum**
See whether the curriculum is adequate to the child's
developmental level, learning style and temperament

The Physical Environment
Check whether the physical environment is adequate or is it
creating barriers to educational engagement for the child?

The instructional environment/pedagogy
Aspects of the classroom environment and climate and the teacher's
pedagogy, whether they are facilitating educational engagement.

The Social Environment
Looking at the child's classroom and school. Does the child feel safe and
secure in class and at school. How does the child feel in this environment?

The Pupils Group
What is it like to be a member of the social groupings in the class?
The effect of pupil engagement of the disadvantaged
pupil and his/her educational engagement.

The individual Child
See whether there is something distinctive about the child's manner
of engagement that creates a barrier for achievement. |

Figure 3.4 based on Cooper 2006

When dealing with SEBD in the classroom a teacher can make use of various effective tools such as:

- Reflection alone and with peers
- Reflective Diaries
- Interviews and Consultations with pupils

- Standardised Screening Instruments (such as SDQ, Goodman's Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire and Boxall Profile)
- Behavioural Observations (such as Goldstein's TOAD schedule and ABCs)
- Sociometrics

The strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) is a behavioural screening questionnaire and is a tool that will help the teacher develop a picture of the range of social, emotional and behavioural strengths and difficulties of a pupil. It is suitable for teachers and parents and this increases parent-teacher correlations. This tool can be used to assess change in pupil behaviour after intervention (Cooper 2006 p.46).

An example of Behavioural observations tools are the TOAD and ABC observation. The TOAD (figure 3.5) helps the teacher focus on certain behaviours and records the frequency of such undesirable behaviour. After the observer identifies the child, and records the incidence of each behaviour which can then be plotted on a chart. TOAD might also be utilized to check for changes of the undesired behaviour over time and in order to evaluate effectiveness of interventions.

Figure 3.5 is an example of The Toad Schedule

Time Interval	Out of Seat	Does not raise hand	Disruptive behaviour	Attention problems
15 seconds				
20 seconds				
30 seconds				
Other _____				

The ABC (figure 3.6) is a useful tool since it enables the observer to examine the behaviour in context of factors and identify what might influence its recurrence. In this approach behaviour is recorded as well as the antecedent (what happened before the behaviour) and the consequence (what happened immediately after the behaviour). Through looking at the antecedent and consequence of the behaviour the observer might identify stimuli that lead to the behaviour and by looking at the consequence it can be determined what is reinforcing and rewarding the behaviour. Thus a more effective intervention can be planned which controls the antecedents and consequences.

Figure 3.6 An ABC recording sheet

Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequence
The music teacher greeted the pupils in the music room. The children sat down in a circle and were given a handout of the songs they were about to sing. The children started to sing.	Sarah started to sing loudly and out of tune. She looked at her peers with a smile while doing so.	C 1: The music teacher was angry and told her off. C 2: Some of Sarah's peers were laughing.

Sociometry is a method to monitor the social status of a classroom as well as individual students.

"Sociometrics can work as a mental health barometer for a classroom, as well as individual students." Dr. Larry Sherman 2002

Through a sociogram an educator can see the relationships within a group and discover the basic "network" of friendship patterns and sub-groups within a classroom (Sherman L. 2002). A sociogram is a useful tool to the teacher since it can help the teacher develop greater

understanding of group behaviour so he/she can operate more wisely in group management as well as curriculum development. Research also indicates that healthy classroom climates also appear to be related and likely to enhance overall classroom and academic achievement (Schmuck & Schmuck 1996).

Coie and Rodge (1983) have also presented evidence that children's social status developmentally across time, remains quite stable, especially children who are not accepted by their peers. This research indicates that social rejection is a strong predictor of classroom absences, school drop-outs and a variety of other socio-emotional problems, and these children can be described as "socially at risk". Through the use of sociometrics a teacher can become more aware of subtle inter-personal relationships that might be difficult to detect, thus providing a better living and learning situations within the classroom (Sherman L. 2002). One can have a better insight of the relationships between peers.

2.4.4 Emotional Literacy

If children are not capable to manage their emotions they might not be able to be effective learners. Emotional Intelligence is important since children learn to

- Recognize their emotions.
- Understand their emotions in order to become effective learners.
- Manage their emotions in order to be effective learners.
- Appropriately express their emotions in order to develop persons capable of helping themselves and to become emotionally healthy.

Through emotional literacy the children will learn how to understand better social situations and how to manage relationships. They also learn

to understand their own emotions and feelings as well as how to understand, expressing and managing these emotions (Hart A. 2008).

2.4.5 Circle Time

Circle time is another effective tool in order to promote positive behaviour in the classroom and school. It is most effective when it is adapted as a whole school approach in order to maintain a positive school management system. It is an essential tool in the classroom since it promotes positive behaviour as well as creates a respectful ethos. All children will gain through circle time since it boosts their self-esteem as well as their self-confidence and help build healthy relationships within the classroom. During Circle Time the children are given a voice and their needs are then better catered for. It creates the right atmosphere since it increases the feeling of being part of a respectful and valuing team (Mosley, Niwano 2007).

When Circle time is utilized in the classroom it is easier to manage the children's behaviour since the teacher is creating the right environment and conditions in the classroom for learning to take place. Thus, children are in control of their learning and healthy relationships can flourish through working on moral development. Through Circle time the teacher gets to know the children better and has a better understanding of how the children make sense of the world around them. The teacher might learn more about their feelings and learning experiences, and cater better for their differences.

2.4.6 The Curriculum

Laslett (1977) Wilson and Evans (1980) state at times there is little attention given to classroom function and little attention given to

classroom activities in the accounts of early work with maladjusted children. Teachers need to give significant attention to the value of teaching and learning in helping children grow in confidence and self-esteem. What the children learn and how they learn it makes their school experience and the curriculum should be tailored to contribute to changes which lead to the children's adjustment (Laslett 1977, p.123). There are various areas and subjects that help SEBD students improve their self-esteem and provide a positive schooling experience, these include; physical education, drama, music, art and craft. Physical education in particular helps the children to improve awareness of self through concentration, fitness as well as co-ordination. When playing games in groups the children also learn to co-operate with peers and sharing as well as channel their energy and aggression. Another subject that might be used as a tool when educating children with SEBD is Drama since activities such as imaginative play provides the opportunity for releasing feelings by discussing and interpreting them. Music is another effective tool since it helps the children understand changes in their mood, rhythm and movement. Through arts and crafts the children are provided with means of communication, distraction and relaxation from frustration and overcome difficulties and produce a finished product (Cooper 2005 p.39)

2.5 SEBD within our Schools

Social, Emotional and behavioural difficulties in our schools has become a cause for concern, and research also indicates that there is an increase in frequency in the past decades (Cooper 2006). There has been an increase in violence, antisocial behaviour, bullying and other various forms of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in schools internationally. It is estimated that between 10% and 20% of all school children in the UK and USA experience SEBD to a significant degree at any time

(Cooper 2006 pg 5). Rutter and Smith 1995 presented an international increase in the frequency of SEBD and this is reflected in epidemiological studies. Professor Cooper also states that social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in education have been with us for a long time and they are not likely to go away in the future (Cooper 2006 pg xi).

It is a challenge for all educators in managing the issue of pupils exhibiting difficulties with social, emotional and behavioural aspects of their lives since there is a tension between the issues of incidence and time to deal with the incidence. Morag Hunter-Carsch et al., 2006 explain how Birmingham head teachers working in primary and secondary schools have reported an increase in incidences of SEBD. This study also indicates that there was a rise in mental health issues among children. Deprivation and poverty are often associated with SEBD. The head teachers mentioned in this study also reported a rise in permanent and fixed-term exclusions due to such increase in poor behaviour.

Morag Hunter-Carsch et al. (2006), also claim that the curriculum has become more focused on attainment these days, and this is leading teachers with little time to attend their pupils' pastoral needs. As the incidence of social, emotional and behavioural issues are on the increase within our schools; there has been a move away from dedicating time to listening to our pupils in class because of the pressure that teachers experience in terms of focusing on the curriculum in order to prepare pupils for their examinations and to get the highest marks possible (McNamara, 2006 pg 25). It would surely help encouraging the teacher to respond to such evidence and to make them realize that pupils learn in different ways.

Evidence has clearly shown a link between reading difficulties and pupils with challenging behaviour which were excluded (Morag Hunter-Carsch et al. ,2006 pg 26). Other factors that come to mind when dealing with SEBD is the nature and nurture factor. McNamara (2006) presents various strategies which help improve behaviour when working with children with SEBD which include:

- Learning Mentors
- Reward Systems
- Time-Out rooms
- Learning Support centres
- Alternative Curriculum
- Courses on Anger and Stress Management
- Counselling.

Peer relations are also an important aspect when dealing with SEBD, and can be used as an approach to prevention. Within our schools Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are more obvious when the pupils are externalizing disruptive behaviour. The pupils' disruption might take the form of behaviours that interfere with the learning and teaching processes and in some cases even violence against pupils and staff (Cooper 2006 pg 4). Another manifestation of SEBD which is frequently neglected in our schools can take the form of severely withdrawn behaviour, the child being anxious, depressed and shrinks from emotional and social interactions. As Cooper (2006 pg 4) state, withdrawn behaviour can be the result of the same influences associated with externalizing forms of SEBD. Such pupils might develop fears and anxieties as a result of socialization which involve neglect, abuse and modelling. Because of its nature, withdrawn behaviour is not easy to

detect in a busy classroom, and the children end up to stay quiet, become reluctant to engage socially and also become socially isolated. These children might also be sullen, tearful and unhappy, or seem emotionless. In class SEBD might take the form of disruption (example talking out of turn), hindrance of other pupils, off task behaviour and rudeness to other pupils and staff. Some serious cases of SEBD might take form of severe disruptive behaviour and persistent rule infringement and might even involve opposition, defiance towards teachers and educators and verbal and physical aggression to pupils and adults.

2.5.1 What type of teacher training?

It is important that schools better train teachers on how to educate SEBD pupils in order to reduce conflict. It is important that pre-service training supports the development and use of proactive rather than reactive intervention (E. Royer 2006 as cited in Morag Hun ter-Carsch et al., 2006). Every school needs two levels of intervention when working with SEBD pupils, Universal and Specific. The Universal interventions are provided to the children through school rules, class rules, and social skills training. On the other hand Specific interventions are tailored for each individual child and include; individualized interventions, consultations, IEPs (Individual Education Plans), self-control and aggression management training etc. (Morag Hunter-Carsch et al. , pg 32). Walker (2000) proposes that teachers' pre-service training should focus on solving problems and in developing intervention strategies in the school setting when working with SEBD pupils.

2.5.2 Relationships, Communication and Behaviour

Cooper P. (2006), states that students with SEBD often experience problems in formulating and communicating basic verbal messages and

in understanding their emotions (p.3). This clearly indicates that SEBD pupils have difficulties in 'communication skills' and the lack of them are important causal factors in SEBD. Communication is a skill and like every skill it can be learned or acquired through instruction and practice. If children with SEBD learn certain skills such as linguistic competence, social and emotional literacy, these skills would play major roles in helping the children to improve their behaviour.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided insights into the nature of SEBD and the various ways it manifests itself in the educational context. We see that its origin lies in biological, psychological and social-environmental factors. I looked at various theories that help us understand better SEBD as well as assessment tools and interventions when working with children SEBD children.

Chapter 3
Methodology

3 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to understand children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties. This project helps us understand better their feelings and emotions as well as present children's experiences and perspective.

Through this professional project I investigated how children manifesting challenging behaviour or withdrawal feel about their schooling experience, thus giving them a voice.

3.1 The Sample

The sample chosen for this research consists of 9 pupils aged between 8 and 10 attending a government Primary school situated in the Cottonera area. The children are of both sexes, but mostly males. These pupils were chosen since they can be categorised under the umbrella of children with SEBD and they might be acting out challenging behaviour within their classroom or are withdrawn or disengaged.

3.1.1 Qualitative Research

I chose qualitative research since it allows me to go deeper into understanding the subject and the investigation. It is flexible and in addition it allows me to pursue new areas of interest, as well as discover different angles of the subject. Qualitative research has four main characteristics which include intensive and long participation in the field setting, careful recording of what is happening in the settings and also the

analysis of the data and reporting the results (Erickson, 1986, as cited in Wimmer and Dominick 1999). Qualitative research is essential to this professional project since it is more effective as it provides quality in research enabling me to go in depth and in detail since I am able to interview and participate in discussions with the sample to be studied. Only this way I have the possibility to understand and analyse the data throughout the study.

On the other hand qualitative research also has its own disadvantages and the main disadvantage is that the sample size is too small to allow the researcher to generalise the result. During this research I observed 9 pupils in their in their class or during recess and record their behaviour as it occurs. Methods of qualitative research planned for this project include interviews, focus groups, case studies and observations. Through these sessions I got to know the children as well as their behaviour within the educational context. I also took part in discussions with the children and talk about their behaviour and about what makes their schooling experience a positive one.

3.1.2 Methods used

An Emancipatory approach was employed in this research, thus giving these children a voice.

"The emancipatory paradigm, as the name implies is about the facilitating of a politic of the possible, by confronting social oppression at whatever levels it occurs" (Oliver, 1992: 110).

This approach helped me to always keep in mind and to take in consideration and ensure that the children were not harmed or upset in

any way. Emancipatory research was chosen for this project since it is a way to engage people in the process and aims to challenge oppressive structures that define and control informants' lives (Bernard 2000). This type of research was suitable since it is suitable for school based research and looks at human activities and relationships. Emancipatory research was chosen since the informant is in control and present during the whole process (Azzopardi A. 2004). The pupils build a relationship me and this approach gave them the opportunity to express their feeling and talk about their experiences in order to investigate whether they are being excluded. This research was emancipatory-oriented since it is a method that appointed the children in the process in order to present their voice. Narrative was utilised in this research so to identify causes, dilemmas, tension and relationships within a school community. The aim of this research lies in the pupils' stories through their interviews and focus group. Emancipatory research was selected in order to empower the pupils and research practices within our schools based on the investigatory discourse.

Qualitative Research was utilized since this research concerns with the process rather than the outcome, and through this research one can make more sense of these children's lives and experiences. The instrumentation employed includes case studies, interviews, focus groups and observation. The sample were 9 children (both genders) in their Primary years (mixed gender state school) within the Cottonera Area who manifest challenging behaviour. The children were chosen since they manifest challenging behaviour, withdrawal, emotional or social difficulties. This study kept ethical issues in consideration and ensured that the sample was not upset or harmed in any way, and the children's

confidentiality is always confined and all names mentioned in this study are fictitious.

3.2 Conducting the interviews

In this research an interview with each of the 9 pupils was conducted. Informant style interviews were used and this allowed the children to be free to respond and give information as he or she saw fit (Powney & Watts 1987). The children and their guardians were given a consent form where it was clearly stipulated the aim and objectives of the study and also the role of researcher. Through these interviews I built a positive and trusting relationship with the pupils in order to take part in a constructive discussion and then present the children's experiences, feelings and frustrations. Through both the interviews and a focus group I obtained information which might be useful when working with children with SEBD, thus getting to know what makes them feel better, what promotes positive behaviour and what reinforces the positive behaviour.

3.2.1 Focus Group

I conducted a focus group with the sample. Focus group activities and questions were carried out as circle time. The session started with an ice-breaker where puppets will be used for projection to encourage children to participate and act out their feelings and emotions.

A story and some pictures were utilized during the focus group and the children then discussed how they think the character is feeling and why they think he/she is behaving that way. I also made use of questions in order to find out about their behaviour, feelings and what they suggest to make the puppet/person feel better.

Finally a discussion took place about how we are feeling today, what we liked about the focus group and then I also presented the aim of the session. We then concluded the session with another ice-breaker.

3.2.3 Case Studies and Observation

I observed the children in class as well as during recess, and made use of tools such as ABC in order to try and understand better the children's behaviour and what triggers and reinforces undesirable behaviour. I also carried out a sociometric test in the pupils' class and produced a case study for each of all 9 pupils (See Chapter 4). Prior to my observations in class each teacher was asked to sign a consent form where the aims and objectives of the project were clearly indicated.

3.3 Ethical Consideration

The children's and teacher names are all fictitious and the children's confidentiality is always confined. The sample was informed about the research being conducted, and also about my aim and role in this research. Once the research is completed the sample will be presented with the findings. A Consent form was given to the child and the child's guardian prior to the research, where it was clearly indicated that their participation is voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time and that their names will always be concealed. The class teachers were also given a consent form prior to observations conducted in class. I have taught some of the children in this research in the past and this raises the issue of intimacy factor and one might question whether the children were always honest.

Chapter 4

Findings, Analysis and Discussions

4. The Educational Experience of pupils with Challenging Behaviour

I interviewed nine pupils (7 boys and 2 girls), aged between 8 and 10 years. They all attend the same Primary school situated in the Cottonera area and all represent a broad spectrum of challenging behaviour. I knew most of the children since I taught them in the past and built a positive and trusting relationship with these pupils. I was still working in the school at the time of interviewing.

This chapter is concerned with the perceptions and experience of 9 pupils whose behaviour has proven problematic to teachers and administrators. These pupils might be labelled as 'problem pupils' but through this chapter I tried to see their characteristics and circumstances which are diverse and to understand better their needs as learners. This information was gathered through the interviews and I tried to understand better problem behaviour not by focusing on the child or school but on the interaction between them (Wise 2000 pg25). These interviews and observations helped me illustrate the significance of possible factors that may affect pupils' behaviour. I also attempted to enhance understanding of exactly why or how different factors and processes interact and become significant in impacting behaviour, and based on this information made proposals for improving the education provision and experiences for children with SEBD.

I explored the pupils' own view of internal, psychological factors that they perceive as influencing their behaviour, but also factors belonging to the various systems impacting their lives, such as the school and their family life.

4.1 Are the children happy at school?

When the children were asked whether they are happy and whether they liked school, most found it difficult to answer immediately. Only 1 out of the 9 pupils answered that they do not like school and they do not feel happy when they come to school. On the other hand 2 answered that they love school and that they feel good when they are at school, but the majority answered that it depends and gave various reasons to their answers.
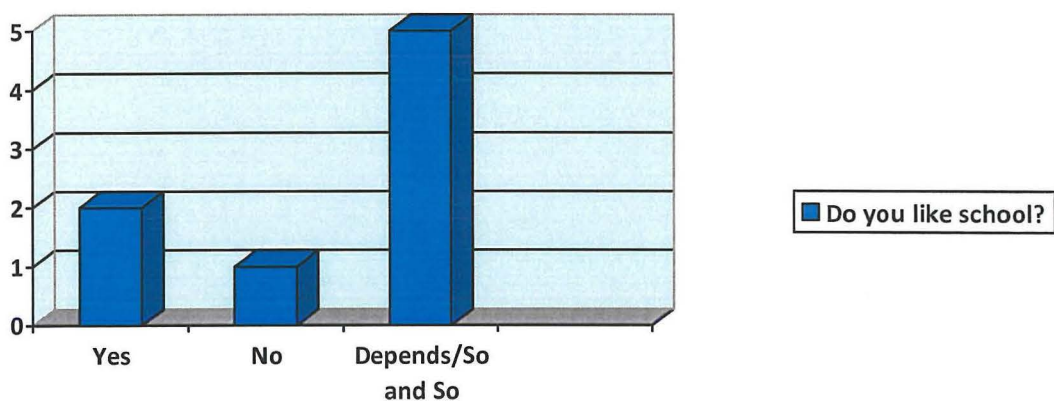

Figure 4.1

The children mentioned various factors that influence their schooling experience and mainly included the relevance and level of curriculum content:

- The teacher
- The Curriculum (Whether it is adequate to their ability) and whether Differentiated Teaching is taking place.

May's statement proves how much the teacher affects the way the pupils feel at school and their teaching and learning process:

May: *"Min mindu tlajt Year 5 sirt   Since I am in Year 5, I like s
        Inħobbha ftit. Yr 4 kont   school more. I did not like
        niddejjaq niġi l-iskola għax kien   Year 4 and used to get*

ikolli wisq x'nagħmel, u t-teacher
ta' din is-sena nħobbha aktar."

bored since I had to much to
do. This year I like it more.

When I observed May in class she seemed very fidgety and was moving about on her chair. Her SDQ (Appendix 2) shows that she scored high in hyperactivity. In class May needs to move about and I think that Time Out cards would work out with her, this would give her the opportunity to move about when she needs to and decrease her misbehaviour in class. By observing May in class and looking at her profile it is also clear that she longs for praise and loses concentration when she is shouted at, and when she is given difficult work.

The children were also asked to give reasons why they disliked school and this figure clearly indicates that their dislike towards school is mostly Curriculum related or Teacher related. The major problems mentioned by the children support Schostak's studies since boredom with lessons; examination pressure and poor staff-student relationship were mentioned by these pupils. These results reflect Morag Hunter-Carsch et al.'s (2006), since these answers show that the curriculum has become more focused on attainment and that this is leading teachers with less time to attend their pupils' pastoral needs.
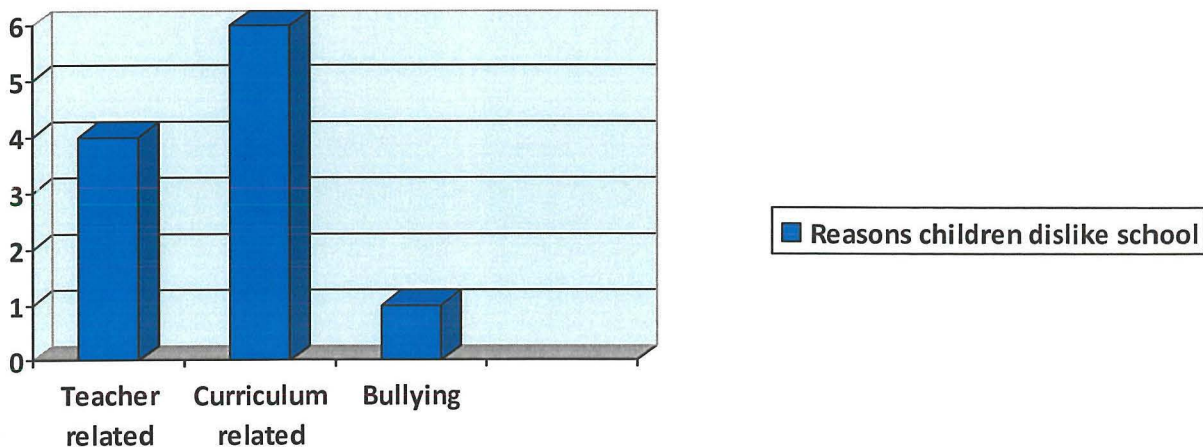

Figure 4.2

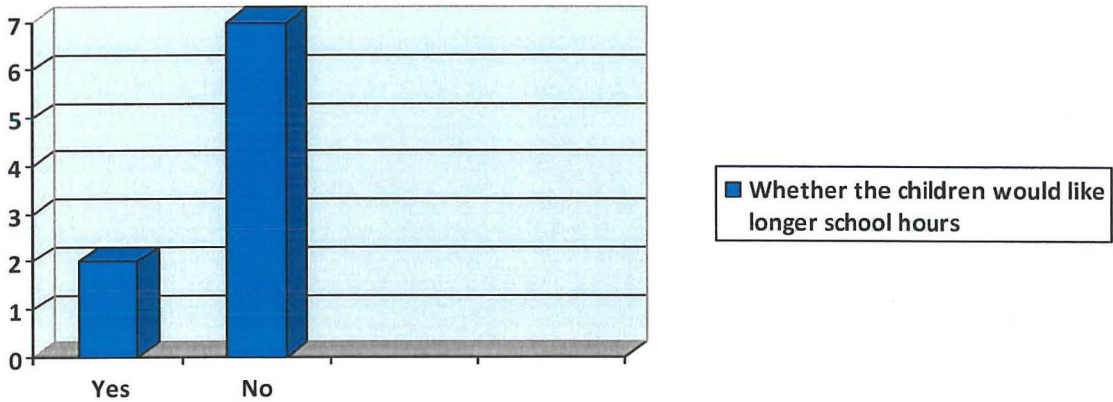The children were also asked whether they prefer if school hours were shorter and the answers were:

Figure 4.3

Figure 4.3 clearly indicates that most of the children would prefer shorter school hours and stated:

JeanPaul: *"Nixtieqha ddum anqas*   *"I would like it if school*

        għax l-iskola ġieli niddejjaq."   *Ends before because*

                                        sometimes I get bored".

Carl: *"Iva, nixtieqha ddum anqas*   *"Yes I would like it if school*

        biex ikolli inqas x'nikteb u   *ended before so I have less*

        homework, kieku ma jkollix   *to write and less homework.*

        hekk inkun nixtieqa ddum aktar."   *If I don't have too much to*

                                        write and homework I would

                                        like it if school hours were

                                        longer".

In fact when I observed Carl in the classroom setting he seemed lost during explanations and found it difficult to focus on the tasks that where assigned to him. Carl seems to dread writing tasks (Appendix 3) and tends to misbehave and disrupt his peers frequently during these reading and writing activities. Roderick also seems to be facing the same challenges in class and this was recorded during my observation in class (Appendix 9). Like Carl Roderick also tends to misbehave during reading and writing activities and when given long tasks, he finds it difficult to focus on a task. Reading these children's comments and looking at their profile clearly indicates that these pupils feel frustrated when lessons become boring and too difficult to them. Since they find it difficult to focus and concentrate they rarely manage to finish in time.

Noel: *"Nixtieqa ddum anqas għax hawn ma tantx ikun hawn daqshekk pjaċir għax trid tikteb il-ħin kollu. Jien crafts u npingi, plasticine u football nieħu gost. Nixtieq inkun fil-klassi ta Mr. ………. għax idaħħak dak u kieku nkun nixtieqa ddum aktar l-iskola."*

"I would prefer if school ended before because here I don't enjoy myself much since I have to write all the time. I enjoy crafts and drawing, play dough and football. I would like to be in Mr. …… because he makes us laugh and if so I would like if school hours were longer."

These statements clearly indicate that these children prefer shorter school hours because they are bored. The teacher's learning style is surely influencing the children and if they have less writing and a good relationship with the teacher

their schooling experience would be a different one and they also stated that if so they would not mind longer hours at school.

4.1.2 The Curriculum

When asked what they dislike doing at school several children mentioned aspects of the Curriculum. Most stated that they have too much homework and that they get bored writing all the time. Most of these pupils are struggling academically and this is affecting their schooling experience.

Some of the pupils judged a teacher to be 'good' or 'not good' based on whether the teacher was able to meet their own specific individual personal needs and demands in the classroom. Through analyzing these children's statements one realizes the importance of understanding the very unique perceptions of survival in the classroom that may be held by pupils with SEBD.

Manuel : *"Skond Miss, l-iskola ma tantx togħġobni imma t-teachers mhux kollha l-istess. Li ma jgħajtux u ma jagħtux ħafna homework ma jdejjqunix. Nħobbhom lit-teachers li ma jagħtux ħafna homework, nħobb Noqgħod inpinġi u ma niktibx ħafna jew ikunu tqal għalija. Inti Miss kont tgħidli nikteb id-date u t-title u niġi ħdejk u tagħtini affarjiet li kont inkun nafhom u ma kienx ikolli*

"It depends Miss, I don't like school but not all teachers are the same. The ones who do not shout and do not give a lot of homework do not bother me. I love the teachers who do not give a lot of homework. I like drawing and I don't like to write a lot and that the work given to me is not too difficult for me. You Miss, used to tell me to write the date and title and come

ħafna li jgħejjini."

to your desk and used to give

me work I could work out

and I never had to work out

lots of work which tires me".

Manuel's statement clearly indicates that the way he feels at school depends on the class he is in, and his teacher. In fact when looking at Manuel's ABC (Appendix 1) it is evident that Manuel seeks for his teacher's and peers' attention and he would like to build positive relationships with them. When the class teacher praised Manuel, his behaviour was good and he continued to concentrate on his task, on the other hand when the teacher was angry at him he became disruptive and misbehaved. Both Manuel's statements and the ABC (Appendix 1) also indicate that Manuel misbehaves when he is given long tasks and this frequently leads to misbehaviour.

Teacher's pedagogy also affects the pupils. Various pupils also stated that they do not feel happy at school because they write a lot and because they have a lot of homework, and that the work assigned to them is beyond their ability. Supporting this, when Mark was asked what he would change in his teacher he stated:

Mark: *"Ma tagħmilx xogħol tqil u*   *"That she does not give me*

   ma tagħtix ħafna homework."   *difficult tasks and a lot of*

   homework."

When Mark was asked what would make him feel better at school he answered:

Mark: *"Li ma jkollix ħafna homework*   *"That I am not given too much*

   u ħafna xogħol li ma nafux."   *homework and not given tasks or*

work that I am not not able to work out."

Looking at Mark's profile (Appendix 7), it is clear that he looses motivation when the lesson or work assigned to him is beyond his abilities. The ABC also indicates that Mark gets lost most of the time because he is not understanding in class or knows that he can't work out his assigned task. Through the observations I conducted in class I realised that Mark's self-esteem and confidence is very low especially when it comes to academic work.

O'Keeffe & Stoll (1995) also describe the negative feelings relating to certain subjects described by the pupils in their study, where simply a result of the subject being perceived as too difficult, which is similar to the statements made by pupils with SEBD in this study. Some of the pupils who found that work was too difficult for them also justified their behaviour as being a result of these academic difficulties. In support of this statement, the pupils claimed:

Mark: *"Inħoss, li t-teacher tagħtini ħafna homework u kitba u ma nkunx nafu u tibda tgħajjat."*

"I feel that my teacher gives me too much homework and which I am not able to work out and then she starts to shout at me."

Manuel: *"Jien taqbiżli ċ-ċinga meta Tagħtina ħafna homework jew kitba għax niddejaq ħafna, mbgħad nibda niġġieled jew ma nogħqodx kwiet."*

"It gets on my nerves when she gives us lots of homework or writing, then I start fights or I misbehave in class."

These pupils also seem to be adopting actions to avoid embarrassment in order to maintain a certain degree of personal control over the situation. The children seem to find it easier to refuse to do their work rather than claiming that they can't do it. It also appears that punishment was rich and at times enjoyable by the pupils when the work was too difficult: Marisa's statement clearly indicates this:

Marisa: *"Lil Miss……… nghidilha li ma rridx naghmel lesson u naqbad u mmur il-barra."*   *"I tell Miss ……. that I do not want to stay for the lesson and leave class."*

These statements support Laslett (1977) and Evans's (1980) statement that at times little attention is given to pastoral care within the classroom. Mc Namara's statement is also evident in these statements since we realise that social, emotional and behavioural issues are on the increase in our classrooms but most teachers dedicate less time to listening to our children in class because of the pressure that teachers experiences since their main focus is the curriculum and to prepare pupils for examinations and to get the highest marks possible.

4.2.1 Teachers and Teacher Training

During the interview the children were asked whether they felt that this year's class teacher was their friend. The majority answered yes and only 2 answered no and one said he did not know.
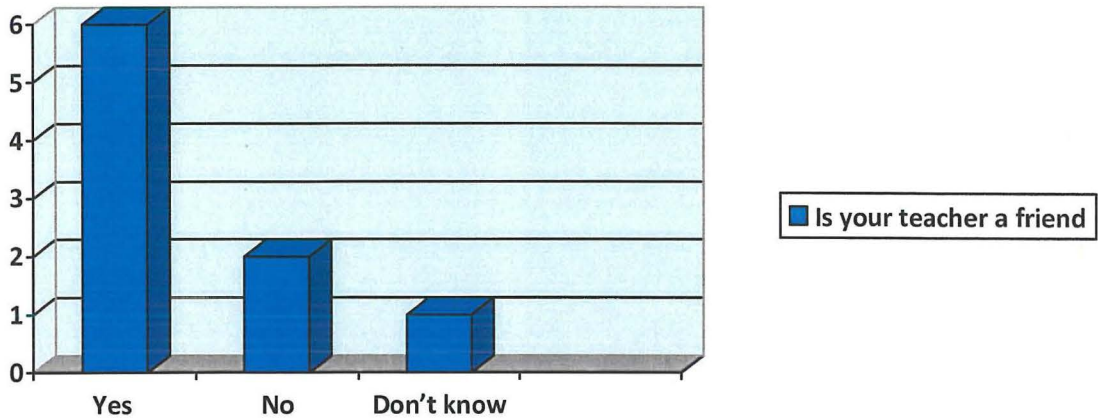
Figure 4.4

The children also talked about other teachers and stated what they liked about certain teachers and what they disliked in others. There was a consensus since all pupils said that they do not like it when a teacher shouts, especially if he/she shouts frequently.

In fact when the children were asked what they would change about their current teacher several children answered that they prefer if she shouted less and if she gave them less to write and less homework. One child even mentioned that he does not like it when his teacher does not send him to the toilet when he really needs to go. This clearly indicates that this child would like more responsibility and not be treated as a child.

When asked whether they ever made their class teacher angry the children all answered yes. When asked what they did to make their teacher angry, 3 answered that they misbehaved, 3 answered that they refused to write or did not do their homework, 2 mentioned that they started a fight and 1 even answered that she refused to do a lesson and left class.

Manuel: *"Iva, nirrabjaha meta taqbiżli*   *"Yes, I get angry when she*

ċ-ċinga u niġġieled jew ma   *she gets on my nerves and I*

Noqghodx kwiet Meta taghtina   *misbehave. When she gives*

ħafna homework u kitba tatqbiżli   *us too much homework or*

ċ-ċinga u ma noghqodx kwiet jien   *too much to write I feel*

u niġġieled".   *angry and misbehave and*

     start fights."

When looking at Manuel's SDQ (Appendix 1), one might notice that he scored very high at having conduct difficulties. His ABC also indicates that Manuel needs his teacher's attention and when it is not given he starts to misbehave and start fights. When looking at Manuel's profile it is also understood that he is struggling academically and when he is given too much work he tends to misbehave and might also be disruptive in class.

Marisa: *"Iva nghidilha li ma rridx*   *"Yes, I tell her that I do*

     naghmel lesson u nitlaq il-barra."   *not want the lesson and*

     leave class."

All the children claimed that they made the teacher angry one time or another. When asked how they feel when the teacher is angry the children gave different answers. Out of the four children that stated that they feel sad three mentioned that they are sad because of humiliation:

Roderick: *"Imdejjaq, u tghidli biex*   *"Sad, because she sends me*

     immur il-barra!!"   *out of class!!"*

Noel: *"Imdejjaq, ghax tkun qed*   *"Sad because she gets*

     tirrabja mieghi."   *angry at me."*

JeanPaul: *"Imdejjaq għax tniżżilni*   *"Sad, because she takes me*

   għand il-Madam."   *to the Head's office."*

On the other hand three pupils answered that when their teacher is angry they don't feel anything and that they just feel normal.

May: *"Xejn, Normali nħossni."*   *"Nothing, I feel normal."*

Roderick: *"Xejn, ngħid għal għand*   *"Nothing, I realise that I am*

   il-Madam mela jien, u hi   *going to be sent to the*

   tibda tgħajjat u tgħidli u   *Head's office. The*

   jien nirrispondi."   *teacher starts to shout at me*

              and I answer her back."

However two children answered that they feel good when their teacher gets angry and stated:

Mark: *"Ferħan, hekk għax naraha*   *"Happy, because I see her*

   tirrabja u titbaqbaq."   *get angry and loose her*

   (with a smile)   *temper."*

Manuel: *"Tajjeb, inħossni funny u*   *"I feel good, I feel funny and*

   aktar nidħak."   *laugh more."*

The children claimed that they had particular teachers that loved them more and that he/she was their friend. The children gave very interesting reasons why they liked these teachers.
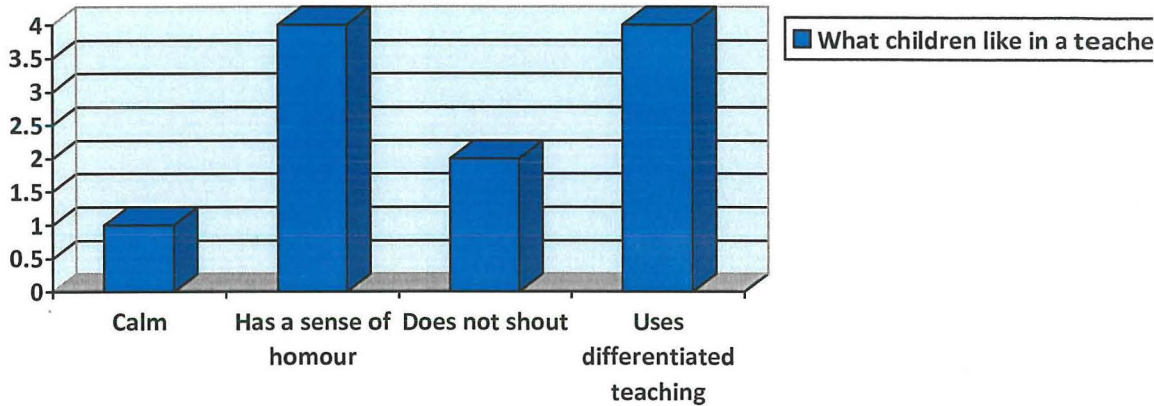

Figure 4.5

Manuel: *"Kont inhobbok aktar għax ma kontx tagħtini ħafna homework u kont inkun nafu li tagħtini u li ma kontx inkun naf kont tgħini. Int ma kontx tgħajjat u kont Iddaħħakni wkoll."*

"I used to love you more because you did not give me a lot of homework and I knew how to work out the work you gave me and also used to help me. You did not shout in class and used to make me laugh too."

Mark: *"Kif għidtlek Miss, kont nieħu gost għax ma kontx tgħajjat għal xejn u il-classwork u l-homework li kont tagħtini kont inkun nafhom."*

"Like I told you before Miss, I liked you because you never shouted at us for No reason and the classwork and homework you used to give me, was not difficult

for me to work out."

Robert: "*Kelli żewġ teachers li kont inħobb ħafna, lilek u Miss ……, inti kont tfiehem u kalma u ma kontx tgħajjat għal xejn. Kont idaħħakni xi kultant.*"

"*I had 2 teachers I liked very much, Miss ….. and you Miss. You used to explain calmly and you did not shout for nothing. You used to make me laugh too.*"

Noel: "*Iva lilek Miss, għax ma tgħajjatx, u per eżempju flok tgħajjat biex tispjegalek, terġa tispjega għax ma tifhimx u tgħidilna bil-kalma. U kont idaħħakna wkoll.*"

"*Yes, you Miss, because you did not shout and for example you used to explain again calmly if we do not understand. You used to make me laugh too.*"

When looking at Noel's profile and observations (Appendix 6) it is clear that Noel needs to move about. I think that Time Out cards would also be effective with Noel as he needs to move about. It is also evident that Noel does not like it when the teacher shouts at him and appreciates if the teacher explains to him calmly. It is important that the teacher keeps in mind the challenges Noel has to face in class because of his condition and that the teacher should use strategies and activities to help Noel improve his attention rather than give him long tasks, since he looses his attention after a short time. All these statements support Reid's (1995) statement, that children identify the needs that a teacher gives individual attention to every student, that he/she helps the pupils on a personal basis, even with their personal problems, provide pupils academic and remedial help and also have a sense of humour.

During the interviews the children also mentioned teachers they disliked and gave their reasons:

Jean Paul: *"Per eżempju, Mr. ....*   *"For example, I don't like*
idejjaqni, imma qatt ma kont   *Mr. .... I was never in*
fil-klassi tiegħu, idejjaqni   *his class but I do not like*
għax jgħajjat".   *him because he shouts."*

Robert: *"Miss .... kienet tgħajjat ħafna*   *"Miss......... used to shout a*
u jien kont bil-qiegħda quddiem   *lot. I was seated at the front*
u kienet tweġġali widnejja. Dik   *and she used to hurt my*
il-Miss ma kontx inħobbha għax   *ears. I did not like that*
kienet tgħajjat il-ħin kollu. Anke   *teacher because she used to*
ġieli kienet tgħajjat mat-tfal għal   *shout all the time. She even*
xejn. Inti u Miss .... ma nafx   *used to shout at us for*
għaliex imma kont nieħu pjaċir   *nothing. You and Miss ......*
fil-klassi tagħkom, aħjar tkunu intom   *I don't know why but I used*
biss it-teachers tiegħi."   *to enjoy myself in your class,*
        I wish that only you two
        were my teachers."

In Robert's case I believe that he needs to build positive relationships at school. He is a very sensitive boy and in fact he scored high on emotional difficulties. Robert's ABC (Appendix 5) also indicates that positive reinforcement is effective with him. He is very pleased when given praise and acknowledgement of his effort and good work. This is important for Robert to build his self-esteem and confidence in school.

A number of pupils mentioned the impact of negative relationships between teachers and pupils but these pupils are also revealing the importance of positive relationships with one or more particular teachers.

The majority of pupils in this study perceived teachers' skills, personalities and teaching styles as factors having contributed to their school experience. Fontana (1984) has also stressed the importance of teachers and their behaviour effects pupils' success in school and stated that:

> "More attention paid to the social environment in which the children learn and in particular to that environment as represented by teacher behaviours, will lead to pupil learning that is more efficient and effective." (Fontana 1984 p.114)

The children were also asked whether their teacher ever made them feel angry and they all answered yes. When asked what made them feel angry the children answered:

Mark: *"Iva ddejaqni, speċjalment meta tgħajjat mieġħi."*   *"Yes, especially when she shouts at me."*

Raisa: *"Iva, meta l- ħin kollu tgħidli biex nikteb."*   *"Yes, when she constantly tells me to write."*

Manuel: *"Iva, darba bdejt niġbdilha l-karti minn fuq il-mejda u bdiet tgħajjat 'man'. Tirrabjani*   *"Yes, once I was pulling paper from her desk and she started to shout at me 'man'.*

meta tgħajjat.”   *She makes me angry when*

she shouts.”

The children also said that when teachers get angry and shout at them they feel even worse and that when the teacher makes them angry they feel bad. Manuel's statement clearly states that when the teacher shouts at him he feels very angry. I think that this point is important for teachers to keep in mind when working with children with SEBD and adopt effective strategies.

During a focus group the children discussed how they feel when the teacher makes them feel angry they all agreed that when they feel angry they do not feel good and all talked about what they do in class when they are angry and some of the children also claimed that they misbehave when they feel so. The children all claimed that they prefer when the teacher is calm and when she is helpful and explains calmly if they do not understand immediately and also mentioned instances certain teachers made them laugh and how much they like it when a teacher has a sense of humour and a smile on his/her face in class.

Manuel: *“Inħoss nervi naħseb u taqbiżli*   *“I feel nervous, frustrated*

u nibda ninnervja u noqgħod   *and I lose my temper and*

imqareb. Mbgħad meta jitlali   *misbehave. Then when I*

ħafna ikolli aptit naqbad nagħti.”   *can't take it any more I*

start fights.”

4.2.2 Home Environment and Life outside school

The environment that children have at home or outside school might also be influencing their behaviour. These include factors associated with their family and their socio economic status (Wise 2000). The impact of the family on children's behaviour has attracted much research and there is surely

disagreement in attempting to associate family background and behaviour. Charlton and David (1999) state that family influence is still an important issue for pupils with special needs. All the children in this study claimed that at home they misbehaved and that they made their parents/guardians angry. Unfortunately only 1 out of the 9 children is not from a broken family, but his/her family is facing serious socio-economic difficulties and the children are at times neglected. Most of the children spend the week with one parent and the weekend with another. Two out of the nine children live with a grandparent. Charlton & David (1989) indicate that it is risky to always link disadvantaged homes with disturbed children. On the other hand Wedge & Essen's (1982) study found a relationship between family disadvantage and educational attainment and claim that children from single parent families or families with a step-parent were more likely to suffer a range of health, behavioural and educational problems.
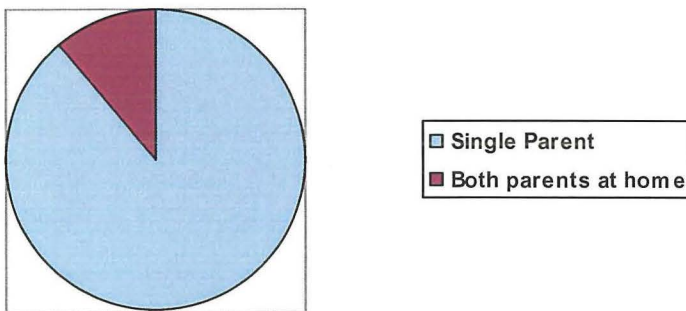

- ☐ Single Parent
- ■ Both parents at home

Figure 4.6

- ☐ Has a step parent
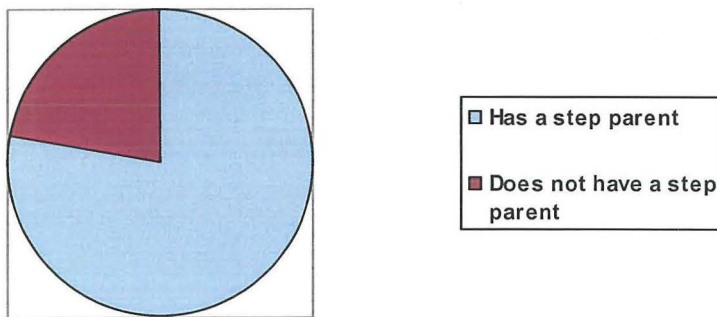- ■ Does not have a step parent

Figure 4.7

Figure 4.6 and 4.7 indicate that the majority of the children in this study come from a single parent background and the majority also has a step parent and in some cases step brothers and sisters. Though this supports Wedge & Essen's (1982) study, this research on the other hand focuses on the importance of schooling factors but it also reveals that a highly complex combination of factors might influence the children's behaviour. I fully agree with Galloway's (1994) who stresses the importance of avoiding making simple statements regarding correlations between behaviour and social variables in the child's background.

All the children interviewed stated that at home they misbehave too and they also gave various reasons for their bad behaviour at home:

Marisa: *"Ma tantx nobdi, meta ma jkollix x' naghmel naqbad maghhom anke mad-daddy u nirrabjahom."*

"I do not behave much, when I have nothing to do I tease them, even my dad and make them angry."

Manuel: *"Ma nobdix ta, niġġieled kemm trid u straġi naghmel, u ghal xejn ghax hekk ikolli aptit."*

"I do not behave, I fight all the time and I make a mess, and for nothing I just feel like doing so.

4.3.1 Favourite Subjects at school

As Cooper (2005) states, Physical Education and arts are important subjects when dealing with SEBD. All the children interviewed said that their favourite subjects at school are Physical Education, Arts and Crafts or Computing. Some of the pupils mentioned more than one subject when asked to mention their

favourite subject at school. I agree with Cooper's assertion and I believe that SEBD pupils benefit through these subjects (Art and crafts, physical education).
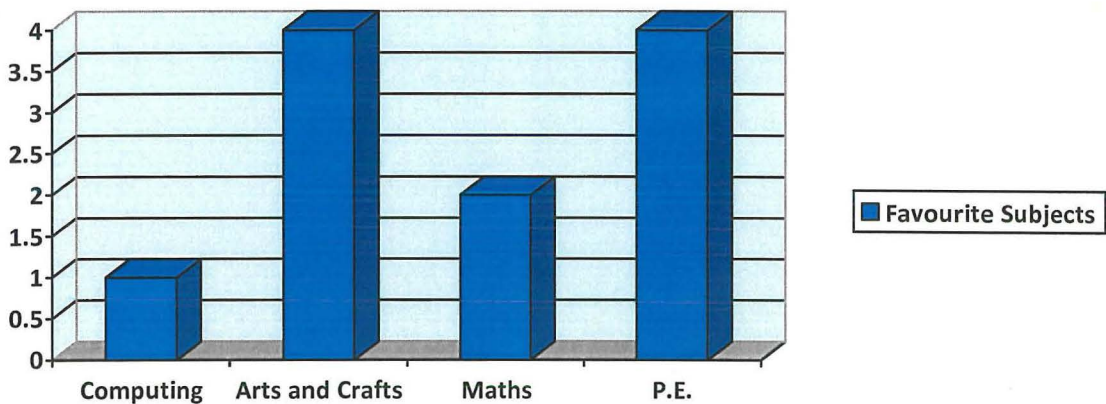

Figure 4.8

Figure 4.8 indicates the 4 favourite subjects mentioned by the pupils. It is highly visible that their favourite subjects are Arts, Crafts and Physical Education.

During an interview when asked what he would change of his teacher Jean Paul answered " *Iva, li tnizzilna għal P.E.*   "*Yes, that she takes us for*

         speċjalment meta ma jiġix   *P.E., especially when the*

         is-Sir tal-P.E."   *P.E. teacher is absent.*"

When I asked Marisa whether she would prefer if school ended later she answered *"Le, imma meta nagħmlu*   *"No, but when we have a*

         il-P.E. iva."   *P.E. lesson yes.*"

All pupils scored high in hyperactivity and Marisa and Jean Claude had a high score (Appendix 4 & 8). Both pupils mentioned that they would like more Physical Education lesson and that they enjoy these lessons. When looking at Marisa's profile one might also realise that she mostly misbehaves when lessons

are too difficult and being sent out of class is reinforcing her negative behaviour. Marisa might also misbehave and prefers to leave class rather than be humiliated during lessons (especially during the reading lesson and this is evident in Marisa's ABC, Appendix 4). Marisa like most of the other pupils, frequently misbehaves during reading lessons. This might be due to the children's reading difficulties. This links to evidence Morag Hunter-Carsh et al., (2006) present, which show us a link between reading difficulties and pupils with challenging behaviour.

The pupils revealed certain subjects to be particularly popular, in fact when children were asked what they liked doing at school they all gave similar answers and again mentioned Arts and Crafts and Physical Education/Football.
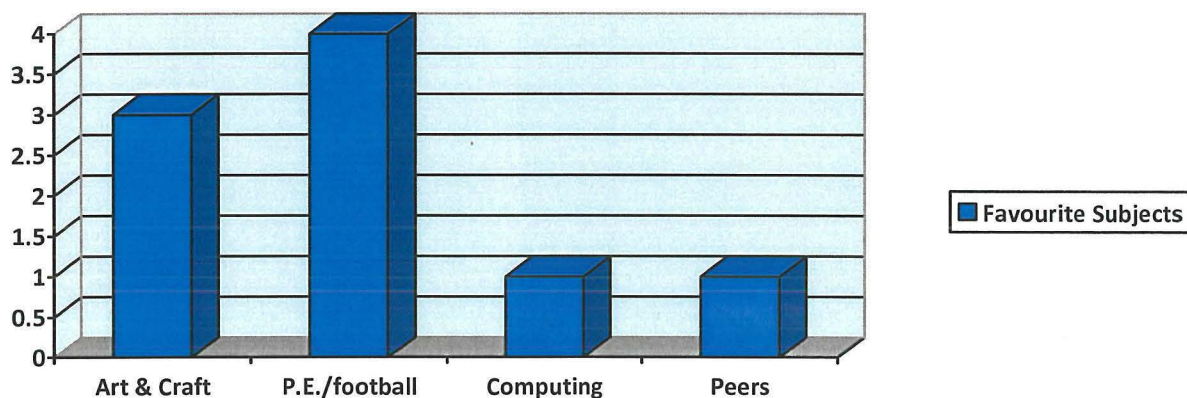

Figure 4.9

4.3.2 Peer Relationships

When the children were asked whether they have friends at school, they all answered that they did. When asked what they like doing with their peers most answered that they like to play with them, one answered that she likes to play and talk with her friends. Only Mark (one of the withdrawn pupils) answered that he only has few friends at school. The pupils chosen for this research are in two different classes and a sociogram of these two classes was conducted in

order to have a better understanding. When looking at the sociogram (Figure.4.), it is evident that May is the most popular in class followed by Manuel. In fact when they were asked whether they have friends at school they answered:

Manuel: *"Iva, ħafna, boys u girls*   *"Yes a lot, both boys and*

il-ħbieb tiegħi."   *girls are my friends."*

May: *"Ħafna għandi ħbieb."*   *"I have a lot of friends."*

Manuel and May were frequently chosen by their friends and all mutual choices. When looking at the sociogram of choices we also realize that in this class the children are forming restricted groups and no one is neglected. Mark, who answered that he only has some friends, has two mutual choices but is isolated from the rest of the group.

All the children in this study claimed that they fought with someone one day or another. Most of the children also mentioned that they had peers that they disliked in class. The majority disliked these children because they talk too much or they pick on them. One child even mentioned that he does not like a particular peer because he does not allow the teacher to conduct a lesson.
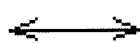
Sociogram of Choices

Positive Question: I choose to sit near these children
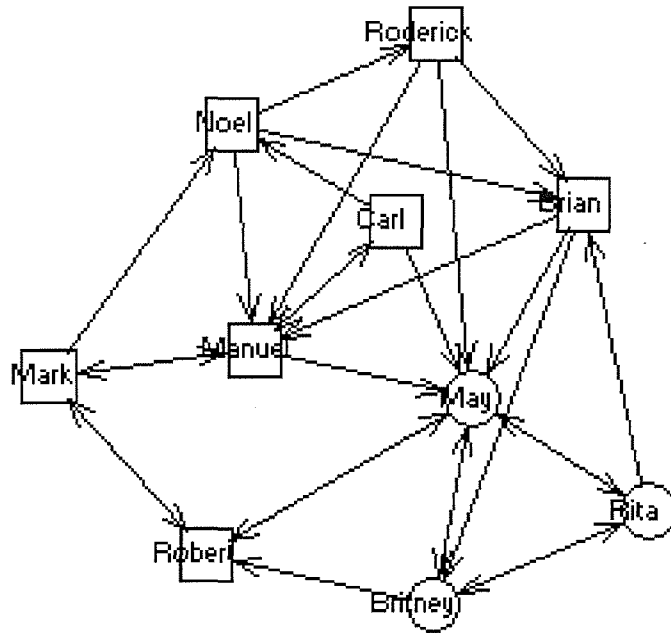
Female Male

⟶ = one-way choice

⟷ = mutual choice

48.3 % of choices are mutual

70 % have mutual choices.

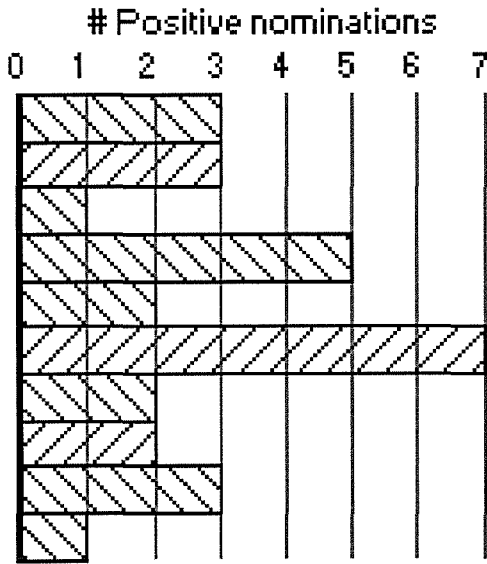School : Cottonera Area
Teacher : Ms. Mizzi
Period : /
Grade : Yr5
Date : May 2009

This Sociogram indicates that May and Manuel are the most popular in class and all their choices were mutual. In class the children also seem to be forming sub groups.

Nomination Chart

Positive Question: I would choose to sit near these children.

Positive nominations

Student labels
p Popular
R Rejected
N Neglected
c Controversial

School : Cottonera Area
Teacher : Ms. Mizzi
Period : /
Grade : Yr5
Date : May 2009

This Nomination chart shows us a better picture of how the children nominated. May is clearly the most popular followed by Manuel. Roderick and Carl were only nominated once and they might risk of being isolated. The two children that got least nominated are the ones who are frequently absent.

Sociogram of Choices

Positive Question: I would choose to sit near these children
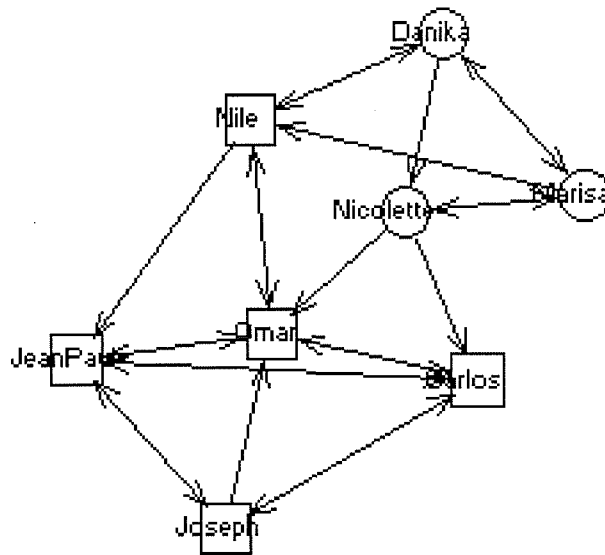
Female   Male
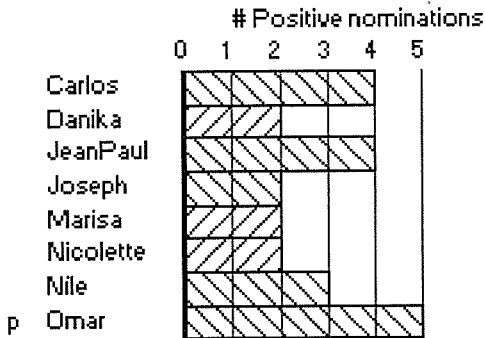
⎯⎯⎯⎯> = one-way choice

<⎯⎯⎯> = mutual choice

75 % of choices are mutual

100 % have mutual choices.

School : Cottonera Area
Teacher : Ms. Borg
Period : /
Grade : Yr5
Date : May 2009

This sociogram indicates that Omar is the most popular in this class and all his choices were mutual. The children also created sub groups within this class but none of the children are neglected or isolated.

Nomination Chart

Positive Question: I would choose to sit near these children.

Positive nominations

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Carlos						
Danika						
JeanPaul						
Joseph						
Marisa						
Nicolette						
Nile						
p Omar						

Student labels
p Popular
R Rejected
N Neglected
c Controversial

School : Cottonera Area
Teacher : Ms. Borg
Period : /
Grade : Yr5
Date : May 2009

This Nomination chart clearly indicates that Omar is the most popular and we see that none of the pupils is rejected or neglected. Omar, Carlos and Jean Claude seem to be the most popular and when looking at the previous sociogram one can see that they are forming sub groups.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the voice of children. These statements give us valuable insight into how pupils with SEBD perceive their own needs. The role of the teacher, staff and parents is crucial and the child's requirement of them is clearly complex. The children's statements indicate that the relationships between teachers and pupils are important to them. It is also clear that the Curriculum needs to be tailored for these children and an early intervention is important. All children claimed that they dislike a teacher that shouts and that shouting leaves a negative impact on their behaviour. This chapter gives educators the opportunity to listen to children manifesting challenging behaviour.

The children's statements make us realise that they need to develop a secure base through reciprocal relationships in order to explore their physical and social environment. We realise how important it is that a child feels secure and safe within the classroom in order to access learning in a classroom. This chapter helps us realise how important it is that teachers identify the needs of their pupils and respond to them and dedicate time to listen to children as well as time to respond to them. Children manifesting challenging behaviour need to establish clear boundaries, consistencies and routines. The children's comments also show the importance of celebrating diversity rather than discouraging it in our class and the importance of including these children rather than excluding them. This chapter highlights the importance of individual interventions as well as the use of social and emotional teaching strategies. The pupils' statements also show the importance of supportive environments and positive relationships when dealing with SEBD.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The main aim of this research is to attempt to explore the perceptions of pupils with challenging behaviour and all the aspects that might influence their behaviour and lives. Through this research these nine SEBD pupils were given the opportunity to talk about their schooling experience and give their own perspective regarding what influences their behaviour. This study is intended to help educators when dealing with children manifesting challenging behaviour by preventing certain behaviours in school and offering support to those who are struggling in the school setting. Hopefully this contribution will make a difference in teachers' ability to support children who are at risk, by doing their best to make them meet their potential.

5.1 Recommendations

It is important that whole-school cultures and structures are developed in schools in order to make possible meeting the various needs SEBD pupils have. Even though this will not enable schools to completely solve behavioural problems, it is not an excuse for inaction (Cooper 2006). Since schools have a major influence in the development of SEBD an early intervention is crucial so to be more effective.

Through this study it is clear that children manifesting challenging behaviour recognize their need for support. In order to tailor effective programmes and interventions, each child's individual needs must be identified. By making use of behaviour approaches good behaviour can be reinforced. Some examples of behaviour approaches include Time

Out Cards, Token Economies (e.g stickers on a chart and a reward in return for a specific award), rules-praise-ignore, Circle Time, Use of Sand Timers, Use of Traffic Light system (green meaning good behaviour, amber meaning the children need to be careful and red for bad behaviour) and more. Social and Emotional Training is another essential tool when dealing with challenging behaviour.

This study provides an insight to educators to better understand the nature of SEBD and how to deal with it effectively by developing understanding and approaches. Teachers and other educational staff have an important role in enabling social and academic engagement. They need to make sure that all pupils have access to the experience of success, thus broadening the way they look at it and avoiding measuring educational success only with examination results. Success in education is when a pupil makes progress regardless of his/her starting point. Education needs to tackle the personal development of children through engagement in the school community. They need to help pupils by creating a positive and nurturing environment where they can feel happy, safe, loved, belonged and respected.

These children show us that teachers, who use praise, humour and differentiated teaching are the most effective. Unfortunately most teachers tend to focus on negative behaviour rather than on positive behaviour. Through reading the children's comments I think that every educator needs to keep in mind that we leave a dramatic impact on the pupils' relationships and schooling experience. These comments also indicate that positive reinforcement is more effective in changing behaviour, while negative reinforcement and criticism produces negative behaviour.It is important that educators work with and support parents of

children with SEBD and encourage them to be active in their children's education.

5.1.2 A Biopsychosocial Aspect

An SEBD child is highly affected by the social environment such as family, school and other social contexts. The social context in which the child grows and develops plays a fundamental role. The school and home environment affects how the child perceives oneself and the others and contributes to the child's attitudes, behaviour, personality and temperament. The biopschosocial model helps us understand better the child with SEBD and to keep in mind the three important factors (biological, psychological and social aspect). I think that this model is effective since it keeps present that actions at the biological, psychological and social model are all dynamically interrelated, and that these relationships will affect the child. Through this model we can understand better our pupils, and the interventions would be more effective.

I think that as educators we need to attend to and accept the feelings of children. It is our responsibility to understand their experience and to make them feel understood. This study is presenting the feelings these nine children are experiencing. We need to make it possible for them to manage their own feelings and find solutions or perspectives that help them solve their challenges. It is important that we dedicate time to engage in conversation and communicate to the children that emotions are important and that they should be valued and respected.

Listening to a child with SEBD helps him/her understand better and express his/her emotions. We need to not just listen to words but listen in

a way in which one's full attention is given to the speaker. Through listening to our children we can find out what works and ensure that the interventions are effective.

This study shows what works in educating children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties within the mainstream setting and shows different approaches of dealing with SEBD. There are no quick fixes or answers when dealing with SEBD but through listening to the children is crucial. There is much knowledge available as well as interventions and strategies to choose from. In order to move away from excluding children manifesting challenging behaviour we need to create the right ethos within our schools and work in collaboration with trained staff and professionals as well as with the families.

Schools have an important role to play in enabling social and academic engagement (Morag Hunter-Carsh 2006). Our schools need to have strong values structure based on commitment to valuing all pupils as members of the school community regardless of their diversity. These values should be reflected in practical measures to enable all pupils in our schools to have access to experience success. This might involve our educational system broadening the way success, thus not measuring success solely to examination results, but in extending a child's knowledge and skills and enable pupils to make progress regardless of their starting point. This study also shows the importance that the children feel part of the school community and known as individuals. These children need to be valued for their positive qualities and for their efforts. The pupils in this study also show us the importance of communication between children and adults in order to understand behaviour in relation to emotional, social and cultural contexts.

This study provides an insight of both the theoretical and practical understanding of children's behaviour in schools. It provides suggestions for dealing with challenging behaviour in everyday life within the classroom. It helps us understand better the complexity of SEBD in order to include these children rather than exclude them. I hope this study makes teachers aware of how important it is to listen in order that these children's cry for help is not misinterpreted and only this way these children are no longer at risk and help is provided by the people who are best placed to help.

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Appendix 1

Manuel

Manuel is a 9 year old boy. He is the eldest of 5 siblings. He lives with his mother and 4 younger siblings. They all live with their maternal grandmother as well as with 2 uncles (one just got out of prison) and 3 other cousins. His home environment is not a very good one and his grandmother is the one taking care of all her grandchildren. His parents are not active participants in his education.

Manuel started to attend this school two and half years ago and had serious behaviour problems at his previous school. He was violent to his Yr 2 class teacher. Since he came to this school he made friends and settled down a lot, his behaviour is still challenging but better than his previous school. Academically Manuel needs some help and support otherwise he does not manage to finish in time. Manuel's attention span is very short and he also needs to move about a lot, in fact he constantly gets out of his place. Manuel seeks attention at all times both from the teacher as well as his peers. He has a tendency to call names when he fights with his peers and also uses foul language, even with his teachers. Manuel has difficulties in the classroom and is frequently sent to the office. He is at times defiant and oppositional.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Manuel really enjoys arts and crafts, he is also very creative and enjoys extra curricular activities such as plasticine, cooking etc. He needs to work on his literacy skills and needs to read more both in English and Maltese to improve his fluency. Manuel likes it when he is given responsibilities and likes to run errands for his teachers.

Manuel's Observation

Manuel sits at the back of the classroom and an LSA was assisting him today, since her pupil was absent. I observed a Mathematics lesson and at the beginning of the lesson Manuel seemed eager to participate and learn. I made use of the ABC, Figure 4.1

Manuel's ABC

Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
The teacher explained the class work. Manuel was showing her his work and asking a lot of questions. The teacher did not answer all his questions and gave a quick look at his work.	Manuel turned to the LSA sitting next to him and hit her in the face and smiled.	**C1:** The teacher called his name and told him off and called him to correct and look at his work. **C2:** The LSA got really angry **C3:** His peers were looking at him and some were even smiling.
The teacher then started to correct the children's class work.	Manuel went back to his place and next to the LSA and talked rudely to her and started to play with her hair and tease her.	**C1:** The LSA was very angry and shouted at Manuel who laughed at her and joked more. **C2:** Teacher called Manuel 3 times for him to go next to her to correct more work.

Hypothesis (based on the assumption that ABCs showed) Manuel wants attention form his teacher.

Manuel's Total difficulties score is 23. He got the maximum points in hyperactivity and also scored very high (9) at having conduct problems. On the other hand Manuel does not seem to have many problems with his peers and does not exhibit much emotional symptoms. However, Manuels prosocial scale is low and he only scored 1.

Appendix 2

May

May is a 9 year old girl and lives with her mother and brother. She is the youngest of the two siblings. May's father was killed when she was still very young. May has a very good relationship with her mother who is also very interested in her child's education. In class May does not behave very well and has a tendency to answer her teacher back. She misbehaves with some teachers more than others. May had a problem with absenteeism and this had a negative effect on her academic achievement. She also finds it difficult to follow directions and to concentrate on tasks assigned.

Strengths and Weaknesses

May is a very sweet girl and appreciates when you help her and give her the support needed. She enjoys playing with her peers and loves company. May's attention span is very short and she tends to daydream in class or get very fidgety. May also likes to talk a lot even during lessons. May is a fluent reader both in English and Maltese and is improving her literacy skills.

May's ABC

Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
The teacher was explaining the topic Verbs.	May sat quietly during the lesson, she was attentive at times but at times she seemed lost. Suddenly May started to talk about what she did the day before and with	C1: The teacher told May that she can talk about these things during the break and she encouraged her to keep the good work and concentrate on the lesson

	what she was playing.	and on her work.
		C2: When the teacher pointed May's good work and encouraged her to continue she was very pleased and concentrated on her work.
The children were working out their class work.	May mixed up things and got her exercise wrong. The teacher was angry with May.	**C1:** May found it difficult to concentrate after the teacher told her off. She then sat quietly.

Hypothesis (based on the assumption that ABCs showed); May is pleased when pointed out for her good work but needs support during writing activities.

May's strengths and difficulties questionnaire clearly indicates that her main difficulty is hyperactivity. She also scored high on conduct problems. May does not seem to have peer problems and also scored low on emotional symptoms. In the prosocial scale May scored 6. May's overall score was 18.

Appendix 3

Carl

Carl is a 9 year old only child. He lives with his mother, but his father visits them frequently since he lives abroad. Carl's behaviour is not always good in class. He is rarely attentive during lessons and rarely finishes his tasks on time. During writing activities he is rather disruptive and very fidgety. In class he likes to make his peers laugh. Carl likes to take part in fights and in forming gangs and during recess he is frequently involved in fights.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Carl really enjoys working on the computer and is very computer literate. He learns through hands on experience and through the use of visuals. He is very practical and very mechanical. Carl's attention span is very short and during lessons he finds it difficult to concentrate. He frequently misbehaves during reading lessons and during writing activities. He is also very good at drawing and is very sociable. Carl needs to work on his literacy skills and on concentrating during writing tasks.

Carl's ABC

Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
The children along with their teacher went to the ground for recess.	Carl was playing with his peers. Then he started to fight with another boy and was forming gangs. He was teasing the other girl and his peers copied his action.	**C1:** Carl got his peers' attention and they even copied his actions which made her feel better

C2: The teacher told the children off. |

Hypothesis (based on the assumption that ABCs showed); Carl is seeking for his peers' attention.

Carl surely does not indicate emotional symptoms. The highest score Carl got was in his hyperactivity followed by conduct problems. His total difficulties score is 15. On the other hand Carl did not score much on the Prosocial score either and got a 4.

Appendix 4

Marisa

Marisa is a 10 year old girl who lives with her father and his partner, but stays over with her mother over the weekend. Marisa used to attend this school when she was young but then moved to another town and attended another school. Her parents never came to the school and are not very participative in their child's education. She came back to this school 2 years ago. Her behaviour is very challenging and she is violent at times and uses foul language. Marisa has a part-time LSA who supports her academically. Marisa is frequently at the head's office because of her acting out behaviour. She is defiant at times and also leaves the classroom herself.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Marisa needs to work on her communication skills and needs to work on her social skills. Marisa sometimes finds it difficult to socialize with her peers and at times is violent towards her them. Marisa needs to work on her academic achievement especially her literacy. At times she has tantrums and her class teacher tells her to leave the classroom frequently.

Marisa's ABC

Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
The teacher started a reading lesson and the class got out their reading books and the teacher started to read. The children then read	Marisa opened her book and was following at first. After about 10 min she started to look around. When her peers looked at her she was	**C1:** Marisa's peers were smiling and looking at her and were distracted. **C2:** The teacher told Marisa off and sent her

| individually in turns. | making funny faces and making funny noises. | out of class. |
| | | **C3:** Marisa did not read individually. |

Hypothesis (based on the assumption that ABCs showed); Marisa is bored during the reading lesson and prefers to be sent out of class, rather than read to class.

Marisa's Total difficulties score resulted to be 24. She clearly has conduct problems and hyperactivity since she scored high. Marisa also scored at having some emotional problems and also scored low on her prosocial scale since she just got 3.

Appendix 5

Robert

Robert is a 9 year old boy who lives with his maternal grandmother. He has 4 other half siblings, 3 from his maternal side and 1 from his paternal side. Robert's home environment is not a very healthy one and he is sometimes confused of this situation. Robert has a very good relationship with his father who picks him up from school on a daily basis. He even spends weekends at his father's house. Robert with his grandmother visits his mother regularly who lives with her husband and Robert's 3 other siblings. His parents are not active participants in his education.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Robert is very good in English conversation and reading. He loves animals and is very responsible. He is a fluent reader and his favourite subject is Maths and he is good at it. Robert needs to work on his self-esteem and confidence. He loves to get his peers' attention and he needs to feel belonged. Academically Robert is improving and he also likes to give a hand to his peers. In the past Robert used to have some tantrums but they have reduced a lot. Robert is a very sensitive child and cries easily.

Robert's ABC

Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
The children got their cushions and sat down on the carpet for circle time (our focus group)	The children sat down on the carpet and got the puppet. Robert sat down on the carpet and eagerly waited for his turn	C1: Robert was praised for settling down quietly.

The children took turns to say how the puppet felt today and why.	Robert was eager to say how Duffy he was feeling. He stated that the puppet is very happy that he is at school today and that he enjoys coming to school.	**C2:** Robert's peers listened.
The children then took part in a discussion about their feelings. In turns they stated how they felt and why.	Robert became a little fidgety and was moving a lot until he waited for his turn. He stated that he was feeling happy since he is with his friends and that he likes circle time.	**C1:** Robert was pleased to share his feelings and was very pleased that his friends were listening to him and giving feedback.

Hypothesis (based on the assumption that ABCs showed), Robert likes to be listened to, especially by his peers. He longs for the sense of belonging, and also enjoys circle time.

Robert's result clearly indicates that his main symptoms are emotional. He did not score high on conduct problems but seems to have some hyperactivity and peer problems. On the other hand Robert did very well in the Prosocial scale and scored 10. His Total difficulties score was 23.

Appendix 6

Noel

Noel is a 9 year old boy. Noel started to live with his mother these past 3 years. He has 2 older siblings which are both married. He started to attend this school 3 years ago since he previously was in YPU and lived in an institution for 6 years. The child guidance unit concluded that Noel has ADHD and Conduct disorder and has a one to one LSA. Noel clashes a lot with his current LSA and when she shouts at him he misbehaves even more and is frequently sent to the head or assistant heads, and he spends hours at their office talking and drawing.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Noel is a very helpful child and likes it when he is given responsibilities and errands to run. He is also very active and very good at sports. He is also very protective of his peers especially with Mark and Robert. When he is involved in fights Noel is very violent. His social skills have improved a lot and this year he also improved his reading a lot. Because of his condition Noel finds it very difficult to concentrate on his tasks, especially writing tasks. He needs to move about frequently and needs his own space. Noel is also very good at drawing and behaves well during Art lessons.

Noel's ABC

Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
The class were during an English lesson. Noel's LSA was sitting next to him during the lesson.	Noel became very fidgety and started to make noises with his pencil.	C1: The LSA and teacher stopped Noel and told him off.

The children started to do their class work.	Noel got out of place and his LSA, started to get angry at him. Noel started to laugh and to tease his LSA.	**C1:** The LSA got very angry and Noel was please to see her get angry. **C2:** The class teacher also got angry and stopped the lesson. **C3:** Noel and the LSA left the class since they were too disruptive.

Hypothesis (based on the assumption that ABCs showed); Noel needs to move around and has a short attention span. He feels worse when his LSA shouts at him.

I was not amazed that Noel scored so high on Conduct Problems and Hyperactivity scale since he has to face these challenges due to his behaviour conditions (ADHD & Conduct Disorder). Noel's Total Difficulties score is 22. On the other hand Noel does not exhibit emotional symptoms and scored low on peer problems. On his prosocial scale Noel scored 6.

Appendix 7

Mark

Mark is an 8 year old boy and is the youngest of 4 siblings. He lives with his parents and siblings. His oldest brother is disabled and his parents need to dedicate a lot of their time to his brother. His home environment is a little deprived and at times Mark comes to school dirty and smelly. When this happens Mark is shy to go near his peers. Mark rarely produces in class and this is impacting his self-esteem and confidence.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Mark is a withdrawn student. He never spoke when he was in Year 1 and 2 and started to speak in Yr 3. He has improved especially since he built a good relationship with Manuel and Noel. He is still very quiet and one rarely hears his voice in class. Mark needs to build his self-esteem and confidence as well as his speaking skills. Academically Mark is a very slow learner and needs support at all times. He struggles in literacy and still does not read fluently. Mark also finds it difficult to finish his work on time and also finds it difficult to concentrate. He daydreams frequently at school.

Mark's ABC

Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
The class were during an English lesson. Mark was paying attention the first 5 minutes.	Mark started to daydream and lost his interest in the lesson.	**C1:** Mark daydreamed and did not follow the lesson

Hypothesis (based on the assumption that ABCs showed); Mark finds it difficult to keep up in class. He needs time to complete his tasks and support in his work..

Mark is withdrawn in class and this strengths and difficulties questionnaire clearly indicated that he is exhibiting emotional symptoms. He does not has conduct problems but he has some peer problems and hyperactivity. In the prosocial scale Mark scored 5. His Total difficulties score was 22.

Appendix 8

Jean Paul

Jean Paul is a 9 year old boy. He is Manuel's cousin and they all live in the same household. Jean Paul lives with his father, grandmother, uncle, aunt, his 2 older sisters and his 4 cousins. Jean Paul also loves his grandmother a lot and she took care of him and his siblings when his parents were both in jail. Jean Paul started to visit his mother on weekends since last year (since she got out of jail). His parents are not active participants in their children's education.

Jean Paul's behaviour in class has deteriorated these last two years. This year he had various power struggles with his class teacher and was frequently at the Head's office. These past two years he also had some tantrums and needed some time to calm down.

Strenghts and Weaknesses

Jean Paul is a very sweet and caring boy. He likes it when he is given responsibilities. He is a fluent reader and not doing bad academically. In class he needs to work on his behaviour and needs to improve his attention span, since he is finding it harder to pay attention and concentrate in class. Jean Paul is also very good in sports and likes to run errands.

Jean Paul's ABC

Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
Today the class teacher was absent and an LSA and another teacher were taking care of the class.	Jean Claude ignored the instructions given and continued to work on the computer. The teacher	C1: The teacher and LSA got very angry and the teacher went to administration who took

The children were working on the computers when the teacher who replaced their class teacher told them to come back to their places.	and LSA told him off and told him to go to his place. Jean Paul then stood up on the chair and started to make fun of the teacher.	Jean Paul to the office. **C2:** His peers were laughing and also got out of control. Some were also imitating him.

Hypothesis (based on the assumption that ABCs showed); Jean Paul seeks for his peers' attention and likes it when he makes them laugh. He might have felt threatened to have a teacher he did not know in class.

Jean Paul's Total difficulties score is 14. Looking at the results Jean Paul needs to work on his hyperactivity and on his conduct. He does not have peer problems whatsoever. Jean Paul scored low on the emotional symptoms and scored well on the prosocial scale and scored 9.

Appendix 9

Roderick

Roderick is a 9 year old boy who lives with his mother, brother, half sister and his mother's partner. His father is currently in jail and Roderick's home environment is not a very healthy one. He is very protective of his younger sister and comes to school sad when she tells him that her dad is not his dad and that he is taking him away from her. His parents are not very participative in Roderick's schooling experience. Roderick is often in fights especially during recess, and at times he is quite violent.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Roderick is a responsible and sensitive boy. He has good relationships with his peers. Roderick had an absenteeism problem in the past and this affected his academic achievement. In class Roderick does not behave much. He answers back to his teacher a lot and is very disruptive during lessons.

Roderick's ABC.

Antecedents	Behaviour	Consequences
The teacher started to explain the lesson	Roderick sat down and listened. At times he was a little fidgety and started to touch his things.	**C1:** The teacher encouraged Roderick to remain attentive and pointed out his good work for making an effort and paying attention **C2:** Roderick put down his pencil and paid

		attention.
The teacher then explained what the children had to work out as class work. The children had to work out an exercise on their copybooks individually.	Roderick became very fidgety and talkative. He was constantly looking at his satchel and played with his things.	**C1:** Roderick did not focus on his task. **C2:** Teacher was angry that his task was not finished.

Hypothesis (based on the assumption that ABCs showed); Roderick dreads writing activities and finds it difficult to focus on a task.

Roderick's Total difficulties score was 18. He scored the highest in hyperactivity followed by conduct problems. Roderick also seems to be facing some emotional difficulties. Roderick also does not seem to have peer problems and scored well in the prosocial scale since he got 7.

Appendix 10

Interview questions with the children

- How do you feel today?
- How do you feel at school?
- What subject do you like at school?
- What do you like doing at school?
- What do you dislike doing at school?
- Do you like your peers?
- What do you like about your friends?
- What do you like doing with your friends?
- Do you feel that your teacher is your friend?
- What do you like about your teacher?
- What would you change about your teacher?
- Do you ever make him/her angry?
- When does he/she get angry?
- What do you feel when he/she is angry?
- Does he/she ever make you angry?
- Why does he/she you angry?
- What do you do when you feel angry?
- Do you ever misbehave in class?
- Why do you feel you need to misbehave?
- What do you feel when you misbehave?
- What do you expect your teacher to do when you misbehave?
- Did you have a teacher you really liked?
- What makes you feel better?
- Do you misbehave at home?

- Why do you misbehave at home?

- What do you feel when you make your mother/father/guardian angry?

- Do you ever feel sad, angry or frustrated?

- Where do you feel so?

- Would you like school to finish earlier? Why?