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AN ANALYSIS OF THE BARRIERS TO INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIOURAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DIFFICULTIES (BESD) IN THE CONTEXTS OF GREECE AND ENGLAND

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Abstract. Children with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) are at high risk of experiencing exclusion in both England and Greece. However, this particular category of Special Educational Needs (SEN) has so far received relatively little academic or political attention in comparison to other SEN. This paper attempts to point out the barriers that may prevent the inclusion of children with BESD both in terms of the theoretical conceptualisation of the category itself and in terms of the policies and practices that England and Greece may implement. In order to achieve a further yet coherent picture of the current situation, this paper has identified three different types of factors that may negatively influence inclusion. Therefore, by discussing the possible ideological, structural, and practical challenges, the paper aims to highlight the crucial need for further theoretical insight that would be able to inform and promote the establishment of a more cohesive and efficient legislative framework for pupils with BESD in both countries.

Keywords: behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, England, Greece, inclusion, BESD

Introduction

Despite Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) being the third largest category of Special Educational Needs (SEN) in England[3)], considerable confusion and significant barriers to their inclusion in mainstream schools still remain. In 2012 – 2013 pupils with BESD in mainstream English schools were at least four times more likely to receive fixed-period exclusions than children with other SEN[20)]. The current educational system's approach to BESD reveals an inconsistency in both guaranteeing the right of inclusion (Visser & Stokes, 2003; Jull, 2008; Cooper, 2008) and providing a specialised and effective environment (Cooper, 2008). Accordingly, Jull (Jull, 2008: 13) aptly argues that BESD 'is perhaps the only SEN category that exposes a child to an increased risk of exclusion, simply as a function of the SEN in the first instance'. Very recently, the English government substituted the BESD category

for a broader term, 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties'[4)], in an attempt to better cater for the needs of the 169,110 pupils who were identified as having BESD in the country in 2015[3)]. Notwithstanding the general support that the new term has already gained (Tutt & Williams, 2015), the former term will be adopted throughout this paper not only in order to specifically examine BESD, but mostly for reasons of consistency with the existing literature.

Meanwhile in Greece, which has been caught in the eye of a socio-economical cyclone, the educational community is seriously worried that despite the relevant legislative reforms, the needs of children with SEN and/or disabilities (SEND) are not met yet and schools are far from adopting any inclusive policies (Zoniou- Sideri et al., 2006; Vlachou, 2006). In fact, the implementation of provisional policies related to BESD is relatively poor as proper screening, identification, planning, and implementation of relevant educational programs is quite limited (Papakyriakopoulos, 2011). A significant number of scholars have already pointed out the crucial need of reform in order to meet the needs of Greek students with BESD (Maniatis, 2010; Nikolaou, 2013; Papakyriakopoulos, 2011). Apart from the limited specialised provision for this particular group of students in Greece, there is also a significant lack of BESD-related data and research. Two fundamental problematic areas in the country appear to be mapping the needs of students with SEND and identification of BESD students.

Greece has not established a coherent database on children with SEND yet[16)], and there is still a lack of a national observatory for inclusion. As a result, there is no accurate picture on the number of children with BESD in Greece and the kind of provision they receive. The design and development of an electronic database for all children and young people aged 4-25 was supposed to be ready for educational use in 2015, but still remains under construction (Dikaiosinis, 2014). Official data was firstly published in 2004 and suggested that only 7.2 % of Greek students with SEN had received a BESD-relevant assessment and, therefore, had been offered special educational planning and provision (Panteliadou, 2004). This first scarce attempt of mapping SEN in Greece is now considered entirely out of date (Lampropoulou, Panteliadou & Markakis, 2005). Moreover, the total number of students with SEN in Greece in 2011-2012, i.e. 36,011 students (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012), turned out to have risen with more than 127% in comparison to the data from 2004 (i.e. 15,850 students) (Panteliadou, 2004).

Considering that students with delinquent or aggressive behaviour are at a high risk of dropping out of school (Lessard et al., 2007; Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Manoudaki, Tsalkanis & Yeorgoulas, 2005), the actual number of children with BESD can be even larger. Moreover, the Centres of Differential Diagnosis, Evaluation and Support ('KEDDY'), which are officially responsible for evaluating any student with SEND in Greece, cannot carry out the identification of students without their parents' consent (N. 3699/2008, 2008). Thus, many students suffering domestic violence or abuse, who according to Greek legislation might fall under the BESD category, could remain

unidentified. In addition, teachers, despite having the responsibility of reporting such cases, can only report cases they are informed of or they can ascertain, while the authorities can conduct a further investigation only with a court order[15]. Considering the Greek schools' lack of permanent specialised personnel (psychologists, social workers, nurses, etc.), the chances of identifying such cases can be dramatically limited.

Inclusion in Greece, as the expression of every child's entitlement to educational equality, remains an important ethical and political issue that needs to be further addressed (Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2006; Vlachou, 2006). Greece, as most of the European countries, has been bound to follow the principles of the Salamanca Statement[17]. However, inclusion has only recently been introduced in the educational agenda of Greece with the adoption of Law 2817/2000, which promoted the need for including children with SEND in mainstream schools (N. 2817/2000, 2000). According to the Greek legislation, the necessary arrangements for all pupils with SEND should include either appropriate support services for mainstream settings or high quality specialised provision for special schools[12]. However, it is noteworthy that inclusion refers to pupils' placement in the so-called 'inclusive classes', where special teaching is provided by special educators outside the main school programme[12]. In practice and according to the relevant Greek legislation, Law 3699/2008, there are three types of school arrangements offered to children with SEND: special schools, 'inclusive' classes, and 'parallel support' from a SEN trained teacher within a mainstream classroom (N. 3699/2008, 2008). As a large body of literature has argued, different or additional provision can expose children with SEND to the risk of being labelled and segregated, thus reinforcing inequalities and devaluation (Dyson, 2001; Ho, 2004).

This paper stresses the need for further investigation of both the theoretical (i.e. conceptualisations) and the political (i.e. policies and practices) perspectives of BESD in the contexts of England and Greece, towards the development of a just and effective environment for pupils with BESD, as well as for the school community as a whole. In the aim to identify the possible factors affecting the inclusion of this particular group of pupils, it attempts to highlight core constraints, indicating the current confusion and inconsistency when meeting the needs of pupils with BESD. Finally, it seeks to critically discuss current approaches, limitations and possibilities of current inclusive practices in both countries. By drawing attention to this significant area of education, this paper attempts to reveal the contradictions of current educational policies and practices in order to contribute to the elimination of educational inequalities.

Defining BESD

During the last three decades, there has been an extensive debate amongst educationalists regarding the definition of the SEN category of BESD. In relation to other SEN categories whose definitions are generally considered reliable and

universal, the BESD definition still remains vague and problematic (Daniels et al., 1998; Cole, 2004; Cole & Visser 2005; Poulou, 2005; Thomas, 2005; Cooper, 2008; Jull, 2008; Goodman & Burton, 2010). One of the main reasons for this lack of clarity and consensus may be that BESD is defined by a complex interplay of social, psychological and bio-psychosocial factors (Cooper, 2006). Notwithstanding the wide array of interpretations of BESD existing across different disciplines and perspectives and in order to add some clarity, it would be preferable to refer to the official definition adopted in the legislation of the English Government, as this definition has had, undeniably, the greatest impact on educational practice.

In the first Code of Practice of 1994, the term 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' is used to refer to difficulties that:

'[...] range from social maladaptation to abnormal emotional stresses. They are persistent (if not necessarily permanent) and constitute learning difficulties. They may be multiple and may manifest themselves in many different forms and severities. They may become apparent through withdrawn, passive, aggressive or self-injurious tendencies'[1].

It is noteworthy that this definition officially recognises a strong relationship between BESD and learning difficulties, an important linkage both for the assessment, the design and application of interventions (Mowat, 2009). The 2001 Code of Practice provides an extensive, but descriptive definition including terms such as 'withdrawn', 'isolated', 'disruptive', 'disturbing', 'hyperactive', 'lacking concentration' and presenting 'immature social skills' and 'challenging behaviour'[1]. The vast variety of behaviours could be characterised as either 'internalising' or 'externalising' (Cooper, 2008; Jull, 2008). Externalising behaviours, including the so-called 'disruptive' or 'challenging' behaviours, are generally considered unaccepted in mainstream schools and usually provoke punitive responses (James & Freeze, 2006). Cooper notices that BESD 'is [...] considered legitimate to apply legally sanctioned punishment and exclusionary practices' (Cooper, 2008: 14). Most importantly, poor understanding of what constitutes BESD could lead to the adoption of negative attitudes by practitioners towards this particular group of children (Armstrong & Hallet, 2012; Mowat, 2009).

Finally, the 2015 Code of Practice introduced the new term, 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health' (SEMH), in order to replace the BESD term. The Code defines SEMH difficulties as 'an overarching term for children who demonstrate difficulties with emotional regulation and/or social interaction and/or are experiencing mental health problems'[4]. However, as it is much wider than BESD, it also includes: 'problems of mood (anxiety or depression), problems of conduct (oppositional problems and more severe conduct problems including aggression), self-harming, substance abuse, eating disorders or physical symptoms that are medically unexplained […] attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactive disorder or attachment disorder' (ibid.). The 2015 Code further declares that the expression of the SEMH difficulties may include isolation, withdrawal, and challenging, disruptive, or disturbing behaviour.

In Greece, it was the 3699/2008 legislation on Special Education that addressed a relevant category of needs for the first time, and that entitled them as special educational needs (N. 3699/2008, 2008). However, the definition that is given to this particular category of needs is even more complex and unclear than in the English legislation. In addition to social and emotional difficulties the student may face complex cognitive difficulties or manifest 'illegal behaviour'. The definition also specifies that the main factors causing the 'illegal behaviour' may be abuse, neglect, abandonment and domestic violence. In fact, the following brief definition is the only reference to the specific category that can be related to BESD:

'Students with complex cognitive, emotional and social difficulties or illegal behaviour due to abuse, neglect and abandonment or domestic violence are included among students with special educational needs.' (N. 3699/2008, 2008).

Since there has not been any more recent Greek legislation concerning the definition and categorisation of SEND, the category as referred above is the only official one.

Ideological factors impinging on inclusion

The uncertainty surrounding the placement of pupils with BESD reflects the ideological/theoretical confusion underpinning the constraints of policies and inconsistent practices. There is no firm and efficient framework concerning BESD. Keil et al. recognise that '[i]ndeed the label of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties is probably one of the most approximate and catch-all labels used to describe special educational needs' (Keil et al., 2006: 170). Relevant research has shown that differing professional and personal values and attitudes (Daniels et al., 1998) can determine which pupils fall under any given definition, thus producing a fluctuating working definition and differing practical application of the terms (Goodman & Burton, 2010). That granted, and considering that the Circular 9/94 specifically excludes pupils who are perceived as 'simply disruptive or naughty' from the definition2), the rights of these pupils are placed at a considerable risk. It is the fundamental ideological issues regarding their right to an equal education that still remain undefined, thus allowing the existence of variant or even contrasting and unequal practices (James & Freeze, 2006; Cooper, 2008).

Since the conceptualisation of what falls under the category of BESD has an enormous impact on how legislation is translated into practice, it is clear that an attempt to reframe the category might aim to set the grounds for a neutral and assumptions-free depiction of BESD and, thus, lead to the design and application of effective practices. Thomas & Loxley suggest that the conceptualisation of BESD is the root cause and conclude that the current educational agenda is 'of deficit, deviance and disadvantage in the child' (Thomas & Loxley, 2007: 49), as there is still a 'dispositional' mindset concerning pupils perceived as having BESD. On the one hand, there is still a medical/individual interpretation of the term BESD that emphasises on the individual 'deficit' of the child and targets on

the normalisation and treatment of any 'disrupting' behaviour. On the other hand, there are conceptualisations of BESD recognising the social causes and focusing on the adjustments that the schooling systems should achieve in order to provide an inclusive environment. In avoiding this duality, interactionist accounts of BESD include an interplay examination of individual, family, social, environmental and broader structural factors (Mowat, 2009). Therefore, confusion appears to be inherent to the term (Poulou, 2005), as long as the term is the product of a complex interaction among various people, contexts, as well as individual and social factors.

In order to tackle the negative attitudes caused by the label itself and the reference to 'who-knows-what' Behaviour, the English government has used various arrangements of the 'E', 'B', 'S' and 'D', with the term 'BESD' remaining the most favoured. The social element was less acknowledged, and finally a more helpful term that totally replaced BESD, has been adopted. The latest SEND Code of Practice of 2015 has introduced the term 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health' (SEMH) difficulties. Behaviour is finally out of the picture considering it to be a result of a social or emotional difficulty, and not a causal factor of it. The new extended term also includes 'Mental Health', which may also cause 'problematic' behaviours. As Cole and Visser (2005) highlighted there was an overlap between BESD and mental health difficulties, whereas children with Attention Deficit Hypeactivity Disorders (ADHD) can often manifest BESD traits. However, there are still concerns that the 'Mental Health' element may be unhelpful as it includes a wide range of difficulties such as anxiety, depression, ADHD, eating disorders, schizophrenia, etc. (Tutt & Williams, 2015). Accordingly, the 2015 Code of Practice points out that SEMH cannot be a direct replacement of BESD[4)].

In Greece, to the author's knowledge no relevant legislative alteration or replacement has been yet made and no specific clarification or 'label' has been yet offered apart from the aforementioned descriptive definition of the 2008 Law (N. 3699/2008, 2008). Due to the lack of an official term, there has been a lack of consistency within literature as some researchers use a direct translation of the English term 'BESD' (Poulou, 2000), others refer to BESD as 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' (Doni, 2015) and several others use the term 'behavioural problems' (Chatzichristou & Hopf, 1991; Kourkoutas, 2011). One may consider this refraining from labelling as an intended inclusive policy; however, it only reveals the discrediting attitude of the Greek state to children with BESD and the lack of any noteworthy specialised provision.

Structural factors impinging on inclusion

As systemic accounts acknowledge, there are several interacting factors, including social structures that possibly relate to BESD and there is not necessarily a single cause responsible for it. Amongst other structural factors affecting inclusion, poverty is undeniably linked with the assessment or/and the development of BESD. According to the official statistical data of the English government, children with BESD are more likely

to receive school meals, a reliable indicator that children living in poverty are at a higher risk of being perceived as having BESD (Parsons, 2005; Keil et al., 2006). Moreover, considering pupils with BESD tend to come from economically disadvantaged families, their parents might find it difficult to exercise pressure demanding better services and provision for their children (in comparison, for example, to parents of pupils with autism or dyslexia) and that might indirectly lead to exclusionary practices (Farrell, 1994). More significantly, there lays the risk of perpetuating the prejudice that all children under poverty have problematic behaviours, thus, determining the teachers' stances and expectations, which accordingly foster such behaviours as a self-fulfilling prophecy (ibid.).

In Greece, the numbers shock: 28.8% of children are at risk of poverty[18]. This continuously increasing situation gives rise to violent behaviour within the family, while it threatens children's access to public goods, such as education, health services, and social protection[15]. In Greece, children with SEND and especially children whose parents are unable to look after them are seriously threatened with marginalisation[16]. The lack of epidemiological data on the prevalence of children with BESD in Greek schools (Kourkoutas, 2011) undermines the evaluation of the current situation and the development of evidence-based policies. Furthermore, a complete and documented evaluation of the socio-economic situation in the country is a prerequisite for the establishment of strategies to address the needs of the growing group of those suffering from the recent economic crisis.

Despite the scarce research on ethnicity and BESD, there is scientific evidence associating minority students with school disaffection and exclusions in England. Cooper, Smith and Upton (1991) highlighted the over-representation of black students in specialist settings for pupils with BESD. Relevant government statistics clearly showed the substantial and perhaps increasing over-representation of black pupils amongst excluded children[13]. Most recently, Lindsay, Pather and Strand (2006) conducted the first national study confirming the concerns for a disproportionate representation of children from minority ethnic groups in special education. In accordance to the latter research, Dyson and Gallannaugh (2008) reveal the existence of widespread and pervasive inequalities in education through the disproportional representation of specific ethnic groups. However, there is still a lack of firm and in-depth research, in the sense that ethnicity constitutes a complex notion capturing variable features (such as language, religion, culturally specific behaviours) and there are obvious difficulties in 'handling' such data. Recent literature, yet, reveals that children from minority groups might be vulnerable in experiencing disadvantaged circumstances, disengaged from the feeling of social belonging, isolated and, in some cases, excluded (Jull, 2008; Parsons, 2005).

In spite of the fact that there has been no research conducted concerning the possible linkage between BESD and ethnicity in Greece, there is some evidence proving deviant or illegal behaviour of students from ethnic or language minorities within Greek schools. Although in 2008 a Greek study suggested that teachers find no significant difference

in behaviours between students from the minority ethnic groups and the general Greek student population, the current situation is far different nowadays. The recent rise in migration numbers alongside with the socio-economic crisis has created an upsurge of nationalism and xenophobia. The increase of unemployment numbers and poverty, and the failure of the Greek state to provide proper social welfare services, has led to discrimination against all immigrants regardless their social or economic status (Tressou & Mitakidou, 2007). Most of teachers in the former research, however, recognised that any deviant behaviour the immigrant students may adopt is primarily linked to their parents' social and educational status, and, secondly, to their cultural capital (Goudiras et al., 2008). Cultural capital refers to the necessary attitudes and knowledge needed in order to succeed in the current educational system (Bourdieu, 1986). Findings from a more recent Greek study indicate that ethno-cultural differentiation and deviant behaviour are not necessarily connected, and ethnicity should be examined along with other factors, such as poor school performance, lack of parental monitoring, and language deficiency (Nikolaou & Christophi, 2014). The majority of Greek teachers correlate school underperformance of immigrant students with behavioural difficulties (Evangelou & Paleologou, 2007). Accordingly, it is generally acknowledged that it is the level of students' engagement and participation in the classroom that shapes the educational experience and may jeopardize inclusion. Thus a child feeling culturally and socially alienated may be just in need of a more active role in the educational process (Evangelou, 2007).

When examining issues of disproportionality within the category of children with BESD, it is obvious that the number of boys assessed is approximately three times over the number of girls (Daniels et al., 1998; Cooper, 2006). Cole et al. (1999) argued that there were ten to twelve times more boys than girls attending English BESD schools. However, girls more commonly experience internalised difficulties that attract less teacher attention and challenge school communities less (Cooper, 2006). If this is the case, it may be suggested that educational policies mainly target on managing challenging behaviours (such as those expressed by boys) rather than attempting to assess every child's unique need and provide holistically for them (Head, 2005; Parsons, 2005; Mowat, 2009). Notwithstanding the concerns expressed by scholars, there has been yet little endeavour to define the reasons, or provide gender-specific educational approaches in the last decade.

Accordingly, Greek boys are more likely to be involved in violent incidents within schools (Psalti, 2012) and demonstrate a higher rate of behavioural difficulties (Doni, 2015; Papakyriakopoulos, 2011). A relevant Greek study reveals that problematic behaviour is more than two times more likely to be displayed by primary school boys than by girls (Papakyriakopoulos, 2011). This data is in line with the cultural stereotype that boys' behaviour is by far worse than girls', since boys' maladjusted externalised behaviour is more easily observed and more likely to be managed by school authorities. It can be more easily labelled as 'challenging' or 'aggressive' (Chantzi & Papadatos, 1990). However, as already indicated, girls can be involved in equally harmful internalising behaviours,

such as depression or anxiety, which could cause extensive difficulties to them and their families (Cooper, 2006). Their behaviour can be as challenging but in a less disruptive and noticeable way, e.g. in primary schools they may use name-calling, exclusion of members from a friends' group, or spreading of rumours (Papakyriakopoulos, 2011).

Practical factors impinging on inclusion

The majority of Greek literature has acknowledged the existence of poor academic skills of children with BESD (Chantzi & Papadatos, 1990; Chatzichristou & Hopf, 1991; Poulou, 2000; Anagnostopoulos & Sini, 2005; Poulou, 2005; Kourkoutas, 2011). Considering the lack of BESD-specific data in Greece, a nationwide research of 2004 investigated the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency in Lyceum schools of Athens and concluded that the majority of students involved in serious incidents display low school performance[21]. The findings also suggested that the lower the academic performance, the worse their established interpersonal relationships, the lower their self-control, and the higher the probability for students to exhibit antisocial behaviour (ibid.). Two former Greek studies have also related low academic performance with 'problematic' behaviour (Chantzi & Papadatos, 1990; Chatzichristou & Hopf, 1991), but as both examine the teachers' perspective on students' behaviour, there remains the methodological question of whether their views are biased. If that is the case and teachers tend to expect low academic performance from students who simply 'do not behave', then low performance may be a result of the teachers' inability to respond properly to their needs. Furthermore, the students' academic failure increases the likelihood of them creating a negative image of self (Anagnostopoulos & Sini, 2005; Kourkoutas, 2011), feeling rejected by teachers and peers, losing their interest in school and ending up in association with 'delinquent' fellow students in order to feel accepted and included. Despite that Greek teachers may have generally good intentions to assist students with BESD (Poulou, 2000), the stereotype that 'a good student is an obedient student' still exists and perpetuates crucial inequalities within classroom.

In England, the very recent report of the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce (2015) declares a national commitment to 'encouraging schools to continue to develop whole school approaches to promoting mental health and wellbeing' (p. 19). The design of school-based social and emotional programmes commits to help young people also acquire the skills they need to make good academic progress (Goodman et al., 2015; Durlak et al., 2014). Thus, the school, as a unit, plays the most important role in developing an engaged relationship between the pupil and the school community, and in reinforcing academic achievements. However, more needs to be done in that direction, since there is still strong evidence that exclusions from schools and academic performance are, in many cases, significantly interrelated[7]. Literature suggests that, in order to improve behaviour and eliminate exclusions, the development of strategies that could offer access to a flexible curriculum based on the pupils'

knowledge, interests and potential skills is necessary (Cooper, 2008; Mowat, 2009). A likely management of behaviour within the classroom might include considering the needs of children with BESD and adjusting the curriculum in a way that it captures the attention of every pupil, reinforces the development of positive self-images and, as a consequence, minimises disruptive behaviour for the benefit of all pupils (Cooper, 2008). As Hallam pinpoints 'the reduction of exclusions is said to depend on schools developing inclusive approaches to the curriculum and teaching, while also developing strategies for working with other agencies to support pupils who are at risk'.

The significant role of a proper multi-agency collaboration is highly dependent on the just economic design of the provision for SEN. While the English Government has already demonstrated that adequate resources should be provided for the effective provision for SEN6), there are many questions highlighting the lack of bound criteria for the just funding of each SEN (Terzi, 2008). This, for example, might mean that even if there were two pupils having the same SEN, it is almost impossible that they receive the same amount of resources and, thus, the same quality of provision. Moreover, researchers have expressed great concerns for the consequences of the inadequate multi-disciplinary provision (i.e. the availability of educational psychologists, or teaching assistants) due to low funding (Mowat, 2009; Goodman & Burton, 2010). Overall, a better design of resources is a prerequisite, since '[c]hanges in policies and priorities cannot be effective unless adequate resource requirements are met'[17].

In Greece, SEN funding is considered decentralised[12], since decisions on resources are devolved from the government to the local level of prefectures (larger than municipalities). The Greek state allocates funds to each prefecture regardless of the number of children with SEN and each prefecture's Council of Education decides on how the funds should be used. In practice, this means that funding is not linked to pupils and their individual needs, but to the setting in which they are educated. Consequently a premium is put on segregation and inclusion is relatively discouraged (ibid.). Greece places the majority of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools (Didaskalou & Vlachou, 2004), but rigid centrally-controlled curriculum means little differentiation (Zoniou-Sideri et al, 2006), yet very loose control at classroom level (Riddell, et al., 2006). Furthermore, the lack of permanent specialised personnel in mainstream schools, i.e. SEN educators, SENCOs, psychologists or any other therapists, testifies to the fact that financing SEN education in Greece is very limited (Lampropoulou, Panteliadou & Markakis, 2005). Apart from the inappropriate and outdated school buildings, there is also limited guidance or availability of ICT or other specialist resources12) and, consequently, it is on the teachers' will (and sometimes at their own expense) to implement any specialised programme. Therefore, provision for children with SEN is regarded inadequate with respect to the small proportion of children with SEN that actually receive

any additional support[10] (Didaskalou & Vlachou, 2004). Rather, the emphasis is on normalisation, so that the pupils with SEN (Didaskalou & Vlachou, 2004), and especially those confronting behavioural difficulties, are encouraged to conform to the behaviour and expectations of the majority.

Discussing inclusion for children with BESD

Despite the strain towards including pupils with BESD in mainstream settings, some authors acknowledge the negative impact that their disruptive, aggressive or violent behaviour can have on the learning environment given the high pressure for the teacher and the increased risks for the peers' group (Jull, 2008; Goodman & Burton, 2010). Based on the writer's teaching experience, challenging behaviours might disturb the learning of others, affect the school's ethos, make excessive demands upon teachers and staff, or even pose the pupil or classmates in physical danger. The Education Act of 2001 demonstrates the right of children with SEN to be included in mainstream schools as long as it is compatible with 'the provision of efficient education for other children'[6]. In Greece disciplinary sanctions and exclusion are usually suggested as an effective and instant response to a pupil's poor behaviour with the main argument that they have disrupted the learning environment in their classroom (Kourkoutas, 2011). Therefore, the conflict between the right of pupils with BESD to be included in mainstream schools and the right of other children to an effective education seems to be in favour of the latter (Visser & Stokes, 2003).

Despite the English legislation's requirement that exclusion should be only used as a last resort, Ofsted (2003) reported an increasing number of pupils in BESD schools and in the number of special schools providing for such pupils. The SEN Programme of Action of 1998 was cautious, stressing that the government's approach to providing for pupils with SEN (including those with BESD) must 'be practical, not dogmatic' putting the needs of individual children first5). Segregated special provision is considered to derive from the need for an individualised and, therefore, highly controlled environment targeting on the application of specialised interventions, which are difficult to apply in a mainstream setting. There are, also, considerable practical constraints for accomplishing an effective inclusive reality, such as the unsatisfactory multi-agency system, the increasing cost of individualised provision, the inadequate training of teachers (Jull, 2008; Goodman & Burton, 2010) and the lack of firm and clear official guidance for effective practices in mainstream schools (Evans et al., 2004). Moreover, on occasion, planned transfers might not only be in the school's interest, but could also constitute a parental and individual choice (Visser & Stokes, 2003). In the light of all above, it seems that BESD-special schools and segregating forms of provision will continue to exist.

Making full inclusion a working reality might still seem to be utopian, yet the commitment to treat all pupils, including those experiencing BESD, in a just and equal way is, and possibly will continue to be, high on the educational agenda

of the English Government (Keil et al., 2006). Greece, on the other hand, needs stronger and more decisive inclusive reforms that would actually not remain on paper as it seems to be happening (Zoniou- Sideri, 2006). Thus, a louder 'political voice' that will stand up for educational and social justice is required (ibid.). Notwithstanding the obstacles faced when schools struggle not only to manage, but also to prevent disruptive behaviours, there is considerable evidence of working whole-school approaches that seem to be committed to inclusive principles and adopt a positive school ethos (Evans et al., 2004). A school that considers holistically the needs of each pupil might ensure an appropriate inclusive environment by avoiding punitive and intolerant practices (Parsons, 2005; Cooper, 2008; James & Freeze, 2006), creating emotional safety and positive teacher-pupils relationships (Goodman & Burton, 2003), implementing alternative and flexible curricula and working with agencies to support those at risk (Daniels, 2006; Cooper, 2008).

With respect to the vast variety of promising approaches targeting 'undesirable' behaviours, teaching strategies that are based on behavioural, cognitive-behavioural, eco-systemic and psychodynamic principles, such as the 'Applied Behaviour Analysis' (Grey et al., 2005), the 'Cognitive Behaviour Therapy' (Pugh, 2010), the 'Behaviour Improvement Programme' and the 'Behaviour and Education Support Teams' (Hallam, 2007) appear to be particularly effective. Teachers who obtain a responsible and positive stance based on consideration of equal opportunities for all pupils could contribute not only to a rather successful educational outcome, but also to a significant social outcome triggering pupils' motivation to actively participate in social life (Goodman & Burton, 2010). Notwithstanding the wide variety of insightful interventions that could be applied in an inclusive classroom, further formulation of policies is needed in order to set the grounds for the required changes in educational practice.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that in the last three decades England has largely encouraged and has passionately promoted the ideal of inclusion, in cases of pupils with BESD and especially those who express externalising difficulties (i.e. the 'disruptive' or 'challenging' behaviour) the policies appear to offer little support of their right to inclusive education (Visser & Stokes, 2003; James & Freeze, 2006). While the legal framework in the country expects teachers to cater effectively for a wide diversity of SEN within the same classroom, according to teachers' accounts, the complexity and the variability of needs is seen as the biggest obstacle affecting the learning environment (Mowat, 2009; Goodman & Burton, 2010). Based on this significant contradiction, this paper has discussed the impact of structural, practical and ideological factors on inclusion, and stressed the need for further determination and commitment to fill the gap between what theories claim and what could really

happen in practice. As this paper has claimed, the outcome of such deliberation would not be the abandonment of special provision, but a flexible environment celebrating diversity and providing equal opportunities.

At the same time the present paper stressed the need of further insights into the current situation in Greece. Despite Greece being mandated to align with European countries in terms of legislation concerning education of children with SEND, there remains a huge gap between theory and practice (Zoniou-Sideri, 2006; Lampropoulou, Panteliadou & Markakis, 2005). First of all, there is a crucial need of mapping SEND in order to identify the individual needs of every child (Lampropoulou, Panteliadou & Markakis, 2005). As this study has indicated, BESD in Greece may be one of the most neglected categories of needs and, therefore, several legislation reforms should be done, both in defining the notion of BESD better, which will make identification easier and more efficient, and legally securing students with BESD's entitlement to inclusion and provision. Then, the country has the obligation to plan and provide the appropriate funding that will eventually facilitate each student's needs, which are still unmet due to the decentralised funding system, the lack of specialised personnel and the rigid curriculum (Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2006). Finally, as this paper has indicated, disseminating scientific insights and evidence of good practice may aid the Greek educational system not only to provide for this specific group of pupils, but for the school community as a whole to eventually create a school ethos, facilitate the teaching procedure, and benefit every student.

The current paper has sought to examine the dilemma of including pupils with BESD in mainstream schools by identifying the possible factors impinging on the fulfilment of inclusion with a specific reference to the English and Greek reality. Initially, it has sought to pinpoint wider ideological constraints provoked by different explanations of BESD, while examining their impact on the construction of this specific category of SEN. While in England the term is officially out and has been replaced by the category of 'SEMH', there is yet no scientific evidence that the latter has overcome any of the ideological barriers to inclusion. In Greece, on the other hand, the vague and scarce official definition of this category of needs remains unhelpful and raises serious concerns about social justice and access to proper provision. Furthermore, the paper has attempted to briefly discuss several structural factors, including the disproportional representation of specific group of pupils linked with poverty, ethnicity and gender. In terms of the possible practical factors affecting the inclusion of this particular group of pupils, the paper has highlighted the decentralised funding system, the lack of adequate resources and inflexibility of the curriculum in Greece, and has pointed out the existence of several weaknesses in the English multi-agency system. Finally, a discussion concerning the limitations and possibilities of inclusion was attempted in order to raise awareness over the possible barriers to inclusion and promote the value of good inclusionary practices. As the

current paper suggested, there is a need to implement whole-school strategies that will equip all students with the appropriate emotional and social skills and will ensure the entitlement of all children to a just education.

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