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School-based self-evaluation in Greece: A challenge for primary schools

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Abstract

This thesis explores whether and to what extent a particular school self-evaluation (SSE) programme, aimed at school accountability and school improvement, can be accommodated into the Greek reality. The research employs an ethnographic case study in one primary school in Athens and involves collaborative action research (CAR) with an external collaborator for the programme initiation and implementation.

The school was scrutinised by a number of methods such as participant observation and teachers' interviews. The pupils', parents' and teachers' questionnaires as well as focus groups used by CAR offered a valuable source of information, thus combining triangulation in data gathering.

The research reveals that the SSE cannot give visible and direct outcomes in reference to school accountability and improvement purposes. Individual teachers' attempts cannot support the cyclical process of SSE - improvement – evaluation, which needs a co-operative and innovative culture. The individualistic and non innovative school culture seems to be the most influential factor.

The study, however, indicates that the process of the SSE implementation can promote invisibly and indirectly the programme purposes. It can affect the participants and particularly the teachers, who seem to develop individual answerability and professional responsibility. This, in turn, can prepare the school for external accountability.

Simultaneously, the process, 'by doing' and critical reflection, seems to act as a 'learning process' for teachers' personal and professional development. The process can reflect upon the teachers' classes and the school as an organisation, even the school culture, since new patterns seem to challenge the established ways and practices of school operation, including school values.

External collaboration appears to be a powerful tool in the process. The researcher-collaborator can undertake the role of the leader initiating the innovation as well as that of the manager inspiring commitment, developing the feeling of ownership and

providing approaches and tools. Balancing power relationships within the school reveals as a particularly sensitive task for her/him to accomplish.

Such a complicated role raises questions about the persons who can undertake it; consultants from educational authorities or researchers from higher education and, perhaps, experienced teachers from other schools can be proposed. In any case, external collaborators should be trusted persons, equipped with appropriate knowledge and skills, clearly familiar with the school context and relieved from appraisal responsibilities.

The external collaborator's responsibilities are expected to be delegated to the school. Thus, the role of the Head and teachers should be upgraded. This seems to have political implications while the need for teachers' and heads' professional development reveals as decisive. A prerequisite seems to be the establishment of a national policy, which will establish a framework for teachers' professional development and provide a kind of balanced autonomy to schools legitimating, thus, innovations. Within this context, SSE aimed at school accountability and improvement should be seen as a long-term project.

Abbreviations

BERA: British Educational Research Association

CAR: Collaborative Action Research

CARE: Centre for Applied Research in Education

CER: Centre of Educational Research

E C: European Community

E U: European Union

GRIDS: Guidelines for Review and Internal Development in Schools

HMI: Her Majesty's Inspectorate

ILEA: Inner London Educational Authority

ISIP: International School Improvement Programme

LEA: Local Educational Authority

NC: National Curriculum

NUT: National Union of Teachers

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OFSTED: Office of Standards in Education

PASOK: Panhellenic Socialistic Movement

P I: Pedagogical Institute

SSE: School Self-Evaluation

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

During recent years in Greek primary and secondary education the issue of evaluation of educational work has arisen within a new context (Zouganeli, et al, 2007). After a complete absence of any kind of formal evaluation for 27 years, apart from pupils' assessment and the need for following social, economic and political evolutions at international and European stage, the Government attempted to establish a legislative framework (2525/1997, 2986/2002) on the evaluation of teachers and educational work including school self-evaluation (SSE).

Teachers, however, reacted to the proposed evaluation. While they acknowledge the importance of evaluation in education (Papadopoulos, 1998, pp 10-12; Didaskaliko Vema 2000, p. 18; 2001, p. 82; 2002, p. 2; Typas, G., 2002, pp. 13-17; Kassiotakis, 2003, p. 6; Athanasoula-Reppa, 2005; Kelpandis et al, 2007, p. 171), they question its reproductive role in school and society and ask for an evaluation for every aspect of the educational system (Iordanidis, 1999; Mavrogiorgos, 2003; Kassiotakis, 2003). Teachers also doubt the methods, the means and the persons who are to implement it (Bagakis, 1999, p. 25).

On the other hand, evaluation seems to be a complex issue since 'the educational process does not produce simple physical products. There is a wide range of complex outcomes at every stage, some of them tangible, many of them intangible, and subject to a range of interpretations' (Bush and West-Burnham, 1994, p.160). Additionally, the political dimension of evaluation adds complexity to the task, given that it can affect people's lives (MacBeath, 1999). Evaluation becomes even more complicated within the Greek educational context taking into account its poor theoretical and methodological background on evaluation issues (Bagakis, 2001, p. 16).

Within this context, the legislative frameworks about evaluation have never been implemented. Evaluation of educational work, however, including SSE has been at the forefront of the public debate among all those involved in education (Zouganeli, et al, 2007, p. 135). The challenge for the government is to find a model of evaluation that, based on a wider and more scientific framework and under well-established

principles, can lead the educational processes and outcomes to real improvement (Dimitropoulos, 1998, p. 17), and accepted by the entire educational community and particularly by teachers.

As a primary teacher myself since 1975, I have experienced self-evaluation of my own practice in the classroom where I have been engaged on a 'day-to-day basis in evaluating activities, renewing (their) my work and the work of (their) my pupils and modifying (their) my practice accordingly' (MacBeath, 1999, p. 7). At the same time, I have encountered the pressure of an old model of teachers' inspection, while, since 1982, I have also experienced the absence of any evaluation, inspection or appraisal in schools.

I identified the 'Greek gap' in evaluation matters when I came closer to the English educational context, while working as a teacher of the Greek language in England for five years (1993-1998). During that period, my studies for an MA degree at London Metropolitan University helped me to reconsider evaluation along with many educational and pedagogical issues. When, in 1999, I returned to Greece, I found the issue of evaluation in education very interesting due to the law and the relevant degrees (see Chapter 2). School evaluation, therefore, became the centre of my interest.

By coming closer to evaluation issues, I recognised the importance of evaluation in a school unit. Pupils passing through a school only get one chance and school should prevent pupils from failing. I considered school as the 'cornerstone' of an educational structure (Karageorgos, 2000, p. 45), as the basic *unit* of change (Simons, 1988, p. 60). I also thought that teachers who are primarily concerned and directly involved in pupils' education should be engaged in school evaluation. Teachers 'who live day-to-day in classrooms and schools should play a major role in evaluating their experiences, their success and priorities for further development' (MacBeath, 1999, p. 152). I considered them as the *prime agents* of change (Simons, 1988, p. 60).

Additionally, I recognised that while the laws of the central government can regulate control and advice, they cannot secure real 'progress without commitment of teachers, students and parents who "are" the system and who have their own personal stake in

quality, standards and improvement' (MacBeath et al, 2000, p. 93). Finally, I assumed that evaluation research can help policy makers to make informed decisions in constructing policies at all levels in the educational system.

SSE seemed to be a valuable and attractive area for investigation and its possible implementation in my country became a challenging thought for me. SSE could become particularly important for Greek primary schools. I directed my concern towards a SSE which 'helps schools understand themselves, as schools do it for themselves and give their own account for their achievement' (MacBeath, 1999, p. 2); a SSE, that is 'an intrinsic and necessary component of school improvement' (MacBeath et al, 2000, p. 92).

Taking into account the emerging situation in evaluation inside and outside Greece, I decided to undertake a relevant study and offer a new understanding about SSE, implementing a programme in a different context. Throughout the period from 2001 to 2003, I conducted an ethnographic case study research in a school in the Athens area. This study covered a collaborative action research (CAR) for the implementation of a programme of SSE in which I also undertook the role of the external collaborator-critical friend.

The ethnographic case study through participant observation and individual teachers' interviews gave the opportunity for an immediate understanding of school culture, necessary for adapting both qualitative and quantitative approaches in the implementation of the programme. This ethnographic case study also helped in understanding the expected possible changes in the school within the wider Greek context (see Chapter 5, Conclusion).

The programme of SSE was based on MacBeath's framework as it has been developed in his book, 'Schools must speak for themselves' (1999). Among the plethora of evaluation models that have been introduced by researchers and educational bodies, I chose MacBeath's framework because I considered it as the most appropriate for the Greek context, flexible enough to accommodate SSE in a new context which I intend to justify later (see Section 4.3).

The study was based on the assumption that schools are likely to strengthen their own ability towards fulfilling their accountability and improvement purposes when they are themselves supported to adopt evaluation that reflects their own needs and values. The overall question is whether the particular approach to self-evaluation can enable schools to give an account of their practices and whether such an engagement can facilitate school improvement. The study, therefore, has been based on the following questions:

- How relevant and appropriate is the SSE approach for school accountability?
- How relevant and appropriate is the SSE approach for school improvement?
- In what way does the process itself affect the teachers and their classes and, therefore, the school?
- How does collaboration affect the process?

To put the research questions in a better perspective, the following sub-questions were formulated:

- What is the role that the 'inside' school context and particularly school culture plays in the process implementation? 'Is the SSE compatible with the school culture?' (Fullan, 1991)
- What role can the headteacher play in the process of implementation?
- What role can teachers play?
- To what extent can parents and pupils participate in the process?
- What is the role of the critical friend in the process implementation?
- How can the process of change be managed in the best way?
- How can a researcher combine his role in the process with that of the collaborator/critical friend?
- What are the ethical and political implications in this process?
- What is the role of the national policy in this process?
- What is the role of teachers' professional development in the process of implementation?

I expect this study to increase the awareness and understanding of SSE and change implementation issues within the particular context. In particular, I hope that this

study will assist all those who are involved in the shaping and implementation of educational policy or are going to act as evaluators as well as teachers to develop a sharper awareness and realisation of:

- the extent to which the proposed SSE can facilitate school external accountability, school responsiveness and school professional accountability;
- the extent to which the proposed SSE can be integrated into the school improvement policy;
- the extent to which the process can affect teachers and, therefore the school;
- the difficulties, complexities and opportunities that school culture and the headteacher pose on the process of implementation;
- the demands for leading and managing the process implementation;
- the responsibilities that the researcher as external collaborator/critical friend can undertake;
- the responsibilities that can be attributed to the school and the headteacher for the process of implementation and continuation;
- the difficulties, complexities and opportunities that the external collaboration poses on the process;
- the extent to which parents and pupils can participate in the process at the given time;
- the ethical and political implications that arise throughout the research;
- the extent to which the headteacher and teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills for change implantation;
- the responsibilities that can be undertaken by local authorities;
- the extent to which the national context can affect the process;
- the need for changes in the central educational system.

Additionally, I expect myself to gain relevant knowledge and expertise conducting the research where I also undertook the role of external collaborator/critical friend. This study may also enable pupils and parents who are going to participate in the process to better understand pupils' schooling and school matters. Finally, I hope that this study will contribute to the total body of professional knowledge and act as a motivator for those who seek to undertake some form of relevant research.

This chapter is followed by a literature review that provides the essential theoretical background and supports the research. Thus, literature review is the focus of the second, third and fourth chapters. The second chapter examines evaluation in the Greek educational context within which the investigation takes place. The purpose is to put the research in a Greek historical and political perspective and bring to light potential opportunities or pitfalls stressing, thus, the need for this research.

The following chapter attempts to define the concept of school evaluation and SSE. It also examines forms and purposes of school evaluation and SSE, such as school accountability and school improvement. Given that the programme is considered as an innovation for the school, the fourth chapter explores SSE as an innovation. It is followed by a critical review of SSE programmes that were carried out in Great Britain and provides some reasons that led to the choice of MacBeath's evaluation framework.

The fifth chapter details the methodological issues of the research. It explores the nature of the present study and justifies the choice of the qualitative paradigm. It goes on to discuss the research methods and the research strategies- the ethnographic case study and the collaborative action research- as well as the methods and the techniques that the above strategies employ. Considering the researcher/collaborator as a tool in the research, the fifth chapter also attempts to identify this multiple role. Finally, this chapter highlights some decisions and procedures that formulate the action plan for the programme implementation.

The data, collected throughout the process, are presented and analysed in the chapters six, seven and eight. They have been structured according to the three phases of a change: preparation, implementation and institutionalisation (Fullan, 2001). They focus particularly on the problems, gaps and constraints but also the strengths and opportunities that the process revealed. Chapter eight closes with a section that scrutinises the school culture as well as teachers' attitudes towards evaluation and change so that research findings can be more deeply interpreted and better understood. These chapters provide a basis for the following discussion in chapters nine and ten that discuss the findings according to the research questions and give some possible interpretations and answers.

Chapter eleven, the last chapter, presents a conclusion and some proposals for the future of SSE in the Greek context. This chapter closes by discussing the limitations and the significance of the study along with some personal reflections and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO: THE GREEK CONTEXT

Introduction

This chapter looks into the Greek educational context and its evaluation system within which SSE is to be implemented. Initially, for better understanding, it examines the structure of the Greek educational system. In its historical prologue it also explores evaluation as it has been implemented for the last three decades through the educational policies which, I will argue, express the ideology of the political rather than the educational system.

Furthermore, the chapter investigates the current debate on evaluation issues as it has developed attempting, thus, to stress the political impasse within which evaluation has been found. It goes on to present a deeper view of the whole spectrum of evaluation behind the Greek educational stage and attempts to provide an understanding of the current ideological and political situation. The chapter closes by exploring the research into SSE that has been implemented in Greece.

2. 1 The Greek educational system

Since the establishment of the New Greek State in 1832, the national educational system has been centrally organised. It is classified within the categories of mechanistic and bureaucratic models while maintaining some particular features in order to serve a traditionally highly homogenous society which values education by tradition. This system is described as complicated owing to its considerable size and multiple structures. It is structured hierarchically in a linear organisation, schematically having a pyramid form (Andreou and Papakonstandinou, 1994, p. 136).

A Minister of Education, supported by two deputy ministers, is at the top. All decisions pertaining to curricula, textbooks, school timetables, appointments, salaries and the career development of teachers, the establishment and operation of the schools are made by the Ministry and are uniformly introduced into all the schools. The prestigious Pedagogical Institute (P.I.), a body that holds the role of Minister's

advisor in pedagogical scientific issues, is responsible for curriculum development and the writing of the school syllabuses. It co-ordinates all in-service teacher training activities (Kassiotakis, 1994) and co-operates with the Centre of Educational Research (C E R) in the evaluation of educational work in school (Law 2986) (issue 24/13 February, 2002, p. 233).

All the nursery (nipiagogio) and primary (demotico scholeio) schools are at the bottom of the pyramid (Andreou and Papakonstandinou, 1994, p. 136). Schools, however, are at the core of the system. The headteacher is at the top of the hierarchy, with the deputy head and the teaching staff following (Kassiotakis, 1994). The main responsibilities of headteachers are to co-ordinate all school activities according to the regulations, provide financial administration, supervise the teaching staff, participate in the school committee and keep teachers informed about the circulars issued by the Ministry, without, however, having any direct authority over the teaching and the curriculum (Athanasίου, 1990, p. 91).

The teachers' council is responsible for minor decisions that are taken on the principle of majority. These minor decisions include the implementation of the National Curriculum (NC), the observation of pupils, the management of disciplinary matters, the observation of student committees and anything that happens in the school such as visits to museums or organisation of musical and athletic events (ibid, p. 91). The school, at the base of the pyramid, must exclusively implement directions coming from the top of the hierarchy. Therefore, real school autonomy is limited. Schools are run by educational directorates which are different for primary and secondary schools. Visiting school counsellors give advice and information concerning educational matters (Kassiotakis, 1994).

In Greece, within the centralised educational system, education is extremely politicised. This means that teachers and administrators are directly accountable to the government (OECD, 1997). As a result of political confusion in the post-war period, the Greek educational system has experienced many educational discontinuities. Despite the attempts for educational reforms, based on the vision for economic growth and social justice, the Greek educational system (Doukas, 1997) is marked by

its authoritarian and formalistic character (Kassiotakis, 1994). The following section explores the evaluation policies within this context.

2. 2 Evaluation in the Greek educational system

2. 2. 1 A historical approach to evaluation

The Greek educational system has applied evaluation to pupils, teachers and some administrative officers in terms of their selection for their post (Dimitropoulos, 1999). Until 1982, teachers were appraised by inspectors, who had the responsibility of local administration and acted in an advisory role as well (Zouganeli, et al, 2007, p. 137). The establishment of an inspectorate system goes back to the first years of the reconstruction of the Greek State (around 1830) and derives from the educational needs of that period (Athanasίου, 1990, p. 91). The inspectors judged the precise reproduction of knowledge in teaching and learning as well as teachers' attachment to use of the school textbook. The criteria of their judgments were more or less undefined and frequently changed (ibid, p. 104).

In 1981, the Panhellenic Socialistic Movement party (PASOK) came into power. The new government attempted a wider 'socialistic' social reform. In this attempt the government introduced a number of reforms in education, whose central messages were 'modernisation' and 'democratisation' (Kassiotakis, 1994, Zouganeli, et al, 2007). 'Democratisation' in this context meant a range of arrangements which were intended to expand participation of stakeholder groups from the wider parts of society as well as the decentralisation of the structure of the educational system (Kazamias, 1994, p. 106).

The nursery and primary school curricula were entirely revised. In primary schools, changes included some compensatory classes, the numerical pupils' assessment was replaced by an alphabetical one and the emphasis of evaluation moved to the evaluation of the educational work (Laws 1304/1982 and 1566/1985). The inspectorate institution, however, was abolished (circular 351/2/D.1550/15-1-1982). The administrative responsibilities of inspectors were undertaken by persons in charge in local educational authorities while their counselling responsibilities were

undertaken by school counsellors (circular 1304/1982) (Papakonstadinou, 1993, p.158; Zouganeli, et al, 2007).

Law 214/1984 defined the duties and responsibilities of counsellors. Counsellors undertook the duties of developers, educators, programmers, evaluators and instructors of teachers (Athanasίου, 1998, p. 113; Reppas, 2000, p. 20). Article 1 of the second paragraph of the law attributed to counsellors the duty to participate in the evaluation – appraisal of teachers, headteachers, deputy headteachers and people in charge in local educational authorities. Terms and procedures for evaluation, however, were never defined. Without securing criteria and prerequisites for improvement of the educational work in schools, this form of evaluation was considered as attached to the traditional inspection. It has never been applied (Zouganeli, et al, 2007, p. 140).

The absence of evaluation practice from schools seemed to relieve teachers from the anxiety of the old mode of inspection-appraisal but not the issue of evaluation educational work. However, evaluation remained firmly on the central stage, causing debates and proposals not only because of its inherent meaning but particularly because of the five Presidential Decrees that were issued throughout the period from 1982 to 1988 (Papakonstadinou, 1993, p. 159). When in 1992 the Conservative Party of New Democracy came to power, it attempted to introduce some form of educational evaluation. Teachers, however, reacted strongly and the issue of evaluation was suspended when in 1993 the Socialists returned to power (Zouganeli, et al, 2007).

Law 2525/19-9-1997 internalised the reform that was complemented by Presidential Decrees 40/1998 (FEK 107A) and 1938/ 27-2-1998 (FEK 189B). Article 8 of this law refers to the evaluation of educational work ‘as a process of judging the quality of provided education and the degree of realisation of aims and targets according to the current legislation’. The purpose of evaluation was the improvement of all those parts involved and their contribution to the educational process.

Teachers’ evaluation in their administrative duties would be undertaken by the headteachers. Teachers’ support in their teaching and pedagogical work as well as

their appraisal as a formative interpersonal interaction would be undertaken by counsellors (Deligianni, 2003). Teachers' appraisal, evaluation of school effectiveness and that of the educational system at local and national level were attributed to the educational hierarchy and the Body of Permanent Evaluators (Soma Monimon Axiologiton), which was to be constituted. The introduction of this body was considered necessary to secure objectivity in evaluation, making it entirely independent (Kassiotakis, 2003, p. 6). Finally, a committee of the University Authority of Teachers would undertake the evaluation of the permanent evaluators.

Article 41 of the law 2525/19-9-1997 introduced SSE which was defined as a double - phase process. At the beginning of the school year a committee of five school teachers, sometimes with pupils' and parents' participation, undertakes the responsibility to evaluate the effectiveness of all the factors that determine the quality of the school's educational work according to the recommendations of the P.I. At the end of the year, the committee issues a report that is signed by the teaching staff and all participants. It is submitted to the local educational authority and is expected to generate future developments. In practice, SSE reports presented some general and subjective teachers' views, which follow a bureaucratic and hierarchical process without any response expectations (Zouganeli, et al, 2007).

Teachers reacted strongly. They criticised the proposed evaluation as a strict inspection imposed by 'outsiders' attempting hierarchical, bureaucratic and arbitrary control. They also argue that SSE cannot be restricted by imposed criteria since each school unit faces specific circumstances and needs (Mavrogiorgos, 2003, p. 26). Teachers asked for at least, as a basic prerequisite, their participation in this process. This law as well as the new Ministry attempt (Circular C2/4791 of 1998) that concerns teachers' appraisal by the headteacher, deputy head and a special evaluation committee in their schools was actually never put into practice.

Since October 2001 the procedures for educational evaluation have been changing again. The articles 4 and 5 of the most recent law 2986/13-2-2002 define the purpose, the targets, and the nature of the evaluation of educational work and teachers and assign the designing evaluation of educational work to the Centre of Educational Research (CER) (Zouganali et al, 2007). This institution is to develop indicators and

criteria for the checking of the system. It also collects and evaluates the reports of schools and local educational authorities. The P.I. becomes responsible for the teachers' appraisal and co-operates with the CER in the implementation of such data, while the Body of Permanent Evaluators was cancelled (Kassiotakis, 2003, p. 4, Xochellis, 2006).

In the meantime, Greece, as a European Union (E.U.) member, has attempted to adjust to its requirements and those of international organisations such as the European Commission (EC), OECD or UNESCO. The target of the EC directive (1992, 2001) is clear: to contribute to quality development in education, encouraging and supporting the co-operation among member-countries (Bagakis, 1999, p.21; Xochellis, 2006b, p. 47; Zouganeli, et al 2007). In fact, evaluation is a clear direction of the 'White Book' (1995) of the EC in the shaping of which Greece had a very active participation (Bagakis, 1999).

The government found itself under pressure to comply with the directions of the above organisations. Thus, during the last decades the Greek educational system has shown a noticeable but slow and inflexible willingness to follow the international trends in evaluation matters. This willingness has been rather of conforming than of developing nature (Demitropoulos, 1999, Kassiotakis, 2003).

In the Greek educational system, the question for evaluation of educational work began in 1982 'from scratch' and reached some form of legislative entity. However, no implementation has been seen so far. Until nowadays (2008), evaluation in education still remains a subject of continuous interest of the Greek educational and political world. The next section attempts to explore the trends in the current debate as they are expressed or implied within the Greek context.

2. 2. 2 The current debate

In Greece, published work on educational evaluation has been mainly restricted to the technical logic of pupils' assessment (Demitropoulos, 1999). It also maintains the meaning of teachers' appraisal that reflects mostly the sociological and political disputes, as was the case in the inspection system before 1980 (Mavrogiorgos, 1988).

Papakonstadinou (1993) explains the long absence of any analysis of evaluation because of the opportunistic hesitation of specialists. He states, however, that the small relevant bibliography is divided into three different perspectives, each one adopting a different approach and formulating a different system of arguments and proposals (p. 160).

A) The unionised perspective. This derives from the collective experience of the profession. It rejects the ideological control within the educational operation and teachers' transformation in exclusive implementors of governmental choices and orders. It relates evaluation to the scientific and pedagogical freedom of knowledge, school life and teachers' role in the contemporary school.

Teachers' unions seem to accept the message 'formation, implementation and accountability' but simultaneously aspire to integrate evaluation within the whole educational system as a creative, dynamic and transformative process (Papakonstadinou, 1993; Athanasiadis in Bagakis, 2001; Kassiotakis, 2003). This discourse presupposes teachers' participation in the process and puts emphasis on SSE which should aim at the development of the school life with the participation of parents' association and pupils' communities (Tsoulas, 2002).

B) The philosophical and political perspective. It is based upon a vague theoretical frame and attempts to analyse concepts such as bureaucracy or 'top-down' and 'superior-inferior' hierarchy in the system. It considers evaluation as a means or a mechanism for confirmation of bureaucratic centralisation, the state empowerment, the development of the state's control, and therefore, teachers' surveillance, subordination and dependence. This perspective also criticises the introduction of educational policies as authoritative and uncovers their ideology as being adopted 'values', based on the technocratic pedagogical ideology (effectiveness, efficiency, quality). It is opposed to the imposing of evaluation and detects its gaps, obscurities and contradictions (Papakonstadinou, 1993, p. 161-163).

C) The pedagogical perspective. It addresses the central question of which institution, agent or person is justified to have the control of evaluation or to whom teachers

should be accountable. In other words, who is entitled to have a say in the shaping and implementation of evaluation. In this discourse control can be exercised by:

- a) the state and the public hierarchy in the name of public interest
- b) teachers themselves, because they should be considered as responsible professionals
- c) pupils and parents, the consumers who receive education. The rationale of this approach is based on the rejection of state intervention and the notion of personal freedom (Kogan cited in Papakonstadinou, 1993, p. 165).

This perspective cannot provide a complete and dialectical synthesis. There is a deadlock in the issue as answering simple “yes/no” questions remains problematic in the educational world (Syphados, 1999, p. 6). Teachers individually and collectively tend to see evaluation more from the unionised and political aspect rather than the pedagogical one. The reason lies in the manner the government manages the question of evaluation. It seems that control plays a predominant role while teachers themselves under these circumstances lack an evaluation ‘culture’ (Kassiotakis, 2003, p. 3).

In the last decades there has been considerable scientific upgrading of the evaluation issues that has followed international interest and developments in the subject. For example, there is a serious bibliographical database on educational evaluation while all the institutions that produce education have included the subject of evaluation in their programmes (Koutouzis, 2003).

At the dawn of the third millennium, however, the existence of evaluation scepticism that lags behind that of the United State of America, Canada or the United Kingdom is not enough to give answers to the current challenges (Bagakis, 1999, p. 21). Clearly, some relevant policies should be implemented since the need for educational evaluation is recognised as contributing to the solutions of problems at an economical, pedagogical-psychological, sociological and practical-administrative level (Kyriazi, 2002).

When exploring the context of evaluation in Greek schools the basic question that arises is: for what reasons has evaluation been excluded from the schools and the educational system?

2. 2. 3 A deeper insight

The centralised educational system, dominant since the re-establishment of the Greek State (about 1830), is characterised by uniformity and consistency (Andreou and Papakonstantinou, 1990; Bobas, 1995 cited in 1998, p. 181). It is based upon a very detailed National Curriculum (N.C.) that advocates the principle of equal opportunities. The N.C. should be followed by all teachers and provides knowledge that should be learned by all students in all schools and at the same pace throughout the academic year. It assumes that all students have the same starting point, study the same textbooks and are evaluated in the same way (Papakonstadinou and Bolyfatos, 1991, p. 75-76).

This dominant perception of a uniform and consistent pattern is so rigid that it leaves no space for interpretations, necessary to solve the multitude of problems in education or for implementation of proposals, models, techniques and alternative solutions (Raptis, 1999, p. 136). School units simply implement the central educational policies (Koutouzis, 2003). In other words, the system cannot promote changes, initiatives and innovations.

At the same time, the principle of 'equal opportunities' which assumes that schools are neutral and able to secure equality and objectivity legitimates the view that all schools teach and treat all pupils under the same conditions (Bourdieu in Dale et al, 1976, p. 113). This can be said to contribute to the exercise of the state's authority and control. Ball (1990) writing about the UK example, stresses that centralisation in the educational system aims at the induction of accountability and control in education (in Orphanou, 1998, p. 116).

Within this context, the evaluation system also attempted to get teachers' conformity to the governmental policy and ideology. Until 1982 inspectors were teachers' appraisers. Their unclear and subjective reports were not limited to judging teachers'

work. They also referred to teachers' political views, even to teachers' personal life. Teachers were judged for their appearance, social relations, and religious beliefs as well as for the way they were dressed or spent their free time (Athanasiou, 1990, p. 104). Thus, inspectors acted as the political guardians of ethnocentrism and Christian religious ideology in schools (Reppas, 1998, p. 19).

Teachers were merely supporters of an ideology, mediators of imposed knowledge, and implementers of governmental choices under rules and norms which could secure the functionality and productivity of the system (Papakonstadinou, 1993, p. 155). Teachers' appraisal and evaluation constitutes a mechanism of ideological conformity and social selectivity within a school that aimed at reproduction of the ruling-capitalist social relations (Reppas, 1998 p. 19-20). Such an evaluation, as Gitlin and Smyth (1989) state, 'contrary to conventional wisdom is not a neutral objective, value free activity; it is imbued with a very deliberate political agenda' (preface).

The government of PASOK (1981) in its attempt to democratise education introduced changes through the new curriculum. It also abolished the inspectorate system but standardised the teaching methods. All teachers were obliged to follow the same teaching methods as they were provided by teachers' manuals. The new arrangements in education attempted to increase the effectiveness of teachers through attachment onto a single source of knowledge, a single programme, a single book and teaching method and a single method of assessment (Bolyfatos, 1991, p. 70).

These changes were criticised as a governmental attempt to replace the traditional direct control by a technical one and to maintain the 'bureaucratic model' of evaluation. However, in contrast with the traditional control, where the employer gives obviously orders to the employee, the technical control was now concealed (Reppas, 1998, p. 20).

At the same time, although the emphasis on the evaluation of 'educational work' can be considered as an attempt of the government to remove the above criticism, the Ministry's attempts to re-introduce teachers' appraisal through school counsellors caused teachers' reaction. Three Presidential Circulars from 1982 to 1985 attempted to test teachers' reactions but with no result (Bolyfatos, 1991, p. 70). Teachers seemed

to react to the philosophy, the character and the orientation of certain parts of the educational policy and constructed obstacles to evaluation implementation (Papakonstadinou, 1993, p. 159).

After a long time lacking progress, law 2525/97 proposed evaluation as an issue of immediate priority and as the catalytic means for the upgrading of quality in education (Mavrakanas, 1998, p. 396-397). The law was criticised in many ways. It assumed evaluation as a hierarchical, 'top-down' process, which excluded any return 'feedback' activity. No other model attempted to exercise so many forms of teachers' control by so many agents (Kavvadias and Tsirigotis, 1997, p. 27; Koutouzis, 2003).

The law also received criticism for its complexity and its vague points (Fikaris, 1997, p. 151). Counsellor's role remained 'weak' and teachers were completely excluded (ibid, p. 154). Such evaluation seemed to be in full harmony with the strictly centralised and hierarchical character of the educational system (Kavvadias and Tsirigotis, 1997, p. 27). It could be argued that this law leaves a 'sense...of the known past', with regard to teachers' appraisal (A.CH-K.G. 1999, p. 17). Thus, this law was never put into practice.

Some authors like Doukas (1997), Athanasiadis (2001) maintain that the differences in opinions between teachers and policy makers are only hypothetical. In reality, evaluation is a negotiable issue and an area for academic debate since political parties and teachers' unions are interrelated and the real policy makers are politicised teachers. The fact, however, is that the Ministry's interest is concentrated on the appraisal of educational members of staff rather than the evaluation of educational work. Thus, evaluation in Greece remains an elusive but none the less pursued target (Zouganeli, et al, 2007, p. 139). The project of SSE, which was implemented and piloted by the P.I., proves the interest in the issue. The next section examines this attempt.

2. 3 Research of school self-evaluation in Greece

Within the context of the third Frame of Community Support, Dr J. Solomon, the president of the Evaluation Department in the P.I., in cooperation with European

schools and the National Experimental Programme of Internal Evaluation, developed and piloted with his colleagues a project of SSE in secondary education. This proposal was a type of internal collective evaluation or SSE, which, according to the researchers, aimed at 'qualitative difference' in school.

The implementation of the project in five schools, however, was interrupted in 1998, the third year of its life. The main reason was the students' reaction to the governmental policy about the examination system and the conflict between the P.I. and the Ministry of Education. This fact led Dr Solomon to resign. In 1999 the P.I. published the book: 'Internal evaluation and planning of the educational work in the school: a framework and support', which explained and analysed the research proposal.

The project combined two ideas. The first one was that teachers in a school should co-operate in action research projects to gather information and the second one was for the findings to be sent to a special centre for teachers' feedback (Verdis, 2002). Its basic target was to disseminate and establish an evaluation type which would be friendly in use and encourage change or improvement of the educational practices and outcomes in primary and secondary schools (Solomon, 1999, p.9).

This scheme for SSE was criticised as lacking any theoretical consideration and as being devoid in content about the factors that have an impact on the quality of education. It was also considered as a socially neutral pedagogical technique which strived exclusively to develop the schooling function beyond the historical and political circumstances (Verdis 2002). Although the researchers considered that the quality of the school and the educational practices played a considerably important role in pupils' learning and development, they ignored the fact that the social and cultural parameters are also crucial.

It is also argued that the proposed model does not take into consideration the social dimension of evaluation. It remains a mechanism of confrontation and social selectivity within a school aiming at reproducing the ruling social relations. The proposed indicators of SSE have been shaped according to the 'common sense and experience', the educational legislation and the current trends of the behavioural

CHAPTER THREE:

SCHOOL EVALUATION AND SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter examines ‘evaluation in education’ as the basic concept of my study. The first section attempts to define and describe evaluation and distinguish the various forms stressing the political dimension of the activity. It also attempts to identify the purposes of evaluation and differentiates its basic purposes, those of school accountability and school improvement. The section, therefore, explores the concept of accountability and scrutinises the basic aspects of school accountability, external accountability, answerability and professional responsibility.

School self-evaluation is the focus of the second part of this chapter. Initially, this section attempts to place SSE under a scientific framework for a deeper understanding and gives some of the most characteristic definitions of the term whilst acknowledging the complexity of the issue. Having accepted that SSE can combine school accountability with school improvement purposes, this part looks into SSE from the perspectives of those purposes and attributes to it a democratic direction with a pluralistic perspective. Finally, the section presents a definition of SSE as it has been constructed for the needs of the present research.

3. 1 Evaluation in education

3. 1. 1 Defining evaluation

The term has been defined and described in many ways. Dictionary definitions refer to evaluation as ‘assessing the value (or worth or merit) of something’ (Collins, 1991). Although in education, students and teachers have always been the most popular objects of evaluation, the ‘something’ can be anything in an educational system: some kind of innovation, intervention, project or service (Robson, 2000, p. 10); an activity (Clarke, 1999, p.1); processes of teaching and learning (Stenhouse, 1975; Elliott, 1978b); the ‘whole process of schooling’ (MacDonald 1978; Simons in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p.116); intentions, processes, outcomes and the

relationships between these, resources, planning and implementation for such ventures (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 5). In fact, 'the most hotly contested disputes in evaluation revolve around these so-called value issues' (House and Howe, 1999, p. 5).

For Weiss (1972), evaluation is 'an elastic word that stretches to cover judgments of every kind' (in Clarke, 1999, p. 1). Scriven (1967) also accepts evaluation as 'judging the worth of an educational programme'. For Adelman and Alexander (1982) educational evaluation is 'the making judgments about the worth and effectiveness of educational intentions, processes and outcomes...' (p. 5). This is also articulated by the Greek term of evaluation (evaluate=axiologo: value+tell) (Demetropoulos, 1997, p. 18).

On the other hand, many researchers who come from a social science background within humanities give a different dimension to the judgmental nature of evaluation. They provide descriptive studies with little direct reference to criteria of worth and value standards. Thus, Cronbach and his associates (1980) define evaluation 'as (a) systematic examination of events occurring in and consequent of a contemporary programme - an examination conducted to assist in improving this programme and other programmes having the same general purpose' (p. 14).

For others, however, evaluation is 'an activity comprised of both description and judgment' (ibid, p.4). Similarly, Demunter (2001) accepts that: 'I evaluate' means I confirm whether the posed goals have been successful, realising that the achievement itself can make them evolve but 'I evaluate' also means that I make a judgment relevant to the collective evidence which attempts to give meaning to all those that occur (in Bagakis, 2001, p. 28). Nevo (1986) has pointed out that 'there is a considerable consensus regarding the definition of evaluation as assessment of merit or worth' (p. 16) and, thus, evaluation inevitably 'involves judging the value, merit or worth or effectiveness of something' (Clarke, 1999, p. 1).

Other definitions stress the practice of evaluation. Rogers and Badham (1992) define evaluation as 'the process of systematically collecting and analysing information in order to inform value judgments based on firm evidence' (p. 3). Similarly, Nevo (1995) defines evaluation as 'an act of collecting systematic information regarding the

nature and quality of educational objects' (p. 11). According to Patton (1982), however, 'no single-sentence definition will suffice to fully capture the practice of evaluation' (p. 35).

It becomes apparent that in education, the concept is difficult to pin down. There is a wide range of complex outcomes, some of them intangible, and subject to a range of interpretations since at every stage of education the learning process is built on the human element (Bush, 1995). Thus, the term is used as a general designation to refer to various forms of evaluation. The next section attempts to explore some of them.

3. 1. 2 Forms of evaluation

A great deal of evaluation goes on every day. In a school, individual teachers evaluate when they make decisions about the best approach of teaching and learning or the particular way to behave towards a pupil. Headteachers, making choices in leading and managing, also evaluate. Parents and pupils are inevitably involved in judgments about the school, the teacher and the teaching, the administration and so on. Behind any decision making, therefore, there is a hidden evaluative element. These private evaluative elements, usually undefined and very subjective, are often referred to as 'informal evaluation' (Osborne in Davies et al, 1990).

Although informal evaluation can be valid, evaluation in education does not refer to its informal aspect since it is undefined, subjective and unsystematic. Evaluation in education refers to formal evaluation which is 'usually well documented in terms of evidence collected and the conditions drawn' (Osborne in Davies et al, 1990, p. 153). Adelman and Alexander (1982) state that 'formal evaluation is the making of judgments of the worth and effectiveness of educational endeavours at a public level, sometimes as a matter of deliberate institutional policy' (p. 6). Emerson and Goddard (1993), however, accept that 'evaluation is a process which is carried out at various levels throughout the school and with varying degrees of formality' (p. 195).

Scriven (1967) introduced the most popular and lasting distinction of evaluation: that of summative and formative evaluation. Summative evaluation takes place at the end of an activity. Its 'principal aim is to determine the overall effectiveness or impact of

a programme or project, with a view to recommending whether or not it should continue to run' (Clarke, 1999, p. 8). In this sense, it is relevant to the rationale of control. In schools, standardised tests are good examples of techniques used in summative evaluation.

In contrast, formative evaluation intends 'to provide feedback to people who are trying to improve something' (Scriven, 1980, p. 6). It supports, therefore, 'the process of improvement' (Scriven, 1991, p. 20). Formative evaluation accompanies activities, leads them, and allows the realisation of deviations as well as accidental and unpredictable elements which appear during its realisation, indicates modifications which need to take place with simultaneous adjustment of the activity or the network of detection and evaluation' (Demunter in Bagakis, 2001, p. 30).

Stenhouse (1975), expressing Scriven's ideas, writes about the evaluation of curriculum development and points out that, 'summative evaluation is concerned with the appraisal of the emergent curriculum as it is offered to the school system' (p. 104) while formative evaluation influences 'the shaping of a curriculum through the successive revisions of the developmental phase' (ibid, p. 104). Contrasting the two forms, Patton (1986) stresses that 'summative evaluation tends to be conclusion-oriented whereas formative evaluation tends to be action oriented' (p. 66).

These distinct approaches to evaluation have apparent differences, as Clarke (1999) identifies 'in methodological orientation, the choice of research methods, the frequency with which data are collected, the opportunities for reporting research findings, and the nature of the relationship between the evaluator and those engaged in programme activities' (p. 8).

Evaluation can be characterised as a 'product' model when it is primarily oriented to the outcomes of a programme or a function and 'it is expected to indicate the pay-off value of it' (Hopkins, 1989, p. 17). On the other hand, 'process' models pay attention to the transactions of the programme or function and it 'is expected to indicate the intrinsic values of the programme' (ibid, p. 17) such as motivation, work habits and relationships with other people. For Simons (1981) 'product models emphasise measurable learning, teaching intention, and how efficiently the intentions have been

achieved' whereas 'process models study the processes of teaching, learning and schooling in order to be able to compare practice with intention, opportunities with aspirations' (in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 115).

Evaluation can also take the form of internal and external evaluation (Hopkins, 1989, p. 18). Scriven (1991) defines internal evaluations as 'those done by project staff, even if they are special evaluation staff-that is, even if they are external to the production/ writing /service part of the project'(p. 197). Internal evaluation can be characterised as hierarchical when the upper educational hierarchy of the school judges the lower. It can be also considered as collective or SSE which is based on processes organised and monitoring fundamentally by the teachers on an equal basis, usually with pupils' and parents' participation (Solomon, 1999). This is the form of evaluation that the present study will explore (see Chapter 4).

External evaluation has an externally hierarchical character with the purpose of teachers' control. In external evaluation 'the external evaluator is someone who is at least not on the programme project or programme...It is best to regard externality as a continuum along which one tries to score as high as possible' (Scriven, 1991, p.159). Internal and external evaluation, according to Hopkins (1989) 'differ as to how formal the agreement to evaluate, as to how free the evaluators are to raise issues and interpret findings, and as to how changes in plans will be negotiated' (p. 18).

Finally, evaluation can be applied either as a simple set of procedures or it can take the form of 'disciplined inquiry' (Lincoln and Guba, 1986, p. 550). In the second case, it can apply 'scientific procedures to the collection and analysis of information about the content, structure and outcomes of programmes, projects and planned interventions' (ibid, p. 1). Respecting the nature of social research, evaluation can be based on the qualitative research paradigm but can also be based upon the naturalistic one, attributing different characteristics to it.

Many of these dimensions are likely to formulate into various combinations as they are correlated both conceptually and in their frequency of use. They form different evaluation designs, 'particularly in new evaluation situations' (Hopkins, 1989, p. 18).

The questions that rationally follow are primarily concerned with the reasons for evaluation and the purposes of evaluation in education.

3. 1. 3 The purposes of evaluation in education

Every day people evaluate what they see, hear or buy, reflecting thus their expectations of specific goods, services or tangible objects. Such evaluations are not always concerned with helping bad providers to improve their products or services. Their purpose is rather that of making informed decisions. Sometimes this happens when people, unconsciously or consciously, criticise activities, choices or behaviours of other people. Finally, people apply self-criticism attempting at self-improvement.

In education the landscape of the issue tends to be blurred since functions of evaluation become overlapped or remain implicit. Nevo (1995) acknowledges that 'evaluation can offer systematic evidence that would inform experience and judgment' (p. 8). In other words, evaluation can be considered as a reflection on progress using evaluation data to inform decisions for strategic planning (Rogers and Badham, 1992). Evaluation can be also used for accountability (Scriven, 1967) and it can serve a socio-political function: to motivate and gain public support (Nevo, 1986).

House (1973) stressing the political dimension of evaluation argues that 'contrary to common belief, evaluation is not the ultimate arbiter, delivered from our objectivity and accepted as the final judgment. Evaluation is always derived from biased origins. When someone wants to defend something or to attack something, he often evaluates it. Evaluation is a motivated behaviour - an integral part of the political process of our society' (in MacBeath, 1999, p. 5). This means that evaluation can have consequences for the future of institutions, distribution of resources and the status or lives of individuals and groups (Adelman and Alexander, 1982). To some extent, evaluation can be used by someone to exercise authority becoming, thus, a mechanism of control (Nevo, 1995, p. 8).

Finally, evaluation is used for improvement (Cronbach, 1963, 1982; Stufflebeam et al, 1971; Cronbach et al, 1980, in Nevo, 1995, p. 8; Rogers and Badham, 1992). Thus, the function of evaluation offers three basic alternatives: evaluation for action as

decision making, evaluation for understanding that seeks improvement and evaluation for control (Clarke, 1999, p. 92).

To the question ‘what is the purpose of the evaluation?’ Rogers and Barham (1992) identify two main purposes: accountability ‘to prove the quality’ and development ‘to improve the quality’. Similarly, Davies et al (1990) suggest two basic answers: accountability and feedback aimed at improvement, which covers a wide variety of different situations (p. 167).

Despite the failure of the improvement tradition to establish a common currency of approach or practice in comparison with that of accountability, the above distinction remains strong (ibid, p. 159). The present study considers accountability and improvement as the basic functions of evaluation. The following sections examine them, although school accountability and school improvement, as concepts, are almost completely absent from the Greek educational literature but common in the English one.

3. 1. 3. 1 Evaluation aimed at school accountability

Nevo (1995) has pointed out that ‘evaluation has provided the light and the heart for the accountability movement’ (p. 1). Accountability, however, is a multi-faceted concept and as Burgess (1992) argues, ‘the trouble is that people understand many different things by accountability’ (p. 5). According to a simple definition accountability might be ‘to hold someone in account’ (Sockett, 1980, p. 10). Kogan (1986) defines it as ‘a condition in which individual role holders are liable to review and the application of sanctions if their actions fail to satisfy those with whom they are in an accountability relationship’ (p. 25).

A question that then arises is: “what should teachers and schools be accountable for?” According to MacBeath (1999) ‘schools are primarily accountable for what they do for pupils’ (p. 6). Teachers, as Sockett (1980) believes, should be accountable for outcomes and for the process leading to those outcomes, explaining, however, that teachers and schools should be accountable for what is in their control. This implies that ‘in the same way all sectors of the service should be accountable for those parts

of the service they are responsible for and over which they have autonomy of decision making' (Simons in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 131).

Another question can be: "to whom should teachers and the school be accountable?" In a rather diffuse usage of the term, Becher and Eraut (1977) state that 'an individual is accountable to all those who have placed one in a position of trust and that accountability should be expressed in terms to secure the continued renewal of that trust' (p.11 cited in Scott, 1994, p. 137-138). Kogan (1986) goes further and distinguishes those who have 'hard' sanctions, such as pay, promotion or continued employment, from those who have 'softer' sanctions, such as disapproval (p. 25). Elliot (1979), turning the question to school accountability states: 'In an ideal situation one might argue that a school is accountable to all those groups and agencies who have either a legal or moral right to know about and influence its work' (p. 69).

Taking into account the political dimension of evaluation since it can be used by one group to secure or maintain its interests, to promote or prevent change in power relationships (ibid, p. 146), it should become clear, 'who is directing every decision' (Dike, 1999, p. 13). In any case, 'control of the central evaluation decision is a vital means of determining the direction of accountability relationships' (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 24).

Sockett (1980), considering school accountability, distinguished external and internal form. In a more detailed way, Becher et al (1979) identify three aspects of accountability: contractual accountability to one's employers or political masters, answerability to one's clients (moral accountability) and responsibility to oneself and one's colleagues (professional accountability) (cited in Scott, 1994, p. 138). These aspects of accountability are examined further in the following sections.

Contractual or External accountability

Conventionally, accountability in education tends to focus on external accountability of teachers or institutions to outside evaluators/ inspectors or bodies which have a prior claim to know how well they are performing (Goddard and Leask, 1992, p. 154; Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 24). Usually, external educational evaluators are

‘working with administrators and serving the information needs of “decision makers” (Nevo, 1995, p. 1). Turning to external accountability, evaluation enables ‘the school’s “worth” to be judged by the outside world...is concerned with using evidence to judge the level of competence achieved’(Emerson and Goddard, 1993, p. 193) and attempts at summative data.

External accountability schemes involve influence or conformity to external prescription (Newman et al, 1997, p. 48). They deny ‘school staff both the “ownership” or commitment and the authority it needs to work collaboratively towards the clear purpose of improving student learning’ (ibid, p. 50). The process of accountability schemes, according to Jones (1989), ‘drains away from teachers the sense of involvement in and responsibility of their work’ (p.125). This can result in ‘distorting of reality, since a single measure of output of precisely defined objectives is often the only indicator of value’ (Simons in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 130).

In such cases teachers may feel unfairly asked to give an account and, as Stenhouse (1978) states ‘they devise ways of beating the accountancy without actually improving the balance sheet’ (in Goddard and Leask, 1992, p. 156). This may result ‘in the de-motivation and deskilling of teachers’ (ibid, p. 155) and brings stress and dissatisfaction into teachers’ lives ‘which are increased when external measures are applied in a way that appears insensitive’ (Russell, 1996, p. 28). Thus, external accountability sometimes seems to ‘divert, frustrate even at worst, to paralyse schools’ own efforts to improve’ (ibid, p. 29).

In many cases external accountability schemes emerge as tools that politicians and policy-makers use not only to supplement their decision-making but rather to establish control over peoples’ actions and, at worst, to justify their actions. As House (1993) states ‘evaluation serves important legitimization, information and control functions for governments in advanced capitalist societies’ (p. 52). It can be considered, therefore, as the upward, strict form of accountability.

External accountability can be considered as closely related to the contractual aspect of itself, which, according to Becher et al (1979), has the notion ‘of being accountable to ones’ employers (including the financial and political component) (cited in Scott,

1994), since both of them are imposed and controlled from outside and addressed to outside the school. In this sense, the two terms can be used interchangeably.

Within the context of external accountability I also considered bureaucratic accountability, according to which 'rules and regularities specify how districts, schools and teachers are to behave since '...both policy and practice can be standardised' (Stecher and Kirby, 2004, p. 6). This form of accountability seems to go well with the centralised Greek educational system, where schools or districts are accountable only to local authorities and the government follows rules and regulations since, at present, the system lacks any evaluation process (see Section 2.2).

This study, therefore, only uses the term 'external' to connote the vertical, upwards direction of accountability. Such an external accountability, however, does not address parents and pupils. It does not support the notion of school answerability which the next section examines.

Answerability mode of accountability- school responsiveness

Goddard and Leask (1992) pointed out that 'it is both right and necessary for teachers and education service to be accountable to the community and society for the quality of provision' (p. 154). This implies that schools should provide 'students with the kind of information they need as "evaluation clients"' (Nevo, 1995, p. 1). According to MacBeath (1999), 'our school is to satisfy parents and the public that we are not reckless with the money which taxpayers have invested, nor reckless with the lives and future of children' (p. 5).

The foundation of the central assumption for vertical downward accountability lays in the central relationship of the teacher with the child. The power that teachers have over their pupils motivates them to be accountable to their pupils, even though there are strong demands, caused by dominant pressures for upwards accountability, to meet curriculum and managerial goals (Goddard and Leask, 1992, p. 157). Thus, teachers and schools that are directed by a strong sense of moral accountability are answerable to pupils and their parents.

The notion of an 'answerable' school can be overlapped by the notion of a 'responsive' school (Elliott et al, 1981) where 'responsiveness describes the willingness of an institution - or, indeed, an individual- to respond on its own or on their own initiative, i.e. the capacity to be open to outside impulses and new ideas' (Scott, 1989, p. 17). Responsiveness and, therefore, answerability can take the form of practical discourse or dialogue (Elliott, 1981, p. 21) considering that answerability can enable 'people to influence rationally the conduct of others through interpersonal communication free from constraints imposed by the adoption of special status and roles' (ibid p. 22).

Such a responsiveness and answerability seems to require a society 'where human relationships are not too formalised, standardised and hierarchilised' (Elliott et al, 1981, pp 22) and 'has the responsibility to know what it wants the education service to be accountable for and to know the best way to hold the service accountable so that the profession can be effective' (Goddard and Leask, 1992, p. 154). This means that 'the extent to which schools can be answerable to parents depends on the extent to which responsibility for educational decision making is devolved to them' (Elliott, et al 1981, p. 23). Stronger professional autonomy for teachers and schools means more 'answerable' and 'responsive' teachers and schools (ibid).

In this sense, a 'responsive' and 'answerable' school can also encompass collective accountability to client groups operating in a situation of moral obligation but also intra-professional accountability between individual teachers operating in an open management system (Elliott, et al 1981, p. 22). If this is the case, it might be productive to examine how intra-professional or simply professional accountability could be perceived.

Professional accountability

Professional accountability can be considered as a teacher's responsibility to oneself and one's colleagues (Scott, 1994, p. 138), perceiving responsibility as the 'moral sense of duty to perform appropriately' (Kogan, 1986, p. 26). Since teachers in a school are judged by peers according to professional norms and values (Bush and West-Burnham, 1994, p. 316), professional accountability assumes that strong

accountability can be achieved within a school community, without prescriptive mandates from external agencies (Newman et al 1997, p. 42). Professional accountability, therefore, advocates decision making by all members of the school, regardless of role or status, to see themselves as mutually accountable (Sockett, 1980; Elliott, et al, 1981; Kogan, 1986). In this sense, professional accountability can come close to the notion of 'collegiality' (Elliott, et al, 1981).

Professional accountability is also related to professional self-control. Without involving any legal obligation for the above, this view stresses schools' and teachers' autonomy that fosters the release of human potential (Bush and West-Burnham, 1994, p. 315). As Fidler et al (1997) believe, 'quality in the educational system is best ensured by granting autonomy to teachers, advisers and others who have been trained in, and have access to, relevant knowledge and whose professional ethic leads them to act always in the interest of their 'client' - the pupil or student' (p. 23).

This means that teachers are professionals who have sufficient expertise and competence to determine and apply the best ways of meeting their pupils' needs. In this sense professional accountability is doubted and there is a substantial debate about whether the nature of the knowledge base for teachers' education is developed enough (Stecher and Kirby, 2004, p. 6). Policy circles consider it as weak and insufficient to ensure that education provision responds adequately to the complex demands of a modern economy and society whilst in the more extreme cases they argue that it is completely absent at all (Fidler et al, 1997, p. 23). Nobody, however, can deny its value.

Professional accountability can be more influential because it is self-imposed. It can keep a balance for teachers to be accountable, protecting both schools from demands for product oriented outcomes and their own professionalism through self-evaluation forms, and on the other hand to respond to clients, giving to parents the opportunity to exert direct influence over their children's schooling' (Kogan, 1986). Thus, professional accountability requires a boundary between what teachers are accountable for and what they are professionally responsible for (Sockett, 1980).

The notion of such a professionally accountable school is also tied to the notion of a 'responsive' school, which in turn is closely connected to the notion of self-evaluating or self-reporting school whose process throws 'into sharp relief the issue of internal accountability of those who should be answerable to whom for their actions' (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 24). Thus, accountability can serve its noble purpose: 'to protect the interests of individuals and of democracy is an inherent requirement of public institutions and a defining characteristic of "professionalism"' (MacBeath, 1999, p. 5-6).

Although the above distinctions are valid, most modes of accountability as evaluation purpose incorporate school responsiveness and responsibility (Bush and West-Burnham, 1994) considering that, in a continuously changing society, schools respond and become responsible only 'if it (responsiveness) results in change' (Elliott 1979, p. 69). This brings the notion of the school improvement purpose of evaluation, which is examined in detail in the following section, prior to the school accountability purpose.

3. 1. 3. 2 Evaluation aimed at school improvement

Evaluation data should not be merely collected and provided inside or outside the school for accountability purposes. Evaluation data should be used for improvement. It can provide useful indicators of what works well but also what needs to be improved in schools, given that 'the level of effectiveness of all elements that constitute a given school will never all be at the limit of their possibilities' (Reynolds et al, 1996, p.2). Cousins and Leithwood (1993) argue about the importance of 'knowledge utilisation' that is 'the use of evaluative data or judgments for improvement purposes' (cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 169). This consideration comes close to the school improvement purpose of school evaluation.

What counts as school improvement is a highly contested issue. In various school improvement programmes many writers have adopted various value based definitions. One of the most widely accepted is the definition of the International School Improvement Programme (ISIP) that spanned from 1982 to 1986 in 14 countries and co-ordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Harris, 2002, p. 24). The programme defines school improvement 'as a

systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively' (Van Velzen et al, 1985, p. 48).

According to this definition, evaluation can become, 'a vital and important activity, if for only one reason: it should always be the first step in a systematic school improvement process to gather diagnostic information in order to improve the functioning of the school' (Hopkins, 1989, p. 117). Even though summative data are collected, it can be useful for the ongoing process of improvement.

The definition focuses on the introduction of change into schools that aims at the improvement of the learning process. It pays attention to educational goals such as knowledge, basic skills, self concept, vocational competence, societal skills such as responsible citizenship and equity and others (Hopkins, 1987). These goals can vary from country to country and, in most cases, from school to school according to the needs and values they hold, but also according to the extent to which they are explicitly stated, examined, debated and transformed into school policy (Fidler et al, 1997, p. 250-251).

The definition puts emphasis on the significance of a multi-level perspective on school development and change (Harris, 2002, p. 24). Improvement should be pursued at school processes and pupils' outcomes (Hulpia and Valcke 2005, p.108); in other words, at school and classroom level given that it is difficult to 'change education - even in a single classroom - without also changing the school organisation' (Hopkins, 1987, p. 2). Russell (1996) agrees by saying that 'improvement will only come if changes happen at the same time in school, classroom and between individuals' (p. 25).

School improvement pays attention to the learning conditions. These conditions can be referred to as the organised activities of school, directed by teachers or others that aimed at accomplishing educational goals. They can also refer as well to 'other "related internal conditions" such as the curriculum materials, the school organisation structure, local policy, school climate, role allocation, relations with parents, resource uses and so on' (Hopkins, 1987, p. 2). School improvement, therefore, focuses on the

school internal context and processes of strengthening its capacity to deal with change (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001).

School improvement assumes an 'openness' about the nature of educational goals and decisions upon what the school itself regards as desirable action as well as any intermediate process necessary to achieve these goals (Hopkins, 1987). The explicit belief is that beyond values established centrally, schools can underpin choices towards their decision for improvement. There is still a place for a school to seek and maintain an organisational commitment to certain values about the purposes of education, given that consciously or unconsciously schools form the basis for their choices within the limited freedom they have. This implies a process that involves diagnosis, priority in goal setting according to school culture since the apparently neutral notion of 'school improvement' comes with hidden values (Elliott, 1996).

The definition takes the school at the centre of a real change (Harris 2000, p. 3; Hulpia and Valcke, 2005, p. 108). It advocates a 'bottom-up' approach providing, thus, a way of thinking about school level change contrasted from that of the 'top-down' of 1970 (Harris, 2002, p. 24). It supports that change is 'much more a matter of implementation of new practices at the school level than it is of simply deciding to adopt them' (Hopkins, 1987, p. 1). It views teachers as an intrinsic part of the change that utilises their knowledge rather than relying exclusively on external knowledge (Stoll and Fink, 1996; Harris 2002).

School improvement as a systematic, carefully planned, well-managed and long-term process (Hopkins, 1987, p.1-2) is also characterised as a 'sustained effort'. This implies that the change can be initiated 'by the school itself; by the inspectorate; by the educational authorities (local or national); by support system persons or groups- or by any combination of these (ibid, p. 2). In other words such a process can use all initiators, promoters and activists at all levels, both internally and externally (Harris 2000, p. 6). Finally, while the definition pays attention to the 'one' school, it also stresses the possibility of involvement of more schools in a change process.

School improvement, perceived as the above, emphasises the notion of SSE or school-based review as one of its basic topics (Hopkins, 1987, p. 7; Stoll and Fink, 1996, p.

43; Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, p. 459). School improvement should embody and integrate 'the long-term goal of moving schools towards the position of self-renewal and growth' (Harris, 2000, p. 3) so that what emerges is an integrated whole. Aspinwall et al (1992) have pointed out, 'if evaluation is a stage of the process of change, it can be put off; if it is an integral part, it cannot' (cited in Bush and West-Burnham, 1994, p. 158-159).

This definition characterises the first phase of the school improvement movement (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, p.459, Hulpia and Valcke, 2005, p. 107) that has been criticised as 'loosely connected to student learning outcomes' (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, p. 459). The second phase advocates school decentralisation and self-management. It resulted from the interaction between the school improvement and the school effectiveness communities (ibid p. 460).

Sometimes school improvement can be described in terms of effectiveness -'doing the right things'- or efficiency -'doing things right' (Davies et al, 1990, p. 153). The differences between them, however, seem considerable. While school improvement clearly maintains change direction, school effectiveness without stressing the necessity of changes focuses on assessment scales that attribute the minimum wastage of pupils' talents or other changes. It generally concerns summative outcomes, such as examination results, and primarily signifies school accountability purpose (Reynolds et al, 1996). Are, however, school accountability and school improvement purposes incompatible?

The relationships between these purposes are apparent. Glickman (1990) argues that 'the twin pillars of accountability and empowerment are comparable' (cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 168). Davies et al (1990) speaking about evaluation claims that 'the accountability end of the evaluation would most clearly be related to the static part of the model whereas the improvement function would make most use of the dynamic characteristics' (p. 166). School effectiveness research, therefore, can contribute to the practices of school improvement (Reynolds et al, 1996, Hulpia and Valcke, 2005, p. 111). This implies that school evaluation and, therefore, SSE can combine the purposes.

The third age of school improvement research focuses upon the importance of pupil outcomes and capacity building that can include staff development, medium-term strategic planning with pressure and support. It attempts cultural change adopting a 'mixed' methodological orientation and programmes that relate to, and impact upon teachers and their practices (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, pp 462-463; Hulpia and Valcke, 2005, p. 111).

The present study adopts the position of school improvement as it has been described by Van Velzen et al (1985) stressing also basic characteristics of the second and third ages of the movement. It focuses upon changing school culture that can result in pupils' learning and summarises school improvement as 'a strategy for educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change' (Hopkins, 1996: 32 cited in Harris, 2002, p. 10). Within this context if SSE is to be a stage into a school improvement process that can integrate accountability and improvement purposes, how might SSE be perceived?

3. 2 School self-evaluation

3. 2. 1 School self-evaluation under a scientific framework

SSE originates from Stenhouse's ideas according to which education is comprised by the process of training that is perceived as 'the acquisition of skills involved in the performance of the specific task' as well as by 'instruction' that concerns 'the acquisition and retention of information' (Elliott, 1991, p. 141-142). For Stenhouse, education also includes the process of 'initiation', which is interested in securing commitment and conformity to certain social norms and values.

Finally, education contains 'induction'. It refers to giving access to knowledge which is different from information. Knowledge constitutes structures or systems of thinking about us and the world which are encapsulated within our culture. When knowledge has been clarified as a medium rather than a product of thinking, then the functions of norms, information and skills within the educational process can be grasped (Elliott, 1991, p. 141-143). Stenhouse (1984), considering that learning in education 'is not learning the truth: it is learning the context of a search for truth' (p. 68), he claims that

schools are engaged in an educational process and a process is educational if the learning outcomes becomes unpredictable (MacDonald, 1999).

In Stenhouse's view the objective model of evaluation which perceives evaluation as 'the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are being realised' (Tyler, 1949:105-106 in Hopkins, 1989, p. 3), is appropriate only for the processes of training and instruction. For the processes of initiation and induction this model is not adequate. Stenhouse criticised it as weak, since 'learning is assessed in terms of the development of intellectual powers manifested in its outcomes...' (Elliott, 1991, p. 151).

In 1972, Stenhouse also criticised the 'new wave of evaluators' who although they had argued that 'future efforts to evaluate (these) practices be designed to be responsive to the needs and perspectives of a different audience; illuminative to the complex organisational, teaching and learning processes at issue; relevant to public and professional decisions forthcoming; and reported in language which is accessible to their audience' (MacDonald and Parlett, 1973: 79-80 cited in Stenhouse, 1975, p. 115), they 'still seem to me to be concerned with "merit" or "worth" in a curriculum or educational practice, but their criteria are not clear and their concern with audiences and presentation of results appears to me to mask their problem' (ibid, p. 116).

Stenhouse put forwards the 'research model of evaluation' (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 122), which places evaluation closest to the developmental approach and change, since it comes from inside educational scholarship and research. Thus, 'evaluation leads development and can be integrated with it. Then the conceptual distinction between development and evaluation is destroyed and the two merge as research' (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 122). Under this consideration, Stenhouse advocates the notion of 'teacher as researcher' and relates it with the 'creation of curriculum knowledge'.

Stenhouse's ideas are closely linked to school self-evaluation and have influenced many evaluators who formed a group and worked with him at the Centre for Applied Research in Education (CARE) (Blenkin et al, 1992). During the 1980s and 1990s the

debate concerning SSE gathered increasing momentum and drew interest from many progressive educators.

3. 2. 2 Defining school self-evaluation

For SSE, the literature uses various terms and concepts. SSE and school-based review are basically synonymous and address a plethora of school level evaluation processes, procedures and schemes; they are often used interchangeably (Blenkin et al, 1992, p. 124). For instance, Russell (1996) uses both the terms 'SSE and self-review' to 'describe the blend of monitoring and evaluative procedures' (p. 35). SSE is the most often employed term throughout this study because it is also used in the Greek context (see Section 2. 2).

In the term SSE the word 'self' may refer to different levels. 'Without denying the necessity and potency of private self-evaluation, SSE is usually focused on the whole-school 'on school's curriculum and organisation' (Hopkins, 1989, p. 116). Kemmis (1982) is focused on SSE process and defines it as 'a process of collecting information and implementing procedures which make it possible for those involved to participate in continuous, systematic and critical discussions of educational enterprises' (p. 222).

Similarly, Simons (1998) perceives SSE as a process of convincing, collecting and communicating information and evidence for the purpose of informing decision making, ascribing value to the programme and establishing public confidence in the school. SSE, therefore, can serve several purposes. All purposes, however, can be included within those of school improvement and school accountability.

3. 2. 3 School self-evaluation aimed at school accountability

Although evaluation is usually considered as a tool for accountability, the shift to SSE meant changes in the conventional thinking. Simons (1981) considers SSE as evaluation of teaching and learning processes or the whole process of schooling and suggests it as 'an alternative to current accountability models' (in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 116). SSE attributes this task to school because it recognises that 'whoever

controls the evaluation can control de facto this relationship regardless of the formalised de jure relationships worked out for the institution' (Adelman and Alexander, 1982 p.24).

SSE, by giving teachers control over their own evaluation, gets around the disadvantages of an externally imposed, 'top-down' approach, such as resistance, sabotage, low morale, dissatisfaction all associated with a decrease of a sense of ownership and commitment to the effort (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992) (see Section 3.1.3.1a).

At the same time, SSE does not deny any form of accountability. SSE can become 'a means by which individuals and groups find out and judge their own and each other's activities as these contribute to the institution's *collective* endeavours' (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 24). As it can become a continuing part of professional practice that reflects the quality and breadth of learning and teaching, it can lead to a form of accountability consistent with professionalism (Simons in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p, 132).

SSE can be also considered as preparing schools for answerability and external accountability. SSE 'respects (their) teachers' autonomy, protects their right to privacy and, paradoxical though it may seem, provides a process of making the policies and practices of school more public' (Kogan, 1986, p. 145). MacBeath (1999), acknowledging Nevo's (1995) conclusions, states: 'a school that does not have an internal mechanism for self-evaluation will have difficulties in developing positive attitudes towards evaluation and lack of self-confidence, necessary for constructive dialogue between the school and external evaluation' (p. 93). Within this context, SSE attributes to the political dimension of evaluation a democratic ideology.

3. 2. 3. 1 School self-evaluation under a democratic ideology

SSE assumes that the perspectives of various stakeholders who have 'the most immediate investment in education success' (MacBeath et al, 1996, p. 11) should be taken into account. Crucially, the groups who are likely to be affected by the evaluation outcomes should be invited to take an active part in the process (Fink

1995). More importantly, SSE supports the view that a variety of perspectives can give a fully rounded in-depth picture which can help us to see clearly 'for the benefit of pupils' (Elliott, 1996) (see Chapter, 5.2.2). The importance of obtaining the views of a wide range of participants/stakeholders is increasingly recognised (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 72). SSE, therefore, respects the diversity and recognises the value of pluralism.

Pluralism in the school community should not be grasped as a matter of fact or, as a range diversity of culture, ideology and world view, that there are and regarded in a pluralist society. Such differences are to be valued, welcomed and even encouraged (Amilburu, 1996, p. 135-136). The pluralist perspective of SSE, however, which seeks a range of interests in its formulation, respects commonality and diversity in values, ideals and procedures. This is a characteristic of a democratic school since the respect in which pluralism involves a balance of unifying and diversity is well brought out in the vision of a democratic school (ibid, p. 137).

In this sense, democratic evaluation can be seen as a way of appealing to school internal values and as a way of persuading professionals to create a public sphere of informed deliberation (Simons, 1987, p. 251). It respects as basic principles those of 'confidentiality', 'negotiation' and 'accessibility', recognising 'the right to know' (MacDonald and Walker, 1974). Thus, SSE can protect the interests of individuals and of democracies 'as an inherent requirement of public institutions and a defining characteristic of 'professionalism' (MacBeath, 1999, p. 5-6).

SSE that has a democratic dimension should, according to Cronbach et al (1980), 'offer information for scrutiny and independent interpretation (p.17), to "illuminate, not to dictate the decision"' (p. 155). Within a continuous process of appraisal and modification, 'collective and open', SSE should not treat its findings as an 'objective fact', as a 'terminal point - the product view of evaluation, accepted and acted upon with little debate' (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 183).

Elliott and Kushner (2007) accept that 'the relationship between evaluation and democracy is intimate and essential' (p. 329) but from 1979, Elliott admits that 'within any given political context the answers are not so simple' (p. 69). Despite the

difficulties, such processes 'are challenging the political as well as the content assumptions of orthodox thinking' (Simons in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 116), as they have the potential for supporting development, change and improvement (Bush and West-Burnham, 1994; Adelman and Alexander, 1982), 'developing social capital, promoting civil society and sustaining social cohesion within a culture of diversity' (Elliott and Kushner, 2007, p. 230).

3. 2. 4 School self-evaluation aimed at school improvement

SSE can be directly connected to school improvement. It can help schools examine their own practices and provide useful indications of what works or what needs to be improved. 'SSE relies on the collection of reliable information that can be used to inform decisions and priorities for improvement efforts' (Southworth and Conner, 1999, xi).

Self-appraisal is taken for granted; in Russell's (1996) words, 'self-confrontation for self-improvement' (p. 99). According to Adelman and Alexander (1982), 'SSE aspires to achieve individual or private self-appraisal undertaken with a view to achieving efficiency, productivity and perhaps improvement on one's day-to-day teaching and formal evaluation to aid institutional decision making' (p. 183). Teachers can become better informed about the roles, responsibilities and problems of their colleagues. SSE can also help teachers in identifying effects of policies which require attention at school or classroom level, in enhancing their perspectives or developing their professional skills (Simons in Lacey and Lawton, 1981).

Advantages of SSE are considered to be the sensitivity of all parties that are involved, the development of an interest for a deeper investigation of the educational work, the development of collaboration and co-operation, the promotion of a sense of co-responsibility towards improvement of their work. Initiatives, activities and the ability of school for self-control are also encouraged (Clift et al, 1987; Hargreaves, 1994; in Bagakis, 2001, p. 215). Since SSE leaves the control of the process to schools, it can generate or enhance the feeling and operation of responsibility, necessary for accountability and improvement (Stenhouse, 1975).

SSE can create 'a context of shared understanding within which schools can begin to realise the need for change, develop insights and encourage reflections' (Nixon, 1992, p. 21). Within this context, teachers, studying systematically the school as a whole, can gain a better understanding of it as an organisation. SSE can 'bring about critical awareness, improvement, and change in a practice, setting or system' (Wellington, 1996, p.15). SSE can lead to improvement through explanations, professional development, and promoting understanding of the history, context and culture of the school (Stoll and Fink 1996).

SSE, therefore, can provide learning experiences. It can become a central element in the professional learning and the inquisitive process of school improvement (Nixon, 1992). This learning, in turn, can improve the pupils' learning process. As Simons argues 'the most appropriate justification for SSE is educational and professional' (in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 118).

Thus, SSE can convey 'the idea that the process of evaluation and the development is one and the same thing' (Hopkins, 1989, p. 189) that is consistent with Stenhouse's (1975) view, according to which 'development and evaluation are destroyed and the two merge as research' (see Section 3.2.1). Having been immersed into the conceptual consideration of school evaluation and SSE, I will now attempt a feasible definition of SSE for the needs of the present study.

3. 2. 5 A working definition

In the present study I define SSE as the systematic and continuous process of collecting and proving valid and descriptive rather than judgmental information about school work as a school-based democratic activity, which engages all interested groups in critical discussions, intending that school accountability and school improvement be integrated within its process.

Conclusion

Evaluation, as assessing the value of students, teachers, schooling or educational work is a complex issue since the outcomes in education are not tangible. On the other

hand, even in descriptive evaluations, valued judgments cannot be avoided. Evaluation can take a lot of forms with various terminologies according to its function, direction or the manner of its conduction. The basic purpose of school evaluation can be considered school accountability and school improvement.

Evaluation, aimed at school accountability can be directed vertically and hierarchically upwards, outside the school as external or contractual accountability. This tends to be the stricter aspect of evaluation since in many cases it can be used for political or ideological justification. Evaluation can also serve the vertical downwards responsibility of a school to answer to pupils and their parents, school answerability or school responsiveness.

Finally, evaluation can be addressed horizontally within the teaching profession contributing, thus, to professional responsibility. In all cases, evaluation intending at accountability should be linked to feelings of responsibility. Evaluation, more importantly, can work for the school improvement purpose. Then, it should be integrated into the systematic process which attempts at achieving the educational goals and takes place within the school if the internal conditions are appropriate.

SSE, which stems from Stenhouse's (1975) ideas, is a systematic process of gathering information for school work, engaging all interested groups in democratic procedures. It can apply to school professional responsibility and answerability without rejecting external accountability. SSE can be particularly used for school improvement purposes, integrating the evaluation findings into the school policy. At the same time, SSE acknowledges that the process of the activity creates a context which can also lead to school learning and, therefore, to school improvement.

Taking into account that SSE as a deliberate process constitutes a new undertaking for school in the Greek educational context, the study also explores SSE from another aspect: that of innovation. The next section undertakes this investigation acknowledging its importance for the 'process implementation'.

CHAPTER FOUR:

SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION AS AN INNOVATION

Introduction

Considering that the programme was initiated and implemented for the first time in the school, this chapter attempts to examine SSE as an innovation. It assumes that an innovation is not implemented in a vacuum but within a particular school context, which can affect the process implementation but also be affected by it. Thus, the chapter initially clarifies the concept of innovation and distinguishes it from that of change. It approaches innovation from a cultural and political perspective since it puts emphasis upon the culture and the relations of power and authority that exist within a school context.

This consideration calls for a deeper exploration of school culture. Thus, the chapter attempts to approach the concept of school culture and provide an answer to the question of how school culture can be identified and whether it can change. Finally, the chapter elucidates the particular culture that would be supportive for the implementation of a change process.

The last part of the chapter looks into approaches of SSE. Initially, it examines its origins and explores schemes that are somehow connected to the proposed framework. The section distinguishes them in those that were initiated by local authorities, those initiated centrally and those that were implemented by individual researchers. The chapter closes by exploring the reasons that supported the choice of MacBeath's framework of SSE as applicable to the Greek context.

4. 1 School self-evaluation as an innovation

4. 1. 1 A conceptual approach to innovation

Innovation, according to Larson (1992) 'is typically thought of as an intentional act of introducing something new into a situation' (p. 12). Innovation, defined as a planned change, is distinguished from an accidental change which 'may occur whether willed

or not, whether planned or not, due to forces both within and outside the organisation' (ibid, p. 12). The definition proposes that an innovation is always a change, while a change is not always an innovation (Larson, 1992).

In this study, 'innovation' is basically referred to as the intentionally implemented SSE programme, while 'change' is particularly referred to as change or changes that are expected as the outcomes of the innovation implementation. It accepts change as 'a dynamic and continuous process of development and growth that involves reorganisation in response to "felt needs"' (Morrison, 1998, p. 13).

The study focuses on the innovation SSE programme as a planned change. It also pays particular attention upon planned and unplanned changes that are expected as the outcomes of the innovation and expects that such changes can range 'from simple alteration or substitution of practices to the levels of restructuring ideas and systems and adopting new values' (Larson, 1992, p. 12; Morrison, 1998) (see Section 3.2.4). As Harris (2002) argues 'any innovation will inevitably lead to other change and have a range of consequences' (p. 40). In many cases, however, the term 'change' may be also used as innovation.

The study recognises that the programme of SSE is not an event, it is a process of innovation. This process that is implemented within the school context can help it to 'adapt external changes to internal purpose' (Hopkins, 1996, p. 33). Thus, the ultimate improvement of school can come from within. This 'implies a very different way of thinking about change than the ubiquitous 'top down' approach so popular with policy makers' (Halsall, 1998, p.8). This 'top-down' aspect of SSE implementation requires a deeper consideration of school context. The next section explores this issue.

4. 1. 2 School self-evaluation as an innovation

The innovation of SSE is not to be implemented in a vacuum. It is to be implemented within a school context with its particular circumstances and the 'related internal conditions' (see Section 3.1.3.2). The study 'without denying differences in individual skills, interests, commitment, curiosity or persistence' accepts that 'the prevailing patterns of interaction and interpretations in each building demonstrably creates

certain possibilities and sets certain limits' (Little, 1982: 338 cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p.80). This implies that a school context constitutes a world composed by people who fit into one or more interrelating social, political, and cultural systems that have particular meaning for them.

The above consideration means that the study, within school context, respects the formal power (authority) and the informal power (influence) in teachers' internal but also external relationships, which permeate every human setting and affect the goals that should be and how they should be achieved (Larson, 1992; Harris and Bennett, 2001). It acknowledges that innovations are rarely neutral. They tend to advance or enhance the position of certain groups and disadvantage or damage the position of others (Ball, 1987). The study accepts, therefore, 'the programme evaluation as a political process' (Elliott and Kushner, 2007, p. 323) and pays attention to the inevitable conflict of values and goals that accompany any innovation (Larson, 1992).

This consideration assigns to innovation a political perspective and accepts that change and politics (or micropolitics) are found together (Harris and Bennett, 2001, p. 78). Under a democratic consideration of the present innovation, however, the study also takes account of issues of co-operation, negotiation and mutual adaptation among the participating groups (see 3.2.3.1).

At the same time, the present study goes deeper. It gives emphasis on the school culture and accepts that an innovation is found in an interactive relationship with it. Considering that 'change is approached differently in different contexts' (Southworth and Conner, 1999, p. 9), the goals of innovation and the procedures of its implementation are expected to be modified and accommodated within the particular school culture (Larson, 1992; Harris, 2002). The innovation, therefore, should be compatible with the school culture - the 'intangible or "higher order" domain' (Hopkins and Jackson, 2003, p. 88) - which, in turn, is expected to be influenced by the innovation itself.

It becomes apparent that cultural analysis can lead to a deeper understanding of how things are done in a particular school, providing an indicator of the match between internal and external school values and facilitating assessment of areas of activities

that are open or in conflict with the desired culture (Bush and West-Burnham, 1994, p. 104). In this sense, a question should be answered: How is school culture perceived?

4. 1. 2. 1 A conceptual approach to school culture

In a simple way, culture can be defined as ‘the way we do things around here’ (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991, p. 17). What and how teachers do and think, however, is fundamentally influenced by their beliefs, assumptions and values (Fullan, 1991, p. 117). Thus, ‘culture is best thought of as the procedures, values and expectations that guide people’s behaviour within an organisation (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991, p. 17).

In a more detailed definition, Schein (1985) argues that culture ‘is a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and integration- that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore has to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems’ (p. 9). A first question that is expected to be answered is: How the culture in a school can be created?

Schools are shaped by their history, context and the people within them and school culture by the values and beliefs of teachers, parents, headteachers, counsellors and all those who participate in school life. Teachers in a school, particularly the older ones, participate decisively in the formulation of the school culture. School culture can be also influenced by the distinct headteacher’s characteristics (Kavouri, 1998, p. 181).

Headteachers can make key decisions about the vision and direction of a school, motivate people and foster a culture towards the desired vision (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001) although Schein (1992), speaking about new leaders, remarks: ‘but leaders are only one of a number of influences on culture’ (p. 5). In Alvesson’s view, the power of symbols, such as myths, fairy tales, stories, ceremonies, and rituals can also play an important role in the shaping of school culture (Harris and Bennett, 2001, p. 127)

On the other hand, schools form their own culture partly by the environment, the circumstances, such as the form and the number of pupils, as well as the socio-economic level of the population of the school area. Furthermore, school culture is influenced by external political and economic forces and changes in national or local policies (Kavouri, 1998, p. 181).

Finally, changes in society related to learning of the pupils' population, organisational management, rapid technological development or the changing role of women pose challenges to a school's culture (Dalin, 1993 cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 83). In general, school culture can be considered as created through the interaction of people (Harris and Bennett, 2001).

Within the school culture, the organisational culture which primarily interests this study is defined as 'a set of assumptions, beliefs and values that predominate in an organisation, and which operate in an unconscious or semi-unconscious way' (Halsall, 1998, p. 29). Organisational culture, in Schein's (1985) words, 'is the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operates unconsciously, and that define in a basic 'taken-for-granted' fashion an organisation's view of itself and its environment' (p. 6).

Although questions can be addressed about whether the culture in an organisation can be viewed holistically (Harris and Bennett, 2001, p. 126), the focus is on the notion of a single or dominant culture that is reflected by the meaning of 'shared' values and can be grasped 'as one way of stressing the distinction from the subjective perspective' (Bush, 1995, p. 132).

The possible existence of subcultures, however, which reflect cultural differences between various groups or subgroups within the school community, is also taken into account (Harris and Bennett, 2001, p. 127). This implies that although values and beliefs that underpin the behaviour and the attitudes of individuals may not always be explicit (Bush, 1995, p. 131), school culture cannot be considered as intangible. Then, the question that arises is: how can school culture be identified?

According to a descriptive definition ‘culture is the *standard practices*, the *meanings* assigned to these practices, and the *processes* that establish and maintain these practices and meanings’ (Trumbull 1989:458 cited in Blenkin et al, 1992, p. 44). This implies that school culture can be expressed by the stated and explicit school regularities and norms that, according to Deal and Kennedy (1983:4), ‘evolve in working groups and in rules of the game for getting along in the organisation’ (cited in Fullan, 1991, p. 81). Otherwise, aspects of culture can be extracted by ‘the perceptions of persons in the organisation that reflect those norms, assumptions and beliefs’ (Owens, 1995, p. 82).

Under this consideration, school culture is often reflected in how individuals interact and how they behave towards one another or what they expect of one another. Assumptions, beliefs and values can be detected as they are exposed through staff room conversations or in guiding philosophies, for example in pupil-centred teaching-learning approaches (Schein 1985). Thus, school culture can be studied by observing the behaviour of people and listening to what they say, ‘the wellspring from which the values and characteristics of an organisation arise’ (Owens, 1995, p. 82).

Finally, culture is often revealed by organisation structures that unfold how teachers work together, thus revealing their professional relationships. Halsall (1998) believes that, while it is difficult for someone to ‘see’ school culture, there is little doubt that people, especially those with experience of several organisations, can often -and quickly get a sense of it’ (p. 29).

The present study followed Schein’s (1992) analysis that suggests that culture has to deal with an external orientation, the environment in which the organisation finds itself and with the internal mode of work of the organisation. Thus, the study explores: the external orientation of school culture such as attitudes to innovation, and then it can be characterised as prospector, defender or reactor; the school aims, and then it can be classified as academic, balanced or social; and attitudes to parents and then it can be differentiated as customer, partner or mentor.

The study also examines the internal orientation of organisational culture, such as leadership style, seen as autocratic, consultative, participative, working together;

known as collaborative, co-operative, independent and relationships with children; classified as friendly, business like and respective (Fidler et al, 1997, p. 40-41). Considering that 'when culture works against you, it is nearly impossible to get anything done' (Deal and Kennedy, 1983 cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 80), the next section attempts to examine the characteristics of the culture in a school that can support the initiation, implementation and integration of an innovation.

4. 1. 2. 2 The supportive school culture for implementing an innovation

At first level "micro" personal variables, such as values, abilities, motivation, relations with peers and supervisors, play a major role in one's reaction to change while at school level other organisational variables are incorporated' (Larson, 1992, p. 25). The study, however, assumes what research has indicated: successful change occurs when teachers develop shared beliefs of what ought to be, have a clear focus on improving teaching and learning and are involved collaboratively in decision making and have a means to deal with issues openly (Hargreaves, 1994; Darling and Hammond, 1995; Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000; Harris, 2002).

Similarly, according to Stoll and Fink (1996), schools should present two basic norms: 'the first concerns the existence of shared goals, the pursuit of a common vision and a shared sense of direction. The second is collegiality as mutual assistance, joint work and sharing - the sense of 'we are working on it together' (in Halsall, 1998, p. 30). Russell (1996) also states that successful schools are those that deliberately and collaboratively explore what happens in teaching, encourage mutual support and work together towards broad agreement on educational values (p. 27-28).

This means that schools should be willing to get involved in an implementation process (Dalin, 1993, p. 101); are collaborative with collegiate working relationships (Harris, 2002); are 'open' to innovation and have a means to deal with issues openly (Darling and Hammond, 1995 cited in Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000, p. 52). Schools which, within an open and trusting environment, constantly encourage everyone to be seeking to improve and take risks to become involved in collaborative work, respect one another's views, knowledge and experiences, recognise the value of a common ground and the contribution that individuals make, can support SSE implementation.

In a similar consideration, successful innovation depends on a school's 'internal conditions' or 'readiness' or 'capacity', widely used terms, which can be defined as the collective competency of school as an entity to bring about effective change (Hopkins and Jackson in Harris et al, 2003, p. 87-88). The cultural dimension of school capacity, however, refers to 'the territory of shared values, social cohesion, trust, well-being, moral purpose, involvement, care, valuing and being valued' (ibid p. 89).

This dimension of school capacity implies the professional learning community as people, interpersonal and organisational arrangements working in developmental or learning synergy and the idea of leadership capacity as a route to generating the moral purpose, shared values, social cohesion and trust to make this happen and to create impetus and alignment (Hopkins and Jackson in Harris et al, 2003, p. 89). This implies that change leaders, having understood the content and the process of change as the outcome of their own motivations and the resulting combination of developed expertise and commitment (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001, p. 136), undertake the initiation and support of a systematic, co-ordinated and well-managed change process (Dalin, 1993, p. 101). Within such a culture the innovation is expected to result in real change.

The expected changes, 'can range in magnitude from simple alteration or substitution of practices to the levels of restructuring ideas and systems, and adopting new values' (Larson, 1992, p. 12) (see Section 2.24). Halsall (1998) notes that 'the notion which is reinforced time and again is that the crucial change is not to do with this or that innovation or development priority, but with changing the culture of an institution' (p. 29). Thus, the question that arises is whether school culture, as expressed by teachers' values, assumptions and beliefs, can change, and how.

4. 1. 2. 3 Change of school culture

Some writers suggest that once the school culture is formed, it becomes fixed. It functions as a stabilising force, particularly for long-standing members. 'Culture', however, according to Aristotle and Cassier 'is a symbolic world that may create and unite the physical world in order to inhabit it' (in Amilburu, 1996, p. 10). This implies

that culture in a school, created by its participants and by surrounding forces, inevitably changes to define, construct or produce a new conception of professional practice.

In a similar way, Bolman and Deal (1991) perceive culture as both product and process: 'as product, it embodies the accumulated wisdom of those who were members before. As a process, it is continually renewed and recreated as new members are taught the old ways and eventually become teachers themselves' (cited in Hopkins and Hargreaves, 1994, p. 250). Thus, culture as a product expresses its fixed and static characteristic while as a process expresses its dynamic characteristic since it constantly evolves (Stoll and Fink, 1996).

In terms of change 'values that underlay norms and actions are much more difficult to reach than surface behaviours' (Rossman et al, 1988 in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 100). Thus, changes in teachers' behaviour are more likely to occur before changes in beliefs (Southworth and Conner, 1999, p. 8) while beliefs held less dear are more open to debate, refinement and change (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Change in culture, therefore, means a difficult and complex exchange of meanings and signifying practice.

Confirming these difficulties, Wilkins and Patterson (1985) propose that 'large scale change may need to be accomplished in stages over a number of years and as circumstances permit' (cited in Fidler et al, 1997, p. 51). The change may be brought about 'by a long period of unfreezing followed by intense discussion and persuasion, and general acceptance' (ibid, p. 50). Thus, the complex process of culture change takes time while as Deal and Kennedy (1988) identify 'evident crisis', when an organisation is in trouble, 'attractiveness of change' and 'strength of present culture' can play a serious role in change of school culture.

Rossman and his colleagues (1988) identify three processes in cultural change according to the degree of explicit and conscious focus on it. Evolutionary change is implicit, unconscious and unplanned since over time norms, values and beliefs are introduced as others steadily fade. Addictive change may or may not be explicit, as norms, beliefs and values become suddenly modified when new initiatives are

introduced. Finally, transformative change is explicit and conscious, with deliberate attention to changing norms, beliefs and values (in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 89).

In the present study the expected cultural change can combine the three perspectives. SSE as an innovation that aspires explicitly and consciously a change in norms, beliefs and values attributes a transformative character to it. Since the process is expected to be implemented over a period of time within which norms, beliefs and values can also change implicitly and unconsciously, the change can also take an evolutionary dimension. As the innovation is expected to result in shift on school policy, the school may find itself involved in additive change.

Having dealt with the issues of evaluation, SSE in education and SSE as a school-based innovation as well as having thoroughly decided what SSE should entail, my next concern was to place some sort of framework for choosing and arranging the process. It would hardly be advisable particularly for new researchers to try to produce a framework from scratch. I decided that a good solution would be to immerse myself in the literature already available. The next section explores that literature.

4. 2 Approaches and models of school self-evaluation

4. 2. 1 The origin of school self-evaluation

This study mainly investigates SSE approaches in the UK where they have been mainly grasped and cultivated. SSE was particularly known in the late 1970s and early 1980s, all having in common a concern to enable teachers to play a much greater part in professional and curriculum renewal (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 10). For Clift, et al (1987), however, ‘the roots of the concern for SSE can be found in four aspects of development: a) development of accountability, b) curriculum development, c) curriculum review and d) staff development (p.1). Although they are not distinct, they provide a complete explanation for the rise of SSE.

The movement arose as a response to increasing accountability demands. In 1976, the Great Debate, which followed Prime Minister Callaghan’s speech at Ruskin College, posed questions about the performance of schools (Davies et al, 1990, p. 156).

Schools and teachers were called to become more publicly accountable since the public demand for quality in publicly available education was growing. The DES Circular 14/77 reminded Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) of their curricular responsibilities, including monitoring and evaluation (Blenkin et al, 1992, p.124).

The 'hard' responses to these demands were more testing of children and more inspection in schools. It seemed, however, that the increased inspections by 'outsiders' such as local inspectors and HMI had neither dramatic effect on school improvement nor on school accountability (Hopkins, 1987). Some LEAs proposed certain approaches of SSE. However, under the pressure of the accountability demands, schools that undertook these approaches had merely to respond to them (Clift et al, 1987, p.2).

In the 1960s and early 1970s the movement for curriculum development aimed at change and improvement. A whole series of central initiatives and documents put forward and encouraged the idea of reviewing the curriculum in schools. The Schools Council adopted change as 'a more localised strategy, with support given for small-scale initiatives having a high degree of teacher involvement and school specificity' (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 10).

This movement appeared partly as a reaction to the rather central approach to curriculum innovation in projects of Schools Council and partly to their lack of success. Even though initially the documents appeared to have little effect on schools, gradually schools began to take on review activities (Clift et al, 1987, p. 3). This movement gave rise to a more constructive approach to SSE.

In the 1980s, the focus moved towards accountability to the effectiveness of individual teachers and SSE. The central idea of this movement, however, was that of 'teacher as researcher' as it developed within the important and sophisticated project of Lawrence Stenhouse. Considering teachers as mediators of real change in pupils' learning, 'his approach had more of a "research" rather than an "evaluation" orientation, but the idea of improvement through teacher investigation is, in effect, self-evaluation' (Clift et al, 1987, p. 3) (see Section 3.2.1).

More recently, the concern moved towards the improvement of the whole staff, presupposing that in service training can address schools' particular problems. This aspect directed the movement to a more school-based, school-focused or school-centred approach. The movement combined with the educational management tradition and put emphasis on schools as organisations that need improvement (Clift et al, 1987, p.4). The movement gained popularity in LEAs. In the following years a number of SSE projects were initiated that shared common roots with various procedures and outcomes.

It would have been easy for me to get confused by the plethora of approaches and models of evaluation which usually reflect either the author's evaluation method or 'an approach to a specific evaluation problem' (Hopkins, 1989, p. 18). Few of them, however, provide careful step-by-step instructions for new researchers to follow. The next section highlights some of those that affected my thought and choices. Although, 'seen as a whole the literature, whether from academic or practice-led origins, is fragmented and non-cumulative' (Osborne in Davies, et al, 1990, p. 156), the section separates approaches according to their origin and distinguishes those initiated by LEAs, those led centrally, and those that were implemented by individual researchers.

4. 2. 2 Schemes of school self-evaluation initiated by local authorities

The first schemes were initiated by LEAs as 'a response to accountability pressure' (Simons 1987). The LEAs in an attempt to encounter both the reduction of financial resources and the tradition of teacher autonomy, offered the least costly SSE schemes with the most acceptable way of monitoring the work of schools (Blenkin et al, 1992, p. 125).

The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) began with the initiative 'Keeping the School under Review'. It spread rapidly and by the middle of 1982, four-fifths of LEAs in England and Wales had been involved in devising schemes for systematic SSE, while about one third had already published them (Hopkins, 1987, p. 46). A variety of schemes were presented. Most were voluntary and "free-standing" while some were the counterpart of programmes of testing or inspections (ibid, p. 46). Their

most common feature was a checklist of classified questions about the nature and purpose of schooling against which teachers and schools were expected to evaluate. The approaches, however, contained a contradiction. Although their legitimating rhetoric advocated power sharing and joint responsibility within schools as well as between them and local authorities, the schemes were mainly devised by administrators or advisers while at school level only headteachers usually participated (Blenkin et al, 1992, p. 125). They also assumed hierarchical organisational and curricular structures with an objective model of curriculum planning, sometimes in explicitly behaviouristic terms. Thus, 'the schemes contributed, covertly, to the maintenance of the status quo and reinforced rather than challenged a technicist view of curriculum' (ibid, p. 125). Some of the most representative locally-led examples are those that were initiated by Oxfordshire LEA (1979, 1982-84) and Solihull LEA (1979).

4. 2. 2. 1 The Oxfordshire scheme

The Oxfordshire scheme intended to provide an 'aid to teachers, individually or collectively, and schools in examining the value of what they do; a starting point for discussion and further questioning...of what it is achieving' (Clift et al, 1987, p. 13). Hopkins (1987) identifies: 'the double purpose was clearly to promote greater contractual accountability and the improvement of educational practice in schools considering, however, attitudes to school improvement as a separate factor' (p. 54). The scheme, however, that had obviously similar questions with those of the ILEA project, only partly met its intentions. It could neither promote school accountability nor develop teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for school evaluation and improvement (Hopkins, 1987).

At that time the attempt was considered as immature for both the particular scheme and the general notion of SSE since 'there were no clear views about how the report should be prepared, what evidence should be considered, and to what extent assistant teachers should be consulted or expect to participate' (Clift et al, 1987, p. 12). An issue that arose was the contrast between 'the careful "political" preparation for the introduction of the scheme and the almost lack of technical preparation' (ibid, p. 26).

4. 2. 2. 2 The Solihull Schemes

The example of the Solihull Schools' initiative for secondary schools in 1979 and for primary schools in 1980 had a diagnostic and remedial character. They intended 'to improve the quality of education offered in our schools'. The project for secondary schools contained a list of statements hierarchically grouped in sub-headings. Teachers had to consider collectively the statements, to rate them according to their importance for their school and then to rate the effectiveness of their school in a voluntary way, without any timetable for the use of the project and without the obligation of producing any report.

Although the literature on the issue had grown and awareness among practitioners of what it entails had been increased, the project could not give any indication of the effectiveness of SSE in promoting changes in schools. The schemes were considered as created ready made systems of SSE (Clift et al, 1987, p. p. 54-56).

In general LEAs approaches cannot be considered 'as representative of school self-evaluation *per se*' (Blenkin et al, 1992, p. 126). Fidler et al (1997) admit that 'school self-evaluation began in the 1970s but evidence showed that teachers were rather better in identifying areas for improvement than in bringing about improvement' (p. 63). Responding to deficiencies of these schemes other forms of institutional self-evaluation developed. The most widely known and used was that of centrally-led Guidelines for Review and Internal Development in Schools (GRIDS).

4. 2. 3 Centrally-led initiatives of school self-evaluation

4. 2. 3. 1 Guidelines for Review and Internal Development in Schools (GRIDS)

Unlike the LEAs' SSE schemes GRIDS in 1981 'was designed specifically to promote school development rather than to fulfill any accountability function' (Reid et al 1987 in Blenkin et al, 1992, p. 126). Its origin was, in part, from the 'staff development' and 'management' tradition and its purpose was to improve the teaching and learning process with the opening statement: 'when a school is reflecting upon and assessing its own work, then it is engaging in self-review or self-evaluation (McMahon et al, 1984, p. 5).

GRIDS assumed that the whole-school staff held the key to improvement. It was basically a structured, five-stage, linear process of review and development. Each stage was broken down into 19 steps. Thus, a systematic step-by-step approach was recommended throughout. During the initial stage the staff had to answer a questionnaire and state individually and anonymously priorities for improvement on a number of school issues (Hopkins, 1990, in Blenkin et al, 1992, p. 126). The collected evidence contributed to determine the perceived effectiveness of existing policy and practice.

GRIDS' approach supported 'the democratic principles of collaboration and consultation' (Blenkin et al, 1992; Ferguson et al, 2000, p. 137) since 'all the staff should be involved in the process of evaluation and should control the reporting' (Clift et al, 1987, p. 6). The scheme was also trying to keep accountability considerations out of the evaluation process as 'there were no arrangements for classroom monitoring and, because of the prevailing climate of opinion, it might have been very difficult for any head to assert his or her right to monitor teaching quality by making observations of teachers during lessons' (Ferguson et al, 2000, p. 137).

The scheme was criticised as having conceptual and methodological deficiencies which limited its potential to promote educational change... It clearly embodies a mechanistic and simplistic view of change, keeping a technological perspective...(Blenkin et al, 1992, p. 126). The project, therefore, was strong on what schools should evaluate but weak on 'how to do it' (Clift et al, 1987, p. 6).

The project promised that 'development follows from review' (Hopkins, 1990, p. 123) 'as night follows day'. However, it could not associate a well-established theoretical relationship between review and development. It contrasts with 'the premise of the action research which envisages review and development as an integral part of the same process, where in Stenhouse's (1975) terms, "conjectures and refutations are woven into one logic" (p, 24).

The approach also criticised as putting emphasis on the school as an organisation rather than on its central educative purpose as it is expressed in and through the curriculum, while the procedures that recommended assumed hierarchical

organisational structures because the overall control and direction of the review was to remain firmly in the hands of the headteacher or senior management (Blenkin et al, 1992, p. 127).

Finally, research revealed that GRIDS did not address issues of school culture. It assumed a degree of homogeneity and consensus which belied the political realities of schools (Blenkin et al 1992, p. 127). Thus the scheme was characterised 'as a complex, five-stage, process-oriented, evaluation system which was elaborated and time-consuming and fell into disuse before it could have any great effect on schools' (Ferguson et al, 2000, p. 137).

For certain periods of time, centrally-led initiatives as well as schemes driven by local authorities had obviously considerable impact on schools locally. Osborne (1990), however, accepts that 'neither they, nor the flood of books, articles and LEA generated guidelines seem to have created a self-sustaining process of formal evaluation in our school' (in Davies, et al, 1990, p. 155). Another influential centrally-led approach was that of OFSTED (1998).

4. 2. 3. 2 Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED)

In its publication, 'School Evaluation Matters', OFSTED presented a framework that offered criteria for SSE the same as those used in all schools by inspectors. This was considered as advantageous because 'a common language has developed in the work of schools, expressed through criteria. Teachers and governors know that the criteria reflect things that matter' (OFSTED, 1998a, p.18).

Ferguson et al (2000) distinguish the OFSTED self-evaluation process that uses the criteria from a variety of other self-evaluation methods that do not use them and advocates 'self-inspecting' rather than 'self-evaluating' schools (p. 6). They suspect self-evaluation as a 'soft option' for schools, which tend to present themselves in a favourable way. They conclude their research by saying that 'there can be no certainty that schools will consider this a priority or be able to find the time or resources to conduct self-evaluation (self-inspection) rigorously and systematically'.

They support the view that only an external inspection maintaining a proper distance and neutrality can provide ‘an independent and unbiased opinion’, although they believe that ‘OFSTED’s preoccupation with its accountability function prevents inspectors from giving attention to school improvement’ and suggests that ‘provision for the improvement and accountability functions of inspection should be separated’ (Ferguson et al, 2000, p. 140).

4. 2. 3. 3 ‘How good is our school?’

Comparing the English and Scottish education sectors, the latter seems to maintain a sense of partnership and co-operation between the state and education that is missing in England. This seems to influence areas of evaluation approaches which, while in Scotland are mostly directed at the school’s own improvement efforts, in England the focus is still placed on accountability measured by external agents.

In 1996 the Scottish Office published a book concerning SSE where the HM Chief Inspector of Scottish Schools, Mr McGlynn states ambitiously: ‘...our new and refined set enhanced by support materials keeps our schools at the forefront of development worldwide’ (The Scottish Office). The book provides examples of SSE and contains 33 performance indicators to be used in Primary, Secondary Schools and Special Education as well as advice to schools on how to use them. It does not, however, provide a framework for the whole SSE process. It is therefore helpful if it is used with other models which provide guidelines such as that previously published by Scottish Authorities.

Apart from the locally and centrally-led approaches to SSE, individual or group researchers have developed their own frameworks or models. The following section attempts to present some of the most important of them that somehow related to the attempted endeavour.

4. 2. 4 Individually-led approaches to school self-evaluation

4. 2. 4. 1 H. Simons

H. Simons (1987) developed a well-known approach to evaluation that aspires to reflect on the process of teaching, learning and schooling. Simons pays attention to both intended and unintended outcomes of education. Even though accomplishment of the pre-set goals is important, she considers of greater significance other outcomes and successes of a programme or a service that it may lead to, even if they have never initially aimed at it (Simons, 1987, p. 197-198).

Simons suggests the model of 'process evaluation' which aspires to reflect the process of teaching and learning (in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 114). It provides an interesting framework for evaluation of the whole-school where teachers act as evaluators following democratic dimensions (Bagakis, 2001, p. 24). She stresses that evaluation intending at accountability needs different criteria from those that the process evaluation demands, given that the two forms serve completely different purposes: the first one intends to provide establishment and the second one self-improvement through supportiveness, consultation and development (Dimitropoulos, 1999, p. 99). Such a process evaluation is a form of SSE.

A question that then arises is whether the internal and external evaluation can also fulfil the demand for accountability. Simons, in her practical model, integrates successfully internal and external evaluation towards accountability and school improvement. She maintains that although, in the short run, self-evaluation should be separated from requirements of accountability, in the long term it can provide an effective and constructive model of accountability. (Simons, 1987, p. 198)

4. 2. 4. 2 D. Hopkins

Hopkins (1989) points out that 'evaluation needs to be linked to development' (p. 3). Linking evaluation to improvement, Hopkins distinguishes three particular approaches. The first: 'evaluation of school improvement is usually concerned with evaluating the outcomes of an improvement effort' (ibid, p. 186). It tends to be 'product' evaluation, dealing primarily with qualitative and statistical data. When

‘process’ evaluation is employed in it too, it tends to be a search for the process’s outcomes (Cullingford, 1997, p. 162).

The second approach, ‘evaluation for school improvement’, is best described as formative evaluation focusing on facilitation of change (Hopkins, 1989, p. 188). Evaluation and change, however, remain distinct (Cullingford, 1997, p. 163). Closer to SSE towards improvement is the third perspective: ‘evaluation as school improvement’. It attempts ‘to convey the idea that the process of evaluation and the development is one and the same thing’ (Hopkins, 1989, p. 189).

Although Hopkins does not support Stenhouse’s view that evaluation should not involve judgments, the above argument covers Stenhouse’s (1975) belief that ‘evaluation should, as it were, lead to development and be integrated with it. Thus, the conceptual distinction between development and evaluation is destroyed and the two merge as research’ (p. 122). Considering that collaboration is another cornerstone in Hopkin’s ideology, ‘evaluation as school improvement’ is the approach which offers schools the best opportunity to build a continuously developing culture (Cullingford, 1997, p. 169).

4. 2. 4. 3 S. Russell

Russell, S. (1996) shares the developmental view of Simons and Hopkins and emphasises the importance of Stenhouse’s belief in the practice of evaluation process. She points out that schools need to choose a system which fits their particular situation and maintains that successful schools are those which stress collaboration and mutual support, working towards broad agreement on educational values. She calls these schools ‘learning organisations’, currently a fashionable, common term in both management and evaluation literature.

Russell’s proposal is practical and provides a step-by-step approach to evaluation. It begins with definitions of concepts, leading to the planning and implementation process and writing the report, and discussion about whom to report to. The school should be able to undertake its own improvement and reporting procedures. Like

Simons she believes that systems of school self-review provide both the means to improve and the assurance that improvement is taking place.

Russell also addresses the debate about external and internal evaluation and suggests that it is important for schools to adapt the idiosyncrasies and particularities of each school while it is equally important for schools to be aware of the national requirements of standards (p. 18-19). She encourages schools to look for ways of collaborating and in seeking a working partnership with external inspectors, minimising, thus, the negative impact of external publicity.

4. 2. 4. 4 John MacBeath

In 1996 MacBeath, one of the widely known writers and lecturers of evaluation introduced with his colleagues at Strathclyde University their approach to school evaluation. Their book 'Schools Must Speak for Themselves' (1999), reports on a study which was carried out in 1995 under the commission of the National Union of Teachers (NUT).

The starting point of questioning, is similar to GRIDS. The main question, however, is: what parts could teachers, pupils, parents and other groups play in the production of their own framework and instrument for SSE? MacBeath puts particular emphasis on support material. He provides step-by step guidance to those who want to develop their own methods and tools of interest. MacBeath also examines the relationships between external and internal evaluation and encourages schools to undertake such work. The relevance of this approach with the present study is examined in the following section.

4. 3 The choice of the framework for school self-evaluation

I considered many approaches to SSE amongst those experienced in the United Kingdom. I also took into account the Greek context where school evaluation exists only as a theoretical term. Although I considered elements of the Simon's and Hopkins's referred approaches, I finally focused on MacBeath's framework as it

appeared to be the most appropriate for the case of Greek schools. I constructed the rationale concerning this selection, taking into account the following arguments.

1) Whilst studying literature in a context different from my own and the school under study, I realised that I had to consider a framework that would permit adapting to experience, skills and the needs of a Greek school with a distinct culture that operates within an educational context with its own characteristics and circumstances. This dictated the need for applying an evaluation process that would permit modification to any individual school context and educational system (Ferguson, 2000, p. 119).

MacBeath's framework permits consistency to national and school culture. It recognises that evaluation should be in accordance with the formal requirements and prevailing attitudes and norms of the national context. It also acknowledges that evaluation should be situational and consistent with the school culture, recognising that 'schools have a history, a unique cast of characters and a narrative that unfolds over time in unanticipated directions' (MacBeath, 1999, p. 2).

The framework dedicates plenty of time to the preparatory stage. This indicates that the framework respects the existing school culture and allows time to be spent identifying this culture and teachers' attitudes towards evaluation and change. Since the framework does not propose as necessary any classroom observation, it can reduce teachers' anxieties and possibly improve their attitudes towards evaluation and change. In this way the framework also contributes to the ripeness of school culture for such an endeavour. The fact that MacBeath's framework had already been applied in various school contexts within various educational systems (Scottish, English, Danish, etc) encouraged me to opt for this choice.

The framework also offers the challenge for establishing evaluation criteria. Although criteria could be adopted from the externally prepared large variety of checklists, in MacBeath's framework the criteria derive directly from the values, needs and expectations of interested groups who articulate and agree with them, expressing thus, the school culture. In this way, people have a chance to discuss the set of indications through or modify them to local needs, context and colloquial use instead of adopting

someone else's set, passing them one future layer down a hierarchy (MacBeath, 1999, p. 112), so that schools can 'determine their own future' (Russell, 1996, p. 9).

The flexible language that the framework uses indicates its respect of school culture. The framework permits the language of participants to be heard in phrases as they are given by teachers, pupils and parents. It prefers the utterances of real school life rather than the dry statements of bureaucratic checklists (Russell, 1996, p. 106-107).

This framework offers a mass of possible procedures and choices. It admits that 'investment in investigating and creating something unique to the school will be worthwhile' (Russell, 1996, p. 108). It proposes a process flexible enough to allow modification by individual schools attributing to evaluation 'an evolving nature with watch-words such as "flexibility" and "responsiveness"' (Cousins and Earl, 1995, p. 142).

2) The framework proposes evaluation aimed at school accountability and improvement. It acknowledges that 'schools into a healthy educational system should be open and inviting of accountability and improvement' (MacBeath, 1999, p. 90). The framework enables teachers 'to get a firmer grip on their accountability as well as helping them to identify realistic and achievable improvement strategies, opening up new possibilities and alternative approaches' (MacBeath, 1996, p. 84). This means that firstly the proposal carries notions of 'evaluation as school improvement' according to Hopkins' (1989) distinction and pays attention to 'knowledge utilisation'.

At the same time, the framework does not deny school accountability, although Ferguson (2000) criticises it as unconnected to any external evaluation. Acknowledging that strong accountability can occur internally within a school community without imposed demands from external agencies (Newman et al, 1997, p. 42), the approach leaves a sense of strong teachers' professional autonomy and growth. The proposed SSE can prepare the school for external evaluation, giving the opportunity to the individual school to find its own road towards this. It can become the means to bridge school professional accountability to school answerability and

contractual accountability expecting to exercise influence on educational authorities and central government.

In the case of Greece, I considered that this element would be helpful since the absence for a long period of any kind of accountability would create difficult circumstances for external accountability demands. Such an attempt might cause resistance or sabotage and dissatisfaction in the school.

3) The framework proposes a 'bottom-up' approach which sees teachers as researchers. It involves teachers in evaluation and is concerned to equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to undertake changes as researchers themselves in terms of evaluation and improvement. At the same time it advocates collaboration and offers the school possibilities to invite other people to work with the staff.

It is based on the assumption that schools need an external perspective since 'the contribution of an external agent can bring a measure of objectivity as well as a measure of support...can reduce any sense of threat by being able to employ a light touch...Perhaps the stronger argument of having a critical friend is that he or she can work with the school over time to assist in the process of change, bringing to task the experience of other schools and other approaches' (MacBeath, 1999, p. 110). For the case of Greek schools, a critical friend is a 'must', given that schools have no experience in such endeavours. On the other hand, for new researchers/critical friends the framework provides careful, step by-step guidelines that also illustrates.

4) The framework gives the opportunity to schools to produce items that fit their own particular circumstances. It addresses not only the managerial staff but also every single teacher, since methodologically it is clear, simple in its use, detailed and descriptive, although, it does not offer a rigid recipe. Thus, it might seem paradoxical that the open areas of decisions that mediate an 'open' ideology respect a 'closed' practice (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 62).

The chosen framework is to be implemented by a structured and systematic but not fixed set of procedures. It is 'something that holds things together, an outer shell or scaffolding...It should provide a structure giving shape and coherence to what would

otherwise be a loose conglomeration of good ideas and interesting practices' (MacBeath, 1999, p. 104). It could be argued that this workable and user-friendly framework can serve as a guideline for those who want to develop their own methods, tools and framework.

5) The framework promises democratic foundation with a pluralistic dimension. It promotes diversity in participation since it opens the school to parents, pupils and the local community who respect values and expectations (MacBeath, 1999). The framework presupposes articulation, negotiation, agreement and dissemination of findings. It appears to agree with Davies and Ellisson's (1997) view that 'education's role is to accommodate the needs and tensions of the society...' (p. 184).

It attempts to give answers to questions concerning democracy in education, such as: Whose interests are represented? Are interested groups represented? How do people participate in the evaluation? Are the evaluation procedures able to control power imbalances? Is there reflective deliberation? (House and Howe, 1999). Such an evaluation can become a challenge for schools in the Greek educational context.

Conclusion

This study considers SSE as an innovation since the programme is implemented deliberately in a school attempting at accountability, change and improvement. This means that innovation should be adapted to school culture which has been defined as the shared values, beliefs and attitudes, expressed in school norms, customs, behaviour and ways of working. I have argued that for an innovation such as SSE to be supported, this culture should be presumed as open, innovative and co-operative. A headteacher should encourage and support teachers and activities. SSE implemented in such a school culture is expected to produce changes in school policy; teachers and even in school culture.

I have indicated research of SSE that has been developed in England. They have either been initiated by LEAs like Oxfordshire and Solihull, by central authorities as, for example, GRIDS and OFSTED or have been led by individual researchers such as Simons, Hopkins, Russell and MacBeath. Finally, I have demonstrated and justified

my choice of MacBeath's framework as the most effective and appropriate SSE implementation within the Greek educational context.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methodology and includes the overall study approach, the methods as strategies and practical research techniques which have been employed, adapted or revised as well as the constraints, dilemmas and ethical issues involved (Robson, 2000). The chapter has been structured in four sections.

The first section attempts to identify and clarify similarities and differences among the terms ‘evaluation’, ‘evaluation research’ and ‘academic or basic research’, given that the study concerns evaluation, a frequently controversial issue since sometimes it is not clear ‘whether evaluation is a separable activity from research; or a particular kind of applied research; or whether it is sometimes research and sometimes not’ (Robson, 2000, p.11). This approach appears to be particularly helpful for a new researcher in the field for identifying the nature of the research and defining the researcher’s role in it.

The second section introduces two major research traditions and attempts to identify the main differences and similarities between them. On this basis, the section continues exploring the nature of the present study and presenting the arguments for choosing the qualitative perspective. The third section explores the methods as approaches or strategies that the qualitative research employs. Firstly, it examines the case study strategy from an ethnographic perspective and considers generability issues of the findings. This is the academic research that, as an umbrella, ‘covers’ the SSE research.

Since the research employs a collaborative action research for SSE implementation, this section deals with the general nature of this approach. It also attempts to define it, identify its basic characteristics and the expected benefits for the teachers and the school. Furthermore, this section attempts to distinguish the characteristics of the strategy that can justify its choice for the implementation of the evaluation process. The third section comes to an end by looking into the specific characteristic of collaboration in this case and its meaning for researcher and teachers as collaborators.

The fourth section of this chapter looks into the methods as the basic instruments that the study employs. Firstly, it explores the methods of participant observation, interview and questionnaire that the ethnographic case study engages and considers issues of their validity. The use of a research diary, as a useful tool in the hands of a participant observer, is also examined in this section.

Although MacBeath's (1999) framework provides a valuable background concerning the methods of action research, an exploration of the basic methodological assumptions that underpin the implementation of SSE is considered as necessary. Thus, the fourth section goes on by developing this methodological background and examines the basic instruments that were used, those of questionnaires and focus groups.

Finally, acknowledging the decisive role of the researcher as a basic instrument in this study, the fourth section attempts to highlight some of its critical aspects and identify decisive responsibilities that the researcher undertakes as an initiator of the innovation and critical friend throughout its implementation. In particular it looks deeper into this role, explaining the choice of being an external collaborator and considers the implications in power relationships between the 'outsider' and 'insiders' and poses ethical considerations providing some answers and solutions.

Having identified the instruments of evaluation and my own role in the research, the last, the fifth part of the chapter, explores some practical issues and makes critical decisions in developing the process of implementation. It attempts to design a plan respecting the Greek context and the school culture and the attempted evaluation. Apart from the head and school teachers, it identifies other participating groups in the process and justifies the decision. It also presents some logical arguments about the development of evaluation criteria. This chapter concludes by exploring issues of validity of evaluation which, according to Anderson et al (1994), can be distinguished in democratic, process, catalytic and dialogue validity.

5.1 Evaluation, evaluation research and basic/academic research

Although the terms 'evaluation' and 'evaluation research' tend to be used interchangeably, some evaluation theorists distinguish between them. Among those

who see evaluation as a separate activity from evaluation research are Cordray and Lipsey (1986). They interpret evaluation primarily as being concerned with the determining of the merit or value of a programme or intervention and its function as a direct response to the needs of programme administrators and managers. They maintain that evaluation is 'essentially a service-oriented, practical mode of inquiry that primarily has evaluative intent' (Cordray and Lipsey, 1986:19 in Clarke, 1999, p. 4).

On the other hand, the above authors describe evaluation research as 'an applied social science study of social programmes with no pretensions to be evaluative, responsive, or useful (at least in the short term)' (Cordray and Lipsey, 1986: 20 in Clarke, 1999, p. 4). It investigates cause and effect relationships between programme activities and outcomes, and attempts not to discover whether a programme works but to explain how it works (ibid, p. 4).

Similarly, Patton (1986) distinguishes evaluation and evaluation research according to their primary intention. Thus, while evaluation focuses on 'utility, relevance, practicality, and meeting the information needs of specific decision makers', evaluation research puts 'relatively greater emphasis on generability, causality, and credibility within the research community' (p.15).

Suchman (1967) attributes similar intentions to evaluation and evaluation research, as in his view evaluation is concerned with 'the value or worth of an action, intervention or programme'. He pays attention to the process of evaluation research and states that it 'takes place when scientific methods are employed in the process of carrying out an evaluation' (in Clarke, 1999, p. 3). Methodology and methods, therefore, are another contentious area.

Evaluation uses limited methods and focuses on a narrow range of short-term phenomena despite the complexity of the long human experience of those under scrutiny. Evaluation research, on the other hand, places an emphasis on 'methodology with reflection on the process of research which shows how the research methods of the textbooks were actually employed to meet the circumstances of the particular situation and what has been learned from this' (Robson, 2000, p. 257). Although

Cordray and Lipsey (1986) claim that 'to the practice of evaluation there is considerable overlap between the two approaches' (in Clarke, 1999 p. 4), evaluation and evaluation research present differences in purposes and methods.

Considering evaluation and academic research the differences are much more distinctive. The main difference between them is the purpose for which the data are collected. Evaluation 'carries notions of assessing "value" with it...,while academic research is traditionally seen as concerning itself with description, explanation and understanding' (Robson, 2000, p.11). Patton (1986) also considers the difference in objectives since research is aimed at truth while evaluation is aimed at action (p.14). Similarly, according to Weiss (1997:516), 'evaluation, unlike the basic sciences, does not aim at "truth" or certainty; its aim is to help the improvement of programming and policy making' (in Clarke, 1999, p.2).

Differences may also be identified between evaluation research and academic research despite the fact that they may have many similarities since both use methodologies and methods of social science research generally (Cohen et al, 2000, p. 38). Cohen et al (2000) and many evaluation theorists (Suchman, 1967; Rossi and Freeman, 1993) share, however, the view that evaluation research differs from academic research, in terms of its intended objective more than in the nature of design or the method of its execution (in Clarke, 1999). Thus, evaluation research or applied research is distinguished from 'blue skies' research since 'the latter is open-ended, exploratory, contributes something original to the substantive field and extends the frontiers of knowledge and theory, whereas in the former the theory is given rather than interrogated or tested'(Cohen et al, 2000 p. 38).

A basic difference between evaluation or even evaluation research and academic research appears to be that the former is a political activity. MacDonald (1987) argues that 'evaluation is an inherently political enterprise' (in Cohen et al, 2000, p.40). Similarly Rossi and Freeman (1993) stress that 'evaluation research is not just about the application of methods, but is also a political activity' (in Clarke, 1999, p. 3) while Green (1994:531) states that 'it is integrally intertwined with political decision making about societal priorities, resources allocation, and power', despite the fact that 'much research is evaluative' (in Cohen et al, 2000, p. 38).

Under the above consideration, I attempted to clarify the nature of this study. It can be said that this research *is* conducted at two levels. The first one refers to SSE which, using MacBeath's (1999) framework, is concerned with a theoretically and methodologically well-established process of evaluation. It carries notions of assessing 'values' and attempts to provide information for school improvement (Robson, 2000, p. 11). It is, therefore, evaluation research with possible political implications.

At a second level, this evaluation research is put under the umbrella of research which aims to understand the particularities of the context within which the evaluation programme is to be implemented as an innovation and investigates how the programme works within the given context.

This second level of the research attempts to identify cause and effect interrelations between programme activities and outcomes throughout the process, and generates knowledge about the basic principles that underline effective programme implementation. It explores issues to reach 'at truth' with 'activities of description, explanation and understanding' (Robson, 2000, p. 11). Based upon a well-established theoretical and methodological basis, it uses methods as 'the means for facilitating the development of knowledge' (Clarke, 1999, p.36). This research, therefore, is constructed as the basic, academic research of the study that covers the evaluation research. It is this consideration that helped me to construct the present study (see the map on page 126).

5. 2 Searching for a methodological framework

5. 2. 1 The two main traditions

In social research, researchers employ different logic, models and techniques to investigate the world. They are based on different answers to ontological assumptions concerning the nature of reality. More importantly, they accept different answers to epistemological assumptions about the nature of knowledge, what we accept as knowledge and how we know what we know (Bryman, 1988, pp 5, 50; Usher in Scott and Usher, 1996, p. 11). These answers shape the methodological framework, 'the philosophy or general principles behind research' (Hall and Hall, 1996, p.29).

Methodological framework or research paradigm (Kuhn-1962 cited in Guba and Lincoln, 1994) may be defined as 'a distinct way of approaching research with particular understanding of purposes, foci, data, analysis and more fundamentally, the relationship between data and what they refer to' (Scott in Scott and Usher, 1996, p.61). Its goal is 'to describe and analyse methods, throwing light on their limitations and resources, clarifying their suppositions and consequences, relating their potentialities to the twilight zone at the frontiers of knowledge' (Kaplan, 1973 cited in Wellington, 1996, p.16).

In social research there are two quite distinct research paradigms, perspectives or traditions: the rationalist and the naturalistic ones (Bryman, 1988). From the rationalist/positivist/ empiricist perspective, the social sciences are essentially the same as the natural sciences. General and universal laws regulate and determine social behaviour. Discovery of these laws is therefore the ultimate aim of researchers. Social phenomena are measurable just like natural phenomena. Sociology is a neutral science in respect of values and sociologists are neutral observers with their values separate from the descriptions of reality they provide. So generalisations can be applied in different contexts. This research is concerned with testing theory and involves questions about how much. It is often constituted as quantitative research (Woods, 1977).

The opposite perspective accepts that the social sciences are fundamentally different from the natural sciences and social phenomena are quite distinct in character from natural ones. There are no universal laws governing social behaviour. People differ from natural objects in their ability to think, interpret and make sense of their worlds. 'There are multiple, intangible realities which can be studied only holistically; inquiry into these multiple realities will inevitably diverge (each inquiry raises more questions than it answers) so that prediction and control are unlikely outcomes...' (Harris and Bell, 1990, p. 315).

Interpretative epistemology in social research assumes that every human action is meaningful. Hence, it has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices uncovering the actors' point of view from the social situations they occupy (Cohen and Manion, 1996). It focuses on social practices within the world and supports that social research is 'the research of exploring, describing, understanding, explaining, predicting, changing or evaluating some aspects of the social world' (Hall and Hall, 1996, p. 11).

An interpretive perspective sees social research as a subjective rather than objective undertaking. It is essentially concerned with theory building and answers questions about how and in what way situations are created. This means that investigation of the social world must relate interpretations to the natural everyday situations in which people live (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). The researcher is involved in these social situations and is concerned not only with describing but also with understanding them (Hall and Hall 1996, p.30). This perspective is usually associated with qualitative research.

The above consideration indicates that I have to justify my choice of the qualitative paradigm. I chose my particular way of using approaches and methods with the intention of reflecting the specific focus of inquiry. My basic concern, therefore, is to clarify the intrinsic nature of the study since the motivation for adopting the naturalistic paradigm can neither be a tendency towards it nor 'the desire to avoid the shortfalls of rationalism' (Harris and Bell, 1990, p. 313).

5. 2. 2 The objectives of the research

The present study examines whether and how a SSE programme with distinct objectives can fit into the Greek primary schools at a given time. This means that a given school context with the complexity of interactions among people and events is to be investigated so that the programme can be adapted to it. Investigation of the school context as the physical setting as well as the historical, political and socio-economic conditions would add understanding.

The present study, however, goes deeper. It assumes that people in a school community share common values and operate within systems of rules by which they can be identified (Scott and Usher, 1996) and accepts that if these shared values become well understood, the complexity of school context can be better interpreted (Marsall and Rossman, 1995). Schein (1985) has made clear that 'we simply cannot understand phenomena without considering culture both as a cause and as a way of explaining such phenomena' (p. 311). Thus, understanding of school culture was the focus.

At the same time, the research intends to identify possible outcomes that are visible on school policy and are related to the evaluation objectives. Considering the SSE as a process of innovation, another target of the study is to grasp possible changes on teachers and schools and provides an indication of how the process affects them. In this attempt the study was based on two assumptions: the first was that participants' beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and practices as well as school culture do not remain static; the second one that the process of innovation has the ability to change them. The research explores, therefore, how the process through methods and procedures brings about changes (Scott and Usher 1996) and relates them to the school culture.

My main concern, therefore, before, during and after the programme implementation, proved to understand the school culture as the distinct internalised norms, rules and customs with distinct roles and power relationships (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Considering that a difference between the two paradigms is 'the distinction between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry' (Stake 1995 p. 37), I was led to believe that cultural understanding demands qualitative research.

Such an understanding could not be adequately achieved by a 'snapshot approach'. It demands a long term investigation, which allows the identification of the unexpected as the key issue to be further explored, intending not to discover but to construct knowledge (Stake, 1995, p. 37). An interpretive approach has the capacity to identify the unexpected and illuminate the odd (ibid). It has the ability 'to look at the change process over time, to understand the actor's meanings, to adjust to new issues and theories as they emerge and to contribute to the evolution of new theories' (MacKenzie, et al, 1997, p. 89). This approach is particularly important for schools where the unexpected cannot be easily observed and where something supported in discussion is eliminated or even oppressed since schools are driven by bureaucratic imperatives toward goal consensus and conformity (Hargreaves, 1999).

Such objectives cannot be pursued as a set of discrete actions and effects, divided into specific parts. Events, acts, behaviours and consequences need to be investigated as an organically related pattern within school context. The study, therefore, puts emphasis on 'a holistic treatment of phenomena' (Schwandt, 1994 cited in Stake, 1995, p. 43) and investigates them within their natural setting, the school, so that the meaning of human

actions can be interpreted within the context of social practices. Such a research that provides opportunities for a holistic approach within the natural context is qualitative (Scott and Usher, 1996).

In this approach the researcher is expected to become an instrument in the construction of reality. As a matter of fact, all research depends upon researchers' interpretations. The researcher's role in this study, however, is not merely limited to personal interpretation that considers the period between collecting and analysing the data as 'value free' (Stake, 1995). The researcher in this study is expected to reflect upon participants and procedures throughout the research and therefore to influence the research findings. The distinction between a personal and impersonal role for the researcher constitutes another characteristic of qualitative research (ibid, p. 37).

As the study deals with the lives of participants, sensitivity should be a prevalent feature. The qualitative approach 'offers sensitivity in picking up everyday facts about social structures and social systems' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 15) and 'displays a sensitivity to process that virtually is excluded in paradigms stressing control and experimentation' (Harris and Bell, 1990, p.313).

Finally, this investigation can be viewed as an opportunity for school and teachers to develop the understanding of their role in evaluation, school change and educational matters. This understanding essentially constitutes another feature of qualitative research which 'is not simply a matter of representing, reflecting or reporting the world, but creating it through a representation' (Usher, 1996b, p. 35).

Thus, the present qualitative study attempts to explore and understand the school culture of a specific school within the Greek context at the beginning of the 21st century, before, throughout and after the evaluation implementation. At the same time it attempts to detect, understand, explain and evaluate the process of implementation and identify the possible effects relating them to school culture and context.

Having identified the methodological framework, the next section examines the strategies that were selected as the overall plan and reflects 'a series of major decisions made by the

researcher in an attempt to ascertain the best approach to the research questions posed in the conceptual position of the proposal' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 42).

5. 2. 3 Case study with an ethnographic perspective

A qualitative study is 'holistic and case oriented' (Stake, 1995, p. 47) considering case as 'a bounded system' (ibid, p. 47) or 'the framework of interaction, which is produced in and through the interaction at the same time' (Flick, 1998, p. 20). The case, in this study, is the school unit which is going to participate in the research.

A case study is expected to be 'an inductive, discovery-oriented approach', able to 'catch' the complexity of the case. It can identify the common and unique features of an organisation, how they affect the implementation of systems and how they influence the way that the organisation functions. Since 'contexts are unique and dynamic... case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance' (Cohen, et al, 2000 p.181).

A case study can delve into complexities and processes of various groups that may have different and even contradicted interests. It can offer, therefore, 'a contextual relevance and richness' where all the contextual variables are operating (Bell, 1993, p. 9). Thus, 'a case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (Stake, 1995, p. xi). A case study which has an interpretive perspective, as explored earlier, attempts to 'gain an insight' (Gillborn, 1990, p.11) and provides opportunities for considering the situation 'through the eyes of participants' (Cohen, et al, 2000, p. 183).

An immersion in school culture, however, and understanding 'another way of life from the native point of view' (Spradley, 1980: 3 cited in Argyris et al, 1985, p. 153) attributes to the case study an ethnographic perspective since 'rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people' (ibid, p. 158). Thus, although initially I had assumed that it would be helpful to study two schools through 'a cross-sectional design' (Easterby-Smith et al, 1995, p. 34), the ethnographic characteristic of the study, which demands a labour, intensive and longitudinal research perspective, dictated focusing on a single case-school.

At the same time, a case study is appropriate where the researcher wishes to make change since it acts as *a spur to action* (Cohen and Manion, 1996, p. 209). As this study is about 'an innovation in practice', I took into account that the uniqueness of an institution, the power of culture and the importance of ownership of change call for an adaptive perspective, which is sensitive to the situation of the individual school and demonstrates a concern for developing the capacity for change within the school (Hopkins and Hargreaves, 1994).

The study of a single case could help in the innovation implementation. It could increase the researcher's time to become familiar with the key actors and understand them; to concentrate on the initiation and change implementation so that it will be flexible in designing and responsive to the culture and needs of the school; to get closer and reflect on the way in which participants get involved in the step by step process since future development in the field should be premised on what works (Hopkins and Hargreaves 1994).

Considering that innovation concerns evaluation, the evaluation of a single case could directly satisfy the need to manage and assess both the intervention and the implementation process. Such a study could provide a deep understanding of the experience of implementation. It could help me in identifying the dynamic and evolutionary role of all actors as the process unfolds. It could also enable me to explore the challenges and possible changes in teachers and school over time and interpret how they are interrelated to the change implementation. The study of a single school could offer opportunities 'to describe a version of events from which alternative interpretations can be made' (MacKennzie et al, 1997, p. 89).

Finally, the emphasis on the particular school could incorporate a change in thinking since according to Stake (1995) 'the function of the research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the belonging of it' (p. 43). Thus, the present study is 'an ethnographic case study -single in depth study' (Sturman's 1999:107 cited in Cohen, et al, 2000, p. 183). It is expected to provide a deep understanding of the uniqueness and the complexities of the specific context and culture of a Greek primary school, before, throughout and after a SSE implementation.

The study of a single case, however, poses questions about the external validity or generability or transferability of its findings that refers to 'how well these inferences generalise to a larger population or are transferable to other contexts' (Anderson et al, 1994, p. 25). This issue is examined in the next section.

5. 2. 3. 1 Considering issues of the data generability in the case study

It might be argued that case study findings are of limited use outside the particular setting and they cannot constitute a base for generalisations to a population of cases as strongly as other research designs. Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that 'a qualitative study's transferability or generalisability to other settings may be problematic' (p.144) since 'each individual researcher will produce and experience the production of a case study as a unique and idiosyncratic series of events' (Bell, 1983, p. 79).

It becomes apparent that a single case study cannot produce conclusive, definitive results and generalisations and this particular study neither seeks to generalise about conclusions nor suggests a particular model for SSE. It assumes that generalised one-size fits all solutions do not work since 'all problems are de facto local' (Stringer, 1996, p. x) and attempts to explore whether a particular SSE can be applied to a particular school, adapting to its culture and identify the outcomes of this process. This could be seen 'as a weakness in the approach' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 144).

Case studies, however, examine the interplay of variables and achieve a comprehensive understanding through an in-depth description. 'Thick description' (Stake, 1995, Eisner, 1991) can show the complexity of variables and interactions that are valid; 'within the parameters of that setting, population and theoretical framework the research will be valid' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 143). More specifically, as ethnographers Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 8) state, 'the search for universal laws is rejected in favour of detailed descriptions of the concrete experience of life within a particular culture and of social rules or patterns that constitute it' (cited in Scott and Usher, 1996, p. 143).

On the other hand, considering that the value of case studies 'as a separate contribution rests on the notion of relatability' (Halsall, 1998, p. 91), the study takes for granted that the findings may be relevant to another case and intends to establish whether a position holds

true from one school to another. The reader, who wishes to apply the findings of a group's interest to a second group, assumes that the second one is sufficiently similar to the first and asks to justify the relevancy of the first study to the second setting (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). This indicates that the case researcher should facilitate the reader's judgments.

Case researchers should present the context and the findings for the reader to determine the reliability of the findings to his own context. Instead of generalisations, case researchers try 'to establish an empathetic understanding for the reader, through description, sometimes thick description, conveying to the reader what experience itself could convey' (Stake, 1995, p.39). Then, readers can add their own parts of the story because they are often more familiar with their own cases than the researchers are. As readers operate 'in highly idiosyncratic situations themselves appreciate description of individual instances in action because they can relate them to their own experience' (Simons, 1987, p. 73). In this way the case study, by focusing in depth, may influence choices for action and provide a basis for both unique and universal understanding generalisations.

In order to assist the reader in making this transfer, I used a thick narrative, writing a story with a chronological presentation and a personal description. Emphasising time, place, persons and events I provided rich ingredients for vicarious experience. Then, 'transferability in which the burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of findings to another context rests more with the investigator who would make that transfer than with the original investigator' (Lincoln and Guba 1985, cited in Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 143).

I took into account that a case study 'involves empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence' (Robson, 1993, p. 5) and I used multiple sources for gathering data through multiple techniques to enhance the study's deep understanding and, therefore, its transferability. Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that, 'designing a study in which multiple informants, or more than one data gathering methods are used can greatly strengthen the study's usefulness for other settings' (p.144).

5.3 Methods as research approaches/ strategies

A paradigm provides not only with a particular philosophical world view, which helps us to understand the products of an inquiry but also with the process itself and the choice of research methods (Cohen and Manion, 1996). When societies, schools and classrooms are investigated, the distinct methodology makes the way of using the various approaches and techniques of gathering data explicit (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). In that way 'methodology and method feed into one another' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 1) and the procedures of inquiry becomes as important as its outcomes.

The methods, the 'tools' or 'instruments' that are used for data collection, can encompass a range of approaches, strategies or techniques and procedures that are employed for this purpose (Cohen and Manion, 1994). 'Methods are devices by which the data, that is, those elements in the events studied which are relevant to the conscious purposes of the research, are recognised, apprehended and recorded' (Modgil et al, 1986, p. 63). In effect, 'methods must be selected according to purpose' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. x).

The methods, reflecting the research paradigm, provide answers to the questions as they have been formulated during the conceptualisation of the research. Such questions, in this study, are: 'How can I explore and deeply understand the cultural context within which the innovation is to be implemented?', 'How can I obtain a clear understanding of the process of the SSE implementation?', 'How can I identify possible changes on the teachers and school?'.

In terms of the above consideration, I decided, within the qualitative paradigm, to employ a case study approach with an ethnographic perspective, as the main research strategy. I also decided to employ an action research strategy for the implementation of the evaluation programme. The next section attempts to explore these approaches and justifies these choices in the context of the present study.

Finally, the CAR that was used for the programme implementation can be considered as a particularly strong point for the validity of the case study. Action research, which explores

the innovation in the practice of implementation and identifies the unintended consequences or the contradictions throughout the process, can offer the reader further vicarious experiences and conceptualisations or raise positional knowledge. The following section looks into this approach of CAR.

5. 3. 1 Action Research: a strategic method

5. 3. 1. 1 Exploring the nature of action research

The literature provides many definitions of action research. For Kemmis 'action research is trying out new ideas in practice with a view of improving or changing something, trying to have a real effect on the situation' (cited in Hopkins, 1985, p. 34). Similarly, Elliott (1991) defines action research as 'the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it' (p. 69) and McTaggart (1991) as 'an approach to inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve both their practices and their understanding of practices' (cited in Robson, 2000, p. 23).

According to a philosophical and more detailed definition of Kemmis and Taggart (1988), 'action research is a form of collective self-inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out...' (p. 5). This definition is more appropriate for the needs of this study.

Halsey (1972) views 'action research [as] a small- scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention' (cited in Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 208) as do James and Connolly (2000) who consider it as 'an intervention of some kind into the organisational processes with a view of changing those processes' (p. 21). As a school-level inquiry, action research tends to be co-operative and democratic, involving all teachers and all interested groups assuming that 'in a democratic system the smallest part will affect the overall shape of the whole' (McNiff, 1992, p. 3).

Action research, therefore, is characterised by 'involvement' and 'improvement'. According to McNiff (1992), 'the social basis of action research is involvement; the

educational basis is improvement' (p.3). Action research, according to Robson (2000) 'does not end with interpretation or theoretical understanding but makes the further step into action for improvement of a situation, followed by monitoring the results of this action' (p. 23).

Action research also has a third feature, that of 'intervention'. These are the 'the 'three I's' of action research as they are specified by James and Connolly (2000, p. 21). Combining the above definitions and intentions, action research, for the purposes of this research, is considered as an intervention in a school situation. It involves the entirety of teachers in the form of a collective inquiry, with a view of changing and improving practices and understanding of both practices and situations.

According to Lewin, as he is interpreted by Kemmis (1980), action research proceeds through spiralling cycles of planning, execution, and reconnaissance (or fact-finding) in order to evaluate and perhaps modify the plan (in Elliott, 1991, p. 69-70). Kemmis and McTaggart (1982) adapt Lewin's description but emphasise recurring cycles of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and revising. This process for Ebbutt (1985) is 'a series of successive cycles, each incorporating the possibility for feedback of information within and between cycles' (p. 164).

This process engages teachers in critical reflection that was studied by Schon (1983, 1987). For Aoki, this is 'a process that expects educators to analyse the assumptions and intentions of their professional beliefs and actions' (in Widdén and Andrews, 1987, p.190). In this study reflection can be characterised as reflection-on-action (Schon, 1987) since the time of reflection is after the events. This time, according to McAlpin, et al (2004) 'is more contemplative, may be intentional, and may or may not influence future events' (p. 338). Reflection-on-action, however, is a kind of dual processing with reflection-in-action that is concurrent with the action (ibid, p. 339).

Reflection-on-action can enable 'both the assessing of prior knowledge and the constructing of knowledge from experience' (McAlpin, et al, 2004, p. 338). It enables teachers to develop a personal philosophy on teaching and learning, and carry out self-evaluation (Webb, 1990, p. 259). This in turn, can increase teachers' self-esteem and confidence and encourage a greater feeling of competence in solving problems and

making decisions (Oja and Smulyan, 1989). It can be seen, therefore, as 'a process of formative evaluation in which one collects and uses feedback to revise and improve [instruction] actions' (McAlpin, et al, 2004, p. 338).

The recurring cycles of the process can promote reflexivity and create a valuable background for teachers to increase classroom and school understanding (Oja and Smulyan, 1989, p.1). Within this context teachers can shape their practice and reconstruct them on a basis for improvement (Halsall, 1998 p. 82). Action research can, therefore, become a learning process (O'Hanlon, 1996).

The co-operative involvement of all teachers in such a process can promote educational debate in the staff-room, contribute to critical appraisal of school policies and proceed in creating an open-minded and critically reflective school environment (Webb, 1990). It can become 'very powerful in achieving organisational change' (James and Connolly, 2000, p. 20) and more importantly, it can foster the collaborative aspect of culture within the school. Thus, it can help in transforming the school into a learning school.

In such a school, teachers are motivated 'to try out new ideas, implement current initiatives in an exploratory and constructive way and offer an open-minded and critically reflective response based on evidence' (Webb, 1990, p. 268). Action research, therefore, can proceed to another stage, that 'of further research' (Halsall, 1998, p. 73) and encourage teachers to view themselves as researchers (Stenhouse, 1975). In this sense, action research can also be seen as a contribution to educational theory and teachers' professionalism.

Hopkins (1993) states that 'systematic self-study is a hallmark of those occupations that enjoy the label 'professional'' (p.33). Teachers acquire greater control over their own behaviour and become independent of others when their perceptions and understanding are heightened; this contributes to their professional growth (Oja and Smulyan, 1989 p. 10). Finally, the matter of making judgments as to what is worthwhile and decisions as to what to do (Bassey, 1995:39) is at the heart of professionalism (in Halsall, 1998, p.72).

Action research, whether on a small or large scale, means 'action both of the system under consideration and of the people involved in that system' (McNiff, 1992, p.3). Although action research can begin from individual teachers, it is placed in and affected by the

context including human interactions because the practice that teachers investigate is always in relation with other people (McNiff with Whitehead, 2002, p. 36).

This implies not only ‘change in people’s lives, and therefore in the system in which they live’ (McNiff, 1992, p. 3) but also change in society (McNiff with Whitehead, 2002). Although in 1980 action research was criticised as being ‘ambivalent’, the empirical support for its utility is strong (Reynolds et al, 1996; Radford, 2007). How is such a process connected to the implementation of a SSE programme? The next section attempts to give answers to this question.

5. 3. 1. 2 Connecting the action research strategy to evaluation process

Action research and school self-evaluation have ‘some commonality’ (Clarke, 1999, p. 27) or share some common features (Bagakis, 2001, p. 33). The concept of action research lies in the core of group self-evaluation (Owens, 1999, p. 225). The key features of improvement, intervention and involvement underpin the choice of action research in the SSE implementation.

SSE aims at school improvement (see Section 3.3) while action research’s ultimate objective is ‘to improve practice in some way or other’ (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 208). Since both, evaluation and action research attempt improvement, ‘the principal justification for the use of action research in the school context is improvement of practice’ (ibid, p. 214). Intervention is another common feature of SSE and AR. The study regards the process of SSE as an innovation that intervenes in school work (see Chapter 3) as does the action research process (see Section 5.5.1).

Finally, involvement connects SSE to action research. The process of SSE, driven by a democratic ideology, proposes the engagement of all teachers and all interested groups (see Section 3.3). Similarly action research is perceived as a ‘research WITH, rather than research ON’ (McNiff 1992, p. 4). It is ‘a democratic process which enables its participants to fully live the experience of democratic action with colleagues and others involved in the research’ (O’Hanlon, 2002, p.1). ‘Others’ in the present study are considered to be the interested groups as well as the researcher, who is expected to get deeply involved in the process as the initiator-critical friend. Such an engagement

attributes to action research the characteristic of collaboration, as a part of a shared enquiry. The next section explores this characteristic in the present research.

5. 3. 1. 3 Collaborative Action Research

Hord (1981) distinguishes co-operation from collaboration, suggesting that ‘in the former, participants reach some agreement but proceed individually towards self-defined goals, while in the latter, participants work together on all phases of a project which provides mutual benefits’ (cited in Oja and Smulyan, 1989, p. 12). Collaborative enquiry, however, is, according to Street and Temperley (2005), ‘an essential professional activity for any school community that wishes to continue to grow and develop’ (p. 13).

In the present research the external researcher collaborates ‘with a set of presumably active professionals, who help to refine research questions, have a role in interpreting the data and carry the results into their organisations’ (Cousins and Earl, 1995, p.104). In different projects collaboration can vary and take a number of forms, depending primarily on the degree to which teachers are included in the project (Oja and Smulyan, 1986, p. 13).

In this investigation the researcher introduces the SSE programme, works together with teachers as an integral part of the project and becomes the objective observer of the intervention. The researcher’s focus is expected to be the scientific work maintaining the methodological and managerial responsibilities with a clear supportive role (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 208; James and Conolly, 2000) (see Chapter 10). The teachers participate in the process of implementation and collaborate in negotiations and decision making for criteria and areas of evaluation and put forward changes which are to be followed, having thus, a say in the overall decision throughout the process.

Although the roles could be seen as essentially asymmetrical, the teachers’ role is considerably decisive for the process. On the other hand, in collaboration, ‘parity and equal responsibility do not mean that each member has an equal role in decision making or input during all phases of the study; role shifts occur depending on the needs of the situation’ (Oja and Smulyan, 1989 p. 13).

CAR follows a particular process that is considered as 'technically simple' but 'socially complex' (Street and Temperley, 2005, p. 12). It 'is intended to be a learning experience for those involved to produce a change for the better in the practice and to add to social theory' (Owen 1999, p. 224). In particular, CAR involves participants in gathering information, analysing, reflecting on this information and identifying how practice needs to proceed (Street and Temperley, 2005, p. 10). It espouses the values of independence, equality and co-operation (Owen 1999) and requires 'a high level of intra and interpersonal skills, including skills of facilitation, an understanding of group processes and effective communication as well as personal qualities including honesty, sensitivity, commitment and trust' (ibid, p. 13).

Such a CAR can facilitate teachers' 'capacity for self-reflection' (Elliott, 1991, p. 19). This implies teachers' self-awareness and self-critique which in turn can promote their ability for self-monitoring and self-determination in their practice (Elliott, 1991). More importantly it is expected to help both teachers and researcher to develop 'shared understandings' (Easterby-Smith et al, 1995, p. 8) or 'mutual understanding and consensus, democratic decision making, and common action' (Oja and Smulyan, 1989, p.12).

Both parts of collaboration are likely to 'be more helpful and productive' (James and Connolly 2000 p. 22) since working together they seek to build positive working relationships and productive interactional and communicative styles (Stringer, 1996, p.19). They share 'in the planning, implementation, and analysis of the research and each contributes different expertise and a unique perspective' (Oja and Smulyan, 1986, p.9).

Within this context, collaboration can provide opportunities for both collaborators 'for the connection of theory and practice and...for reflection and for unexpected insights into situational realities' (Little, 1981 in Oja and Smulyan, 1989, p. 12). It contributes, therefore to educational theory which 'includes the discovery and elaboration of theoretical frameworks underlying teacher practice' (ibid, p. 9). Such collaboration can act 'as a means of improving the normally poor communication between the practising teacher and the academic researcher, and of remedying the failure of traditional research to give clear prescriptions' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 211).

Having identified the ethnographic case study that also encompasses a CAR as the basic research approaches in the present study my next concern is to distinguish the methods that these strategies employ for data gathering.

5. 4 Methods as instruments of the research

5. 4. 1 Methods as instruments of the case study

5. 4. 1. 1 Observation

For qualitative research, which explores complex human interaction, methods associated with qualitative data collection are preferable to those associated with quantitative data collection (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). Qualitative advocates such as Guba and Lincoln (1982), Eisner and Peshkin (1990) put high priority on direct interpretation of events and lower priority on the interpretation of measurement data (in Stake, 1995, p. 40). Thus, the qualitative-interpretive orientation of this study dictated the need for methods, such as observation and interviews.

Observation becomes the basic tool. It allows 'greater understanding of the case' (Stake, 1995, p. 60). Robson (1993) advises, 'as the actions and behaviour of people are a central aspect in virtually any enquiry, a natural and obvious technique is to watch what they do, to record this in some way and then to analyse and interpret what we have observed' (p. 10). In observation, the researcher becomes the main instrument for data gathering.

As a researcher, I had to choose between 'non participant' and 'participant' observation. Engaging in a 'non participant' observation - 'observer as participant' or 'complete observer', according to Gold's (1969) distinction - I would have to avoid group participation and stand at a distance from the group activities. As a 'participant observer' - 'complete participant' or 'participant as observer' (ibid, 1969) I could be engaged in the activities that I had to observe (Clarke, 1999, p. 79).

The ethnographic characteristic of the case study justified my decision to follow the example of 'participant observation'. Cohen and Manion (1994) state that 'most studies in a natural setting are unstructured participant observation studies' (p. 124) although Burgess (1982) remarks that the four roles of an observer 'are ideal typical constructs, and within the

context of a single study the researcher may, from time to time, move between roles'(in Clarke, 1999, p. 79). Participant observation would enable me to observe and interpret human actions and behavior, protecting me from 'observing social factors cold-bloodedly in the effort of remaining "objective", as well as from the danger of becoming inhuman and therefore, unreal' (Marshall and Rossman, 1989 p. 17).

The 'cover' in this participation was impossible. It would gradually become known that I was a researcher who expected to complete my studies at university. As Cohen and Manion (1994) state 'a complete anonymity is not possible' (p. 122). This is not a problem, however, since 'cover is not necessarily a prerequisite of participant observation' (ibid, p. 122). Hammersley (1995) reinforces this by stating that 'in its most characteristic form ethnography involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus in the research' (p.1).

As the research also employed interviews, I will now indicate how the interview method was used in the study.

5. 4. 1. 2 Interviews

Interview has been defined as 'a conversation with a purpose' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 80). It is an effective instrument to capture the world from the native point of view. According to Kvale (1996), 'interviews are particularly suited for studying peoples' understanding of the meanings in people's world, describing their experiences and self-understanding and clarifying and elaborating their own perspectives on their lived world' (Kvale, 1996, p.105) and intend to produce knowledge, which can be used 'either to enhance the investigated subject's conditions or to manipulate their behaviour more effectively' (ibid, p. 11).

Considering the form of interviews, I knew that the structured interviews were 'safer' for researchers. I also knew that in practice, researchers have to be aware of the dangers of distortion through structuring on one hand and on the other, of unreliability through lack of structure. Semi-structured interviews enable me as the researcher to

develop and direct a natural conversation or divert to a different topic if appropriate. They allow me to probe for deeper-information, clear up misunderstandings whenever needed, elucidate teachers' views and experience and ask 'important, if uncomfortable, questions about the deepest assumptions and the most taken-for-granted purposes and perceptions in organisations' (Hargreaves, 1999, p. 174). I took into account that the most frequently cited advantage of semi-structured interviews is flexibility. Flexibility through an informal running and open questions allow expression of opinions, non-anticipated responses and development of respondents' views freely and occasionally at length. It provides 'unencumbered response, expressed spontaneously in the respondent's own language' (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 41).

I also expected such interviews to provide me with the chance to note non-verbal behaviour. This important indicator would help in deepening my understanding. Finally, by immersing into the thinking of respondents, semi-structured interviews could enhance their understanding of the research issues. I preferred, therefore, instead of using interviews as formal events with predetermined response categories, to apply individual semi-structured interviews like conversations. I had, however, to design a complete schedule with the areas to be investigated.

The focus of the interviews was school culture. I identified as an influential factor the years of teaching during which teachers become more experienced, years of working in the particular school as well as teachers' professional development. Additionally, I took into account that special courses which might have been held and other particular conditions could facilitate or compromise the school's operation. I considered that gathering of information about school history, the socio-economic background of the school population and its expectations would be valuable.

I expected the headteacher to clarify his own vision and needs and give his own interpretation on the school operations. The headteacher and teachers would be asked to comment on areas regarding school aims, targets and school policies, teachers' co-operation, communication and relationships with colleagues as well as their needs for support. Furthermore, they would be required to elucidate their relationships with pupils,

the relationships between pupils themselves and their expectations from them. Teachers' communication with parents was another area of interest.

Finally, I considered that a deeper understanding of the headteacher's and teachers' attitudes towards evaluation and innovation constitute a valuable background for evaluation implementation. Their perceptions, beliefs, knowledge and experiences relevant to evaluation and innovations as well as their expectations from such an engagement were examined as factors that affect their attitudes. Within this context, teachers would be asked to comment on pupils' and parents' participation in school evaluation and discuss the possibility of evaluation findings' dissemination.

I formulated the questions according to previous research background and I organised them in areas of interest relevant to the inquiry (see Appendices 5 and 6). All interviews were tape-recorded with the interviewees' permission. When I lost one tape-recorded interview, I produced a hand-written script immediately after its completion and I gave it to the teacher so that she could verify its content. Gradually, I transcribed all the interviews that were made available for the teachers to read.

Questionnaires were designed for teachers to evaluate the programme of SSE. The next section examines this instrument as it was used in this study.

5. 4. 1. 3 Questionnaires

In a broader sense a questionnaire in a research study can cover any set of questions, including an interview schedule that an interviewer uses to question a respondent directly (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 100) According to a narrow definition, however, 'a questionnaire is a set of questions for respondents to complete by *themselves*' (Newell, 1993, p. 96 cited in Hall and Hall, 1996, p. 98). Since I was interested in a form of a structured and written questionnaire to be completed by participants, I could say that the second definition is the most suitable for the case. Questionnaires were to produce instant information and shape the big picture of the given situation.

Completing the programme of evaluation, I constructed a form of questionnaire for teachers to evaluate. The questions referred to the feeling that their engagement in the

research generated to the changes which they, as teachers, had experienced. They also concerned how teachers viewed their own role in the process as well as that of headteachers and the critical friend. Finally, the questions attempted to explore teachers' difficulties during the process implementation and requested their proposals for the future (see Appendix 17).

I expected teachers, completing the open questions individually and privately could express their views freely. Most of them, however, asked to respond discussing the questions with me. Thus, using the questionnaire as a base, I examined it individually and in groups of two or three people (see Chapters 6, 7). The open-ended character of questions as well as the follow-up probes allowed teachers to express themselves freely and uncover their perspectives at length. The formal questionnaires were transformed to spontaneous semi-structured interviews, which offered a rich source of data.

A valuable tool for the field work in this ethnographic case study was a research diary that also became useful for the action research. This diary is examined in the next section.

5. 4. 1. 4 Research diary

Burgess (1984) states that 'if ethnographers are to provide detailed portraits of the situation they are observing, then they require careful recording in the researcher's diary' (in Clarke, 1999, p. 199). Thus, I wrote up the diary almost on a daily basis. I recorded important information about the case and the context of activities that I observed. I gave details of persons I had met, phone numbers, place and time of interviews, along with any other relevant information. I also described actions, behaviours, events or incidents as they occurred. I included comments and experiences as soon as possible after the conversations or incidents that had taken place.

I also used the diary to encompass the difficulties that I encountered entering the school and implementating the programme, as Kemmis et al (1981) have pointed out, 'personal accounts of observations, "feelings, reactions, interpretations, reflections,

hunches, hypotheses, and explanations” (cited in Elliott, 1991, p. 77). Such an application does ‘not merely report the “bland facts” of the situation, but conveys a feeling of what it was like to be there participating in it. Anecdotes, near verbatim accounts of one’s feelings, attitudes, motives, understanding, in reacting to things, events, circumstances; these all help one to reconstruct what it was like at the time’ (ibid, p.77). The research diary served ‘as a record of ongoing reflections and learning in relation to the subject of the research and as an *aide memoire* for analysing the data more fully’ (Webb, 1990, p. 251).

My next concern was to consider issues of reliability of the data that were gathered through observation, individual teachers’ interviews and questionnaires reflect the participants and the inquiry itself.

5. 4. 1. 5 Considering issues of reliability and data validity

My direct involvement as a participant observer could be a potential source of bias that compromises the validity of the data which, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), ‘is the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences researchers make based on the data they collect’ (p. 169) or ‘the trustworthiness of *inferences* drawn from data’ where ‘trustworthiness involves the demonstration that the researcher’s interpretations of the data are credible’ (Anderson, et al, 1994, p. 25).

Participants may consciously modify their behaviour and present themselves in a positive light after becoming aware that they are being observed. Thus, the data can represent a false picture and give out deliberately misleading information (Clarke, 1999, p.81). It becomes apparent that I had to deal with issues of ‘*reactivity*, or how people’s behaviour is affected by their awareness of being observed or by the characteristics of the researcher’ (Hall and Hall, 1996, p. 42).

Since the planning stages, due to the fact that I am a teacher myself, I was sharply aware of my own expectations from the study, based upon prior knowledge of and assumptions about the community I was about to work in. Nevertheless, I had to

become a trusted person, relieved from accountability relationships so that participants would behave and express themselves freely.

I also followed the advice of Guba and Lincoln (1981), 'keep a carefully analytic fieldwork diary, separating the operational from the presentational data and draw on implicit, as well as, propositional knowledge uncovering attempts to deceive' (p.81). Thus, throughout the process and analysis of the data, I tried to be engaged in a continuous interpretive undertaking where my emphasis was on presenting alternative interpretations or on leaving explanations open.

I also acknowledged that as 'the case studies' observations take place over an extended period of time, the researcher can develop a more intimate and informal relationship with those she/he is observing in natural environments' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 125). In this ethnographic case study, I was constantly aware of the risk of 'going native' (ibid, p. 125) and, therefore, biased and subjective. I had to be careful not to allow myself to influence my findings.

I accepted that 'being objective means working towards unbiased statements through the procedures of the discipline observing the canon of proper argument and methodology, maintaining a healthy scepticism, and being vigilant to eradicate sources of bias' (House and Howe, 1999, p. 9). Thus, I could become a member of the participant groups but, simultaneously, I had to avoid controlling the participants or intervening, in order 'not to influence the situation more than would be expected from other participants' (McKenzie et al, 1997 p. 105). Keeping myself out of school matters and maintaining balanced relationships with participants could be helpful.

A useful means to protect the research from bias were the interviews. In semi-structured interviews 'a balance is being sought between reliability through control and validity through spontaneity' (Shipman, 1988, p. 89) while the tape-recording of interview development contributes to the trustworthiness of the research outcomes (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Such interviews were used to confirm or doubt my own observations and as a source for further study. The data collected by them supplemented that of participant observation so that each method would feed each other.

‘Observational techniques, when systematically applied, can provide new insights by drawing attention to actions and behaviour normally taken for granted by those involved in programme activities and therefore not commented upon in interviews’ (Clarke, 1999, p. 81). Robson (1993) states that, ‘whilst observing behaviour is clearly a useful enquiry, the technique of asking people directly about what is going on is an obvious short cut in seeking answers to our research questions’(p. 229). Both methods gave me the opportunity to ‘compare and contrast the various interpretations of the same event or particular issue which were gained from different participants and alternative data sources’ (Webb, 1990, p. 251).

The present ethnographic case study, however, has also employed a CAR, which became a valuable source of information (see Section 5.3.1). I can say, therefore, that multiple methods, such as observation, interviews, questionnaires and action research, which gave data from teachers, pupils and parents, operated as a routine for triangulation. This research construction could ‘relate different sorts of data in such a way as to counteract various possible threats to the validity of our analysis’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p 199). Triangulation, able to eliminate or at least reduce sources of bias, became ‘a major mode for improving the credibility of findings and interpretation’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:290 cited in Larson, 1992, p. 134).

The CAR, as the strategy for implementing SSE, is examined in the following section. It begins with some methodological considerations, necessary to underpin choices for activities and procedures so that evaluation can be conducted ‘according to its design using methods for data collection required to address evaluation questions properly’ (Nevo, 1995).

5. 4. 2 Instruments for evaluation

5. 4. 2. 1 A methodological background

Evaluation in this study has been defined as a rather descriptive activity, acknowledging, however, that subjective judgments about the value of school work are unavoidable (see Section 3.1). Simons states that ‘in evaluating process of

teaching, learning and schooling, the judgments of people are an important source of data it would be foolish to ignore if understanding of the complexity of these processes is sought' (in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 121). She later concludes that 'an understanding of different attitudes and values towards the policy issue under discussion is essential if modification or a change in policy is to be an outcome of the evaluation' (ibid, p. 123).

Similarly, Adelman and Alexander (1982), acknowledging House's (1973) views, state: 'We cannot avoid that evaluation is about valuing and educational evaluation is doubly value-laden...For evaluation must exist, at least in part, to expose and clarify value issues - the varieties of educational goals and priorities for educational programmes and the varieties for judging the quality and effectiveness of these programmes' (p. 161).

At the same time, evaluation in the present study has been characterised as having a democratic dimension (see Section 3.2.3.1) whose origins can be detected in the feminist ideology. Feminist research, however, challenges the legitimacy of the research that does not empower oppressed or invisible groups (Cohen et al, 2000, p. 35). It recognises the value of pluralism and seeks to represent a range of interest in its formulation (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 121) establishing an agenda of empowerment, voice, emancipation equality and representation of oppressed groups in this case, pupils and parents (Cohen et al, 2000, p. 35).

Thus, descriptive and judgmental or subjective areas in evaluation, which have a democratic dimension, can be better expressed by methods designed to provide documentation of controversial issues from a variety of parties in depth and covering a wide range of controversial human acts (Elliott, 1991, p. 18). Such sensitive data should be collected by methods that should be as sensitive as the data itself (see Section 5.3). Qualitative methods, therefore, appear to be appropriate. House and Howe (1995) confirm this by saying that value investigation should be outside the territory of positivist investigation (p 6).

A democratic evaluation programme, however, should be conducted without 'selling out' to the positivist (Cohen et al, 2000, p. 37). It should also adopt a quantitative

perspective. Adelman and Alexander (1982) advocate the choice of both methodologies by saying that 'there is relative security to be gained from a stance of considered eclecticism deliberately drawing on contrasting methodologies' (p. 169). Similarly Simons argues, 'the data base is broad and may include quantitative and qualitative indicators of progress or events...Both may be needed, if relevant to the issue under review' (in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 121). Thus, CAR should be driven by both methodological traditions.

My next concern was to choose methods that would have the soundest theoretical basis for producing a valid picture of events. Quantitative data, expressed by numbers, statistical elements or diagrams, can provide 'the big picture, the big numbers, the trends over time' (MacBeath, 1999, p. 112); Combined with specific and detailed qualitative data it can 'cover' the complete picture. Thus, attitudinal questionnaires and focus groups were selected as the basic techniques for gathering evaluation data, paying also attention as to which method will work best considering 'particularly contingent problems with time, resources, expertise and acceptability' (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p.167).

5. 4. 2. 2 Evaluative questionnaires

Initially, I constructed a questionnaire for teachers to choose areas for evaluation, although I had not taken it into account (see Section 6.2.4.2). I organised the questionnaire with 20 positive statements (two from each of the ten categories of indicators of a 'good' school). Primarily, I selected the statements from the bibliography. However, I adjusted and modified them to the reality of the certain school in a clear and broad basis of meaning. I left statements with specific content for the phase of school evaluation (see Appendix 11).

I constructed the evaluative questionnaire in an attitudinal form according to the general evaluative areas, which were in the interest of the school, waiting until the process revealed the so-called 'topic guide' (Easterby-Smith, et. al, 1995, p. 94). When the areas of school climate and home-school links were revealed as the weakest ones, I tried to formulate the 'evaluative criteria' according to participants' perceptions about the ideal school but also teachers' individual interviews and my

own observations. At this point a deeper exploration of the notion of 'school climate' was necessary, distinguishing it from that of 'school culture'.

School climate is created by what we perceive through our sense. It refers to perceptions of persons in a school about its norms, assumptions and beliefs that reflect the school culture (Owens, 1995, p. 81) (see Section 4.1.2.1). School climate, therefore, concerns the 'attitudes to culture' (Fidler, et, al, 1997, p. 101) that are created at any time by any number of variables in any number of interesting ways. Considering that the study of school climate is a difficult task since the definitions of 'school climate' or ethos are somewhat subjective and intuitive, I turned to taxonomies of 'climate' for systematic conceptionalisations.

Tanguiri's taxonomy (1968) suggests four dimensions:

- ecology, which refers to the physical environment in which a group interacts
- milieu, which is the social characteristics of individuals and groups participating in the school
- social system, which refers to the organisational and administrative structure with the meaning of the patterned relationships of persons and groups, and finally
- culture, which concerns the collective accepted beliefs, values, behavioural norms, assumptions and ways of thinking of the group (Owens 1995).

I preferred the view of Anderson (1982), who agrees with Tanguiri's taxonomy and distinguishes the environmental, human, social and cultural dimension in school climate. With reference to the cultural element of climate, I followed the view of Schein (1992), who sees it as having both internal and external orientation. The first one examines the position of leadership style, working together and relationships with the children while the external orientation scrutinises the position of attitudes to innovation, school aims and attitudes to parents (Fidler et al, 1997, p. 40, 41). The external orientation of the culture could give me the opportunity to investigate school-home links.

I developed questionnaires that had different numbers of inventory statements for teachers, pupils and parents, separating the questionnaire for the older pupils from that for the younger ones (see Appendix 12). The questionnaires had a common core of

items relevant to the school climate and put an emphasis on home-school links that were excluded from pupils' questionnaires. I particularly tried to adapt the language to any particular group, specifically to pupils so that the instrument could become familiar to them. I tried to construct a user-friendly and economical instrument, appropriate for the task, able to generate good and robust information (MacBeath et al, 1996, p. 75).

The items were relevant to the aims that the N.C. puts, the goals that the school puts as priorities as well as the support that the school provides to achieve them. The statements also put forward issues of discipline and extra-curricular activities, which, in the preparation phase seemed to absorb a lot of school energy and time. The investigation of teachers' attitudes towards curricular aims and innovations were another target of the questionnaires. With reference to innovations, the items implied imposed innovations with analytical instructions and practices of implementation as well as non-obliged innovations which teachers undertake with their own responsibility.

The relationships among and between teachers, pupils and parents covered a large part of the questionnaires. The operation of the class for pupils with special needs but also pupils' comments in the preparation phase gave me the motivation to deal with issues of equity. I used the term 'particularities' with the meaning of 'dissimilarity' and 'uniqueness'. The teachers' questionnaire additionally referred to teachers' relationships and co-operation with the headteacher that 'are virtually invisible to their pupils but central to teachers' morale and job satisfaction' (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001, p. 86).

The statements concerning home-school links were based on teachers' and parents' answers and comments. They were relevant to school policy about parental involvement, the contribution of the Parents' Association, the teachers' attitudes, knowledge and skills that required for improvement of the links.

I organised the questionnaires in a Likert scale where 'certain information is given' in a 'standardised' way (Saunders and Karmock-Golds, 1997 p. 25); the scale was of five points for adults and of four points for children (see Appendix 12). Thus my

choice of a four point scale for children can be considered as a limitation of the investigation, since the comparison of teachers', parents' and pupils' data became impossible. The investigation, however, could attain accurate information preventing children from confusion and relieving them from the anxiety of completing a complex five-point scale. On the other hand, the data that the older children would give could be compared to those of the younger pupils.

The teachers' questionnaire included 38 items in a double scale structure. It required two responses: the first one to indicate how significant the teachers consider the specific characteristic for a 'good' school (where should we be?); the second scale to indicate the present situation of the school (where are we now in our school?) (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001, p. 87). This structure allowed respondents to acknowledge their own roles as agents of 'change' or 'conservatism' (ibid, p. 45) (see Appendix 12.2).

Apart from these questionnaires, I prepared two questionnaires for teachers' evaluation. The first one was for the younger pupils (first and second level) and the second one for the rest. These questionnaires could be used by the teachers themselves on a voluntary basis (see Appendix 12.5).

The questionnaires were used as the basis for following group discussions. They could prepare the participants and facilitate their understanding and discussions. Finally, considering that 'questionnaires can be useful instruments and add value when used well' (MacBeath et al, 1996, p. 112), the questionnaires served to support and validate the qualitative data that was to be gathered by the focus groups.

5. 4. 2. 3 Focus groups

The mode of gathering qualitative data was critical. House and Howe (1999) have argued that 'for the evaluation of complex social service such as education, dialogue is usually necessary because programmes and policies can be identified in many different ways and can affect groups differentially' (p. 120). I, therefore, considered group interviews, generally termed 'focus groups' (Merton and Kendall, 1946 in Clarke, 1999, p. 77), as the most appropriate method.

A focus group is a group of individuals who the researcher selects and assembles to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research (Powell and Single, 1996). A focus group is a purely qualitative interviewing method which provides a rather quick, relatively inexpensive and efficient way of collecting valuable qualitative data. Its most interesting contribution to the discussion is the chance to 'share and compare' individuals' ideas and experiences and create lines of communication (Morgan, 1997, p. 20).

Focus groups could also provide me with the opportunity to note non-verbal respondents' behaviour, an important indicator of how they consider the issue. I could also have direct evidence of 'how the participants themselves understand their similarities and differences' (Morgan, 1997, p. 20-21), thus, acquiring a better understanding of the social process and dynamics of group interaction. Finally, in focus groups I could identify and address many issues as well as introduce an element of quality control into the data collection process (Clarke, 1999; Easterby-Smith, et al, 1995). In this study focus groups were to provide the qualitative data, offer ideas and validate the quantitative data.

Focus groups, however, have disadvantages. Individuals, under social pressure 'may suppress or modify their true feelings' (Clarke, 1999, p. 77). They also may not feel confident enough to work with other unknown participants or may be reluctant to openly express their views, particularly when the status of the latter restricts them (ibid). Furthermore, focus groups may 'be hard to make a clear end-point to the research' (Easterby-Smith, et al, 1995, p. 9). Avoiding any 'manipulation' in discussions I had to attempt a possible agreement. Finally, I had 'to draw out the full significance of the experience when writing it up' (ibid, p. 9). Since writing up discussions would be a laborious task that could prevent the advantages of focus groups to be revealed, I had to record and transcribe the discussions.

The size of groups was important. Although there is no fixed size, I preferred the group to be neither 'too large as this may inhibit some members from joining in the discussion nor too small so that a conversation can be unfolded' (Clarke, 1999 p. 77). I tried therefore, to arrange groups of about five people as MacBeath (1999) also

suggests (p.p. 115, 118). Teachers, pupils and parents were identified as the participating groups. The rationale for this decision is examined in details in Section 5.5.2.

The manner, according to which participation is organised, as House and Howe (1999) define 'is nearly as important as who is selected to participate' (p. 119). Apart from the teachers, I estimated to interview 12 groups of parents and 12 groups of pupils, selected in a random way, considering only pupils' level and gender. Practical difficulties but also parents' repetitions dictated me to change my initial plan and interview only 30 parents (see Chapter 6).

I designed focus groups as 'teachers-only, but also pupils-only and parents-only' to ensure that their perceptions and expectations would be accomplished without any influences (Cousins and Earl, 1995, p.119). I expected to mix up groups. This procedure could add democratic validity to the evaluation. MacBeath (1999) suggests it. Political implications, however, did not permit me to follow my initial intentions. I had to protect participants from unequal power relationships in a school that has its first experience in pupils' and parents' participation (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Since my experience in interviews was derived from one-on-one encounters only, I attempted to increase my interviewing skills by piloting two pupils' focus groups in my own school. The conditions seemed to be similar to those of the research school. The pilot study helped me to identify and organise my own role more successfully. I improved my questioning ability and my competence to keep the discussion focused on the research question. These skills were improving as the focus groups were proceeding.

I used focus groups for two purposes: in establishing criteria and in obtaining evaluative information. In the first case, the target was for participants to discuss their values, views, and beliefs on issues such as, what teachers require from a school, what pupils expect from their school and what parents want for their children from it. All these issues were incorporated into a single question: 'What, in your view, are the key characteristics of a 'good' school?' At this phase, I also attempted to develop criteria for teachers' evaluation. I organised pupils' focus groups where the question

correspondingly was: 'What, in your view, are the key characteristics of a 'good' teacher?'

The brainstorming technique was used to provide answers to these questions, common for each group. This form allowed respondents the freedom to introduce their own responses as an open-ended task and elaborate on the question asked. I expected that 'the key feature of the discussion starter question is that one should easily be able to respond to this...and something that all participants will be interested in' (Morgan 1997, p. 49). In the second case, that of gathering evaluative information, the basis for the discussion would be the attitudinal questionnaire which could provide some kind of interview structure.

In this process teachers also participated in a whole staff meeting as, for instance, in the research introduction and report presentation. The basic mode of their participation, however, was that of team work in feedback, negotiation and decision making. Team work can help in 'agreeing aims, clarifying roles, maximising the use of resources, motivating, supporting and encouraging members of the team, improving relationships and communication within the members, encouraging decision making, increasing participation, increasing knowledge and understanding, reducing stress and anxiety releasing individual potential, sharing expertise and skills' (Bell, 1992, p. 46).

In particular, I expected team work towards decision making to increase teachers' feeling of ownership and their commitment for the process (Bush and West-Burnham 1994, p. 272). Lewin points out that 'group decisions act to produce commitment and changes in attitudes and behaviour not attainable through lecturing or individual treatment' (Lewin, 1952 cited in Oja and Smulyan, 1986, p. 55). Thus, as Clarke (1999) stresses, 'there will be an increased likelihood that participants (they) will act upon the findings' (p. 18).

It becomes apparent that in the programme implementation, as the researcher-collaborator, I would undertake a decisive role. What should be my own role in the CAR?

5. 4. 3 The role of collaborator in the process

5. 4. 3. 1 The collaborator as a critical friend

The main aspect of my role as the researcher in the ethnographic case study was that of participant observer and interviewer. Participant observation, although ‘it is often referred to as a method, it is in fact more accurately described as *a role*’ (Walker, 1985, 1995, p. 83). My self-imposed task was to enter into the lives of the school and its participants. I had to observe and interpret what was happening in the school throughout the process, including an appraisal of my own activities as a researcher or critical friend (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001) (see Section 10.3.2) since in the CAR I also had to undertake the role of collaborator as facilitator-critical friend (see Section 5.3.1.3).

Although in practice the function of these roles is complexly interwoven, MacBeath and Mortimore (2001) distinguish them by saying that while the critical friend role is primarily to support the process of change, the researcher’s purpose is to document and interpret what is happening in the development process, including appraisal of the activities of the critical friend (p. 139).

As an outside facilitator I had to ‘fully understand the context of the work presented’ (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001, p. 138). I had to suggest who could participate and to what extent, how the research methods might be used and managed, and how the research findings could be disseminated. The ethnographic case study could help me to achieve a good understanding of school context and culture. Then the process, adapted to school norms and customs, could preserve active participation and a sense of community among all participants (Stringer, 1996).

I had to develop a vision for the programme implementation ‘supporting the review and renewal of educational beliefs, values and practices’ (Day and Townsend cited in Campbell and Groundwater-Smith, 2007, p. 48). Considering that ‘teachers frequently do not see the need for an advocated change’ (Fullan, 1991, p. 69), at an early stage I had to make perfectly clear that, although I was an external researcher, an ‘outsider’, they could co-operate with me, as ‘insiders’, for issues and problems of the school that they

themselves would point out. Ownership of the innovation had to become one of the main 'driving forces' (Alvick, 1996).

I also had to introduce and manage methods and procedures, analyse and negotiate data. In this attempt I had to inspire teachers' commitment to establishing a communication and collaboration network with them, necessary for the continuation of the process (Oja and Smulyan, 1989). I had to support teachers in their active role and help them to clarify their focus or shift direction if it was needed, as Oja and Smulyan (1989) advise: 'If outside researchers are involved, their role is to help teachers to examine their own practice' (p. 23). In a broader sense, my concern was to help all participants, 'to articulate their concerns, describe what they see as core issues and develop their own solutions' (Clarke, 1999, 24).

In reference to my target, that would be 'to facilitate a comprehensive exchange of views in which all participants are able to speak their minds and to respond to the ideas of others' (Walker, 1985: 5 in Easterby-Smith, et. al, 1995, p. 93), it might be necessary to take 'the role of mediator or consensus generator' (Clarke, 1999, 24). A constant concern, therefore, was to establish myself as 'a trusted person', able to 'ask provocative questions, provide data to be examined through another lens and offer a critique of a person's work as a friend' (Costa and Kallick, 1993 cited in MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001, p. 138). I had to become 'a supporter of the success of the research' (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 170).

Such a decisive role in my collaboration with teachers might raise issues of asymmetrical power. I took into account that the evaluation finding here 'depends on the number variety and mutuality of contacts between researchers and practitioners (Huberman, 1990:364 cited in Cousins and Earl, 1995, p. 104). I had to avoid keeping 'a directive' or 'expert' role as well as being evaluative (while encouraging evaluation) and teaching pupils or attempting to teach teachers in any directive, expert, content-led way. Providing instant or 'quick fix' solutions to school problems influencing content (as opposed to process) and breaking individual confidentiality or anonymity was out of the question (MacBeath and Mortimore 2001, p. 139-140).

Such a role could be facilitated by being 'external' in this collaboration. The next section attempts to illustrate the rationale for selecting the role of an 'outsider' collaborator and describes how the school for the research was chosen.

5. 4. 3. 2 Deciding the role of external collaborator

My initial thought was to conduct the research in my own school. The deep understanding of the school context and culture was an advantage. There was also a practical reason: the school was close to my residence. Nevertheless, after more thoughtful deliberation, I decided to focus on another school. I preferred to play the role of the 'outsider' rather than that of the 'insider' researcher.

As an 'insider' researcher I had to overcome some difficulties, such as that of power relationships. The teachers and the head might be hesitant and suspicious to explicate values, attitudes and changes due to fear of possible consequences in their daily life. Webb (1990) identifies that 'practitioners collecting data in their own schools usually experience few difficulties - other than practical ones, such as finding opportunities to conduct interviews - in gaining access to the staff perception and school events that they wish to research' (p. 249).

On the other hand, the headteacher could ask to have access to the research data and exert his authority over an 'insider' researcher more than on an 'outsider'. Elliott (1991) points out that the power which a head has over an 'insider' researcher is far greater than it is with an 'outsider' researcher (p. 59). Dilemmas could also arise from 'a conflict between the value of critical openness to pupils and parents and respect for the professional expertise of colleagues and their right to exercise authority within the confines of their own classroom' (ibid, p. 59). Although I had study leave for two years in order to conduct the investigation, this exposure of the school could become particularly risky considering that later I would return to the school as a teacher or the headteacher.

Finally, I acknowledged that the culture in my own school was not supportive for such a research. Oja and Smulyan (1989) warn, 'action research projects are most successful when the school climate encourages communication and experimentation and when

administration supports the project' (p. 20). Thus, I turned my attention towards another school.

'Platon' school had many advantages. It was located close to my home and its headteacher had been a friend of mine for many years. The District Advisor, considering the school culture, encouraged me in this choice. He also informed me about the operation of a class for children with special education needs. Thus, as I could have a school that represents a 'total' primary school in Greece, the 'Platon' school seemed to be particularly interesting.

On the first contact and the two subsequent discussions the headteacher appeared to be interested in the programme. Although he expressed some hesitations about particular colleagues, he seemed to have ambitions for the school and himself. Stake (1995) advises, 'we need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry, perhaps for which a prospective informant can be identified and with actors (the people studied) willing to comment on certain draft materials' (p. 4). Yin (1993) also suggests that 'the selection should be based on the criterion of feasibility and access' (p.34).

At the end of the school year 2000-2001 it seemed that I had a school for the research. Then, I began to consider ethical issues thoroughly.

5. 4. 3. 3 Considering ethical issues

Qualitative research raises serious ethical issues. Taking into account that the present research involves action research, the issue of ethics becomes decisive because data gathering for gaining knowledge of social change is a political process (Schon, 1973). Moreover, the collaboration in action research demanded the establishment of an ethical framework. Rapoport (1970:499) states that 'action research aims to contribute *both* to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework' (cited in Oja and Smulyan, 1986, p. 12). At the same time, as 'evaluation deals with issues which affect people's lives' (Robson, 2000, p. 29), the concerns become clearly political and the need for considering ethical issues even more critical.

Teachers engage in SSE with pupils' and parents' participation. 'Ethical and sometimes legal dilemmas arise out of competing obligations and conflicts of interests' (Hall and Hall, 1996, p. 279). Teachers may feel particularly threatened and 'their security and confidence need to be safeguarded' (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 182). The evaluation should be conducted 'legally, ethically and with due regard for the welfare of those associated with the evaluation, or who may be affected by its consequences' (Nevo, 1995, p. 192). Thus, 'the question shifts from whether or not the research should be done, to how such research can be conducted' (Gorman, in Campbell and Groundwater-Smith, 2007, p. 19).

Initially, I had to enter the school legally and consider the routine ethical issues. Taking into account that everybody who is being involved in the research should know it and wish to take part (Robson, 2000), I had to respect the voluntary nature of teachers' involvement as well as that of pupils' and parents' participation. With a 'respect for democratic values', teachers are entitled to be informed about the research, as BERA (1992) recommends, and ensured that the dissemination of the evaluation findings outside the school would be of their own decision.

I had to protect confidentiality as a basic democratic principle while another concern was to ensure anonymity and privacy. Hall and Hall (1996) advise, 'no individuals will be identified by name in the report and nothing they say will be attributed to them personally' (p. 124). Individuals could have 'control over access to themselves and information about themselves' (Robson, 2000, p. 32) and no one could 'make use of disclosures made within a group in other decision-making contexts' (Frost et al, 2000, p. 39).

Concealing school and individual names and responses, however, could only protect teachers from 'outsiders' and external scrutiny. How could I protect a specific teacher from recognition by other teachers who work with him? In a single ethnographic case study, locations, individuals and their interests cannot be camouflaged completely. Anonymity does not protect teachers from 'insiders' (Simons, 1987). Burgess (1984) has pointed out that 'whatever precautions are taken to protect those involved in the field study, nothing is foolproof' (p.206).

According to ethical guidelines, the aims of the programme and a general plan of the process along with standard ethical guidelines had to be organised in a written consent form, known as 'voluntary informed consent'. The teachers had to sign it voluntarily as an ethical framework to protect their interests and participation since they should be 'informed about aims, purposes and likely publication of findings involved in the research and of potential consequences for participants, and to give their informed consent before participating in research' (BERA, 1992, p. 19).

Initially, I wondered whether I should ask teachers to sign such a form or just give reassurance verbally (Robson, 2000). I thought that in the Greek context teachers are not used to such formal procedures. A signed form might generate suspicion about the research and a sense of tight obligation might even lead to a complete refusal to participate. Nevertheless, having studied ethics in the literature where 'the notion of "informed consent" is nowadays taken as given and essential' (David, et al, 2001, p.348), I put these doubts aside. I decided to proceed preparing the form for teachers to sign or refuse straightforwardly. I maintained, however, reservations considering that the use of a formal consent form is dependent upon circumstances (Robson, 2000).

Preparing the form, I realised that I could neither specify the amount of fieldwork that I had to complete, nor be too precise about the process (Hall and Hall, 1996). At the beginning of the investigation I did not have a clear idea of what I was going to research exactly (McKenzie et al 1997). As 'all research necessarily entails a hidden element' (ibid, p. 163), I decided to omit some details and I prepared the form in a simple way using friendly and clear language (see Appendix 4).

I was also aware that the signing of the form could not guarantee teachers' participation. 'Consent is given in a fleeting moment at the outset of an enquiry' (McNamee and Bridges, 2004, p. 31). As the process continues, teachers may realise that they do not fully understand 'what they have let themselves in for'. They may develop misgivings and, therefore, reluctance or their circumstances might change and find the research demands too onerous (Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Robson, 2000). I had to show sensitivity to teachers' reluctance to participate and respect their right to refuse (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). The ethical guidelines of BERA (1992) are clear: 'participants have the right to withdraw from a study at any time' (p. 19).

Consent should be seen as an ongoing process. Negotiation and renegotiation towards agreement with those in the context should be, therefore, a principle in ethical issues (David, et al, 2001). Thus, I realised that my role was decisive. I had to cultivate a 'bond of loyalty' so that participants 'feel that all is in a good cause that will be lost if there is a withdrawal from later questions' (McNamee and Bridges, 2004, p. 31) and, in this case, from later activities.

Parents and particularly children's participation brought up additional ethical considerations. Introducing the research to them, I gave verbal reassurances of confidentiality and anonymity, while participants in focus groups could also act as a guarantee. The issue was more complicated in the case of children who are 'by definition, immature emotionally, intellectually and socially' (Robson, 2000, p. 39). The issue of power relationships between children and adults could not be ignored.

Although the general principle is that both the child and the parent or guardian should give their consent (Robson, 2000, p. 39), I preferred, as McNamee and Bridges (2004) advise 'the children not to have any previous information about the subject matter of the survey as this could influence their replies' (p. 32). I doubted the power of adults over children since it might be used to 'deny children the right to be heard' (Leeson, in Campbell and Groundwater-Smith, 2007, p. 138). Finally, I supposed that the head and teachers, who gave explicit consent for the investigation, remained the only 'gatekeepers', since 'the one who gives permission accepts responsibility' (McNamee and Bridges, 2004, p. 35).

Accepting that no ethical issue is truly unique, since 'moral obligations are always conditional' (Scott, 1996, p. 162), I had to be well prepared for making on-the-spot decisions and deal with tensions and dilemmas that might arise. Thus, I followed the advice to dip into the literature and identify some of the problems and difficulties (Cohen, et al, 2000, p. 59). I could then 'regard other researchers' discussions on ethical problems and deal with hypothetical situations in order to illuminate more 'standard' ethical considerations, and refine the researchers' abilities' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 77). The school context would be decisive for my decisions.

From the beginning, I took into account that 'an individual's understanding of the consent statement and acceptance of his/her status as an autonomous decision maker will be most

powerfully influenced not by what the individual is told, but how he or she is engaged in the communication' (Sieber, 1998:131 cited in Robson, 2000, p. 31). I also acknowledged that I enter into 'personal and moral relationships with those I study' (Hall and Hall, 1996, p. 280). These stressed the importance of my own role.

I had to offer guarantees that my behaviour conforms to specific ethical standards (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 76). I had to behave or talk thoughtfully because even the seemingly innocent act of encouraging participants to talk about their school and teachers may jeopardise their work or relationship. Robson (2000) illustrates that 'friendliness, respect and empathy will convey as much, probably more, than the actual words you use' (p. 31). 'Successful qualitative studies depend on building trust, maintaining good relations, respecting norms of reciprocity, and sensitivity considering ethical issues' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 64).

In order to acquire trust, I had to avoid being perceived by the teachers as a person of higher status. The fact that I was sharing similar professional background with them that was attributing similar styles, manner and forms of operation was an advantage for me. Robson (2000) argues: 'If feasible, there is much to be said for an interviewer or observer sharing important characteristics of these kinds with those being interviewed or observed' (p. 31). My status as an 'outsider' might also contribute considerably in building such a trust. For example, an outside researcher can restrict a heads' power over the access to the data.

Acknowledging that professional ethics is conceived as 'elements of human virtues, in all its complexity, as expressed through the nuances of attitudes, intentions, words and actions...' (Day and Townsend in Campbell and Groundwater-Smith, 2007, p. 42) and having addressed methodological considerations I had to immerse myself further in practical considerations.

5. 5 The process of evaluation: defining a background

5. 5. 1 Developing a plan for the process implementation

The process of action research towards evaluation should not be a 'random, *ad hoc* activity that characterises everyday life' (McNiff, 1992, p.7). Considering that

evaluation is 'a systematic enquiry made public' (Stenhouse 1980 cited in McNiff, 1992, p.7) that involves 'the collection, analysis and reporting of case data' (Elliott, 1991, p. 64), the process should be 'well planned and carefully structured so as to defend its place in a rationally functioning organisation' (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 21). Although 'what to do next is determined on the basis of the results of what is currently done' (Cousins and Earl, 1995, p. 121), some prearranged decisions should organise a plan that can be 'either very detailed or more general' (Nevo, 1995, p. 68).

I took into account that the process is dynamic. It should permit, therefore, 'the actions, reactions, responses and interactions of the various players who have the stake in the change' (James and Connolly, 2000, p. 30) to take place. It should accommodate surprising elements of unpredictability and change as part of a democratic process, which allows for individual differences and creative episodes so that individualities will themselves shape the environment (McNiff, 1992, p. 3). This means that the process should also be flexible.

According to O'Hanlon (1996) the process should be 'flexible, challenging, allows openness and honesty in encouraging the exposure of the real life in schools to possible transformation and because its agenda for reconstructing educational contexts' (p.87). For Fullan (1991) 'successful implementation consists of some transformation or continual development of initial ideas' (p.105). Such a flexible process can be set against the usual background of constraints in schools.

Flexibility can be also supported by planning the process as a 'cyclical process' (Elliott, 1981; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982; Ebbutt, 1985). The spiral pattern indicates that initiative can shift over time since recurring reflection and interaction can lead to modification of plans (ibid, 1989). While planning a flexible and adaptive process it 'is possible to anticipate much that will occur in the change process' (Fidler, et al, 1997, p. 65). I had, therefore, to design a process that maintains a balance between structured and flexible activities.

At the same time, the 'complexity' of the process, which involves a range of people and approaches, was apparent. Although complexity promises more, because more is being attempted, it might create problems and conflicts. It would be helpful, therefore,

for me to consider this complex process separately, broken into components so that it can be implemented in an incremental and advancing manner (Fullan, 1991). I accepted Fullan's (1991) phases of a process for the implementation of a change: initial, implementation and institutionalisation.

I tried to organise the process step-by-step. I realised, however that 'the stages are extremely complex in so far as they interlock and in the sense that they are present *throughout* evaluation in different ways' (Osborne in Davies, et al, 1990, p. 160). Thus, I restricted myself to identifying and arranging some basic steps. I could say, however, that at this first period of studying, this identification was done rather intuitively.

I prepared a plan, sensitive to the rhythms and norms of school work and I tried to adapt the steps into a standard school timetable given that 'a relevant time frame is required in order to validate any assessment since effects or outcomes may not be visible at all if the time frame is wrong' (Osborne in Davies, et al, 1990, p. 167). I took into account Nevo's (1995) advice: 'practical considerations require that evaluation be conducted within the time framework of the school, in line with its constraints without too much disruption to teaching and learning, and with due regard to the evaluation needs of the school' (p. 71).

I adapted specific procedures for each term and I estimated that the study was going to last the entire coming school year (see Appendix 1.1). The timetable seemed to be based on a logical base. I acknowledged, however, that despite the logical planning, the time spent in the school would depend on participants' availability as well as teachers' and my own commitment to this complex process. Eventually, the evaluation process lasted much more time than that I had estimated (see Appendix 1.2). Having prepared the process, the next practical consideration for me was to identify the participating groups.

5. 5. 2 Identifying participants

The present study identifies three basic participating groups: teachers, pupils and parents. The headteacher and all teachers participate not merely as sources of data. The headteacher

must be 'the gatekeeper of change' (Fullan, 2001, p. 138) and teachers 'at the heart of any serious reform effort' (ibid, p. 115). The CAR defines them as 'collaborators' in steering innovation, 'but also in responding to the way any change is affecting the context of the school, communicating the impact to other decision-making as appropriate and refining the process further as a result' (Dike, 1999, p. 44) (see Section 5.3.1). The process attributes a key-player role to them and expects 'a shift from the current role of the profession, where teachers are often given no other opinion than to act simply as interpreters or recipients of established theory' (Halsall, 1998, p.75).

The second group consists of pupils whose voices are rarely heard. Adults, as Fullan (2001) argues, 'rarely think of students as participants in a process of change and organisational life' (p. 151). Similarly Rudduck (1996) believes that there is a reluctance for adults to take seriously young people's critique of education, or their perceptions of it because of tradition and teacher anxiety' (p. 2-3).

The present research, however, introduces pupils' participation in evaluation within the Greek context. It considers SSE as based on democratic values and the innovation as a people-related phenomenon for every individual. The study respects the principle of young people's right within the school community (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007, p.6). It acknowledges that pupils 'even little ones, are people, too' (Fullan, 2001, p. 151) and recognises children's 'capacity to reflect on issues affecting their lives' (Rudduck 1996, p. 172).

The study also perceives pupils' participation rather as consultation since it engages them in conversations about things that matter to pupils in the classroom and school and that affect their learning (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007, p. 7). In other words, the study engages pupils in a learning partnership (Riley, 1998).

Such an engagement concerns pupils' personal and social development. It can enhance pupils' confidence given that their ideas are taken seriously, and confidence in being able to express their view. It can also support and develop pupils' confidence as learners that in turn can positively affect their commitment to learning (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007, p. 10).

Involving pupils, the research puts emphasis on children as ‘social and cultural actors’ (Christensen and James, 2000, p. 31). Pupils’ engagement can lead to significant improvements in teachers’ practices and to a transformation of teacher-pupil relationships, although, it can be said that teacher-pupil relationships are risky and difficult to be managed (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007).

According to Fullan (1991), pupils can provoke changes in ‘knowledge, skills, and behaviours, necessary for their learning’ (p. 190). This, however, means change at school level. There is a broad consensus that pupils can play an important role in school improvement (Pickering, 1997, Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007) and research has shown that pupils have successfully achieved accuracy in assessing their school (Riley, 1994).

Another fundamental argument for this participation is that pupils’ involvement in responsible debates about their education can reflect upon their responsibility that pupils have in their own lives outside the school and affect their ability to handle it (Jorgenson in McBeath and Moos, 2004, p. 114) since ‘the inner learning environment - mind, thoughts and knowledge - is shaped by the pattern in the outer learning environment (ibid, p. 113).

In the English system, pupils’ involvement is a key dimension of both personalised learning and citizenship education (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). As Maitles and Deuchar (2006) stress, ‘we don’t learn democracy, we live it’. Fullan (2001) argues that ‘treating students as *people* comes very close to “living” the academic, personal, and social educational goals that are stated in most official policy documents’ (p.162). Being a school teacher and dealing with young pupils I came to agree with it.

Parents were the third participating group. Parents are informed about school work through their children (Elliott, 2003). Although ‘the opportunities for the exercise of the individual or collective parental voice within a school appear limited’ (Vincent and Tomlinson, 1997:365 in Riley, 1998, p. 134), it is accepted that parents’ participation contributes to the quality of education for all the students. It has been recognised that ‘the closer the parent is to education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement’ (Fullan, 2001, p. 198).

The participation of different groups has been acknowledged as a kind of ‘in-house triangulation’. Thus, ‘the more they constitute a cross-section of the population in question, the easier we might feel about the danger of bias’ (Wood, 1986: 86 in Wellington, 1996, p. 25). It means that omissions of major stakeholders could bias the study. Nevertheless, I left it for later to decide about other groups’ participation, depending on school circumstances.

It became apparent that SSE cannot include the interests of every individual person who might be affected. Such inclusions are impractical. I had to use representations rather than direct involvement of every single stakeholder (House and Howe, 1995, p. 116) and thought, therefore, about representatives from the above groups. I aimed at selecting 60 pupils randomly; five from each level, to construct pupils’ groups and similarly 12 groups, consisting of five parents each (see Section 5.4.2.3).

In this attempt, I took into account that pupils’ and parents’ participation was quite new in the Greek context. Teachers mistrust researchers. I had to proceed carefully applying the usual safeguards. The extent of their participation would be rather a decision made on the spot. Although this involvement was later restricted to employing parents and pupils as mere sources of evaluative information, they initially participated in identifying evaluative indicators from a ‘blank sheet’ (MacBeath, 1999). For this decision, I had to apply logic, exercising professional judgment.

5. 5. 3 Identifying criteria: Establishing a rationale

An indicator is defined as ‘a single or a composite statistic which reflects the health of an educational system and can be reliably and repeatedly obtained’ while a network of indicators constitutes an indicator system (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 183). Indicators by themselves do not reveal everything about a system (Hulpia and Valcke, 2005, p. 13). They can ‘provide a clearer image of the reality we are working towards’ (Sutton, 1994, p. 41) and can tell us a lot when we lay some kind of interpretation around them. Indicators, as Nuttall (1994) says, ‘do not provide the diagnosis or prescribe the remedy; they are simply suggestive of the need for action’ (p.17, in Stoll and Fink,

1996, p. 183). Indicators, therefore, should be the starting point (Hulpia and Valcke, 2005, p. 113).

Indicators can be used to define, as in the present study, the 'evaluation criteria' that is 'the evidence we would look for to check whether our targets have been achieved' (Sutton, 1995, p. 38). Otherwise, criterion can be used as a set of references upon which evaluation takes place; it is an established principle or established rules or attitudes when it is used for evaluation, choice and preference (Dimitropoulos, 1999, p. 131). Although differences between 'indicator' and 'criterion' can be identified, for the needs of the present study the terms will be used interchangeably.

The choice of indicators is an important decision. 'It is the choice of indicators and the quality of their expression which then determines the success of both the implementation and evaluation of our targets' (Sutton, 1994, p. 41). School effectiveness research and OFSTED's framework provide sets of criteria for schools that wish to follow a short cut approach in establishing them. In this case, the school could either adopt a set or adapt it discussing and prioritising criteria according to its own values.

A set of criteria, however, which is imposed by an 'outsider' and adopted or adapted according to a restricted part of the school community, that of teachers, could not express a wider agreement on the values of this community. The school had to develop this set. 'Developing an indicator system does signal that a school, district, province or nation measures what it values' (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 183).

Criteria generated by the school community also mean greater interest, commitment and ownership. 'The importance of ownership of evaluation criteria and information being gathered is no longer a matter of assertion or wish-fulfillment but well supported by research' (MacBeath, et al, 1996, p. 11). Such criteria express thoughts, perceptions and experiences of those who work in school and they are not simply 'procedures on paper' (Earley, et al, 1996b, p.118). They derive from the 'beliefs, values and commitment and from the ability of school staff and parents to translate that commitment into everyday practice' (MacBeath, 1999, p. 36).

Additionally, this approach of establishing criteria could give the opportunity to participants to develop their 'understanding of the inter-relationships and dynamics among different factors that affect the school as well as the significance of some clusters of criteria as opposing others. These cannot be gained by using a list of criteria, which, within limitations, tend to suggest that each category carries equal weight' (MacBeath et al, 1996, p. 24). This process could also help participants to understand the research itself better and furthermore, verify its value. It can confirm 'the value of what the school has discovered and tests the research and its apparent relevance for that school' (ibid, p. 25).

Finally, the fact that this study attempts to introduce a SSE programme in a school within an educational context where there is not any previous research in evaluation criteria formulation, affected my decision seriously. I considered that it would be necessary for evaluation criteria to derive from 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' indicators as they are derived directly by the school community.

I had to take into account, however, an inherent danger of this approach. The criteria produced in this way may be too specific and inharmonious with what researchers have discovered about effective schools or with the mainstream policy and practice. They may be 'conservative, reflecting on what people have experienced rather than on what might be, particularly when based on consultation with five year olds whose experience of the alternatives is necessarily somewhat limited' (MacBeath, et al, 1996, p.24). At this point MacBeath's (1996) advice was valuable: 'if the school does generate its own criteria from scratch it is worth checking against other sources to see if important criteria have been missed out' (p.75).

To complete the methodological consideration of the evaluation I had to examine whether the evaluation responds to the canons that stand as criteria according to which its trustworthiness can be evaluated (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The next section explores the reliability and accuracy of the evaluation process as well as the validity of its findings considering that 'the data and canons of procedures are there to judge the validity of what they (studies) have done' (Parsons in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 52).

5. 5. 4 Considering issues of reliability and validity of evaluation

Morris et al (1987) have pointed out: ‘Methodologically, an evaluation is credible if data are collected in ways that the potential users perceive to be valid, reliable, and objective. Validity in this sense is not simply the technical validity of a scientific research study, but a validity that reflects organisational sensitivity...’ (in Hall and Hall, 1996, p. 242). This means that ‘evaluation should “ring true” to those who provided the data’ (Anderson et al, 1994, p. 25); in my case to teachers, pupils and parents.

For Anderson et al (1994) the validity of evaluation can be assessed as democratic validity, outcome validity, process validity, catalytic validity and dialogue validity. In this study validity was examined according to this distinction.

5. 5. 4. 1 Democratic validity

An evaluation can be characterised as democratic by the way the information is gathered and the findings are disseminated (McKee, cited in Bagakis, 2001 p. 280). This evaluation, based on democratic ideology with a pluralistic perspective, obtained information from all immediately interested groups through the democratic process of an action research. Initially, I acquired the official permission from the Pedagogical Institute to enter the school. Apart from the headteacher and the whole teaching staff, pupils and parents participated as a part of the school community not only in the evaluation but also in generating indicators. Their values and interests were taken into account as an issue of social justice.

Since it was impractical to include the interest of every single individual, I used random representations of parents and pupils in a logical analogy considering also boys’ and girls’ participation (see Section 5.5.2). The evaluation presented, therefore, what Cunningham (1983) calls “local” validity as a version of the democratic validity since the evaluation areas and criteria emerged from the particular context and the solutions that were appropriate to that context’ (cited in Anderson et al, 1994, p. 30).

The use of combined quantitative and qualitative methods can be considered not only as a way of confirming method reliability but also as a way of confirming democratic procedures. Discussions and reflections in focus groups seemed to promote the democratic dialogue while negotiations throughout the process can be considered as additional democratic procedures (Simons, 1987).

By not mixing teachers, parents and pupils in group discussions I protected them from power struggles. I also attempted to restrict my own power over participants and procedures, keeping myself out of outlining conclusions and recommendations that could manifest power imbalances and biased procedures and findings (see Section 10.3). The confidentiality and anonymity was protected as a basic democratic principle in the process, while the oral presentation of the report enhanced teachers' opportunities to negotiate it.

The absence of headteachers' comments from the evaluative report and some decisions as for instance the one in the findings dissemination can be considered as restriction of the democratic validity. The procedures, however, were necessary and the evaluation was conducted as Nevo (1995) has pointed out 'legally, ethically and with due regard for the welfare of those associated with the evaluation, or who may be affected by its consequences' (p. 192) (see Chapters 5 and 10).

5. 5. 4. 2 Outcome validity

Outcome validity according to Cunningham (1983) 'is the extent to which actions that occur lead to a resolution of the problem under study' (cited in Anderson et al, 1994, p. 30); in this case, improvement of school climate and home-school links. Apart from some vague and haphazard attempts, no distinct formal action or decision for action was taken. I could say, however, that the evaluation process led to teachers' reflection, understanding and learning. This learning was reflected upon classrooms, school organisation and perhaps school culture and it can be interpreted as school improvement (see Chapter 9).

5. 5. 4. 3 Process validity

Process validity, according to Watkins (1991), has to do with the ‘dependability’ and ‘competency’ of the study concerning the methods and the style of working (cited in Anderson et al, 1994, p. 31). The methodological background and the detail process analysis justify the methods as they were used and the decisions as they were taken throughout this evaluation process.

The data were collected through more than one method, namely questionnaires and focus groups. In this way, the data derived from each method, confirming or doubting the data of the other, was used for data validation. The data was also collected by many sources of information; namely, teachers, pupils and parents. Thus, questionnaires and focus groups provided comparable information between and among all participants. The oral presentation of the report tested its validity, its possible generability and its practical application.

Throughout the study I had the opportunity to cross-check a lot of data, gathered by multiple methods. This cross-checking helped me to realise if the people were telling the truth as well as to guard against viewing words and events in a simplistic or biased way. Triangulation of methods and views provided a means of checking the data validity. ‘In such a utilising of a range of different methods as it occurs in utilising different people as sources, cross-checks on the accuracy information can be established and the validity of judgments are assessed’ (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 121). In other words: ‘a careful analysis of data from multiple sources adds to the evaluation’s validity’ (Morris, 1987 in Hall and Hall, 1996, p. 242).

To test my own ability in leading a focus group, I piloted focus groups on three pupils’ groups. I also piloted teachers’ and pupils’ evaluative questionnaires and made the appropriate improvements. Focus group discussions were recorded and handwritten, given that technically accurate methodology is important in giving the report credibility. Finally, the time spent can be considered as a contributing factor for the issues to be explored in full.

The written report gave 'status and validity to the evaluation process' (Rogers and Badham, 1992, p. 81). Quotations that were extracted from the data supported the validation of the findings (see Chapter 7). Finally, the oral presentation of the report enhanced teachers' opportunities to negotiate and make it clear and tested the report's validity, its generability and practical application.

5. 5. 4. 4 Catalytic validity

Catalytic validity is, according to Lather (1986:272), 'the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energises participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it' (cited in Anderson et al, 1994, p. 31). In this evaluation, changes at teachers' personal and professional level were identified and that was reflected upon classroom and school level (see Chapter 9). Teachers' involvement in the collaborative action research contributes to reorientation of the importance of the role of school climate, action research, critical friend and teacher development in a SSE and change attempt.

Although the validity of the evaluation for pupils and parents needs investigation, pupils who participated into the process deepened their understanding of their role into the school's social reality (see Chapter 9).

5. 5. 4. 5 Dialogue validity

SSE through collaborative action research can ensure dialogue validity. It can facilitate dialogue among teachers within the school. The collaborator researcher's contribution is valuable, since she/he acts as a familiar critical friend and, in many cases 'as devil's advocate for alternative explanations of research data' (Anderson et al, 1994, p. 32).

Action research can provide a strong reason for external validation since it engages users in the process of research without staying at the 'back end' during the validation of findings' stage. It also develops dialogue validity in its collaborative form with the external researcher within the school and sometimes beyond it. External validity in action research, as Stenhouse (1979) accepts, depends on the generation of action

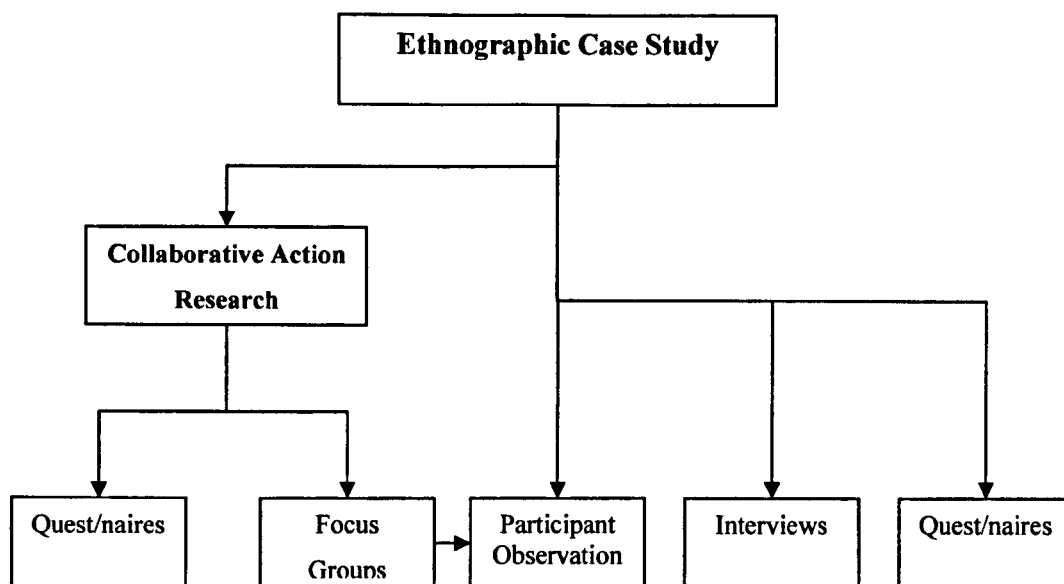
research by teachers and on the development of a genuine form of collaborative research between external researchers and teachers (Elliott, 2002).

Conclusion

In the area of evaluation the terms 'evaluation', 'evaluation research' and 'academic research' are controversial, since there are many differences in purposes, functions and methodological approaches among them. The consideration of these terms became a valuable source for a new researcher in the field, like me. It helped the present case study research to be identified as an academic one, which covers an evaluation research, based on methodological assumptions, like an umbrella.

The main strategy used while conducting the research was the ethnographic case study. This choice is justified by my need to understand school culture within the wider Greek context so that I will adapt the process implementation and understand the possible changes. Participant observation for an immediate investigation, individual teachers' interviews for understanding the situation from the native's point of view and questionnaires became the main instruments in this approach. This case study, however, covers a collaborative action research which is used for the evaluation implementation.

Collaborative action research, based on both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches, employed questionnaires and focus groups for developing criteria and gathering information for evaluation. These methods feeding each other in a form of triangulation guaranteed their reliability. In this collaboration I became an outside critical friend, who, considering ethical issues, initiated, led and managed people and procedures. As far as the teachers were concerned they would be left with the choice of evaluation areas as well as decision making for possible changes and the procedures they could possibly undertake. The next diagram sets out the overall research design.



Apart from methodological implications, some practical considerations also seem to be useful for decision making. Thus, establishing a plan according to a standard school year but flexible enough to be adjusted to the particular year became a prerequisite. Similarly, the decision for developing criteria is based upon the rationale for school community participation in pupils' schooling and developing teachers' ownership in the evaluation.

CHAPTER SIX:

ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH SETTING

Introduction

The ethnographic case study gave me the opportunity, during the two years of visits to the school, to construct a 'thick description' (Stake, 1995, p. 39). This description consisted of whatever I had observed as a participant in the school's daily life as well as whatever I had heard in individual teachers' interviews and their meetings.

Since this case study was combined with an action research strategy, the thick description was enriched with whatever I had read in questionnaires and I had heard in focus groups with teachers, pupils and parents so that thick description was 'not complexities objectively described; it was (is) the particular perceptions of the actors' (Stake, 1995, p. 42). In this manner, however, I had gathered a considerable amount of extremely complex data that varied 'in level of abstraction, in frequency of occurrence, in relevance to central questions in the research, in the source of ground from which they are experienced' (Marshall and Rossman, 1994, p. 112).

I understand data analysis as a process of bringing 'order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data' (ibid, p. 111), underpinned by a commitment to explain individual actions in terms of actor's definition and interpretations of the situation, focuses primarily on identifying the meanings of social situations and the organisations of the activities in question (Marshall and Rossman, 1994). In this way data analysis becomes 'the best means to make sense of the data in ways that will facilitate the continuing unfolding of inquiry, and secondly; lead to a maximal understanding of the phenomena being studied' (Lincoln and Guba, 1981, p. 224).

The initial grounding and planning had suggested some categories for the subsequent analysis. Therefore, throughout the investigation, I followed an analytic strategy, directed by these initial concepts and the guiding hypotheses so that I could, as Schatzman and Strauss (1973) suggest, 'adjust my observation strategies, shifting

some emphasis towards those experiences which bear upon the development of my understanding and generally to exercise control over my emerging ideas by virtually simultaneously “checking” or “testing” of these ideas...’ (in Marshall and Rossman, 1994, p. 112). Once the fieldwork had been completed, however, the thick qualitative data had to be analysed systematically, converted into standard components. Therefore, a management system was necessary.

My first concern was to ‘clean up’ what seems overwhelming and unmanageable with attentive care to the manner in which the data was to be reduced during the reading process (Marshall and Rossman, 1994, p. 113). Thus, I returned to the fieldwork and the interview transcripts, and attempted to become familiar and articulate what had been recorded since ‘the analytic process demands a heightened awareness of the data, a focused attention to those data, and an openness to the subtle, tacit undercurrents of social life’ (ibid, p. 114).

I also acknowledged that ‘the process of analysis is a difficult and demanding one, which needs maximum time and effort to ensure that the final account is not merely a description of events’ (Walker, 1995, p. 252). Thus, my next concern was to discern common and contradictory themes. I also considered that, searching for general statements about relationships among categories of data for a grounding theory to be built, I should leave space for new categories to emerge (Marshall and Rossman, 1994, p. 111). I tried, therefore, to articulate the concepts that the hypotheses had highlighted as explanatory variables but also those that the process revealed. Finally, searching for alternative explanations of the data I chose to go by ‘feel’, to follow the intuitive approach which might produce ‘brilliant material’ (Easterby-Smith et al, 1995, p. 110).

The pattern of writing the analysis was another of my primary concerns. I followed Wolcott’s (1990) advice: ‘qualitative researchers need to be storytellers’ (p. 17) and I decided upon the narrative form, known as the ‘story-telling’ pattern (Stake, 1967 in Simons, 1987, p. 79). This narrative, as clear and well ordered as possible, had a thick descriptive character, combined with an analytical and interpretive dimension, and focused on the sequences and interrelationships between national, local and school

context, since 'description, analysis and interpretation are the three primary ingredients of qualitative research' (Wolcott, 1990, p. 49).

This analysis put emphasis on the process which is the mechanism by which changes are legitimated or delegitimised so that the content of the change becomes ultimately a product of this legitimisation process (James and Connolly, 2000, p. 30) considering, however, that in a change implementation, there is a continual interplay between the content, the context and the process. In this attempt the separation of the researcher from the researched is blurred and 'a tale is told through the chronology of fieldwork events, drawing attention to the culture under study but also to the fieldwork experiences that were integral to the cultural description and interpretation' (Van Maanen's, 1988 in Marshall and Rossman, 1994, p. 118).

Analysis of the research process and the gathered data is structured in the next three chapters, six, seven and eight, following Fullan's (1991) three phases of a change implementation: The **preliminary**, the **implementation** and the **institutionalisation** phase (see Section 5.5.1). Each phase encompasses stages, ten in total, according to the procedures as they were unfolded throughout the process implementation.

This sixth chapter is organised in two sections. The first one analyses the procedures for gaining access to the school. In particular, it highlights how I prepared for and how I got to the school. It explores in detail the inner school context: the teaching staff and its physical environment as well as the contacts I developed with the head and the teachers.

The second section explores the longer and the more decisive phase of the process, the preliminary one, and includes the first four stages of the process. The first stage examines how the research was established in the school paying attention to how the induction meeting was prepared and took place. The next stage explores the procedures of gathering background information about the school culture from the native point of view through headteachers' and teachers' interviews, according to the ethnographic character of the case study.

The third stage explores the procedures concerning the establishment of evaluation criteria. It highlights how teachers, pupils and parents focus groups were organised and conducted for gathering perceptions and how the collected data was analysed and constructed in diagrams and a summary of indicators. Finally, the fourth stage explores how these indicators were turned into evaluative criteria. It scrutinises dilemmas in presenting and negotiating areas for evaluation as well as the final procedure for choosing areas for evaluation. The preliminary phase closes by looking into the preparation for the evaluation implementation.

6. 1 Gaining access to the school

6. 1. 1 Preparing the access

Having acquired the appropriate conceptual and methodological background, I decided to proceed in the investigation. The acceptance of the research from the school of my choice was decisive. My first task was to negotiate my access to the 'Platon' school primarily through its 'formal', and secondly through its 'informal' gatekeepers (Marshall and Rossman, 1994).

In May 2001, I visited the headteacher at the school. There followed a discussion about our common professional concerns and related educational issues. I proposed the engagement of the school in the research without expecting an immediate response. We agreed to meet again at a later date. Two additional discussions were held concerning the research, one of them with the presence of the local advisor.

I attempted to describe the aims with some basic procedures along with the rationale behind them. In retrospect, I am not quite certain whether the proposed research made full sense to the headteacher completely, nor did its implications to him and the school. However, he assured his permission and personal support. He added that he anticipated some kind of gain for himself and the school. After I gained the head's agreement, I felt that I had to proceed with the formal procedures that would legitimise and facilitate my research.

My first concern was to apply for official permission for conducting the research. Bell (1987) as well as Cohen et al (2000) advise that it is important for researchers to

follow clear official channels by formally requesting permission to carry out their investigation as soon as they have an agreed project outline (p.46 and p. 57). In the Greek context, such permission is given by the P.I. Such an official permission would also give legitimacy and validity to my research (see Section 5.5.4). I estimated that this would be in my hands by September 2001. Until that point I could prepare the next steps and specific issues of the research, such as the ethical issues or my own role in the investigation (see Section 5.4.3). The awaited permission was granted in August 2001.

Cohen, et al (2000) warns: 'the problem of access is not resolved once one has been given permission to use the school or organisation' (p.67). At that moment, however, I took into account MacBeath's and Mortimore's, (2001) recommendation: 'the normal pattern is for the researchers to visit the school, to establish initial contacts, negotiating ground rules for future relationships, arranging for data collection, agreeing the broad parameters within which the school and project staff would work' (p. 140). I proceeded with my work.

6. 1. 2 Getting to the school - The teaching staff

On 2nd September 2001 I visited the school. The headteacher welcomed and introduced me to the teachers. Two of them were ex-colleagues of mine. These teachers could be a means of connecting me to the others because the relationships I had had with them in the past were based on mutual respect and trust. Such visits lasted for approximately 15 days. In this period of time I could develop contacts with the other members of the teaching staff.

The school had 12 class teachers. It also had one specialist teacher for the special needs class as well as a teacher for athletics, English and music. The last one completed her weekly schedule by working in another school in the area. Two additional teachers were working after the end of classes: 12.40 - 16.00 hours in the extended programme, which was operating on an experimental basis. Additionally, a teacher of art, employed by the local municipal authority, was working for six of the classes, every Wednesday.

The exact number of teachers varied slightly during my research; periodically supply teachers worked in the school. Apart from the headteacher and the deputy head, there was not any particular management structure for leading academic and pastoral teams in their roles. There were neither remedial specialists nor educational psychologists. There was no assistant, secretary or caretaker. The only non-teaching staff of the school was the canteen worker who was also assigned gate-keeping duties.

6. 1. 3 Developing contacts with teachers

The teachers' behaviour was friendly and supportive. In informal discussions they asked to be notified about the research, but they also wanted to learn about my professional aspirations and how my studies could affect my career. I tried to explain that development of my career prospects was dubious but the study was an important target for me. Issues of power relationships seemed to be revealed.

Acknowledging that some resistance was possible, my main concern was to inform and motivate the teachers, reduce their anxieties and inspire respect and trust in an open collaboration. At this stage, it was important for me as a researcher to take into account the power of my initial impressions. My general attitude could have a considerable contribution in establishing trust. It could be my 'passport' into the school, my 'perceived allegiances and alliances' (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001, p. 140). Thus, I considered the Marshall and Rossman's (1994) question: 'When initiating entry into a field of research, can the researcher offer guarantees that her behaviour will conform to specific ethical standards?' (p. 76) and I attempted to be careful with my language and my behaviour, even my way of dressing.

I also attempted to develop relationships with the teachers according to Marshall and Rossman's (1994) advice: 'One could agree that successful qualitative studies depend primarily on the interpersonal skills of the researcher' (p. 64) (see Section 5.4.3). I approached those who seemed to be more indifferent to the research or the new teachers in the school who seemed to be isolated and distant. I also tried to distinguish from amongst those teachers who seemed to be really interested in my research because I felt that they could be valuable in developing an atmosphere of trust for those who seemed to be less interested.

This approach could be a particularly difficult task if I was perceived as one of higher status or coming from a different social, ethnic or age group. My attempt was then based upon understanding the need to communicate that I was a teacher with similar professional and social background. Robson (2000) warned: 'If feasible, there is much to be said for an interviewer or observer sharing important characteristics of these kinds with those being interviewed or observed' (p. 31).

To protect these relationships from power imbalances was my constant concern. I was particularly careful in communicating with the headteacher and I preferred to use teachers' intervention in developing relationships among them. Friendliness, respect and understanding can succeed as much, probably more, than the actual words I use (see Section 5.3). Finally, I considered that 'the energy that comes from high personal interest (called bias in traditional research) is useful for gaining access' (Marshall and Rossman, 1994, p. 62). I was aware, however, that although these first contacts could facilitate my acceptance, they were not enough to establish myself as a researcher-collaborator in the school.

The deputy headteacher was the only teacher who remained distant. I noticed that in our first discussion, he had stated fundamentally: 'I have no time to dedicate to additional work. You also have to know that I am going to retire next year. I do not think that teachers will participate in this work because teachers are very busy people.' Initially I thought that a deeper understanding of the research might attract his interest. Later however, detecting his unorthodox behaviour in the school, I realised that it was impossible.

The deputy headteacher appeared close to his pupils but distant from his colleagues. He was duly present in all school events and formal meetings but never present in his office to undertake his responsibilities as a deputy head or in the staff-room to have discussions with his colleagues. The headteacher and teachers appeared to have put up with this behaviour. They never commented on this absence until the end of that year. This fact clearly raised issues about the meaning of teachers' stage of career in a change undertaking (see Section 9.2.2.1). My relationship with the deputy-head remained very friendly throughout the year. His early refusal, however, alerted me to

proceed even more carefully. In the meantime, I had the opportunity to explore the school's physical environment.

6. 1. 4 The physical environment of the school

The school was located at the heart of a suburb, not far from the church, the shopping centre, the hospital and the entertainment area. As the headteacher later informed me, it was the oldest one in the locale. It was built around the 1950s encapsulating the ideological motives of the style of that time. It catered for the needs of the residents of the then small village, 15 kilometres north of Athens. During the 80s and particularly the 90s, however, the population of the village grew as it became a suburb of Athens, with associated services and infrastructure. Therefore, the number of pupils increased. As the population of the suburb increased the existing schools could not satisfy the need. Thus, three more schools had been founded and another one was going to open the following year.

The school building consisted of three blocks, parallel to the three roads that surrounded them. Traffic lights on the main road have been recently installed, and school traffic policewomen now protected pupils during arrival at the school and on departure. A small iron gate provided an entrance into the school yard. From this vantage point, one could see the 12 classes: seven on an upper level with a small store-room and six on the lower level where the pupils' toilets and the canteen were also located. An outside corridor provided access to the classrooms.

The second block contained the class, well-known as a 'multiple- purpose' class. This was a big room which was used for the school's celebrations and the physical activities in the event of a rainy day. In the afternoons, the Local Municipal Authority also utilised it for women's aerobics. This function, however, prevented the use of the room as a school library or for music, art or English lessons.

Opposite this room, one could see the staff room and the head's office, the third block of the building. They had recently been reconstructed. The headteacher, who as a teacher had first-hand experience of the lack of space, had them transformed into two comfortable and spacious staff rooms for his teachers and himself, when he took over

the head's post. These three blocks enclosed the school playground that was used for play and assemblies. It was a place without any trees or vegetation and without any cover to protect the children from the rain and the sun. This building was expected to be reconstructed the following year.

In the meanwhile, I could prepare the process of SSE that is examined in the next section as the preliminary phase.

6. 2 The preliminary phase of the process

6. 2. 1 Stage one: Establishing the research

6. 2. 1. 1 Preparing the introduction meeting

This introductory, formal whole-staff meeting was decisive for the establishment of the research development. I tried to prepare it as thoughtfully as possible. Besides studying literature I had already done a lot of groundwork for this; the lapsed time with the experienced difficulties deepened my understanding of the context and my own role in this meeting and the research in general.

Initially, I had to motivate the teachers. Since there was not any accountability or inspection demands to act as extrinsic motives, I had to focus on intrinsic motives and address issues to their self-concern since they tend to wonder just what the innovation entails for them (R. Van den Berg, et al, 2000, p. 332). Later, teachers might be interested in deepening their understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. They might be simply curious about what they have achieved or how it could be improved (Sutton, 1994, p. 5).

When teachers would be more oriented towards their pupils and their colleagues than themselves, they might desire to fulfil the need of confirming that their school provides the best in pupils' education. Apart from others, Simons has identified 'self-development, curiosity, an awareness that evaluation is the 'in-topic', 'technique-gathering' would be some of teachers' motives and expectations (in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 133-134).

Ownership of the innovation was another concern (see Section 5.4.3). I realised, however, that at this stage, ownership could neither be fully grasped, nor be secured. It could be achieved through experience throughout the process. My own reassurances, therefore, did not seem adequate before the teachers had 'the opportunity to choose activities which they experience as meaningful and rewarding' (Alvick, 1996, p. 3). Alvick (1996) advises: 'motivation for school self-evaluation presupposes that those involved have the possibility of developing ownership towards the decisions and that ideally this ownership results in formulating problems that arose joint curiosity on the part of those involved' (p. 4).

I also had to take into account that the exposure of teachers in the unknown with the possibility of revealing incompetence and hidden conflicts might generate anxiety or fear and therefore their resistance and refusal to get involved. I needed to stress that my own role in the school was not that of an inspector to assess the school or appraise individual teachers. I had to emphasise the co-operative and supportive aspect of my role (see Section 5.4.3).

It seemed to me that it would be effective to give answers to reasonable questions such as: 'Who is the evaluation for?', 'Who will benefit from this research?', 'What do we evaluate?', 'What will the means of evaluation be?' 'Who will have the control of the findings?' Although sensitive research elements should be kept confidential, the answers had to be characterised by 'clarity' - in Fullan's (1991, p. 70) terms with well defined goals and specified means of implementation. The answers had to be given in an open discussion within a positive 'can do/will do' attitude being as clear as possible on confidence issues and anonymity (see Section 5.4.3.3). Under the supervision of my tutors, I organised a brief introduction of myself and my research for the meeting (see Appendix 3).

In the meantime, after visiting the school for 15 consecutive days, the school climate for the programme initiation seemed to have matured. I interpreted some positive teachers' attitudes towards me and my research. Teachers seemed to anticipate the next step. For example on some occasions they asked: 'When do you think we can start?' I felt, however, that the school needed time to organise its work in the beginning of that school year.

I met the headteacher many times. We discussed the official introduction of the research. I asked for the head to arrange the date of the introductory meeting so that the research could 'be incorporated into existing planning cycles, be negotiated with various groups and build in time for reflection and action.' (MacBeath et al, 1996, p. 77) (see Section 5.5.1).

The headteacher proposed to integrate my initiation into the agenda of another meeting, so that the gathering of all teachers could be achieved. This introduction could be conducted on 11th October 2001 during the 20 minutes long break that could be slightly extended. The time seemed to be restricted. So my introduction had to be as precise and well-prepared as possible. The meeting, however, was postponed because two teachers were absent as their classes had been on a museum visit that day.

6. 2. 1. 2 Introducing the programme

On 15th October 2001 the meeting was held in the large and comfortable staff-room at 9.40 a.m. It followed a discussion about the school celebration of the National Day celebrated on 28th October. Although at a previous meeting with the headteacher and the Local Advisor the latter had proposed to introduce me at this formal introductory meeting, I decided to introduce myself and the research to protect it from possible teachers' resistance because of threatened power relations.

Fifteen teachers were present in the event. Full participation of teachers could not be achieved. The deputy headteacher had, as stated earlier, refused to participate. One teacher was absent because of illness. The music teacher was also absent, working in her second school and the two teachers of the extended programme were now working in the afternoon.

The headteacher sat amongst the teachers. At this stage, I considered that the headteacher could not exert his authority on the teachers' decision. In contrast his presence could only positively motivate teachers by providing his own example of involvement and, thus, attributing a formal role model to my research. I sat in the centre of the room. In this manner, I could see every teacher. This choice was also symbolic, as I had come as a visitor, without intending to take the seat of anybody.

The headteacher opened the discussion and explained the reason for that meeting. Then, he turned the presentation over to me. I began by introducing myself as a teacher who shared the same background as them and as a student who was undertaking a research study as the result of my own personal and professional motivations, stressing the independence of my role.

I illustrated the assumption and the primary aims of my research programme. I particularly stressed my belief that a school is able to get involved in a programme intending to improve its work. Thus, I put emphasis on the possible benefits for a school and teachers that would experience a SSE programme. This could result in a deeper realisation of school strengths and weaknesses, a productive discussion of its needs and expectations and the undertaking of constructive action on the findings.

I also outlined the initial steps of the process. I particularly stressed that, in collaborating, teachers would have control of any decision that affected the school. Finally, I promised complete confidentiality and participants' anonymity as well as their right to drop out of the research whenever they would like (see Appendix 3).

The teachers were listening carefully. It seemed as if they were trying to grasp the meaning of my words. For some seconds we were just looking at each other. Then, they asked a few questions concerning the process itself. A representative sample of these is: 'How the pupils' groups would be organised?' 'Would teachers indicate pupils, according to their background?' 'Would evaluation refer to every aspect of educational procedures and classroom observation as well?' 'Would groups include parents whose children are also involved in the project?' During the discussion the headteacher remained silent.

In retrospect it seemed that the teachers were anxious about the unknown. Their questions highlighted issues of concern resulting from their 'inspection' experience. However, the teachers' first reaction of being involved in the research was positive and I asked them to confirm their participation by signing the consent forms, thus asking them for written confirmation of their decision (see Chapter 3 and Appendix 4). Some teachers, more confident in proceeding than others, signed the form straight

away. These were the teachers who, at the end of the meeting, approached me and expressed their interest to undertake a role in the project.

Amongst the rest of the teachers, however, I detected some signs of hesitation and a 'wait and see' attitude. They seemed to be waiting for something to push them into making the decision and stated that they would sign later as they were busy. I interpreted that they wished to be informed if other colleagues had signed the form. A teacher stated that her daughter was preparing for her exams at university. However, throughout the day, all the teachers gradually returned the signed form.

The group of the interested teachers who had signed seemed to act as catalyst for the hesitant teachers to do so. One teacher signed, but she never participated as an active and committed participant. There were clearly issues about the personal teachers' characteristics in school involvement in an innovation (see Section 10.1.1). I felt that the issue needed more exploration. However, for the needs of the present study I decided to proceed.

During the next two days I systematically introduced the research to the other teachers and they eventually signed the form. The deputy headteacher's refusal to sign was the only exception. Although I understood that a signed form cannot secure teachers' engagement, I felt that 19 teachers were ready to proceed, having believed that the process itself could maintain the teachers' interest in it.

My following concern was to intensify the ethnographic aspect of the study: to explore the school culture probing into the surface of the school life, through the eyes of natives. I planned to conduct semi-structured interviews firstly with the headteacher, and afterwards with the teachers (see Chapter 5). I now examine this procedure in detail.

6. 2. 2 Stage two: Gathering background information

6. 2. 2. 1 The headteacher's interview

The headteacher suggested the interview to be held on 30th October, at 13.30 hours, after school lessons. I met him in a classroom. He gave his consent to being recorded

(see Section 5.4.1.2) (see Appendixes 5, 7). I encouraged the headteacher to open the conversation by giving general information about the school and school community. He stated that the farmers in the area of the past were now civil servants, professionals, shopkeepers or businessmen/women. Most of them lived now in well-equipped and comfortable houses or flats.

He stated that, although the old population was still present, the majority of the pupils' parents belonged to the 'middle class' many of whom had post-secondary school education. They desired higher education for their children. In the district there were also families from the working class and ethnic minority groups, particularly from Albania and Russia. These parents' expectations for their children were also high. They expected education to further help their children's attempts in escaping from their own class. The school, therefore, seemed to be loaded with high expectations.

The headteacher had been in the post for a year. He undertook the post because another teacher, who had had longer experience, refused it and became the deputy headteacher. He admitted that he did not have sufficient experience as this was his first appointment in the post. He also acknowledged a lack of any academic 'theoretical base'. As it is the norm in Greek primary education, he had not attended any professional development courses or special training before or after taking up the headteacher's post.

His 30 years of teaching experience, two of which as the deputy headteacher in the school where he had been working as a teacher for five years, were his only qualifications. However, his extended knowledge of school daily circumstances, administration and culture it could be argued were diminished by the unorthodoxy of his selection. In fact, this was a factor that affected the establishment of his status in the school.

The headteacher gave examples that indicated an interest in school matters, particularly in administrative ones and admitted that 'administration absorbs me completely'. He illustrated proudly that he had improved the school building. Turning the old store-rooms into his office and staff-room, teachers could sit and discuss

comfortably in their own space with new carpets and furniture. He had also arranged the canteen to re-open, affording a place for this use in the main building. He had taken measures concerning pupils' safety. Thus, the gate of the school remained closed during school operation despite the initial reaction of parents. He acknowledged the need for additional similar improvements but, since there was a governmental plan for a complete renovation for the next year, this was a period of fallow. This plan, however, was delayed for a year.

The headteacher was particularly interested in extra curricular activities which, as he explained, not only 'cultivate the whole child' but also they were perceived by parents as significant. This was the vision he was trying to inspire. Indeed, he gave examples where the school had been distinguished for its extra curricular activities. The school had its established choir; school concerts were organised, and the students had been taken to see interesting theatrical performances. The school had already begun to prepare the end-of-year concert. During the last years the school succeeded in acquiring a good reputation and many parents preferred it for their children instead of a private one. This apparent school emphasis on extra curricular activities, however, caused teachers' resistance, which became obvious later.

The operation of the extended programme was another advantage of the school. The parents could leave their children after class lessons in the school, where they could have their lunch, study, play and watch videos. This programme was, however, a headache for the headteacher. The fragmental policy of the government, the lack of school facilities and the limited resources prevented the operation from being well-organised. Furthermore, parents' expectations seemed confused and, therefore, conflicts had already appeared.

The headteacher complained that he worked without support in his duties and he noted that he was working without a secretary, or caretaker or any other assistance. He systematically avoided mentioning the role of the deputy headteacher. Instead he referred to the hard work of certain teachers who undertook the bureaucratic work or the load of school concerts. He also referred to the valuable contribution of the President of the Parents' Association in introducing Information Technology in the

school administration. However, these distinctions which took the form of preferences were involved in school micro-political issues.

‘Democratic procedures’ and ‘participatory decision making’ were the most commonly used phrases by the headteacher when he was referring to school policy. As he also stressed, ‘I am struggling to praise and reward any teachers’ attempt through the limited means that a head has in a Greek school. Thus, I am trying to thank the teachers after a festival or to be profoundly protective of my staff against parents and support them in any difficulty’.

He put forward, however, some complaints referring to teachers’ tactics as for instance in discipline matters. He stated that ‘the teachers should manage their pupils in their class without looking for a solution in my office. I did not like to be perceived by the pupils as the ‘threat’ of the school’. The headteacher did not refer, however, to issues of ‘values’, ‘negotiation’, ‘collaboration’, ‘management or team building’, ‘change’, ‘trust’, which convey a vision of a leader who is comfortable in working with others on an equal basis (Harris, 2004). Headteachers’ attitudes towards evaluation and innovation are examined in Section 8.3.2.

By the end of the interview the headteacher acknowledged that our discussion helped him in organising his thoughts more systematically. He had become more conscious of his vision and articulated actions that he had adopted unconsciously. He said: ‘I did not expect that a conversation could deepen so much my understanding in so many issues. I wish similar benefits for all those who might get involved in the research’.

Finally, we discussed some further details about the next steps of the process. I again asked his support in my effort to have access to the parents and he renewed his promise about his support. Later, as he had promised, he introduced me to the president of the Parents’ Association. A parallel concern was to investigate the school culture through the teachers’ eyes. Having acquired their agreement, I undertook to conduct individual teachers’ interviews.

6. 2. 2. 2 Teachers' interviews

I conducted teachers' interviews after lessons or during teachers' 'free' hours in the school. As I had plenty of time, I could follow teachers' preferences in appointment arrangements and overcome the difficulties of interruptions or delays. Teachers seemed to be happy to participate. Nobody refused my tape-recording of our conversation. The semi-structured teachers' interview had the same format as that of the headteacher (see Appendices 6, 8).

The teachers had a working experience of 11 to 25 years. Three of them were new to that school. They seemed satisfied to work in classes of 22 to 28 pupils, although this number of pupils was considered as disadvantageous for the school. 'Learning' was the main focus of teachers and the school 'because this is what the educational system requests', a teacher said.

'Learning' also expressed parents' expectations since in many cases 'parents see their own social recognition through their children' teachers argued. 'Learning', however, in their opinion meant 'knowledge'. Thus, parents complained when teachers sometimes escaped from their own perceived model. 'Parents complained because with my class I organised many concerts, a theatrical play, we visited many museums, we dealt with UNICEF... A group of parents reacted because they considered that I had not kept up with the content of curriculum. However, it did not happen. Simply, I was trying to give something extra to their children', a teacher complained. Since then, she had reduced the number of similar visits.

Teachers acknowledged that parents' attitudes influence them substantially in making daring changes, although teachers seemed to doubt parents' maturity since, according to their words, 'parents cannot escape from their personal experiences'. Teachers also feel that the structure of the educational system does not leave enough room for them or the school to set priorities according to pupils' needs for the real life. 'I am afraid of the system when I experience something new', a teacher confessed.

Teachers, however, had detected changes in society and particularly in the school society. They believed that 'although pupils in the school are clever and have a high

background, they face increased problems in their interpersonal and social relationships, in their psychology'. 'I detect a super "ego" in my class' a teacher said. In this context, teachers have realised a constant and intensive need for school to reconsider its targets and posed the question: 'Do pupils take from the school what they need?' Teachers recognised the value of extra-curricular activities for the children and agreed with the headteacher's view that during the last year the school had put a strong emphasis on them. Teachers appreciated the headteacher's contribution towards this improvement.

Teachers also felt the need for their own assistance and support. 'Nobody in the school or beyond school help us. The system considers that teachers can deal with their work difficulties by themselves. However, in such cases I feel inadequate', a teacher complained. Although, the few pupils from ethnic groups have been integrated and they do not have learning difficulties, pupils with special needs and learning difficulties were a source of stress for teachers. 'I have pupils with learning difficulties. I cannot understand why they are not in the special class', a teacher argued.

The operation of the class for pupils with special needs could neither absorb all pupils with learning difficulties nor offer radical solutions in every case. Later on, the investigation revealed that the operation of this class was a source of micro-political arguments which, however, remained camouflaged. The school building's condition also seemed to cause additional stress to the teachers, particularly to the specialist teachers as they had not sufficient space to organise their own lessons appropriately. 'The school building causes serious difficulties to me. For example, I have not got my private space for my staff'.

In reference to the teachers' relationships, teachers revealed that they are at a good level. 'The atmosphere ranges from good to excellent' or 'I am new in the school but the atmosphere is friendly' were some of the teachers' comments. Teachers' relationships, however, were in many cases antagonistic since, according to a teacher, 'there are colleagues who, in some sly way, prevent me from trying something new'.

Teachers when commenting on their relationships with the headteacher said: ‘we always find channels of communication with the Head although sometimes it seems to be fragmentary. I understand that the way of his appointment as the school head affected our relationships as, while we were working as teachers, he suddenly undertook this post’. Some complaints, however, were heard about the headteacher’s behaviour towards parents or his cooperation with teachers: ‘I have not discussed my work with him, although I would like to very much’, a teacher said.

Similarly, at a formal level, co-operation among school teachers had not developed particularly, although informally and occasionally teachers may co-operate. This expresses a teacher’s comment: ‘I do not co-operate completely with my colleague of the parallel class. I co-operate, however, with the specialist teachers’. Specialist teachers, however, do not agree with this. ‘I would like teachers to co-operate and support me in their class’, a teacher argued.

The analysis of the headteacher’s and teachers’ interviews in combination with my own observations gave rich background information for the school and the school culture. This understanding was valuable in preparing evaluation implementation. Later on, my understanding of the school culture was enhanced by pupils’ and parents’ evaluative questionnaires and focus groups that referred to the school climate. A separate section analyses all information about school culture (see Section 8.3.1).

The next concern in my investigation was to establish a set of indicators for school self-evaluation (see Section 5.4). Having identified the participant groups (see Section 5.5.3), the next task for me was to organise and conduct focus groups with them for gathering their perceptions. The following stage examines this procedure.

6. 2. 3 Stage three: towards an indicator system

6. 2. 3. 1 Gathering perceptions

Organising groups

I organised representative groups of pupils, teachers and parents and arranged meetings with them a day after the national day on 28th October. In this endeavour the

help on headteacher's, teachers' and parents' part was valuable. I decided to start with the pupils because it was easier for me to organise pupil groups. The headteacher gave me computerised lists of all pupils from every level. Although the teachers had proposed to help me in selecting pupils, I chose the pupils 'randomly' from the list, paying attention only to a balance between boys and girls. I constructed one group of five pupils from each class, two groups from each level. This was a table of 60 pupils from the 12 school classes.

I co-operated with class teachers to find out the appropriate time for focus group assemblies without disturbing the lessons. The headteacher arranged a place for the interviews. The classroom of 'multiple use' was considered as the most suitable of the available places. I could not say, however, that it was 'the ideal place' as, in many occasions, discussions with pupils or parents were interrupted by 'outsiders' and in some cases we had to continue our sessions in another classroom.

The headteacher constituted a separate group in order to protect participants from power relationships. Organising groups with teachers was a relatively easy task. The same task, however, was particularly difficult with parents. At this stage, the contribution of the President of the Parents' Association was decisive. She assumed the responsibility to communicate and organise groups with some parents, opening thus channels for further communication. It was difficult for me, however, to organise parents' group meetings that would combine convenient time and place. Many times meetings were postponed or cancelled. This was one of the most difficult stages of the research for me.

Focus groups

In the first meeting with each of the groups I thanked the participants for their participation in the research. I introduced myself and I asked each participant to give a brief self-introduction as this procedure could help in setting 'the mood for the group as a whole' (Morgan D, 1997, p.49). Then, I explained the general aims of the research and the particular target of the meeting. Making the ground rules of the interview explicit, I also asked permission to record responses and promised anonymity and confidentiality.

I asked participants to write down individually or in pairs, in a few cases because of language difficulties, their own personal list of five key characteristics of a 'good' school and 'good teacher' (see Chapter 5). Usually, participants needed approximately five to seven minutes, except for young children who needed more time. I used them as a backdrop to the discussion that followed, which was about what lay behind participant choices.

Participants took the opportunity to express their own perspectives and expectations about school and teachers. I tried to lead the discussion probing, articulating and sharing perceptions in a climate of openness and in good faith. My constant attempt was for responses to be negotiated so that participants could come to an agreement. In some cases, particularly in pupils' focus groups, I wrote summary statements on a chart with the language that was used, and I read them publicly to give status to the responses.

These voices, which were used to provide a check on the validity of the classification of indicators articulating and confirming them, were also available for scrutiny throughout the analysis. Subsequent analysis of the interview transcripts enriched the research findings as they offered important and illuminating insights of participants' views and attitudes towards school. This procedure seemed to deepen my understanding about what was expected by a good school, being a pupil or a worker, or a parent (an ethnographic view). The next section examines how I experienced focus groups with teachers, pupils and parents.

Focus groups with teachers

I could arrange and conduct focus groups with teachers rather more easily. I interviewed 18 teachers (two groups of five, two groups of three, one group of two teachers and the headteacher). At this stage I left teachers to organise groups according to their own preferences, although later it became apparent that group composition affected the discussion. The first group of five teachers was easily organised. The group recommended a nice and quiet cafe in the area as a meeting place. We had an extremely interesting discussion for an hour-and-a-half. The

teachers, who were among the most interested in the research, expressed their satisfaction with the discussion.

The second meeting of five teachers took place in the staff room after school. I arranged to meet the third group of the two teachers of the extended programme at 16.00 hours at school and the fourth group of three teachers also in the staff-room. I faced most of the difficulties in interviewing the last group of three teachers because two of them, after a long period of absence, were loaded with additional work. This absence, however, might reduce their sense of ownership and, therefore their commitment to the investigation.

In all cases, the discussions lasted much longer than an hour. The teachers exchanged very interesting views, ideas and critical proposals about educational and school matters. The discussions had a natural flow with very limited interventions from my side just to keep the discussion focused.

Focus group with pupils

Each interview lasted about 45 minutes, as long as a teaching hour. The work with the pupils was easy, interesting and enjoyable. Having piloted pupils' focus groups I felt more experienced to conduct the interviews. It seemed that always an enjoyable and 'lively discussion' emerged from this exercise (MacBeath, 1996). The children were very keen to talk and they seemed to be affected by the tape-recording less than I had anticipated. On the contrary, they seemed to enjoy speaking in front of the tape-recorder and usually they asked to play back the tape and listen to the discussion. Many times I was able to give them a small extract. I felt that the interviews had achieved adequacy in terms of spontaneity and useful data.

Focus groups were particularly useful in articulating pupils' indicators. I remember that a level 6 pupils' group disagreed with the indicator: Two separate books should be used in some subjects, for example, language. They already had a lot of books and some more could not add anything extra apart from the difficulty to carry them.

In another case, a level 4 pupil wrote: 'teachers should not be demanding'. In the discussion she explained: 'By saying "a demanding teacher" I do not mean a teacher, who gives a lot of homework. We are in a high level, the classes are difficult. We need to attend and study. By saying 'demanding teacher' I mean a teacher who is not too strict, but has good and friendly relationships and co-operates with us'. Therefore, this characteristic of a good teacher turned into the idea of the 'teacher to be lenient'. Working with pupils, however, I faced some on-the-spot difficulties.

I asked the very young level 1 pupils to draw a 'good' school. It was a time-consuming and abstract exercise, as pupils could not usually connect their drawing to school characteristics. Later, in another focus group I tried to discuss with the pupils the characteristics of a 'good' school. I wrote them down respecting pupils' language. I preferred the second procedure because it seemed to allow young pupils to be more concentrated on the issue and to give more precise characteristics.

I also considered that level 2 pupils could write indicators. I remarked, however, that pupils were concerned about spelling. They usually asked me: 'How do I spell this word? I realised that pupils, reflecting the school's targets in language - orthography, were trapped into the writing and their free expression was restricted. On the other hand, writing lasted much more than I had estimated, minimising the time for the discussion. This posed issues regarding writing values at this level.

On a rainy day meeting after a level 3 focus group had been on a school trip to a nearby wood the pupils could not focus on the discussion. One of them said, interrupting: 'I would like to run into the rain' and another one: 'How beautiful the horse was that we saw in the forest!' I preferred to change the focus of our discussion and give the opportunity to the pupils to express their feelings and play. The focus group was conducted a week later with another group of pupils. Working with children I realised the value of context awareness. The procedure should be carefully designed according to pupils' cognitive level of development and their needs.

Ethical issues are also brought into sharp focus when children are involved. One of the incidents constitutes a point for further consideration. A father, who had an argument with the headteacher interpreted that the headteacher's behaviour towards

his son was caused by his son's comments in a group discussion. He suspected that I had informed the headteacher and visited the school and asked for an explanation. The headteacher arranged an appointment and explained the case to me. Although the father was known to the headteacher and the teachers for his particular behaviour, I felt the need to look into the case thoroughly (see Section 10.3.5).

I met the father in the headteacher's office. Knowing that the child had not said something 'bad' about the headteacher, I kept the transcript in front of me and I explained that research is a trustworthy activity and should only be perceived as such. I added that I had the official permission from the Ministry, the headteacher and the teachers, and finally, that this conflict was not one I was aware of. I assured him that his son had not said something against the headteacher but when he asked to read the relevant abstract from the group discussion, I adamantly refused. The incident stopped there. However, it raises methodological considerations (see Sections 5.4.3.3).

Pupils seemed to respond interestingly and critically. Later, most of the teachers expressed their surprise at the lucidity of pupils' reflections. Organisation and conduction of focus groups, however, was a time-consuming task. Thus, while I expected the focus groups with pupils to finish in 15 to 20 subsequent days, follow up interviews, delays, changes and obstacles required a much longer period. Some pupils' focus groups were conducted at the beginning of December. In the meantime focus groups with teachers and parents had begun. In the meantime I was organising and conducting focus groups with parents.

Focus groups with parents

I met parents' groups in available classrooms usually before the end of the lessons. Parents preferred this time because they could also pick their children up. In many cases, however, this time was different for the pupils. Thus, time arrangement became a difficult task. Each meeting lasted at least 40 to 45 minutes, as long as the teaching hour lasted, and in many cases it went on much longer.

The difficulties in organising and conducting parents' focus groups increased because Christmas was approaching and parents were becoming busier. Practical difficulties

but also similarities in parents' views and repetitions of the core characteristics of a 'good' school made me change my initial plan about the number of parents' participating. Instead of interviewing 60 parents, I reduced the number to 30 who were organised in three groups of five, three groups of four and one group of three.

I also abandoned my initial idea of mixing groups of teachers, pupils and parents (see Section 5.5.2). The ongoing realisation of existing differences in power relationships among groups was the basic reason for avoiding this mixing. It could be a valuable approach in the future but at that time the conditions did not seem 'ripe'.

Most of the participating parents were mothers apart from four fathers. I encountered parents, who willingly took the opportunity to express their expectations regarding their children's school. Others showed a lack of interest and before I began they went out. Others who misunderstood their participation, at least initially, differentiated their behaviour.

I recall a mother who left the class with her little children just after she had arrived without any explanation and another one who wrote two characteristics of 'a good school' but refused to participate in the following discussion. Before the end of the discussion she shyly expressed some opinions. I tried to understand the reason for such a reaction. I might suppose that the tape-recording of the interview prevented her from continuing, although initially she had agreed to this. This may be an issue for a further piece of research.

Difficulties in focus groups' conduction affected my initial time-plan concerning process implementation (see Section 5.5.1 and Appendix 1). This stage was extended until the Christmas holidays. The Christmas holidays, however, could give me the adequate time for data analysis. The next section explores how this data was organised in an indicator system.

6. 2. 3. 2 Analysing the data

I had interviewed 109 individuals. I read and re-read the discussion transcripts that were used exclusively for explaining and clarifying the written indicators. In the text

data I could distinguish some more indicators. I isolated them initially intending to calculate them in the creation of indicators together with the numbered ones.

Later, however, I decided to calculate only the written indicators. The groundwork could become simpler and the evaluation criteria could be protected from possible preferences and inclinations. However, the drawing-discussion of the second level 1 group and one level 2 groups gave exclusively 20 and 32 indicators of a 'good school' correspondingly. I had gathered 519 indicators: 95 from teachers, 274 from pupils and 144 from parents as well as about 240 indicators of a 'good teacher' from pupils.

The next task was to identify common indicators and collect them into categories. I intended to bring them into the MacBeath's (1999) list of ten 'clusters', very similar to that of school effectiveness research: school climate, relationships, classroom climate, support for learning, support for teaching, time and resources, organisation and communication, equity, recognition of achievement and home-school links (pp. 36 - 58). I identified, however, some differences and modified the list, taking into account MacBeath's suggestion to researchers and schools: modify the list, refine the indicators to meet local needs and context and reduce them if necessary (MacBeath et al, 1996, p. 75).

There was only one reference to equity concerning pupils with special needs. I decided to include it in the cluster of school climate not because I considered it of less importance but because I considered equity as related to school values, closely connected to school climate and culture (see Section 4.1.2). Thus school climate as the category 'umbrella' could accommodate equity as a sub-category.

Similarly, recognition of achievement was mentioned only once by the teachers. Although in Greece, teachers' employment, payment and promotion depend exclusively upon the policy of the central government (see Section 2.1) I preferred to classify the issue into the category of school organisation and communication, believing that a Greek school as an organisation can find ways to recognise teachers' efforts and achievement.

I decided to replace the two missed categories from MacBeath's (1999) framework with those of 'teachers' and 'books-curriculum' as I had identified many references in them within the data. Finally, some isolated characteristics such as 'pupils wearing a uniform' or 'schools providing free-meals to their pupils' that were stated only by one girl, remained separated and they are addressed as individualised characteristics (six references). Thus, when category or categories were chosen I could adjust indicators in each cluster.

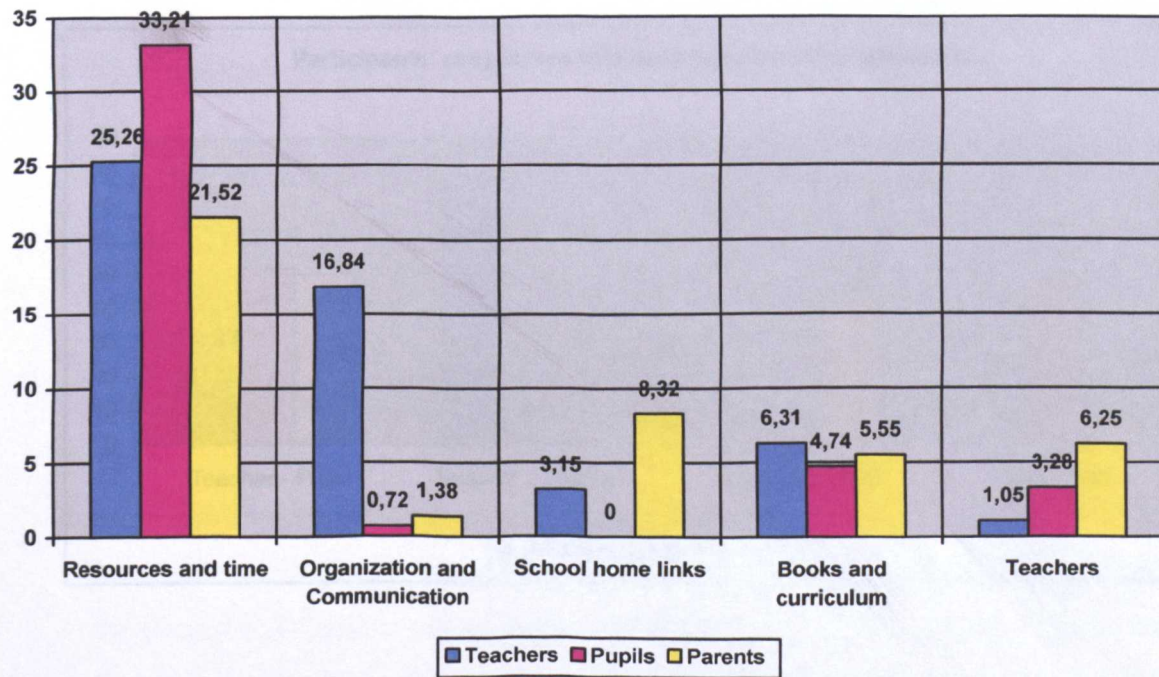
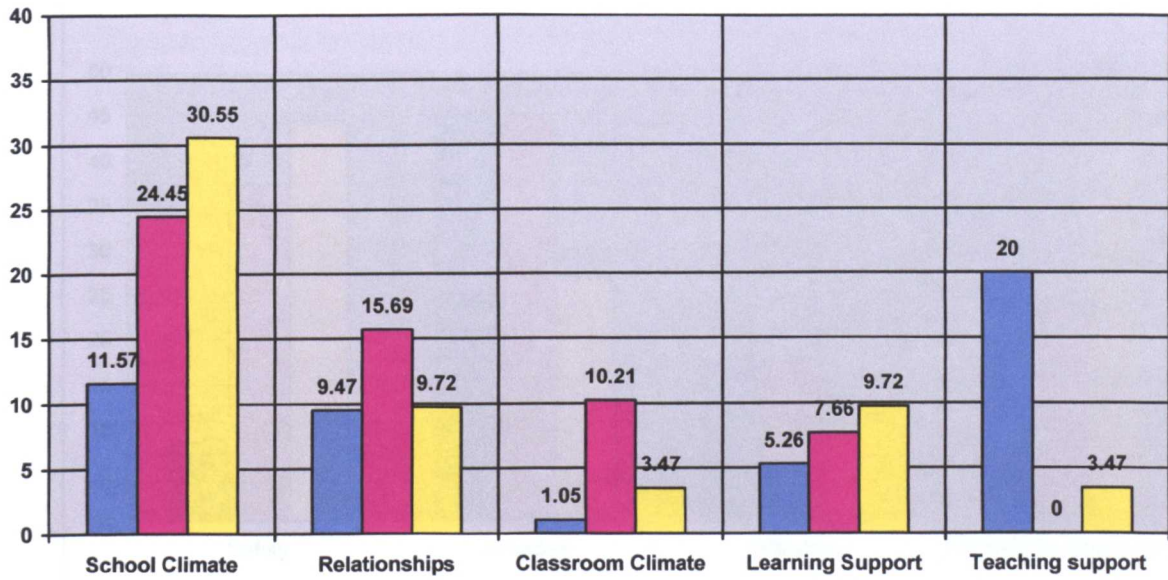
Some of the characteristics seemed to arise from participants' expectations, needs and interests which the school should fulfill. They reflected 'the concerns and priorities of people rather than problems with the structures of the system' (MacBeath, 1999 p. 25). I discerned, however, others that were stressed because they were broken. In any case the text data seemed to express participants' and particularly pupils' deeper thoughts and perspectives. For instance, pupils and parents spoke about their anxiety and pressure because of study overload whereas pupils talked about teachers' favouritism towards some pupils or about underestimation of others.

The responses gave me the opportunity to look into participants' attitudes towards school and teachers. At the same time, comparing the characteristics and text data, I could consider what a 'good' school means from a number of different perspectives: by being a pupil, a teacher or a parent (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001). Finally, I discerned the perceptions which are held in common or are unique to different groups.

I prepared a summary of the findings to present orally to the teachers. I also thought that it would be more exciting, understandable and authentic if the characteristics were constructed in a measurable way. Thus, I calculated and organised the results in two diagrams. The first one presented the ten categories of the participants' responses since the natural numbers alone could not present the correlations between and among them. The second diagram presented the participants' responses in particular sub-categories of three indicators (School Climate, Resources and Relationships) for teachers to grasp the particular interest of respondents. The diagrams were presented as follows:

Diagram 1

Participants' responses about the indicators of a 'good' school in categories



19 Teachers: 95 indicators

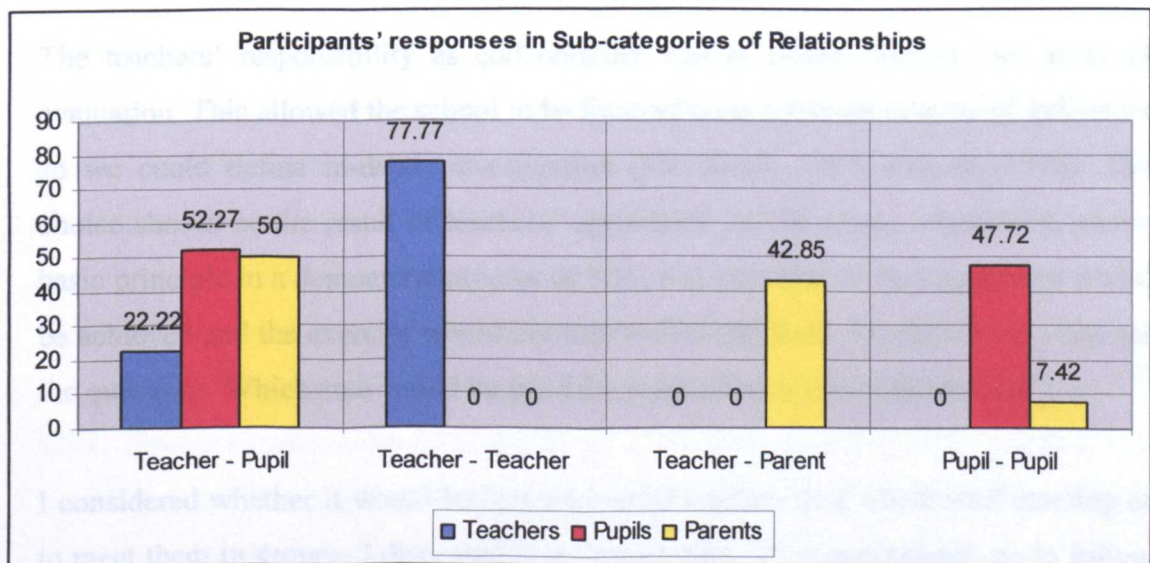
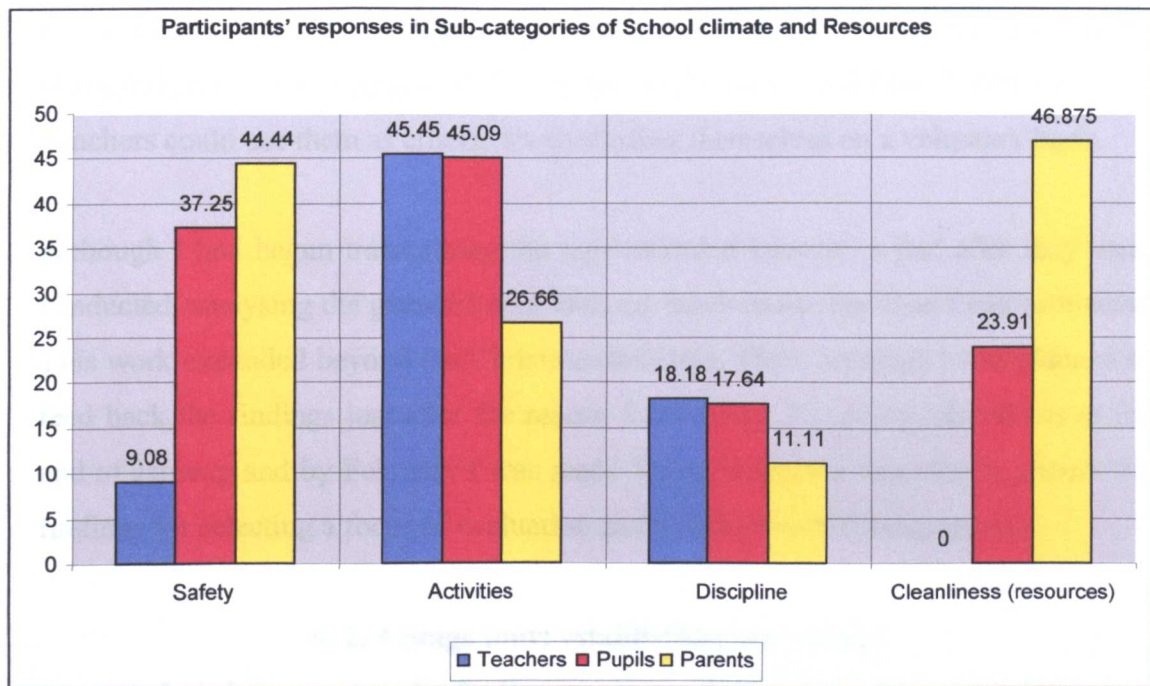
30 Parents: 144 indicators

60 Pupils: 274 indicators

6 Various indicators

109 Total Participants: 519 Total indicators

Diagram 2



Teachers' responses: School Climate 11 / Relationships 9 / Resources: 24

Pupils' responses: School Climate 68 / Relationships 44 / Resources: 32

Parents' responses: School Climate 45 / Relationships 14 / Resources: 32

I also prepared two lists of the characteristics of a 'good teacher', as the pupils perceived her/him. The first list consisted of the characteristics that were referred to by the young pupils of the first and second level while the second list included the characteristics that the pupils of the higher levels mentioned (see Appendix 10.2). Teachers could use them as criteria for evaluating themselves on a voluntary basis.

Although I had begun transcribing the tape-recorded interviews just after they were conducted, analysing the gathered data took me much more time than I had estimated. This work expanded beyond the Christmas holidays. Thus, although I had planned to feed back the findings just after the recess, I could not. I met my supervisors at the end of January and by February I was ready for my next step that was to present the findings for selecting a focus of evaluation and therefore establishing criteria.

6. 2. 4 Stage four: establishing the criteria

6. 2. 4. 1 Presenting the findings and negotiating areas for evaluation

The teachers' responsibility as collaborators was to choose one or two areas of evaluation. This allowed the school to be focused upon a limited number of indicators so we could define in-depth investigation (MacBeath, 1999, Russell, 1996). The choice should be the result of teachers' agreement. At this stage, negotiation, as the basic principle in a democratic process of SSE, was essential so that agreement would be achieved and the exercise would become well-established. Teachers had to answer the question: 'Which area would be good for your school to be evaluated in?'

I considered whether it would be better to invite teachers to a whole staff meeting or to meet them in groups. I discussed it with my tutors. They encouraged me to follow the second approach so that teachers, participating in smaller groups, could exchange their viewpoints and negotiate areas more easily. I took into account that 'the idea behind SSE is that the participants develop greater insight into the interplay between frames, processes and outcomes' (Alvick, 1996, p. 4). This procedure could increase the opportunities for reflection given that 'in any case one must estimate with a considerable amount of learning on the way by joint retrospective reflection' (ibid, p. 6).

Teachers, participating in small groups could also increase the feeling of ownership by choosing a theme of their own interest. This approach could also develop the sense of teachers' ownership for change, strengthening, at the same time, the democratic element in the process since ownership has, according to Rudduck (1996), 'a good democratic ring to it' (p. 123).

Finally, although group discussion tended to load me with additional work since grouping and discussing with the teachers needed much more time, other practical reasons contributed to this decision. It would be easier for teachers to agree on the time and place of meeting. I felt that this was important. 'Practicability and minimal disruption of the classroom and school are the criteria for selecting research methods' (Altrichter, 2002, p. 7).

I met the teachers in four groups, and the headteacher separately, protecting thus, teachers from power relationships. I followed the 'standard' approach. I began with a short introduction reminding the teachers of the research aims. I also related the steps and the method that we had been following and I explained the purpose of the meeting. After that, I presented the diagrams and I read the summary of the findings with the list of the characteristics of a 'good teacher'. The teachers commented on the findings and got involved in a related discussion.

The indicator concerning pupils' equity - pupils with special needs - seemed to attract the particular interest of the first group, which included the teacher for pupils with SEN. Teachers expressed their surprise about the revealed issue and a spontaneous question was: 'Which group provided this indicator and discussed such issues?' The second group seemed to choose the cluster concerning school organisation and communication, in particular teachers' relationships as well as school resources.

Another group acknowledged the importance of school organisation, home-school links and pupils' relationships but also relationships between teachers and pupils since, as they stated, 'these relationships constitute the basic prerequisite for a good school with immediate implications to teaching and learning'. Teachers of another group seemed to be annoyed by the reference to teachers' favouritism and attempted to guess the group of pupils who referred to it. Finally, the list with the characteristics

of a 'good' teacher seemed to attract the teachers' particular interest. Teachers continuously asked: 'The pupils of which class referred to this?'

Teachers seemed to maintain a defensive attitude. Some typical comments were: 'the system demands learning by heart', 'learning could be better in a classroom with a smaller number of pupils', 'we work without educational resources', 'we have pupils with learning and other difficulties', 'there is a lot of material', 'teachers should be motivated by the society and by the system that assumes social recognition and provision of economic motivation'. On the other hand, many times teachers stressed the headteacher's contribution to the creation of a 'good school', repeating that 'a headteacher should have a good background on psychology, administration, and pedagogy', 'a headteacher should promote the school', or 'a headteacher should have aspiration and moral principles. She/he should establish a climate of respect'.

When, however, teachers were called to choose one or two categories for evaluation, they seemed to hesitate. Each one seemed to articulate the answer of another. It was common for a teacher to begin naming some categories and the others to continue adding something different. Thus, teachers could not distinguish and agree on one or two particular categories. This could be interpreted as lack of teachers' experience or as their desire to acquire a multilevel picture of the school and themselves. A deep investigation of all areas, however, was a very complex, rather impossible enterprise.

I met the headteacher on 27th February 2002 in a quiet cafe. He read the quantitative findings and listened carefully to the qualitative results. He confessed: 'I now realise that our discussions have given me the opportunity to reconsider my relationships with the pupils. I need to come closer to them, have a real empathy with them and visit their classes more often'. Although, the headteacher expressed his interest in the evaluation of the whole-school, his basic concern had to do with teachers' views about his headship in the school. Within such blurred scenery how could I proceed?

6. 2. 4. 2 Choosing areas for evaluation

I felt that my contribution as a critical friend was decisive. I had to help the school in its decision. I faced two possibilities. The first one was to organise the evaluation

across all areas, as a broad-brush approach (MacBeath, 1999). The second possibility was to complicate the procedure and organise a broad questionnaire for the school to continue pursuing a deeper investigation on one or more specific areas.

The first approach seemed to be more simple and safer than the second one. It was expected to give some broad insight into the school life without ‘digging’ in depth possible ‘sensitive’ aspects. I felt, however, that I had to help teachers reach to one or two categories ‘for more in-depth treatment’ (MacBeath, 1999, p. 120). Russell (1996) advises: ‘A school should make a decision about its priorities for evaluation, and then reduce the list to not more than one or two focus areas in a year.’ (p. 109).

I also thought that priorities should be given not to comfortable but to demanding and challenging areas, considering, however, that they should not be “too risky” for those involved, to develop the courage to approach the classroom and to share one’s ideas and experiences as the project develops’ (Alvick, 1996, p. 4-5). Thus, I decided to follow the second possibility and organise a questionnaire as a sequential step in the process that could be used simultaneously as a first broad evaluation. This meant further insight into the school work and possibility for change in certain areas. At the end of the day, the process could be as important as the evaluation findings themselves.

I organised the questionnaire in an inventory form with 20 positive statements, two for each of the ten identified categories of indicators. I structured them in a five category rating; from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ (see Appendix 11). I primarily chose the statements from published work (Schratz, 1995, MacBeath, 1999 and other writers). I tried, however, to modify and adjust them to the reality of the specific school according to the findings of the previous stage, my own observations, and teachers’ interviews so that what comes out of the previous activities ‘will provide the starting points for designing the techniques which would help in reflecting back to the school its priorities and values’ (MacBeath, 1999, p.101). I preferred statements with a broad meaning, leaving statements with more specific content for the phase of evaluation.

On 20th March 2002, during the long break and teachers' 'free periods', I distributed the questionnaire. I asked teachers to prioritise each particular item according to the extent to which the item was perceived to be true in their school. The questionnaire was completed on the spot. It took about ten minutes. I collected the questionnaires. Then, I asked teachers to transfer the answers from the completed questionnaires, which I had already re-distributed randomly on an enlarged version of the questionnaire that I had pinned upon the note-board in the staff-room.

The questionnaire was completed by 17 teachers. The English teacher had been absent for more than a week, while the art teacher asked to keep the questionnaire for a day. The process could wait. The sense of ownership for the teacher was important. When I asked, however, for the questionnaire at the other school where the teacher was working, she argued that she could not complete it because one day a week is not adequate time for understanding what happens in the school.

Later on, she admitted that since the previous year her relations with her colleagues and particularly with the headteacher had not allowed the sort of communication which was adequate for the needs of the questionnaire. This confession reinforced her interview and established my observation about her isolation and distance from her colleagues and particularly the headteacher. Despite this refusal, later she returned to the investigation. Her questionnaire might affect the findings slightly but the process revealed the role of micro-politics in a school undertaking change as well as the headteacher's role. I also realised the importance of the critical friend's role in the process and especially in teachers' trust for uncovering deeper views and thoughts.

This procedure offered on-the-spot analysis of the questionnaire by respondents themselves. It also gave them the opportunity to be informed of other teachers' responses and compare them with their own, avoiding, however, their exposure on sensitive areas (Szaday, 1997). Finally, the procedure gave me the opportunity to observe teachers' reactions.

I could see the headteacher studying carefully the enlarged questionnaire and I could hear his question: 'Who is that teacher who gave a rating of 'strongly agree' to the statement "Resources are preserved and used efficiently and effectively?"', which

conveyed rather his doubts for teachers' tendency to present that 'all runs well'. I could also hear some teachers saying: 'I did not write this. I put the sign in another column', remarking, thus, on differences and identifying the items that showed strengths or weaknesses.

The weakest areas were those concerning school-home links and school climate. I wrote the results on the board. Having chosen the areas for evaluation, my next task was to develop the instruments of evaluation for the chosen areas: the questionnaire.

6. 2. 4. 3 Preparing data collection

Although I could help participants in responding on the spot, I piloted the teachers' questionnaire with two ex-colleagues, considering it as the most complex. I thus, devised and justified some changes and then proceeded (see Appendix 12.2).

I organised focus groups of five participants who were not necessarily the same people as those who participated in the stage of 'generating criteria'. Practical reasons and the perspective of a wider representation of the school population justified this decision. Obtaining school and teachers' agreement for pupils' participation I considered that the parents' consent form was only a risk for the process. I attempted to avoid it despite the danger that my research had encountered in the previous phase (see Section 6.2).

Meanwhile, the school climate seemed to be affected by the expected changes in the headteacher's post and people in the administrative post. Such changes began from people in charge of educational authorities. By the end of February 2002, the candidates for leadership had to submit application forms for their selection that would follow. For this, the candidates would be interviewed by the selected people in charge and representatives of teachers' unions. This meant that the candidates needed a strong support from their political party but also the appropriate qualifications, which, in many cases, they could not gather.

After Christmas, the headteacher seemed upset and anxious as he felt insecure in his position. He tried to collect certification, such as that of attending a computer

programme or conferences, and many times he complained: 'I do not think that I will be in this school next year'. Such conversations were opportunities for me to encourage him in the research. The headteacher's attitudes and actions as well as his attempts for the school and himself to gain a good reputation in the school community were being criticised by many teachers as having unorthodox motives and caused a reaction that would become more obvious later (see Sections 6.2.2.1, 10.1.3). The headteacher's mood, attitudes and actions, therefore, seemed to affect the school climate.

During that period, I invited teachers for a dinner at my house and later to a restaurant. I thus, attempted to recognise teachers' efforts in the research that would encourage them and develop my relationships with them in a more relaxed environment. Most of the teachers participated, including the headteacher. Teachers discussed and commented on school life and research in a calm and friendly atmosphere. The headteacher admitted that his involvement in the research had affected his thoughts and perhaps his behaviour towards pupils (see Chapter 7).

Under these conditions and having prepared the appropriate instruments under my tutors' supervision, I felt ready for the next phase of the process, that of evaluation implementation.

Conclusion

Following very carefully the official paths acquiring the permission from the P.I. and the headteacher, I approached the 'Platon' school where I was successful in gaining my acceptance by the teachers and their agreement for their involvement in the programme implementation. Participant observation and individual teachers' interviews throughout the long period of the preliminary phase helped in understanding the school culture and teachers' attitudes towards evaluation and change. This understanding deepened as the process evolved.

In the preliminary phase, focus groups of teachers and focus groups of pupils' and parents' representatives defined the characteristics of a 'good school' according to their needs, values and expectations. Additionally, focus groups of pupils suggested

the characteristics of a 'good teacher'. The findings of this procedure were organised in ten categories/areas for evaluation, which were presented in a quantitative and qualitative form to the teachers. Teachers were called to negotiate among them the most weak or interesting area or areas for evaluation.

Since the teachers could not choose any particular area for evaluation, a questionnaire which was completed on the spot by the teachers revealed as the weakest areas those of school-home relationships and school climate. Up to this point the process offered staff an opportunity to develop an indicator system which was adapted to the relevant literature review and constructed in the evaluative questionnaires, different for teachers, pupils and parents. This procedure was time-consuming but it seemed to prepare the school for the next phase, that of implementation of the evaluation activity.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF THE PROCESS

Introduction

This section examines the implementation of the evaluation in the school. It contains four stages which indicate the steps of implementation and follow the four stages of the previous phase. Thus, the fifth stage explores the procedures of obtaining the evaluative information. More precisely it examines how the groups were organised and how the focus groups of this phase were conducted.

The sixth stage refers to the end of the procedures for obtaining information and describes a simple celebration of this achievement that coincided with the end of the school year. The seventh stage explores the analysis of data and the report writing, a hard task that took place during the summer holidays. The same stage also examines the procedures for renewing the contact with the school in the new school year.

Finally, the eighth stage explores the process of communicating the report. It begins with the procedures of preparing the presentation, continues by examining this presentation and the negotiation of the findings that took place until the teachers came into agreement.

7. 1 Stage five: Obtaining evaluative information

7. 1. 1 Organising groups

At the beginning of April and before Easter, I started visiting the school more systematically as I intended to organise focus groups. I followed a similar logic of approaching participants and organising focus groups as I had had at the previous phase. I began with the teachers. I met them conveniently in three groups of four and in two groups of three. One of the meetings was held in my house and the rest in the school after lessons. I attempted to distribute the questionnaires before the meeting so that teachers could have a look first and complete them quickly. I felt that the process

had prepared the teachers for this activity and everything seemed to happen naturally and spontaneously.

I undertook the responsibility of organising groups with parents by myself. The previous phase had become valuable. Furthermore, my participation in a trip with two school classes which took place on 13th and 14th April as a part of their environmental educational programme, helped me in improving my communication with some mothers and three meetings were arranged there. The help of some teachers in grouping parents was also valuable. For instance, a teacher arranged a meeting of four mothers and other teachers introduced me to some mothers. I set interviews with four groups of three parents, three groups of four, one group of two and four groups of one parent, some held in their houses and most of them in the school. In total, I interviewed 30 parents, all mothers apart from three fathers. The last can be an issue for further investigation.

As I had already experienced, organising groups with parents was not an easy task. There were cases in which parents did not appear for their appointment and then I was forced either to cancel the meetings or to continue with a smaller number of participants. Some events contributed to such difficulties, such as the closure of the school for four days because of an epidemic disease or because of a teachers' strike. These focus groups continued well after Easter, into May, in parallel with those of pupils.

7. 1. 2 Evaluative focus groups

In these groups, I followed the established procedures. I particularly stressed issues of privacy, trust and anonymity. I asked each participant to rate the school on each item. Afterwards, I engaged the participants in a discussion. The discussions were unstructured, based, however, on the core of the questionnaire's issues. Usually the initiation was given by participants' questions or comments, or after explaining the rating. Thus, although there were certain issues, the participants could freely discuss areas that accorded with their own interests. I asked participants to express freely not only their positive views but also their negative comments.

Focus groups appeared to be necessary for explanations. This was because even questionnaires with a rating scale structure had disadvantages: 'the meaning of the grading between the two poles is done subjectively by the individuals' (Saunders & Karmock-Golds, 1997, p.25). Discussions, therefore, seemed to give 'more detailed information about certain issues on a more personal level' (ibid, p. 29). At the same time, critical reflection appeared to affect participants' thinking. An event, which happened in a pupils' focus group, illustrated this.

In their discussion, level 6 pupils maintained the opinion that the school takes their views into account in making some of its decisions. The day after the interview, the pupils of that level assembled in the school yard to prepare their programme for the school festival. When their performance finished, some of them ran towards me and one said: 'Madam, we would like to change something that we discussed yesterday. The school does not take our views seriously into consideration. For example, we have dedicated a lot time to a programme that neither offers pleasure nor other benefits. We are simply passive participants, although we could get actively involved in our class performance, planning the programme in collaboration with our teachers'.

Two of the teachers who were present looked at each other sceptically. Some discussion did eventually take place casually. Teachers promised that they would have a discussion with the headteacher and the rest of the staff. Privately, they took the opportunity for a forthright exchange of views and acknowledged pupils' right to complain.

The discussions tended to be, according to Pollard and Tann's (1987) suggestion: '1) descriptive (rather than judgmental), 2) dispassionate (not based on suspicions and prejudice), 3) discerning (so that they are forward-looking) 4) diagnostic (so that they lead us into better action). The target in the focus groups was for the participants, through negotiation, to reach an agreement. In many cases, however, disagreement remained. This was acceptable as long as all the views had been exposed and considered.

I realised that group synthesis affected teachers' discussions while teachers seemed to try to construct their own group according to their own preferences. When, however, I

deliberately mixed up a teachers' group, consisting of two class teachers and two teachers of the extended programme, the discussions revealed experiences and deep insights, even complaints, that participants had not expressed previously. The teachers of the extended programme, who appeared distant in comparison with the rest of the staff, took the opportunity to criticise their working conditions and the existing co-operation with their colleagues. Both sides acknowledged existing problems that had never before been discussed openly. Although both sides advocated their arguments, interesting solutions were proposed.

On the other hand, while group synthesis did not seem to affect pupils' discussions, after interviewing the first group of parents, I realised that some of them hesitated to bring up their deeper thoughts that they felt would be a source of contention with other members. For example, the following incident happened in a group where a teacher and parent participated. The mother who participated seemed to agree with the teacher who used only 'good words' to describe her ex-colleagues and the school. Thus, while the focus group was expected to contribute in the discussion development, its synthesis seemed to prevent it.

I realised that, in contrast, parents in individual interviews were much more open. This happened in the case of a mother who, at her own house, could talk quite freely. Without judging school work, she could articulate her comments according to her own experiences. I faced, therefore, a dilemma: was it necessary for me to build parents' groups or to go on with some individual interviews?

I reconsidered that data collection is extremely sensitive. Osborne (1990) states: 'the more judgmental or subjective areas of data are likely to be deeply hidden within groups or even held by individuals, who will only give access to that information in conditions where they felt that it is relevant and safe to do so' (in Davies et al, p. 161). Thus, I decided to continue with the flexibility of both options. When there was an occasion of some individual interviews, I decided to go ahead. The difficulties that I faced in group organisation also contributed to this decision.

I also decided, despite MacBeath's proposal, to avoid the additional choice of mixing representatives of teachers, pupils and parents. Power relationships could put the

school and the research at risk. I preferred to proceed giving the participants the opportunity to express their opinions freely among persons who share the same status in the school. Although this could affect the research data, evaluation should be handled sensitively, particularly when this is the first approach of the school.

Each focus group lasted from one-and-a-half-hours to two-and-a-half hours, apart from that of pupils that lasted much less, usually from 40 to 45 minutes. I tried to conduct teachers' focus groups before Easter because after this. I realised from my own experience as I teach they would be busy with the additional work for the end of the year. I extended the phase of gathering information according to the circumstances. By the end of May I had completed the focus groups with pupils and parents. It became impossible, however, to discuss this officially with the headteacher. Although I hoped that I could do it later, unfortunately, this never happened.

I abandoned my initial plan of pupils evaluating their teachers. Teachers might feel uncomfortable and suspicious in the first implementation of SSE. The time was also restricted. Taking into account that many of the teachers had expressed their interest in investigating themselves, I proposed to give the questionnaire to the teachers who wanted to do it for themselves. Four teachers proceeded in such an evaluation. When we discuss some responses, however, I detected teachers' difficulties in their interpretations.

During that period the school seemed to be absorbed with the preparation of the end-of-year festival within a problematic environment of tensions and conflicts among teachers. Teachers seemed to resist the headteachers' pressure and perhaps confusing management style. He accepted the ideas of a certain group of teachers, causing opposition from the rest. The teachers were separated in two to three groups. For some of them the friendly relationships went sour. There was a widespread expectation of a new headteacher, a new 'supreme authority' to restore the broken relationships and improve the headship in the school.

I felt that there was not adequate time for analysing the data, organising and presenting the report. Despite the risk of possible changes in the headteacher's post,

the teaching staff or the disposition and willingness of the rest to continue, school circumstances as well as the extended time of preliminary and implementation phases contributed to my decision of disrupting the process and waiting for the following year. The process confirmed my tutors' doubts: a school year is not adequate time for such an investigation.

At that moment, however, teachers' valuable work throughout the past year should be recognised. I decided to organise a small celebration as a kind of teachers' reward as described in the next section.

7.2 Stage six: Celebrating with the teachers

The last day for teachers in school for that year was the 19th June 2002. It was a relaxing day for them. The work had been arranged and the anticipation of the summer recess had created a climate of pleasure. I asked teachers to dedicate a few minutes and 'celebrate' with me our collaborative work up to that point. Some snacks, and a few words gave us the opportunity to remember the process from the beginning and to renew our promise to continue next year.

Summer holidays would give me time to analyse the data and organise the report in order for it to be presented and negotiated by the teachers at the beginning of the following school year.

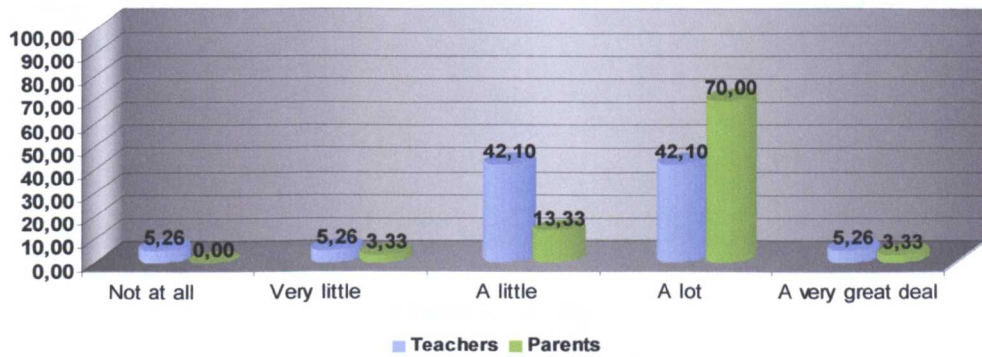
7.3 Stage seven: Analysing the evaluative data and writing the report

7.3.1 Analysing the data

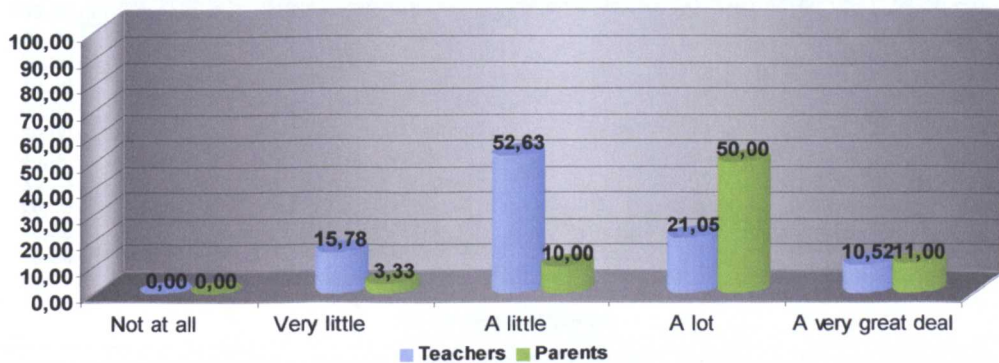
I calculated the quantitative responses. A clear measurable picture in a diagram with percentages could present the general picture of the evaluation findings and the possibility of comparing the respondents' answers and then them with the report that was going to follow (see Section 7.3). Thus, I constructed two diagrams of comparisons; the first between teachers' and parents' responses and the second between the responses of older and younger pupils. For the whole work see Appendices 14, 15. A sample of them is represented as follows:

Teachers' and parents' answers on evaluation questions

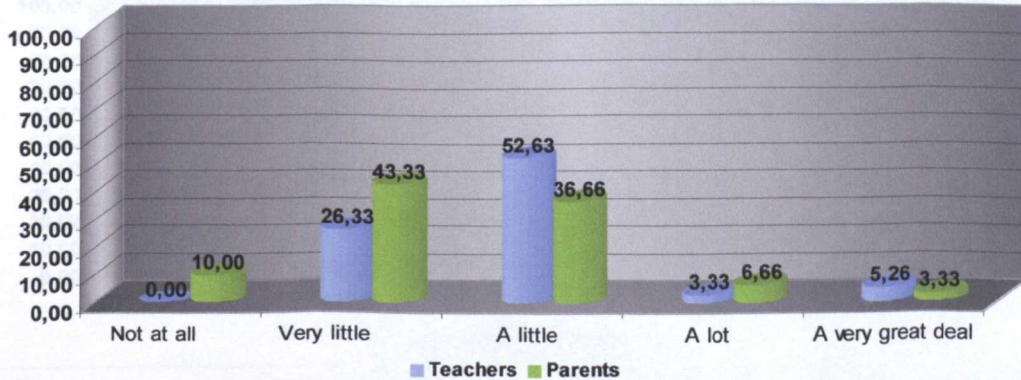
1.The school is a safe place



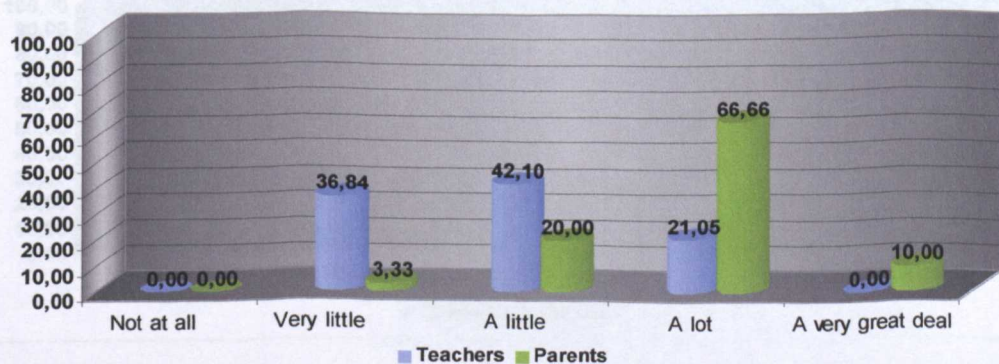
2.Pupils like going to the school



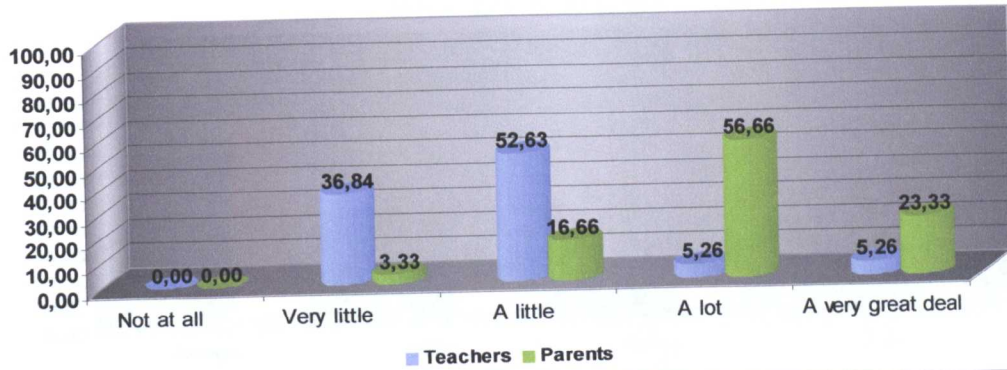
3.The school seeks deliberately to try new ways of approaching situations



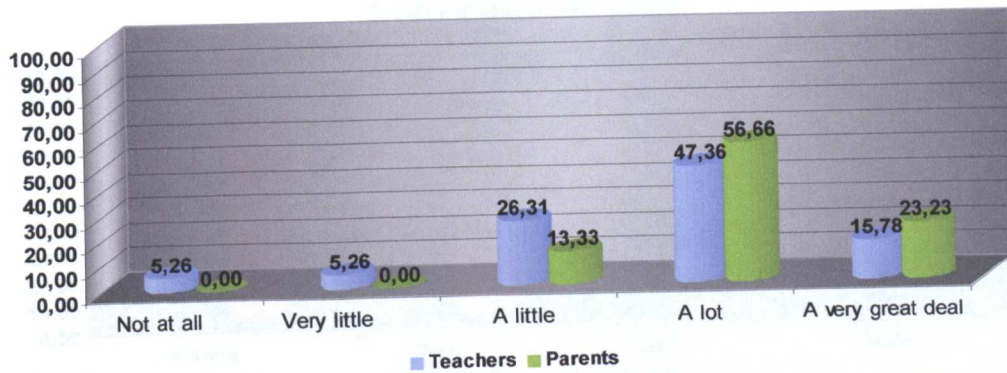
4.Pupils are well behaved and well mannered



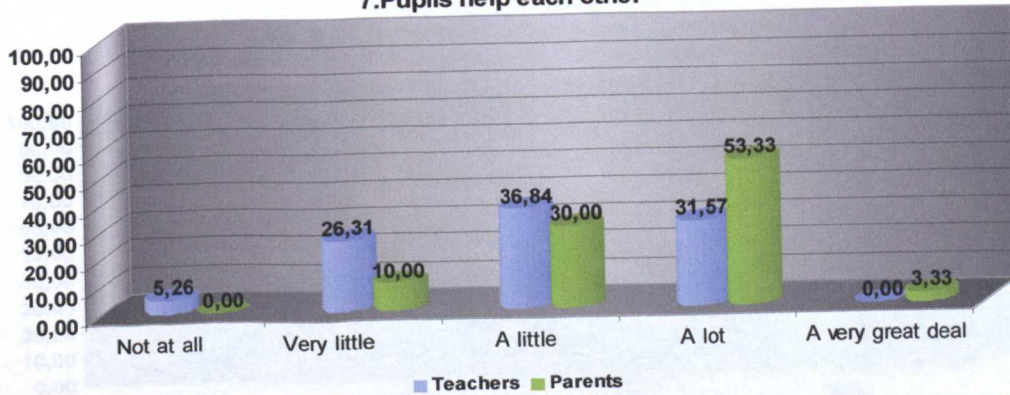
5. Pupils respect teachers



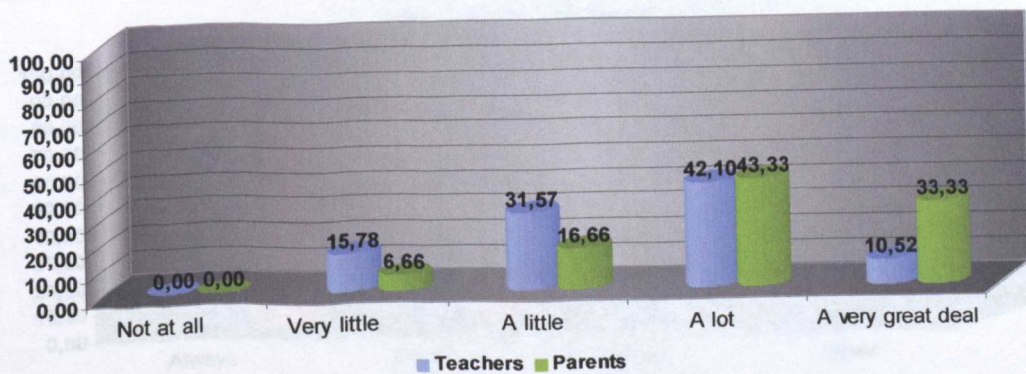
6. Teachers respect pupils



7. Pupils help each other

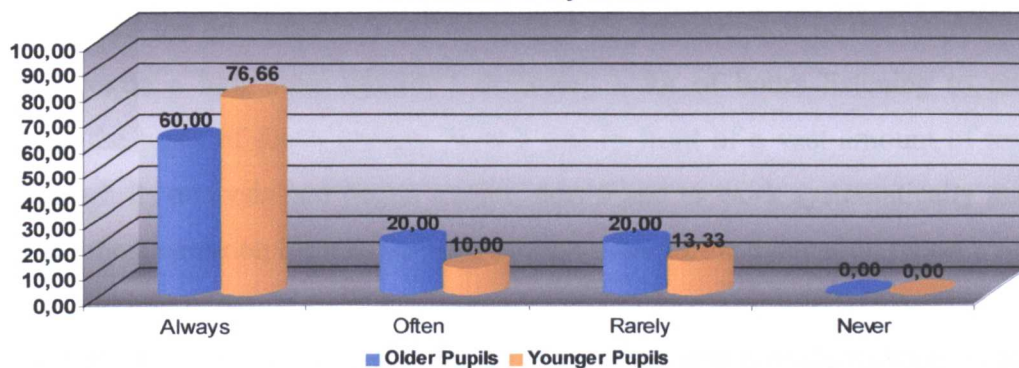


8. Pupils fight with each other

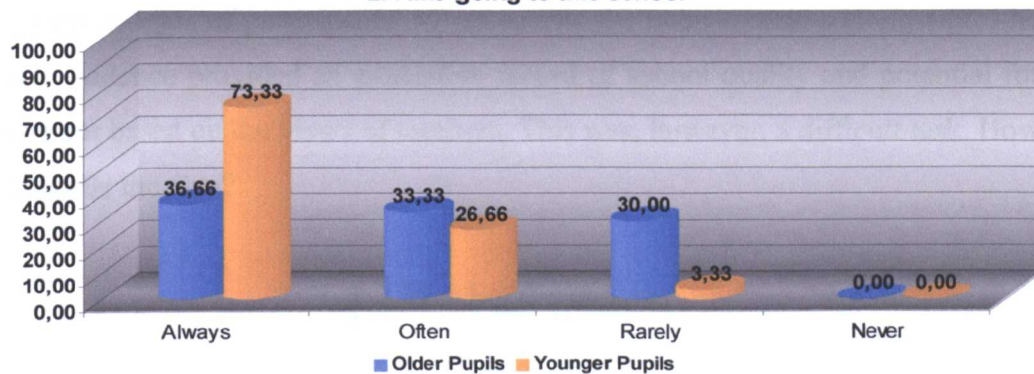


Older and younger pupils' answers on evaluation questions

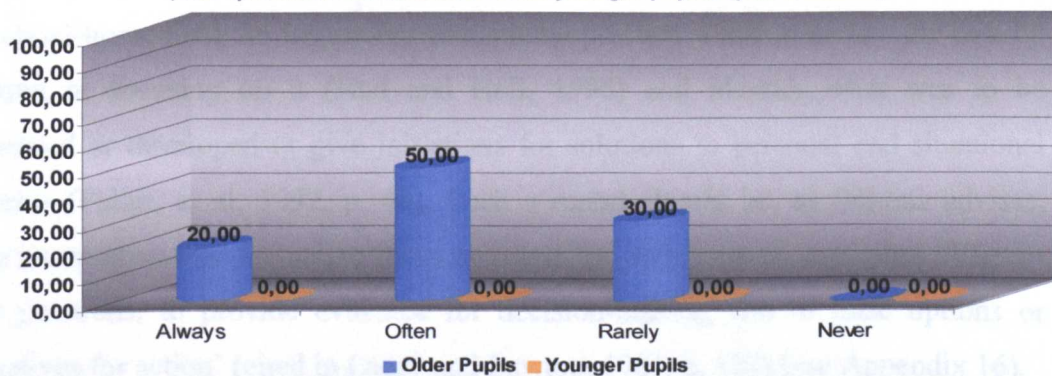
1. I feel safe in my school



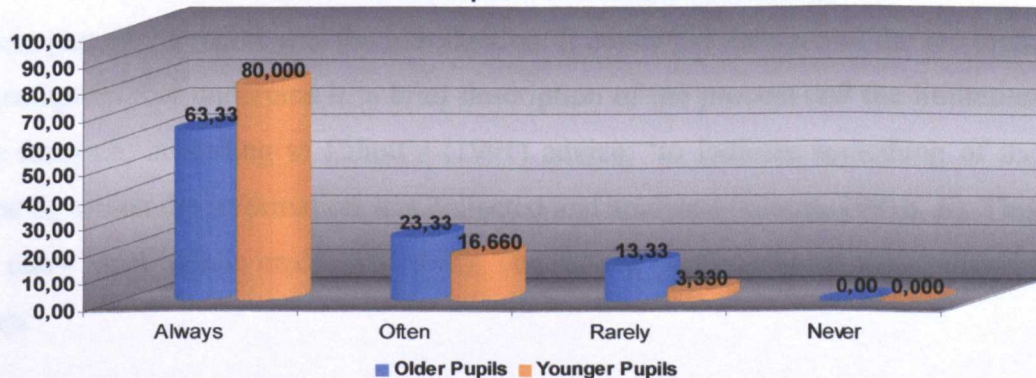
2. I like going to this school



3. We try new ways of doing things in the school
(*The question is not included in the younger pupils' questionnaire.)



4. We respect our teachers



Having prepared the quantitative data I continued the transcription of the interviews that I had begun a long time before. I dedicated a lot of hours listening to and transcribing the tapes of focus groups. Now I was in front of a vast amount of text data. Although its analysis had begun earlier, now I had to work systematically and organise the most common form of communication - that of the evaluation report.

The transcripts of interviews, available for scrutiny, could also provide a check on the validity of the quantitative data but more importantly to enrich the report offering illuminating insights of participants' views so that the questionnaires along with 'the interview evidence provided an evaluative record of school quality and potential for improvement based on the views of teachers. This was, however, a difficult task. How could I handle the data?

7. 3. 2 Writing the report

I had to write the report very carefully. Primarily, I had to concentrate on my analytical purpose: that of informing the school's policy-makers about school climate and school-home links for improving educational practice. I had to reduce the data by selecting or focusing on it (Hall and Hall, 1996) and identify what was to be maintained or developed or give initiations for solutions to personal and situational problems (Fidler, et al, 1997, p. 40). Such a report should be, as Simons advises, 'more interpretive than factual, to focus on particular policy issues, to expose different value positions, to provide evidence for decision-making and to raise options or alternatives for action' (cited in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 121) (see Appendix 16).

The first part of the report was the introduction. It contained the aims of the research, the assumption that underpins it, a brief description of the process and the limitation of the research, according to Elliott's (1991) advice: 'to indicate something of the process by which the information was collected and analysed (Elliott, 1991b, ii). This could carry much public credibility (ibid). The second part concluded the evaluative findings.

I avoided giving any interpretations or presenting the responses as a list of consequences. I handled very carefully and sensitively the judgmental and the negative findings that might be as interesting as the positive ones but also risky. Negative findings were used to cross-check the results of one theme against another, or against the characteristics of the group participants and verified as isolated or unpredictable responses. I brought out similarities and contrasts and I used direct quotations from informants enhancing, therefore, the report's credibility (Hall and Hall, 1996, p. 244). I avoided references to persons or events that could be identifiable, and I tried to present the 'gentle truth'.

Although not all reports require a section for recommendations, I decided to include these considering that recommendations coming out from the informants give them more credibility (Robson, 1993). Without taking the form of obligation in a separate section, the recommendations attempted to be practical, 'capable of implementation' and suggested 'attainable' improvements for the school (ibid, p. 246). I grouped the report around the themes of the questionnaires and I organised it as follows:

SCHOOL CLIMATE
1. The general attitude
2. The physical domain: Safety and building
3. The social domain
3.1 Behaviour
3.2 Teachers-pupils relationships
3.3 Pupils-pupils relationships
Discipline
3.4 Teachers' relationships
4. Objectives, targets and shared values
4.1 Objectives and targets
Extra-curricular activities
Group work
4.2 Shared values: Respecting pupils' 'particularities'
5. Organisation and Communication
5.1 Co-operation and collaboration
5.2 The headteacher
6. Home and school links
6.1 School-parent communication
6.2 Attitudes of parents towards teachers and vice versa
6.3 Parental involvement
6.4 Parents' Association

The 'style' of writing was another task for consideration. Different audiences or purposes need different styles (Robson, 2000, p. 121). Although the academic community might be one reader, teachers would certainly be the first audience. Thus, I had to adjust the report to the first audience. The intention was then to use terms that were comprehensible to teachers and to make the report sound 'professional'.

In a democratic process the report would become the negotiated currency, the basis on which clearance and improvements would be sought. Thus, to put the report on a negotiable basis, I tried to make the report open, giving a sense of calling for further

reflection and verification. I also tried to use language that indicated a disposition of academic rigour and intimidated by teachers such as 'it seems' or 'it would'. Being prepared, I waited expectantly for the new school year.

7. 4 Stage eight: Communicating the findings

7. 4. 1 Renewing the contact with the school

On the 3rd September 2002, I visited the school. The school had faced many changes. The headteacher, the deputy headteacher and two of the teachers had changed posts. I met the new headteacher in his office. I introduced myself and gave some explanations for my presence there. The following days I also had some informal conversations with him and I arranged a meeting to make him aware of the research.

In the meanwhile, on the 9th September, with the headteacher's permission, I attended the first pedagogical meeting in the staff-room. It was mainly concerned with teachers' distribution among classes. The headteacher could overcome threatened conflicts among teachers. He seemed a calm and warm person with fresh ideas and good communication skills.

The headteacher, in his interview, stated that he had not attended any specific professional development course. However, his experience as teacher, deputy headteacher and headteacher during his long career in Greece and abroad, both in public and private schools, acted as good qualifications for the responsibilities of his post. He acknowledged the teachers' decisive role in child development and he stressed that his priority was for teachers to improve their 'ideals' and eradicate some of their prejudices, particularly in religious issues. He expected to achieve it by reminding the teachers of their role. This attempt, however, as became obvious later, created a silent teachers' reaction. On the other hand, the headteacher characterised the research as an important and valid 'heritage from the past' and he promised his support.

The post of the deputy headteacher was undertaken by a school teacher, who was selected from three others. This selection was a reason for micro-political implications in teachers' relationships. However, at that time, the tension among the candidates

seemed to be overcome. The teachers seemed to try to forget the unpleasant experiences of the past, and the school attempted to find its own rhythms and peacefully start a new beginning. I spent the first month renewing my contact with the old teachers and developing communication with the new headteacher and teachers. I felt that the school climate was positive for the research development.

7. 4. 2 Preparing the report presentation

Once the school found its routine, being prepared and having received my supervisor's advice, I distributed the diagrams to the teachers. Some of them studied the diagrams immediately while others preferred to leave it for later. I had the first teachers' reactions such as: 'I am satisfied. I liked that the teachers were particularly critical with the school and themselves' or 'I am upset. What is happening here? Where is all our hard work?' Another teacher commented: 'Parents' views about their contribution in their children's learning seem to be different from what teachers believe'. I felt that it was the time for the report presentation.

My main objective was for teachers to communicate the report and accept it through a possible agreement. Negotiation as a democratic procedure was clearly necessary. This approach would be a more interactive way of communication that might also renew the sense of teachers' ownership and commitment.

At this stage I felt that this was important since 'building commitment to the process is not just something that has to remain throughout the process and then translated into a yet different form at the point of moving into the planning/action stage' (Osborne in Davies et al, 1990, p. 160). I also took into account Robson's (2000) advice: 'there are no hard and fast rules for the way in which findings of small scale evaluation are communicated' (p. 121). Thus, instead of handing over copies for teachers to read individually, I decided to communicate and negotiate the report through an oral presentation.

In this attempt the timescale needed particular attention. Communicating and negotiating the findings had to last long enough for the school to internalise them and possibly to act according to them, but not too long to exhaust it. I opted to begin

through a formal staff meeting. It might add to my work 'prestige'. Negotiating it with the headteacher, he proposed the meeting take place in his own comfortable office.

7. 4. 3 The report presentation

The meeting was held on the 9th October 2002 during the long break. Although the headteacher's office was a place for non-smokers, the headteacher permitted smoking with the tolerance of non-smokers. He kindly proposed to exclude himself from the meeting. I explained, however, that he could stay since, as the new headteacher, he had not intervened in the process. On the contrary, he might deepen his awareness and understanding of the school culture that would prove valuable for his headship in the school. The headteacher decided to stay.

I began with the introductory part of the report. I stressed the evaluation limitations. The report did not include any headteacher's views, attributing to it a one-sided character. As my intention was clearance through negotiation, I asked teachers to put critical questions and probing interpretations for clarification, thinking simultaneously how these findings could be used. Osborne (1990) advises: 'Reporting and then moving forward into the planning-action stage requires careful thought and wide agreement...always bearing in mind the possibility of re-negotiation of these elements as the evaluation nears "completion"' (cited in Davies et al, 1990, p.162).

The meeting lasted almost half-an-hour and apart from the introductory part it covered the parts of general feeling, physical environment with the building and safety issues as well as social school environment except teachers' relationships. The first teachers' comments concerned children's views about the school's physical environment and their proposal for use of the spare lab. Teachers doubted the suitability of that particular room. They stressed, however, that the expected reconstruction for the following year might provide a solution. Teachers also doubted parents' comments about their common efforts with the school in planning a particular safety activity.

The extended long break, however, was not enough to accommodate the whole report presentation. As the meeting ended the teachers agreed to continue in groups. The procedure had been effective in the past. The arrangement for focus groups, however,

became impossible for the next days. The municipal elections kept schools closed for two days a week - Monday and Friday - for the two following weeks while two days of the third week were dedicated to school's celebration of the National Day of the 28th October.

The meetings were arranged for after the 28th October. Three groups were shaped. The first meeting of eight teachers took place on Wednesday the 30th October in the staff room at the end of the lessons. It lasted for more than two hours. The second meeting, also with eight teachers, was held on Thursday, the 31st October in my house and lasted more than two-and-a-half-hours. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher were present.

Finally, I met the three teachers of the third group on the 5th November, after lessons, in the staff-room where we held a discussion for approximately two hours. In these clearance sessions, teachers asked for explanations and elaborated further on the issues, changing substantially very little. Negotiations in these sessions, however, offered a lot of teachers' insights. These are examined in the next section.

7. 4. 4 Negotiating the findings

Teachers in the first group, discussing the section about their communication with parents', exchanged their views and took the opportunity to recall their own experiences as parents. They concluded that parents should discuss directly with teachers what they perceived as their children's problems and not by-pass them, approaching the headteacher. Such an approach implies suspicion which might undermine teacher-parent relationships and co-operation. They agreed, however, that in order for parents to open their thoughts and trust their deep secrets, teachers should respect pupils' problems and approach them sensitively.

In the third group, a teacher did not agree with the findings that presented the parents in the school area as 'difficult'. She argued that 'the school itself created the conflicts of the last years since it could not put social boundaries, for example with the Parents' Association', leaving, thus, contentious issues about the headteacher's role. The teachers agreed and expressed their satisfaction with parents' desire to develop their

awareness on educational, psychological and social issues. They admitted that the school has never undertaken the responsibility for organising meetings and discussions about these issues. Some doubts about parents' response to such invitations were dispersed and teachers, finally, acknowledged that improvement of parents' communication with the school needed hard attempts on behalf of school and teachers themselves.

In the same group, a teacher disagreed with the 'discipline' part of the report. She stressed that the problems which the school faces in pupils' discipline were not serious. Some isolated incidents should not affect the general picture, implying, thus, doubts about certain colleagues. Although the whole group agreed with this objection, teachers concluded that the improvement of the school policy on issues of discipline should be a top priority for the school.

The group, which the headteacher and the deputy headteacher included, also developed a constructive discussion. Home-school links attracted the group's interest. Teachers tried to specify how their meetings with parents were organised. It became clear that teachers organised these meetings once a month. Teachers realised, however, that in arranging them, they had adopted various ways. They individually or in groups met parents on various days of the week. They also stressed that parents tend to communicate only with class teachers and bypass the specialist teachers; possibly because of their indifference with some subjects. Although they insisted that school-parents communication depended on parents' interest, they finally concluded that the school should improve the organisation of this communication.

The teachers stressed particularly the difficulties in their communication with parents of children with behavioural and learning problems. They acknowledged that both sides feel uncomfortable. At this point the headteacher took the opportunity to advise teachers about their communication with parents. According to his view, 'teachers should try to avoid being judgmental when holding a sensitive discussion. Teachers should acknowledge parents' difficulties in facing their children's problems and emphasise the positive aspects of the child.' The headteacher concluded that, 'although honest and sincere communication is a difficult task the school should find solutions in approaching parents'.

The headteacher took the opportunity to introduce a change in organisation of school parents' meetings. He suggested that it would be beneficial for the school to respect the working parents. He argued that it would be not too onerous for them to donate some time for an evening meeting instead of the standard meeting held in the early afternoon, given that the teachers dedicate plenty of time to their responsible work with children. This might also give a solution to the problem with the specialist teachers' communication. Some of the teachers seemed to agree with this proposal but most of them remained sceptical. The issue remained open.

Commenting on the function of the Parents' Association, the headteacher doubted whether the committee knows its role and its responsibilities in depth. The teachers, on the other hand, doubted a particular action of the President. What were the limits of the committee's intervention? The headteacher remarked that it would be essential to discuss such issues with the President of the Association.

In the section of parents' involvement in school work, teachers attempted to guess the identity of parents who had commented on the manner in which teachers deal with parents' active interest. Teachers, however, felt satisfied, even relieved, when they heard that parents appreciate their effort in the environmental programme. They felt that this programme positively stimulated their children and, indirectly, their own communication with the school.

Teachers also reflected on pupils with special needs and learning difficulties. They formulated critical questions about the school role and particularly that of the Special Needs Class. Various views were articulated and the headteacher commented: 'I would like to discuss the operation of this class' asking, thus, for teachers' contribution in increasing his awareness on the issue.

Participants agreed with the findings in terms of teachers' co-operation. They realised the need for a closer co-operation in defining school targets, priorities and possible initiations. They excused the lack of co-operation by saying that: 'it happens due to the centralised system and school organisation' or 'because of the workload and the

lack of trust between teachers themselves'. They did not seem, however, to have elaborated the type of co-operation that they were discussing.

During the discussion, two teachers of parallel classes asked the headteacher's permission to exchange their pupils to evaluate their work and co-operate. The headteacher, considering the possible improvement of teaching and learning, promised it and made clear that: 'I am open to teachers' initiatives'. He concluded by suggesting that 'a pedagogical meeting would define pedagogical issues for school improvement'. The above teachers' proposal, however, was never realised.

A lot of negotiation took place around teachers' relationships. The findings had revealed that the older teachers should create for the newcomers a warm, friendly and supportive environment. Although objections were heard, at the end the teachers agreed that the older ones should act as mentors to help the newcomers until they found their own space in the workplace.

The references to the old headteacher gave the teachers an opportunity to comment rather negatively on his behaviour towards teachers, pupils and parents. The new headteacher stressed that 'headteacher's position has authority. A headteacher, however, should respect teachers, parents and pupils even though contradictions and conflicts happen on a daily basis'. The absence of the first headteacher appeared to simplify the negotiation and relieve the teachers from the anxiety of possible consequences.

Teachers in this group consisted of the most curious and fascinated teachers. They negotiated many parts of the report. The ensuing productive discussion in teachers' experiences, insights, ideas and proposals lasted longer than in any other group. However, teachers in every group stressed the necessity for improvement of school targets and priorities as well as teachers' co-operation. They promised to think further upon the findings and elaborate on the issues.

At this stage, I made a thoughtful decision: to overcome the negotiation of findings dissemination among teachers, pupils and parents. For this decision I took into account individual teacher interviews where parents had been stigmatised as

‘immature’ for further involvement in school matters (see Section 8.3). I also considered the report negotiations which revealed the deep gap between teachers and parents.

Furthermore, the absence of any evaluation system, the lack of any channel for upwards communication and lack of teachers’ trust to advisors and the central system contributed to this decision. I avoided confusing the teachers and making them anxious. It would be preferable for the school to fully experience the process of evaluation and, later, decide by itself about more democratic procedures (Simons, 1981; Russell, 1996) (See Section 7.1).

I revised the report and I handed it to the headteacher. The process had to go on. SSE should be perceived not as an end but as a part, ‘as a journey’ of the school improvement process (Jackson, 2000, Fullan, 2002 in Hallinger 2003, p. 345) (see Section 3.2.4). How could the school integrate formally evaluation findings into its policy? In other words, how the school could institutionalise the findings? The next chapter examines this phase.

Conclusion

The implementation of the evaluation called teachers, pupils and parents to respond to the evaluation questionnaire and engaged their groups in a reflective discussion. This engagement revealed school weaknesses and strengths and contributed to a deeper understanding of school culture, and particularly teachers’ and parents’ attitudes towards each other.

The quantitative data was organised in tables and diagrams and the qualitative one in a rather descriptive report which also contained many ideas and proposals for improvement. Writing of the report, however, was difficult work, since many judgmental views of the participants should be overcome and the ‘gentle truth’ presented.

In the second year of the research the new headteacher and deputy headteacher undertook their responsibilities. After the school organising its work, the data were presented and negotiated by the teachers in whole staff meeting and in teachers' teams. Teachers changed some points in the report and proposed as the area for improvement that of school policy concerning pupils with learning difficulties. The cycle of evaluation had arrived at the phase of institutionalisation.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

ANALYSIS OF THE INSTITUTIONALISATION PHASE

Introduction

Institutionalisation is the phase ‘when the initial idea becomes an automatic and established part of practice’ (Southworth and Conner, 1999 p. 8). Although, it could be said that the boundaries of the phase were difficult to define since institutionalisation can start from the beginning of the cyclic process, the process seemed clearly to enter into a new phase.

This section contains the last two stages. The ninth stage explores the attempts of teachers and school to set priorities and integrate the findings for improvement, both into the school policy and into the teachers’ practice. The tenth stage includes the last part of the process, that of the programme evaluation.

The next sections explore the process of SSE. School culture is highlighted in the final section. This section attempts to look into school culture, organisational culture and the headteacher’s role in it. Since school ‘culture is shaped by what teachers do and think which in turn are fundamentally influenced by teachers’ beliefs, assumptions and values’(Little 1982: 338 cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 80), it looks into school norms, customs, practices, routines and behaviours and clarifies teachers’ beliefs, assumptions and values.

This section attempts to also examine separately teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards evaluation and change, as they can be considered as contributing to the shaping of the basic background context which ‘determines how close to the starting gate the school is during any period of change’ (Gray et al, cited in Hopkins 1999, p. 148).

8. 1 Stage nine: integrating the findings into school policy

8. 1. 1 Setting priorities

Teachers in random groups discussed again areas for improvement. They tried to negotiate and prioritise areas that had attracted their interest. My frequent visits to the school spurred and facilitated these discussions. Teachers seemed to be interested in discipline matters, their relationships with pupils and those among the pupils themselves. They particularly stressed school policy concerning the learning of pupils with difficulties. The dissatisfaction of certain teachers became apparent.

The next pedagogical meeting was held on 12th November 2002. At this meeting, the teachers proposed development of curriculum at certain subjects. They had experienced pupils' needs in some parts of the curriculum and the 'patchy' construction of textbooks in language and mathematics. It seemed to be an interesting suggestion that also excited the headteacher, who promised that he might even arrange publication of the work. The discussion however, was restricted to many vague ideas and decision making was postponed for later.

In the meantime, the headteacher's suggestion about an open parents' evening, which crucially emerged as the report was being negotiated, could not be put into practice. The headteacher, despite his intensive attempts, could not manage the proposal effectively. Some teachers reacted and the proposal collapsed. This caused obvious disappointment to him. Until the Christmas holidays there was not any organised and systematic attempt for change. I felt that 'it is at this point that energies may be relaxing, and if this is so it may require extra attention, particularly to bridge the evaluation-action gap' (Osborne cited in Davies et al, 1990, p. 162).

The following pedagogical meeting was held on 16th January 2003. As I had to be absent for a meeting with my supervisors, I asked the Deputy Head to tape-record the discussion. He accepted willingly. When I returned from the UK the deputy headteacher gave me the tape. I was informed, however, that two of the teachers had reacted to this recording. Although the relevant parts of the teachers' reaction were

excluded from the tape, the meeting was taped because the headteacher and the rest of the teachers had voted for this procedure.

In the same meeting, as teachers informed me and I myself concluded from the tape, a teacher asked to explain further the operation of her class and her own role in this class, the school and the district. The headteacher and the other teachers, despite their previous clearly identified interest, avoided discussing relevant issues. A question arose: What is the power of micro-politics and informal agendas in the process of school change? Was it the beginning of teachers' resistance to their engagement in the programme? Does this mean that when teachers feel insecure in their position they react to undertaking any change?

In this meeting, initially, the headteacher and teachers discussed with a representative of the Parents' Association issues about school safety and parents' support for the school festival. When parents departed, the teachers continued their pedagogical discussion. The proposal about curriculum development was discussed once more. Many ideas were also heard. The teachers, however, seemed to face the same difficulties in defining aims, procedures and consequences. The headteacher and the teachers seem to ignore what Stoll and Fink (1996) suggest: 'in choice of priorities schools need to consider both manageability and coherence of sequence' (p. 68). Once again nothing was decided and the proposal, once again, was left for later.

8. 1. 2 Small-scale results and attempts for long-scale plans

In an informal discussion with a teachers' group, a teacher put straightforwardly the question: 'Could you help us in such an attempt? We feel the need for somebody to organise and direct us.' I did not accept, however, any formal invitation. This matter raised a lot of considerations. Could the school put forward an initiation to its agents and undertake the management and the risk of the process? What should the role of the headteacher be? Do the teachers have the appropriate skills to proceed? What should my own role be? Why had nobody asked for my support in the official school proposal?

For the next two months I was periodically visiting the school, observing meetings, discussions, events and everyday activities. I tried to identify if the school would proceed to long-term and large-scale improvements. At the same time, I tried to investigate if the programme had any impact on the teachers and the school as short-term and small-scale attempts for change.

Although no formal decision was made, many teachers made some isolated and separate attempts for change. Some of the teachers talked spontaneously to me. For example, the physical education teacher confessed: 'I developed close co-operation with the teacher of the first level about pupils' behaviour and common approaches in discipline matters'. Another teacher tried to develop parents' involvement in class work. She invited a dentist parent to assist her teaching during health education. Another teacher actively participated with her class in a parents' Christmas bazaar.

Teachers acknowledged that they had to improve their communication and co-operation with parents. They could overcome the dissatisfaction that had been caused by the headteacher's manipulation and they voluntarily organised an evening parents' meeting. Later on, the headteacher participated in an evening meeting of the Parents' Association, where he presented the school aspect in the issues discussed. After two months, however, few decisions had been taken formally and fewer actions took place at school level.

Before the Easter holidays I decided to proceed to the final step of the research. It was the evaluation of the programme by the teachers. Evaluative questionnaires would further investigate teachers' views about the SSE programme and its impact on them and the school. The implementation of questionnaires was my next task.

8.2 Stage ten: The final step - evaluating the process

I had already prepared the final questionnaires. Following four school classes on a three-day trip, I had the opportunity to discuss the questionnaire with some teachers. I revised some sentences and points of the questionnaire structure. Teachers were called to answer whether and how the process of implementation affected the school and themselves. They were also to indicate what changes should be made in the process,

how they saw pupils' and parents' participation and what development work should be undertaken in this context (see Appendix 17). I distributed the questionnaire on the 18th April 2003 and I asked the teachers to complete and return them after the Easter break.

From the beginning, teachers made it explicit that they preferred to complete the questionnaire with me. For the majority of them, I adopted the following procedure: teachers had a careful look in advance and then they met me for explanations and clarifications. This approach gave us the opportunity to openly discuss the programme implementation in the school. All teachers except two held a discussion with me, while a particular teacher did not return the questionnaire due to her workload. I speculated whether she had been disturbed by the findings or the process. We never had the opportunity to openly discuss anything relevant. Teachers' answers are discussed in Chapters 9 and 10.

In May, the Counsellor visited the school. During a long break, the Counsellor, expressing a governmental proposal for improving the teaching methods, presented an innovative programme. It was called 'programme of flexible zone' and it referred to the introduction of the project method at school level. The Counsellor asked that for the next year the school should get involved in it on a voluntary basis.

The headteacher seemed to be particularly interested in this initiation. Some of the teachers appeared anxious. Others remained sceptical and suspicious about the State's and counsellor's support while some others, who, it could be said, constituted the 'progressive clique' of the school, appeared confident and willing to proceed. The last group was utilised by the headteacher to influence the hesitant teachers. Thus, the school promised its involvement in the programme. This incident seemed to contribute to the interpretation of the headteacher's role within the school context.

The deep understanding of the school culture, as the fundamental background for SSE implementation, was pursued throughout the two years of the investigation. School culture was studied through participant observation, teachers' and headteacher's individual interviews. Evaluative questionnaires as well as teachers', pupils' and

parents' focus groups contributed to this by giving valuable information from another point of view. School culture is the focus of the next section.

8. 3 A deeper insight to the school context

8. 3. 1. The school culture

'Platon' school is considered as an ordinary part of the Greek Primary educational system with resources and working conditions comparable to any other public school. 'Platon' school, however, as a school unit, had its own distinct climate and culture (Dalin, 1993; Kavouri, 1998).

The school had apparently an academic dimension which placed specific emphasis on pupils' cognitive development. The 'knowledge' that is well-organised and specified by the detailed National Curriculum absorbs schools' and teachers' interest. Individual cognitive development and achievement was a common and wide-spread value, not only because it was imposed by the system but also because teachers and the school community valued it; as a teacher in a focus group revealed: 'Knowledge is appreciated by parents, pupils and teachers themselves who can gain their "job satisfaction" since knowledge can be measured'.

At the same time, teachers, in their interviews, seemed to worry about pupils' future within a rapidly changing and complicated world. Pupils, according to teachers' views, seemed to live in a contradiction. They are negatively affected by the mass media; the increasing number of broken homes and decreasing communication between the young and adults. The increased burden of private tuition also absorbs pupils' free time, and their natural induction in maturation and socialization. On the other hand, pupils accept the positive effects of technological progress. They have also the opportunity to participate in sport, musical or theatrical and leisure activities.

Teachers acknowledged that nowadays school is not ready to meet the challenges of a post-modern world that is completely different from the traditional one of the past. One of them wondered: 'What about pupils' skills?' It implies that pupils need to develop not only the basic skills in language and numeracy, but also critical thinking

and skills: personal skills, social skills such as co-operation with others, or general key skills for problem solving.

Teachers who had experienced the orientation and weight of the curriculum but also the changing values and needs of pupils, posed issues of change in the school's targets and perhaps in the overall purposes of education. They seemed to agree with Stenhouse's view, according to which, education is a moral activity that should develop the character and mental power of children (Simons, 2003).

Some attempts at change, which a few teachers undertake are minor and isolated, for instance a child-centred approach to teaching and learning. Teachers stated that, within the restricted freedom that the imposing N.C. leaves, such attempts are mainly directed by their own personal pedagogical interests, their moral responsibility to pupils and their own needs to respond to those of their pupils. Attempts also arise through teachers' feelings of recognition and satisfaction that usually come from the local community, where they can acquire a good reputation as doing a good job. The more motivated teachers seemed to create a 'progressive clique', a positive 'sub-culture', forming a background for undertaking school-based change.

The only obvious school-wide attempt for improvement was the development of extra-curricular activities, although its realisation caused a lot of contradictions in the school (see Section 6.2.4.3). The school seemed rather to expect the Government to initiate changes through national programmes. Such programmes, however, do not usually come or when they do, according to the headteacher's complaints, are inadequately organised and leave school and teachers ill-prepared, as in the case of the 'extended programme' or in the Physics science of level 5 when textbooks changed. Usually teachers react because they feel marginalised and frustrated and, then, it is doubted if change comes. The Counsellor's proposal, however, clearly highlights questions about change in the school.

The school seemed to be rather selective in acceptance of new ideas, holding on to some existing ideas and in some cases it rather resisted any innovation at all. An inherent barrier for the school to initiate innovation became apparent. Old values and norms seemed to set parameters in the school that justify or demand a school culture,

which, as Dalin (1993) states, ‘make it hard to adapt and meet new challenges’ (p. 99) (see Section 4.1.1). Within such a background, it is interesting to explore how the school attempted to cope with its organisational life.

8. 3. 1. 1 Organisational culture

The social relations among colleagues seemed to be good. Everybody seemed to be happy working in the school. The teachers appeared to maintain a friendly work environment with an openly warm atmosphere. Teachers, however, did not seem to work co-operatively towards a well worked-out developmental plan upon agreed goals and shared values. They were working according to the central curriculum aims in isolation, based upon the guidance of auxiliary books and selected intuitively practices or procedures to serve current needs.

The school seemed to have adopted what the system dictates, to favour the one-teacher, one-classroom work. In some cases, class teachers of the same level, in informal conversations during breaks in the staff-room, might exchange simple ideas and views within the curriculum framework. Nothing, however, could be described as a well planned and long-term attempt.

Wide-spread teamwork seemed to be exercised only in extra-curricular activities, although, when the work was to be undertaken, roles and responsibilities could not be successfully defined and distributed. Any attempt at co-operation uncovered micro-politics and resulted in conflicts which destroyed teachers’ relationships and, at worst, reduced their respect in professional communication and collegiality. Thus, most of the teachers, as they confessed, see common planning and co-operation as an extra ‘burden’ with doubtful outcomes while the expected recognition and rewards were usually rare and sometimes absent. On the contrary, the individual teacher’s work was recognised, at least, by the parents.

The sense of community spirit which could help the teachers trust and respect one another and freely discuss professional matters in a collaborative culture with mutual influence was not strong (Fidler, et al, 1997, p. 41). The nature of learning was ‘still dominated by single subjects, individual, “desk learning” and individual teaching’

(Dalin, 1993, p. 97). It was based on teachers' independence and to norms of not sharing, observing or discussing one another's work that often leads to the isolation of teachers (ibid, p. 98).

I can summarise that the school did not stress co-operative work as part of its culture. Cultivating a rather competitive set of relationships, it contributed to the individualistic aspect of the culture. The school culture seemed to concentrate the features of what Elliott (1991) calls 'traditional craft culture' that has as a basic characteristic: 'What I do in my classroom is my business and what you do in yours is your business' (in Halsall, 1998, p. 84).

Although to put the school culture under a type is almost an impossible task, the prevailing culture was an individualistic rather than a 'collectivistic' culture (Hargreaves, 1980; Dalin, 1993). Despite individual teacher's attempts to achieve imposed aims and combine their pupils' needs to specific goals, the school seemed to have a closed rather than an open culture, directing its work to maintenance rather than to development (Hundy, cited in Fidler et al, 1997).

Assuming that the nature of leadership can influence the internal school context (see literature review) the next section examines the headteacher's role played within the school culture.

8. 3. 1. 2 The Headteachers

In my two years of research, I had the opportunity to study and compare the role of the two headteachers in the school. The first one placed emphasis on the improvement of the school environment and pupils' social skills. Although many of the teachers stressed that the headteacher simply attempted to satisfy personal ambitions and obtain personal benefits, nobody could deny that he was encouraging and supported teachers' initiatives.

He particularly sought to inspire teachers and the wider school community towards extra-curricular activities as the only available space for the school to develop a self-directing process. The headteacher was explicitly interested in improving the public

image of the school that could reflect his own one. It could be said that the headteacher's acceptance and support of the SSE made explicit his desire for improvement, despite the potential risk for the school and himself.

On the other hand, teachers experienced confusion and inconsistency over the headteacher's style not so much in communicating clear goals towards a vision but more in managing procedures and teachers towards its realisation. Although the headteacher, in his individual interview, stressed his belief in the principles of 'ownership' and 'shared decisions', and despite his attempts at encouraging all teachers to take an active part in making decisions, he could not keep the necessary balance in the dynamics and micro-politics among teachers and avoid conflicts. Thus, some of the teachers openly opposed the headteacher's management and control over decision making. The headteacher, unprepared, untrained, inexperienced and helpless in exerting his role, was further obstructed in his duties by a distant deputy headteacher.

During the second semester with his extra responsibilities and feeling also insecure in his post, the headteacher appeared to behave in a particularly impulsive way. His abandonment of the research merely highlights the problems. Daily observations as well as teachers' focus groups and comments made obvious that the headteacher's managerial style and his particular behaviour and mood had a serious impact on the level of trust and confidence among disappointed teachers. This seemed to cause teachers' resistance and conflicts within an uncomfortable working environment, which seemed to influence the school atmosphere and ethos since pupils and parents also expressed complaints.

The second headteacher, from the start, communicated and made explicit his interest in humanistic values, paying particular attention to relationships between teachers-pupils, parents-teachers and among pupils themselves. This headteacher's interest was particularly stressed in his individual interview. He revealed a distinct ability to utilise a diplomatic approach to problem solving. This became obvious throughout the first pedagogical school meeting in the second year of investigation (see Section 8.1). The teachers initially seemed to appreciate the headteacher's style. They felt more relaxed

and secure than previously since additional activities and hence conflicts had been minimised. They commented that the school climate had become more 'peaceful'.

As time passed it became obvious that the headteacher, despite his assurances, did not encourage teachers in undertaking additional responsibilities, apart from those that were necessary for the school operation. The headteacher neither inspired any change, nor supported any teachers' initiatives. Examples of this attitude included the further school participation in environmental education, school's support of pupils with learning difficulties, or teachers' proposals for curriculum development.

Furthermore, the headteacher did not seem as open-minded and democratic as initially I had thought. For example, he made decisions before meetings or tried to influence the circumstances towards his own choice. Teachers privately accepted that they experienced the headteacher's attitude as directing their work and more importantly their ideas and beliefs. Thus, some teachers' complaints were heard. Some existent 'cliques' among teachers that had been shaped according to their common ideology (more and less religious, progressive and conservative) were maintained in an even more distinct manner. Teachers, however, seemed to avoid 'open' conflicts since they were interested rather in the maintenance of good social relationships. Thus, it is doubted if the apparent relaxed and peaceful climate reflected the reality.

Focus groups revealed that for teachers the concept of headship is illustrated by the headteacher's behaviour, their role in inspiring, encouraging, consulting, supporting and protecting the staff, acting as a 'buffer', structuring the school, establishing targets and priorities and making decisions along with teachers and according to their own abilities and inclinations.

Despite their complex role in the school, headteachers were based almost exclusively upon their work-experience and their personality. This seemed to have been a headteacher's belief. In a discussion, the second headteacher said: 'A charismatic head is adequate for a school; there is not a need for an educated one'. At the same time, as the first headteacher complained, the school did not attribute enough power to them. Headteachers did not have the authority to observe teachers' classes, to evaluate their work or intervene in other pedagogical work (Kavouri, 1998, p. 198). Could it be

argued, however, that this lack of authority further restricted the headteacher's leadership role?

In some instances, however, headteachers and teachers acknowledged that despite the centralised system, heads can find ways to exert their personal authority, as for instance, in teachers' recognition. Headteachers can recognise and praise the work of an individual teacher and satisfy her/him according to her/his contribution. In any educational system, as Frost (2003) believes, 'heads have a deal of power and the building of educational capacity rests on their ability and willingness to use their power to create the conditions that foster teachers' leadership' (p. 8). The question that then arises is: Do the headteachers have the willingness or ability to use their power in exerting their leadership or management roles?

Both the headteachers seemed to attempt to respond rather to their administrative role. They seemed to maintain a style of intervention between the central authority and the school. They seemed to lack combined effective leadership abilities and management competence which could reinforce each other, so that the process of building and maintaining a sense of vision' for the school organisation is coming along 'with co-ordination, support and monitoring of organisational activities' (Day et, al, 2000, p. 135).

Headteachers tended rather to transactional leadership (Day et, al, 2000, p. 135). They had not developed a capacity of building the so-called model of 'transformational leadership' (Leithwood and Jantzi 1990 cited in Frost, 2003, p. 8). This attribute in headship seemed to affect the school climate and reflect on the school culture, which was characterised by 'stability, predictability and a hierarchy on decision-making' (Dalin, 1993, p. 98).

Within this context the role of deputy headteacher seemed to be limited not only to the first year of the research, when the deputy's career was found in a particular phase but also in the second year, when a teacher with experience, qualifications and willingness to work undertook the post. The school did not seem to benefit from this advantage. School structure seemed to affect also its culture as 'culture is often revealed through an organisational structure, especially on how teachers work

together and define their professional relationships' (Hopkins, 1996, p. 37). Despite the acceptance of the SSE programme, within such a culture it would be a difficult task for an initiator to inspire and implement innovation. It would also be hard for the school to undertake change, integrating the findings of any evaluation.

Although the study intended to explore SSE as a whole-school attempt, I considered that an understanding of teachers' attitudes towards 'change' and 'evaluation' could contribute to responding to the research questions. Acknowledging that this was an issue for further research, the next section attempts to answer the following questions: How do teachers and headteachers perceive 'change' and 'evaluation' in their work? What are headteachers' and teachers' attitudes towards 'change' and 'evaluation'?

8. 3. 2 Headteachers' and teachers' attitudes towards evaluation

Individual interviews revealed that teachers consider evaluation as something inextricably connected to their life and their professional life: 'Evaluation is connected to our daily life. I evaluate and I am evaluated' said a teacher. Most of them connect the evaluation of school work to their own 'self'. A teacher said: 'For me evaluation means I detect myself, I diagnose particular weaknesses or highest strengths' and another one: 'I always evaluate myself...my work, my teaching'. They seemed to perceive evaluation 'as reflection on success and failures, strengths and weaknesses (Emerson and Goddard, 1993, p. 195).

Teachers also connect evaluation to their own self-improvement and believe that it can become a means of improving the quality of their teaching and their pedagogical decision. Teachers seemed to consider evaluation 'as an integral part of their professional role recognising their own responsibility for monitoring their own performance' (Scottish Council, 1988, p.1). In general, teachers did not refuse the value of evaluation in school and sometimes they seemed to wish for evaluation after a long absence. In this sense, it could be said that teachers have positive attitudes towards evaluation.

It became explicit that all of the teachers, speaking about evaluation, could not distinguish it from appraisal which they expect as a one-way consultative rather than

judgmental discussion about their teaching that usually comes from an 'outsider' competent inspector. A new teacher said: 'evaluation means for me, somebody to judge school work and its effectiveness'. Another teacher said: 'Evaluation means for me, the counsellor to come into the classroom, observe my work and consult me; a prerequisite should be the counsellor to have the appropriate knowledge and competence for such a role' (see Appendix 8). Another one, initially, could not give a constructed answer to the above question. As the discussion was unfolding, however, it seemed that she was connecting evaluation to appraisal which had been experienced in the past, leaving a 'bitter taste'.

It also became apparent that teachers perceived school evaluation as a two-way critical discussion. A teacher, almost intuitively, described evaluation as follows: 'I would like to attend a lot of seminars aiming at dissemination of new knowledge with a lot of discussions related to our work. Then, I would like to call the evaluator to observe the educational process and help, direct and support me on the new roads'. It could be said that the teacher precedes a step further and associates evaluation with innovation as a process which attempts at teachers' work improvement through their consultation by an 'outsider' consultant during the innovative process of SSE.

Teachers could not grasp evaluation as an internal systematic process of collecting information and providing information for school improvement, applying methods and instruments. Such an evaluation seemed to be something quite new for the teachers who often, throughout the process, were asking: 'Are we going to continue?' 'Are you going to observe me in the classroom?'

At the same time, teachers who perceived evaluation as appraisal seemed to doubt the potential of an objective evaluation for school but also for other sectors of society in Greece. They considered it as a clearly judgmental activity that attributes to them the exclusive responsibility for children's learning. A teacher said relatively: 'The value of evaluation cannot be acknowledged. I believe that evaluation does not promote the competent but those who easily 'sell'', stressing, thus, the political dimension of evaluation in the Greek context.

Teachers, therefore, seemed also to have negative attitudes towards evaluation as they perceived it as a one-way appraisal, coming as a monologue from a hierarchical upper towards a hierarchical inferior. Such an evaluation aims exclusively to exert control and legitimate political decisions 'as a way of reproducing existing social relations and cultural capital' (Gitlin and Smith, 1988, preface, Broadfoot, 1996) (see Section 3.1, 3.2). These realistic but negative attitudes, however, could be alleviated by the positive one. Thus, although resistance to it remained, the school could accept SSE implementation.

Both the headteachers had similar views. The first headteacher acknowledged the power of informal evaluation in everyday school life. He seemed to perceive school evaluation as teachers' evaluation in which he could play an important role. He illustrated this by saying: 'It is time teachers were evaluated so that those who are better than others can proceed. Isn't that right?' and later he commented: 'Where is the headteacher's role in the SSE programme?' (see Chapter 8). He seemed clearly to perceive SSE as a hierarchical internal teachers' evaluation which the headteacher can implement as a means of internal control. The second headteacher considered SSE as a source of information about the needs and weaknesses of the school without connecting it to accountability or school improvement.

From the beginning of the research it became apparent that teachers and headteachers had various misconceptions about the meaning of evaluation. They seemed to be confused since they had not clarified issues concerning purposes of evaluation, such as improvement and accountability. Teachers apparently, in their perceptions about evaluation, carry the notion of accountability.

Connecting evaluation to their own 'self-competence' in the classroom, teachers admit accountability to their own 'self' and their pupils (moral accountability). They also seem to acknowledge the obligation of employees to the government-employer. A teacher said: 'evaluation is a critical discussion between the headteacher or the Counsellor and the teachers as a whole about their work'. In any case, however, teachers rejected contractual accountability which has promotion implications and can act, therefore, as an instrument of control. Teachers' perception of accountability is

restricted in a hierarchical consultation without any other implications. It rejects the notion of control.

This was also true for any notion of answerability to parents, despite the fact that teachers work informally towards employers' and parents' satisfaction (see attitudes towards change). Teachers seemed to have difficulties in accepting the participation of school society in a SSE process although it could protect the evaluation from 'arbitrary judgments, by providing descriptions which are as objective as possible and making judgment procedures explicit and open to discussion' (Nevo, 1995, p. 53). Initially, the participation of pupils seemed to have surprised them: 'Pupils?' Later they added: 'Pupils? Why not?' Finally they seemed to agree. Teachers, however, seemed to be constantly hesitant with parents' participation because they considered them as inadequate for such a role.

These teachers' perceptions seemed to have been constructed by their past experiences and their expectations. Although in effect evaluation was exerted informally by teachers, pupils and parents, the absence of any formal evaluation system for more than 20 years seemed to reserve old perceptions and create prejudices. School evaluation has been restricted to the private, unrecorded and un-oriented, reflecting the assumption that it is up to the individual teacher as a professional to evaluate some aspects of his/her own work. It seems that 'it is always the case that the national context affects what is done at a local level' (Alvick, 1996, p.1).

8. 3. 3 Headteachers' and teachers' attitudes towards change

Answering the question concerning teachers' attempts for change in their work, teachers admitted that they promoted the initiatives that the system imposes. They anticipated getting involved in projects organised by the central system, while two of them had already been involved voluntarily in an environmental programme. This tendency expressed a teacher's view, who said: 'I would like the Ministry to produce programmes for schools and teachers, because it knows better than teachers'.

Many of them referred to some minimal changes, such as changes in pupils' assessment or arrangements of desks. As teachers themselves explained, they usually undertake voluntarily them through their collected experience. All of the teachers explained that the demanding N.C. and the fear of parents' reaction constrain them from undertaking substantial initiatives. A teacher stated: 'I would not like parents to doubt my work after so much effort'.

A more open-minded teacher mentioned: 'I attempt to develop the content of the curriculum in the social subjects. To protect myself and the risky attempt I inform parents about the change and its purposes, securing, thus their support. Since the system does not support us, I have to undertake the risk of being "uncovered" by the system. The only driving motivation is my belief that the endeavour is for the pupils' benefits'. She also added that her experience in an 'innovative' school had helped her in that and similar attempts.

Teachers seemed to be anxious in following the educational but also the governmental guidelines. They did not feel autonomous. Teachers' technical control seemed to overturn every aspect of pedagogical and professional autonomy. The current educational system restricts the role of teachers, who are used to work within the boundaries that a confined and detailed curriculum poses without real freedom to initiate change. Fragudaki and Dragona's research (2000) describes it by saying that the centralised educational system leaves little space to teachers for initiating in relation to teaching methods and evaluation, because of the strict prediction of the content of teaching through the N.C. and to the almost mandatory stipulations of the auxiliary books (pp 43-44).

Teachers, particularly the older ones, seemed to have come to terms with a restricted role. They seemed to prefer working in well-established routines. As Rudduck (1996) states, 'the limits of possibility may be determined by expectations rooted in the familiar past' (p. 30) and change, therefore, seemed to be connected very closely with teachers' emotions. Teachers rather appeared as 'programmed devices', who execute their duty faithfully and strictly according to the given guidance.

On the other hand, teachers seemed to lack the necessary support to overcome their doubts about the expected outcomes of a change given that teachers can never be certain that a proposed educational change will work and benefit the pupils (James and Connolly 2000). Thus, teachers in the 'Platon' school did not express Stenhouse's vision according to which a 'teacher becomes the inquirer and the classroom a laboratory in which techniques and new ideas are constantly being tested and practices continually being examined to discover the hidden assumptions and motives underlying them' (Wideen and Andrews, 1987, p. 196). Could this be interpreted, however, as negative teachers' attitudes towards change?

Negative attitudes could mean a proactive rejection of everything novel. However, the voluntary participation of teachers in the environmental programme, their decision to get involved in the proposed programme by the Counsellor as well as their active participation in the SSE programme and the many isolated attempts for change that observation and discussions revealed showed teachers' desire in improvement. The anticipated benefits for them and their pupils seemed to overcome the fear of the risk of change. Although the school culture cannot be characterised as 'transformative', teachers' desire for improvement of their work and their positive attitudes towards change became apparent. These attitudes could mean that there was a positive background for undertaking change in teachers and in schools.

Conclusion

This chapter, using a thick description model, analysed procedures and data of investigation and attempted to reveal the pertinent issues in answering the research questions.

The school context with the individualistic, non-innovative and non co-operative culture and the ambivalent relationships with parents seemed to be a controversial issue for the programme implementation. While such a school culture does not appear positive for a SSE implementation, the school could complete the cycle of this process and accommodate it up to the institutionalisation phase, although value judgments, ethical and political implications were to prove unavoidable.

The analysis of the process and the data revealed some outcomes derived from this SSE implementation. The next chapter discusses these outcomes at length, differentiating between teacher and school level. It relates them to the school internal context and participants' role but also to external school context in order to reach general conclusions.

CHAPTER NINE: THE RESEARCH OUTCOMES

Introduction

The discussion has been organised in two chapters according to the research questions, the first of which, Chapter nine, discusses the outcomes of the programme implementation for the school. It attempts to provide answers to the double research question, that is: to what extent school self-evaluation can respond to school accountability and school improvement purposes? Then, Chapter ten discusses the possible factors that affected these research outcomes as well as the process of implementation itself.

The present chapter is organised in two sections. The first one differentiates between the direct outcomes, the tangible or otherwise ‘visible’, in Cousins’ and Earl’s (1995) terms, on school policy and formal decision making. This is valid since the school was expected to integrate evaluation findings into school policy and undertake action in realising both school accountability and school improvement purposes. Under this consideration, evaluation is assumed to be a form of formal and summative evaluation towards ‘proving’ and ‘improving’ according to its basic purposes (O’Hanlon, 1996, p. 74).

The second section of the chapter discusses the research findings that attempt to answer another research question: ‘what is the impact of the process itself upon the teachers and, therefore, upon the school?’ It examines the indirect; the intangible or ‘invisible’ outcomes (Cousins and Earl, 1995) that concern school improvement and accountability purposes as the process implementation revealed.

This chapter discusses the direct and indirect outcomes of the research as emerging through evaluation, which is perceived as a form of formal and informal process, ‘able’ to make the ‘service better’. Such outcomes, however, can also be revealed through the action research which can be considered as a ‘learning’ process’ (O’Hanlon, 1996, p. 87), although they cannot be easily distinguished as intrinsically connected. Finally, another central element is what Halsall (1998) stresses as the

fundamental dilemma of not being sure whether these outcomes ‘were not produced by some other factors’ (p. 192). I cannot be sure about the possible impact on students and parents.

The direct outcomes are discussed according to the evaluation purposes, those of school accountability and school improvement, while the indirect outcomes have been organised in three parts as follows:

1. Changes at teacher level that includes changes at teachers’ personal and professional level as well as their answerability and professional responsibility.
2. Changes at classroom level
3. Changes at school level encompassing also changes at school as organisation and as culture.

9. 1 The direct outcomes of the SSE implementation on the school

9. 1. 1 School self-evaluation and school accountability

Participant observation supported my initial assumption that the school does not work towards any formal accountability demands. While the teachers, in their individual interviews, seemed to admit the fairness of discussing and disseminating the evaluation findings as a logical and democratic procedure, during the process, they did not seem to be ready to proceed.

The idea of pupils’ participation in the process surprised the teachers while that of parents created a degree of doubtfulness (see Chapter 6). However, the teachers, increasingly convinced about pupils’ participation, discussed logical arguments with me but were mainly driven by their own democratic and moral criteria. Teachers admitted that pupils have an immediate experience of their own schooling, and they can, therefore, give valid information. Nevertheless, they seemed to maintain an attitude of ‘we will wait and see’ about parents’ participation. Teachers, however, viewed skeptically the extent to which both pupils and parents could get involved in making schooling better under the particular circumstances of the project implementation.

Later, the evaluative questionnaires and focus groups about school culture and school-home links revealed the contradictory attitudes of teachers and parents towards each other. For example, I could understand the teachers' attitudes towards parents when teachers pointed out that parents should merely support their children in their homework whilst the role of the Parents' Association should be restricted to helping only financially the school in its operation. It seems that the case has accepted the third distinct parents' role of Newsam (1994) according to which 'teachers see parents as a body essentially separate from the work of the school but it provides support to the school when it is needed' having also combined another role, according to which the school is clearly responsible to them through teachers and headteachers (in Fidler et al, 1997, p. 249). Similarly, parents complained about their communication with the teachers and school.

The whole-school context did not seem to support the school answerability purpose of evaluation. It seemed rather to oppose the issue. Within an atmosphere that lacked co-operation and trust, the school seemed to lack any specific answerability culture (see Chapters 6, 8). It appeared to be particularly difficult for the school to respond formally to its community through a process which demands transparency of its work and teachers' practice.

School responsiveness in SSE implementation seemed to require an improvement in teachers' and parents' attitudes towards each other or a change in the school culture. Such a change, however, needs a long-term and systematic attempt. This may also mean a change in teachers' and parents' role that poses the issue of change in power relationships with consequent political implications.

Teachers seemed to accept as logical the 'flow' of evaluation conclusions towards educational authorities. They acknowledged that an educational authority and the higher levels of the educational hierarchy should be informed of the evaluation findings of a school for decision making (see Section 8.3). Within the hierarchical structure of the educational system, teachers seemed to feel accountable only upwards. Despite the absence of any formal evaluation, aimed at external accountability, the old model of their inspection as well as the imposed N.C. seemed to maintain the power relationships between teachers and government. The N.C. is

still, as Davies and Ellison (1997) claim ‘essentially reactive, tying teachers into a framework of public accountability which some would see as controlling and punitive in its original intent’ (p. 180).

Simultaneously, teachers in their individual interviews complained because neither the local educational authorities nor the ministry took into account their own opinions in decision making. The channels among schools, authorities and the central system were blocked. The system did not uphold democratic procedures and a two-way flow of information. Although the issue needs further investigation, the study revealed what Elliott et al (1981) indicates: ‘the relationship between school accountability and democracy is both uneasy and complex’ (p. 207). This is a complex issue which raises serious political considerations, not least about hegemonic structure of power within the delivery of education.

Finally, I took into account that, in the phase of institutionalisation, the school could not proceed with any improvement (see Section 8.1). When the purpose of school improvement is abandoned, how could a school attempt at achieving the school accountability purpose in a SSE programme? School accountability is intrinsically connected to school improvement. School accountability assumes school improvement as an ongoing process where the basic purposes of SSE can be interchanged (see Sections 3.1.3, 3.2.4). The simple exposure of a non-innovative school could not be a research intention.

Within this context, as the research was proceeding, I decided to undertake the responsibility for the report to remain only for school use. In this decision I took into account that ‘managers are more likely to be driven by the culture’ (Harris and Binnett, 2001, p, 127). Also, I was seriously influenced by Russell’s (1996) suggestion: ‘Aims for first attempt at school self-evaluation should include developing understanding of evaluation and strengthening of teamwork as well as improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school. In the second and subsequent phases the school can expect to achieve greater rigor in its evaluation methods and a greater capability to cope with external pressure and accountability’ (p.100).

Teachers' answers in their final evaluative questionnaires also justified this decision. A typically representative comment was: 'It would be logical for parents and pupils to be informed about the findings of the evaluation but I am satisfied with their participation up to that point of the process. I think that it was enough for the moment'. Another teacher stated: 'At this time, the dissemination of the report has no meaning since no decision can be made upon it' while another one said: 'I could not think of anybody with whom I could share the evaluation findings'.

At this first attempt the school tried to internalise the evaluation findings and understand the process. Fullan (1991) suggests that a change needs small and careful steps. It should not be revolutionary. Then, could it be said that the programme implementation failed in reference to the purpose of school accountability? I tried to identify among others what changes teachers presented in reference to the accountability purpose of evaluation throughout and after the process implementation. Section 9.2 discusses them.

I also considered SSE outcomes in terms of school improvement since it was expected that the school would make 'effective use of evaluative information to modify and improve institutional practices' (Adelman and Alexander, 1982). Thus, I had to answer questions such as: 'What were the outcomes in school policy for improvement?' or 'To what extent could the school establish its own agenda for improvement activities according to evaluation findings?' The next section attempts to give some answers to these questions.

9. 1. 2. School Self-evaluation and School Improvement

SSE 'as school improvement' in Hopkin's term (see Chapter 4), was expected to become a phase in the school improvement process integrating the summative findings into its policy. It seemed that the headteacher's and deputy's replacements could influence this process rather positively. The new headteacher, distant from the evaluation findings, seemed to offer an effective vehicle for introducing a change in the school. The headteacher's personality also seemed to contribute to it while his deputy seemed to have qualifications and experience for undertaking the role.

Indeed, the new headteacher supported the programme implementation and got involved in it. This engagement contributed in preparing the climate so that the school could introduce into its policy a change: the organisation of an open parents' evening (see Section 8.1). This simple change, which was of particular interest to the new headteacher, was a successful one despite the educational regulations as well as the disagreements and conflicts among the headteacher and teachers that his management had caused. The importance of 'management' of change even if it is simple, became obvious. It also became explicit that within the centralised system, the school could find room for change. The role of the headteacher in a school-based change seemed to be decisive.

Later on, the teachers enthusiastically negotiated various priorities and under the headteacher's leadership, they agreed with an ambitious proposal for curriculum improvement (see Section 8.1). The headteacher promised his support in the change implementation, even in the publication of this school's undertaking. In this way the headteacher and teachers seemed to create and communicate a vision. Beyond the usual 'professional practices' in the school, democratic procedures and a kind of sharing leadership emphasising support rather than control seemed to play an important role in creating and communicating a vision, decision making and cultivating an atmosphere of change. The headteacher was to play an important role.

With the headteacher's support the teachers seemed to reflect upon the evaluation findings and connect them to their own interest in teaching and learning. However, teachers seemed to modify their initial focus for school policy improvement in regard to pupils with learning difficulties (see Chapter 7). The headteacher and teachers even avoided the discussion of a proposal that could affect well established situations. They seemed to prefer to follow old certainties and protect the school and themselves from possible resistance and reaction of certain colleagues. They actively defended a position that would insulate them from conflicts and contradictions.

The suspicion of teachers' resistance to the change as well as the role of micro-politics in decision making became evident later, in the next pedagogical meeting, when a teacher asked to clarify her work conditions. This along with several teachers' comments seemed to support my previous assertion that the school is primarily geared

to its own hierarchies. The headteacher and teachers seemed to prefer to calibrate their interests to the existing school climate rather than disturb it.

The idea for curriculum improvement was again discussed. Everyone tried to re-define its aims and the manner in which it would be implemented. The proposal seemed to be not only ambitious but also precarious in terms of ambivalent and uncertain outcomes. Despite the teachers' efforts, it could neither be defined nor formulated into a strategy for action with incremental steps and a clear networking system for teachers' co-operation. On the contrary, each teacher seemed rather to interpret intuitively tacit targets and models for the change implementation that was never realised.

Once more, the role of the headteacher in leading teachers towards a change with attainable targets was decisive. Similarly the role of headteacher or deputy headteacher in managing the change process was crucial. Failure to do so firstly indicated their lack of conceptual knowledge on curriculum change. Teachers also defined the ability to effect change as being at the edge of their responsibilities. There were, then, many temptations for teachers to articulate themselves as restricted within a centralised system.

From their narrow position, teachers were able to actively defend the legitimacy of such an intervention. Teachers, whom I have termed the 'progressive clique', sought a road to change. They developed modes of activity, schemes with external collaborators and validation from their peers. However, this group, which shared values at variance with the legitimacy of the dominant school culture, was not strong enough to overcome the official expectations of the school.

Within the school culture, the headteacher's expectations and his continual exhortations to postpone discussion to 'let's think about it later' were prevalent. Any attempt for managing change as well as any formal proposal for collaboration was, therefore, limited. There was neither time for the researcher to undertake such a responsibility nor was it appropriate to do so (see Section 8.2). Therefore, the school's efforts for change remained unsuccessful at the planning level and after repetitive postponements they were abandoned.

The school, however, decided to get engaged voluntarily in a programme entitled 'flexible zone' that was officially initiated by the Greek Ministry of Education for the next year. The programme seemed to be one of particular concern for the headteacher, who played an important role in encouraging enthusiastic teachers to accept it. The headteacher used them to convince other more hesitant colleagues. This reinforces my assertion about the importance of a headteacher's role in facilitating school change. The role of sub-cultures in a school and the way in which a headteacher can employ them was also revealed as important.

In conclusion, it could be argued that it is doubtful if the SSE had achieved the purpose of school improvement. It failed to integrate formally the evaluative findings into school policy. Some minimal and rather superficial changes at school policy cannot be considered as the 'visible outcomes' for school improvement. This conclusion correlates with Fullan's (1982) findings that summarised that 'planned change attempts rarely succeed as intended' (p. 6) and with Nixon's (1992) assertion that 'it is rare...for evaluation in schools to have the kind of direct and visible impact that it is too often expected to have; educational evaluations may on occasions provide definite answers; but usually in response to questions which...appear fairly simplistic' (pp. 24-25 cited in Bush and West-Burnham, 1994, p. 166).

The direct and obvious outcomes, however, cannot just be considered in isolation. Participant observation and conversations with teachers as well as the final teachers' questionnaires revealed many outcomes that the process of evaluation had upon the teachers and, therefore, upon the school. These can be considered as the indirect, intangible or 'invisible' outcomes, (see Chapter 9 Introduction) since changes were particularly intrinsic, and only partly reflected upon individual practices and behaviours. The next section examines these changes and attempts to identify the extent to which they took place.

9. 2 The indirect outcomes of the process implementation

9. 2. 1 Change at teacher level

9. 2. 1. 1 Change at teachers' personal level

It can be argued that the process provided most teachers with the opportunity to scrutinise their own 'self' as persons and professionals. Teachers reflected in a number of group discussions where they could realise their weaknesses or strengths. These critically reflected discussions seemed to create a contemporary system within which teachers had the opportunity to think more synthetically and systematically about themselves. Such discussions seemed to contribute to teachers' self-evaluation and self-critique (Oja and Smulyan, 1996).

In turn, this critical reflection seemed to increase teachers' self-understanding and self-awareness. For example, the headteacher honestly admitted that his pupils helped him analyse his own behaviour. As a result of this intervention, he attempted to be more calm and tolerant (see Section 8.3.1.2). Many teachers also stated that the procedures helped them increase and monitor their self-control. Deeper self-awareness and improved behaviour of teachers seemed to increase their self-confidence and self-esteem. This was indicated either in the classroom (see Section 9.2.2) or in individual teachers' answerability and professional responsibility (see Section 9.2.1).

Although in general the teachers accepted the impact of the process upon their self-perception, they found it difficult to specify what that impact was. Changes at teachers' personal level seem to need more investigation. These changes, however, seemed to be intrinsically connected to the changes that occurred to teachers as professionals. Although it is difficult to separate the two, the next section attempts to distinguish the teachers' changes at professional level.

9. 2. 1. 2 Change at teachers' professional level

Two of the teachers admitted that they participated in research for the first time. All of them also acknowledged that this was their first engagement in such a project. All the

teachers, however, stated that their involvement in the research raised their awareness and understanding in research and evaluation issues.

It could be argued that in the collaborative action research, 'learning by doing' (Nevo, 1995) within the framework of discussing and critically reflecting, helped teachers to increase their awareness, skills and understanding on research and evaluation issues both at a theoretical and practical level. Thus this engagement seemed to help teachers in the task of questioning and searching as well as in developing their evaluative thinking and improving, therefore, their positive attitudes towards research, evaluation and change (see Section 9.2.3).

Teachers also reported awareness on many pedagogical issues, such as discipline and classroom management issues, teaching and learning methods, pupils' assessment, parental involvement in class work or even their communication with parents. Teachers particularly stressed their deeper understanding of pupils' needs. Additionally, the process gave teachers the opportunity to rethink the school role within the wider sociopolitical and economic context but also re-examine their own role within school and education.

In some cases the reconsideration of the wide 'gap' that teachers felt between their professional understanding and the new educational challenges seemed to increase the already existing disillusionment. In most cases, however, the enhanced awareness, skills and understanding seemed to strengthen teachers' self-confidence. This can be detected from their follow-up interest in the process and their attempts for change at classroom and school level (see Sections 9.2.2, 9.2.3). Teachers' involvement in the evaluation process seemed to spur their interest and create a positive background for further knowledge and inquiry, with possible change in their attitudes towards evaluation, research and change (see Section 9.3.2.2).

Collaborative action research seemed to create a contemporary system within the permanent school system where the teachers had the opportunity to co-operate, share experiences critically reflecting, make decisions and establish expectations (Oja and Smulyan 1989). In this system, 'discussions frequently draw on teachers' deeply held values about students, teaching and curriculum and have a moral-ethical dimension

which encourages teachers to think in more encompassing ways' (ibid, p.141). Within this context, teachers are likely to confirm their prior awareness, understanding and skills or gain new insights and 're-weave' them, in Elliott (2004) terms into the existing frameworks. Then, they can improve them.

This implies 'teachers' learning', which comes either as 'learning by doing' (Nevo, 1995), or as learning through critical reflection which 'is sited in the methods of action research and is concerned with highlighting the needs of staff, curriculum and institutional development' (O'Hanlon, 1996, p. 74). Collaborative action research creates, therefore, a context for teachers' learning. It is this learning which, sustained by increased self-confidence, reflects somewhat on teachers' accountability. The next section discusses the changes at this level.

9. 2. 1. 3 Change in teachers' accountability

The process of evaluation with critical reflection seemed to raise teachers' self-critique and self-perception, their awareness and understanding on pedagogical and organisational issues and their own role in school and education. Teachers negotiated proposals about them and decisions for their improvement which, in many cases were applied (see Section 8.1). SSE seemed, therefore, to enhance individual teachers' professional responsibility. This manifested itself as school professional responsibility which produced expectations of a wider professional responsibility. For example, whilst discussing the final questionnaire, a teacher proposed: 'evaluation findings and the whole experience can be shared with other colleagues and schools in the area'.

Simultaneously, SSE seemed to enhance the individual teachers' and, informally, school answerability. Though the school did not disseminate the findings to pupils or parents, individually the headteacher and teachers tried to respond to them (see Section 8.1). Parents' and pupils' participation in the process seemed to affect this particularly. Further investigation, however, might examine the manner in which the process has an ability to cultivate, perhaps unconsciously, teachers' answerability. These teachers' 'natural' responses to pupils and parents that can prepare the school for its answerability are examined in the next sections as teachers' attempts for change at classroom and school level.

9. 2. 2 Change at classroom level

Although a teacher admitted: 'I could not detect any changes in my classroom work due to my involvement in the programme', teachers, in general, admitted that this engagement contributed them rethinking, taking decisions and experiencing alterations in their classroom practices. As teachers stated, they tried to improve the methods of their pupils' assessment, the methods of teaching and learning, the classroom management or the discipline system. Changes in classroom routine may also signify a shift in teachers' attitudes towards change.

In their final questionnaire teachers also stressed that they improved their relationships with their pupils. 'The input of pupils concerns into the SSE process increased my understanding of pupils needs' said a teacher. This resulted in changes in their skills, practices and behaviour toward pupils. A better understanding of pupils' needs may also imply changes in the teachers' attitudes towards them (see Section 9.2.1).

Finally, according to my participant observation, reflective discussions, teachers' responses and their involvement in the process seemed to affect their relationships with their pupils' parents positively. Some teachers seemed to make concessions to parents in terms of getting them more involved in classroom work. Parents' participation in the process with feedback and critical reflection seemed to play an important role in such changes. This also seemed to reflect on the modification of the school policy concerning the organisation of parents' open evenings (see Section 9.2.3). Do these changes also mean changes in teachers' attitudes towards parents? It is clearly beyond the scope of this study to give answers to these questions. This issue needs further investigation.

I can conclude by stating that these changes seemed to be intrinsically connected to the teachers' learning process, although such influences cannot be precisely differentiated. It could also be argued that the above sporadic changes are accidental. Finally, it seemed that, as old familiar attitudes and behaviour are challenged (Oja and Smulyan 1989), such changes cannot occur in the same manner and at the same level

amongst teachers (see Section 9.2.1). Thus, ‘collaborative action research may challenge some teachers to new learning; it can overwhelm others’ (ibid, p. 136). Similarly Larson (1992) states that, “‘micro” personal variables such as values, abilities, motivation and relations with peers and supervisors play a major role in one’s reactions to change’ (p. 25).

Resistance by some teachers, however, cannot be negatively interpreted. It is not realistic to expect everyone to adopt changes since change is closely connected to emotions (Fullan 1991; 2001). As Stoll and Fink (1996) believe ‘change is a highly personal experience and for adults as well as for children, learning is as much an emotional activity as it is a cognitive one’ (cited in Southworth and Conner, 1999, p. 9). The issue also needs further investigation.

These changes, which can be considered as the ‘formative’ aspect of school evaluation, indicate an informal ‘institutionalization’ of findings by individual teachers which can contribute to pupils’ development. Barth (1990) argues that ‘probably nothing in a school has more impact on students in terms of skills development, self-confidence or classroom behaviour than the personal and professional growth of their teachers’ (p. 49). In this sense it could be said that the process positively affected school improvement. Could such changes at teacher level affect the school as well?

9. 2. 3 Change at school level

9. 2. 3. 1 Change at school as organisation

It might be argued that nothing constructive happened at school level due to its engagement in the SSE process because no tangible and formal decision for change was undertaken. Although such changes are difficult to specify, participant observation and teachers’ responses to that, revealed that the process enhanced the school’s awareness of its own internal processes since strengths and weaknesses were identified by the alternating views of teachers, pupils and parents.

Crucially, the reflective process promoted open communication between and among teachers and headteachers. Teachers’ discussions in staff meetings and groups created

conditions within which they could critically reflect upon and openly communicate many experiences and views on pedagogical and educational issues, even if some of them were particularly sensitive and difficult for the school, as for instance the issue of pupils with learning difficulties.

On some occasions, the deep and frank exchange of ideas seemed to uncover hidden agendas, values and attitudes that challenged, disturbed and shocked some of the teachers. They felt disappointed and closed channels for co-operation with certain colleagues. 'Some colleagues went away because of the fear of being exposed', a teacher confessed. The existing 'gap' between teachers seemed to become enlarged. This poses serious questions about the role of individualistic school culture in the process implementation as well as the role of critical reflection and management of the process within such a culture.

The few cases of this kind, however, cannot affect the general picture: most of the teachers seemed to appreciate the open communication of needs, practices, views, ideas and beliefs. Furthermore, this communication in meetings and group discussions seemed to offer opportunities for teachers' co-operation in pairs within various networks (see Chapters 6, 7, 8). The process seemed to improve the co-operation between teachers at classroom level as well as at school level that can be considered as a difficult step, taking into account the individualistic school culture with the competitive dimension.

The school also experienced the external collaboration, the support of a critical friend and an alternative democratic approach to decision making. Within this collaboration, the school could go through a sensitive programme of evaluation. Finally, the school experienced new channels of pupil and parent involvement in school matters. Although the task needs further investigation, it can be said that the school developed innovative structures of thinking and working and, therefore, a new perspective of the school as an organisation. Could it be said that these changes affected the school culture as well?

9. 2. 3. 2 Change at school culture level

Changes in school culture are difficult to be identified. This is because they have more to do 'with values, norms and personal issues' (Dalin, 1993, p. 113, see Section 4.1.2). Taking into account that in terms of change, values that underlay norms and actions are much more difficult to reach than surface behaviours' (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 100), I attempt to discuss indications of such changes in teachers' words, practices or behaviour to sketch out a broader picture.

During the two years of the research, the school experienced the first cycle of the process 'evaluation-action-evaluation'. Throughout this cycle the school gave indications that, despite the influences of the headteachers' distinct personality and vision that they conveyed, it might be able to develop co-operative work towards evaluation in a parallel way to its own priorities. The school, however, found it difficult to co-operatively undertake by itself a change and 'break out of the survival cycle' (Webb, 1990, p. 256) (see Chapters 6, 7, 8).

A reason for this could be that the programme seemed to run counter to the prevailing individualistic school culture. Apart from some minimal changes visible in school policy, it could not change any basic school norms. It seemed to continue to work within a culture where the main characteristics were privacy, professional isolation, and norms of no sharing, avoiding open discussions. The existing school culture was powerful. In this sense the impact of SSE was not strong enough to reach the school culture level. The road for such a shift seemed to be very long. Hargreaves (1995) states: 'changing a school's core culture is likely to be a complex and a long-term business' (cited in Gray et al. 1999 p. 145).

Teachers, however, learnt from their engagement in the process and this was reflected at classroom and school level. I have already illustrated how teachers individually modified practices, behaviour and perhaps attitudes towards evaluation, innovation, research, pupils and parents (see Section 9.2.1). At the same time, changes such as open communication, co-operation, more constructive and democratic procedures in decision making, helped the school to develop a fresh perspective of the school as an organisation. The process, developing a sense of change ownership, seemed to foster

‘a keener sense of shared purpose and commitment’ (Halsall, 1998, p. 197) (see Section 7.1).

Additionally, the experience of collaboration in the SSE process under the constant support of the critical friend as well as the new democratic channels of parent and pupil intervention in school matters seemed to have an impact on school work and thinking (see Section 9.2.3.1). It seemed to create a climate of curiosity under which the school could find time to reflect on success and failures and to make decisions for a change. SSE seemed to develop a ‘learning’ environment within which teachers could define themselves as learners with a right to learning opportunities as individuals and professionals.

Finally, reflecting a new perception about evaluation, teachers also seemed able to develop a sense of personal and common professional responsibility and answerability (see Section 9.2.1). SSE could increase school self-awareness and, opening channels of communication with the external collaborator and the school community, it seemed can prepare the school for a more formal and systematic response. SSE can work as a primary component for establishing a culture of professional responsibility and answerability that, in the future, can work towards external accountability. SSE can ‘promote the ultimate demonstration of self-accountability, translatable into wider accountability’ (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 168).

Such influences cannot be argued to constitute changes of school culture. However, they can be considered as creating a positive background for a cultural shift in the school. Dalin (1993) has stated that: ‘openness and direct dialogue is often the best strategy for cultural change’ (p. 113). The process of SSE, as a first attempt created a background, becoming what Webb (1990) has declared as ‘a thrust towards creating an operational context’ (p.257), suitable for school culture transformation. Although the issue requires more investigation, after two years of research a teacher spoke about an “‘aura” in the school, a feeling that something new has happened or is going to happen in the school’. This implies the need for repetitive attempts, acknowledging that the journey is long and adventurous.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed issues, relevant to the research questions, as they were revealed through the process of implementation and the gathered data. Discussing the extent to which the SSE can accommodate school accountability, the chapter finds that, although external school accountability seemed to be a risky task within the current Greek educational and political context, informally and rather unconsciously, the process seemed to strengthen individual teachers' and school answerability and professional responsibility. SSE can be considered as the first step towards school responsiveness and external accountability as a long-term attempt assuming that the school will find ways and room to undertake change and the system will find channels for communication between and among its components.

The chapter also identified that, although the school could not integrate formally the evaluation findings into its policy, the process seemed to affect teachers both as people and teachers. Teachers could understand themselves better, their methods and practices as well as school policies and its role within the community. This, as teachers' learning, was reflected in their behaviour and practices within their classroom, with signs of change at school level as an organisation, up to the whole-school culture.

The above outcomes and changes were affected by factors that seemed to disturb or contribute to the process implementation. The next section attempts to identify these factors and clarifies how they might affect the school's capability in the evolution of SSE process.

CHAPTER TEN:

REVIEW OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE RESEARCH PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

Introduction

The present chapter, scrutinising inside and outside the school context, looks into the factors and the conditions that seemed to affect the process implementation and the outcomes of the programme. It has been organised in three sections, according to the three broad categories that MacBeath and Mortimore (2001) identify: internal and external school context as well as the content of innovation, which is closely connected to the process implementation as it was experienced by the central key-role players, the external collaborator and the teachers.

The first section focuses on the internal school context and discusses those factors that the school can improve directly under its own responsibility. It pays attention to those dynamics that are connected to individual teachers, as they were revealed by the analysis of the data, even though this was not the primary concern of the study. This section also illustrates the important role that the school culture played in the process of implementation as well as the role of the headteachers within that culture. This attempt is supported by the assertion: innovation and change depend on both individual teacher's factors and the culture of the school (R. Van den Berg et al, 2000, p. 344).

The second part of the chapter is concentrated on the factors that although they 'are originated by the external context, beyond the school's control' (MacGilchrist et al 1997, p. 10), affect school context and its capacity to undertake a programme evaluation. A central point, in this attempt, is that such influential factors, as MacBeath and Mortimore (2001) state, 'are not discrete and self-contained: rather, they blend in complex ways to create different patterns of relationships' (p. 177).

The third section pays particular attention to the role of the researcher who, undertaking the role of participant observer and simultaneously that of the external

collaborator is considered as the key-player in this ethnographic case study. Although each aspect cannot be clearly distinguished from the other, the segment attempts to separate the functions of such a multifaceted role. It discusses my own personal difficulties as the researcher who exerts such a complicated role and highlights the critical friend aspect of an external collaborator according to my own and teachers' experience. Finally, this section attempts to scrutinise the deeper political and ethical implications of the process implementation.

10. 1 The role of the internal context

10. 1. 1 The role of individual teachers

It became obvious that teachers' lives affected their engagement to and their commitment towards the process while their psychological state created a predisposition about acting on change (Fullan, 1991) (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8). There was clearly a need for special care on my part to convince, encourage and facilitate the teachers with appointments and location of focus groups. Further investigation might focus on the management of individual teacher's needs in a change implementation, since it appears to be a powerful determinant of change.

Teachers' positive attitudes towards evaluation and change seemed to be the starting point for undertaking evaluation and change. The school improvement rather than accountability framework of evaluation seemed to affect them. These attitudes can be considered as a valuable background, particularly when teachers themselves have experience in bringing about modifications. The 'progressive clique', which promoted such attitudes towards the project, could influence the reluctant teachers while the headteachers, by being role-models, seemed to motivate or de-motivate teachers (see Chapters 6, 7, 8 and Section 10.1.3).

It also became obvious that although a teacher justifiably argued that low salaries were a powerful counter for the programme continuation, teachers did get involved, expecting as a reward from this engagement only a source of professional satisfaction, which might take the form of an enhancement of awareness and skills or simply promoting the educational research (intrinsic motive). This became explicit in teachers' individual interviews. 'I expect to know more about evaluation' a teacher

said. 'I would like to have an objective view of myself and my work through the eyes of a researcher or my pupils' another teacher stressed while a third one accepted that her engagement was to 'help the researchers, who promote knowledge'.

The stage in teachers' careers seemed to play an important role in their motivation to get involved in the process and maintain their commitment to it. For example, this factor seemed to play a major role in the deputy headteacher's refusal to get involved in the research. Additionally, the first headteacher seemed to expect, as he explained, something 'good' for the school that would also improve his career prospects (see Appendix 7). He anticipated it by acquiring knowledge and experience of SSE and thus, be placed at a better position to exert authority upon teachers (see Chapter 6).

There was some evidence that the headteacher got involved in the programme in order to enhance his reputation in the school community. Thus, while the headteacher initially had accepted with enthusiasm to involve himself and his school in the research, he later found it difficult to respond to the evaluative interview (see Chapters 7, 8). He justified the repetitive postponements by claiming a heavy work load and ineffective communication. There was certainly an expectation on his behalf that the programme would support his expected promotion. It can be argued, therefore, that the professional career acts as a strong motive which seriously affects teachers' engagement in innovations.

The latter headteacher seemed to keenly accept the 'inheritance' of the programme, despite the fact that he could not carry out the proposed change in the phase of institutionalisation. One could claim that the second headteacher, being close to his retirement, without further promotional expectations showed no real interest. The headteacher, however, supported the programme of 'flexible zone' and could manage the teachers to accept it for the school. He considered that central educational policies play a decisive role motivating schools towards undertaking innovations. Lack of knowledge and experience in managing the process of implementation, however, could be another reason (see Section 8.2).

The role of headteachers' and teachers' careers, stimulus, personal motives and attitudes in an innovation undertaking seemed to influence individuals' and school's

engagement in a change endeavour although it seemed to need further investigation. Individual teachers' characteristics can play a considerable role in attracting or pushing backwards teachers from an evaluation and change attempt (MacGilchrist et al 1997). Teachers are 'individuals who will bring to any proposed change different skills, knowledge and attitudes depending on their previous experience, their length of time in the school, their status within the school and their own particular concerns and interests, not least in terms of the stage they have reached in their own career as a teacher' (ibid, p. 15). In the Greek context they should be the focus of another study.

The issue, however, raises another consideration: in an organisation, such as a school, are individual teachers' characteristics potentially crucial for school evaluation and change undertaking? Evans (1999) asserts: 'although on the surface they (teachers) may differ in expectations and preferences, fundamentally teachers - like anyone else - are uniform; they are uniform in wanting their needs to be met' (p. 36). This consideration reveals the decisive role of school context and particularly that of school culture in the conduction and continuation of evaluation and change. The next section looks at this in further detail.

10.1.2. The influence of school culture

From very early, it appeared that the internal school context was not particularly supportive towards evaluation and change. The 'school capacity' to change (Stoll and Fink, 1996) was limited. Teachers' responses implied it. For example, a teacher admitted: 'we are not used to working co-operatively. In fact group discussions are a challenge for us'. Another teacher stated: 'through our discussions I realised the gap between my views and those of some of my colleagues. Therefore, I was reluctant. I do not believe that we can co-operate towards improvement.'

The above comments were concordant with my own observations. They indicate that the school's individualistic, transactive and non transformative culture constrains any co-operative effort for change (see Section 8. 2). Despite individual teachers' attempts towards some minor, isolated and unsystematic changes in their classrooms (see Section 9.2), the school did not seem to be able to support teachers becoming involved in a co-operative process of change and absorbed into its routines. School

culture is of prime importance in terms of a school's state of readiness to change and its capacity to do so. The culture change appeared to be necessary.

On the other hand, two or three teachers, who seemed to be more open-minded and experienced in change than the rest of them, shaped a certain group, the 'progressive clique'. This group, which sometimes was extended by new self-actualising and motivated members and sometimes was restricted according to circumstances, seemed to be the leading group in the change undertaking. It acted as front runners for the others, creating, thus, a kind of positive sub-culture that seemed to affect change implementation (see Chapters 6, 8). Some questions arise: Can sub-cultures undertake the load of a school-based change? What happens when 'some members' create negative sub-cultures?

After a long process, at the phase of institutionalisation, the school seemed to be 'ripe', prepared and committed to begin a new endeavour. The process seemed to have helped the teachers in becoming more conscious of pupil's needs and their own role within the school. Considering that the division between teaching and managing that can perpetuate the notion that 'managers manage and teachers teach' (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991, p. 15) is false; it was expected that teachers undertake a more active role and develop strategies for managing the change process.

The study, however, revealed that teachers could neither make a clear decision for action nor could they co-operate constructively towards a common achievable target (see Sections 8.1, 8.2). Teachers found it difficult to undertake a role in change and preferred to remain simply receivers, interpreters and implementers. Within such a culture, teachers found adequate parents' and pupils' participation. This consideration raises issues for a shift in school culture.

Teachers should have the means to deal with issues openly (Darling-Hammond, 1995) while the research indicates that successful school changes occur when teachers develop shared beliefs of what ought to be, are involved collaboratively in decision making with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 1994; Bascia and Hargreaves, 2000, p. 52). Finally, as studies indicate the school context

affects teachers' willingness and ability to participate in the process of action research (Oja and Smulyan, 1989, p. 20).

Within a shifted school culture teachers need to be researchers, developers and evaluators. For this, schools, among others, need to trust teachers as professionals, who can make decisions that benefit children, promote high quality staff development, encourage teacher leadership and participation, and promote collaboration for improvement (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 150-151).

The issue of the headteacher's role within the school culture is posed directly by a teacher when she asked: 'How the proposal could be realised without the headteacher's vision and help?' Another teacher also understood this role as crucial in the evolution of the change implementation by explaining: 'The programme might have been continued if there had not been any change in the headteacher's post'. Teachers asked for a headteacher who 'can inspire, organise and support teachers'. They appeared to point to the top if change was to be made. It is, therefore, necessary to look at the role of the headteachers.

10. 1. 3 The role of the headteachers

The first headteacher appreciated the advantages of the programme implementation and accepted its initiation. The school was involved collaboratively in the change. Although the headteacher distanced himself from any intervention apart from a limited co-ordination of procedures, he seemed to play an important role in persuading the teachers and all participants to overcome their anxieties about evaluation and innovation, particularly through his own presence and example (see Chapters 6, 7). Such headteacher's symbolic acts proved decisive in school engagement. The headteacher played a role that no 'outsider' could assimilate.

The second headteacher, from a more secure position, seemed to accept the benefits of the programme and anticipate some benefits according to his own 'hidden agenda' (see Chapter 8). Following democratic procedures, he stimulated and encouraged his staff in decision making. Therefore, his role in directing teachers towards school decisions was decisive.

It seemed, however, that despite the headteacher's and teachers' agreement about the focus of the change, the targets of change could not be clarified (see Chapter 8). A teacher commented: 'I am not sure if the content of the proposal concerned each one of us and I think that there were many inconsistencies. Discussing it with my colleague, I realised that we had perceived the content in a different way'. It became apparent that the school vision needs to be clarified and understood.

On the other hand, my own observations revealed that the priorities which the school had set were close to the classroom needs and relevant to the evaluation findings, had targets that were complicated, conceptually undefined and challenging in manageability and consequences. The proposed change had to be realistic, particularly for a school that was inexperienced in initiating, planning and implementing a change. Fullan's (1991) advice to 'start small, think big' (p. 69) had to be applied at 'Platon' school.

This raises issues about the managerial dimension of the headteacher's role particularly when the role of deputy headteachers is disempowered. For a complex change to reach to an end, a well-led and well-managed plan by a skilled manager is necessary since educational vision needs to be clear, accessible, understood by all stakeholders and framed in a manner which allows negotiation, review and evaluation.

A particularly difficult and sensitive task in the headteacher's role was that of managing micro-politics that seemed to pose considerable constraints in the running of the school and in the process of innovation as well, causing even teachers' resistance (Brooke-Smith, 2003). The teachers avoided openly referring to them. However, participant observation and teachers' comments with 'short words' expressed their powerful presence throughout the process. The most characteristic case was when the headteacher and the teachers preferred to shift the focus of the change and simply overcome priorities that seemed to put at risk their relationships. A year earlier they had experienced conflicts with a consequent deterioration of relationships between certain colleagues (see Chapter 7).

Change and politics seemed to be found together. 'Jealousies, guilt, anxiety and undisclosed and often unrecognised struggles for power have a profound effect on the acceptance or rejection of rational solutions to apparently straightforward problems (Brooke-Smith, 2003, p. 64), since 'identities and vested interests, self-concepts and long-established habits are challenged' (ibid, p. 66). The headteacher's role in managing the raised micro-politics throughout the process was revealed as decisive.

It also became apparent that when the school came to transform decision into action, the headteacher adopted an attitude of 'we will see', staying a 'step behind'. He did not seem to have the will or the means to involve the teachers in constructive co-operation and look critically on what they habitually do. A teacher's response expresses this view: 'At the beginning of the process the headteacher was positive. Later, however, he could not form and establish the necessary background and framework that only himself could establish in order for teachers to undertake action'. Another teacher articulated: 'A change process should be supported by the headteacher'.

The transactive aspect of the headteacher's role (see Section 8.3.1.2) did not seem to support the change. The challenge for the headteacher was to develop and communicate a realistic vision; to develop and implement a plan for action advocating continuity and legitimacy of the project (see Section 10.3.6). The context did not seem to help the headteacher in undertaking additional responsibilities since, as the collaborative process required certain procedures, the needs for tighter guidance and administration were becoming necessary. The educational context within which leadership is located seems to be crucial (Simkins, 2005, p. 12).

The above raise a lot of questions. Was the headteacher prepared for such a role in the school? Did he have the will, motivation or freedom to undertake such a responsibility? The questions pose issues about headteachers' appropriate professional development for leading and managing teachers and procedures in a change process (see Section 10.3.6). A teacher who commented that 'the headteacher should be able to direct the teachers towards improvement and manage this work' supported this argument.

Additionally, these questions imply a shift in the role of the school when it is called to undertake responsibilities for innovation. The questions carry messages for school autonomy and a shift in roles within an autonomous school (see Section 10.3). A shift in roles, however, indicates a change in power relationships. The attempt of teachers and school to enhance its restricted power in the system is essentially a political move with political implications inside and outside the school. Thus, consequent questions are: 'How far is a school free to change within the context in which it is set? What are the space and control that schools have within a centralised system? What is the role of the school external context?

10. 2 The influence of the external context

My own observations and teachers' responses revealed that teachers, being ripe for integrating evaluation findings into the school policy, doubted their competence for undertaking responsibilities that demanded additional knowledge and skills in managing the change. As a consequence, teachers indicated resistance since their confidence was suspected; the attempt was finally abandoned.

Even where a school presents a collective norm of willingness to innovate, teachers, as Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008) state, 'not being able to adequately respond to calls for change threatens their (teachers') sense of competency and skill, and eventually can result in the loss of self-esteem and identity as a teacher' (p. 48). In other words, 'if calls for change make teachers start doubting their professional competences, they provoke intensive emotional reactions and resistance' (ibid, p. 64). The message for teachers' professional development in management of change and research issues becomes explicit. This is, however, a responsibility beyond the school context.

In terms of 'how the programme could be continued?' the headteacher provided another dimension to the issue: 'An innovation depends upon the teachers' disposition'. Generally, teachers should decide to work hard and be well organised while people with 'vision' should be found at all levels of the educational system. Above all, however, in order for the school to undertake an evaluation, change needs legislatimisation through a national policy'.

The headteacher placed emphasis away from school context and attributed the responsibility of change implementation to the Government. It becomes apparent that within the Greek context only a 'top-down' stimulus spurs efforts for a school-based innovation. Kotsionis (1997) supports this view by stating: 'a general identification is that in the Greek educational system innovations are launched usually by the Ministry, sometimes after recommendations made by the P.I.' (p. 150). Schools, implementing changes imposed from the 'top', seem to have accepted a subordinate role within the system. Therefore, if something is to change in schools, a national policy should provide the legislative framework to legalise the effort or act as stimulus for teachers to do so.

The role of the central educational policy in cultivating an innovative school culture and developing teachers' positive attitudes towards change is decisive. There is clearly a need for an ideological and political shift that will place the school at the centre of a responsible role in undertaking innovation. The central government which, after all, has the legitimate role in developing a national policy, needs to re-think schools as well as its own role and develop a vision. This vision, despite the political implications, should create opportunities and leave 'room' for schools to undertake innovative responsibilities. It should incorporate a shift in the school role within the parameters, set by the state.

The case of 'Platon' school itself, however, constitutes a paradox. Despite the lack of a national policy, the school got involved in the programme on a voluntary basis as a self-imposed and 'bottom-up' innovation rather than as a 'top-down' one. It could be said that, while the centralised educational system perturbed the school in establishing a policy about a school-based change, the school could get involved in the SSE. As Fidler et al (1997) state, 'formal power and duties - while important - do not fully determine the behaviour of individuals and groups. The *de facto* distribution of power - and consequently the amount of autonomy and effective choice - within a system may be very different from that which appears to follow from the system's legal framework' (p. 247).

By delegating the prospect of change to his teachers, the second headteacher moved the responsibilities towards them. According to him, 'teachers should have a vision

and work towards it'. In the 'Platon' school, however, individual teachers could attempt changes. They indicated that they could formulate a vision and think of themselves as being key persons in that realisation driven by their responsibility towards the pupils.

This should become an important base for a shift in teachers' and the school's role. For such a change, the need for headteachers and teachers' preparation and continual development within a well-established national policy was revealed as decisive.

The above consideration poses political implications. Change in the school's role challenges the legal power, duties, rights and responsibilities, laid down by the central government. It implies redistribution of roles with the consequence of empowering amongst others, the role of teachers, local authorities, parents and the school community. The centralised educational system, where formal power and duties are specified, should look at areas within which the school is limited in its autonomy to exercise choices. In such a scenario, in what ways and to what degree can schools exercise an increased autonomy? What should be the headteachers' and teachers' responsibilities? The necessity for establishing a sequential and balanced framework is obvious.

On the other hand, the study revealed that the teachers felt disappointed by the process of SSE . They seemed to expect something analogous in the school change undertaking and turned expectantly towards the researcher. Teachers referred directly to external collaboration (see Chapter 8). As MacBeath and Mortimore (2001) state, in a sense, the critical friend may be seen as a "catalyst of change" (p. 139). The role of external collaboration in the process is examined in the next section.

10. 3 My own role as a researcher and external collaborator

10. 3. 1 My personal difficulties

It has been said that 'researchers who do not understand themselves tend to misconstrue the pronouncements and feelings of others' (Kincheloe, 1991: 45 in O' Honlon, 1996, p. 82). Indeed, as I was becoming increasingly involved in the research, I felt that the heightened awareness of myself, the better understanding of

my own particular circumstances and the increased willingness to accept personal responsibilities were important assets for the process of implementation.

Firstly, I encountered my Greek educational background where, apart from pupils' assessment and teachers' appraisals, the notion of school evaluation and SSE were areas unfamiliar, either as conceptual abstracts or as practice. However, my studies for an MA degree at London Metropolitan University which included a management and a social research module, my professional experience as a Greek primary teacher for 24 years and as a headteacher for a year completed an extremely useful background (see Chapter 1).

An ongoing need for me was to study relevant literature both in English and Greek. However, whilst performing studies in a foreign language, I had difficulties with translation and communication of terms and ideas. I had to grasp the different meanings of many concepts such as 'ethos' and 'culture' ('ethos' in English has a meaning similar to 'culture' while, in Greek, it means 'ethics'). I also had to differentiate between 'evaluation' and 'appraisal' (see literature review). Continually, I tried to clarify and pin down concepts such as 'evaluation', 'self-evaluation', 'inspection', or 'school accountability and improvement' as well as 'action research' 'innovation' or its 'management' and separate their distinct meaning within the Greek educational context.

Furthermore, I had to explore the scientific identity and the methodology of my research so as to harmonise my role in the context of the investigation. For some time this long laborious inquiry created some confusion in me. However, in conjunction with my tutors' helpful supervision, which acted as a form of professional training, it became highly revealing. My own difficulties indicate many issues that external collaborators might wish to consider if they intend to become engaged in some evaluation and innovation endeavours at local and national level.

I experienced an additional difficulty resulting from working between two countries. While I was studying the relevant bibliography in England where I was being supervised, I was simultaneously conducting the research in Greece. Although my study-leave helped me overcome basic time obstacles (see Chapter 1), this situation

inevitably created delays with additional complication and cost. After one year of studying and having acquired sufficient knowledge, I embarked on an investigation in the school where I adopted both the participant observer's role and the role of the 'outsider' collaborator. My emphasis as participant observer was to explore the nature of SSE phenomena within the 'Platon' school. This aspect of my role is discussed in the next section.

10. 3. 2 The researcher in the participant observer's role

As a participant observer I was the main 'instrument' of the study. I directed my interest towards a deeper understanding of the school culture by observing norms, behaviour, interactions and events and grasp, in accordance with Stenhouse's view of 'how something factually works or occurs' (Flick, 1998, p. 139). I sat as a member in school meetings either among teachers or between teachers and members of the Parents' Association. I participated in many school activities, such as festivals, excursions and celebrations (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

Sometimes I helped teachers in their playground duties and I replaced some of them in their class. I had coffee with the teachers in the staff-room and, apart from in-depth interviews I also participated with them in long formal and informal conversations and discussions, trying to keep a standard phraseology. Being present in many school crises I tried, as Shipman (1988) suggests 'not to disturb the natural setting' (p. 39) and on many occasions I had to wait for a positive climate for procedure implementation.

Apart from participant observation and individual teachers' interviews, focus groups and informal discussions with parents and pupils gave me the opportunity to explore school culture from many perspectives. The analysis of the school culture deepened my understanding. This understanding became a valuable background not only for the needs for the ethnographic case study but also for the needs of the action research. It provided a 'relatively *incontestable description* for further analysis and ultimate reporting' (Stake, 1995, p. 62).

As participant observer I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible. My concern was to establish casual relationships with participating groups or individuals, particularly with the headteachers, and manage them considering political and ethical issues (see Chapters 6, 7). I tried to avoid controlling relevant variables and influencing the situation more than would be expected from other participants (MacKenzie et al, 1997). I made every effort 'to be an 'insider' without 'going native' and losing the outsider's perspective' (Anderson et al, 1994, p. 27) so that a methodologically sound piece of work could be produced (see Chapter 5).

My role, however, soon became more complex since, while I was trying to keep 'myself' away from any intervention, I was also trying to establish collaboration within school and, as the critical friend, intervene deliberately in the situation given that 'action research is a method in which the researcher seeks deliberately to intervene in the situation, often by employing specific techniques, in order to achieve a particular outcome' (MacKenzie et al, 1997, p. 90). Given that the roles seemed difficult to distinguish, a balance of interplay between and among them was necessary. Having discussed my role as participant observer and interviewer, the next section attempts to examine the aspect of critical friend.

10. 3. 3 The external collaborator in the critical friend's role

In the research I became the outside collaborator who as the critical friend undertook the task of introducing the innovation. Initiating the programme, I found myself in a leading role. Being a teacher in the same district provided me with an initial awareness of the school context. This acted as a useful background while the ethnographic character of the case study deepened my understanding of this context, even the school culture. I tried to develop a vision for evaluation and communicate it with the teachers and other participants. I attempted to clarify its objectives- the 'what' has to be done and 'by whom'- and convince the teachers that SSE can serve not only the purposes of the research but also the broader needs of the school.

In a parallel way, I undertook the responsibility for managing the process. Thus, my role seemed to be threefold: To inspire, manage the process and put it on the agenda of the school as well as encourage and support. I tried to establish an idealistic picture

of a desirable future, emphasising the ideological benefits, attainable, based on the current reality and on shared values, focused enough but also flexible enough to allow scope for the enterprise and creativity in strategic action (James and Connolly, 2000, p. 27).

I became the internal co-ordinator of the process (see Chapters 6, 7). As a team building co-ordinator I organised the focus groups and teachers' meetings with the headteachers' and teachers' assistance. Sometimes I intervened and mixed teachers for developing critical reflection and achieve what Halsall (1998) suggests: 'team building' for 'team work' 'by way of developing a keener sense of shared purpose and commitment' (p. 196). Although group work presented a challenge for the school as a new way of working, it could become a useful tool in the hands of a manager (see Chapters 6, 7, 8).

Individual and common teachers' ownership and commitment was my constant concern. Joint decision making proved a useful tool for developing commitment. Stoll and Fink (1996) have pointed out: 'Part of co-ordination involves building commitment of colleagues through joint decision making' (p. 68). The need for motivational reinforcement also became obvious. I identified that motives change even if change is widely accepted well as 'when certain prime motives are reduced, then other motives may become primary' (Bush and West-Burnham 1994, p. 226). I tried to help teachers remain continually motivated and, therefore, committed. Feedback at every stage became an essential tool for fostering teachers' satisfaction and renewing their motivation. 'Feedback from monitoring can be used to make ongoing work more satisfying, more manageable and more useful' (Russell, 1996, p. 37.)

In this process, negotiation became essential and valuable. Each group and all teachers negotiated and jointly decided upon criteria and areas for evaluation, the report and areas for improvement giving, thus, their own direction and purpose to the evaluation. 'Negotiation' and 're-negotiation', as democratic procedures, were maintained throughout the cyclical process at many levels (see Section 5.4.3).

On the other hand, negotiation seemed to foster a feeling of anxiety. For example, in the stages of criteria identification and report negotiation, teachers appeared nervous trying to guess the persons who had given distinctive and critical views. Negotiation also seemed to raise school micro-politics as it seemed to reflect hidden teachers' thoughts, values and expectations and give meanings to them (see Chapter 8). Thus, negotiation for decision making remained a difficult and risky exercise for the school that challenged the managing and negotiating abilities of a manager.

I felt that my effectiveness as a negotiator was dependent upon an adopted frame, the procedures that were used and the associated process of interpersonal communication. This frame might be termed as 'the exercise of general skills' (Lowe and Pollard, 1989 cited in Bush and West-Burnham, 1994, p. 260). Despite the fact that they were not strong enough to bridge the evaluation-action gap, they revealed useful tools for the programme implementation (Osborne, 1990).

Ensuring teachers' continual support was another concern. I organised social events to celebrate successful procedures. These also acted as a positive reinforcement, a reward for their effort that seemed to encourage and foster teachers' sense of satisfaction taking into account that the emotional dimension of change, even if the change is beneficial and the need for it widely accepted in the organisation is an important issue for the managers (James and Connolly (2000, p. 29). Moreover, monitoring the process, in terms of what has been defined as the 'short-term' immediate checks on the delivery of evaluation (Dean, 1991), seemed to be a continual source of support but also a source of pressure (Russell 1966).

The careful management of teachers' time was another important task for me. Thus, teachers could spend their personal time for two years, when they were involved in a research away from their 'real' job (Robson, 2000 p. 25). Although the majority of teachers in their final questionnaire did not refer to the factor of time as posing a particular constraint to the process, in contrast with the second headteacher, who referred specifically to it, the factor of time cannot be ignored given that the involvement in the process is time-consuming (Gray, et. al., 1999). Time is an important factor that affects the process of innovation and raises serious management issues.

The study cannot answer the question to what extent negotiation, feedback, support, pressure and reward in managing the process affected the changes at teacher, classroom and school level. This may prove a worthy subject for further investigation. The fact, however, is that the structure of management procedures contributed to the smooth running of the process, since resistance to what was seen as an imposition from outside was alleviated. In this sense I could define my role as that of a developer while I came to realise that distinctions between leadership and management responsibilities were unhelpful (Simkins, 2005, p. 12).

Throughout the process another constant concern was to establish a democratically collaborative process and a positive example of a collaborator (Ebbutt, 1985). I tried to achieve more constructive deliberation and avoid what Carr and Kemmis (1991: 202) described about facilitators when they work with teachers: 'They often create circumstances in which project control is not in the teachers' hands' (cited in Halsall, 1998, p. 81).

From the induction of the research, however, I experienced the power derived from my multiple roles. This power inevitably involved me in political and ethical dilemmas which could put participants and the process implementation at risk. Robson (2000) has identified that 'it was not too difficult for subjects to find ways of sabotaging or subverting the evaluation if views of this kind take root' (p. 17). The next section attempts to probe beneath the surface of such a complicated, decisive and powerful role and discuss such political and ethical implications.

10. 3. 4 A deeper insight in the political and ethical implications of my role

The literature review had prepared me to consider the ethical and political implications that the power imbalances of my multiple roles could create. As a participant observer, I had the routine task of identifying where imbalances threatened the integrity of the research while, as critical friend, I had to manage them since 'all ethical and micro-political issues are pertaining to the management of change' (Alvik, 1996, p. 8).

From the early stages of the process the possibility of developing unequal power relations between the 'outsider' and the 'insiders' was evident. However, I could only assess them as the process was evolving. The realisation of researcher's 'power of the theory' by both headteachers and teachers might have had consequences in terms of teachers' self-confidence and self-respect and, therefore, in the innovation implementation.

In establishing a sense of balanced power relationships, my educational background, which was similar to that of the teachers, was used as a valuable empathetic tool. I also adopted a 'low profile' attitude while in formal and informal discussions; I avoided demonstrating any theoretical knowledge. I broke this self-imposed rule only when it was absolutely necessary for the needs of the programme. And then, I adopted a questioning-responding method as, for example, when I tried sensitively and carefully to discuss teachers' perceptions about SSE (see Sections 8.3.2 and 8.3.3).

I also tried not to appear as an expert and be perceived as a counsellor or counsellor-therapist. They were roles, which I could have locked into easily (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001). For example, some of the teachers and parents constantly asked for encouragement or advice on a host of issues; one teacher asked for advice and help in classroom management and pupils' discipline or I was often called in to intervene in teachers' conflicts (see Chapters 6, 7, 8). In such cases, they appeared ever ready to take advice from an objective friend.

I attempted to establish myself as an 'outsider researcher-collaborator' who did not constitute any threat to teachers' hierarchy, professional autonomy and their 'authority' which I understand as the legitimate use of power in the eyes of subordinates considering that teachers have authority over children on the basis of 'experience' and 'expertise' (Elliott, 1991, p. 57).

I respected the school work and I was very careful with my actions and choice of words, continuously reflecting upon their appropriateness for the task in hand. I avoided some symbolic acts that might cause contention. For example, visiting the two rooms (smoking and non-smoking) I selected them thoroughly or I avoided

staying for long periods in the headteacher's office. In this manner, I also could establish the independence of my role (see Chapter 6).

Finally, I tried to protect teachers from judgmental issues, constructing boundaries within the discussions and 'manipulating' them sensitively. Although I tried to distribute my power, 'sharing control and allowing others to delegate and assume responsibility' (Oja and Smulyan, 1986, p. 17), in many cases such relationships with headteachers and teachers or pupils remained unequal.

I found myself in power guiding and directing a level six pupil discussion towards certain targets (see Chapters 6, 7, 8). Such cases could provide a space for me to unlock the door and intervene to change the pattern of thinking and behaviour. Although these interventions did not seem to have any obvious consequences for the process, the enhanced power of myself as researcher over the participants became obvious. I came to realise that research with pupils requires great sensitivity and robust ethical considerations (Leeson in Campbell and Groundwater-Smith, 2007, p. 129). The issue needs further investigation.

My power over the teachers seemed to be noticeable when I intervened in the case of selecting areas of evaluation (see Section 6.2.4.2). The unequal power relationships became apparent when I undertook the control of the report dissemination. Even if my intervention was in accordance with the teachers' views, it can be seen as an 'imposed' one. Such decisions, however, can be justified as attempting to overcome the difficulties that the school had in its first experience of a change implementation. Finally, the control over the process and the methods seemed to increase my power over the teachers. The question that then arises is: If a kind of control is necessary, to what extent can a school undertake its own self-evaluation programme?

In addition, my complete accessibility to the research data, including the evaluative findings seemed to be an additional source of power over the headteachers, teachers, parents and pupils. Although SSE was implemented as a research process having a democratic perspective with descriptive character, it generated judgmental data, which I had access to and which was a potential threat for particular people, interests and processes and, therefore, for the balance of institutional power. Does the role of

an 'outsider' help in alleviating the researcher's power over teachers, pupils or parents?

Despite such a powerful role, I tried to construct some attempts for power sharing within the given context. As an 'outsider' researcher I collaborated with the 'insiders' to develop a shared understanding of action that supported the school's aims, 'without challenging its underlying assumptions' (O'Hanlon, 1996, p. 80,). Communication and negotiation for joint decision making allowed a sense of participative shared management with people oriented actions.

My constant attempt was also to maintain a non directive role in group discussions, acceptable to the teachers and formulated in action. The catalytic aspect of my role was to energise the group, encouraging it to set specific, challenging but realistic goals. Finally, respecting anonymity and confidentiality, I treated the data sensitively particularly the negative comments and I presented the 'gentle truth' (see Section 7.3). However, there were issues concerned with the possible impasses of such a process and the potential powerful position of my role.

I expected the power of my role in leading and managing the process to be alleviated by the headteachers and other teachers, who, as collaborators, would take responsibility for the SSE implementation (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). The degree of such an undertaking would depend upon the context itself and 'what is possible with the people involved and what they can be persuaded-or successfully instructed to do' (Fidler et al, 1997, p. 246).

It seemed that this was a significant time for the school. On the one hand, the school had a headteacher who was interested in upgrading the reputation of the school along with his personal image because he was expecting to renew his post. On the other hand, the teachers, creating sub-groups, seemed to be interested in educational and pedagogical issues and, with the researcher's support, to be positive in the implementation of the project.

At the phase of the institutionalisation of the findings, however, the project seemed to 'fall away'. The new headteacher seemed to feel safe enough in his new post. Nevertheless,

within the individualistic and non-innovative school culture, headteacher and teachers did not seem prepared or ready to undertake responsibilities of leading and managing the project while the lack of a national policy to establish a background seemed to be decisive for the school to proceed.

Some of the teachers asked for my continual intervention (see Chapter 8). Since headteachers and teachers seemed to be inexperienced or unprepared to undertake new responsibilities when they were to be delegated to them, the process seemed to enhance my power over them. In terms of balancing power relationships between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', the study revealed the necessity of teachers' professional development in the relative issues and of enhancing school ownership of the programme.

In these relationships, the 'outside' characteristic of my role seemed to be valuable for the process. Firstly, it could protect it from the unwarranted attentions of the headteacher's control. Given that he expected access to certain kinds of data, it provided a safe boundary. The headteacher found it impossible to exercise his power over an 'outside' researcher (see Section 5.4.3.2). However, this characteristic seemed to help the headteacher to accept the researcher's confidentiality and 'sufficient expertise' to handle and use the data (Elliott, 1991, p. 61).

At the same time, my working status 'outside' the school seemed to be crucial in obtaining the trust of all participants. For example, deeply hidden information was exposed as participants felt free to do so (Elliott, 1991, p. 63). My studies outside Greece seemed also to help teachers in relieving them from the threat of their exposure.

Finally, the value of the 'outside' characteristic of my role was revealed with the parent who intervened in the procedure of pupils' focus groups (see Chapter 6). This incident did not cause problems for everybody but it revealed that the outsider's power of management is intrinsically connected to the power of those who could attack the privacy and territory of headteacher and teachers (Elliott, 1991). The questions that then arise are: What are the implications when a school undertakes the

responsibility for such a process on its own? Can a teacher's appraiser be an external critical friend as well?

I realised, however, what Oja and Smulyan (1986) state: 'parity and equal responsibility in collaboration do not mean that each member has an equal role in decision making or input during all phases of the study. Role shift occurs depending on the needs of the situation. Continuity is provided by the researchers through the communication and collaboration network they establish with those involved in the study' (p. 13) (see Chapter 5). Similarly Nevo (1995) maintains: 'The parties involved in the dialogue are not necessarily equal in their authority, but there is a symmetry in the assumption that each had something to learn from the other, and something to teach the other' (p. 189).

I also came to realise that there is no set rule book or clear-cut set of principles for the decision on how to respond in these situations (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001). In relevant questions, the responses seemed to be personal and dependent on the context. My general attempt was to keep myself focused on the main task to avoid becoming perplexed by other concerns and overcoming interpersonal and organisational diversions.

In collaborative action research the issues of collaboration, democracy and power relationships and their management seem to be a particularly difficult task. As Oja and Smulyan (1986) admit, 'successful action research projects may struggle with and find ways to balance the concepts of collaboration or democracy and leadership' (p. 17). The research placed demands on my energy and time. After two years of research I felt tired by struggling to meet the requirements of the role. Clearly there are many possible interpretations. Among others, how did teachers see the role of researcher/critical friend?

10. 3. 5 How do teachers see the role of a critical friend?

In this first experience of school involvement in a programme of SSE, the teachers initially saw the researcher/critical friend as an 'evaluator-appraiser'. One of their first questions was: 'when are you going to visit us in the classroom?' As the process

unfolded possible retrospective accounts about my role in the school with elements of suspicion, fear and anxiety were alleviated. There were many instances where, if teachers defended levels of attainments as low, they seemed to grasp the opportunity to look for advice and solution to their impasses. This was the case of a teacher who asked for my guidance about a dyslexic pupil. Teachers saw me as an advisor-consultant.

Teachers also perceived me as a counsellor or 'therapeutic counsellor' (MacBeath and Moretimore, 2001, p. 145). They asked my help when they had to face difficulties in their communication preparing the school concert. I could not, however, give any specific response. It could be easy to find myself locked into such a role. In some cases teachers but also parents saw the researcher as an instrument which they could use to attack the headteacher or a colleague.

Teachers also defined me as a developer. For example, a mother of a girl with dyslexia approached me on the suggestion of her daughter's class teacher, to intervene and initiate an improvement in school policy concerning the difficulties that were experienced by her daughter. It became evident during the process that teachers depended on me to continue with the programme despite the fact that the school did not seem ready or willing to grasp the opportunity to use the 'critical friend' with its own developmental plans.

According to the final evaluative interviews, most teachers accepted the critical friend as a director, facilitator and manager. 'The researcher's role was important. She inspired us with respect and sensitivity, she was a good organiser of the process and teamwork' a teacher said. 'The researcher stood by us and was willing to explain each step, one-by-one, and answer each and every question. She could match her available time with our own free time' another one stated while a third one acknowledged: 'The critical friend role was supportive and illuminative. She helped us keep focused and positive about the situation here'.

Teachers seemed to appreciate the difficulties (not least in terms of time) and the inherent complexities of my role. 'The most exciting experience of the process was the identification that the researcher could operate as a friend as well' a teacher

stressed. Another teacher remarked: 'I empathised with the anxiety of the researcher in her work with us to pose critical questions, to persuade, to conclude without pressure and without any support from the headteacher. She helped us be reflective and respected people's points of view. The most important experience of the process was the fact that we shared with her and with my colleague substantial worries in a way that I had never experienced before.'

Teachers seemed to appreciate the researcher's competence to manage the process. They spoke about the critical friend positively and warmly. There were frequent favourable references to my style and personal qualities that helped in establishing and maintaining good working relationships within an atmosphere of trust. For example, some of the teachers' relevant comments were: 'I felt very close to the critical friend' or 'I felt that I was able to be completely honest and that confidentiality was assured' or 'She had a very positive and sensitive presence'.

Two of the teachers, however, did not return the final evaluative questionnaires and avoided making any comments. One of them was the teacher who seemed to feel her work was at risk. The other one was the teacher who, from the beginning, was particularly reluctant. My role in the school undoubtedly seemed to cause resistance since my intervention was aimed at change and accountability (see Section 5.2).

Finally, both headteachers commented positively about the researcher's presence and role throughout the process although the circumstances did not favour their participation in the final evaluative questionnaire (see Section 5.2). The former headteacher could not give answers for the overall process because of his early replacement while the latter one, whilst appreciating and making use of the evaluation findings, also seemed to remain distant from specific comments since he had not experienced the entire contribution of the critical friend to the change implementation. In answering the question whether the critical friend had made any difference, the headteacher replied 'I don't think so, although her presence spurred a lot of critical discussions'.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the factors that seemed to affect the process of the SSE programme. The positive personal teachers' characteristics and their attitudes towards evaluation and particularly towards innovation were to prove a valuable foundation. However, the internal context with the individualistic and non-innovative school culture and the headteacher's role within it seemed to pose obstacles for a change undertaking from within. The need for a shift in school culture as well as headteachers' and teachers' professional development was to be of primary importance.

At the same time, the external context seemed to influence decisively the internal context and perhaps teachers' attitudes towards evaluation and innovation. A shift in the teachers' role within the school and school's role within the system seemed to be necessary. Nevertheless, the school under a stimulated leadership and careful management that respected the principles of ownership, negotiation, communication, privacy and balanced power relationships could accommodate the first cycle of the continuous process Evaluation-Improvement-Evaluation. The role of external collaborator as a critical friend seemed to be decisive. Taking into account the research findings, the last chapter attempts to provide some recommendations for SSE implementation within the Greek context.

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENTATIONS

Introduction

The final chapter provides a summary of the research background, the effects of the research undertaking for the school and the factors that are considered as influential to these effects. This chapter also attempts to present some recommendations for the future within the Greek context. The chapter closes by presenting the limitations and contribution of the study along with the areas that the research opened for further investigation.

11. 1 The background and the process of the research

In the compulsory primary and secondary Greek educational system there has been a complete absence of any formal evaluation, apart from that of students, for the last 23 years. Under the requirements of the European Commission directives the issue of evaluation in schools has arisen within a new context.

The Ministry of Education attempted to establish a framework concerning evaluation of teachers and educational work including SSE. According to that framework the Greek schools are required to evaluate themselves and respond to the system. Although some attempts have been made, in practice evaluation in Greek schools has not been implemented.

Within this educational context, the present ethnographic case study regarded the school as a unique context and intended to investigate whether a specific programme of SSE that is based on MacBeath's (1999) framework is appropriate for school accountability and school improvement. The ethnographic case study was combined with a collaborative action research for the programme implementation. Both strategies employed the methods of participant observation, teachers' individual interviews, focus groups and questionnaires.

The study attempted to identify the 'visible' and 'invisible' outcomes of this implementation on the school and explore the role that the internal and external school context played in them. The study also attempted to explore the role of the external collaborator in the process of implementation and clarify how this process as an innovation can be managed in the best way. The ethnographic characteristic of the study but also the collaborative action research offered valuable information about the school context and culture, including teachers' attitudes towards evaluation and change at the given time and circumstances.

I introduced the programme under the initiation and with support of the headteacher. I succeeded in gaining the voluntary engagement of 19 out of 20 teachers of the school with whom I collaborated as an 'outsider'. Apart from the teachers, SSE, as a democratic process with a pluralistic perspective, engaged pupils and parents as well. I dedicated a long period to prepare the school in terms of getting involved in the research and developing a sense of 'ownership' of the programme. This period also facilitated me in becoming familiar with the school context and an understanding of the school culture.

Evaluation criteria were identified directly by the school community. Focus groups of teachers, pupils and parents defined quantitative criteria. They discussed and clarified their values, needs and expectations from the school, since 'the criteria by which the merit of various aspects or domains of the school should be judged must be determined within the educational and social context of the school and the needs of its target population...' (Nevo, 1995, p. 55).

The quantitative findings, assisted by the qualitative ones, were adjusted and grouped in ten categories similar to those of MacBeath's framework. They were presented to the teachers with a summary of the qualitative data and uncovered similarities and differences between and amongst participants. Although groups of teachers negotiated areas for investigation, a questionnaire helped them in selecting as the 'weakest' areas those of school-home links and school culture.

At the implementation phase, focus groups of teachers, pupils and parents responded to the evaluative questionnaire that I constructed according to their level. They

discussed it whilst reflecting critically upon their responses. The quantitative data were organised in comparable diagrams. The qualitative data were analysed sensitively in a written and rather descriptive report that also included many participants' proposals for school improvement. In the second year of the investigation the findings were presented to the teachers and negotiated by them. The school managed to reach at a decision making stage. Although it could not formally integrate evaluation findings into the school policy and proceed directly in a change undertaking, the qualitative study revealed many changes and complex findings, on the basis of which some proposals and recommendations were made.

11. 2 The effects of the research

First of all, systematic evaluation is not a naturally occurring phenomenon in school. As a short-term attempt, it cannot be said that SSE can fulfil school accountability intentions since it gave no direct outcomes, 'visible' at school policy level. Since schools lack any evaluative and accountability culture within an educational system that also lacks any evaluation structure, SSE towards school's accountability seems to be a difficult and risky undertaking. The opening up of school work to public critique should not be the purpose of evaluation. Rather as Simons claims, 'evaluation needs to be separated for a time from accountability demands...' (cited in Lacey and Lawton, 1981, p. 132).

The ethnographic study, however, revealed some indirect and 'invisible' outcomes of SSE intending at school accountability. SSE, 'by doing' and critically reflecting on the CAR, can involve headteachers and teachers in a process of individual self-evaluation and self-accountability and, therefore, in their individual professional responsibility.

This process which engages parents and pupils could also contribute to individual teachers' responsiveness to them. Teachers, more confident in their competence to implement and accomplish an evaluative cycle and better-informed about pupils' and parents' needs and expectations, could respond individually more constructively to them. It could be said that SSE, as a long term endeavour, can contribute to school answerability.

The process appears to help teachers to understand that individuals, intuitive and informal descriptions and judgments are not adequate. Supported by hard evidence, they can take a formal concept with many ideas for change. Thus, the process can help teachers in developing the sense of common accountability. As Alvick (1996) stresses, 'the idea behind SSE is that the participants develop greater insight into the interplay between frames, processes and outcomes' (p. 4).

At the same time, teachers working within an organisation that is part of a hierarchical educational system seem to have accepted that it is reasonable to give an account to their educational authorities and the central government. SSE can be considered as the first step towards school external accountability. As a long-term undertaking, the spiral process of Evaluation-Change-Evaluation can contribute towards developing a school culture of evaluation and accountability so that in the second and subsequent phases 'the school can achieve greater rigour in its evaluation methods and a greater capability to cope with external pressure and accountability' (Russell, 1996, p. 100).

Nevo points out that 'a school that does not have an internal mechanism for self-evaluation will have difficulties in developing positive attitudes towards evaluation and lack of self-confidence necessary for constructive dialogue between the school and external evaluation' (in MacBeath, 1999, p. 93). Similarly, Stoll and Fink (1996) state: 'evaluation can promote school self-accountability, translatable into wider accountability' (p. 168).

In reference to the research question that connects SSE to school improvement, the study reveals that the accomplishment of the evaluation cycle did not result in any direct outcomes that were 'visible' at school policy. It could be said, therefore, that SSE cannot achieve the school improvement purpose. Nixon (1992) has identified that: 'it is rare for evaluation in schools to have the kind of direct and visible impact that it is often expected to have. Educational evaluations may on occasions provide definite answers; but usually, only in response to questions which...appear fairly simplistic' (cited in Bush and West-Burnham, 1994, p. 166).

The qualitative study, however, considering that ‘change is simply a matter of learning to do things differently’ (James and Connolly 2000, p. 16), revealed changes at teacher, classroom and school level. At a first level, the process helps teachers to scrutinise themselves as people and professionals. Teachers can raise their self-evaluation, self-awareness and self-understanding with consequent changes obvious in their behaviour.

The process of evaluation ‘by doing’, which is the best way to learn how to do evaluation and change... (Nevo, 1995, p.59) can help teachers to increase their knowledge and awareness of evaluation, research and change but also many pedagogical and educational issues. It can spur individual teachers’ inquiry and offers them the opportunity to reconsider the school role in education as well as their own role in school and education. The process seems to create a temporary system within which teachers can reweave their thinking and provides opportunities for teachers’ personal and professional learning.

Teachers’ learning seems to enhance their self-confidence and self-esteem and sustain the belief that they can make a difference. Teachers’ learning, combined with better understanding of pupils, and parents’ needs, can reflect positively on teachers’ classrooms. The study reveals changes in teachers’ practices as well as in their behaviour and relationships with pupils and parents and perhaps in their attitudes toward them. Teachers, after mature consideration, become able to challenge and refocus their practices, to confront the existing assumptions underlying their actions, and to be involved in debates about issues researched (O’Hanlon, 1996, p. 81).

Although such changes do not appear to happen to the same extent to each teacher, they are considered as important for school improvement as a whole, since ‘whatever the legitimate concerns of government in legislating or regulating the process of teaching and learning, the majority of what schools do is still largely the preserve of individual teachers in individual classrooms’ (Holms, 1993, p. 34). Stenhouse’s conception according to which ‘any proposal needs to be tested and verified and adapted by each teacher in her or his own class’ (McIntyre, 2005, p. 369) is as true as ever today.

The process and teachers' learning can also reflect upon the school as an organisation, since the school experienced new elements in its operation. The school seemed to understand better its strengths and weaknesses from various points of view and more importantly to develop communication, group work, co-operation and more democratic procedures in decision making. Although critical reflection appears to challenge some of the teachers and raise micro-political issues, even some resistance, negotiation and re-negotiation can establish openness, trust and 'honesty in encouraging the exposure of the real life in schools to possible transformation' (O'Hanlon, 1996, p. 87).

SSE, therefore, 'as a self-reflective tool is a method for developing whole-school learning' (Middlewood et al, 2005, p. 75). This appears to reflect even on school culture as 'an aura'. This means that SSE can contribute to a shift in school culture. Under this consideration SSE, as a short term attempt, can be seen as having partly achieved the school improvement purpose. These findings can be interpreted as the indirect, 'invisible' outcomes of SSE indenting at school improvement.

Interpreting the above effects, the qualitative research provides valuable information about the factors that seem to contribute to or disturb the SSE as an innovation. School culture and headteachers' roles, individual teachers, external collaboration and national policy can be considered as the most influential. Acknowledging that these factors are not 'discrete and self-contained: rather, they blend in complex ways to create different patterns of relationships' (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001, p. 177), the next section attempts to summarise them and present some relevant recommendations. These recommendations draw both on the research reported in this study and my own professional experience as a teacher and headteacher.

11. 3 Some recommendations

1) School culture seems to play a decisive role in such an endeavour. The prevailing individualistic school culture that attempts at maintenance rather than innovation and improvement cannot be considered as supportive. The existence of progressive sub-cultures in a school can positively affect the innovation but they are not adequate. Schools need to develop a transformative counter culture.

Schools also need to develop an evaluative and accountable culture which ‘permeates every kind and level of daily action’ (Owens, 1999, p. 226). Given that accountability and improvement purposes of evaluation are intrinsically connected to an ongoing process, development of accountability culture also means development of transformative culture which values research and innovative initiations.

Within such a culture teachers, instead of being merely recipients, interpreters and implementers of established knowledge and policies, believe that they can make a difference and, as ‘change agents’ (Fullan, 1993), undertake new roles acting as learners, researchers and innovators. This, however, requires a culture that respects co-operation, internal collegiality, critical reflection and sharing of knowledge and experience.

Within such a learning culture, teachers can improve their attitudes or motivation, knowledge, understanding or skill, the ability to complete a particular task or solve a particular problem unaided; develop a risk-taking mentality but also feel autonomous to undertake the risk of change as part of their professional role integrating a systematic approach to experimentation with practice, the use of evidence and working collaboratively to share and support learning (Frost et al, 2000, p 140-141; Frost, 2003).

Finally, SSE suggests a school culture which respects the democratic procedures in decision making taking into account pupils’ and parents’ needs and expectations. This can gradually open a school’s thoughts and doors to the school community up to limits which it itself defines. Improvement of both teachers’ and parents’ positive attitudes towards each other are considered as a prerequisite. SSE, therefore, calls for a shift in school culture.

Since the study reveals that SSE can make a valuable contribution toward a shift in school culture (see Section 11.2) SSE can be considered as a cultural turning point, accepting that ‘the objective is rather to help the school grow towards evaluation and a change culture...’ (Dalin, 1993, p. 112). SSE, adopted by school policy and implemented through an action research strategy, can ‘be built into routine working

practice: be conducted collectively, systematically and rigorously; be enacted in such a way that the processes support development' (O'Hanlon, 1996, p. 80). Teachers' positive attitudes towards evaluation and change can be considered as the most valuable background.

In this attempt SSE should be seen as a long-term endeavour in the cycle of Evaluation-Change-Evaluation since implementation of a single SSE cannot be considered as adequate to transform the school culture. 'Changes in culture of a group take time. There must be a gradual process of developing evaluative and transformative culture whose learning, openness and trust are the main characteristics. The task to transfer attitudes and behaviour to school as a whole cannot be accomplished by means of the knowledge and skills arising from a single project' (Dalin, 1993, p. 112). Then, as Walker (1995) states, 'increasingly there (was) is a thrust towards creating operational contexts in schools which emphasises staff collaboration and participation in decision making and has the potential to create the kinds of conditions in which practitioner research can flourish....' (p. 257).

2) Within school culture the headteacher's role is revealed as decisive. The specific stage of their career seemed to affect it. However, headteachers, exerting their duties, should acknowledge the value of evaluation in school improvement and develop an evaluation-minded attitude and 'a culture of curiosity' (Steiner-Loeffler, 1996, p. 21). They should inspire and communicate a clear vision for change according to school needs and expectations. They need to operate as leaders who attempt to develop a culture of learning. Headteachers' impact upon school improvement is significant (Harris, 2004, p. 11).

Such leaders should be people who are change friendly and 'change agents', 'stimulating change through bottom-up participation' (Hallinger, 2003, p. 338) and striving to be 'model learners' (Harris, 2002, p. 67). This requires headteachers to restrict their transactional role and adopt the transformative aspect of it (R. Van den Berg et al 2000; Harris, 2003, p. 74; Harris, 2004, p. 16; Middlewood et al, 2005, p. 43).

Headteachers should also act as managers, competent to manage people and procedures in a process of innovation, able to build it, 'as a simple and idealistic picture of a desirable future, attainable, emphasising the ideological benefits rather than immediate tangible gains, grounded on the current reality focused enough but also flexible enough' (James and Connolly, 2000, p. 27).

Managing conflicts seemed to be an important aspect of their role. Given that 'change most often comes through conflict within staff, it is important for the leadership of the school to recognise squarely what is happening and to manage conflict within the school rather than to pretend that it does not exist' (Simons, 1987, p. 169). Headteachers can reduce teachers' anxieties, uncertainty and stress when change is directed to be small-scale and manageable (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 160).

Finally, headteachers should inspire teachers' commitment in a change through their own example; provide internal support using strategies for encouraging them to be more reflective and analytical (Schon, 1983). Headteachers should develop, therefore, the structural aspect of their role (developing clear goals), the political aspect of it (building alliances) with symbolic leadership principles (presence and inspiration). (Harris, 2004, p. 16) A shift in headteacher's role should be reconsidered.

3) A shift in school structure and specifically in the deputy headteacher's role is also revealed as a necessity. Marx (1990) accepts that 'schools with a fairly 'fragmented structure', with isolated work units, will have a particularly difficult job' (in Dalin with Gunter, 1993, p. 105). The deputy headteacher's role should be redefined and upgraded. They should undertake responsibilities that would help headteachers and schools in exerting their role. Headteachers and deputy headteachers who play a decisive role in school cultural norms should have a key role, as Frost (2003) claims, 'in paying attention to synergy, leverage and communication, fostering a climate where individual agency and mutual learning can flourish' (p. 9-10).

4) Individual teachers at particular stages of their career and life along with their discrete personalities, particular knowledge, experience and attitudes towards evaluation and change can create groups of distinct sub-cultures, able to affect school culture and capacity to undertake an innovation.

5) The role of external collaboration is also decisive. External collaborators can initiate the SSE programme to the school's concerns. Adopting such a responsibility they can find themselves in a leadership role. They should develop a vision and communicate it initially with the headteacher, whose support is a prerequisite, and later with teachers and all participants. They should encourage participants and formulate frames for support according to their needs. Scheerens et al (1999) have identified that 'although resistance to evaluation towards accountability is more likely, an improvement oriented culture is also a phenomenon that cannot be taken for granted as a given general orientation of school personnel but usually has to be stimulated by means of external support' (p. 93).

Engaging teachers in the process of implementation collaborators-critical friends can introduce procedures and describe steps. They can prepare and supply the school with the necessary materials for the evaluation, undertake the responsibility of managing the process, experiencing, thus, the process of an ongoing and onsite management.

Managing SSE is a complex process. Procedures are complex and people are complex beings as well. Since the process involves a range of procedures and participants whose lives can be affected, the process of evaluation becomes even more intricate. 'The more people involved, the more complex the process becomes' (Wideen and Andrew, 1987, p. 193).

Critical friends should keep teachers highly motivated to get involved in the difficult process of SSE (Lacey and Lawton, 1981; Goddard and Leask, 1992). Job satisfaction and internal motives but also the systematic and well organised process with feedback, negotiation, consultancy, support and celebration of success can act as a 'gentle' pressure that motivates and re-motivates the teachers throughout the process. Such procedures can also develop the teachers' feeling of ownership and commitment. The extended preparation phase can help teachers to enhance them. Internal co-ordination, supported by the headteacher and the teachers, is also an important responsibility for a critical friend.

Managing the process, critical friends should take seriously into consideration micro-political implications, particularly when critical reflection and negotiation for decision making threaten the existing status quo. Critical friends should manage them with flexibility and sensitivity. James and Connolly (2000) suggest, that 'effective management of change requires creativity and the ability to identify and solve problems' (p. 19).

Management of time should be a persistent responsibility for a manager. In a research-orientated evaluation, time is not presented as a serious problem. The researcher can adapt the time of various procedures to the school's timetable and teachers' needs, although teachers, in their first experience, seem to be curious about the research findings. Nevertheless, when the process is to be integrated within the school operation, time should be an important factor for the change implementation. A school has a pressing timetable and teachers are typically busy professionals with highly stressful responsibilities. SSE, therefore, should make minimal demands of school time (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 168).

Managers should acknowledge that 'changes cannot be managed independently of the general or routine management' (Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991, p. 14). They should encourage schools to incorporate the evaluation process into their management, as something that is not 'extra or unusual, but a task with which it can cope comfortably because innovation and change have become a natural part of school management traditional arrangements, management of change challenge' (ibid, p. 14). Since new challenges call for additional tasks and a redefinition of the existing school management is required, as Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) state, 'managing change involves changing management' (p. 14). Davies and Ellison (1998) argue that the 'way that you manage change can be as important as the change that you manage' (p. 23).

External collaborators in a researcher-critical friend role should take seriously into account political and ethical implications throughout the process. They should respect anonymity and confidentiality although a person's identification cannot always be obscured while ethical issues with reference to pupils pose difficult questions to be answered. Researchers-collaborators should also avoid some disadvantages that the

unequal power relationship can create. Initially, they should secure the independence of their role and create an atmosphere of trust. The realisation that school and teachers are free from constraints of accountability is particularly helpful.

Collaborators' balanced relationships with headteachers and teachers are valuable. Collaborators should also prevent these relationships from the 'power of theory'. They should adopt a low profile and avoid the role of the expert consultant. This ploy can be considered as powerful in reassuring teachers, who might feel that their professional autonomy and authority is threatened. Oja and Smulyan (1986) suggest that 'in order to make collaboration succeed, researchers must learn to work with teachers together as peers and be sure that their work supports rather than interferes with teachers' ongoing school responsibilities' (p. 13). Collaborators who share with teachers a similar educational background have an additional advantage.

Sharing power in managing the process should be another constant concern of collaborators. Developing ownership through communication, feedback, negotiation and re-negotiation for decision making as well as maintaining a non-directive role in meetings and focus groups can become valuable tools in their hands. The power of providing methods and materials can be reduced by negotiation of findings and joint decisions. As those in the school become more knowledgeable, aware and experienced, the power is expected to be gradually delegated to them.

A researcher-critical friend is also called to alleviate the power that the accessibility to the data reveals. Confidentiality and anonymity are prerequisites while negotiation and sensitivity in treating it can provide satisfying solutions. Writing the 'gentle truth' in the report seems to be the best means for encountering the critical friend's power. The power of the possible control over the dissemination of the findings can be justified considering that the collaborator uses this control to protect school and individuals from the risk of a rushed exposure. When the conditions are not 'ripe', evaluation should not expose schools, 'individual weaknesses to public scrutiny' (Adelman and Alexander, 1982, p. 168) and 'make life even more difficult' (Robson, 2000, p. 25).

Despite the attempts of researchers-collaborators to balance their power over headteachers and teachers and offer an impartial collaboration and critical friendship, the collaboration may appear as maintaining unequal relationships between them. If researchers are involved, 'they may provide an overall issue of framework or plan additional research in conjunction with the teachers' projects, although the imposition of such a framework may limit practitioners' freedom on issues of importance to them' (Elliott, 1985, cited in Oja and Smulyan, 1989, p. 14). Collaboration, however, does not mean equal roles in the process. Acknowledging that the balance of power equilibrium is a difficult and 'fragile' task, roles and power within them can pass from one collaborator to the other.

On the other hand, such an external collaboration appears to work effectively in the case of schools that lack knowledge or are inexperienced in a school-based change undertaking. Taking into account that 'there is (was) a little opportunity for this to occur spontaneously in the school or organisation' (O'Hanlon, 1996, p. 81), SSE through CAR can become a new challenge for the Greek school reality under the assumption that external collaborators 'can bring to bear a range of different expertise and value orientations' (Frost, 2003, p. 6).

External collaborators should avoid borrowing simplistic and ready-made copies from other contexts (MacBeath and Mortimore, 2001, p. 2). The need for external collaborators to know deeply the 'internal school context' becomes a prerequisite so that they could adapt the process into the school and classroom constraints (Goddard and Leask, 1992, p. 214). External collaborators should understand, as MacBeath and Mortimore (2001) state 'the nature and history of the school, its community, its pupil population and current programme; teachers' professional, personal, political and learning experiences and the school's current culture' (p. 143).

Researchers as external collaborators can work to achieve this understanding. They should communicate frequently and openly with teachers throughout the process 'to avoid possible conflicting perceptions and assumptions which result from their different positions in the field' (Oja and Smulyan, 1989, p. 13). Despite the difficulties of working at two levels, each role can feed into the other providing valuable information that facilitates both of them. A collaborator who shares a similar

cultural background with that of the school is useful. The issue that needs to be under consideration is who can undertake such a complex and sensitive role.

Consultants in local educational authorities could undertake such a role under certain prerequisites (Simons, 1988). They should be well-prepared for such responsibilities so that teachers trust in their competence. All importantly they should be relieved from the evaluator's or appraiser's role. This is clearly an issue that needs further investigation.

University departments can also collaborate with schools at the research level. Universities have 'expertise in research' as well as 'the experience in providing structures to support teachers' reflection and their presentation of accounts of practice' (Frost, 2003, p. 6). Finally, researchers from higher education and school districts should collaborate. Since evaluation, as a continuous process, should be gradually delegated to the school, researchers can provide a framework for action, help teachers in designing suitable research techniques and enable them to reflect on their planning (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Such changes, however, within the school context and beyond it, need changes that derive from the external school context.

6) The external context should provide a national policy that will establish and legitimise a new evaluative system, acting, thus, as a motive for schools towards evaluation and innovation undertaking. Such a policy can act as a source of pressure and support considering that 'pressure is to legitimate and demand, when progress is in peril, whilst the support is to encourage and make possible' (Fidler et al, 1997, p. 66).

The need for a national policy, which would put a framework for headteachers', teachers' and possibly consultants' development, is also revealed as decisive. Headteachers and teachers are called to undertake additional responsibilities in a school whose role changes; they need professional development. The restricted teachers' knowledge and skills for a systematic investigation are referred to amongst other disadvantages of school self-evaluation (Altrichter, Spencht, 1998, in Bagakis, 2001, p. 215).

Headteachers and teachers should raise knowledge on evaluation issues on both a theoretical and practical level. An introduction to evaluation theory can represent the major concepts of educational evaluation as well as its main purposes with the potential benefits or problems. A theoretical background about school innovation and change is valuable as well. Headteachers and teachers also need to be well-informed of the political context concerning evaluation and change issues.

Furthermore, a theoretical basis on the research perspectives and methods are necessary. This does not mean that headteachers and teachers should become professional evaluators, researchers or 'skilled technicians'. They should develop, however, a wider perspective on how they can design an evaluation and action research study, construct and use the complex and most frequently used instruments and techniques to carry out an evaluation or change. They should also know how to collect, analyse data and translate the research evidence into practice. 'All teachers should be equipped with the professional tools of educational evaluation so that intuitive professional judgments can be backed up by informed professional judgments' (Goddard and Leask, 1992, p. 213).

Finally, a deeper knowledge and understanding of school management and management of change seems to be necessary for the school to gain greater control over the change process. Self-evaluation as change needs leaders with the skills to manage change and people in a way that, building capacity, protects them against and challenges them with the imperatives of change. It is accepted that there is a need 'for a combination of *pressure* on and *support* for teachers' (Harris, 2002, p.43), who also need to develop their managerial skills.

The initial knowledge and skills on relevant issues should be provided by the basic teachers' education. Teachers' professional development should proceed as in-service education, taking particularly the form of school-based training, prior to undertaking change. It can raise teachers' awareness on regular updating and renew their spirit for evaluation and improvement according to school needs, acting thus, as an important teachers' motive.

At this level, a well-designed teachers' training can also prepare them to handle changes as a working group. It can construct shared meanings and develop school commitment for teachers' improvement in the school improvement plan. Such in-service training programmes can harmonise 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches, within school and among schools as a continuous process for improvement and adaptation of teachers' professional development at local, regional and national level. Within such a policy CAR should be seen as a significant contribution. It can lead to informal teachers' learning, since 'by doing' and through critical reflection it can help teachers in enhancing awareness, understanding and practice integrating skills into their active repertoire (Wideen and Andrew, 1987, p. 77).

Such a policy, however, requires a transformation in perceptions about evaluation and change. The absence of any evaluative system for a long period, the prior experience of teachers' inspection-appraisal and the political subordination of teachers' profession with the undesired consequences should be considered.

At the same time, a national policy that concerns changes also requires change in perceptions about teachers' and schools' roles. It should trust, facilitate and support teachers and their activities in schools rather than impose or control them from above since a system that follows a bureaucratic conception of teaching, defining the role of teachers as implementers of a curriculum prescribed by administrators and experts, does not trust teachers to understand teaching, nor does it trust them to assess its quality (Nevo, 1995, p. 190). Such an educational policy should perceive teachers as learners and researchers as well as schools as learning organisations, developing 'a more professional conception of teaching' (ibid, p. 190).

The need for opening democratic channels of communication and responsiveness between and amongst all those involved in the educational enterprise at local and national level, is revealed as decisive. Well-defined democratic procedures in decision making should penetrate the whole educational system. Schools should be aware of the needs, values and expectations of their community, maintaining the right to provide a space to parents and pupils in order to have a 'say' about their children and their own schooling. On the other hand, the central system should be responsive to school proposals.

Educational authorities, standing between schools and central government should establish and maintain open the channels of communication. Since the community's and the school's voice can be heard, school accountability can take place as a natural procedure in a democratic educational process. SSE that involves all interested groups for school improvement according to their needs, values and expectations, can contribute to the establishment of democratic procedures in education.

This implies the need for the system to delegate more autonomy to schools. Schools should be autonomous to undertake the risk of an innovation and teachers must have opportunities to exercise autonomy as part of their professional role (Stenhouse 1975). Then, schools and teachers might feel more responsible and accountable since 'the greater the autonomy of the school, the more the state feels the necessity for external evaluation for accountability purposes' (Scheerens, 1999, p. 86).

On the other hand, a policy that leaves complete autonomy to individual schools cannot be an inclusive and satisfactory alternative. The challenge is for the national system to provide such freedom that can meet the constraints that local and national authorities pose. A careful balance between a central framework and school based planning for SSE and innovation, supported by the local authority, should be proposed for a 'balance between centralisation and decentralisation' that means 'improvement of understanding and links between different parts of the system are a priority' (Goddard and Leask, 1992, p. 198).

For a highly centralised system, such a policy raises political implications since it threatens the stability in power relationships between and among the different apparatus of the system. SSE, however, as a long-term attempt, appears to provide the opportunity to the Greek educational system to be recognised as a healthy entity becoming 'open and inviting of accountability and improvement' (MacBeath, 1999, p.90).

11. 4 The limitations of the study

This study presents limitations at two levels:

A) Limitation at SSE level:

- In terms of democratic validity in the sample, the number of pupils that participated was triple and that of parents double to the number of teachers who engaged in the process. However, the obvious advantage of teachers seems to be eliminated considering pupils' and parents' population. Additionally, the avoidance of mixing up of participating groups and the dissemination of evaluative findings can be considered as a limitation in the democratic validity of the process. This first experience of the school, however, reveals political considerations such as:

- In terms of collaboration, the role of researcher-collaborator appears to be powerful. In the inexperienced school, however, such a role seemed to be necessary.

- In terms of individual reflection the whole process can never be an objective one and the data may be influenced. The number and synthesis of groups can bias the picture. Individual interviews balanced these influences.

- The disengagement of the deputy headteacher as well as the lack of his views and the headteacher's evaluative-qualitative data can be seen as a limiting factor in terms of the evaluative data validity. Furthermore, the process could not build a cross-checking framework on data validity through a mixture of teachers', pupils' and parents' groups, although their views could be analysed and compared.

- School self-evaluation could not achieve dialogue validity, in this case through dissemination of the findings.

B) At the case study level:

- Conceptual limitations in evaluation, school improvement and school accountability as external accountability, school answerability and professional responsibility within the Greek context.
- Limitations in generalisations. Nobody could be sure that a school within the same national educational context with the same influences, participating and co-operating in the research and the process of SSE could gain the same effects. The research findings are the product of the particular sample of a school at a specific point in time within the given historical and educational context.
- There were also limitations in ethical issues as, for instance, parental permission for pupils' participation as well as confidentiality and anonymity in a case study research.
- Finally, limitations in the data interpretation should be taken into account. The use of language and the opening of interpretations attempted to mediate this issue.

11. 5 The contribution of the study

Despite these limitations, the contribution of this work is looking at SSE in a different context, that of a Greek primary school. In particular, the significance of the ethnographic case study can be viewed from three perspectives:

- a) Contribution to the theoretical background and debate about evaluation, SSE, School Improvement, School Accountability, School-based Innovation and Change and its Management, School culture and Collaborative Action Research.
- b) Contribution to case-study, evaluation and action research methodology and methods.
- c) Contribution to the better understanding of teachers' and headteacher's role in this process as well as that of an outside collaborator as an initiator/critical-friend.

Although it must not be taken for granted a priority that a reform, as proposed in the present study, should work in Greece, the value of this study can also lie in its

contribution in instigating a Greek programme policy and leading the way to further research in a variety of settings without limitation to primary schools or school self-evaluation. I believe that the study will be useful to other teachers in other schools that work in similar situations. Finally, I hope that policy makers, reformers and evaluators or teacher educators could relate their decision making to what is described here. The study, therefore, could help the educational policy to overcome the impasses that have characterised Greek Education during the past three decades.

Closing, I stress the value of the study in my personal reflection. In this study I tried to combine the demanding task of an ongoing PhD and SSE programme implementation. The literature review helped me to draw upon references regarding both theoretical and methodological issues, although immersing in the broad issues of evaluation and change I found it difficult at times to isolate important threads and focus my review. I could achieve a clear understanding, for example, of the notions of evaluation, school accountability and improvement, change in school and management of its process as well as case study, action research and external collaboration.

Conducting the research on SSE I gained many insights into evaluation and change in general. I also experienced the role of researcher-collaborator-critical friend, who had leadership and managerial responsibilities. I could organise people and procedures in the process of SSE within the historical and cultural boundaries in which it occurred. These experiences also were very valuable to me as I learned how to analyse and synthesise the many pieces of observational and interviewing data in evaluative report. Also, the process towards the PhD also taught me to organise my thoughts systematically on many crucial aspects. Finally the contribution of the study is that it leaves a space in some topics for others researchers' further investigation.

11. 6 Further investigation

Based on the findings, the present study can open up areas for further investigation such as the following:

- changes at teachers' personal level

- the role of the individual teacher and particularly the role of the stage of their career, life or work experience in the process of SSE and change undertaking
- headteacher's role in the process of SSE implementation and change undertaking
- teachers' motivation and its role in SSE and change undertaking
- teachers' resistance to evaluation, appraisal and change
- the role of sub-cultures in school
- the impact of the process on pupils and parents
- changes on teachers' attitudes towards evaluation and change
- the role of group dynamics in a focus group
- the role of negotiation, feedback, support and reward in managing the process of change
- the role of individual interviews in comparison with focus groups in gathering evaluative information
- the role of national policy in school change
- the role of parents' in school change
- teachers' and parents' attitudes towards each other
- teachers' professional development on evaluation and change issues

These are all areas for potential further investigation in the Greek context. The study I have carried out shows that it is possible to bring about some significant cultural and educational changes within one school through introducing School Self-Evaluation. However, unless a more co-ordinated approach is taken such single initiatives will have very little effect on the system as a whole. In the future I hope to build upon this research to share the ideas with the wider educational community in order to have greater influence.

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Appendix 1: Timetable of the SSE programme implementation

1.1 Expected timetable of the SSE implementation for the academic year 2001-2002

Months / Procedures

September: Informal visits and meetings with the headteacher and the teachers;
Meetings with the supervisors.....

October: Organising and conducting the formal meeting with the headteacher and teachers

November: Focus groups with teachers, pupils and parents for gathering data towards identifying indicators; Meetings with supervisors

December: Working with the data; Meetings with supervisors

January - February: Presenting the findings, negotiating and agreeing priorities; developing the instruments for evaluation

March: School evaluation: completing questionnaires and conducting focus groups with participants

April: Analysing and interpreting the data

May: Presenting and negotiating the evaluation report; negotiating the report dissemination

June - July: Evaluating the process

1. 2 Final timetable of SSE implementation for the years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003

A. Preparation phase

1. Entering the school and establishing the research

- a) March to September 2001: Preparing the research
- b) September to October: The first contacts in the school
- c) 15th October : Introducing the programme
- d) October to November 2001: Gathering background information

2. Generating criteria

- a) November to December 2001: Gathering perceptions (focus groups with participants)
- b) December of 2001 to January 2002: Analysing the data and establishing criteria

3. Agreement on the focus of evaluation

- a) February 2002: Negotiating area/areas for evaluation
- b) March 2002: Choosing areas for evaluation and preparing data collection

B. Evaluation phase

4. Gathering evaluative information

- a) March to April 2002: Preparing data collection
- b) April to May 2002: Obtaining information

5. Celebrating with the teachers June 2002

6. Analysing the data and writing the report

Summer and September 2002

7. Communicating the findings

October to November 2002

C. Institutionalisation phase

8. Integrating the findings into the school policy

- a) November to December 2003: Setting priorities
- b) January to March 2003: Making decisions/ Small-scale results and attempts for long-scale plans.
- c) April-May 2003: Evaluating evaluation

Appendix 2: The official permission of the P.I. for conducting the research



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΕΘΝ. ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ & ΘΡΗΣΚ/ΤΩΝ

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Βαθμός Ασφαλείας:

Να διατηρηθεί μέχρι:

Αθήνα 25-7-2001

Αρ.Πρωτ. Βαθμός Προτερ.

Φ.15/765/Γ1/694

ΠΡΟΣ : κ. Κοκορέση Αργυρώ

Αλφειού 9

Βριλήσσια 15235 Αθήνα

ΚΟΙΝ.: Βλ. Πίνακα Αποδεκτών

ΘΕΜΑ : Χορήγηση άδειας διεξαγωγής έρευνας.

Απαντώντας σε σχετικό αίτημά σας και έχοντας υπόψη την Πράξη 12/17-7-2001 του Τμήματος Ε.Τ.Ε.Τ. του Παιδαγωγικού Ινστιτούτου, σας κάνουμε γνωστό ότι εγκρίνουμε τη διεξαγωγή της έρευνάς σας με θέμα: «Βαδίζοντας προς την αυτο-αξιολόγηση: ένας προκλητικός στόχος για τα ελληνικά δημοτικά» η οποία θα πραγματοποιηθεί στο 1^ο Δημοτικό Σχολείο Βριλησίων.

Η άδεια χορηγείται για μία τριετία.

Για τη διεξαγωγή της έρευνάς σας θα πρέπει:

α) Πριν από τις επισκέψεις σας στα σχολεία να υπάρχει συνεννόηση με τους Δ/ντές τους και συνεργασία με το διδακτικό προσωπικό, ώστε να διασφαλίζεται η ομαλή λειτουργία των σχολικών μονάδων και

β) Τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνάς σας να κοινοποιηθούν στο Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο και τη Δ/ση Σπουδών Π.Ε.

Οι Προϊστάμενοι των Δ/σεων και Γραφείων Π.Ε. στους οποίους κοινοποιείται το έγγραφο αυτό, παρακαλούνται να ενημερώσουν σχετικά τα σχολεία στα οποία θα πραγματοποιηθεί η έρευνα.

Εσωτερική διανομή

Δ/ση Σπουδών Π.Ε.

Τμήμα Α'



Ο ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΤΗΣ ΣΠΟΥΔΩΝ Π.Ε.

Πρόσ. Αντιν. Π.Ε.
ο προϊστάμενος Τμήματος
Διςκπ/σης & Πρωτοκόλλου

ΚΩΝ/ΝΟΣ Ι. ΚΩΤΣΗΣ

Appendix 3: The introduction of the SSE programme

Since you already know, I will now try to explain how I decided to get involved in a study relevant to school evaluation. Living in the educational reality of Greece for 25 years, but also coming closer to the English educational context for the last five years, I realised, among many other differences between them, a gap in school evaluation matters. I distinguished school evaluation from teachers' appraisal through inspection, which is the most known method in the Greek educational reality, while evaluation of educational work, as it has been introduced by the previous Minister of Education, attracted my concern..

For me, the important issue was the answers to simple questions: Why do we evaluate? What is the purpose of evaluation? Evaluation for school improvement seemed to be the primary purpose. Another question was: 'Who evaluates?' Evaluation within the school (teachers, pupils and parents), as an integral part of school life, seemed to attribute a fairly democratic dimension to evaluation. Finally, the answer to the question 'what should be the criteria against which the school is evaluated?' was also important. The school evaluates itself against criteria which are posed by the school itself. This view as it is proposed by MacBeath SSE framework became for me the most attractive one.

How can the school be evaluated? This is going to be unfolded with you, the teachers, step-by-step. At this stage, I will not present a whole mass of information because it cannot reduce the opacity. It can rather lead to increase the complexity of the understanding process. Thus, I only present an outline of the research schedule. I estimate to work with you and groups of pupils and parents throughout the year. We are going to discuss issues that concern school matters and negotiate opinions and ideas. Possibly we can make decisions and proceed in action. In this effort I am going to become for you a constant friend-advisor.

I must make explicit that this research is self-funded. It is supervised by a university outside Greece and it is expected to be completed after four years or more. I also confirm that I do not intend to use observation of teaching for collecting data while I ensure the confidentiality and protection of the school and individuals. I am going to

use pseudonyms and avoid detailed explanations while the possibility of findings dissemination will be your decision.

I hope that the school will take a positive step in involving all teachers in the process. This involvement can offer opportunities for you to raise understanding and develop skills. However, any lack of commitment will be respected. In co-operation I expect to dedicate some time to discuss issues that this programme implementation may raise.

Finally, although I know that something like this is untypical of Greek culture, for research demands I will ask you to confirm your participation by signing the following consent form.

Appendix 4: The consent form
4. 1 The consent form in English

I would like you to participate in my research study entitled: 'Towards school self-evaluation: a challenging target for primary schools in Greece'. This study will attempt to explore whether a particular self-evaluation programme is appropriate for school accountability and improvement and to gain an understanding of how this process evaluation can work in the current Greek primary schools.

Initially your involvement will take about 30 minutes of your time in a group interview. You will discuss issues concerning a school or your school. Your participation will be positive for you and your school. The benefits of your participation are expected to arise during the process of the research.

All information will be coded and strictly confidential. Nothing which could affect you and your school negatively is going to be revealed. Any part of your confident and identifiable information will not be revealed without your written consent. Of course, your participation is completely voluntary and you can stop at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact me:

Kokoretsi Argyro
Alphiou 9
Vrilissia 15 235
Tel. 8046311

Please read the following sentence and if you agree to get involved in the research, please sign below.

I agree to get involved in the above research programme under the conditions as they have already put across.

Signature:

Date:

The researcher.....

Date.....

4. 2 The consent form in Greek

Έντυπο συμφωνίας δασκάλου/ας για τη συμμετοχή του/της στην έρευνα.

Θα ήθελα να συμμετέχετε στην έρευνά μου με τον τίτλο: “Βαδίζοντας προς την αυτο-αξιολόγηση: ένας προκλητικός στόχος για τα δημοτικά σχολεία στην Ελλάδα.” η οποία θα προσπαθήσει αφ’ ενός μεν να διερευνήσει εάν ένα συγκεκριμένο πρόγραμμα αυτο-αξιολόγησης είναι κατάλληλο για την απόδοση λόγου και βελτίωση του σχολείου και αφ’ ετέρου να κατανοήσει πώς αυτή η διαδικασία αξιολόγησης μπορεί να λειτουργήσει κατά τον καλύτερο τρόπο για το σχολείο και τους συμμετέχοντες μέσα στη σημερινή εκπαιδευτική πραγματικότητα στην Ελλάδα

Αρχικά η εμπλοκή σας θα απαιτήσει περίπου είκοσι-τριάντα λεπτά του χρόνου σας για μια ομαδική συνέντευξη στην οποία θα συζητηθούν θέματα που αφορούν το σχολείο.

Η συμμετοχή σας θα ήταν θετική για σας και το σχολείο σας. Τα αναμενόμενα θετικά αποτελέσματα από τη συμμετοχή σας αναμένεται να ανακύψουν κατά τη διάρκεια της διαδικασίας.

Κάθε πληροφορία σας θα είναι κωδικοποιημένη και αυστηρά εμπιστευτική. Κανένα στοιχείο που θα μπορούσε να επηρεάσει αρνητικά τον εαυτό σας ή το σχολείο δεν πρόκειται να αποκαλυφτεί. Κάθε μέρος της εμπιστευτικής και αναγνωρίσιμης πληροφόρησής σας θα αποκαλυφτεί μόνον κατόπιν γραπτής συμφωνίας. Φυσικά η συμμετοχή σας είναι τελείως εθελοντική και θα μπορείτε να διακόψετε σε οποιαδήποτε χρονική στιγμή της έρευνας.

Αν έχετε οποιαδήποτε ερώτηση παρακαλώ επικοινωνήστε μαζί μου.

Κοκορέτση Αργυρώ
Αλφειού 9
Βριλήσσια 15 235
Τηλ. 8046311

Παρακαλώ διαβάστε την παρακάτω πρόταση και εάν συμφωνείτε να συμμετάσχετε, παρακαλώ υπογράψτε παρακάτω:

Συμφωνώ να συμμετάσχω σε αυτό το ερευνητικό πρόγραμμα κάτω από τις συνθήκες, όπως αυτές εκτέθηκαν παραπάνω

Υπογραφή

Ημερομηνία.

Η ερευνήτρια

Ημερομηνία

Appendix 5: The questionnaire of Headteacher's individual interview

First part: School culture

A: Headteacher's background:

- 1) How many years have you been teaching?
- 2) How many years have you been a headteacher? How many years have you been in this school?
- 3) Have you any postgraduate studies or other qualifications?
- 5) Have you prepared for undertaking such a post?
- 4) Have you attended any courses relevant to evaluation or innovation in school?

A: General information about the school context

- 1) Could you comment on the building of the school?
- 2) How many pupils are there in the school?
- 3) How could you describe them?
- 4) How could you describe the neighborhood of the school?
- 5) What are the parents' expectations from the school?

C: Headteachers' role

- 1) What is your vision about the school?
- 2) How do you communicate this vision?
- 3) What are the school targets for this year?
- 4) Do you undertake innovations in your school? Please give me some examples.
- 5) What kind of relationships do you have with your teachers?
- 6) Is your cooperation with your teachers successive?
- 7) Do you sometimes use certain approaches to accomplish your objectives?
- 8) Is there co-operation between school and pupils' parents?
- 9) Which are the responsibilities that absorb you mostly?
- 10) What are the difficulties of your role?
- 11) Have you got any help in exerting your duties?
- 12) Where can you address for guidance and support?

Second part: Headteacher's attitudes towards evaluation and change

A: Headteacher's perceptions, belief or opinion about school evaluation

- 1) How do you perceive evaluation in school?
- 2) What does self-evaluation mean to you?
- 3) What does school-self-evaluation mean to you?
- 4) Teachers say that schools are responsible for their pupils. Do you agree?
- 5) Has your duty as a headteacher affected your opinion? If yes, how?
- 6) Do you know something about the last legislation concerning evaluation of educational work and SSE?

B: Headteacher's knowledge and experience

- 1) What are your experiences in evaluation in school? How have they affected you?
- 2) How do you relate to the term 'evaluation' if you think of your professional practice?
- 3) Recounting your day yesterday could you tell me whether evaluative comments played a part in it?
- 5) How do you use this information?
- 6) Who plays a role in such information?

C) Headteacher's expectations of SSE programme

- 1) What are your expectations of getting involved in a SSE programme?
- 2) How do you think evaluative information can be better used in your school?
- 3) Do you think that the school would feel more responsible for its work if evaluation has been taken place?
- 4) Do you think that pupils can participate in the programme?
- 5) What about parents' participation?
- 6) Do you think that the school should address the evaluation findings to parents?
- 7) What about the educational authority?
- 8) Do you think that teachers have enough skills to undertake this task?
- 9) Do you know where the school can find guidance and support to undertake such a process?
- 10) Do you think that teachers have enough time for this task?
- 11) Have you got any other questions?

Appendix 6: The questionnaire of teachers' individual interviews

First part: School culture

A: Teacher's background:

- 1) How many years have you been teaching?
- 2) How many years have you been in this school?
- 3) Have you any postgraduate studies or other qualifications?
- 4) Have you attended any course relevant to evaluation or innovation in school?

B: General information about the class:

- 1) What are your targets for your class?
- 2) Do you try any initiations in your class?
- 3) How are about your relationships with the pupils?
- 4) How would you characterise the interpersonal relationships of your pupils?
- 5) What are parents' expectations of their children?

C: Information about working conditions

- 1) How are your relationships with your colleagues?
- 2) How is your co-operation with them?
- 3) How do you see your co-operation with the headteacher?
- 4) Do you feel that your work is recognised in the school? If yes, how?
- 5) How is your co-operation with parents?
- 6) Who do you feel that can help you in your work?

The second part that referred to teachers' attitudes towards evaluation and innovation was similar to that of headteacher.

Appendix 7: The headteacher's individual interview

Researcher (R): I would like you to give me some information about your professional background. How many years have you been teaching? How many years as a headteacher and how many years in this school?

Headteacher (HT): I have been working for 28 years. This is my second year in the post of headteacher, when the deputy headteacher refused it. In this school, however, I have been working for five years.

R: Have you got any postgraduate or other qualifications?

HT: After 27 years, last year I attended the course of 'exomiosis'. It was an interesting programme. I have also got some training and I have attended some conferences but nothing in reference to evaluation in education.

R: Have you been prepared for undertaking such a post?

HT: Not in any particular way.

R: What are your aspirations in the profession?

HT: I would like to maintain my post in this school. This year headteachers will be re-appointed...I am not sure if I will achieve it. There are many candidates.

R: I would like to have some background information about the school. What about the building?

HT: The school was built in 1947. It was the first one in the area, when the suburb was a village near Athens. Now there are four more schools and next year a new one is going to operate. The building has been reconstructed. Last year I transformed two large storages into the staff and headteacher's offices. However, the building needs further development. For the next year we have arranged five rooms to be added; we expect them to facilitate the school operation. We'll see...

R: What about the pupils' population?

HT: The school has 295 pupils. We operate at six levels, two classes for each one. We also have a class for children with special needs (about 7-8 pupils) as well as a class to support children with problems in language that, however, does not operate at the moment due to lack of teachers. The children from other ethnicities have already been integrated into the school community.

R: How would you describe the neighbourhood of the school?

HT: It is a nice neighbourhood. Although the school is located in the old part of the suburb, the place has been valued and there are nice houses and comfortable flats. In

general the suburb population is prosperous. There are, however, many children whose parents are divorced with the well-known consequences for them.

R: What are the parents' expectations from the school?

HT: Parents value education. They have at least finished Lyceum (that means 12 years of education) and many of them have a degree of tertiary education. Thus, most pupils are directed to follow high education.

R: What is your vision about the school?

HT: Good operation in general is our first goal. Pupils should be safe. Teachers in their class should achieve the best in teaching and learning. We are also interested in pupils' socialisation because, as I have already said, pupils in our current society have many difficulties. Their families put on them a huge amount of care.

R: How do you communicate this vision in the school?

HT: I am in close contact with my teachers. I spend a lot of my time in the staff-room where I have the opportunity to discuss every thought informally with them. Of course, in formal meetings we take decisions 'democratically'. I also have personal communication with parents and particularly with the President of their Association. They need to be informed and we need their support and their participation in our activities because our government cannot afford the expense, something which is not good for our country.

R: What are your targets-priorities for this year?

HT: We have undertaken an environmental programme where students from the third and fifth level do some research on water. We also participate in a UNICEF programme about street-kids and child exploitation, and other extra-curricular activities. We put emphasis on the extra-curricular activities because they can contribute in developing pupils' relationships and socialisation. We have already delegated to a committee of four teachers to prepare proposals and ideas for the final festival of our school. Our school has achieved a good 'reputation' in the area due to such activities and many parents prefer it instead of a private one.

R: I also heard that you computerise and you also plan to do some building development.

HT: Yes, it is true. The President of the Parents' Association helps us in computerising and we have agreed with the municipality for five teaching rooms to be added, one of which will for recreational activities, music, art, English and computers.

R: Do you introduce any initiatives? Could you give me some examples?

HT: Yes, I try but the teaching staff does as well. We discuss initiatives as I referred to them and we make decisions. Some of the teachers have already organised the responsibilities and the activities for the festival at the end of the year and we are going to have a meeting for that.

R: What about the teaching staff?

HT: The teachers are extremely co-operative. They are willing to be involved in many school activities, particularly the younger ones, who seem to have fresh knowledge and interest. Taking into account the problems that other schools have, I could say that the atmosphere of this school is good.

R: What about your co-operation with your teachers?

HT: I am always in favour of co-operation and democratic decision making. It is not necessary to follow hierarchy because teachers can complement each other. Thus, teachers co-operate in extra-curricular activities and assist me in my role.

R: Do you sometimes use certain approaches to accomplish your objectives?

HT: Yes, by rewarding teachers who undertake some additional responsibilities so that others will follow suit. Sometimes I have to be strict and then teachers may complain. However, there are some creative teachers who 'attract' the others.

R: What are your responsibilities that absorb you mostly?

HT: Of course, I would like to pay more attention on pedagogical issues. I try to discuss teaching methods with teachers and support them in their pedagogical duties. However, my administrative responsibilities overwhelm this aspect of my role. We have many things to do. We need a secretary so that we could devote ourselves to other responsibilities as what happens in secondary schools. We need assistance that cannot come from anywhere. Thus, I try to co-operate with my teachers to go ahead.

R: What are the school relationships and co-operation with the parents?

HT: I could say that parents are supportive and co-operative. They seem, however, to be very caring with their children, something that can create conflicts with an individual teacher. We also have some differences with the expanded schedule programme- 'olohmero school' - which does not facilitate them or pupils in any case. The programme is new and needs many improvements but also parents need more information and understanding of the school possibilities.

B part

R: Let's get into evaluation issues. How do you perceive evaluation in school?

HT: My idea is that we evaluate teachers and pupils when we seek improvement. This means that I connect evaluation to consultation.

R: Here I would like to point out that many times teachers claim that they are actually adequate for their responsibilities and schools; therefore, they do not need any official evaluation.

HT: I believe that teachers are conscious professionals. In any case, however, it would be a good idea if schools could be evaluated if evaluation is for improvement. The point is by whom and how we are going to be evaluated.

R: How do you differentiate evaluation from inspection?

HT: I believe that there is a difference between them. The purpose of evaluation is to pinpoint deficiencies and improve them, while I see inspection as a form of control.

R: Have you ever had personal experiences concerning inspection?

HT: I was evaluated by inspectors many years ago. The inspector, however, did not come to point any weaknesses on my part and discuss it with me indicating the means of improvement, as I believe he should have. The inspection was connected only to my appraisal.

R: What does SSE mean to you?

HT: The SSE that is now applied to schools is a bureaucratic procedure, only on paper. I believe that a real implementation of SSE would help us accomplish a lot of things that are now missing from our school. I believe that the school should be evaluated in its entirety. Now, who is going to be the evaluator...It is a difficult issue. It depends on many things. Maybe the consultant or the headteacher, perhaps the teachers, I cannot say...

R: Do you evaluate officially as a headteacher?

HT: No, never.

R: Unofficially?

HT: Of course. On a continuous basis I observe and evaluate mainly the teaching staff and the school unit, such as the building, extra-curricular activities and so on.

R: Apart from your observations do you have any sources of information inside or outside the school?

HT: Yes. I have a lot of input from outside and particularly from parents.

R: Students also?

HT: Of course. Firstly, I check the information and then I act accordingly.

R: Do you think that pupils can have 'a say' in school evaluation?

HT: Of course. Children continuously evaluate and they do it particularly in their class.

R: I am referring to official procedures.

HT: Of course they do.

R: What about parents? Can they participate in school evaluation?

HT: Parents can have an opinion but they should not control evaluation. Greek parents, however, are not mature. They do not have the experiences of their European counterparts as in Germany, for instance, where I have spent a lot of time and I have seen parents play a serious role in school activities but they have done that for many years.

R: Do you think that SSE can offer the initiation for further parental participation in school matters with well-defined boundaries.

HT: I believe that discussing and exchanging ideas can lead to something good. How can it possibly not work with parents? At the moment, however, we should be careful.

R: If teachers undertake evaluation by themselves do they have enough knowledge, skills or time for this? I would like your comments on each one of them.

HT: That would have been a good idea. I believe that teachers and especially the younger ones that are more enthusiastic and better equipped may evaluate the unit well. Anyhow, all teachers have time. Where is the headteacher in such an evaluation?

R: How do you see your own role in evaluation?

HT: Neither I nor my colleagues would like to keep the control of evaluation and replace the old inspectors. I would like, however, to initiate evaluation and supervise it. This is completely different from control.

R: If teachers need additional knowledge, guidance and support in school evaluation, where do they then turn?

HT: The way things are, they should go to the school counsellor, even though I do not agree with the way they operate. They seem to be distant from teachers and schools.

R: Does it mean that you don't trust them?

HT: It depends on the counsellor. Usually the institution of counsellors has not been developed and utilised. We would like them to come to school, discuss and exchange views and ideas so that we could find solutions together.

R: In retrospect, your experience has not provided you with substantial proof to trust them, but you think that there is plenty of space where they can act. Do you think school evaluation findings should be kept for inside use or they can go 'outside' the school?

HT: Where can they go?

R: Upwards, to our educational authorities or downwards to parents.

HT: I have no objections. The authorities should know. Why don't the findings go outside school? Schools should be open. The community should know. As I have already mentioned, the community only needs some time to acquire experience.

R: In the shaping of the above views have you been affected by your headteacher's post?

HT: Of course. I have revised a lot of my views as, for instance, my views about extra-curricular activities as well as about evaluation. Before undertaking my headteacher's duty I was negative. Now, I believe that evaluation can help teachers and schools to be improved. Toward this, the government should undertake the responsibility. The government has left us and schools alone. A national policy is necessary. We need support. This year some books have changed without any training available for the teachers who are going to teach them.

R: What do you expect from this school engagement to the process?

HT: Beyond our personal relationships, I believe that something positive can derive from this research for the teachers and the school and the evaluation findings can become the beginning for action.

R: Thank you very much.

UNIVERSITY HAVE REQUESTED THE
INDIVIDUAL NAMES BE REDACTED FROM
THE TEXT IN THE APPENDIX ON PAGES
19, 25, 67, 73 AND 77

Appendix 8: Teachers' individual interview

8. 1 Interview with

Researcher (R): I would like you to give me some information about your professional background. How many years have you been teaching? How many years have you been in this school? Have you any postgraduate or other qualifications?

(H): In 1985 I graduated from the Pedagogic Academy. I have attended the Maraslian training programme for two years after passing an examination and a S.E.L.D.E. programme which I entered through a lottery system. For two years, 1985-1987, I worked in the private sector (the Greek-German school). Since 1987 I have been working in public education. I worked in the Maraslian School that is adapted to the Pedagogical Academy. I came to this area because the other school was too far away and it took me too much time to travel. This is my first year in this school after my maternity leave which lasted two years.

R: I would also like you to give me some background information about your class in this school. Which grade do you teach? How many pupils are there? What about your pupils?

H: In this school I handle a part of the fourth grade with 28 pupils. I have a foreign girl in the class with serious learning problems. Previously the girl was supported by special classes but, today, there is a problem. The school does not provide any special class for this girl and in spite of the special care that is been taken by myself, the girl herself as well as the family do not respond to my assignments. Additionally, I have a pupil with a serious concentration disruption problem.

R: What are the conditions of your class operation and your own priorities this year?

H: Learning is my first target but pupils' behaviour and socialisation are equally other important goals. Generally, I could say that upon entering the class I detected a sense of upheaval and self-promoting displays of doubtful knowledge. Now, after devoting sufficient time their learning level has come up to a satisfactory level and their interpersonal relationships have improved. I believe that parents' co-operation has contributed a lot to that.

R: Now you have arrived at another question. How do you see pupils' parents and what are their expectations from the school?

H: They expect a lot from the school. Through their children they see their own recognition in society. This is a characteristic of Greek parents and particularly of this area. They are very interested in their children's progress.

R: How do you see your relationship with them?

H: In the beginning, I saw a rather condescending behaviour towards the teacher but I was able to communicate with them on a lateral level after a few sessions, without implying that we socialise in any sense of conversation on a first person basis. Thus, after a few meetings I was able to establish communication and co-operation and I do not have any problems today.

R: I would like to enlarge on that. How did you handle the subject?

H: I explained to them from the beginning, how we were going to work together. In our regular monthly meeting that occurs during the nine months of the school year I introduce a subject of mutual interest and I assume a position on that. Having also explained that I am not a specialist in any field, I made it clear that my proposals are a result of research and study. After the introduction of the subject I answer relevant questions of a general nature, then discuss its implementation in the classroom and finally hold private talks about individual concerns and problems.

A subject that we have discussed, for instance, is about a child's ability to concentrate between the ages of 10 and 15, and the last one had to do with the way parents present themselves to their children. What raised this subject was a question submitted to us by the school psychologist at the school that my own children go to, and it was this: Do we show our children a pleasant, happy face today, to stand by the child or an anxious face that will transfer to the child all the anxiety that we feel?

More or less this is how I operated and I managed to have 90-95% parents' participation even though meetings take place during the daytime hours and it is hard for them to get away from their work and come to school.

R: Was your effort discussed in a wider range within the school place?

H: Not in this school. But in another school of another district the headteacher asked me to introduce subjects relevant to pedagogical and teaching subjects for the benefit of the parents, which, of course, I refused to do on a permanent basis because I do not consider myself to be a specialist. Some things were discussed but they stayed there. It is an issue of co-operation but not of additional load for a teacher. I think that teachers try a lot to improve school operation but in a personal and individual way.

R: Beyond what we have just described and which would be considered to constitute an innovation in the field of developing communication and co-operation with the parents, do you take similar initiatives with the class process?

H: Well, let me tell you, when I worked in a private school I used to take specific work for the children - photocopies and other materials - and I had to follow a certain way of teaching. Now, because I am a person that cannot compromise with routine I have chosen to work in a public school in order to have flexibility in my choices.

R: Would that mean that you feel liberated enough within the school to try out innovations and trials?

H: No, no. I am afraid of the system itself. I am afraid that a supervisor or a counsellor will come in and find me 'technically' wrong. The only thing that I have achieved, and I pursue this every time, is to have the parents on my side. For example, in fourth level there is minimal reference to Greek Geography even though this is pupils' last chance because in the fifth level they learn about Europe and in the sixth level they are taught world Geography. So, after I informed the parents and gained their approval, I worked on the way that would help the children learn about their country. I made up teams that would not only work at school but at home as well, trying to reach, for instance, the hidden treasure at Delphi. They would have to specify the means to get there, the route to follow, the time required, and accumulate information with their parents' help. Finally each team would present their conclusions in class. In the end I found out that both children and parents were very pleased. At first level I ordered double-lined notebooks even though the manual specifies otherwise. I risk a few things. I am afraid of the system but I have the support of the parents.

R: Do you share these efforts with other colleagues?

H: Not this year, because of special circumstances (I was away etc.). In previous years, yes, I collaborated with the teacher of the other departments.

R: Is there some sort of a more specific discussion in the office or does it always remain at an informal, interpersonal and occasional level of communication-collaboration?

H: No, only at informal level. There have never been proposals or inquiries.

R: Are you satisfied with your personal and work relationships with your colleagues?

H: Yes, I am satisfied enough, I would say.

R: Would you recommend the school to another colleague without reservations?

H: I would say yes. The only drawback is the large number of pupils in each class. I have 28 pupils. In the Maraslian Primary School we had decided that there is not enough time to teach, correct, observe and help a 30-pupil class, which is the

maximum, so we reduced the number to 25. Now, with 28 pupils here I can see that the time is not enough. This is my only reservation.

B Part

R: You mentioned previously that when you try something new you see the reactions, if the face of the children and parents is happy etc. In other words, you evaluate on a daily basis. What does evaluation mean to you?

H: At first I evaluate my pupils at a class level, and then individually focus on the effort that each one made in order to achieve the desired class or individual goals. Then, I make self-evaluation to determine the rate of my success in achieving my goals in the learning or teaching process.

R: So, you are talking about self-evaluation of a teacher. What would you say for self-evaluation of the school unit itself, given it is a living organism that operates as a whole even though it is consisted of isolated groups?

H: I would agree, of course. It appears that many aspects of school's life as whole could improve. Today, we almost exclusively try to make the school look 'good' through the arrangement of different events. We give attention to the shop window of the school, but we could discuss other sides of school life as well.

R: Do you believe that teachers in general are able to take on such a task (self-evaluation of the school unit) with the intention of improving it? Do they possess the knowledge and skills needed?

H: Yes, I believe that they are capable of many things, but most of the time they prefer to conceal their abilities in order to maintain an easy level of work requirements. Of course, that does not mean that they do not know. They can and they do know. At the Maraslian School I remember what a headteacher used to tell us: your husband, at home, should only know you from the waist down. It is not necessary or it would not be to your benefit if he knew you from the waist up. What you think, what you know, what you may accomplish and what your capabilities are; but what if we were doing the same in school. The headteacher was doing this anyway. She had ideas but she would enlist other colleagues to put them into effect. The same happens with many of our colleagues. They are capable, but they will not assume the additional responsibilities. It is impossible, though, to operate a school under the rules and logic that we apply to our personal life.

R: Is there time?

H: It is true that time is pressing, but I think that a lot can be accomplished if we are well organised and follow a system. Now teachers question many times whether they should make an extra effort since there is not any financial benefit for this. This is how much I get paid, this is how much I produce, they think. I agree with that but, on the other hand, I take into consideration the fact that we are not dealing with commodities but young souls in the making. Therefore, I should regard my job as a duty which requires an extra step to be taken. In reference to that now I have to repeat that we have to plan and organise our work in order to cover the material which should be taught especially in higher levels.

I try to find time, maybe to tidy up the classroom that still has the Christmas decorations hanging, because I was absent or whatever... You see, generally, we assign great importance to the lesson. Irrespectively whether it is good or bad, we try to follow the syllabus design in the best possible way and that keeps us away from other activities and responsibilities. If some of the elements were planned I believe that the necessary time would be found.

R: In a school evaluation effort, except the teachers, who else could provide information?

H: The pupils, maybe.

R: What about parents?

H: Maybe, but without vulgarity. Only people that have shown interest and have taken a serious stand on the issues while following, through their children, the school operation could participate and offer their wisdom in the evaluation of the school. I would never accept any comments from people that are not in touch or exhibit ill-will while they only try to get their own repressed feelings out through what should be a serious and responsible piece of work. That 'personal' part scares me.

R: Would you mind if the findings of an evaluative attempt for the school were made public by the educational authorities or parents?

H: No. I think that it may be good for the school.

R: Do you feel that somebody from the educational environment could help you in such an attempt? After all these years that you work as an educator who do you think you could apply to for help?

H: I find support in my books, in writings or so to speak in my own personal interest; also, from the specialists, sometimes. One of my parents is a psychologist. I asked her

to present a subject that would be a product of her field expertise. So, there is something to take from the others.

R: From within the system? Who does the system itself refer you to?

H: To nobody, only to other colleagues. From then on everything becomes extremely bureaucratic. You do not find anything. You just get lost if you happen to need help.

R: I insist and I get more specific; maybe some counsellors? You did not mention it. It did not spontaneously occur to you. So you do not think about it at all.

H: No, no, there is nothing there. That's how it is.

R: How do your expectations get involved with a school evaluation programme?

H: I expect to acquire information and experience evaluation to improve my work.

R: Thank you very much. We will discuss this again later.

Appendix 9: Focus groups of teachers, pupils and parents for identifying indicators

9. 1 A sample of a teacher's focus group ()

(M) (reads): Friendly and dignified climate.

Researcher (R): What do you mean by that?

(F): That has to do with us, the teachers. This will be provided by good relationships, a good atmosphere, good disposition and above all good leadership.

M: Leadership is very important. It works as a buffer.

F: Indeed, it has to deal with the alienation of personal problems in the workplace so that you can leave the problems behind and bring out your better self. This means that if the headteacher performs well and wants the team to work and go ahead he/she should be acting like a conductor to solve problems with us, such as if for instance today your leg hurts and you can not operate properly, he/she should try to soothe out that pain, give you a day off, cover for you today so that you can perform better tomorrow or if you have a hard time with some of your responsibilities, to help you out providing someone next to you. Having done these things when they are needed, he/she can contribute to professional solidarity which can lead to personal relationships.

Stasia (S): The headteacher would be helpful in the creation and allocation of more school activities on behalf of our colleagues. That is to say that he should operate as a catalyst for each teacher, to give the best that he has got (to perform the best of his ability). Also he operates as a buffer or rather as a go-between so that teachers would not have serious confrontations with parents, thus providing protection to our colleagues.

Christal (Ch): For example, what would he say, when a parent comments for the teacher 'why is he taking the pupils to the theatre?'

S: Is there such a case?

(Y): Yes, yes, there is.

(At this point we had a short discussion about a certain past argument between the teacher and parents).

R: Let's proceed.

F: I read: excellent facilities

Y: That means modern classrooms, recreational rooms, music labs, chemistry lab, athletic facilities, a space in the yard to protect the kids during break in bad weather

and foreign language lab. Sufficient educational resources are also relevant to the excellent schooling facilities.

F: I would like to point out on this subject that, what I meant by art laboratories, were facilities where pupils could discover their inclinations and particularities through self-search. (They group in these places) This is not hard and could help us find individual talents.

Y: What is also very important is the sufficient scientific support by psychologists and pedagogical specialists in order to enhance and improve our knowledge particularly in terms of newly developed ideas we are not aware of.

M: I consider psychologists to be essential in every school unit; a visiting psychologist or somebody that we can refer to.

Ch: As for instance, the counsellor we do not have. For as long as I am in this area he has only come by once and I have just met him without him offering any kind of professional contribution at all.

M: Information, connected with pedagogical and educational aspects is necessary; maybe some seminars.

F: Some kind of in-service education; of course, some new things, but also awareness and organising of some everyday activities, which we do not fully realise. For instance, your coming over gave us the opportunity to realise some things that I did not have the opportunity to before. That could have happened through the use of the counsellor. It is not necessary to organise a 300 people seminar, but that could happen in each school individually according to the needs of the school and classes.

Ch: When I was in Evia we were holding seminars of that sort quite often. Perhaps it is a matter for the counsellor and supervisors. In general, though, the institution of the counsellor has been weakened. It is actually non-existent. How could somebody be a counsellor and, at the same time work in the Ministry (of Education)?

Y: I would also like to stress that it would be great if there was a teacher in school to stand in for temporarily absent teachers...

M: For instance, after finishing your scheduled hours you must remain at school for the sake of the pupils and teach, in fact, new pupils in a new class. How can you remain and work at school under these conditions?

Ch: This is the 13th teacher that was counselled in the process. This is a source of conflict among teachers and between teachers and headteachers. There are many

ambiguities in the school legislation and much of it has been misunderstood and misinterpreted.

S: This can be a subject of central but also school policy as well. I read another indicator: Organised systems - programmes as knowledge-gathering for the pupils.

R: More specifically. How do you perceive this? Do you refer to curriculum?

F: Readjustment, but not change of the entire curriculum. There should be mandatory programmes which would complement the regular class. The central educational system might institute programmes that the teacher would be aware of and have the obligation to carry out as in the way indicated by the teachers' manual. That, of course, would be the result of expert research which would indicate that, for instance, second level pupils are able to deal with certain aspects of environmental education and I as well as the pupils would know how to go about it.

M: I consider it an immediate necessity.

F: You see, today if we want to visit the Town Hall we have to refer to a private company, pay, get tagged, follow certain rules etc. There should be stimuli, programmes, and suggestions. What exists now is so vague, general, and abstract as well as time consuming that it may very well be the reason that teachers do not attempt anything since they do not have to. The system itself provides the unwilling with the opportunity to say 'I cannot'. I have the same problem with art education.

Ch: Nevertheless, you can do it by yourself.

S: In any case, however, I could add that I would like to utilise the private sector but without putting any financial burden on the pupils.

M: I think that nowadays the school has freedom in economics. It is rather a subject of increasing the education budget.

R: We are clear. Let's go on.

S: The right to choose books, the so-called multi-text for the pupils' schoolwork. This means the existence of a list of books or the liberty to try out books in order to choose the best.

M: It should be parallel to school work. We should avoid providing photocopies for improving the text books and our work.

R: This is also a matter of central but also school policy; to decide the way according to which teachers should use books and photocopies.

S: I continue: teacher-pupil interpersonal relationships. At this point I can say that there is no time. The programme is by itself generating time pressure. Teachers push

children to read and write. It would be beneficial for our relationships with pupils if there was time for both to get in touch. We used to have a school-life hour in the programme. There is a need for more interaction with pupils beyond the 'did you write? And did you study?' routine that the pupils experience daily. I would like one hour a week to sit down with the pupils and read something or listen to music or go out and collect some leaves to make a collage so that students will get in touch with each other as well as with us. Fifth level is very strenuous to me. I am only occupying myself with the absolutely specific requirements. There are no group ties and no sense of pupils being classmates. They have been together for five years and they still fight violently. They refer to their classmates as 'him' or 'her' without uttering their names.

R: So you refer to pupil relationships among themselves.

S: ...and that would make our work easier. When the pupils stop regarding us as a whip bearer or a simple source of knowledge, they could carry out duties better but that is not cultivated.

M (continues): I read: Relationships and co-operation with parents.

Christine: I believe there is nothing you can do.

S: Well, I explain my position as follows: I am only one. You are 27 x 2 plus grandparents etc. I cannot possibly reply to you individually, but only in a group-like manner.

Ch: I would like to discuss this issue more, because last year I faced a very difficult problem. I refer to a personal experience of me being doubted by both colleagues and parents. I think I have won something.

M: Some of our colleagues had learned to stay in the back. Those colleagues irrespectively of what they said or did in front of us they always had a hidden agenda to either minimise their workload or present themselves as the best.

Ch: You cannot work when you have obstacles in front of you that you cannot overcome because you will insult or demote the other, when you just cannot cross that line.

R: Do you think that school has any responsibilities in overcoming such obstacles?

S: Obviously, it does. We are used to doing whatever is mandatory and only this, and we demand this from everybody.

M: No. It is the manifestation of our personal properties. One gives out freely while the other sells.

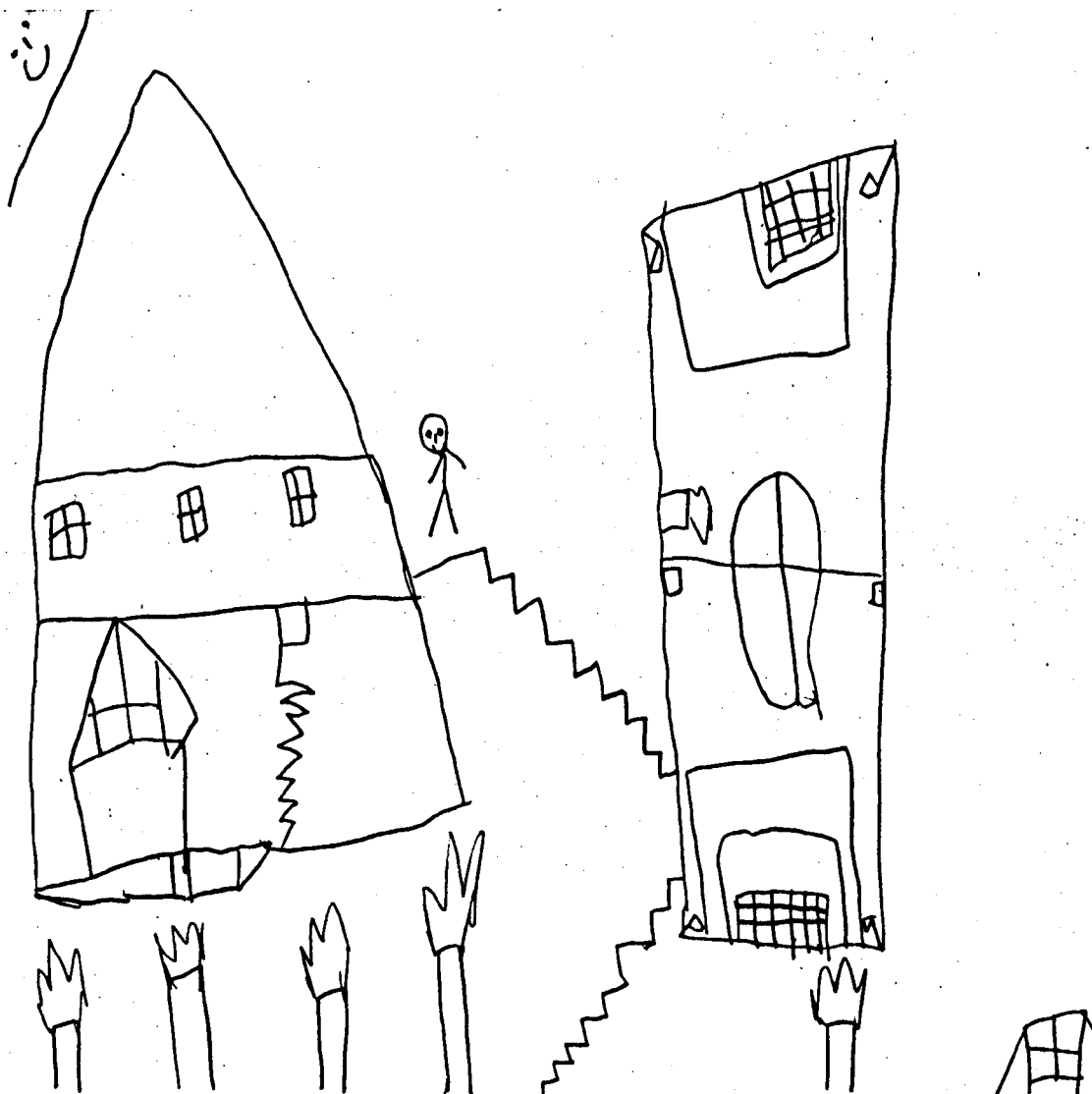
Y: When someone has nothing to sell, they feel uncomfortable and they attack...

S: Some colleagues looked at me strangely when I said that we will include our names in the festival programme, as participants in the production of the play.

R: This indicates teacher-parent relationships but it also puts straightaway issues of teachers' co-operation. Finally, it implies that the school should recognise the effort and achievement of teachers overcoming the mentality of 'we are all the same'. Thank you for your co-operation.

9.2 Pupils' focus groups

9.2.1 A sample of a pupil's drawing in a focus group of first level



Alex explained that a 'good school' should have a football pitch, a closed room for sports, a small bed for children to have a rest until mum comes, it should teach the pupils 'good letters' and 'reading' and offer a lot of pleasure trips to the pupils.

9. 2. 2 A sample of pupils' focus group of fifth level

(Violetta, Alexandra, Nick, John, Nasos)

Researcher (R) (reads): The headteacher should co-operate with the teachers and children.

Nasos (Ns): I believe that he should always be right, because if the headteacher is very strict he cannot communicate with the teachers or the children.

Alexandra (A): With the teachers he could be but with the children...

R: You mean that you do not want a very strict headteacher?

Everybody: No, not very strict.

Violetta (V): He must not oppress the children and make them feel bad in order to go ahead but with examples and nice ways to try to...

Nick (N): To co-operate with everybody.

R: You rather mean to instruct the children. Now, for the teachers we will leave it up to them. Well, shall I put... I read: the headteacher with examples and nice manners to instruct the children. Do we agree?

Everybody: Yes.

R: Another child put down: The school should be clean. Do you agree?

Children: Yes. It is one of the most important things.

R (continues): I would like the teachers to grant all my requests.

Children: No, no. Not to favour.

John (J): You mean, to go on trips and have no classes and the teachers to agree?

R: You do not agree on that. In a school, teachers have to do their work properly. We go on: to have good pupils so that they do not fight with each other.

Ns: This is not easy to do.

R: Of course it is hard. Can it be done though?

J: If all pupils wanted it and they worked together. Let's say I am talking with another boy now and he says something that for some reason I do not like. What is going to happen? Are we going to start swearing? That should not happen.

V: Someone has to pull back or find the proper language to talk, thinking about the other person also; not only himself/herself.

R: So, what you mean by saying 'no fighting' is to improve their relationships. There is always space for improvement. How should pupils feel in order to have good relationships with each other?

V: As a family.

J: Love each other and all to be equal with each other.

A: They may not be equal in the lessons.

J: Lessons do not indicate behaviour and relationships.

V: Only that some kids cancel the rights of the others.

R: How does that happen?

V: By continuously diminishing them.

R: How?

V: By making fun on them. Let's say a girl in the class specifically...

R: No specifics.

J: A boy may have a defect as I...

R: Not for your own self. Tell us, what you would like or not.

V: Not to talk badly about their families and homes because we can tease somebody and we should know when to stop.

R: Well, we discuss matters of equality and mutual respect.

V: To know the other person's tolerance levels and how far we can go teasing him/her.

R: So, stay within limits in order to protect our relationships.

J: When a child reads well and writes correctly and the teacher congratulates him or her, the other children should not pick on the child and call him or her names like wise guy or other silly things.

V: Yes, but it is one thing to do well and not brag and another thing to go around saying 'I never make mistakes' and such things.

J: Some of us are able to put down everything in one lesson and some of us not. Is this a sign of a good child?

R: Are you trying to say that each one should consider himself/herself equal with the other?

J: And boys and girls should not hate each other and when we are asked to make a sentence using a given word to have a girl get up and say 'boys are...'

R: So, to put down that there should be equality among children and between boys and girls as well. Avoid picking on pupils' particularities and consider everybody as

something special. We proceed: No garbage throwing. We have written it in the clean school. I read something else: To behave well and pay attention in class.

Ns: To be on good terms with the teacher and not to interrupt the teacher when he/she teaches or our classmates when they talk.

R: Something else says: 'The teacher should co-operate with the pupils'.

N: We already talked about it.

R: Indeed, we discussed it as a matter of relationships. Now we are saying co-operation in class matters. Nick, what do you say?

N: To have everybody work together...

V: In order for the teacher to decide on something to ask the children, also if they want something.

J: If it is a surprise he should not tell them.

V: That is different. It is different for a group...

R: Here you want to tell me that pupils should participate in decision making.

J: ...the pupils' opinion should count.

A: This, exactly.

J: There are decisions of the teachers that pupils should not participate in.

V: Yes, but if they are matters that affect pupils...

Researcher: So, we can say that pupils may participate in some decisions, but not in all of them. Now, something else: the books should have nice texts with pictures.

How do you understand this, Nick?

N: ...

R: How would you like a book to be in order to find it attractive?

Nick:

R: Alexandra, what do you say?

A: ...

R: Nasos?

N: First to have stories inside: to be pleasant and funny.

J: Not too many difficult words

R: You mean humorous and easily understood?

V: When a book is all letters, letters, letters, your eyes get tired, but if there is a picture, your imagination can work better on the text and help you understand it better. In music let's say, we write the song and the teacher tells us to paint any relevant thing we want next to it.

R: Anything else about the books?

Children: No

R: I read: 'each child should be obedient' How do you understand this? Nasos?

Ns: ...to make no trouble during class or annoy the others...

A: And be nice with the pupils.

R: Yes, but we discussed the subject of pupils' relationships, now when we discuss about obedience?

V: Each pupil should function as part of the class, not on his/her own; to avoid doing things on his/her own; to function as a whole.

J: The family, let's say, gives an example, as in the family. When someone has a problem then everybody helps.

R: This implies that the class should work as a team. In this, however, what do we mean when we say: pupils should be obedient? Obey whom?

Ns: The teacher. It is necessary for us to work together obeying class rules.

R: How could we express it?

Children: Obedience...discipline...teamwork...

V:...and respect the others. We cannot all think in the same way. We should think differently, but in school matters we should obey the rules of the team in order to work together. Different opinions are respected but we agree to follow the most widely accepted.

R: 'Pupils' point of view should be listened to.' I think we have to discuss this.

V: And in many cases the teachers or the headteacher show more respect and interest for a child who is the son or the daughter of another teacher.

J: Exactly. It becomes 'the teacher's pet' something like that.

V: Teachers do not measure pupils equally. Those particular pupils seem to measure up a little higher. Whatever important happens in class they always have the first shot at it.

J: We have seen cases like that. Even though pupils speak the language fluently, sometimes they may be confused themselves.

R: The teacher should not favour certain pupils in the classroom. I put it down. We proceed: 'Five days and many hours'. What do you mean? That the school hours are many?

V: Specifically on Friday we do five hours and now...

R: Do you want a school with fewer work hours because you have also other things to do?

V: Of course. We have other things to do as well.

R: I repeat. Do you mean that you want a school with fewer class hours?

Children: No.

V: From older days to date school has not been the primary concern for the children. Some time ago children would go to school and work. Today we have private teaching, help our parents with a few things and other activities that when they fall together we have no time. In some cases all these come together. Then one hour less school would be better.

R: Are you saying that we should cut down school hours in order to do other things?
Alexandra?

A: No, I do not agree.

J: I do not agree. Today in school we have several different activities. Like foreign languages.

V: They are interesting and we have to do them but...

R: Should they become more interesting, more...?

J: I say that we do, let's say a language outside of school, let's say English. We also do it at school and it helps us at school and at the English Institute as well.

R: So, what are we saying here? That the school should help you with your private studies? Wouldn't you rather prefer that whatever you do at school should be more complete so that you do not need the outside help?

A: Yes. We have to finish school lessons normally and then to go to the English institute. I, let's say, have English at five o'clock today. Will I have time to do my homework and prepare for the language school?

Ns: The school goes very fast and it is hard.

Children: Exactly.

R: So, you mean that school classes are very hard and you need outside help that 'eats up' your time.

V: Some children do not take only languages but also private lessons in maths or physics because the books or the teachers do not explain the lesson well.

Ns: And above all, it is not the teachers' or books' fault as my classmates say but of the children themselves...

A: Books are to blame because no matter how good the teacher is, she/he can not teach us what is not in the book or teach us more.

R: I am going to classify what we discussed and we are going to return to them on another occasion. Thank you very much.

9. 3 A sample of parents' focus group (Lefki, Maria, Fani, Kalia)

Kalia (K): Classrooms and cleanliness. These are clear: comfortable classrooms, warm, clean, nice decoration etc.

Fani (F): Better parent- teacher relationships.

R: How do you understand it?

Maria (M): As a parent, I would say that if the child presents some kind of a problem either behavioural or with the lessons or anything else, the teacher should approach me and talk to me frankly and without prejudice because there are such teachers that present a bad picture of the child. I would like a more personal relationship with an open-minded teacher.

R: Do you refer to matters of communication with the school as well?

F: We would like to hold the meetings during the afternoon and in a room where we do not have to leave after a while because of an incoming class; a little more time without the kids around us.

R: So, communication with teachers and school in an organised manner. Let's proceed.

Lefki (L): Good books.

R: What do you mean?

L: Meaningful content. To be...

M: Why should teachers use photocopies? Why isn't there a book and the teacher has to make photocopies? On the other hand, I believe that a photocopy is something different for the child, like my daughter in first level that writes and draws on it. It is not easy to interfere with the book.

L: Well, I think that they give photocopies because there are not any workbooks.

F: Well, I believe that it shows the teacher's opinion about the specific day's importance of the lesson. If he/she had a sanctioned book he/she would have to say that we have to do from here to there. The photocopy is a free choice of the teacher. That is how I see it.

M: To have a workbook.

F: I am trying to understand now, why does a photocopy annoy?

K: I cannot say that it annoys me.

M: And furthermore when they do not get a photocopy my daughter comes and tells me that today we did not have a photocopy and she is a little sad.

R: Here I want to clarify whether the parent feels that the additional work is needed for the child.

F: I am not sure about the additional work because my child is at first level.

K: May I speak? I have seen that a first graders' material is enough for his time and capabilities. Studying with my son I saw that I could not explain to him simple and easily understood things which need for instance a grammatical rule, because the rule is not in the book.

L: Why are rules not included?

L: (continues) I put it down here even though I do not refer to first level.

M: Why have they been taken out?

K: Theory has diminished in volume in the books in favour of additional exercise.

R: To sum up: photocopies provide a stimulus for the child to work harder but they do not help because, when a parent is needed to help, they do not provide enough information.

M: The parent cannot go along this kind of education. We are used to different methods.

F: The question is: Why should parents always help the children in their studies? I have also lived abroad. I understand it at first level, even though something like that does not happen abroad. I can see that it is a lot for the children: a new letter every day. I personally, of course, do not have the experience of first level schooling.

K: I do not exactly remember, but it was generally very easy. It was a different system and different books. I can say that today's materials do not respond to rules.

L: Yes, but we have to help the kids and we do not know how to do it because there are no rules and we do not know what the teacher taught the child at school. Whatever is to be learned, the child learns it from the teacher.

F: It is true that the teacher is the king of the class. Whatever the teacher says is the rule for the child.

M: This is why the teacher has to explain again and again.

R: This means that a close co-operation should exist between parent and teacher.

K: This is quite difficult. We all have to become teachers in order to help the children.

F: Well, we become one in the end. Our daily programme is: the child is back from school, we eat, we rest, we study...Her father has a harder view 'let her work alone', but I explain to him that if she is left alone she does not proceed. I do not mean to be on top of her, but to watch. She does not need any more material, but maybe a different approach; a play, a puzzle.

R: Maybe at a slower pace?

M: Will there be time to cover the material?

K: It would be nice to have a rewarding experience for the children where they enjoy using what they learn.

R: This means that learning should be associated with real-life experience.

Women (all): We agree.

K: The teacher, for instance, could ask the children to list the signs of pharmacies or grocery stores that they met on the way to school.

R: Here we introduce a matter of teaching. You suggest that teaching should occur in a playful way that makes the child learn how to learn through life and use of his brain.

M: Or by reading a newspaper one day, to attract the kid's attention.

R: So, the school should look for alternative approaches.

F: Appropriate teaching so that outside support is not needed.

R: On your next suggestion about how is it better for the child to learn through memorizing or material understanding, what is your opinion?

F: I imagine that memorising is not creative. But I do not know if some of the things memorised would not be useful to the child later on.

M: Yes, but they are asking for memorising.

R: Here you are saying that even though parents do not accept memorising, the system leads them to it.

L: This is how we got to university, through memorising.

R: You are implying that the system needs a radical but gradual change starting from primary school.

M: Yes, but the subjects are so many that without memorising children have no time to learn them all.

L: We live in a country that loves education and the point is that the system of entrance examination demands this kind of study.

R: Let us proceed.

M: Pleasant classrooms with a library and a locker for each child.

R: Another subject is 'safety'. Teachers on duty should be attentive. There should be more green pleasant space, decorated with good taste, music to bring the children in touch with the traditional and classical music.

F: We should pay attention to music. There might be parents that do not have the opportunity or knowledge to take their children to a music school or familiarise them with classical music.

L: They could listen to a nice piece of music and have it properly identified by the teacher.

R: You can discuss it with the teacher.

F: I think that the teacher is oppressed; to keep up with the programme and cover the material while school time does not seem enough.

K: Well, there is a music hour and a music teacher. But music in your opinion needs cultivation and not the simple memorising of a few songs.

M: The same way the children go on excursions, they could go to the Music Hall and listen to some quality music.

K: Can I add something? I would like the children to come to school happy from first to last level, to have a good teacher that will create a group sense in class.

R: Would you like something to add?

F: In the subject of safety. Personnel should be more involved. If it is a matter of parents as well, we are willing to contribute. There are many and different ages. Furthermore, school material in athletics, music and art plus teachers' instructions to help pupils' abilities to come to the surface.

R: You mean to discover talents and train children accordingly. I also read: A reliable school medical system. How do you understand it?

K: We mean co-operation with local institutions. We are all willing to contribute to school. We have even talked with colleagues.

R: So, you are setting a matter of co-operation with local institutions.

K: It is still disorganised in my mind. I strongly believe in local authority.

R: Does that mean decentralisation? More flexible units?

F: Yes, I strongly believe in that, because different areas have different needs.

Appendix 10: Indicators

10. 1 Indicators of a ‘good’ school

The categories are:

- 1) School Climate
- 2) Relationships
- 3) Resources and time
- 4) Classroom climate
- 5) Support for learning
- 6) Support for teaching
- 7) Organisation and communication
- 8) School-home links

All these are from MacBeath’s framework. The categories of equity as well as that of recognition of achievement were adjusted to those of school climate as well as organisation and communication correspondingly. Then I replaced them by new ones:

- 9) Teacher
- 10) Books and Curriculum

School climate

This category contains the following sub-categories: Safety, discipline, extra-curricular activities and equity. They attracted the most interest from pupils and parents. Parents wished their children to find happiness at school; to learn how to learn in a caring environment; to learn to love learning and people as well as real life. For teachers, a good school means a pleasant place of work which promotes the moral of pupils with a spirit of progressiveness and creativity for both teachers and pupils. Finally, for pupils a good school within which they would like to live is a democratic and peaceful one, a place of learning without strict rules.

‘Safety’ is the mostly referred characteristic of a good school by parents and pupils. Pupils referred distinctly to it. It seemed that their experiences influenced them, although continuously I reminded them that the ‘good school’ should be in the sphere of their mind. They stressed repeatedly that teachers should look after pupils carefully during the breaks. Similarly, parents made a particular reference to children’s safety.

A parent stated: 'For me a basic criterion for a good school is to keep my child safe, without accidents, without giving him/her the ability to go out or somebody to come inside the school'.

On the other hand, for teachers a good school means a pleasant place of work: 'A friendly environment that makes my day' or 'good communication with colleagues' but also an atmosphere that promotes pupils' morale with 'a spirit of progress and creativity for both teachers and pupils'. Although teachers may consider pupils' safety as a serious duty, only one teacher expressed her anxiety, stressing that there is a great danger for pupils' safety during the breaks when they return to their classrooms after teachers' departure. This feeling was closely connected with discipline in the school.

Discipline was stressed by all participants. For pupils and teachers, discipline secures good conditions of work 'The school should define rules, accepted by pupils and parents'. For parents, sometimes discipline has the meaning of inspiring respect and helping pupils define their own territory in the school and later into society. Extra-curricular activities also seem to concern all respondents in many ways. Pupils' participation in extra-curricular activities, such as athletics, drama, and others that mostly have cultural character but also their participation in trips contributes to pupils' learning and enjoyment.

In this category I also included an important sub-category: pupils' equity, although only one pupil referred directly to this as a characteristic when she mentioned: 'A good school should not have "deficient pupils"' and the group of five 12-year-old-pupils agreed with this view. They explained that they had experienced disturbance from children with special needs during breaks or even their lesson when these pupils attempted to be integrated into the class.

Equity was also implied by a girl in the discussion of another group. She referred to her classmates' or schoolmates' attitudes to some peers. She mentioned: 'It is not fair our school mates refer to pupils' home circumstances' and later: 'It is not a joke. Everybody should know where she/he must stop, where the limits of the other are'. She also stressed the opportunities for participation in various school events, such as

theatre or festival. Later, I was informed that this girl was the child of an immigrant family.

These comments seemed to be in agreement with the comments of the new class teacher that this girl was among them who had been discriminated against. Although this case was not calculated in the qualitative data since the characteristic was not written, the interview created the sub-category of equity which was found at the side and behind all the rest of the indicators (relationships, support for learning, school and classroom climate, home-school links etc) and gave the opportunity for teachers' reflection.

Relationships

Relationships in school seemed to be an important characteristic. This category was separated in the following sub-categories: relationships of teachers to teachers, relationships of teachers and pupils, relationships of pupils with pupils, relationships of teachers and parents, even parents to parents' relationships (in the interviews).

For pupils, the relationships between themselves seem to be of a considerable importance. They look for good friends. They do not like conflicts between classmates, between classes, between older and younger, or between boys and girls. In the same way pupils, more than other participants, seemed to define good relationships between themselves and teachers either as warmth and affection or as respect. The number of references (19) expresses pupils' anxiety to keep a balance in these relationships. It is remarkable that five from these indicators referred to pupils and headteacher relationships from whom they expected warm and gentle behaviour.

On the other hand, only once the teachers in focus groups mention relationships among pupils, although they seemed constantly to attempt to improve them. Two teachers also referred to interpersonal relationships between them and pupils. On the contrary, teachers' responses were focused almost exclusively on teachers' relationships. They referred to these relations as 'communicating and helping one another', 'an atmosphere of trust' or 'understanding and support among them'. Teachers also put emphasis on their relations with the headteacher of the school from whom they expect to 'approach you with goodness', to be 'warm and friendly'.

Finally they seemed to keep a distance from the parents since they do not refer to relationships with them.

Finally, parents see the relations within a school from their own point of view. Parents would like teachers to promote good and friendly communication with them. They mostly referred to teacher-pupil relationships (seven indicators). It became clear that parents, throughout their interviews, had in their mind friendly relationships between their children and teachers or the headteacher. They expect children to respect all people and particularly their teachers, whose personality, according to their view, plays the most important role in achieving this.

Parents also desire teachers to promote good and friendly communication with them (six). Finally, one of the parents referred to teachers' relationships as contributing to good school climate while a parent's group referred to parent relationships in a school: 'a school can be a place of parents communication as well'. Finally, parents seemed to be interested in relationships among pupils. A parent characteristically wished 'children didn't treat each other antagonistically' expressing the importance of pupils' frank relationships and her anxiety for children life into a competitive society.

Building-resources and time

Building with its physical condition and educational resources has an important meaning for the good operation of a school and the quality of school life. This view seemed to be shared by all groups.

Pupils, more than others, seemed to perceive a good school as a place not only for learning but also for play and various activities. Thus, they expect their school to have apart from large and comfortable classrooms, classrooms for music, drama, dance, computers, foreign languages, libraries, laboratories, a swimming-pool, a large playground with places for break times on rainy days, places for gym and other sports during and after school, giving in this way the meaning of school as a social place. Pupils and parents many times referred to the cleanliness and decoration of the school while toilets' condition was connected tightly to the cleanliness of the school.

On the other hand, although teachers seemed to be particularly interested in educational resources, a group of teachers in their discussions referred to parents to help with classroom cleanliness. Resources and particular educational resources concern teachers, pupils and parents. One teacher referred particularly to the good organisation and maintenance of the educational resources. Such duties require teachers with appropriate knowledge and skills. In his words 'well prepared teachers are necessary for this'.

Time was not given as a separate characteristic for a good school. Time, however, was present in all discussions. Time oppresses teachers in the school. Teachers need more time in their teaching, to achieve access and use educational resources, to promote their relationships with their pupils, to support learning and to co-operate with their colleagues, to prepare and try new methods, to organise activities. The pressure of the detailed curriculum is apparent.

Pupils agree with teachers since they need more time in their classroom, to be supported in their teaching, to develop relationships with classmates and teachers, to enjoy their lessons (see Support for learning).

Support for learning

Learning is at the heart of school. Support for learning can be seen by different groups in different ways (20 indicators of pupils, 14 of parents and 5 of teachers).

Pupils learn when they understand the lessons well. For this, teachers should repeat calmly the difficult points of lessons without the pressure of time, and pupils in this way can also enjoy something special. Learning is also supported when teachers use a variety of teaching methods as, for example, experiments so that learning can become easier and more enjoyable. Pupils wish to work co-operatively with their teachers in organising the timetable taking into account their own needs. They expect additional support for the case of difficult subjects, such as English, or when then are preparing for secondary school while support for learning in language is particularly welcome by the pupils of ethnic minorities.

Homework has been accepted as necessary for learning. Pupils, however, particularly the younger ones, stressed that their teachers should give precise guidance for this work and check them. Studying at home, however, should not cause problems for both pupils and parents. Pupils have many additional duties after school (music, sports or learning of a foreign language), as school cannot satisfy such needs. According to pupils, in order for teachers to understand pupils' needs better, they 'should know the psychology of a child better'.

Parents expect a good school to promote their children's critical thought and prepare them to become independent learners. They believe that they should support their children's learning at home. Parents, however, have not always got the necessary time and knowledge. This causes anxiety and change in their life. Thus, in many cases parents employ specialists for their children's study. Parents wished most that pupils' learning took place at school while their homework had an enjoyable character, connected with real life.

Teachers believe that pupils are supported in their learning when the curriculum can be used flexibly according to their pupils' needs. The school and class environment can also be supportive, as well as time and the class size (structural support according to MacBeath).

Support for teaching

In most cases, support for teaching is closely related to support for learning and these overlap each other. This is mostly stressed by the teachers who seek to do their job effectively. For teachers, support for teaching means teachers' co-operation and their co-operation with specialists (psychologists, special educationalists, advisors etc); their continuous professional development; specialist teachers in school, like musicians in an adequate number; small number of pupils in class; teachers' evaluation aiming at their improvement while class size can be also found in this category.

Teachers are also supported when they are well-paid and well-motivated, including teachers' recognition of achievement, according to MacBeath framework. To these

indicators many others that emerged from the discussions could be added. Time and possibility of change could be seen as two of them.

Parents, on the other hand, believe that teachers are supported when they co-operate with specialists, have continuous professional development, are well-paid and their class size is small while no pupil referred to teaching support.

Books and curriculum

Many times teachers, pupils and parents referred to textbooks. Books are the basic tools for teachers' teaching and pupils' learning. These references formulated the category of books and curriculum. For the Greek context curriculum which is expressed by the books can be considered to be as an important category of indicators of a good school.

Pupils need to have readable textbooks, close to their abilities and concern with a sense of humour and decorated with many pictures relevant to the content. The younger pupils wished their books to have pictures 'like comics' or like Mickey Mouse'. Pupils who additionally see their school as a place for relaxation ask 'many hours for gym and art'.

Teachers seemed to agree with pupils since they referred to 'good books' with 'good, rich and enjoyable language and content', 'close to pupils' needs and covering the entire phase of real life'. They wished to have the opportunity to choose among many books those which have these characteristics. A teacher asked for freedom in teachers' work and many of them stressed the pressure they feel to follow a centrally imposed fixed and detailed curriculum with pre-determined and fixed steps of implementation'. The need for flexible programmes and curricula was mentioned particularly by teachers. Although this did not express a large number of participants, it is of great importance.

Pupils also expressed the need for some curriculum improvement, as in the case of the pupils of first level, who wanted to play more, like in nursery school. Teachers, pupils and parents seem to agree that the curriculum at each level in the educational system should be adequately connected with the previous or the next one.

Although teachers referred to the need for curriculum improvement, they appeared to hesitate to undertake such changes as they were rather afraid of parents' criticism. 'Parents watch what should be taught. I would not like to accept parents' criticism, given that I work hard', explained a teacher. Parents, however, asked 'teachers to escape from the book' and dare innovations providing that they are informed. They also seem to be concerned with the way pupils should study but also with the content and the writing of the books themselves.

Classroom climate

For pupils, the microcosm of their classroom was particularly important. They wanted their classroom to be comfortable, clean, pleasant and well-decorated, particularly with pupils' works. Pupils seem to be anxious with everything that happens in the classroom. They wanted for themselves to have good relationships with others so that their classes can be a calm and peaceful place, since they expect to learn within this place.

Classroom atmosphere was also characterised by pupils' relationships with their teachers. Pupils complained because their teachers favour a few particular pupils, as for example, teachers' children or underestimate some others' achievements either in the process of learning or in extra-curricular activities and school social life. Teacher's behaviour seems to play an important part in the creation of a positive climate for learning, progress and happiness in the classroom.

Pupils considered that punishment, related to discipline, contributes to the creation of their classroom climate. Older pupils explained that some punishments can be fair, but they are too hard for them, as, for instance, when they have to write the same word or sentence many times or go to the headteacher. Finally, parents referred to the classroom as a nice place where teachers care for each pupil like a mother or a father, while teachers did not mention any relevant indicator.

School - home links

It was attempted this category to be distinguished by that of teacher-parent relationship. The categories, however, overlap. The general belief was that co-operation between school and home facilitate pupils' learning and development. Parents have accepted that they should support their children's learning and ask school co-operation in it. They need to be informed about their children's progress and behaviour in every aspect of their life. Parents stress the importance of such communication in the case of particular problems as, for instance, a pupil's dyslexia. They would like to be informed 'as soon as possible', as a mother said.

Parents also believe that in a good school this communication is realised by close and well-organised teachers-parents' meetings. They would prefer evening meetings in quiet classes since it is difficult for them to visit the school only during its day operation. Finally, they believe in communication on a sincere basis, relieved from prejudices.

On the other hand, teachers give priority to other indicators for a good school, although they may believe in the importance of such links. In one case a teacher stressed that parents should not disrupt teachers' work. This means that parents should know their own territory and not exceed the limits. This indicator was not mentioned by the pupils, apart from a reference to the need for parents' good information when a child has a problem during a group discussion.

Organisation

'Organisation' was mentioned by the teachers many times. Organisation for them means mainly co-operation with a sense of common purpose. 'In a good school teachers co-operate not only in extra-curricular activities but much more in their class work. It could be ideal for teachers to evaluate each other....teachers' isolation is not good', a teacher pointed out.

For teachers, a good school is well-organised when it has good management that heavily depends on the headteacher of the school. An inspired and active headteacher contributes to the creation of a good school. She/he is responsible for organising the

programme of work and school activities, supervising them and giving solution to emerged problems.

A headteacher co-operates with school teachers, divides responsibilities fairly according to their needs and inclinations and recognises their achievement that is necessary for the organisation and development of the school. Given that in Greece payment, employment and promotion come directly from the Government, headteachers can satisfy a hard-working teacher in other ways. Thus, two teachers confessed that 'teachers should take moral recognition for their achievement'. Headteachers can find the way. Finally, headteachers should co-operate with the community, the educational authorities and various associations and keep balanced relationships with them.

According to teachers' words, a headteacher should 'be fair and trustful' 'have a strong personality', 'be informed', 'have good behaviour', 'contribute to teachers' creativity', 'support teachers', 'be between teachers and parents', 'be the maestro in the relationships between and among competitive groups'.

Pupils referred to school organisation when they wrote that a good school covers the absence of teachers, and so did the teachers. In one case, pupils also mentioned the headteacher, stressing the managing aspect of her/his role. Finally, parents believe that a good school is systematically organised, puts priorities and develops co-operation with various groups in the community (doctors, dentists, etc), implying the need for educational decentralisation.

Teacher

Teachers, parents and particularly pupils referred to this characteristic of a good school. They expect a good school to have a good teacher, although at this stage they do not define what exactly a good teacher means for them. Teachers stressed that in a good school, teachers should be interested in their work beyond the narrow frames of the transmission of knowledge, love learning and teaching and particularly children. Teachers characteristically pointed out that in a good school teachers should 'search and try the new' or 'have imagination in their work'.

Parents expect a good teacher to be interested in their work, love children and learning. 'It is not a matter of teachers' professional development. If teachers work consciously, they are good'. In other cases, however, they ask for teachers who have done basic studies on psychological and pedagogical matters related to children. They also wanted teachers to be innovators, although teachers express that parents react to the new.

For pupils, a good teacher means many things. Later, I organised pupils' focus groups researching about the characteristics of 'a good teacher'. Some other individual indicators were: pupils wearing uniforms, pupils playing football in gym, pupils having free paid lunch. These remained as separate indicators.

10. 2 Indicators of a 'good' teacher

For the older pupils (third, fourth, fifth and sixth level), a 'good' teacher should: explain the lesson insistently (20 indicators), not shout to the pupils during the lesson (20); not be strict (14); not discriminate their pupils according to their economic, or ethnic background or according to their progress and social relationships (11); give home-work thoroughly (10); be fair (2), polite, behave in a good manner, be co-operative (3), be helpful (5), protect their pupils (6); leave time for discussion, assess their pupils fairly (7); understand the pupils' efforts (2), make the lesson pleasant and easy (3); have a sense of humour (3); organise visits to museums and trips or excursions (3); be on time in the lesson (2); give the opportunity for their pupils' improvement (2), explain how to work in homework (2), correct the pupils' homework (2).

A 'good' teacher should also listen to pupils' views; use examples in their teaching for pupils' better understanding; organise festivals; be well-dressed; organise teamwork and the lesson well; recognise pupils' achievement; be aware of pupils' psychology; protect the furniture and decoration; not keep the pupils after the ringing of the bell; be good at their responsibilities; say interesting things; not be very serious; follow democratic procedures in decision making; give solutions to pupils' conflicts; co-operate with parents; permit football during the breaks.

For the younger pupils (first and second level), a 'good' teacher should: be good with the pupils; take the pupils to the theatre or cinema; tell stories; be well-dressed; go close to the desk to help pupils; explain the lesson and help the pupils; not be strict; love the pupils; correct pupils' work; not punish them.

Appendix 11: The questionnaire for choosing areas for evaluation

Complete the frame in the appropriate column by a cross (x) indicating the present position of the school, answering the following question: To what extent this is true for your school.	not at all	very little	a little	a lot	very great deal
Teachers work co-operatively towards shared teaching goals (support for teaching)					
Resources are preserved and used (and developed) efficiently and effectively (resources and time)					
Books and curriculum are used in the most effective way (curriculum)					
The school promotes parent-teacher co-operation and consultation (home-school links)					
There is an environment for effective learning (support for learning)					
Teachers are open-minded about new ideas and practices (teacher)					
The class is a satisfying place for pupils and teachers (c/m climate)					
Teachers feel that their work is recognised and supported (organisation)					
The school promotes interpersonal and social skills for both teachers and pupils (relationships)					
Conflicts and stressed situations are not swept under the carpet but rather are brought out into the open (school climate)					
The school promotes pupils' relationships (relationships)					
The views of everybody within the school are listened to (organisation)					
Pupils learn to be responsible for their own learning and their learning environment (learning)					

The school promotes practices for exploration of parents' views about the school and education (home-school links).					
Teachers use flexible methods and strategies in response to their pupils' needs (teaching)					
There is a general consensus about discipline and ways of maintaining it (school climate)					
The school measures fairly and in a general consensus the 'received' curriculum (curriculum)					
Resources are as accessible as possible to all potential users, staff and pupils(resources)					
Teachers work effectively in the school (teacher)					
No child is excluded from the possibility of success (classroom climate)					

Appendix 12: The evaluative questionnaires

Appendix 12. 1: Teachers' evaluative questionnaire

Please use the response sheet to record your responses:

A) In the first part from 1-5 put a **cross (x)** or a **tick (v)** in the appropriate column to present the extent you consider that the following statements should be true for an effective school.

B) In the second part from 1-5 put a **cross (x)** or a **tick (v)** in the appropriate column to point out the extent you consider that the following statements are true for your school in the present situation, as you see it. Ask yourself with each statement: 'To what extent does this describe my school?'

The numbers mean:

1: Not at all

2: Very little

3: A little

4: A lot

5: A very great deal

The effective school

The school now

1	2	3	4	5	a/a	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
					1	The school is a safe place					
					2	Pupils like going to the school					
					3	The school seeks new ways to approach situations					
					4	Pupils are well behaved and well mannered					
					5	Pupils respect teachers					
					6	Teachers respect pupils					
					7	Pupils help each other at school					
					8	Pupils fight at school					
					9	The school promotes pupils' discipline and behaviour					

1	2	3	4	5	α/ α	Ερωτήσεις	1	2	3	4	5
					1	Οι μαθητές πηγαίνουν με ευχαρίστηση στο σχολείο					
					2	Το σχολείο είναι ένας ασφαλής χώρος					
					3	Οι μαθητές συμπεριφέρονται καλά κι έχουν καλούς τρόπους					
					4	Οι μαθητές σέβονται τους δασκάλους					
					5	Οι δάσκαλοι σέβονται τους μαθητές					
					6	Οι μαθητές βοηθούν ο ένας τον άλλο					
					7	Οι μαθητές τσακώνονται μεταξύ τους					
					8	Το σχολείο προάγει αποτελεσματικά την πειθαρχία των μαθητών.					
					9	Το σχολείο προάγει την αυτο-πειθαρχία των μαθητών					
					10	Ο καταμερισμός της εργασίας των δασκάλων είναι δίκαιος					
					11	Οι δάσκαλοι αισθάνονται ότι ο Δ/ντής τους εμπιστεύεται και τους υποστηρίζει					
					12	Οι δάσκαλοι συνεργάζονται με κοινή αίσθηση του σκοπού και των στόχων					
					13	Οι δάσκαλοι αισθάνονται ότι οι συνάδελφοι τους εμπιστεύονται και τους υποστηρίζουν.					
					14	Το σχολείο αναγνωρίζει την προσφορά των δασκάλων					
					15	Στις αποφάσεις του σχολείου οι απόψεις των δασκάλων εκτιμώνται					
					16	Στις αποφάσεις του σχολείου οι απόψεις των μαθητών εκτιμώνται					
					17	Οι γονείς έχουν αποφασιστικό ρόλο στη μάθηση των παιδιών					
					18	Το σχολείο γνωρίζει τις ανάγκες, τα αισθήματα και τις προσδοκίες των γονέων					
					19	Στις αποφάσεις του σχολείου οι απόψεις των γονέων εκτιμώνται					
					20	Το σχολείο πληροφορεί τους γονείς για την πολιτική και τις πρακτικές του					
					21	Οι συναντήσεις δασκάλων-γονέων οργανώνονται κατάλληλα κάθε φορά					
					22	Οι συναντήσεις γονέων-δασκάλων είναι παραγωγικές και χρήσιμες					

					23	Οι γονείς εμπλέκονται στη σχολική εργασία					
					24	Το σχολείο χρησιμοποιεί τους γονείς σαν πηγές στη χορήγηση του Α.Π.					
					25	Το σχολείο παρέχει ευκαιρίες στους γονείς να μοιράζονται τα ενδιαφέροντά τους με άλλους γονείς					
					26	Το σχολείο συνεργάζεται αποτελεσματικά με το Σύλλογο Γονέων					
					27	Το σχολείο χορηγεί με ενδιαφέρον το Α. Π.					
					28	Το σχολείο προσαρμόζει το Α.Π. για να συναντήσει τις ανάγκες των μαθητών					
					29	Το σχολείο αναζητά και δοκιμάζει νέους τρόπους για να προσεγγίζει πράγματα και καταστάσεις					
					30	Το σχολείο ενδιαφέρεται οι μαθητές του να αναπτύξουν τις ικανότητες και τα ενδιαφέροντά τους					
					31	Οι εξω-διδασκικές δραστηριότητες εμπλουτίζουν το Α.Π.					
					32	Οι εξω-διδασκικές δραστηριότητες αποτελούν πολύτιμες ευκαιρίες για όλους τους μαθητές					
					33	Οι μαθητές μαθαίνουν να συνεργάζονται					
					34	Οι δάσκαλοι έχουν υψηλές προσδοκίες απ' όλους τους μαθητές τους					
					35	Το σχολείο υποστηρίζει τους μαθητές του να επιτύχουν τους στόχους τους					
					36	Το σχολείο βλέπει τις διαφορές σαν κάτι που προσθέτει αξία στη μάθηση					
					37	Το σχολείο βλέπει τις διαφορές σαν κάτι που προσθέτει αξία στη ζωή των μαθητών του					
					38	Οι μαθητές με ειδικές ανάγκες επιτυγχάνουν τους στόχους τους					

12. 2 Pupils' questionnaire
12. 2. 1 Younger pupils' questionnaire

Please put a cross (x) in the appropriate box:

1. I feel safe in my school

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

2. I like going to this school

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

3. I respect my teachers

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

4. My teachers respect me

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

5. I help my classmates

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

6. I fight with my classmates

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

7. I behave well and I have good manners

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

8. I interrupt the class

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

9. My teachers encourage me to do my best

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

10. I work together with my classmates

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

12. 2. 2: Older pupils' questionnaire

To what extent are the following sentences true for your teacher?

Please put a cross (x) in the appropriate box:

1. I feel safe in my school

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

2. I like going to this school

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

3. We try new ways of doing things

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

4. We respect our teachers

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

5. Our teachers respect us

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

6. Pupils help each other

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

7. I get on well with other pupils

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

8. We behave well

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

9. We interrupt the lessons

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

10. The school supports and advise us

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

11. The school encourages us in our work

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

12. The school encourages us to develop our abilities and interests

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

13. The school gives us the opportunity to co-operate with our classmates

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

14. We learn to value children's differences

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

15. Extra-curricular activities enrich our lessons

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

16. Extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for all pupils

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

17. In some cases we can express our views

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

18. The school takes into account our views

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never ☐

12. 3 Parents' evaluative questionnaire

	To what extent do you consider that the following statements are true for your school at present situation? Please write x in the appropriate column.	Not at all	Very	A little	A lot	A very great deal
1	The school is a safe place					
2	Children always like going to school.					
3	The school seeks deliberately to 'try new ways of doing things'					
4	Pupils respect teachers					
5	Teachers respect pupils					
6	Pupils in the school fight each other					
7	Pupils in the school help each other					
8	Pupils are well behaved and well mannered					
9	The school promotes a system of rewards and sanctions for pupils' self-discipline					
10	The school promotes effectively discipline and good behaviour.					
11	The school is interested in official curriculum					
12	The school is interested in individual abilities and talents					
13	Curriculum is enhanced by extra-curricular activities					
14	Extra-curricular activities provide valuable opportunities for all pupils					
15	The school sees pupils' diversity as adding value to school life and learning					
16	Teachers believe that all pupils can gain success					
17	The school provides effective support and advice for all its pupils					
18	Pupils work together and learn from each other					
19	The school uses certain approaches responding in particular circumstances.					

20	There is a high level of trust and openness					
21	Teachers work together with a common sense of purpose					
22	Pupils' views are valued					
23	Parents' views are valued					
24	The school provides opportunities to parents to be well informed about school policies and practices					
25	The school is aware of parents' needs and aspirations					
26	The school makes use of the information about needs, circumstances and aspiration of its parents					
27	Parent-teacher meetings are productive and useful.					
28	Parents have an input in deciding the goals and teaching priorities for their children.					
29	The school co-operates with the Parent Association for effective implementation of curriculum					
30	Parents are involved in school work.					
31	Teachers-parents' communication is appropriately organised					

12. 4 The questionnaire of the 'good teacher'

12. 4. 1 The questionnaire of the 'good teacher' for young pupils (first and second level)

To what extent are the following sentences true for your teacher?

	Statements	Not at all	a little	enough	in a great deal
1	My teacher is good with us				
2	My teacher teaches us a lot things				
3	My teacher teaches well				
4	My teacher organises good activities (extra-curricular)				
5	My teacher shouts at us				
6	My teacher pays attention to the children in the yard				
7	My teacher helps us in the lessons				
8	My teacher loves us				
9	My teacher likes us				
10	My teacher does nice lessons				
11	My teacher allows us to play football				
12	My teacher punishes us for our troubles				
13	My teacher punishes us severely				
14	My teacher help us when we work				
15	My teacher is calm				
16	My teacher reads fairy tales and stories				
17	My teacher checks our work				
18	My teacher allows us to stick our pictures and work on the wall				
19	My teacher allows us to draw				

20	My teacher allows pupils to draw on their desk				
21	My teacher allows pupils to have their say				
22	My teacher allows us to continue the lesson after the break (He/she does not keep us in the class during the break)				
23	My teacher discusses with us whatever we learn				
24	My teacher treats all the pupils in the same way				

**12. 4. 2 The questionnaire of the 'good teacher' for older pupils
(third, fourth, fifth and sixth level)**

To what extent are the following sentences true for your teacher?

	Statements	Not at all	a little	enough	in a great deal
1	My teacher explains the lesson				
2	My teacher shouts at us				
3	My teacher treats all the pupils in the same way (She/he does not distinguish the pupils)				
4	My teacher gives the appropriate homework				
5	My teacher gives the correct amount of homework				
6	My teacher has good relationships with us				
7	My teacher is strict when it is necessary				
8	My teacher takes us on trips and visits to museums				
9	My teacher does interesting and enjoyable lessons				
10	My teacher punishes pupils severely				
11	My teacher has a sense of humour				
12	My teacher assesses impartially				
13	My teacher loves her pupils				
14	We understand her when she teaches				
15	My teacher understands our needs and problems				
16	My teacher is systematic in her/his teaching				
17	My teacher helps us with our lessons				
18	My teacher is interested in each pupil				
19	My teacher checks our work				
20	My teacher treats us badly				

21	My teacher listens to our views				
22	My teacher keeps us in the class during the break to complete the lesson				
23	My teacher is kind				
24	My teacher laughs				
25	My teacher is fair				
26	My teacher is co-operative with us				
27	My teacher organises team work				

Appendix 13 Evaluative focus groups

13. 1 A sample of teachers' evaluative focus group

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Researcher (R) Do you have any comments on the content of the questionnaire?

(F): I would like to clarify this. There were some sentences as to whether the school is aware of the needs, feelings and aspirations of the parents which I graded with a 4 because I believe that the school should explore that kind of depth in its interventions. Is this within the legal boundaries of the questionnaire?

R: This is your personal opinion and evaluation. Everything has its own reasoning. Let's proceed. How do you generally find teacher-pupil relationships in your school?

F: I have made a general evaluation of those relationships but they tend to differ from year to year.

R: We are talking about today, this year's school.

F: I, for instance, take first and second grade and even though pupils share many characteristics (age, skills etc.) nevertheless they display differences from year to year in aspects contained in the questionnaire such as relationships, discipline etc. depending on the very fibre of the pupils, individual make up.

(P): But, , are they more or less the same?

F: I cannot say. The questionnaire is very specific. The specific children in my class are very nice and I might remain unchanged as a point of reference, but children change. Then, we have the influence of the school climate, the parents, the school-head, the school conditions (classrooms) etc.

R: This is what makes it interesting. Nothing remains constant, and that's why we are talking about today's school. How would you characterise teacher-pupil relationships?

F: My own relationships?

R: Your own as well as your colleagues'. How do you see it in the school yard, the school events, in the office, in private conversations etc?

F: It varies from 2-5. There is a wide spread. My own class could easily reach a 4, not to mention a 5. That is to say it is very good.

R: Do you all agree with Frida's assessment?

(M): I, for one, relative to what Frida said seem to be in terrible shape concerning my relationships with pupils and parents as well. I, as well as most of the colleagues that I see, assign too much weight on our relationships with the pupils but

in a manner that will find us babying them, getting involved with their problems, dealing with their whims and wishes...too much. More than we should, probably.

Katerina (K): Maybe because we are parents ourselves.

P: There is sensitivity.

K: Yes, but this excess of attention that Margaret pointed out really does not help. I hold class with the whole school and I can see that there is a variety in teacher-pupil relationships. I have better or friendlier contact with classes whose teacher has built on those grounds while that seems to be differentiated with classes whose teachers are indifferent or 'have not laid a foundation' to promote good teacher-pupil relationships.

P: I would like to come back to that 'too much' that Margaret said. There should be limits. We have not drawn any limits.

K: How could it be that one class has a better relationship with one teacher than the other?

M: There could be many reasons.

K: Agreed. Teachers should be able to see it, though. I do not think that there is a common policy.

P: I would like to give an account of my own experience. This is the third consecutive year that I have handled the same class and I can see that strong ties have developed. I think that what I have got from them is real love and I have to admit that I am very fond of them as well. On the other hand, they have started feeling at ease and they have developed liberties, leading to problems, during lessons like noise, disturbance etc.

R: In that respect your case could be a starting point for a more general discussion concerning problems in relationships.

F: Of course, and I think that this is what we are doing.

R: Have you done it systematically or occasionally with the person next to you?

M: Nothing has been done systematically not even subconsciously. Many times it does not even pop up in our mind. Discussions are limited and rather private. For instance, the athletic teacher will come and tell me that my class did this or that and I will take corrective action, but we never sit down as a group and discuss each other's specific problem or problems with his or her class. We never scrutinise each other's methods or exchange ideas and opinions on actions that have been or should be taken. No, we don't do that.

K: The only relevant discussion is between the regular and the speciality teachers.

F: In any case there is no common line of action. Problems are attended as they arise and everything stops right there.

P: Unless there is something serious. I remember an incident with a lawyer's child that was discussed at the Association's meeting.

M: I, and forgive me Pelagia if I sound opinionated, will disagree as to whether it was 'that' serious. We held a meeting for the specific children, because it was directed towards the school-head. (At that point she disengaged the recorder in order to elaborate).

F: In general, matters concerning teacher-pupils' relationships are not discussed.

R: What about other aspects of the school?

P: No, none as we said before. There are no guidelines that the whole school should know and adhere to.

R: Including parents?

F: Of course. That is why we do not know what kind of solutions to provide for problems that occur. Some school-heads might be able to establish some guidelines from the beginning due to their experience. Then, again, it might not be the school-head's fault at all because nobody prepares them for that role.

M: This is not of course a personal attack.

K: Absolutely not. The system, though, is disorganised and the higher up you go, the more disorganised it gets.

F: The subject we are discussing is very serious. We are being left helpless, with no seminars or any information or something to hold on to anyway. The only help we have are some circulars that provide general guidelines.

R: It happened that I have had to recently have a discussion with a parent and she told me that she would like to have some kind of a school chart so that she may know her rights and obligations, that is to say the school policy. What would you say to that?

F: It is a must. Parents, pupils and all teachers should know where they stand.

M: Today, at the stage that you find us, it is a coincidence that we survive. We are very lucky with only small differences and few disagreements. You see there is wide spread disorder, but fortunately, there is some good chemistry between us, teachers.

F: We would not be in disorder if there was a valid policy. We would not be doing any thing we wanted and we would not be exposed to just about anybody.

K: I agree that whatever is being done is due to his or her personal efforts.

P: And the personal disposition.

M: And the person's chemistry. How can I say it, I get attacked on Monday, you on Tuesday; he is being nice to Pelagia on Wednesday, changes attitude on Thursday, we announce one thing, we do another...This kind of disorder could disorient us and tear us apart.

F: The only subject discussed is the duties, but it is not the only one that exists. A specific policy that would include general principles could protect us from many things.

M: This is a matter of organising, orderliness and programming that does not exist.

R: From what we discuss, I conclude that there are good social relations and respect between colleagues which is not utilised due to organisational shortcomings. Is that it?

M: Yes. There is an attitude of 'tolerance' because we are in a state of anticipation.

F: I would like to add something else. When there is a positive or very positive climate among colleagues then you are strong enough to cope with many things and keep yourself away from fighting, demanding and creating overall negative environment. I, personally, find that very helpful. I know that I am coming to school to see five or ten people that I really like and respect and that I can talk to and work with and that helps me overcome many things. I take things into account, I draw my conclusions but I don't bother.

P: I agree. I take the good things and I go home disregarding a lot.

R: Let's continue with the subject of relationships. How do you find them among pupils?

P: The children are irritable. The slightest will provoke them to fight. You see kicking, fist fighting etc. I don't know if the colleagues agree to that.

F: I see pupils' relationships to be a reflection of those that people experience in life. I mean they will fight and display attitudes and they will show jealousy and competitiveness and irritability, but great love as well.

M: There is something special about this area. Everything is personal because everybody knows everybody. This does not happen in the centre of Athens or in other suburbs, and while it helps good relationships, many times it puts a lot of stress on them.

R: What kind of mechanisms does the school have in order to improve such attitudes and relationships?

M: In an isolated and spasmodic manner each one tries to save whatever they can.

F: The school, of course, organises some cultural events and tries to cultivate a sense of unity among the children. I do not know if it is done as part of a tradition or if it was a conscious effort. In any case improvement of pupils' relationships and sense of unity is one of the events' targets.

R: Socialisation of pupils. How much is the school involved in developing, for instance, the children's abilities etc?

P: The school or maybe the curriculum does not provide a policy to promote activities beyond the subject of knowledge.

All: We lay weight to knowledge.

M: There is a pursuit, a continuous strive to acquire knowledge. We feel that the time we have allotted to teaching is very little, therefore, at least, I, personally, have to bring way back my efforts to steer the children towards behaviour and activities like bending a full ear, showing love and respect, exercising tolerance, developing friendships etc.

F: You see the effort for those is not easily recognisable while knowledge is more concrete, a measurable quantity easily gauged by parents and teachers.

M: You have to put up a big struggle. Once I had a class where parents, despite their particularities, in their entirety considered other things besides knowledge as subjects of great weight and value. There I was able to produce and find the way to conquer knowledge as well. This year, though, parents are not interested in anything else but knowledge, the teaching material. I am shocked. I gathered all 25 of them. They do not care to get to know each other or learn my name or to find out if their child has any problems (masturbates) if he/her cries etc. Just tell us what it is and get it over with. It just happened with this batch of parents.

R: So, here you introduce a school-parent communication problem. They are, as you put it, a great distance apart. Do you try to counteract those findings? Does the school try to exert any influence?

M: I do try very much, but I would like some team action. When the colleague agrees you can work out problems in a better manner. When your effort, though, is not part of a more general frame of action and it is not recognised, then you lose your willingness to give because the results are seen less obvious. It is necessary to work as a team. Working alone leads to isolation regardless of the fact that I, personally, find it provocative.

K: That happens with sports as well. Concerning the talents we are talking about. We are trying to get the kids to participate in games (basketball, track and field etc.) but there is no help from the administration. There is a point of view that we disrupt the classes and the school operation. I work my programme but it would be beneficial to the children to know and realise how hard it is to start and harder yet to continue and improve on some capabilities that you only have. We could, for instance, have school-games. It is not necessary to go to sponsored games in order to discover talents.

F: Of course, all those impede school function. We have to be well organised because the curriculum is strict but also flexible.

K: Being organised counts a lot as in every aspect of our life.

F: Well, being open-minded does too. You see there are ideas that do not even cross our mind, as in the school games that you mentioned. If the games had been discussed for the benefit of the pupils and to our knowledge that it would require an extra effort we ought to attempt it, for as long as our aim has been correctly evaluated.

R: So, we arrive at what we were saying. To have a policy, evaluate our needs, set our targets, organise our moves and be bold. I, for instance, introduce a relevant question. Has the school ever been concerned with the existence and operation of the special class? And by school, I mean everybody: Teachers, pupils, parents.

All: Not at all, even though it should have, now that you mention it.

R: So, there are needs that have not even been discussed. If for some reasons, like the ones we mentioned before, you decided to veer away from the book, would you be afraid of reactions and from whom?

F: I have not tried it for important things. I do it for little things and I am not afraid of any reaction, because I consider my opinion more influential than that of the parent (even though that does not sound nice). Also, in order to do it, I have to be thoroughly convinced about it. Then, I am not afraid, but I also do not take great risks. Well, it finally seems that I am afraid of the reactions.

R: How do you find your relationships with the parents?

F: In small classes, like the ones I have, you can generally have a good relationship. Not perfect but good. There, you see, you do not grade, you are only trying to help the child stand in school.

R: Does that include all parents?

F: No, no. There are also problems.

R: How does the school try to improve these relationships?

F: When we summon parents to school it would be nice to show them our interest for their children. Not just for the knowledge and their learning goals, the grades or how they will do their homework with no mistakes, but to let their parents know that we have a positive attitude towards their children, that we love them; to get started with the positive aspects. Many colleagues do not understand that. I experienced that as a mother; Acting like we have something to contest. We get going and we let it all hang out. We do not help them, we do not stand by them, they do not bring correct homework, they do not bring all the books in the school bag etc. Only criticizing, as if the parents did not have a hard day's work, did not go home late; and did not wonder what to do first. Look at the child; discuss something, read something with her/him...

R: Some teachers say 'parents of bad students do not come to school.' How do you consider that?

F: They do not come to school for fear of what they are going to hear. But how are we going to talk to them? We should look at the problem personally. Wait. Why do we have a problem? What is happening? What can we do together? You are not going to criticise the parent because each child has its own way and its own place on this earth. Each child is a part of this family and you cannot justify. Parents are indifferent. Why are they indifferent? How are we going to get the indifferent parent involved? Maybe they have no time or knowledge or maybe they do not know how to use them. Maybe they are divorced. What does it mean for an indifferent parent to be criticised straight away?

13. 2 A sample of pupils' second level focus group

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Researcher (R): What is it that you like in this school, ?... ?

(L): I like the windows.

R: In what way?

L: They are big and many.

R: What does that mean?

L: That the school is happy, with a lot of light...

R: Well done. Do you like anything else?

(A): The flag is very nice.

R: Why do you like the flag?

A: I like it because of the blue colour. It is blue and white. And it has the cross high up there. George what are those? I do not understand them.

George (G):..

R: What else would you add, Maria? What did the pupil have in his mind when he drew the picture of the school?

Maria (M): For the school to be pleasant, with beautiful doors.

R: In what way?

M: To have ornaments.

R: What kind of ornaments?

A: To have pictures

R: Only on the doors?

A: Not only on the doors, but when some children make something in the art-class, the lady should stick them on the windows for us to see.

R: So, you would like the school to have pictures. What kind of pictures would you like? Ready-made, or pictures from children's work?

M: No, ready-made but pictures from children's work.

R: What do you like in the picture that the pupil has drawn?

G: The sun because it illuminates the children inside to see what they write.

R: Anton, what do you have to say about your picture?

A: I have drawn a room with the name 'games'.

R: What does it mean for you?

G: Inside there is a yard and the children...

A: No, it is not that.

L: Anton, in the place that it says 'games', means that he would like a classroom full of toys.

A: Here is a classroom for preschoolers and the children go there to play.

R: You mean is it another school?

A: It is another classroom that has preschoolers.

R: Would you like to have what Lena mentioned? That inside the school or class it would be nice to have a place to play? Do you agree so that I can write it down that the children want a space with toys or games? And should it be bright and pleasant? Should I write down that it would be nice to decorate it with pictures from the children? Do you agree?

All: Yes, yes

R: What else did you tell me?

A: We would like...I forgot it.

G: For many children to be there and play and rest from the class.

R: You mean that you would like a lot of games and long breaks or is it something else?

G: No, not so long breaks, short, to remember the lesson also.

M: I would like the books to have Mickey Mouse.

G: Comics.

L: And the children, when they play outside, to be friendly and not chase one another.

R: Very well: Pupils to be friends. Michelle, have you something else to add?

Michelle (Mich):...

The researcher urges her.

Mich:...

M: I would like the whole place to be a playground and play.

R: We put that down.

G: That the space to be larger so that the children could play nicely and friendly.

R: You mean large spaces for break activities. Another child?

A: To have different places to do different things. I mean an exercise room, one for football, one for basket, volley, swimming pool, for sports.

R: You mean places for activities.

M: For ballet.

R: Anything else, children?

L: A canteen.

G: The teacher not to shout in the class and for us to be nice kids.

R: What do you mean?

L: Pupils not to fight when the teacher teaches the class and not to talk when she writes on the blackboard.

R: So, the kids should be paying attention to the lesson. We put it down.

L: The school gate should be always open so that kids do not have to climb up and fall down.

R: Lena, what do you try to say? The school should keep the door open for the kids to go where?

L: To go home or to come from home to school.

R: Do children find the door closed? Should the door be open or closed?

G: When all the kids are inside the school we should close it but when not all of them have come the door should be open.

R: What is the basic thing? The door should be open or closed?

L: To be open.

M: Yes, it should be closed only at night so that thieves do not get in.

A: Instead of the kids climbing the doors when they want to leave, some older kids have done it, they should ask the teacher to open it for them.

R: So, the door should not be open but the kids should ask permission to go out when there is a reason. Therefore, in order for the kids to feel safe, what should happen with the door?

: To be open for the kids to get in.

Researcher: Do you agree? What do you say, ?

A: It should not be open because a small child may jump out to cross the street and not see the car and have an accident.

R: What is more important? What do you say?

All children: What says.

R: So, you agree that the door should remain closed and they should only open it when there is a reason.

All children: Yes, yes

R: I put it down. George wants to add something.

G: The children not to push each other when they get into the classrooms in the morning so that we do not have any accidents; And pupils to wait for their teacher to come in the classroom quietly.

A: Miss, Miss I have something else.

M: We should not make fun of other children during prayer. And we did it today.

R: Do you want to go on or did you hear the bell and you want to go out?

All: No, no miss we would like to stay.

: Place and dolls for the girls to play and many balls for the boys.

M: To have ballet lessons here and go to my mother. I go to ballet classes somewhere else.

R: Does anybody else want to say something? Lena?

L: The books should say funny things and there should be grass on the yards instead of concrete so that we do not get hurt.

R: You mean to have some green in your school, grass and trees.

Girl: So that the kids do not hurt themselves when they do somersault.

Researcher: We needed it for safety and what else?

Boy-girl: For beauty as well.

A: We want another classroom to learn manners.

R: Can't we learn that in class?

R: Are you trying to say that pupils should be occupied with the way that they behave apart from the lessons?

A: To have the lessons but when we finish them the kids should learn manners.

R: What does your classmate mean by saying 'manners'?

G: Not to curse.

: The lessons should be easy.

R: So, the school should teach manners to pupils and lessons should be pleasant and easy for pupils. I think that we are done for today.

Children: Are we going to listen to our recording?

R: Another time. Thank you. Have a nice break.

13. 3 A sample of parents' evaluative focus group ()

R: Since you have no questions about the questionnaire I would like to ask you something: How do you see the pupils' relationships among themselves?

(X): As I was completing the questionnaire I recalled words who used to say that he was getting ideas from his encounters with pre-school and primary school children that were full of life and freshness. The same children at the end of primary school had run dry. That made me think, because it was coming from a scientist-writer who was coming in contact with children. I didn't like it. What is to blame? I wonder, should the school and, of course, children's relationships improve?

R: So, do you believe that relationships in the specific school could be better?

(M): The school could encourage them further. I will report my daughter's example. Every now and then the headteacher asks them to do some homework together with one of their classmates. If it was not occasional, involved more children and it was placed within the framework of schoolwork so that it would be established in school, I think, it would help a lot.

X: Of course, that needs a trained teacher. If the teacher graduated 20, 30 or even 15 years' ago and did not have the sensitivity to keep in touch with current developments then she/he will not do it.

Rena (Rn): The steps taken are few and fragmented in view of what is needed. Still there are some steps. Children's relationships are basically defined by the relationships, interest and disposition of the parents. Parents today cannot devote all the time that a child needs in order to deal with things that occur and that is why we find children isolate themselves. The time, though, that they spend at school continuously gets longer (school with expanded schedule etc)

M: That means that the school logic should be renewed. I would also like to say that in many cases the school not only does not help relationships, but it encourages competition among pupils for great performance. Of course, in the specific class this is under control but that is what usually happens. The child develops the mentality of doing well even to the detriment of his/her classmate. The child thinks: if the other child looks good I might look less good myself. Collaboration and teamwork is not encouraged. Individualism and self-promotion is cultivated...

X: This is sterile and creates problems in the children's relationships, in their relationships with the teachers as well as their own selves.

M: School should cultivate values such as respect for other people's abilities or their particularities...It should define objectives as well. If the pupils' objective is academic excellence, that will necessarily lead to competition. But if the objective is acquisition of knowledge as well as communication with and acceptance of their classmates' point of view then you have succeeded in winning the other person's respect. Also the school logic of simply saying that the other person is of value, while you are looking for the best, will inevitably destroy pupils' relationship. It means nothing to just say it.

X: The school rewards the ones that are good in class. It systematically forgets any efforts made by some of the others. How are the children, then, going to see their classmates; what kind of feelings are they going to develop towards the 'good' pupils, or the 'good' pupils towards the others? How are they going to learn, to appreciate and respect the ability and personality of every one of their classmates? That special something which each child has, is not being promoted and appreciated at school. The child cannot enter the group and develop relationships when it is regulated to the status of a borderline participant.

R: Does that also mean that the school lays weight to the learning as...?

Rn: Undoubtedly, the school is dominated by the research for improvement of the learning level and, of course, it offers barren knowledge. Everything else is not important despite the decent effort of some teachers like the ones we have this year.

R: I wonder if our school could try some new approaches in order to get out of the same old path.

M: Yes, I believe it could. The N.C., I mean the legal framework of it, leaves many windows open that the school could take advantage of and accomplish many things. There is a mentality instilled through the years, though, that carries from generation to generation and makes it easier to just transfer knowledge instead of searching for innovative approaches to teaching and working.

Rn: There are many parents, and therefore a part of society that insists that the school provides knowledge exclusively, since the entire system seems to be so oriented.

X: To begin with the parents should not intervene in the teachers' role. Now in order not to they should have faith in the teachers. If the teacher handles things perfectly then he can put the parents in their place and fend off their interventions.

R: Could the teacher have the support and consent of the parents for the introduction of a new idea or do the parents adhere to the traditional ways?

Rn: This is really a great obstacle. Teachers have improved measurably, but they face comparisons and they would not like to be dominated.

X: From my own experience I also see that when I explain or I have things explained to me in a reasonable way then I get convinced. Parents, in general, can be convinced. But we are not informed. When the teacher provides the time and makes the effort most parents understand.

R: Would it help if the effort was more systematic and from the entirety of the teachers?

Rn: Of course, the more inclusive the participation, the better the result.

M: Of course you have the parents that go crazy if their child does not answer perfectly the 'a' or 'b' thing. How can you work with such parents?

Rn: Yes, but if you win the ones mostly worried about the situation, who usually are the most dynamic ones, then, you have on your side the most fundamental part, because they themselves could help change the mentality and attitude of each parent.

X: Truly it takes a great effort to change ways of thinking and achieve some kind of change. This is why some attempts to change things from above have been unsuccessful.

M: In regard to changes from above I have the impression that even the ones that propose them know how they are going to be developed.

Rn: They usually try to present a more progressive face without foundations and preparatory work; they are just devoid of legal meaning.

X: Well, that is how we have special classes at school; a tragic mistake. Do you have the infrastructure? Have you trained the class teacher to deal with the children with special needs, his/her pupils and the parents of all children? How do you prepare them? It is racist for both sides. I lived through that too.

R: You are saying that preparation is needed before the introduction of a new institution. But could the school work out the defects and take on the challenge? Could our school do something?

X: With the colleagues not knowing what to do? Where is teachers' training? We observe changes year after year but teachers remain the same.

R: The special class teacher in our school has been trained and she is called upon to play her own role. Do you know what she does?

X: The child with learning difficulties is one thing; the child with special needs is another thing.

M: The special class does not have children with learning difficulties. It has trainable children but with special training needs.

R: So, simple information could have been provided. There is room for action in that direction.

X: Frankly, I don't know and I will wait for the school proposals. It is not familiar territory, but I would be interested in learning more about it.

R: Lets' come back to this. How do you experience the co-operation with your child's teachers in your own school?

Rn: As non existent. I don't know any co-operation.

X: I don't know if I can see or meet some of them. I have not been notified.

M: The music teacher, for example. I don't even know her name.

R: Isn't there specific meeting time?

Rena: I get the feeling that there is no co-operation.

R: Don't they call you at a specific time?

M: The teacher calls us to take the report card and talk about the child's progress. We also go to celebrations. That is the extent of our contact with school.

X: I think the class-teacher has given a notice, but nobody else. On an excursion my daughter told me: 'She is our athletics teacher'.

M: I think this should originate from school. I feel uncomfortable. What am I going to say? What do you do in music? What do you teach? What does my child learn? Now, if the teacher called me, this would be different. Then, I would be informed what happens, how I could adjust and realise what to expect. I really feel there is no co-operation. It is the school and I. No two way ties that would allow us to exchange views, to do something, to help. Not even that.

R: Do you really believe that parental involvement in school work can be positive?

Rn: I believe, yes. There are parents that could be utilised in various ways.

X: Yes, each one in his/her subject. Of course, we also have the Parents' Association, but I don't know what they offer because I don't go.

Rn: I don't go to the administrative meeting either. Anyway, the Parents' Association could not satisfy all the parents' desire to offer and participate according to pupils' needs.

M: No, at least not in the way it is today. I see only one person that is active. But all parents cannot participate, although by participating, parents become less critical.

X: Of course, I mentioned before the example of the teacher where the parents failed to see the positive aspects of the participation and they criticised her by saying things like 'the children were making a fuss'.

R: How could we achieve participation but avoid such tendencies?

Rn: Some steps are needed, such as thinking, preparation, planning, and support. Every change assumes a change of mentality.

X: As a result of that teachers do not attempt any change. They maintain the mentality of the traditional teacher that means security and keep their space hermetically closed to the parents, the other teacher, the headteacher along with the school counsellor. He/she constantly performs the same routine: I talk, you listen.

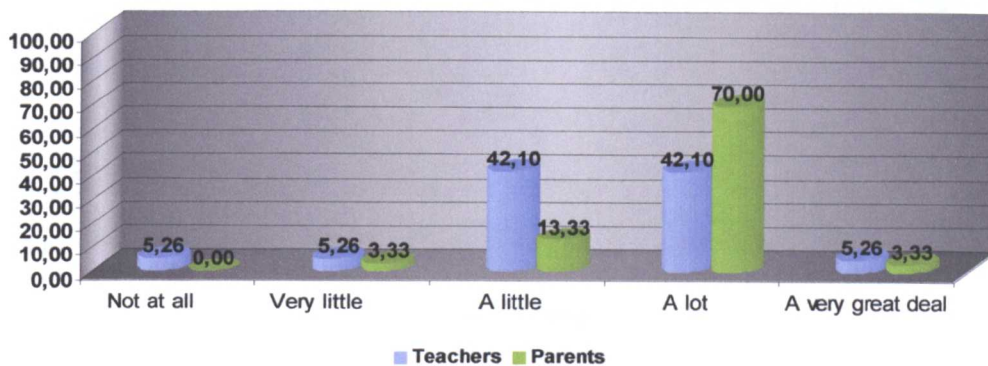
M: The teacher is afraid that he/she could be challenged. He/she is not positive that what he/she does is the best. So she/he tries to rule everything by shutting everybody out.

Rn: Therefore, the teacher needs training. Everything starts from there.

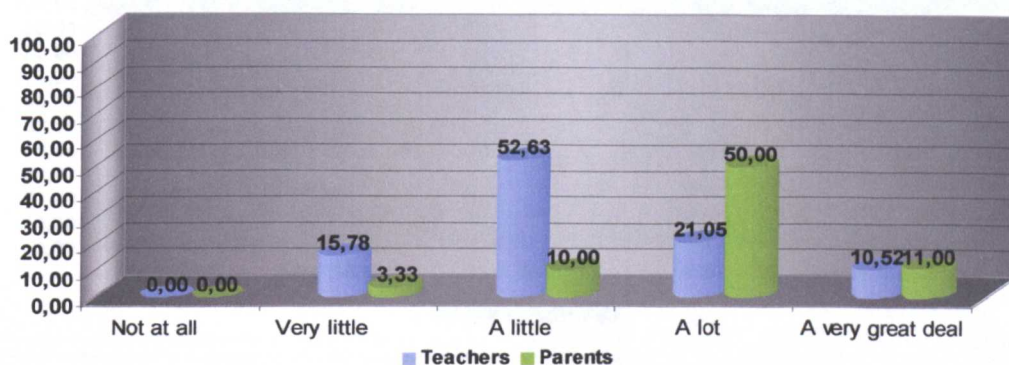
R: I think we have covered a large part of the subject. Thank you for your co-operation.

Appendix 14: Teachers' and parents' evaluative responses

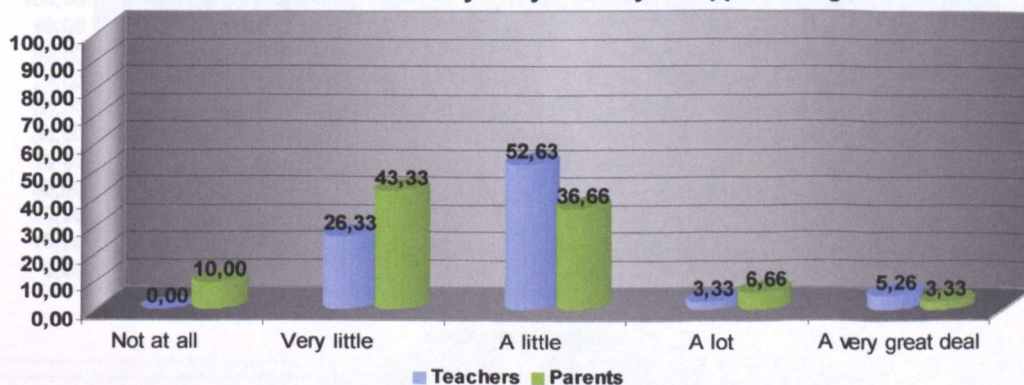
1.The school is a safe place



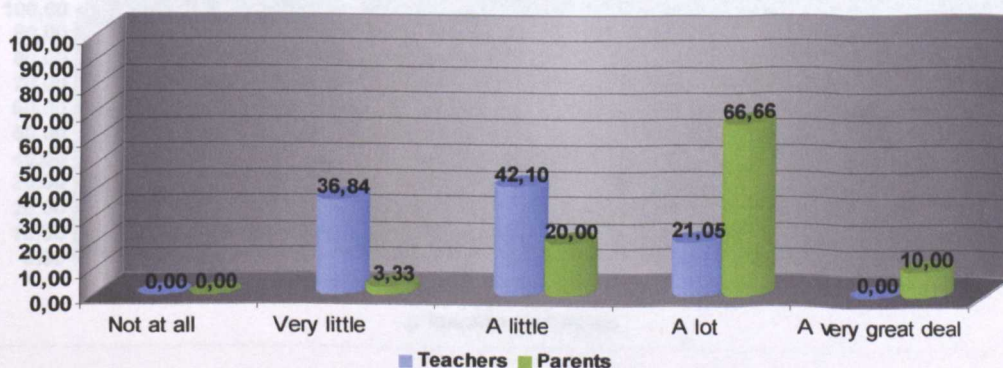
2.Pupils like going to the school



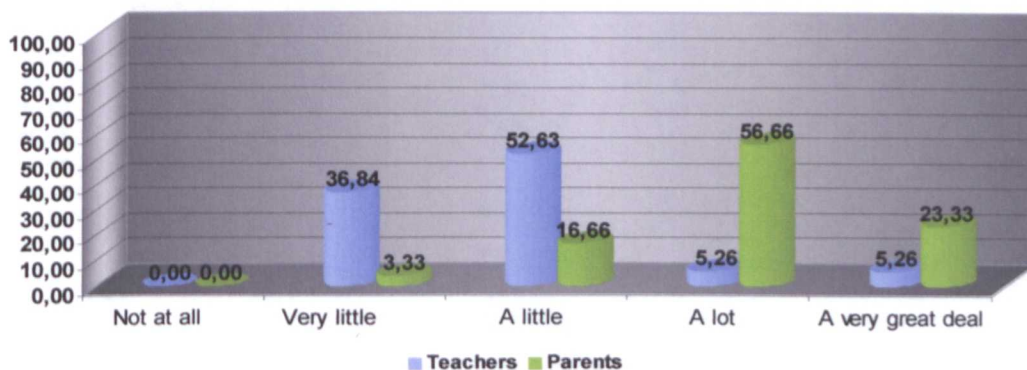
3.The school seeks deliberately to try new ways of approaching situations



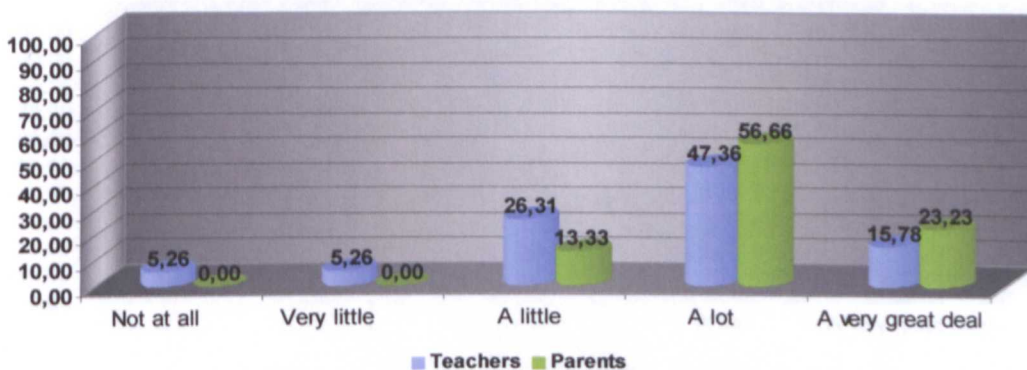
4.Pupils are well behaved and well mannered



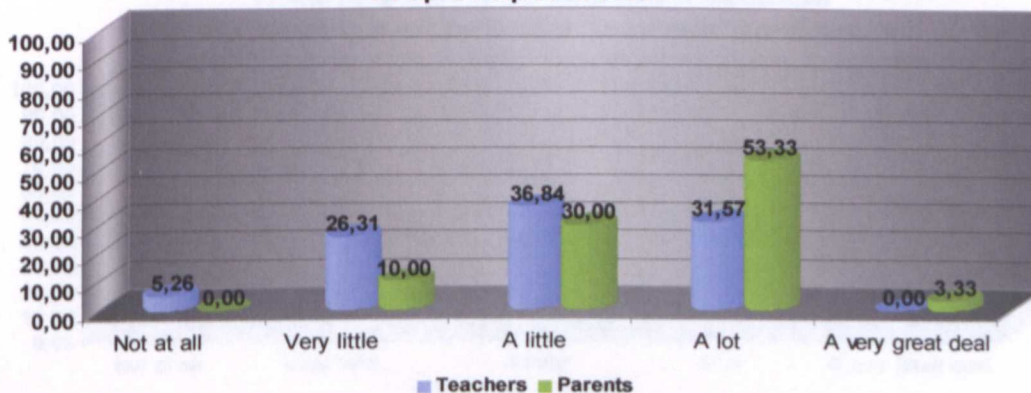
5.Pupils respect teachers



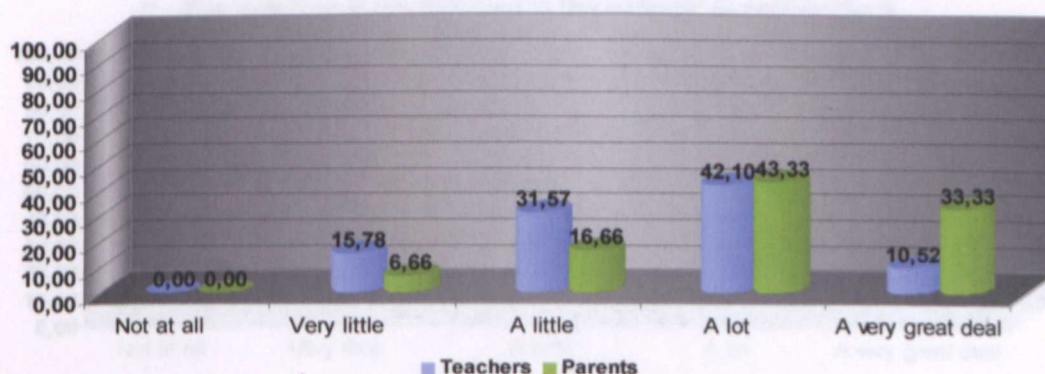
6.Teachers respect pupils



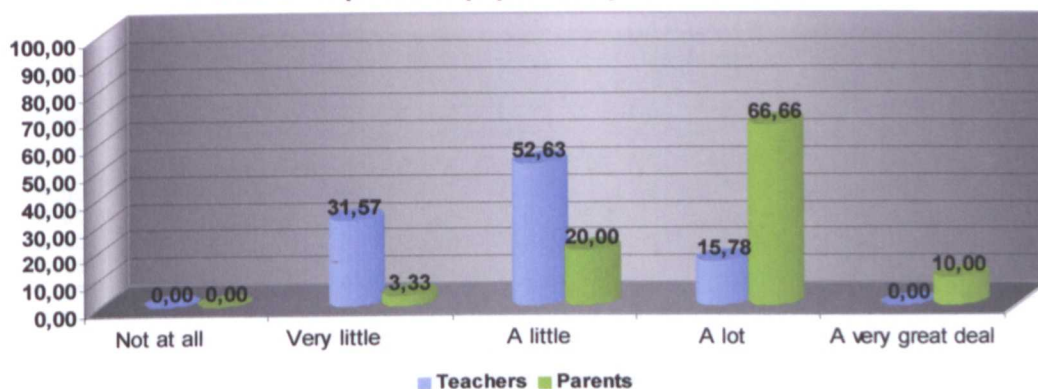
7.Pupils help each other



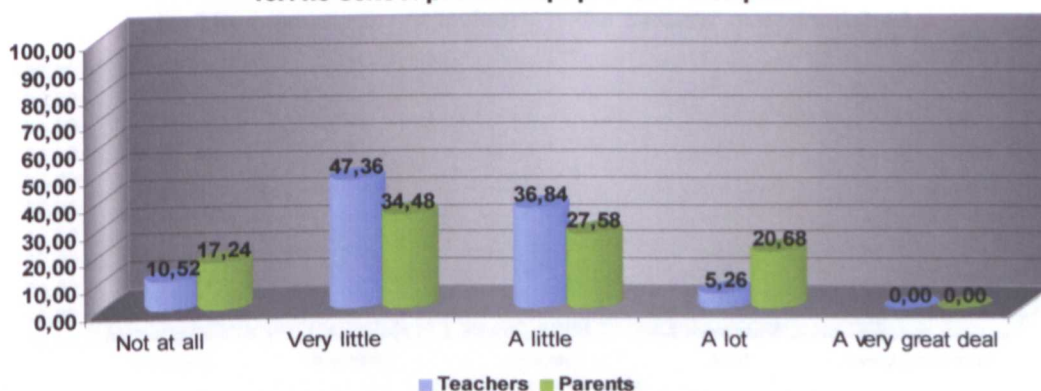
8.Pupils fight with each other



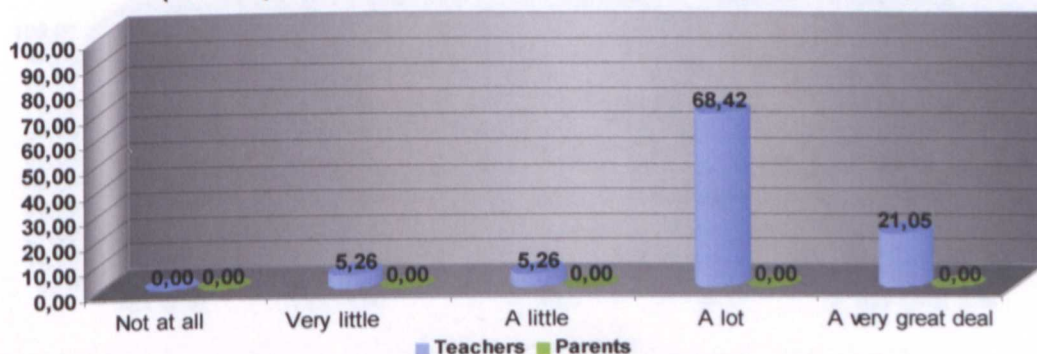
9.The school promotes pupils' discipline and behaviour



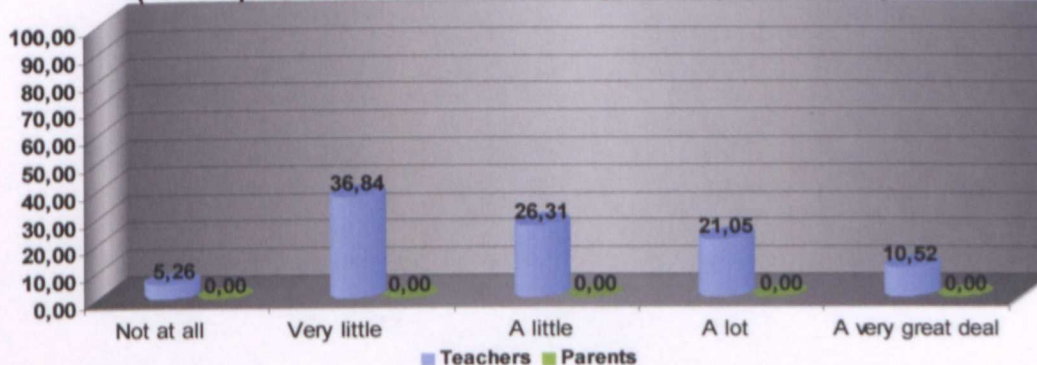
10.The school promotes pupils' self-discipline



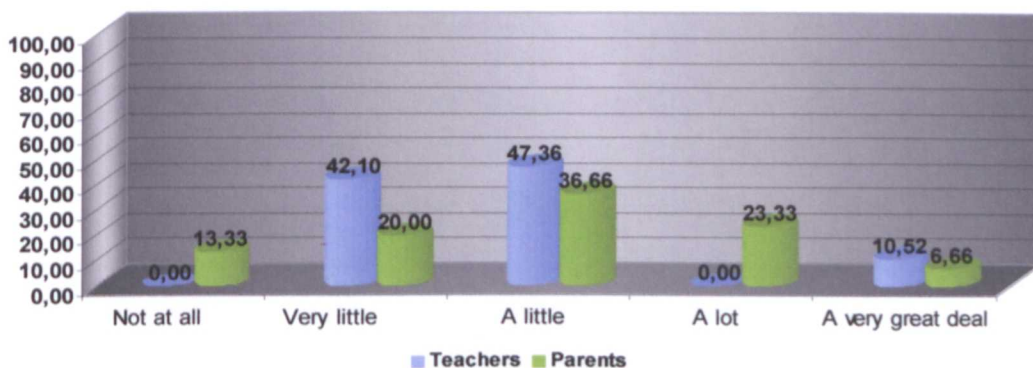
11.The school is interested in official curriculum (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



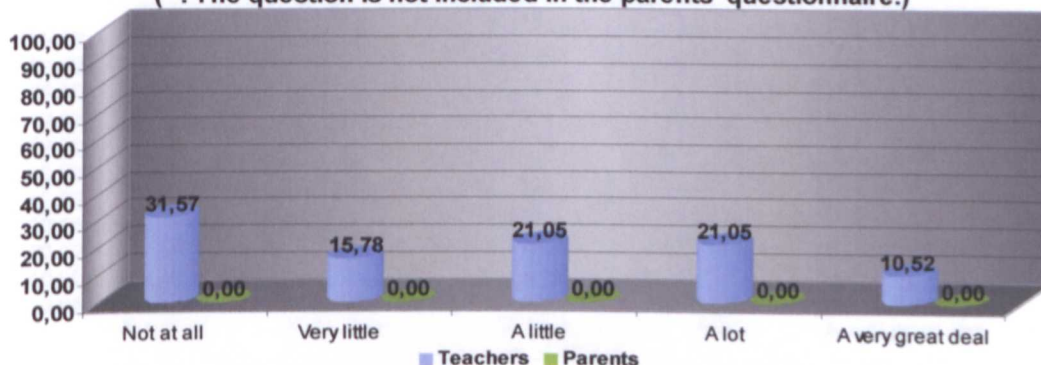
12.The school adapts the curriculum to meet pupils' needs (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



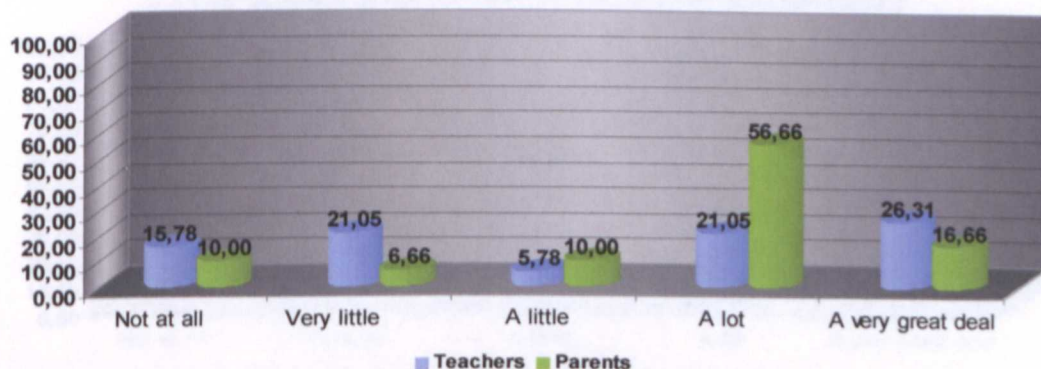
13.The school is interested in pupils' individual abilities and talents



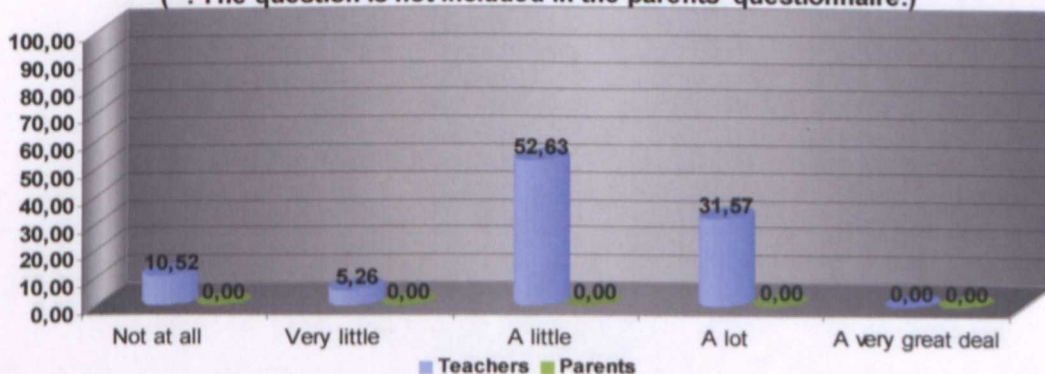
14. Curriculum is enhanced by extra curriculum activities (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



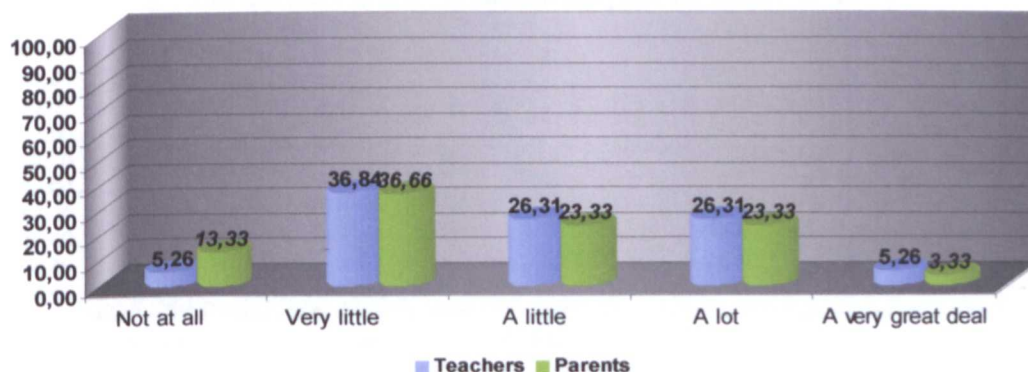
15.Extra curricular activities provide valuable opportunities for all pupils



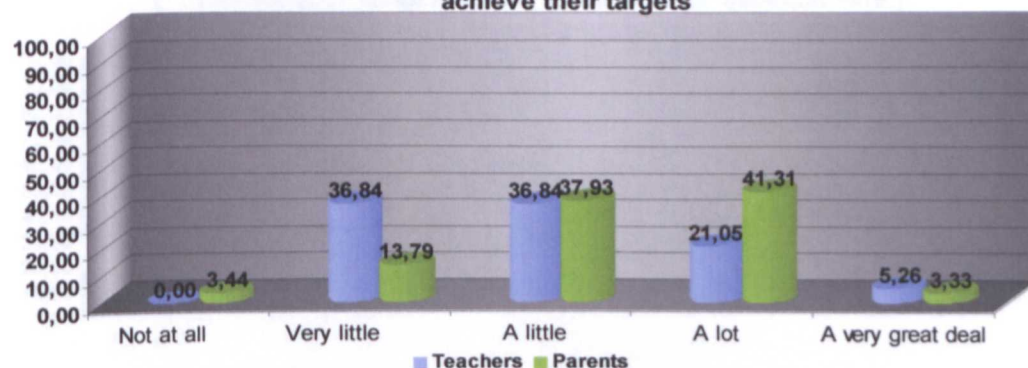
16.The school has high expectations from all pupils (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



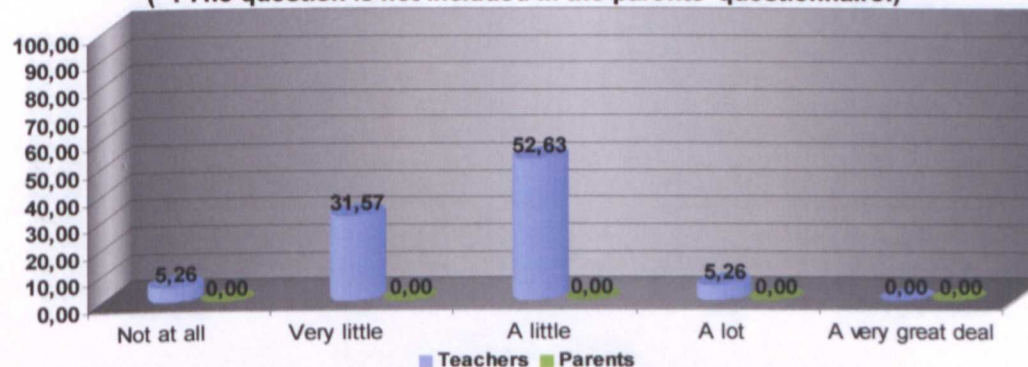
17.The school promotes pupils' co-operation



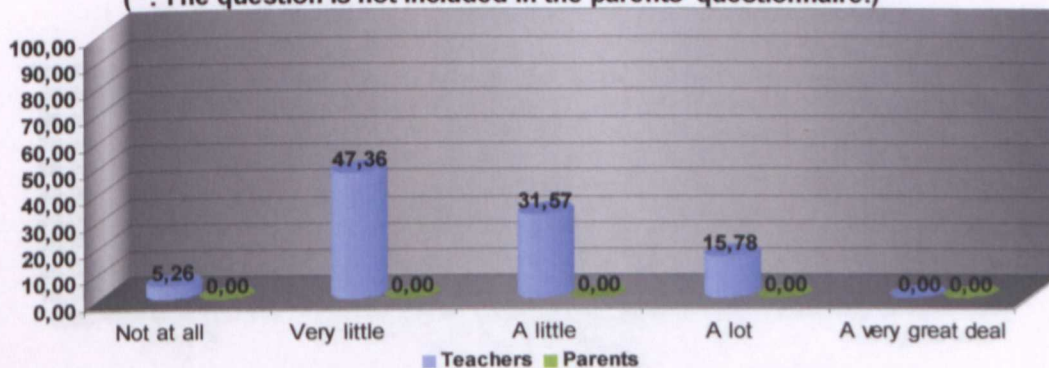
18.The school provides effective support and advice for all its pupils to achieve their targets



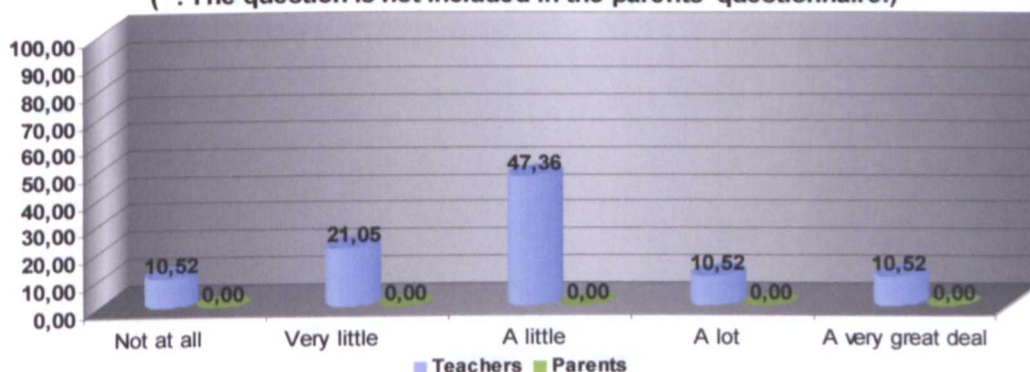
19.The school sees pupils' diversity as adding value in pupils' learning (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



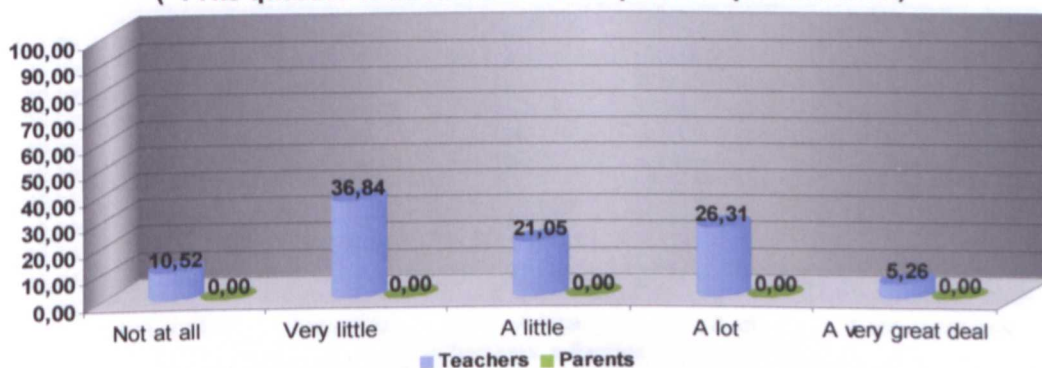
20.The school sees pupils' diversity as adding value to the school life (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



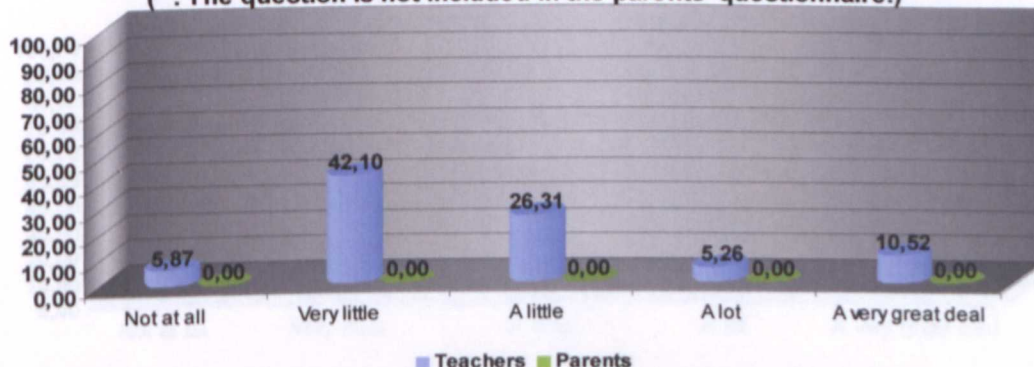
21. Pupils with special needs achieve their targets
 (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



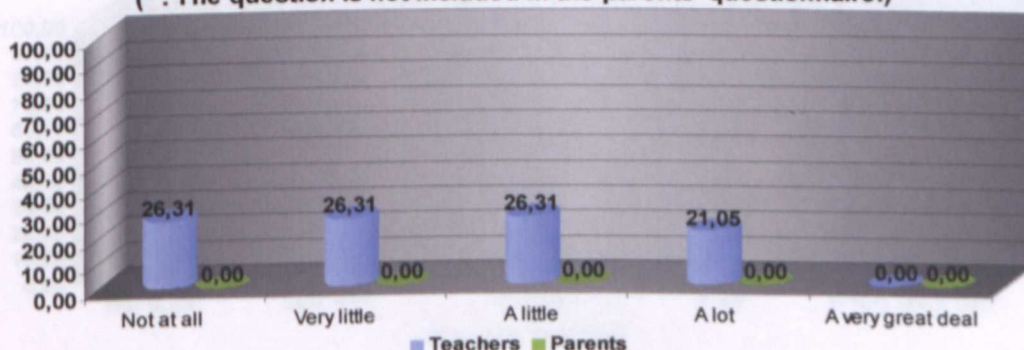
22. Teachers work together with a common sense of purpose and objectives
 (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



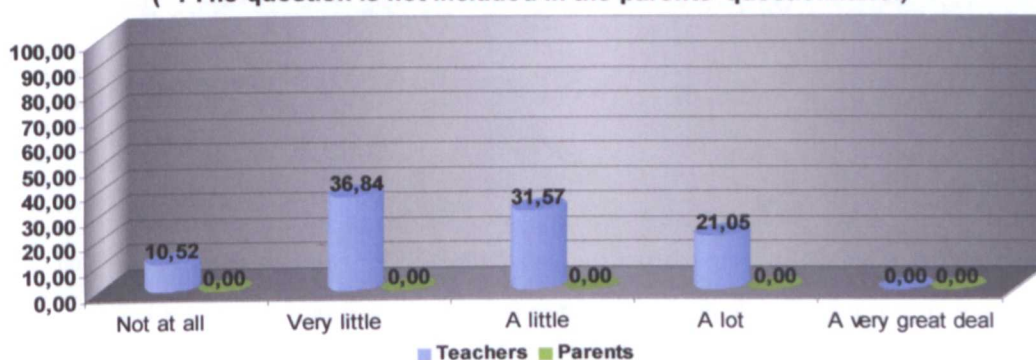
23. The school distributes the school-work fairly to the teachers
 (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



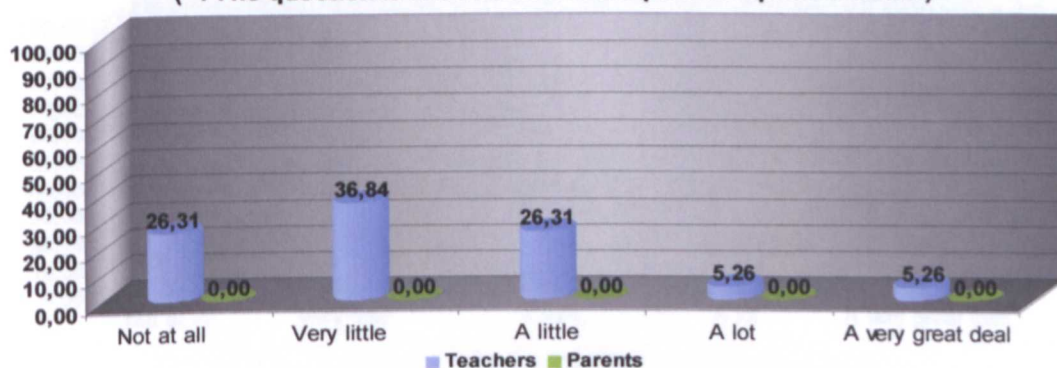
24. There is a high level of trust and support between the headteacher and the teachers
 (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



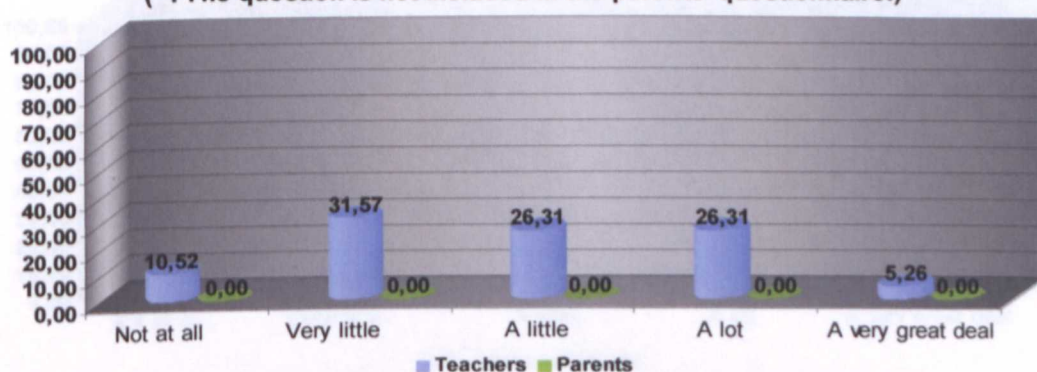
25. There is a high level of trust, openness and support among teachers.
 (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



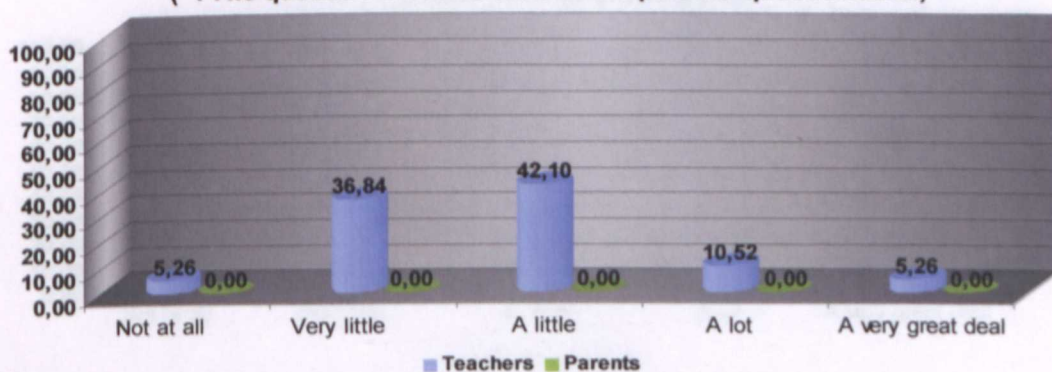
26. The school recognises teachers' work
 (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



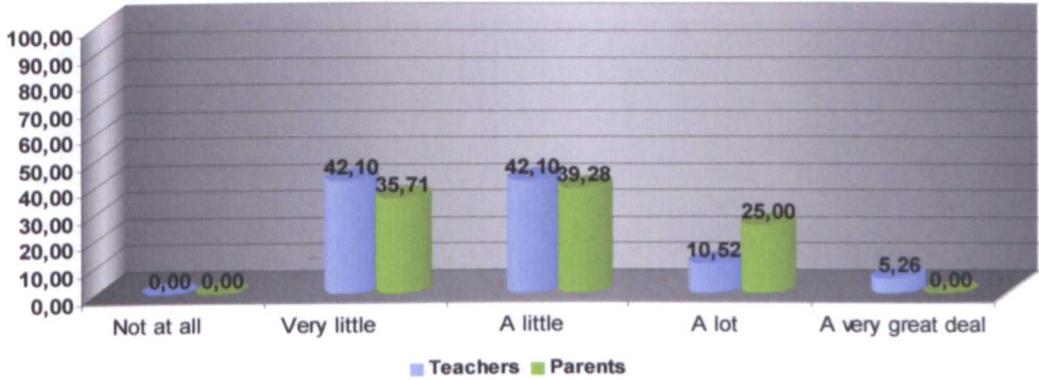
27. Teachers' views are valued in school decision making
 (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



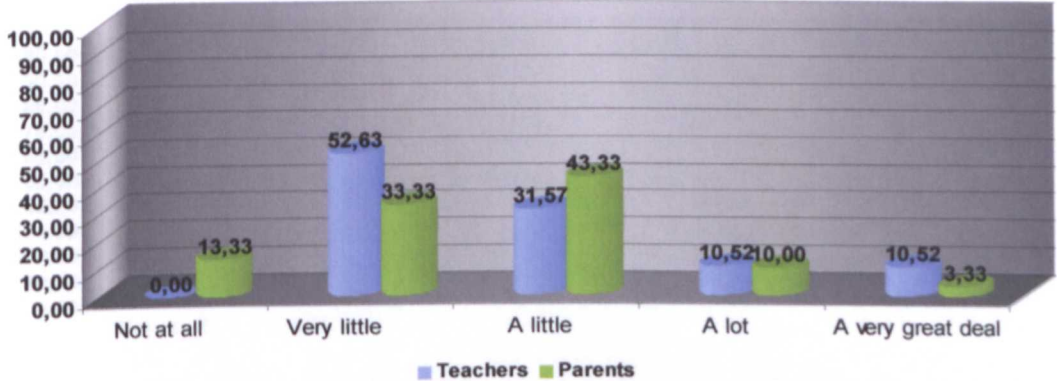
28. Pupils' views are valued in school decision making
 (* : The question is not included in the parents' questionnaire.)



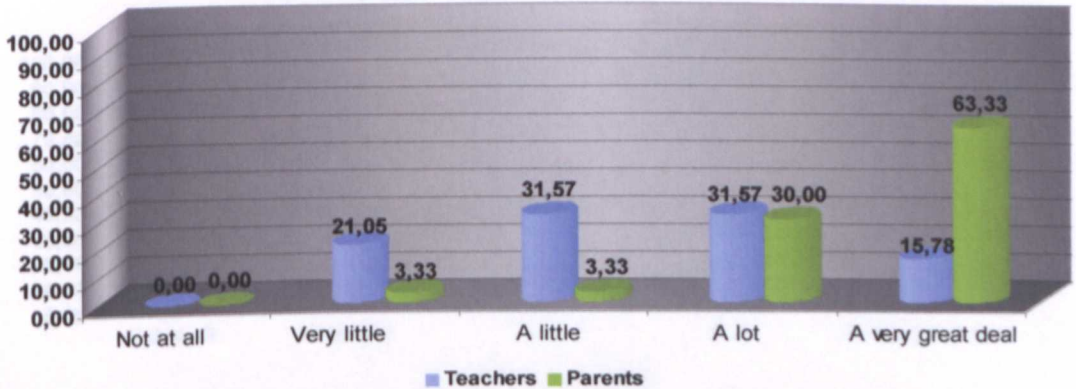
29. Parents' views are valued in school decision making



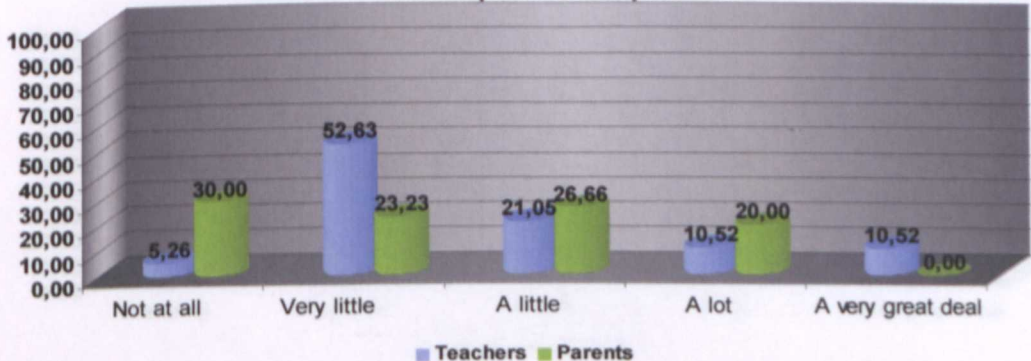
30. The school is aware of parents' needs, feelings and expectations



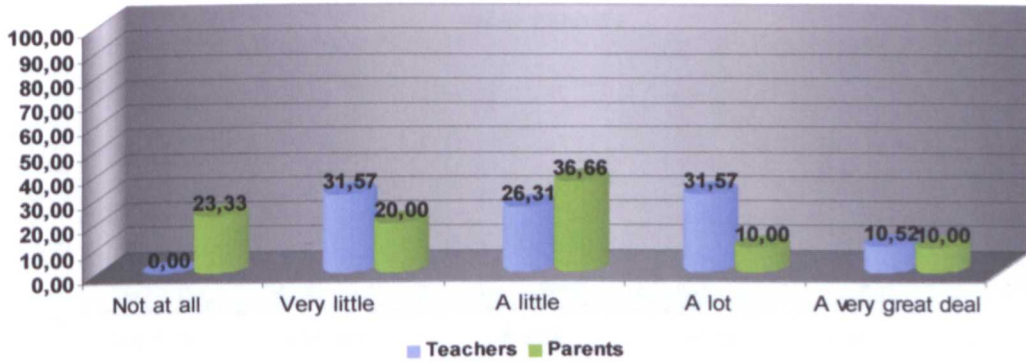
31. Parents play a decisive role in their children's learning



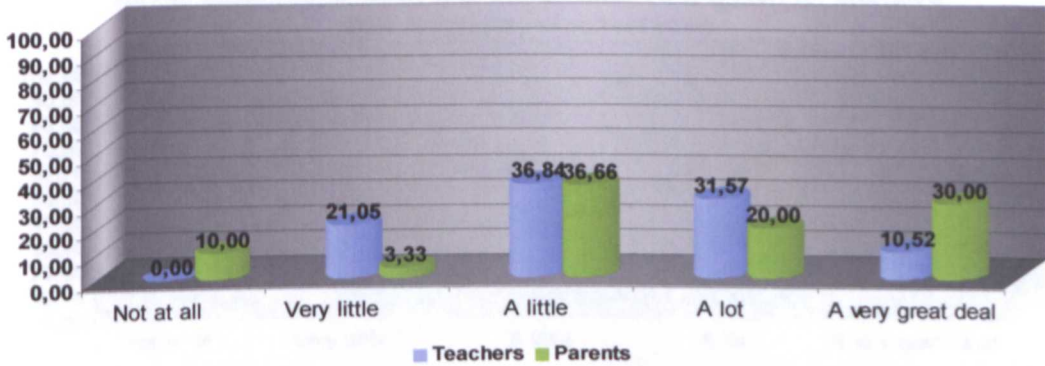
32. The school provides opportunities to parents to be well informed about school policies and practices



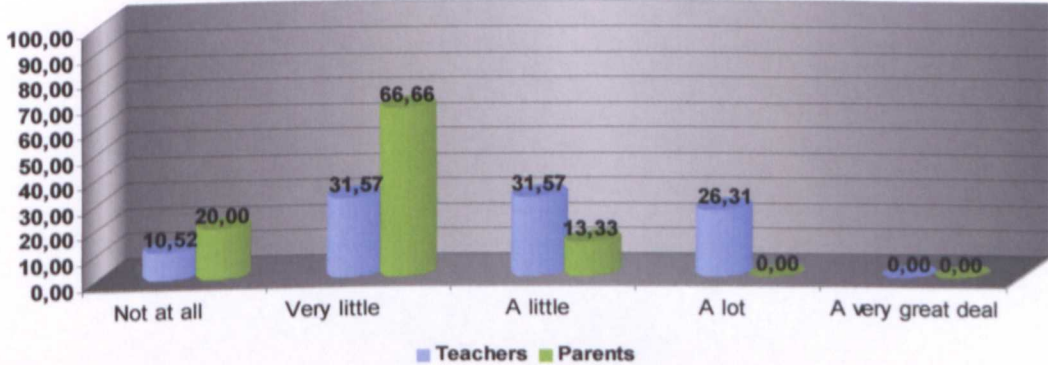
33.The communication of teachers and parents is appropriately organised



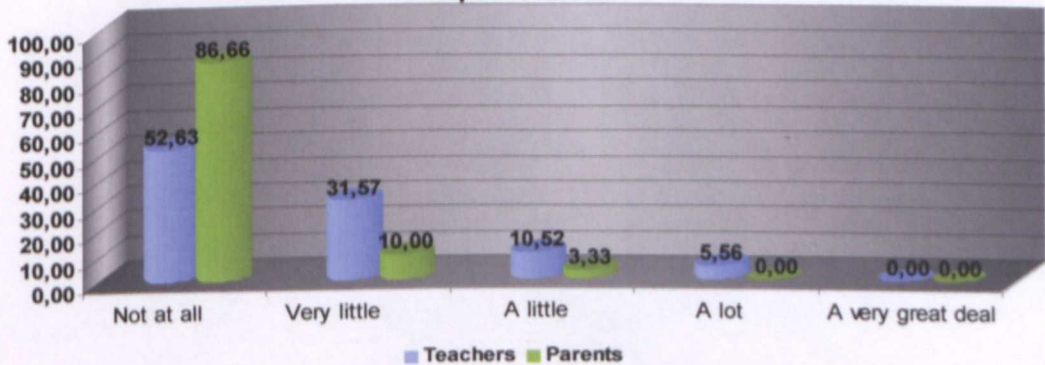
34.Teachers-parents meetings are productive and useful



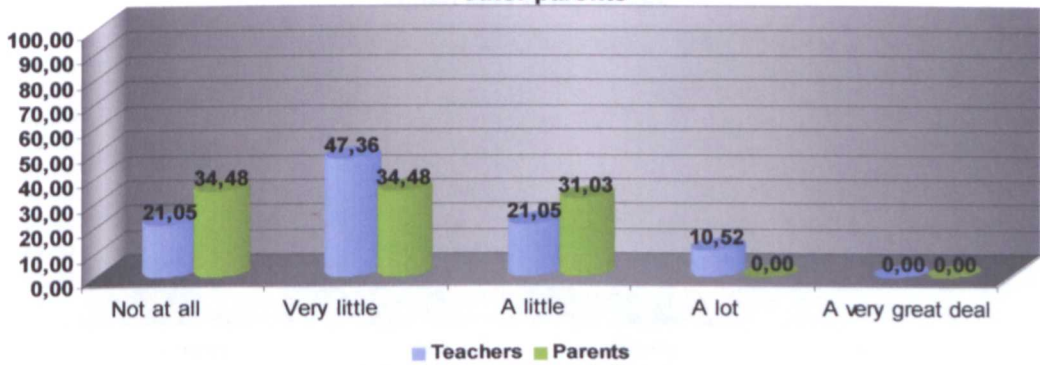
35.Parents are involved in the school work



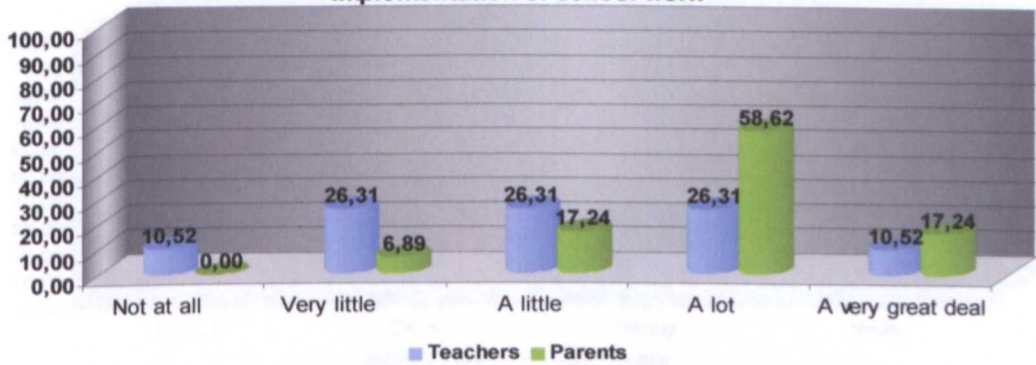
36.The school develops ways of using parents as a resource in the curriculum implementation



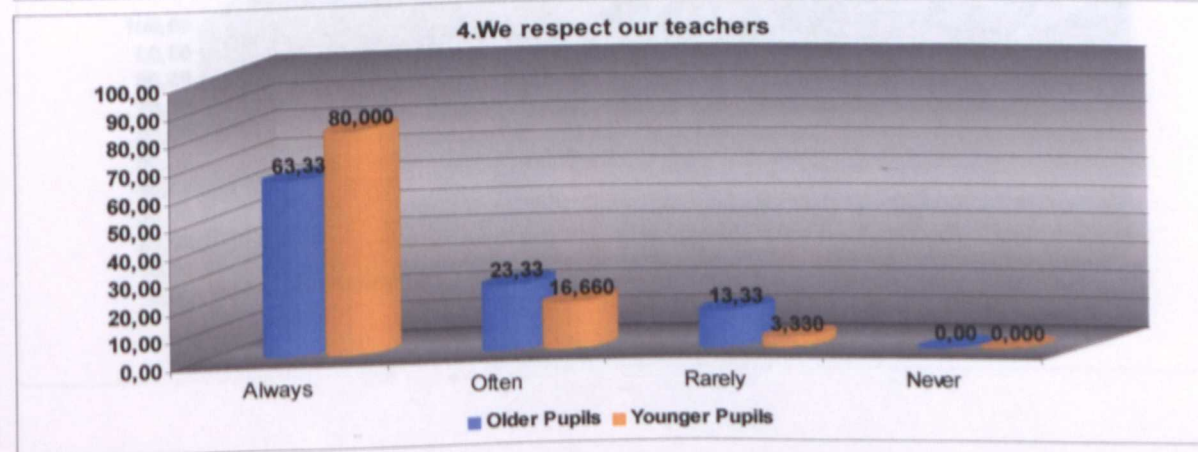
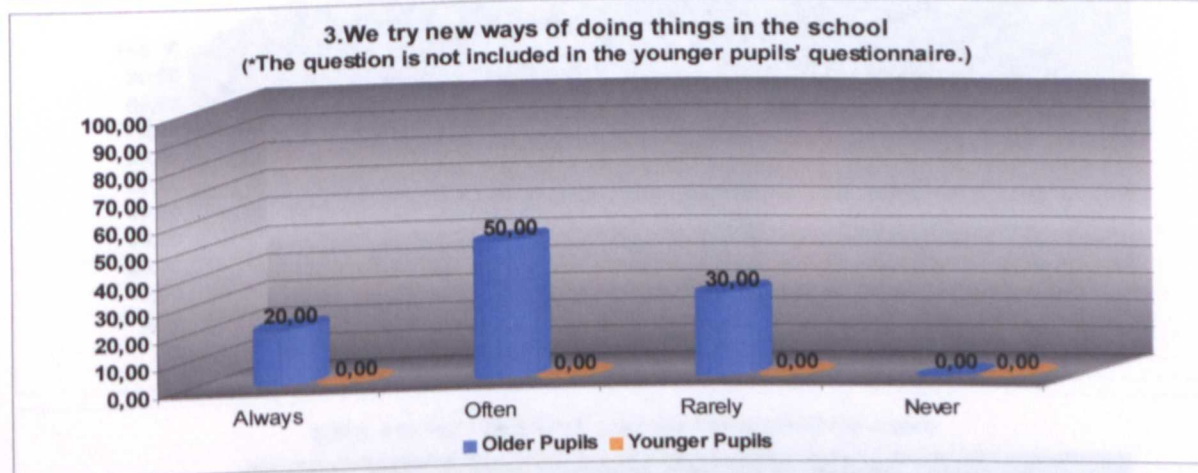
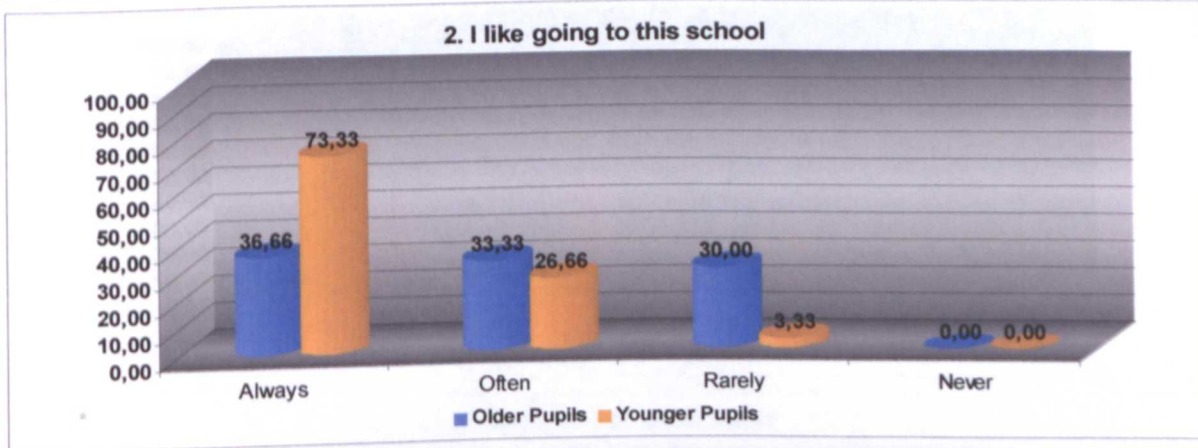
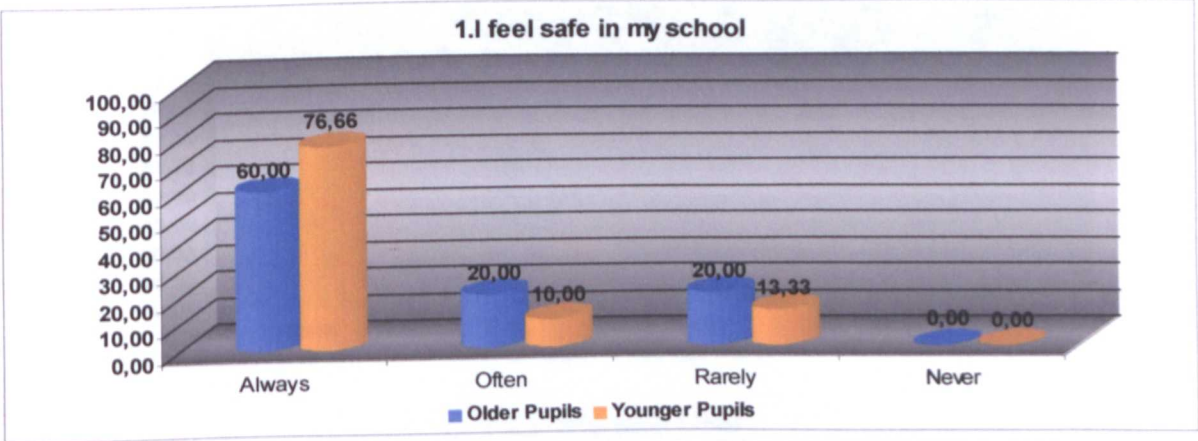
37.The school provides opportunities for parents to share their concern with other parents



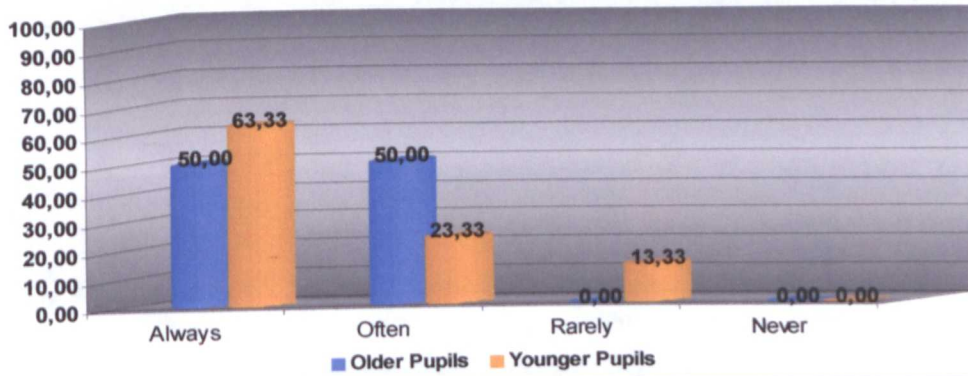
38.The school cooperates with the Parents' Association for effective implementation of school work



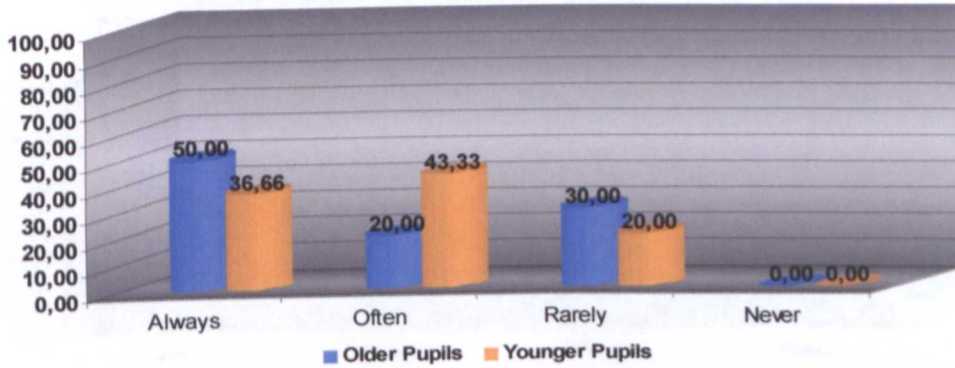
Appendix 15: Older and younger pupils' evaluative responses



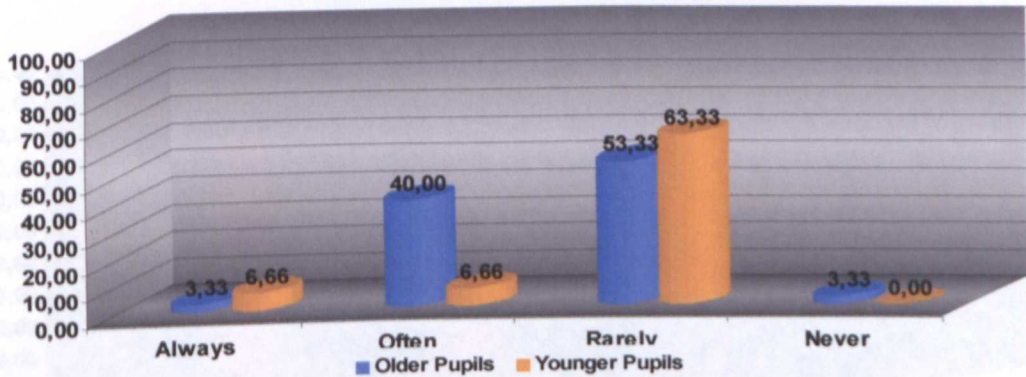
5. Our teachers respect us



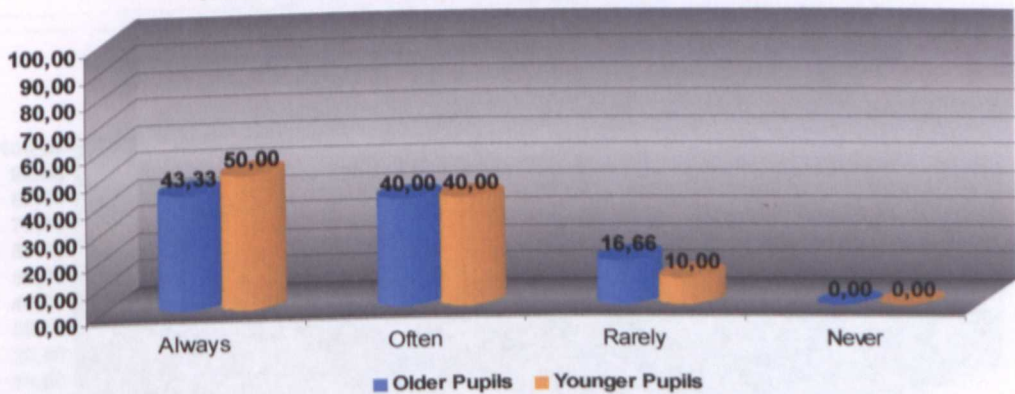
6. We help each other



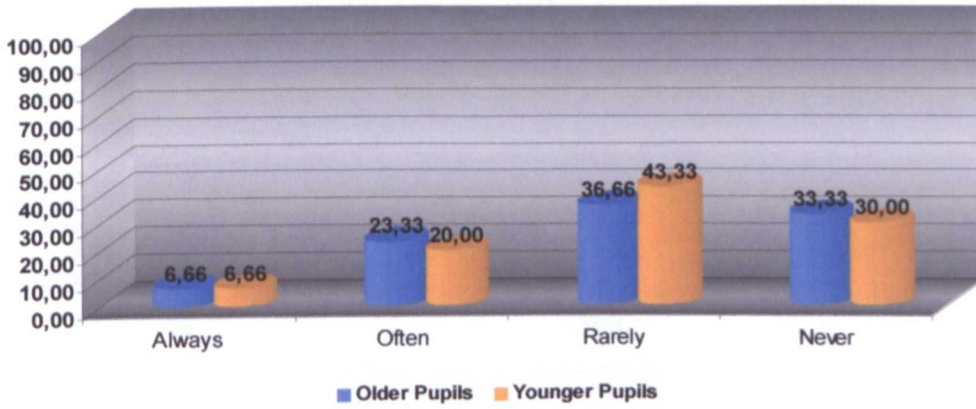
7. We fight with each other



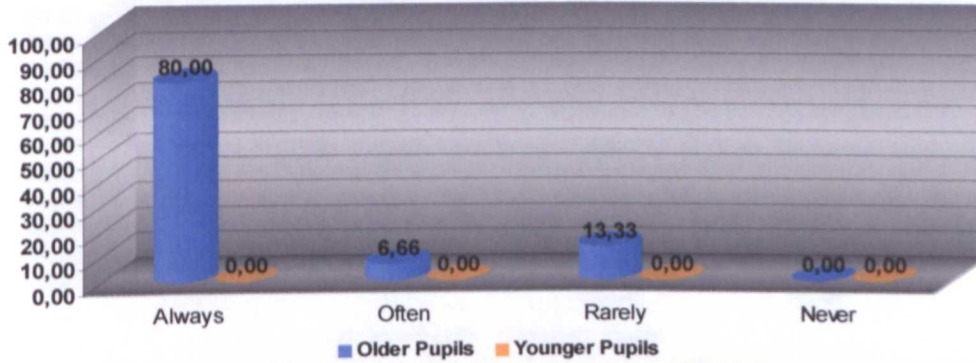
8. We are well behaved and we have good manners



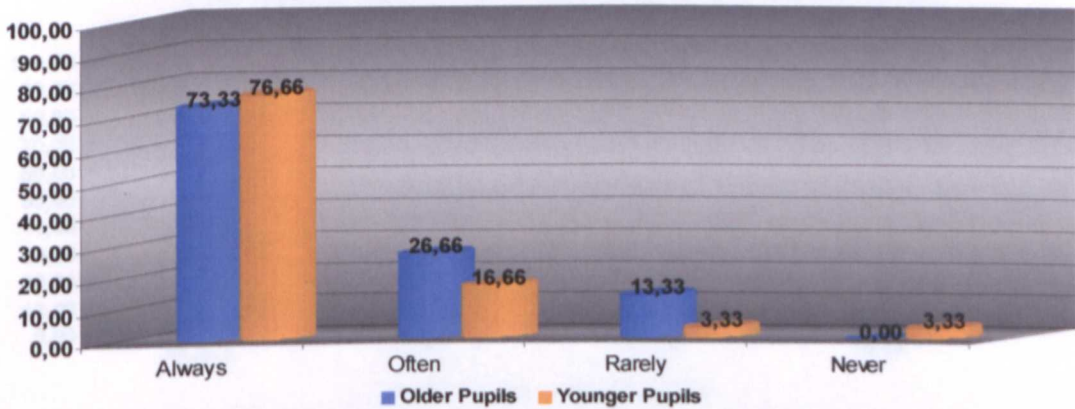
9.We interrupt the lessons in the class



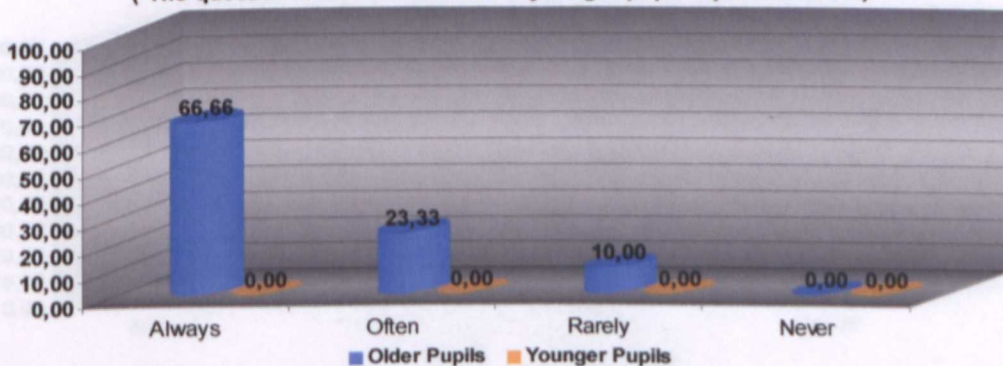
10.Our teachers support and advise us when we have problems (*The question is not included in the younger pupils' questionnaire.)



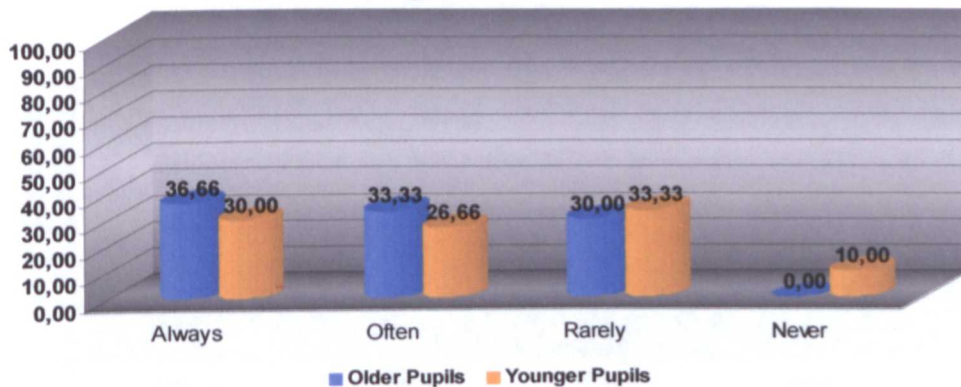
11.Our teachers encourage us to do the best we can



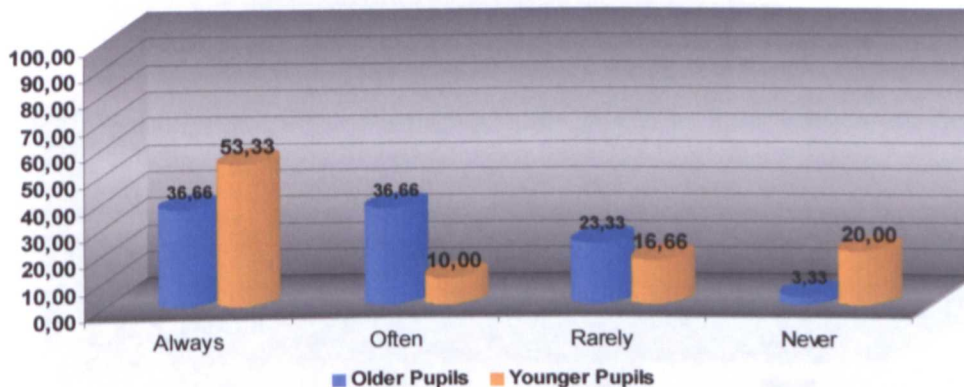
12.Our teachers encourage us to develop our abilities and interests (*The question is not included in the younger pupils' questionnaire.)



13. We work together with our classmates

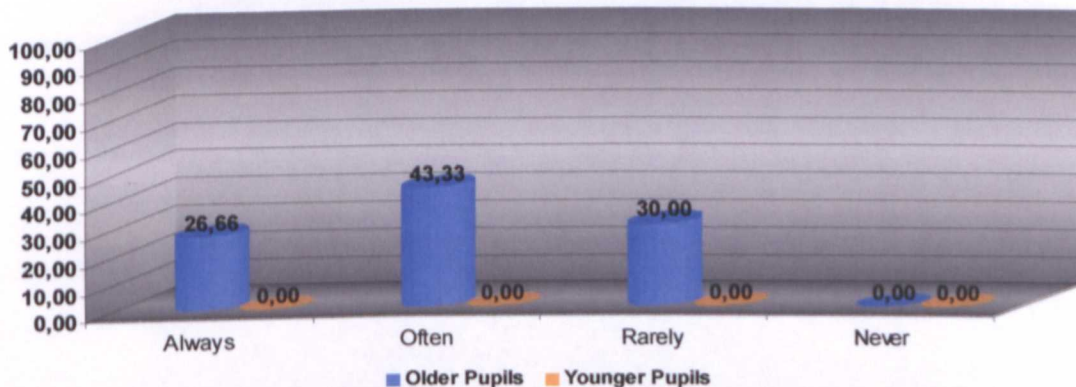


14. In the school we learn to value the differences of the pupils



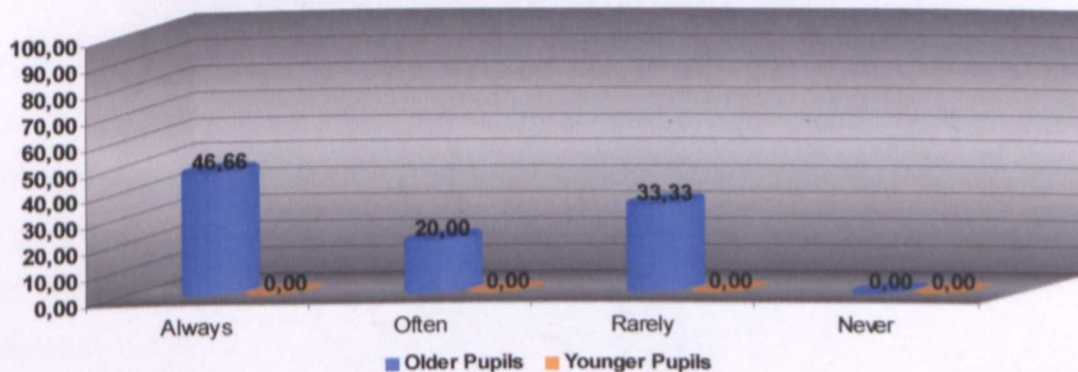
15. Extra curricular activities enrich our lessons

(*The question is not included in the younger pupils' questionnaire.)

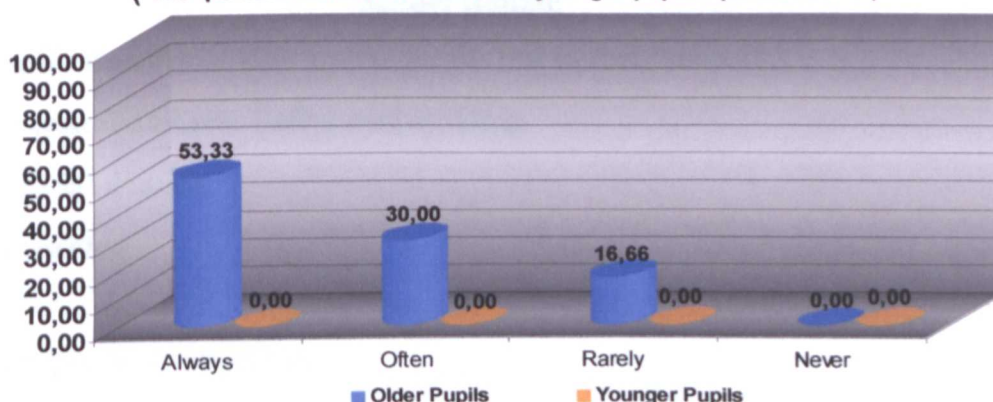


16. Extra curricular activities provide opportunities for all the pupils

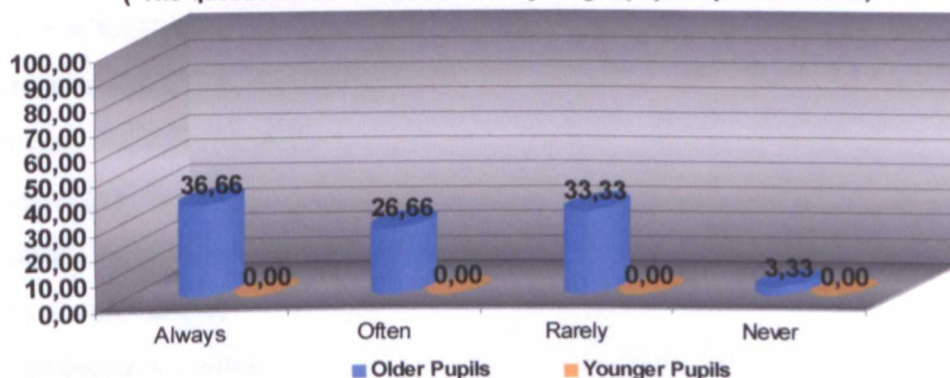
(*The question is not included in the younger pupils' questionnaire.)



17. Our teachers allow us to express our views
 (*The question is not included in the younger pupils' questionnaire.)



18. Our teachers take into account our views
 (*The question is not included in the younger pupils' questionnaire.)



Appendix 16: The report

School climate

I) The general attitude: How do the pupils feel in their school?

II) The physical domain: Safety and building

III) The social domain

1. Relationships

Behaviour

Teachers-pupils' relationships

Pupils' relationships

Discipline

Teachers' relationships

2. Organisation and Communication

Co-operation and collaboration

The headteacher

IV) Objectives, targets and shared values

1. Objectives and targets

· Extra-curricular activities

Group work

2. Shared values: Respecting pupils' particularities

3. Home-school links

School-parent communication

Attitudes of parents towards teachers and vice versa

Parental involvement

Parents' Association

I) The general attitude: How do the pupils feel in their school?

The general attitude of pupils towards the school is positive. The pupils seem to enjoy school and schooling. They happily come and enjoy the school day because they meet and play with their friends. A little girl confessed: 'Every day I wake up and I am happy because I will meet my friends, while on Sundays I am really bored'. The younger pupils also said: 'I like writing and playing' or 'books are interesting as well as our friends' company'. They spoke with greater enthusiasm about their school, teachers and classes than the older pupils. The feelings do not seem to be maintained

for a long time and they change as the children are getting older, something that parents have detected as well.

On the other hand, the teachers seem to be more critical and strict in their comments, as they live through the difficulties that they and the pupils face. They all agree that their own relationships as well as parents' attitudes toward teachers and school mostly contribute to the creation of pleasant feelings.

II) The physical environment: Safety and building

Older children do not feel safe when 'thugs get in to steal and break glass' while the younger ones do not seem to have the same sense of danger: 'I feel safe, because I trust myself...I have courage', one pupil said.

The discussion revealed that the sense of safety both of older and younger children is also influenced by the space they have to play since they compete for playing in the same yard. In many cases the older children argue or fight with the younger ones as a little girl characteristically described: 'The older children interrupt our play and we have to leave or they are going to beat us up because when they go to Gymnasium (High School) they are not going to play anymore while we are.'

The same was stressed by older children: 'The school could install some swings for the little children so that they are not in our way running the danger of getting hurt and then blaming us for that'. Thus, it seems that the space available for play influences the sense of safety, but influences the behaviour and the relationships among children of various ages even more. The pupils seem to understand the problem of the small school yard. They suggest, though, that the utilisation of the back yard which is now closed, with the simple addition of one more teacher on duty to watch it would contribute to solving the problem.

The pupils suggested that training, floor cleaning (in toilets), discipline, solutions even to little problems like what to do when the ball gets out of the ground, and of course, more space, could improve the sense of their safety as well as their relationships among themselves and with their teachers. Pupils also talked about planting trees to improve the building appearance and the need for additional space to

accommodate subjects such as music and art. They also suggested that a small room currently used by the boy-scouts could be turned into a physics and chemistry lab.

Teachers agree that more and better classrooms in the school would improve the quality of classes. Although they did not refer to pupils relationships, the limited number of classes in some cases seems to influence their relationships besides their work. The parents, however, do not seem to comprehend such space implications. They are satisfied with some safety measures taken by the school, such as the inside accommodation of the canteen and subsequent door closure, the installation of traffic lights and the traffic policeman. There is still, however, a lot to be done and until then many parents train their children.

The parents expect co-ordinated playground duties and discipline measures. Apart from these, though, they try through their Association to solve the problems that the very heavy iron doors cause, the traffic in front of the school entrance, the working crews inside the school during school-time and they try to increase funding to hire a guard until the government undertakes this responsibility. Many of the above problems have been discussed with the teachers to determine ways of action.

III) The social domain

1. Relationships

Behaviour

Commenting on pupils' behaviour the teachers stressed the fact that pupils today seem to be more impulsive and frank than the pupils of older times. On the negative side, teachers noticed lack of politeness, gentleness and willingness inside as well as outside the school environment. They also noticed, though, impudence at times and out of limits behaviour. Teachers believe that the basic cause for such pupils' behaviour is the family, with the many problems that it faces with the children's upbringing, as well as the media.

Parents, outside the school, seem to have a different view about their children's behaviour. They think that their children are well-behaved. A reason for such an inclination may be the one presented by a mother who noted that parents sometimes are not aware of their children's behaviour out of their home because the children

make sure to differentiate it according to the circumstances. Finally, children seem to be satisfied with their behaviour, although later, as we will see, they may be critical of some of it.

Teacher-pupils' relationships

Teachers believe that these relationships are difficult. 'You approach them with difficulty, they do not approach you', a teacher said. Most teachers believe that they are open, caring and they exhibit more respect and good mannerism towards their pupils than they get in return. A reason for that, according to the teachers, is the fact that parents doubt the role model of the teacher, something that several parents admitted. All parents, though, wish this relationship to be improved: 'I want my child to respect teachers' or 'I have no complaint with my child's teacher. In contrast, I ask myself if our children should respect their teacher much more'.

Teachers believe that these relationships are affected by the general school climate and the headteacher or teachers may be disturbed when the school gets out of its routine, for instance, when festivals are prepared or when a crew works during class hours. Teachers are also at odds with a certain 'silent' agreement or otherwise 'sensitivity' maintained that seeks to 'baby' the children more than necessary, which cultivates love but at the expense of respect leading, thus, to problems with matters of relationships and discipline.

Teachers, finally, noticed that pupils seem to respect more the regular class teacher than they respect speciality teachers or others who do not teach them. They suspect that there could be an element of... 'self-interest'. The children, though, spontaneously referring to the same matter, admitted their behaviour but they attributed it to the fact that their class teacher treats them better, takes care of them and supports them while the others usually do not even know their names.

Pupils, on the other hand, said the best things about this relationship: 'I love my teacher, because she teaches me' or 'I would not even know my name without her' or 'I would not want another teacher'. They agreed with their teachers that in many cases teachers respect them more than pupils respect teachers. They mentioned, however, cases when the teacher does not respect her pupils when for instance 'she does not

look at us' (ignores us). In a similar way a group of older pupils said that 'the teacher respects us when he follows us to the classroom for the lesson or when he allows us to talk, or when he is strict, but not when he comes already irritated and he just starts shouting at us'. It is impressive how they manage to distinguish between strictness and respect.

Pupils' relationships

Some teachers discovered that pupils' relationships reflect those of society. There are fights and contentions but friendships and love as well. As a general observation, though, teachers stressed the fact that everybody, young or old, fights as 'both old and young are irritable'.

Pupils' relationships are competitive. Some teachers' comments are that 'pupils do not help each other' or 'they cheat' or 'they all hide their class work' or 'they keep watching the grades and how many mistakes or stickers the other took with few exceptions' or 'they reach the point of envy even if they have friendly ties' or 'they might have an operating plan as to how they will hurt and belittle their fellow pupils' or 'they reach the point of even striking or kicking' or 'cliques are created, for instance, boys-girls, good-bad pupils, ball players-non players and fights spread to them'.

Some teachers saw these subjects as a matter of family upbringing. The responsibility of the school was never doubted, though. Teachers agreed that the school attempts to improve these relationships when it organises events and activities promoting such objectives. They believe, though, that it would be helpful if a positive climate is created when school work is planned along common and steady lines i.e. careful supervision during events and their preparation, discipline measures, good working conditions.

Pupils' points of view seem to coincide with those of teachers'. A pupil said: 'In school we have fights and love'. They believe, though that they offer assistance more than they fight since these fights, apart from fights between boys-girls, do not last for a long time. The pupils pointed out that many times parents get involved in order to

resolve differences among their children. Pupils seem to be unaware or confused as to whose responsibility this is.

The same was mentioned by the teachers and was indicated by the parents. A parent commented: 'Pupils' tensions extend to the parents who do not hesitate to even go to school to provide solutions on their own'. Tensions according to some parents' opinion are less among pupils that 'are not as good'. Thus, according to them, it would be beneficial if teachers did not encourage competition among pupils in the school, and reduced using grades as an incentive for learning, something, of course, that additionally requires a substantial change in the educational system philosophy.

Parents also seem to believe that planned work would be a good means of developing pupils' relationships. They agree, however, with teachers and pupils that these relationships are cultivated at school through cultural activities, exercise and games.

Discipline

Discipline seems to be a headache for the teachers: 'We sweat in that subject', one teacher admitted. Class interruption is a usual form of misbehaviour. 'Sometimes we cannot stand in class', another teacher confessed. 'We are trying,' as a group of teachers agree, 'to instill a sense of mutual respect. We use honour and personal persuasion in order to bring respect and not reversal of relationships and situations. We even use our own model or the example of organised society'.

Teachers usually consult. Sometimes though, as teachers themselves admitted, they feel unable to provide solutions and are 'empty' of choices to pursue any action. Even though family plays an important role, they accept that the school cannot ignore its responsibility in discipline matters. The teachers suggest the school should operate a common policy on discipline issues which will be known, accepted and respected by all. In this attempt, teachers hope to get help from specialists.

On the other hand, pupils seem to associate discipline with screaming and punishments of the type, "Write 'I will not make any trouble again forty times'" or 'I will take you to the headteacher', as they said. They want the school to be a bit strict because, as they noticed 'there are teachers that have a weak spot for us; we take

advantage of them; the speciality teachers in particular. We think that they do not know what is going on in our class during the other hours'. Later, however, the pupil added: 'The teacher should be strict but not shouting, because this does not mean that we listen to them'. At another point of the discussion the pupils accepted that 'we listen to our teacher because we are afraid of him'.

Pupils even accept the punishment when it is fair and purposeful and is based on an agreed frame. They seem to agree that punishment is necessary for behaviour reasons but not, for instance 'when we forget ...cardboard' or 'when I did not do something in my school work' or 'punishments should not be momentary reactions' as they said. Younger pupils seem to need more time and attention to their problems. Speaking about a naughty boy - with dyslexia - a little girl said: 'Taking children to the headteacher and have them admonished only makes matters worse... They need a friendly environment, to talk with us, and get closer... they need explanations because through punishments pupils become more aggressive and they do not learn anything'.

Finally, young pupils seem to notice inconsistency in teachers' behaviour. 'Sometimes our teacher says that she is going to punish us but she does not do it' a pupil said. Correspondingly, the parents do not seem to be aware of some kind of discipline policy in operation. The school is considered to be rather loose particularly by people coming from different educational systems. Although they believe that their children are well behaved, they also believe that measures ought to be taken with their own participation.

Teachers' relationships

This category emerged from the discussions without a relevant question in the questionnaire. There is a general feeling that teachers' social relations are positive, open and friendly and teachers strive to protect them very carefully. However, some different dynamics are inevitably created in a workplace according to the way various groups are formed, as for instance, old/new-comers.

Newcomers should be appreciated and be helped by the older staff in their new environment. Of course, this approach is easier for a very open and friendly person like the teacher who made the comment. This might lead to isolation of a rather

withdrawn person. The same teacher, however, justified the colleagues who fairly prefer to spend their limited free time with their 'buddies'. This discussion revealed the need for newcomers to accept a welcome gesture that can help not only their relationships with colleagues but also their co-operation.

Teachers' comments about themselves were very critical. A teacher admitted that 'we survive solely on coincidence'. Teachers acknowledged that the 'good intention' or otherwise 'chemistry' among themselves, seem to operate coincidentally. A climate of 'tolerance' is created. Thus, when many things might disturb the daily routine, the positive climate seems to be ignored. 'I judge, I get my conclusions, I do not deal with them' or 'I pick up the good stuff and take it home', are some of the teachers' comments. Teachers believe that the headteacher could help in building and supporting good relationships among colleagues.

2. Organisation and communication

The headteacher

Right from the beginning, I would like to remind you that the following are only the teachers' points of view.

The discussions indicated that 'headteacher' counts a lot for the teachers. Headteachers are regarded as a major component for creation and support of good interpersonal relationships. During the discussions, teachers implied characteristics of a good headteacher, such as 'to act as a buffer and solve problems', 'to organise and advise with inspiration and sensitivity', 'to be open to new ideas', 'to support the teachers and recognise their work and effort on an equal basis'.

The teachers seemed to distinguish the administrative duties of a headteacher from those of leadership. The headteacher in this school seemed to incline rather to his administrative role as he seemed to care for the building and strive to create a safe environment for the children. As the teachers said, though, 'it would be helpful for the school operation if discussions were not restricted only to teachers' playground duties'.

The teachers hoped the subject of a clear and firm school policy, the founding of a 'structure' which will determine the details of the school operation, i.e. discipline or co-operation, to be dealt with more thoroughly. They seemed to believe that a school has not only got its administrative needs; particularly a school with advantages as this specific school, which can be considered to be, according to a teacher, a very privileged institution with teachers who have good ideas, inspiration and willingness to work.

Teachers seem to have very high aspirations. They expect the headteacher to introduce his own searches and ideas, take teachers' ideas into account and consider the society's needs to proceed in setting up goals and priorities together with his teachers, as, for instance, the pupils' socialisation or the creation of an open school. As the teachers claim, cultural activities are not adequate to accommodate their educational ambitions although they tried to work for their development being convinced of their value. Finally, a teacher said that it would be beneficial for a school if headteachers are experienced or trained and if the institution of the deputy headteacher is put in practice.

Co-operation and Collaboration

A prerequisite for co-operation at school is the trust among teachers as well as between teachers and headteacher. It seems that the trust is not adequate. 'Something professional can be discussed in the immediate environment or the headteacher may start to shout,' a teacher commented. Thus, despite everybody's assertion of 'good intentions', teachers admitted that there is not any systematic co-operation in either school or class level.

The personnel seem to have lost their desire to participate in staff meetings as they are time consuming, they deal with a minimal number of subjects, as for instance, cultural activities, while decisions taken seem to change all the time, always with 'good intentions'. Nevertheless, the teachers participate in all of them whenever they are called, having 'the benefit of the child' as the only incentive.

Similarly, teachers being very critical with themselves admitted that systematic co-operation in classes does not seem to exist or is exhausted in private conversations

about isolated incidents on accidental meetings during the break. A lack of policy leads teachers to professional isolation. A teacher confessed: 'Each teacher is just working for himself/herself and sometimes for the promotion of his/her own work'. As a result, teachers sometimes detect a tendency among parents to compare them. This more or less may be unavoidable, but the teachers should be protected.

Teachers, during discussions, realised a lack of co-operation between and among them or the headteacher and the speciality teachers, or those of the extended schedule classes. Discussions seemed to raise, for first time, issues concerning pupils, classes operation or clarification of some teachers' position in the school. Although teachers seem to believe that for teachers' co-operation it would be better if the headteacher undertook the first step, they also admitted that they could undertake some kind of initiative, too. Despite the teachers' tendency of self-criticism, a level of co-operation in extra-curricular activities could not be refused by anybody.

Finally, I would like to add that the subject of teachers and headteacher's co-operation were, hesitantly, touched on by some parents, although no relevant questions were asked. It could be said that they 'smell' incidental difficulties or experience some weaknesses as for instance, when new teachers have not been supported in their work. This may be considered as an important component in the creation of positive parental attitudes towards the school.

IV) Objectives, targets and values in the school

Objectives and targets

Teachers seem to strive to implement the hard N.C. naturally stressing the aspect of knowledge, as it seems to be many parents' demands as well. Although the school does not seem to have set any targets or priorities, the teachers, realising some needs like for instance, pupils' socialisation, attempt to be concentrated on specific targets. For this they use class discussions, group works, cultural activities or sensitisation of pupils in global problems. For the last one, a teacher claimed: 'I am proud of my efforts'. Teachers complained, however, that such efforts do not become known and, therefore, any further utilisation cannot be achieved while lack of time and organisation add constraint to their efforts.

Parents seem to agree with teachers. Teachers who wish to be responsible at work put in a great deal of effort to deal with the volume of the material. In the specific school, they have positively identified that the teachers try through class discussions and cultural activities to achieve specific goals, something that satisfies a lot of them because parents expect for their children something more than just to become excellent pupils. Parents seem to believe that irrespective of the hard N.C., school and teachers have plenty of room to set targets and implement initiatives. Nevertheless, few parents were satisfied with the teachers. They believe that each teacher complements the others through the alternation of teachers so that objectives can be fully realised.

On the other hand, although pupils did not have any relevant questions to answer, they made clear that they feel as if the school is expecting them all to become scientists. Especially older pupils said that in the class the entire time is devoted to teaching and learning. Sometimes few teachers may initiate discussions beyond the area of the lesson. They would like, though, such discussions to be more substantial and closer to their problems. They want to learn how to act or talk. They need their teachers to provide support not only in their learning but also in personal problems that are related to their behaviour and relationships, as well as the realisation of real life and their uniqueness. They need teachers to recognise their success as well as their personal worth and effort even when it is not related to knowledge acquisition.

Extra-curricular activities

Teachers seem to assign great value to extra-curricular activities. In particular, cultural activities absorb a big part of the school's effort for improvement since they constitute valuable opportunities for all pupils' learning. Some teachers, though, seem to doubt their value and purposes.

A teacher wondered if this tendency is just an expression of traditionalism. Others believe that they are organised rather for the school reputation in the area, something that should come as a result of the success of other school objectives as well. This, however, does not mean that the success of the school in extra-curricular activities and the good intentions of the teachers should be doubted. Teachers seemed to agree with the view that the school could organise other activities besides cultural, as, for

instance, 'school games for talent discovering, the cultivation of abilities and the recognition of effort' as the athletics teachers said.

The children seem particularly satisfied with their teachers' efforts in this area. Although these activities do not seem to be so relevant to their lessons, children believe that participating in these they benefit a lot. Finally, parents seem to agree with both teachers and pupils. They particularly stress the teachers' contribution in cultural activities, but they are not sure if these activities are enough to cultivate sensitivities and improve the human psyche.

Innovations

The question was considered as difficult and the youngest pupils were not asked. It was identified, however, that for the older pupils, the notion of change and innovation was difficult as well. They referred to the Olympic Education, group work as well as changes in the timetable and assessment. They suggested changes in approaches of learning and more liberal methods for some lessons attached strictly to the textbook.

Teachers seem to work within a well defined framework with some innovative attempts, such as the programme of the environmental education, cultural activities or some alternative approaches to teaching and learning. Inhibiting factors for them are the reaction of parents that they experienced during the development of extra cultural activities. In any case, however, teachers themselves should be convinced about the importance and value of any innovation.

Parents seem to believe in the value of trying new approaches that contribute to freshness and creativity of the work in primary school. They seemed to appreciate especially teachers' attempts in cultural activities but, according to their views, other initiatives were few and isolated. They seemed to agree with teachers that teachers themselves need to believe in the value of innovation and understand the difficulties due to the amount of teachers' work.

Parents also seemed to accept their own influences. They admitted that teachers may avoid changes because they would not want to get into comparisons or be doubted by parents who have not similar experiences. As a mother said 'teachers seem to prefer

to follow the security of the traditional approaches and work behind closed doors'. For parents, any innovative effort should be well planned and supported by the headteacher because it contains risk. However, the educational system should give opportunities to teachers to change their thinking and attitude towards school work and therefore become prepared for innovations.

Group work

Despite the fact that parents introduced group work as a means of development of pupils' relationships, some pupils living such a working experience, appeared to be able to locate the benefits of group work at school and home level. They explained that 'we learn through the different views and knowledge, we make ourselves better, because we learn to accept the other person's opinion that seems more logical, we learn to discuss, we develop good relationships and make new friends, we play and entertain ourselves'.

Pupils seemed to perceive group work as following: 'We share the glue, the scissors and we help the weak pupils after we finish our work'. An older pupil also reported: 'The president of the class association took the members to her home' and another one 'we went on an excursion together with our parents'. All groups participating agree that at school group work is organised in extra-curricular activities and exercise or play as well as in art, maybe in music and in some isolated efforts of some teachers.

Something was noticed during discussions particularly with the older children. They seem immature to operate as a team even though a chance arises to put a team together. Problems of 'leadership' arise. A child claimed: 'the leader does not know that even a leader cannot do whatever he/she wants'. Thus, they refuse to co-operate. If we add to that the fact that older children consider group work as a time consuming work, then group working seems even harder. It seems, therefore, that careful and systematic work would help the achievement of the desired goals. Of course, there are still many subjects to be searched.

Respecting pupils' 'particularities'

The question baffled the pupils. It was the question with the most request for clarifications even though in most cases they had comprehended the meaning fairly well. According to pupils' perceptions pupils with 'particularities' are those who have a different point of view, do not think as effectively as the others, originate from another country (one girl is from Russia, said a pupil), do not speak Greek well, are dyslexic, wear glasses, do not play football.

The children without always using the right words described attitudes and behaviours, for instance: we often pick on a dyslexic child telling him that when he goes to high school he is going to fail or making fun...of course when there is a reason (particularity). It is known of course, that discrimination can be expressed with the use of the spoken word (jokes, nicknames) as well as the tone of the voice.

The pupils initially claimed that such behaviours are a matter of family and individuals while the up to now handling of these situations by the teachers were: 'behave well' or 'I will punish you'. In reference to children with special needs, pupils revealed that they should go to a special department (some were not sure about its operation in the school) and in special schools for their own benefit. Similarly, they seem to believe that foreign children would be better having another teacher in a separate class. The discussion bewildered them. They asked for the school to inform them, and moreover, do so starting from a young age with the participation of all parents.

The teachers admitted that cases of pupils with particularities that experience problems are handled by them with sensitivity but in an isolated and random way. Very critical with themselves, teachers also admitted that they may create separate groups to help children while the special class seems to work satisfactorily with her pupils and their parents. Teachers seemed to believe that it is dangerous to touch on 'taboos' especially in Greek community, but, at the same time they were in favour of having the school point to that direction and some cases becoming a reason for a deeper consideration.

Although at this stage of the research parents were not asked to comment relatively to this specific subject, a mother referred to the special class. She seemed to favour separation since special education classes generally operate without any planning, information and knowledge from specialists. The mother justified her views saying that these programmes, instituted without the necessary infrastructure, do more harm than good to the sides involved. A certain amount of ignorance, though, appears to exist on similar matters while the responsibility of the educational system became obvious.

3. Home-school links

School-parents communication

As parents said, the best known and immediate way that the school has to communicate with the parents is the two meetings, one during the school year and one at the end of the school year for them to receive their children's report. The written communication also seems to work well. A teacher or the headteacher may also call parents to the school if deemed necessary. Moreover, some teachers have instituted monthly meetings taking place at fixed days and time for parents willing to come. Some parents seem to know about it, some not. Some parents noticed that these measures, although good, seem to be weak for unknown reasons.

The meetings, according to the parents, could be planned for a more satisfactory place and time. Sometimes they have to be moved during a meeting. Parents also complained that the daytime schedule is a basic problem for those who work in the private sector or far from the school or have more than one child at school. Finally, they think that the morning is not adequate for real communication. Thus, many times they cannot attend a meeting.

The parents seem to need additional information when the school is implementing new programmes and innovations like extended schedule or environmental education. The teachers, though, insist that in this case the government should have already clarified the aims of such programmes without refusing the school's share of responsibility.

Teachers in general recognise the importance of their communication with parents, but they complain that in many cases parents avoid an open discussion with them. On the other hand, they do not seem to have realised parents' need for improving meetings. One teacher, however, doing her own self-evaluation, admitted that there is a certain liberty in the ways of organising the meetings with parents so that a teacher might create some confusion if she/he introduced her/his own way of communication.

During the discussions it became apparent that by saying 'communication with the school' both parents and teachers mean communication with the class teacher. The speciality teachers as well as the teachers of extended schedule were never mentioned. It did not become explicit if this is due to organisational problems or if the importance of developing pupils' abilities and interests is relegated. This may need further investigation.

Teachers' attitudes towards parents and vice versus

These attitudes are reflected in their meetings and play an important role in making them productive and useful. In general, it seems that there is a distance between the two sides. Teachers complain that parents are not open enough. They do not express all their deeper thoughts. They consider their children as 'the best' and they may refuse the 'reality' of the situation. In such cases teachers feel 'oppressed' as they try not to express their thoughts but to 'serve' the truth in a more palatable manner. A teacher, at a moment of self-evaluation admitted: 'I feel weak at this point'.

Teachers also complain that parents are only interested in the 'quantity' of the provided school work and that sometimes they are checked on that. They ask if it is a characteristic of this difficult school area or something covered in each case. Finally, they believe that parents, over-anxious, intervene in their children's learning more than they should without the necessary knowledge of the proper approach.

Parents seem to admit many of these opinions. They accept that some of them, because of their exaggerated ambition, are more interested in the 'quantity' rather than the 'quality' of the learning. The vast majority of parents, though, seem to have different expectations. Beyond the knowledge they expect their children to become independent learners, well integrated into the team and the society. They expect

information and support from the teacher, the school, the specialists and the School of Parents in educational, psychological and social issues.

In many cases, parents complain that the teachers do not seem to take into account their views, although they may seem to agree with many of them and show a willingness to act according to them. Any attempt, though, according to a mother, seems to be given up shortly after. The parents justify the teachers as they know that their work is hard. Sometimes, however, the parents ask whether teachers have the relevant knowledge for planning and action.

Parents accept that they do not express their deeper thoughts, especially the negative ones that are being formed from what the children say. This happens, as they said, not because they are afraid of the grading but of teachers' attitude and behaviour towards their children. This may affect the parents negatively and they remain in a situation of doubt about the teachers.

This is more noticeable among parents with children with problems. They feel that they come to the school to listen to 'complaints'; 'Complaints and instruction' as teachers admitted as well. Sometimes parents feel that they are considered as the 'cause' of the evil. Thus, they feel confused, embarrassed and stressed and sometimes they avoid coming to the school or show aggressiveness. A teacher with similar experience suggested that teachers should exhibit a positive attitude toward the child. As she said, 'to express their interest and love for the child; to start with the positive comments and suggest solutions whenever they can...'.

Parental involvement

Both teachers and parents recognise the importance of parental contribution in their children's learning. A difference on how each side is expected to help the other, however, has already been mentioned.

Teachers expect the parents to support what they build at school and help their children to learn how to learn. So, at the lower level in particular they attempt to help them by explaining the teaching process in detail. This seems to satisfy a lot of

parents. Some parents, though, according to teachers views, 'over-anxious' with their children's learning intervene more than it is necessary.

Parents, from their own side, accept that they get involved a great deal in the children's learning as they have exaggerated ambitions. Beyond this, parents do not seem to be involved in other aspects of school work. They would like, however, to change it and ask for help. The vast majority of parents seem to believe that their involvement in the school work might influence their children positively as well as themselves towards the school as they become a role model of noble contributions for their children.

They know and understand better the way that the school operates as well as its problems and so they are not strongly critical of it, thus, influencing the children's attitudes towards the school. They are being trained for such roles and set the boundaries. A basic constraint for such an involvement is the time. Sometimes, though, there is time and appetite, but knowledge is missing. So, the school could encourage them. This will assign the roles and set the boundaries. Sometimes teachers asked for the parents to help them in their job. In some cases, though, parents would expect teachers to appreciate and protect whatever the parents offered, either as individuals or as the Parents' Association.

However, the parents feel that the school could give them more chances to get to know to each other and communicate their interests. For instance, the excursion of pupils, teachers and parents was a very good chance but it was very little. The teachers, on the other hand, seem to believe that parents could take advantage of the opportunities that the school gives to them (parties, concerts). Some teachers, though, seemed to hesitate to undertake responsibilities for some 'sensitive' issues in the difficult Greek society.

Finally, both teachers and parents seem to agree that the school does not use the parents as sources in programme implementation. Teachers seem to hesitate while some parents with relevant experience seem to talk positively about such attempts.

Parents' Association

Teachers and parents particularly seem to consider its contribution of great value. 'It works as a filter in our communication with the school' a mother pointed out. Parents seem to believe that this particular Association supports and helps the school, but only through its President who sometimes may undertake responsibilities beyond her/his duties.

The majority of parents, though, seems distant from the Association and they do not participate, because many times it exhibits political inclinations or they may detect personal ambitions in the elected members. Its contribution rarely reaches the child in the class and the sphere of influence is very limited (only financial assistance and social events). The Association sometimes may take the role of the judge. The teachers do not seem to take into account the parents' views while the right of parents to participate in the decision making through the school council could be a stronger region.

In any case certain actions of the Association would be helpful to be mentioned. Thus, a parent may report complaints to a member of the Association who may contact the school and report the case anonymously. Then, she/he returns the results of the discussion to the parent. This needs further consideration.

Appendix 17: Evaluating evaluation

The programme

1) How would you summarise your feelings/impressions concerning school self-evaluation on the basis of your experience so far? Please, give some reasons for your positive or negative answer.

2) What in your opinion are the benefits (positive effects) of the programme for the school?

3) What are in your opinion the problems (negative effects) that the programme caused in the school?

4) Was the information we collected appropriate and useful?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If not, what would you propose to alter that will be appropriate and useful?

5) Do you think that the programme affected your work?

YES ☐ NO ☐

- If yes, in what ways (positively or negatively)?

Give me some reasons

6) Do you think that the programme affected your personality?

YES ☐ NO ☐

- If yes, in what ways (positively or negatively)?

7) Do you think that the programme affected your relationships with colleagues?

YES ☐ NO ☐

- If yes, in what ways (negatively or positively)? (Give some reasons)

8) Do you think that the programme affected your relationships with pupils?

YES ☐ NO ☐

- If yes, in what ways (negatively or positively)?

9) Do you think that the programme affected your relationships with parents?

YES ☐ NO ☐

- If yes, in what ways (negatively or positively)?

The process

10) What difficulties did you face during the process?

11) How much time commitment has there been?

A lot ☐ Quite a lot ☐ some ☐ not much ☐ none ☐

- How much the investment of time was worthwhile?

A lot ☐ Quite a lot ☐ some ☐ not much ☐ none ☐

- What general comments about the time of the programme would you like to make?

12) How did you see the headteacher's role in such a process?

13) How did you experience the researcher/critical friend role?

14) How did you see pupils' participation?

15) How did you see parents' participation?

16) Did you feel additional needs throughout the process implementation?

YES ☐ NO ☐

- If yes, what?

17) How could this programme be continued?

18) Have you any more comments to make?

19) What proposals would you like to make about the programme for the future?