

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN GREECE:
OFFICIAL POLICIES, ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSES
& THE ANTINOMIES OF INCLUSION**

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ABSTRACT

The concept of inclusion, despite the problems associated with its implementation both within and beyond the field of education, has become a central feature in the educational and social policy agendas of numerous national administrations and international human rights organisations. This thesis critically investigates the current form, content and function of inclusive policy and practice in the Greek educational system and wider social life, focusing predominantly on issues concerning disabled people.

The thesis approaches inclusion as a contested concept, permeated by values and, thus, susceptible to a wide range of contextual meanings in the discourse of different social agents, involving endless disputes about its 'proper' meaning and uses. With this in mind, the study examines the discursive formulation of inclusion by three distinct social agents in the field of education: policy makers, disability theorists/activists and educationalists. By employing secondary research methods, including analysis of formal policy statements and literature review, and interviews, the thesis aims to expose the conflicting visions and contrasting agendas that exist under the outwardly unified banner of inclusion.

The antinomies that underlie the making of inclusive schools and the intrinsic tensions within the conceptual framework of inclusion reveal a struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic inclusion discourses. In contemporary educational and social policy, the humanitarian vocabulary of the inclusion movement has been colonised by dominant discourses of normalisation. As a result, the illusive concept of inclusion has been assimilated into governmental discourses and has become part of governance in an essentially unaltered exclusionary education system and society, rather than an emancipatory idea which opposes existing official models and prevailing policies of discrimination and exclusion. Hence, the struggle for the formulation of a truly inclusive social reality (in Greece and elsewhere) necessitates a shift of focus from moral imperatives onto the politics of disability, and from the unambiguous ideal of inclusion onto the material economic, political, social and cultural characteristics of the new world order to which the inclusion movement aspires.

DECLARATION AND WORD COUNT

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	II
DECLARATION AND WORD COUNT	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

EDUCATIONAL RESPONSES TO DIFFERENCE

& THE QUESTION OF INCLUSION

	1
1.1 Facing student diversity: The dilemmas of difference in education	1
1.2 Delimiting the 'normal': 'Special need' as a response to educational diversity	6
1.3 Re-defining disability: From the 'personal tragedy' theory to social and cultural approaches	8
1.3.1 From the 'medical' to the 'social model' of disability	9
1.3.2 New responses to difference: Concepts and policies of inclusive education	12
i) From segregated schooling to integration	12
ii) Inclusion as a systematic response to student diversity	14
iii) The emergence of inclusive education in Greece	16
1.4 Understanding the politics of inclusion in Greece	18
1.4.1 Politicising the Greek concept of inclusion	18
1.4.2 Challenges to the 'social model': Alternative perspectives in disability theory	22
1.4.3 Structure and description of chapters	25

CHAPTER 2

INCLUSION AS A CONTESTED CONCEPT:

COMPETING DISCOURSES IN THE INCLUSIVE PARADIGM

	32
2.1 Inclusion as dominant educational discourse	32
2.1.1 The concept and discourse of inclusion	32
2.1.2 The hegemony of inclusion: Language, power and the social	

significance of discourse	36
2.2 The discourse of inclusive education: Towards a shift of paradigm?	44
2.2.1 The dual paradigm of inclusion	45
2.3 Conflicts in the history and design of inclusive education	52
2.3.1 Establishing the inclusive paradigm: A history of progress?	52
2.3.2 From inclusion to ‘inclusions’: Focusing on conflicts in education	57
i) Setting a broader agenda for inclusion: Between ‘inclusive’ education and social exclusion	58
ii) ‘School effectiveness’, ‘achievement’ and the ‘crusade for standards’	62
2.4 Contests over the inclusive paradigm	67
2.4.1 Inclusion as a contested concept	67
2.4.2 Inclusive policy and practice as struggle: Competing agendas for inclusion	70

CHAPTER 3

THE SOCIAL MODEL FOR DISABILITY RESEARCH & THE STUDY OF DISCOURSE:

METHODOLOGICAL PREMISES & LIMITATIONS OF THIS THESIS	72
3.1 Disability research and the politics of critique	72
3.2 The contentious discourse of inclusion: Research framework and hypothesis	81
3.3 Data collection and research strategies	91
3.4 Defining interpretive frameworks	107
3.5 Moving in and through cultural contexts: Translations of ‘inclusion’ and issues of cultural transference	115

CHAPTER 4

THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PARADIGM:

THE PAST OF INCLUSIVE DISCOURSES IN GREECE	121
4.1 ‘Official’ histories of special education	121
4.2 Shared themes in ‘official’ histories of special education	124

4.3 Establishing the domination of the SEN paradigm: A national history in three phases	129
i) 1 st phase: Early 20 th century - 1984	129
ii) 2 nd phase: 1984 - 1989	136
iii) 3 rd phase: 1989 - 2000	139

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCING ‘INCLUSIVE’ EDUCATION IN GREECE: GOVERNMENTAL DISCOURSES, NATIONAL POLICIES & THE ONGOING HEGEMONY OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PARADIGM (2000-2008)	142
5.1 Placing the focus on governmental discourse	142
5.2 Introducing ‘inclusive’ education in Greece: Policy changes and the resilience of Special Education	146
5.2.1 Disability politics in a centralised system: The administrative structure of Greek education	146
5.2.2 The persistence of impairment: Law 2817/2000, ‘inclusive’ policies and governmental discourse (2000-2004)	153
i) The reaffirmation of the integrationist agenda	156
ii) The ostensible terminology shift	159
iii) The proliferation of labelling and categorisation	161
iv) The discourse of modernisation and the continuation of exclusion	164
5.2.3 An inclusion-oriented politics? Discourse and policies during the New Democracy administration (2004-2008)	174

CHAPTER 6

STEPPING BACK FROM INCLUSION: CURRENT TRENDS & FUTURE PERSPECTIVES IN ‘INCLUSIVE’ GOVERNMENTAL DISCOURSES & POLICY PLANNING (2008-2011)	186
6.1 Pursuing inclusion through special education: The antinomies of Law 3699/2008	186
6.2 Putting inclusive education on hold: Current status and future perspectives of Greek ‘inclusive’ education policy	199

CHAPTER 7

IN SEARCH OF A CRITICAL CONCEPT OF INCLUSION:

THE DISCOURSE OF GREEK DISABILITY ACTIVISTS & THEORISTS	211
7.1 The Greek disability movement as a frame of critique	211
7.1.1 Towards a critique of ‘inclusion’	211
7.1.2 A diversity of voices and a quest for self-critique	214
7.2 Debunking the myths about Greek special education: The discourse of the Greek disability movement	217
7.2.1 The failure of special education and the postponed ‘ideal of inclusion’	217
7.2.2 ‘Cost-effective’ special education vs. ‘unaffordable’ inclusion?	226
7.2.3 The myth of social inclusion without educational inclusion	234
7.2.4 The presumed ‘efficacy’ of special pedagogy vs. the ‘risks’ of inclusive education	239
7.3 The impact of ‘reasonable inclusion’ and the ‘inevitability’ of special education: A lost opportunity for the disability movement to promote a paradigm shift?	244

CHAPTER 8

IN SEARCH OF A CRITICAL CONCEPT OF INCLUSION:

THE DISCOURSE OF GREEK EDUCATIONALISTS	254
8.1 Towards a critique of ‘inclusion’: The vantage point of Greek educationalists	254
8.2 Investigating the discourse of educationalists: A qualitative interview approach	257
8.2.1 Research objectives and rationale for the interviews with educationalists	257
8.2.2 Theoretical framework, methodological issues and design of the study	261
8.3 Debunking the myths about Greek special education: Contested concepts in the discourse of educationalists	267
8.3.1 On the concept of ‘educational inclusion’	267
8.3.2 On the concept of ‘social inclusion’	271

8.3.3 On the concept of ‘school effectiveness’	275
8.3.4 On the concept of ‘student achievement’	279
8.4 Teachers in search of a critical concept of inclusion and the continuing appeal of ‘reasonable inclusion’	283
CHAPTER 9	
EPILOGUE:	
TRANSLATING THE IDEAL OF INCLUSION INTO A POLITICS OF INCLUSION	292
9.1 The ideal and politics of inclusion: Manufacturing consent (or How I learned to stop worrying and love ‘inclusion’)	292
9.2 Hope through crisis: The future of inclusion in Greece	301
9.3 The dialectic of personal and political change	308
REFERENCES	314
APPENDIX A: Chronological account of research activities	352
APPENDIX B: Questionnaire (Greek)	356
APPENDIX C: Questionnaire (English)	360

Skinny, socially privileged white people get to draw this neat little circle. Everyone inside the circle is normal. Everyone outside the circle should be beaten, broken and reset so they can be brought into the circle. Failing that, they should be institutionalised or worse, pitied.

Hugh Laurie as Dr. Gregory House
in the TV series *House M.D.* (2006)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: EDUCATIONAL RESPONSES TO DIFFERENCE & THE QUESTION OF INCLUSION

1.1 Facing student diversity: The dilemmas of difference in education

According to the latest available data from the Hellenic Statistical Authority, the Greek education system caters for approximately one and a half million students, of which over a million are enrolled in public institutes of primary and secondary compulsory education (source: Eurydice 2011 for the school-year 2009/10). At the same time, the number of compulsory school aged pupils who are recognised as ‘having special needs’ in either segregated special settings or mainstream schools is 29,954 (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2010).

In a pertinent critique of the Greek government’s response to the country’s recent financial crisis – a response that consisted, among other measures, in proposals for the merging and closing down of schools, including the closure of a school for deaf and hearing-impaired children in Athens – Ch. Diasitis, president of the school’s parents association, called for a fight against a decision that “reduces disabled kids to numbers” (see Eleftherotypia 2011). Still, even when reducing disability issues to bare figures, the government’s logistics is problematic. Commenting on the same measures, the president of the ‘National Scientific Association for Special Education’, M. Efstathiou observed how the actual number of pupils in special education in Greece is strikingly smaller than the estimated number of disabled children. As he put it, while according to international statistical and research evidence the percentage of pupils identified as having special needs ranges between 10% to 12% of the student population, that is almost 200,000 students for the calculated size of the Greek education system, the number of pupils in state-funded special education in Greece today only reaches 30,000 pupils. “How could such a condition justify the merging and closure of schools?”, as he aptly asked (ibid.).

These critical statements delimit the two central points that characterise both the logic and the practice of the Greek state's response to the question of education of disabled children. On the one hand, this response remains centred on binary oppositions that separate children in quantifiable units of disabled and non-disabled, each of which requires specific educational provisions. Children, as Mr. Diasitis put it, are reduced to numbers according to preconceived categories of 'normality' and 'disability'. On the other hand, this categorisation fails to achieve even the aims it is presumed to serve. Despite the sharp division seeking to frame a realm of disabled pupils and respond to their needs, most children with disability, as Mr. Efstathiou observes, remain peculiarly excluded from this provision.

So, the Greek state's educational policy is defined by a fundamental contradiction: while the conceptual categories deployed by the state officials to define disability claim to offer a space for disabled pupils within the educational system, these categories act in fact to exclude most disabled children from this system and, as we shall see, to marginalise those that are presumed to be included in it. In the past few years in Greece there is an apparent agreement as to the aims of state-education with regard to disability. These can be summarised as a progressive move towards the acknowledgment of inclusion as the key concept for directing educational policy. As has often been observed, inclusion has become a buzzword that appears today in almost all official statements describing the orientation of formal education systems. How does such a clearly stated intention give results that prove to be the opposite of inclusion? What is, in fact, intended when state officials and educational institutions proclaim their commitment to inclusive education?

These questions offered the starting point of my research which seeks to investigate the tensions and contradictions of the educational system of inclusion in Greece in order to explore why this system acts to betray its declared aims and purposes. In approaching these tensions the thesis seeks to test a hypothesis that goes beyond the opposition between theory and practice. The reasons for the failures of inclusion are not simply to be sought in the distance between the language of inclusion and the imperfect or incomplete application of concepts and ideals articulated in this language. While this distance is often the first impression one would get from the investigation of educational inclusion in Greece, it soon becomes

evident that the inadequacies of practical application of concepts are not merely the outcome of imperfect application of theoretical categories in the field of practice. Rather this field is already formed on the basis of premises that are contradictory and of definitions that stand in conflict with each other. The linguistic articulation of these premises, which we shall call *the contested discourse of inclusion*, consists of a set of concepts and modes of articulation that serve to legitimise exclusionary institutional settings and practices at the very moment they claim to advance inclusion.

This contested language will be explored on the basis of a twofold juxtaposition. On a first level, the thesis will contrast the discourse of state officials setting the frame of inclusive policies with a counter-discourse articulated by educationalists and disability theorists and activists who point out the inadequacies of the state's categories of inclusion. On a second level, it will also identify and analyse contradictions within the entire spectrum of the discourse about inclusion in order to explore inclusion as a contested concept. Therefore, the aim of the thesis is not to account descriptively for developments in the field of inclusive education in Greece. Its focus is rather on tensions and internal conflicts underlying the discourse of inclusion and dividing it from within – both the official discourse and certain aspects of counter-discourses of educationalists and disability theorists or activists.

The investigation of discourses, as we shall see in the next pages, is thus based on a division between the discourse of inclusion that is currently deployed by the Greek government and government officials, on the one hand, and an alternative discourse or range of discourses, on the other hand, formulated in the field of educational practice and disability activism as a critique of the official educational categories and politics. However, this division will not seek an unproblematic identification of a presumably coherent language of egalitarianism and inclusion that is currently articulated by educationalists and activists. While the latter discourses offer categories of equality and models of inclusion that serve as a standpoint from which to approach the contradictions of state-education concerning disability, they are not themselves ideologically neutral. No language acting to express and mediate the battles fought over and against the relations of power and oppression that define contemporary mass educational systems can be seen as totally separated from the

ideology that defines the system it critiques. As will be discussed in chapter 3, to recognise this participation stands at the basis of every critique of ideology: while it is possible and necessary for a critical approach to assume a place that enables us to maintain a distance from ideological language, this place cannot be understood as a fixed position. The realm of critique can be occupied as a temporary viewpoint, which allows us to illustrate the conflicts of ideological discourse, but which must itself remain contestable and subject to new critical (re)appraisals.

From this viewpoint, the attempt to challenge the present-day discourse of inclusion needs to acknowledge a contradiction that stands at the basis of the mass educational systems that characterise educational institutions within contemporary nation-states and are addressed and shaped by new educational policies. The notion of a national educational system conveys the idea of some basic common features offered to the entire student population: a common core of skills and knowledge, defined in many cases by a unifying curriculum, and delivered through similar school structures and corresponding pedagogic strategies. This commonality of structures and processes is not incidental, but rather points to the conformation of educational practice to a socially sanctioned function or aim of education, whether this is ‘promoting personal development’, ‘transmitting key social values’, or any comparable expectation prescribed by the espoused governmental policies on education (Dyson and Millward 2000:161). At the same time, however, in order to fulfil its prescribed function, education must act at the level of individual students and recognise that those students are inevitably different from each other in ways which are pertinent to their engagement with any learning situation. Thus, as Dyson and Millward (op.cit.) point out, “alongside the requirement for the educational system to do something recognisably *similar* for all students, there is an equal and opposite requirement for it to do something *different* for every student” (original emphasis).

Therefore, a fundamental element for the success of an educational system is the systematic responses to all forms of student diversity and differentiation aiming at the formation of a setting which enables all students, regardless of individual strengths and weaknesses, to become part of the school community and reach the highest level of their potentials. An attempt at resolving these ‘dilemmas of

difference' cannot be reduced to a simple administrative task of a technical nature, limited – for instance – to curricular differentiation, spatial organisation of the classroom environment or allocation of resources. Rather, such an attempt would unavoidably mirror the complex ontological and epistemological assumptions through which the concept of difference is constructed within a socio-cultural environment, and it is determined by the political and ideological foundations upon which educational and wider social organisational frameworks are based.

From this perspective, the question of difference goes beyond disability. It involves every form of differential that may be used as a basis for categorisation, discrimination and unfairness, such as social class, gender, ethnic or religious background and poverty. Moreover, the problem of difference cannot be addressed exclusively through educational initiatives, but rather points to the reciprocal relationship between schools and the wider framework of social structure and relations. From this view, the alleviation of possible barriers to learning, both physical and attitudinal,

“...is ultimately about the identification and removal of all forms of oppression and the realisation of a society in which inclusion, equity and the celebration of difference with dignity are fundamental values”.

(Barton and Armstrong, F. 1999:7)

This acknowledgment posits a dual research framework and a boundary. The duality of the research framework lies in the conjunction of education and society. While the thesis is focused on educational responses to diversity in Greece, as these are formulated within the broader context of modern Western societies, there is a parallel concern about the socio-cultural norms, relations and structures in which any learning process is embedded. Similarly, although the study's main theme is disability and the physical or social barriers that prohibit the inclusion of disabled students, i.e. students experiencing some sort of physical, sensory or cognitive impairment, there is a conscious effort to correlate the notion of disablism to other discriminatory practices such as – among others – racism and sexism (cf. Thomas 2002:38). The boundary arises from the same conjunction. Radical alternatives to the concept of inclusion articulated in the current social context would ultimately be the product of a truly egalitarian social order and thus the product of radical social and

political changes. Any alternatives that we are able to conceptualise in the fields of educational theory and practice are critical only to the extent that we also recognise them as limited by the historical context in which they are produced. As will be argued in chapter 3 (focusing on the methods and frameworks of my research), it is only within the points of internal tension and conflict which define this context that it becomes possible to articulate a critical discourse, which must continuously incorporate forms of self-critique.

1.2 Delimiting the ‘normal’: ‘Special need’ as a response to educational diversity

Educational systems in the past have been based predominantly on a policy of segregation for those students who were deemed to have some sort of learning difficulties and were unable to cope with what was considered as ‘normal learning patterns’. By founding the organisation of educational provision on this dichotomy between what is normal and what constitutes deviation from the norm, formal educational policies created a category-based system which labelled the students according to a complex set of categorical distinctions based on the medical classification of their impairments.

As a result, certain groups within the student population were identified as having ‘special needs’ (the term used in many national contexts was ‘Special Educational Need’, i.e. ‘SEN’), which could not be met within the mainstream school community. These groups were subsequently separated from ‘normal’ students, with the rationale that they required different or additional educational provision pertaining to their acknowledged category of ‘need’. In England, for instance, the 1944 Education Act defined a highly segregated educational system distinguishing ten categories of handicap for which special schools would cater (see Thomas et al. 1998:4). Similar frameworks sustained the development of special education throughout the (so-called) advanced Western countries (and elsewhere) during the first half of the 20th century, by adhering to a discourse of defectology in the child as the main cause for students’ difficulties (cf. Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideris 2000:31).

Another common theme in the set of assumptions characterising the establishment of special education systems is the conceptualisation of ‘special need’ as a fixed notion susceptible only to medical analysis and assessment by a small community of experts (see Beveridge 1999). Contemporary educational and social theory, however, has questioned the proliferation of this administrative categorisation, pointing out that the concept of special needs is ultimately what policy-makers define it to be (cf. Stone 1985). An equal challenge was posed to the very notion of normality both in education and generally in society. As Mike Oliver (1995) has put it, “normality is a construct imposed on a reality where there is only difference” (cited in Thomas and Vaughan 2004:114). From this view, difference cannot be defined as the reverse side of normality and thus as something that must be merely accepted or tolerated – a viewpoint inherent in special education discourses – but rather as an integral part of human life which must be “positively valued and celebrated” (ibid.).

While current educational discourses have challenged the conventional wisdom of categorical educational delivery (Slee 1996:118) and increased awareness of the dangers associated with category-based systems, the ideology of normality underpinning the formulation of social policies and the delivery of educational provision has proved to be extremely resilient in modern societies (see Oliver 1988). However, the dichotomy between norm and deviation was not the only ideological basis of special education.

The policy of separation was not simply seen as an act of isolating those few ‘deficit’ students who could inhibit the progress of ‘normal’ children. As Pijl and Majjer (1994) emphasise, the establishment of special education was generally regarded as beneficial for the ‘handicapped’ children themselves. The majority of both education specialists and state officials claimed that this was an effective practice of social care for students who were held unable to fit in the mainstream schools. According to Cole (1989:169-170), early special education was to a great extent the product of humanitarian motives, as special education policy makers and practitioners seemed generally imbued with a deep concern for the interests of disabled children, and displayed “a genuine wish to help such children achieve the dignity of a self-supporting, integrated adulthood”.

However, this presumed ‘innocence’ of special education, as described by a theoretical standpoint that prioritises its humanitarian perspective, has not been uncontested. As Tomlinson (1982) has argued, in spite of the claims for the beneficial character of segregated provision, the ideology of benevolent humanitarianism that permeated special education served predominantly to sustain and legitimise exclusionary practices by providing a moral framework within which professionals and practitioners could operate. In her words, “education systems and their parts do not develop spontaneously, they do not mysteriously adapt to social requirements, change without intent, and they do not necessarily develop in order to benefit different groups of children” (op.cit.:6). Any educational framework lies in a reciprocal relationship with the societal structures in which it is embedded and is defined by the form and function of broader political and economic structures within a socio-cultural environment. A view that neglects the social, political, financial and cultural basis for the production of systematic responses to student diversity is, to say the least, misleading.

What is more, as Felicity Armstrong (2003:62) has pointed out, there is accumulated evidence in numerous historical accounts of the “dehumanizing experience of life in special schools and institutions”, which brings to the fore “the restrictive, harsh and unstimulating regimes in special schools” exerted in the name of ‘superior’ educational provision for disabled children. In every respect, the institutional framework of special education was not based upon the recognition of the rights of children (Armstrong, F. and Barton 1999:219). Rather, it placed responsibility for the exclusion that disabled people experienced on the functional or physiological limitations imposed by their individual impairment (see Oliver 1990:58) and supported the able-bodied and able-minded society’s ‘right’ to decide what constitutes effective educational or social care for them.

1.3 Re-defining disability:

From the ‘personal tragedy’ theory to social and cultural approaches

This thesis adheres to the social model developed in disability studies in acknowledging that disability is a social construct formulated as a form of social

oppression (cf. Chapter 3). This contention presupposes a distinction between impairment and disability, which needs to be understood in the context of a multileveled rethinking of disability consisting in the transition from the so-called medical to the social model of disability research and the corresponding design of educational institutions and practice. The implications of this model for the theoretical concepts, structure and development of work will be discussed in detail in the third chapter of the thesis. At this point I would like to explore how key categories that this thesis derives from the social model, such as the distinction between impairment in the sense of attributed 'abnormalities' and disability in the sense of socially established barriers imposed upon disabled people (cf. Oliver 1990) need to be understood as part of an ongoing critique of the notion of special education as humanitarian response to a personal tragedy experienced by disabled people.

1.3.1 From the 'medical' to the 'social model' of disability

Past conceptions of special education, mainly formulated before the 1960s, maintained an uncritical stance towards the social conditions underpinning labels such as 'learning difficulties' and 'disability'. However, a transformation of social attitudes and education theories alongside the development of a worldwide movement for human rights engendered a profound critique of special education. This critique challenged traditional normalising discourses by emphasising the cultural and socio-political delimitation of both the process of defining disability (see Booth 1995) and the notion of normality itself. The new approach to disability advocated the incorporation of disabled children in mainstream schools condemning as discrimination and a violation of human rights their compartmentalisation into different, segregated educational establishments.

The climate of political and social upheaval in the 1960s sustained a movement towards the collective organisation of disabled people and encouraged protest against their confinement in residential institutions, their poverty and the discrimination they encountered. Concomitantly, numerous researches (see Thomas et al. 1998) provided evidence on the shortcomings of special education and

ascertained the need to move towards a more inclusive direction. As Oliver (1996a:80) maintains, despite the evocation of the “humanitarian intentions” of special education, it was becoming obvious by the 1960s that this segregated system “was failing the vast majority of disabled children, both in educational terms and in terms of personal and social development”.

This prevalence of an interactionist approach to special education within Western societies was interrelated with the concomitant emergence and subsequent expansion of theoretical movements stressing the socio-political and cultural construction of disability within educational and sociological theory, and especially the development of what has become known as *disability studies*. It was within this context that ‘special educational need’ ceased to be seen as a fixed notion that presumably represents an objective and unalterable reality. Hence, the term came to be recognised – at least by those engaged in the political insights that flowed from the critical deconstruction of the special needs discourse – as a linguistic product that is itself socially negotiated and, thus, acts to convey diverse and conflicting interpretations of the educational and social world. Although the ‘special need’ moniker would remain in use among policy-makers, teachers and the media, and is still today popular in cultural representations of disability, this frame of critique that emerged through the writings of key thinkers in disability studies highlighted the ideological underpinnings of ‘special need’ (cf. Tomlinson 1985) as well as the tensions and struggles that characterise any attempt to formulate an opposing discourse (cf. Allan and Slee 2008:3-6).

Traditionally, the dominant framework for understanding disability has been the *medical model* (also cited as ‘individual’ or ‘deficit model’). Within this framework, disability is designated as “a physical or mental impairment or a biological ‘deficit’ or ‘flaw’ that limits what disabled people can do” (Hughes 2002:60). In other words, disability is regarded as a ‘personal tragedy’, a ‘medical issue’ and, in essence, a ‘problem of the individual’ (see Oliver 1996a:18). As the foregoing discussion has pointed out, the design of special education policy and practice has been heavily influenced by this model, which has effectively supported over a long period of time a conceptualisation of educational difficulties as an individual property of the learner. Thus, by emphasising the individuality of need

based on medical discourses of defectology, special education has essentially treated the social context within which disability is constructed as unproblematic (Armstrong, D. 1999:28).

The *social model* of disability, originating in the campaigns by disabled people against discrimination and exclusion (Barton 2003:6), was formed in opposition to this medical conception of disability. In order to formulate a socio-political account of the notion, the social model approached disability not as a personal problem, but as “a set of physical and social barriers that constrain, regulate and discriminate against people with impairments” (Hughes 2002:63). Seen through this perspective, disability was defined as the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities (Oliver 1996a:22).

In the field of education, this critical reconsideration of the individualistic frame of reference for understanding disability foregrounded the interdependency of learning difficulties and the limitations or deficiencies of the specific educational contexts in which learners are positioned. As Booth and Ainscow (1998:239) point out, the social conception of disability has made evident that “learning difficulties are not something students have, but arise in a relationship between students and tasks and the resources available to support learning”. The key insight offered by this model is that disability cannot be seen as the mere outcome of impairment, despite the fact that this is a view that is not only sustained by official categorisations of disabled people, but is often accepted by these people themselves. To be disabled is irreducible to an individual ‘failing’ or the experience of a personal fate. As the social model invites us to recognise, disability pertains to economic, political, cultural and social barriers which impose certain constraints upon disabled people corresponding to the historically specific organisation and structure of societies. In other words, as I shall argue in this thesis, the question posed by the social model is not how to deal with disability as a problem, but *how to deal with the social order that constitutes a condition of human diversity as a problem.*

The growing criticism of the exclusionary mechanisms of special education has brought to the fore the interactive nature and the broader socio-cultural context of every aspect of the learning process. “Inclusive education”, as Slee (2011:39) underlines, “commences with the recognition of the unequal social relations that produce exclusion”. However, this critical appraisal has not eliminated deficit-centred perspectives, which remain a major influence on the way society regards people with learning difficulties (Mittler 2000:3). As will be discussed, this is more evidently the case in Greek society, in which the striking absence of institutional provisions for disabled people is often legitimised by references to disability as a personal and family misfortune that can only be addressed by state-institutions partially and indirectly.

1.3.2 New responses to difference: Concepts and policies of inclusive education

i) From segregated schooling to integration

The gradual shift in both social attitudes and education theories of disability contributed to the emergence of a new frame of responses to difference, whose roots stretch back to the design of education in the period after World War II. This involved the adoption of a critical stance towards the establishment of special education and promoted the incorporation in mainstream schools of all members of the student population typically described as ‘having SEN’. This new perspective was fuelled by “the increasing rhetoric about the immorality of segregated provision” (Florian et al. 1998:2), a rhetoric that stemmed mainly from the struggle of disabled people (cf. Barton 2001) as well as of other social minorities, which raised their voice against the discriminatory practices of existing systems of social policy and academic provision after the sixties.

These marginalised social groups managed to establish a broad socio-political interest in the issues of human and civil rights, equal opportunity and social inclusion. Their efforts were further strengthened by the placement of social and educational policy within a human rights global context and the active involvement in the issue of several international organisations, resulting in the creation of numerous human and civil rights declarations, i.e. (with regard to disability) ‘The

Declaration of the Rights of Mentally Disabled People' (UN General Assembly resolution 2856/1971), 'The Declaration of Disabled People's Rights' (UN General Assembly resolution 3447/1975), and the more recent 'Salamanca Statement for Special/Inclusive Education' (UNESCO 1994).

As will be argued, the notion of rights "seems to be highly problematic in the way it has been [and continues to be] used by the stated, written and enacted policies" (Vlachou 2004:3). Yet, the embedment of the disability movement's inclusionist agenda within the broader context of international human rights discourse was, at this historical point, instrumental in the implementation of its long-term strategies and the integration of its perspectives into national policies and legislation, aiming to eliminate discrimination against disabled people regarding access to facilities, social security, employment and education.

Meanwhile, in the field of education, neither the set of assumptions and theoretical constructs which informed policy-making, nor the established structures and organisation of provision were replaced by their inclusive alternatives overnight. Initially, a process of *integration* or *mainstreaming* (the terms derive from a western European and a northern American educational context respectively) was introduced, entailing the attempt to accommodate 'exceptional' students (meaning children categorised as having any type of 'special need') within mainstream schools (see Ainscow 1995:147). Yet, the integrationist agenda was characterised by an emphasis on the locational dimension of inclusion, i.e. the physical presence of previously excluded students within the mainstream school environment (see Farrell 2000:153-154), and failed to elucidate the pedagogy, aims and quality of educational provision that were to replace the institutional framework of special education. As both disability theory and educational research suggest, even within an integrated setting, children labelled as having special needs can be isolated from their peers and, in practice, quite segregated. Consequently, the focus must be placed on the establishment of broader social and cultural parameters that will enable inclusionary practices both inside and outside the classroom.

ii) Inclusion as a systematic response to student diversity

The growing critique of educational integration was further supported by an increasing interest of educational sociologists in the role played by economic and socio-cultural factors in the construction of special need and disability, as well as in the process of labelling and categorisation which was inherent in the special education framework and remained to a great extent unchallenged by the integrationist agenda. Hence, over the last twenty years or so, the terms *inclusion* and *inclusive education* have replaced integration in the discourse of disability theorists (at first) and policy-makers (subsequently), in an effort to describe more accurately the process of not simply incorporating all children in mainstream schools, but including them as full-time, active and integral members of both the school community and the wider society.

In an educational context, the shift from the individual to the social model of disability focuses on the environmental interventions required at a variety of levels in order to remove obstacles to the participation of all students in mainstream schooling (Campbell and Oliver 1996). In a broader social context, disability is conceptualised as resulting from “the failure of society to adjust to different impairments experienced by people” (Burden and Hamm 2000:189). In this view, inclusion is not simply a matter of educational assimilation, but rather calls for a broader consideration of the general inequalities and exclusionary practices within contemporary societies (see Oliver 1990). It thus entails (without being limited to) a fundamental transformation of the whole educational system and “a well-thought-through, adequately resourced and carefully monitored equal opportunities policy” (Barton 1995:60).

As a result, contemporary educational discourses encompass a wider conceptualisation of inclusion, which does not delimit the term solely to the referential frame of educational provision. The implementation of inclusive practices is rather grounded on the reciprocal relationship between schools and wider society, and the belief that educational inclusion can promote the social inclusion of students at risk of exclusion, both as children and later in their lives as adults. What is more, there is nowadays a general agreement that the issue is not solely about pupils with disability. Increasingly, over the past few years, “[inclusion] has become more

centred around the idea of reducing barriers to participation and learning of all children... recognising that many groups of learners are at risk of marginalisation, exclusion and underachievement” (Farrell and Ainscow 2002:v). Thus, the exclusion of disabled students from mainstream schools is understood as a socially produced phenomenon, part of a broader pattern of social exclusion that different groups of people may experience due to – among other reasons – their gender, ethnic identity, religion, or disability (see Percy-Smith 2000).

It has been argued that this broader frame of reference involves the risk of approaching the struggle for inclusion as taking place in relation to the level of participation experienced by particular marginalised groups (Armstrong, F. 2003:3). For instance, disability activists and theorists have expressed their fear that within the current broader agenda of inclusion the needs of disabled people may be overlooked, while activists from other social minorities have argued that “the disability movement has high-jacked the inclusion agenda, ... and issues relating to race, gender, sexuality and class are being pushed aside in the debate” (quoted in Armstrong, F.:op.cit.). Yet, this wider framework enables an understanding of inclusion not simply as an educational construct, but also as a process of change and transformation in all areas of social life. This view forwards the argument that the educational objective of ‘inclusion for all’ cannot be divorced from the struggle for the formulation of an inclusive society and emphasises that inclusion is not a fixed state, but “a never-ending process, working towards an ideal when all exclusionary pressures within education and society are removed” (Booth 2003:2).

However, as will be argued in the chapters which follow, no attempt to identify exactly what this process of educational and social inclusion entails is straightforward or uncontested. Although within modern western societies the changing educational policies appear to have been increasingly prioritising inclusive initiatives, many theoreticians acknowledge the simplistic way in which inclusion is often approached and express a valid concern about the making of the term into a cliché. To be more precise, inclusion has become a buzz-word that appears light-heartedly in the discourse of politicians or education specialists (Thomas and O’Hanlon 2001). Yet, as Allan and Slee (2008:3) point out, both the theoretical

framework and the educational effects of inclusion are fraught with controversies and counterpoints. That is because, as Roger Slee reminds us,

“Inclusive education, like special education, is ideological. Both are based upon alternative views of the world and the nature and form of schooling that will build that world”.

(Slee 2011:12)

Thus, beyond the truism that the type and quality of educational provision offered to disabled students can promote or inhibit their social inclusion both as children and later as adults, a critical approach to the concept of inclusion entails a consideration of the specific socio-cultural context in which the set of processes described as inclusive is embedded. With this in mind, and before exploring alternative perspectives within the inclusion framework, our discussion will first examine the appearance of inclusive education within the socio-cultural context of my home country: Greece.

iii) The emergence of inclusive education in Greece

Despite the perpetuation of uncertainties surrounding the definition of inclusion, the human rights movement has succeeded in establishing inclusion as a global issue. Yet, this international human rights agenda for inclusion does not always translate into identical or even equivalent context-specific inclusive policies and practices at a national level. It is worth remembering, for example, that – within the field of education in particular – similar humanitarian discourses, as we saw, have been utilised in the past to sustain and legitimise the framework of special needs education. Over a long period, the design of Greek education has been based on policies of segregation and exclusion for disabled students, on the grounds of offering enhanced provision and protection from the harsh realities of mainstream schooling (cf. Dellasoudas 2003:35). This perspective has shown remarkable resilience to ensuing discourses of inclusion, thus delaying considerably (in comparison to other Western European societies) the emergence of inclusive initiatives within Greek education (see Soulis 2002:298-299).

While the present thesis focuses on Greek inclusive education, the situational context of the study has been set wide, in an effort to understand the theoretical

underpinnings and the pragmatics of inclusion. This choice was, on the one hand, dictated by the acknowledgement of the interdependency between national and cross-national policy-making processes. As Parsons (1999:xiii) has aptly put it, “no nation-state’s education system develops in isolation”, but rather adheres to and depends on broader political and economic mechanisms at an international level “within which the legitimised social processes and the personal tragedy of exclusion takes place”. In the modern era of globalisation this broader frame of reference is more significant than ever, both due to the growing co-dependency of local economies and the effects of an increasingly unified world economy to the formulation of national policy, as well as due to the rising cultural consciousness of the world as a ‘global village’. At the same time, there is the need to contextualise advances in Greek inclusive education with analogous initiatives particularly within the European Union, since for Greek social and educational policy the country’s EU membership in 1981 has signified a dominant western world orientation which has been consistent ever since (see Emanuelsson et al. 2005:131).

As regards Greek special education, EU membership meant the placement of national policy under the EU human rights approach to disability, which was followed by the adoption of an official aim of complying with the recommendations of UN declarations and EU directives for equal opportunities and abolition of exclusion for disabled people (see Zoniou-Sideri 2000a). Thus, in the mid to late eighties Greece witnessed the first official policy statements which challenged the value and effectiveness of special education. Drawing mainly upon the vocabulary and theoretical constructs of the Warnock Report (DES 1978) and other contemporary English policy documents (see Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideris 2000), the 1985 Education Act (Law 1566/1985) negated the existing segregationist and exclusionary agenda of public education established only four years earlier (Law 1143/1981), and attempted to formulate the legal and institutional framework for the integration of disabled students in mainstream schools (see Soulis 2002:292-293). Finally, the Education Act of 2000 was the first legislative document to state explicitly the government’s political will to promote more inclusive educational policies within the national education system (see Law 2817/2000), echoing to a high degree the resolutions of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) on disability and education.

As Emanuelsson et al. (2005:129) indicate, the development of special needs education and the subsequent emergence of integrationist and inclusive educational discourses in Greece resemble similar advances in other industrial countries in the west and appear to be particularly influenced by English socio-political debates on exclusion and the rights of marginalised social groups. However, educational researchers in Greece argue that, even though the political rhetoric of each new administration asserts the right of ‘unprivileged’ children to high-quality education, the Greek education system has not yet arrived at a phase where this can be implemented (Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideris 2000). On the contrary, according to Soulis (2002), there is consistent evidence that Greek education still retains to a great extent an integrationist agenda, and that disability rights continue to be sidelined in educational and socio-cultural public discourses.

1.4 Understanding the politics of inclusion in Greece

1.4.1 Politicising the Greek concept of inclusion

This thesis will explore how the question of inclusive language and policy in Greece is grounded in and at the same time goes beyond the opposition between inclusive vs. integrationist agendas for education. Seen in the frame of the opposition between ‘impairment’ and ‘disability’, put forth by the social model of disability, the language of inclusion in Greece will emerge as being incomplete and somewhat confused. This confusion runs through all levels of the discourse of inclusion, from the language of government officials to that of parents and teachers or, in certain cases, the language of disability activists and theorists. As will be discussed in chapters 6 to 8 of the thesis, one of the key traits of conceptions of inclusion deployed in these contexts is the conflation of medicalised or individualist considerations of disability and integration on the one hand, and socially informed notions of inclusion on the other.

We may begin to approach this confusion by considering an example of response to students’ diversity in the context of university education. While I was

writing this introduction, I was informed that one of the largest universities in Greece decided to create a special committee for the promotion of volunteerism aimed specifically at helping “students with special needs” and promoting their “inclusion” in the university’s educational framework (as posted in the university’s site: access.uoa.gr). This committee was formed in addition to a different one, already operating in the same university, which is focusing on problems of social educational policy as applied, for instance, to students from the least privileged socio-cultural backgrounds and those currently facing financial problems. While the specific operation of this committee is most likely to prove useful, in some respects, to disabled students, it is clear from the outset that the issue of disability is designated as a personal problem that can only be addressed through the humanitarian help of volunteers, while other causes of exclusion, such as poverty, are clearly seen as social problems that invite quests for new social policies. As was pertinently noted just a few years ago by the ‘National Confederation of Disabled People’ in Greece (NCDP), processes of social assimilation do not necessarily entail social equality. So, in relation to evocations of integration, the question is

“...as *what* will people with disabilities be integrated? Will they be integrated as the ‘poor relatives’ that will be nourished with the garbage of the culture of the bodily-able? Will they be integrated in a society that continues to force them to remain passive observers of their needs?”

(Disabled.gr 2006)

The conflict over the meaning and interrelation of integration and inclusion within the Greek national context must not be understood as the product of a belated process of modernising educational policies and following developments that are completed elsewhere in Western societies. While the UK educational system, for instance, presented a pioneering appeal and implementation of inclusive policies in Europe, a recent research in the *Guardian* pointed out how parents of pupils with Down’s syndrome were increasingly made to feel that their children were not welcome in mainstream schools despite a wide range of research indicating that these schools would be the best place for them (Shepherd 2009).

Returning to the Greek context, conceptions of the social model of disability allow us to account for this back-and-forth movement in the frame set by the interlinking of integration and inclusion. In this regard, it is possible to argue that calls for volunteerism as a means for encountering disability or considerations of disability as a personal tragedy that will be discussed in the next chapters are produced by a social context of antagonism and conflict in which discrimination and inequality are central to the operation of the entire social order. While it is partly accurate and useful, insofar as it highlights an opposition deployed by social agents (educationalists, government officials, parents and so on), this interpretation places inadequate emphasis on the fact that the ideal of inclusion has, indeed, become an integral and uncontested part of the Greek discourses on educational practice.

To put the same issue in different terms, it is assumed that within the situational context of this study there are some areas or *loci* of discourse and practice in which inclusion has been reached as a coherent and uncontested concept that is opposed to integration or other conceptions of disability. Yet, the history of special education in Greece (and perhaps also beyond it) points not so much to the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ to advance the inclusive ideal, as to the dilemmas defining the contemporary ideology and practice of inclusion, and the diverse ways in which the inclusive ideal can be used and implemented as inclusive pedagogy within learning institutes and as inclusive culture within a particular society. The appeal to volunteerism as an approach to disability, discussed above, was formulated as an appeal not to integration, but, rather to inclusion. Likewise, as will become clear in the analysis of both official statements and interviews, there are only a few voices – if any – that would object to appeals to inclusion in contemporary Greece. However, what is meant by the term inclusion when deployed in appeals to volunteerism differs radically from uses of the term by disability activists questioning the extent and implications of current inclusive policies in Greece.

In their discussion of Jacques Rancière’s conception of inclusion, equality and democracy Charles Bingham and Gert Biesta (Bingham and Biesta 2010:73-76) point out a distinction, made by Rancière between two trajectories of democratisation: one in which inclusion is the aim or *telos* and one in which equality is a starting point. The history of democratisation, Bingham and Biesta argue, can be

written as a constant movement towards inclusion. But at the same time, this trajectory is a history of exclusions made, paradoxically, in the name of democracy. It is at this point that democracy is linked directly to education, since the task of education in democratic societies is often designated as that of making individuals ready for participation in democratic deliberation and decision-making. Such an idea, however, “puts education before and outside democracy, thus suggesting that politics and education can simply and easily be separated and be kept apart” (ibid.:75). What kind of politics posits inclusion as its endpoint and how does this positing may also operate to sustain and reinforce exclusion? How can a politics of democracy, which takes equality as its starting point, act to criticise the self-effacement of inclusion in contemporary democracies?

By taking inclusion as its *telos* in the inegalitarian and antagonistic context of modern capitalist societies, including Greece, educational institutions restate and legitimise already established divisions between ‘able’ and ‘disabled’ students. They do so because the endpoint of education is the preparation of students in order to work and participate in politics as citizens within this specific social order formed on the grounds of distinctions between more and less capable or able and disabled citizens, workers and human beings. In other words, students are prepared to enter an inegalitarian social and political order, wherein democracy consists merely in the counting of political choices made from one’s specific social and cultural position from which one competes with others. However, inclusion acquires a different meaning if equality becomes the starting point of democracy. From this view, the view of an emancipated society which, as Rancière points out, “would repudiate the division between ... those who possess or don’t possess the property of intelligence” and which only knows “minds in action” that “transform all their works into ways of demonstrating the humanity that is in them as in everyone” (Rancière 1991:71), inclusion may even appear irrelevant to equality and democracy.

Between the medical notion of disability and the consideration of equality as the starting point of a social order, we encounter a diverse range of conceptualisations of inclusion. The aim of this study is to examine critically this web of concepts as central to any attempt at formulating a socially-oriented understanding of the current status of inclusive education in Greece. An approach to

the Greek educational and social order of inclusion that would take language as its focal point needs to recognise both the diversity of this language and the political constitution of its plural forms. Contests over the meaning of inclusion will thus be shown as linked inextricably not only to the political position from which social subjects approach education, but also to their political vision and their participation in critiques of the present social order. Definitions of inclusion will be approached as inseparable from the assessment of the nature, defining characteristics and expressed purpose of social and educational policy agendas, both at national and at cross-national level, that are labelled as 'inclusive'.

Yet, while it will be recognised that none of these definitions can be set outside the discourse of inclusion that constitutes the object of this study, their political vision will be discussed and appraised from a specific viewpoint that is itself separated from most of them: a notion arising from the language of disability theorists and activists proclaiming what we shall describe as the transformative process of educational and social inclusion. This is a notion of inclusion which may not yet have equality as its practical starting point, but nevertheless posits its necessity in theoretical terms and proclaims the need to link inclusive educational constructs and practices in a constant struggle for equality and democracy.

1.4.2 Challenges to the 'social model': Alternative perspectives in disability theory

The social model of disability, on which my analysis is based, has been central to the field of research designated as 'disability theory' (Barnes et al 1999:67). However, we must clarify from the outset that this model has been conceptualised in different and often contrasting ways. Based on a common starting point, i.e. a vigorous critique of the medical model and its individualistic discourse of defectology, disability theorists have developed a wide range of alternative interpretations of the social model, each one identifying a different focal point in its analytical framework and references.

For example, a theoretical strand that is central to the present work locates the source of oppression and discrimination against disabled people in the economic relations established within capitalist societies, thus placing the emphasis on “a political economy of disablement” (Barton 2003:9) and its forms of articulation on the level of discursive and cultural practices. In this regard, the notion of disability is rooted within the institutional structures and underpinning social values of the capitalist system, since “economy, through both the operation of the labour market and the social organisation of work, plays a key role in producing the category disability and in determining societal responses to disabled people” (Oliver 1996b:33).

Other theorists have downplayed the material basis of the construction of disability and have highlighted instead the notion of culture as the main agent of disablement (see Corker and Shakespeare 2002). From this view, the focus is placed on “the importance of cultural processes and discourses in the generation of disability and disablism” (Thomas 2002:49). Drawing on certain currents of postmodern social theory, this position prioritises the workings of cultural assumptions, discursive practises and ideological forces in the construction of all social phenomena, including impairment and disability (see Shakespeare 1997).

In a similar vein, many theorists from within the social model framework have usefully stressed the need to account for the bodily experience of impairment, which may be seen as sidelined in contemporary disability discourses. As we already began to discuss, the social model has promoted a distinction between *impairment*, approached as a medical term, and *disability*, approached as a socially constructed phenomenon. However, several disability theorists have questioned the rigid separation of disability from the body, and prioritise an understanding of impairment and disability as parts of a single, personal experience.

As Shakespeare (1992:40) points out, the social model was instrumental in shifting the focus from physiology onto the real cause of disability, i.e. social discrimination and prejudice. Yet, he argues, this change of theoretical focus had an important side effect: the body disappeared from disability discourse because, in Shakespeare’s words, “to mention biology, to admit pain, to confront our

impairments has been to risk the oppressors seizing on evidence that disability is really about physical limitation after all” (op.cit.). As a number of theorists have argued, now that the social construction of disability has been established, it is important to reinstate the body in disability theory, as an adequate social theory of disability should include all the dimensions of disabled people’s experiences rather than claiming that disability is either medical or social (Shakespeare and Watson 2002).

Arguably, certain currents of thought within the social model have sustained such a dualistic approach and require further discussion. The relation between disability and the body is one of the most contentious issues of contemporary disability theory. It would be helpful, however, to keep in mind that, even if the social model (like any model) cannot explain disability in its totality, it still offers valuable insights towards a better understanding of disability. Oliver (1996a:41) has argued that “because it cannot explain everything, we should neither seek to expose inadequacies, which are more a product of the way we use it, nor abandon it because its usefulness has been fully exploited”. While I would disagree with the first part of this statement concerning inadequacies, I would agree with the second part and explore in this thesis the potentialities for critiquing conceptualisations of disability inscribed in the social model. As we shall see, these potentialities become more evident in the current socio-economic context in Greece and beyond, wherein educational systems are required to operate with conditions of economic crisis and limited resources. In this framework, the legitimisation of financial cuts in the field of education that directly affect disabled students and sustain exclusion returns to or continues to deploy medical or individualist terms for conceptualising disability and normality.

It is beyond the scope of this work to present a comprehensive array of distinct or partially overlapping alternative social model approaches. What I want to emphasise, however, is the complex and contentious nature not only of the object of my study, but also of the conceptual networks and theoretical frameworks which will be deployed and discussed in this thesis. A full discussion of theoretical premises that sustain my research will be developed in chapter 3. At this point it will suffice to note that my approach to the dilemmas introduced here between impairment and

disability or between material foundations and bodily experience of disability must not erase a unifying viewpoint, which also offers a founding premise of this thesis: the consistent and undisputed intent of social theorists of disability to both historicise and politicise all conceptions of their objects, including those deployed by themselves for the purposes of research. It is precisely this politicisation that directs our focus on tensions and conflicts both in the language of social subjects and in the theoretical languages of inclusion.

1.4.3 Structure and description of chapters

At the outset of this thesis stands the recognition of disability as a social construction that is used to challenge the presumed neutrality of linguistic representations and to stress the socio-cultural relativity of categorical distinctions, classification systems and linguistic labels (see Barton 2003:3-5). This theoretical framework has prompted a critical reappraisal of the meaning and function of the discourse of disability and has raised questions of power relations, hidden agendas and competing discourses within disability studies (cf. Oliver 1990).

These concerns have also entered debates on inclusive education (cf. Armstrong, F. 2003; Thomas and Vaughan 2004). As a result, educational theory has begun to question the problematic nature of the SEN label and other categorical distinctions that permeate contemporary educational responses to diversity (see Norwich and Kelly 2005:27-29). This kind of criticism, as already argued, has challenged exclusionary educational practices and disabling social policies. Furthermore, it convincingly argued – as the following chapter will discuss in more detail – for a more inclusive educational and social reality involving de-categorisation and a commitment to “the recognition and appreciation of all aspects of diversity” within both education and the society (Booth 2003:2). It is this innovative framework promoting, simultaneously, educational and social inclusion to which this thesis turns in order to explore the contested discourse of inclusion in Greece.

With this perspective, chapter 2 turns to the contested concept of inclusion as located in competing discursive practices, aiming to investigate how evocations of this concept as an ideal are imbued with inconsistencies, conflicts and vested interests. The chapter examines the current hegemony of the discourse of inclusion as a social construct which involves the confrontation of a web of conflicting conceptions and social groups. Moreover, the chapter explores how this hegemony proclaims in all cases a paradigmatic shift from previous educational responses to students' diversity. The establishment of the 'educational inclusion paradigm' is not, however, regarded as the product of a linear and progressive development towards the removal of barriers in education and the consolidation of equality and democracy. On the contrary, it is argued that while the idea of paradigmatic shift helped disability activists and theorists sustain a notion of inclusion which entailed the participation of all children and citizens, and the concomitant removal of all categories of exclusionary language and practice, it acquired a different meaning when it was appropriated by governmental discourses. In the latter context, evocations of a radical break with the past often concealed the persistence of exclusionist categories or an assimilationist agenda which failed to suggest a process of comprehensive cultural and educational reconstruction. Accordingly, the chapter argues, it is necessary to understand inclusion in the plural and focus on conflicts and tensions constituting the language of inclusion, and especially those arising when we broaden our field and consider the links between inclusive education and its role in preparing the students for a specific social order. These are the links between education and social inclusion as well as those between the categories of 'school effectiveness', 'achievement' and 'standards' on the one hand, and the introduction of students into an antagonistic society wherein notions such as equality and solidarity are subsumed to an all pervasive domination of competition within the frame of hierarchical orders.

Chapter 3 explores the methodological premises and limitations of this study as posited on the one hand by the attempt to combine a social theory of disability with the categories of discourse and paradigm, and on the other by challenges arising from the interpretive encounter with the web of discourses that constitute the focus of my research: the discourse of Greek governments as presented in official documents and statements about educational policy, the discourse of educationalists

and practitioners, based on data collected by interviews and, finally, the discourse of disability theorists and activists based on published work on the subject of inclusion and supplementary interview material. The chapter discusses the methods of research stressing the qualitative orientation of this study, the interview process and the modes of organising research input in the light of certain key research questions. Particular emphasis is placed on exploring the interpretive frameworks deployed in order to analyse my research data and the ways these challenge claims to objectivity and neutrality as well as the binary opposition between subject and object of research. The furthering of a specific political agenda aiming at furthering critical emancipatory disability research delimits the ultimate interpretive frame and orientation of this work. This agenda presupposes the transformative potential of research aiming at deepening shifts and effecting radical breaks in conceptions of disability and inclusion. At the same, it is recognised that such an intention must continuously acknowledge the historical positioning of research subjects and the limitations arising from the striving for inclusion within the context of inegalitarian and competitive societies in which our own concepts are, at least partially, also imbued with the dominant discourses they seek to oppose.

Chapter 4 investigates the special education paradigm as the backdrop of current discourses of inclusive education in Greece. Its aim is not to offer a comprehensive account of the history of special education, but rather to focus on those moments and developments that contributed to the emergence of the contradiction that defines the present rhetoric of inclusive education in Greece: the evocation of inclusion alongside discursive appeals and the practical expansion of special provision for an increasing number of students. This overview of the past of inclusion posited by special education further seeks to dispel the idea of a progressive development leading from special education to inclusion. The endorsement of such a simplistic and optimistic view, it argues, only serves to sideline the complexities and contradictions of the Greek inclusive discourse by obscuring the persistent presence of concepts derived from the 'SEN paradigm' in contemporary inclusive discourses.

Chapter 5 discusses the Greek governmental discourse on special educational needs and inclusive education, and its implications for educational praxis in the

period between 2000 and 2008, which is considered as the time of the introduction of 'inclusion' as a discourse in the context of the Greek educational system. The chapter focuses on discursive conflicts that articulate the persistence of the special education paradigm, the tension between educational and social inclusion and the failure to implement an inclusive education policy. So, on the one hand, the chapter discusses how concepts such as inclusion, integration, democracy, equality and modernisation of education are evoked by the dominant official discourse as ideals that are presumably empowering for disabled people and capable of effecting their inclusion. On the other hand, it seeks to discuss how this discourse remains an empty letter that cannot be translated into truly *inclusive* (without the need for inverted commas) practice, as it is itself contradictory and fraught with paradoxes and tensions. A close analysis of Law 2817, passed in 2000, will act as the focal point of the study. This "Law on Special Education" - as is indicated by its subtitle - provided the legal foundation for all developments in both special and inclusive education in the period examined. The chapter examines how this law maintains most aspects of the paradigm of special education, failing to prioritise the promotion and development of full educational and social inclusion for disabled people. While constituting an improvement over the previous law, as it attempts to modernise the discursive and administrative orientation of Greek special education by adopting calls for inclusion formulated in the context of the European Union, this process was ambivalent and contradictory, acting to maintain the structures of special education and to develop a self-contained system of special needs provision that operated in parallel with mainstream education.

Chapter 6 investigates current trends and future perspectives in 'inclusive' governmental discourses and policy planning focusing on the period from the inception of Law 3699 in 2008 onwards. The endpoint for the discussion of official policy is set towards the end of 2011, when the elected administration gave its place to an interim coalition government (in November 2011) that would stay briefly in office until a new election date could be set. Still, as this coalition stayed in office longer than anticipated (in the end, parliamentary elections were held on May 6, 2012), we will also discuss certain official policy acts during the first months of 2012 (and past the formal end-point of our discussion). So, chapter 6 discusses how the concept of inclusion is articulated both through the discursive content of the new

legislation and in the broader context of concurrent governmental discourses addressing and regulating educational and social inclusion for disabled people in Greece today. Despite the remodeling of some terms, Law 3699 falls short of establishing a language that moves beyond the medicalised model for understanding disability and of advancing inclusive education as a response to the social and political phenomenon of disability. This law is appraised as a ‘backward step’, which, despite some isolated progressive appeals to social and professional inclusion, does not define educational inclusion as presupposition for the process of social inclusion of disabled students. Both the law itself and the wider governmental discourse of the period profess that social inclusion will be sustained – paradoxically - by special education and training. As a consequence, special education is no longer presented as a necessary problem in the layout of the Greek education system, but is rather sanctioned as a viable, if not the optimum educational mechanism for presumably safeguarding both the right to learning and the social inclusion of students that are ‘unable’ to fit in mainstream education. Despite some noteworthy amendments of the previous legal framework, among which is the securing of the compulsory nature of formal education for disabled students, both the law and the discourse of the period return to special education as a valid pedagogical perspective for a society that, supposedly, strives for inclusion.

Chapter 7 attempts a shift from dominant discourses and politics to a counter-discourse articulated by disability activists and theorists in the context of the disability movement. The chapter looks at this discourse in order to discern a critical prism that would allow us to codify the contradiction of official conceptions of inclusion and challenge the shortcomings of inclusive initiatives in the current institutional and political setting. While the starting point of this enterprise is the investigation of Greek critiques of inclusion, there is also an attempt to contextualise the language of the Greek disability movement in the frame of Anglophone disability theory – a link that is also made by Greek writers and activists themselves. The chapter aims specifically at debunking certain myths of special education that are theorised as central to the legitimation of the continuing domination of the special education paradigm: the myth of the ‘cost-effective’ special education vs. the ‘high price’ of inclusion; the myth of social inclusion in the absence of educational inclusion; the myth of the presumed ‘efficacy’ of special pedagogy vs. the ‘risks’ of

inclusive education; and, finally, their culmination in an overarching myth that prescribes special education as a safe harbour and the only way to secure both the educational and the future social success of disabled students. The dismantling of these myths leads to the deployment of the discourse of activists and theorists in order to criticise the discrepancies between theoretical proclamations of inclusion and educational praxis. The chapter then turns its attention to the possible limitations of the disability movement that arise from internal disagreements, and calls for reflection and self-critique.

Chapter 8 turns to the discourse of Greek educationalists. Following the same analytical focus that was deployed in the approach to the language of disability activists, the chapter discusses the discourse of educationalists as a frame for articulating a critical voice that stands against the governmental discourse of inclusion. From this view, it attempts to investigate and interpret the governmental inclusion discourses and their actual policy agenda on inclusive education through the language of practitioners and specialists called upon to implement inclusive policies at the school level. Drawing on a qualitative interviewing study with Greek teachers that I conducted specifically for the purposes of this thesis, the chapter seeks to formulate a critical, rather than descriptive account. After explaining methods for collecting and interpreting data (a discussion that is introduced in chapter 3) the discussion focuses on the juxtaposition of government's and educationalists' inclusive discourses in order to problematise the existing dominant vision of social and educational inclusion in Greece. However, it also stresses how the dominant ideology permeates several aspects of the educationalists' discourse wherein educational inclusion is approached as an indispensable educational and social value, without however adopting a straightforward critique of the myths of special education.

Finally, in the epilogue, chapter 9 attempts a critical evaluation of the research findings and concludes the thesis with a summary of its main points, drawing upon the foregoing analysis of hidden agendas, power relations and competing discourses in the field of Greek inclusive education (and its overarching context). It argues that the presence of conflicting conceptual frameworks and contrasting practices in the design of inclusive policies must be understood as a

fundamentally socio-political issue which cannot be reduced to narrow methodological or technical concerns. Accordingly, it underlines the necessity to move beyond humanitarian discourses of inclusion, which prioritise the ideal of inclusiveness as a moral issue for western cultures, and towards a political conception of the ideal of inclusion which foregrounds the transformative potential of this ideal for modern society.

Regardless of the actual content and the contextual meaning the term has in a particular utterance, inclusion seems to hold an inherent positive connotation. Used in various and diverse communicative settings, the concept retains an unfluctuating authority. Yet, as this thesis argues, this uniform endorsement of the term operates as a mask hiding the absence of unity as to what the term means and how it can be translated into practice. This exploration of the tensions that define the concept as used in the Greek context highlights the clear political intentions underpinning this thesis. Focusing on inclusion as both an educational construct and a wider social practice it argues for the inextricable link between the educational and the social plane. It suggests that while it is crucial to explore the role of schools in advancing an inclusionary social environment, it is also important to acknowledge the limits of educational initiatives. The political and material underpinning of concepts such as human rights, equal opportunities, educational and social inclusion set struggles in the field of education within the broader frame of social and political struggles for equality and democracy.

CHAPTER 2

INCLUSION AS A CONTESTED CONCEPT: COMPETING DISCOURSES IN THE INCLUSIVE PARADIGM

2.1 Inclusion as dominant educational discourse

2.1.1 The concept and discourse of inclusion

“Inclusive education is one of the most important, yet elusive, concepts to emerge in the UK and internationally in recent years. It is an important concept because, in its full interpretation, it represents a potentially profound shift away from policies and practices based on selections according to perceptions about ability, which have traditionally sanctioned the exclusion of many learners from mainstream education. [...] However, it is an elusive concept because it is the subject of many different interpretations, depending on who is using the term, in what context, and for what purpose.”

(F. Armstrong 2011:7)

The past few years have witnessed remarkable changes in educational policy and practice. Researchers, professionals and so-called experts have not reached agreement on the exact aims, form and content of educational and social policies – either at a national or at an international level – concerning the struggles of disabled people (see Hahn 2002:162). Still, in a considerably short space of time the concept of inclusion has substantially gained ground in many parts of the world. As D. Armstrong et al. (2011:29) comment, “thinking about ‘social inclusion’ has become a major focus of the policies of governments”, as in several countries “[p]olicy-makers have become interested in wider issues of social inclusion and how education might play a role in promoting social cohesion in societies that are increasingly diverse, socially and culturally”.

Yet, the meaning of educational and social inclusion “is by no means clear”, as the same commentators are keen to observe, “and perhaps conveniently blurs the edges of social policy with a feel-good rhetoric that no one could be opposed to” (op.cit.:30). From this view, inclusion has become “a bit of a buzzword” (Rieser 2011:154) that people use without necessarily being aware of what it means and what it entails as an educational and social policy orientation. As a result, Armstrong et al. (ibid.) continue, while contemporary social policy “is dominated by the rhetoric of inclusion, the reality for many remains one of exclusion and the panacea of ‘inclusion’ masks many sins”.

Despite the intense conflict about the true meaning of the concept and the struggles associated with its implementation both within and beyond the field of education, the moniker of inclusion has become almost omnipresent in educational as well as socio-political discourses worldwide (see Thomas and Loxley 2001; Mitchell 2005; Rieser 2011). What is more, within the societal frame of reference for this study, it appears – as we shall examine in the ensuing discussion – that the discourse of inclusion has evolved into one of the dominant educational and social policy discourses (cf. Nguyen 2010).

This does not imply, however, that contemporary educational and social policy has finally created an equitable socio-cultural context in which unmitigated educational and social inclusion reign supreme. Rather, as we shall see, it points to the diverse range of interpretations that the concept of inclusion can encompass and underlines the need to define, as Len Barton (2012:2) argues, what exactly is signified by the term, since the language of inclusion “has been colonised by various advocates whose perceptions are informed by different understandings over the scope, intentions and necessity of such an approach”. From this view, “the policy context in which inclusive education is situated, and needs to be understood, is one of competing and contradictory policy developments” (Barton op.cit.:3). Hence, instead of promoting inclusive education and social inclusion, in many locales this policy context strengthens existing exclusionary practices and deepens divisions between different groups of people on the basis of ability, class, gender, ethnicity, etc. For, as we shall discuss, the illusive concept of inclusion can be assimilated into governmental discourses and become part of governance in an essentially unaltered

exclusionary education and society, rather than an emancipatory idea which opposes existing official models and prevailing policies of discrimination and exclusion.

Yet, before we begin to discuss this contention about the discursive ‘dominance’ of inclusion and its theoretical and practical consequences, it is necessary to focus on the term ‘discourse’ and explain why inclusion – educational, social, political, or other – is defined here as a concept that needs to be located in the frame of a specific discourse. (On the relation between concept and discourse see chapter 3). Given the multiple meanings of the term ‘discourse’, the various functions it serves in the vocabulary of social sciences and the different ways in which it will be operationalised in this thesis, it is important to clarify at this point in what sense exactly the term is being used in the context of my study.

Simply put, discourse is the language deployed by members of a speech community and, in linguistics at least, it typically refers to the vocabulary, expressions and linguistic style used in a communicative event (see Brown and Yule 1983:1 and 26). In other words, discourse constitutes ‘language-in-action’ or ‘language-in-use’. However, both within and beyond linguistics, discourse has become a multi-faceted and extremely fluid term, involving much more than language (even though the two terms will sometimes be used interchangeably in the thesis for stylistic purposes, the meaning attributed to both of them is that of discourse). While different theorists from a variety of disciplines approach the term in diverse or even contrasting ways, each emphasizing different aspects of the discursive practice (see Jaworski and Coupland 1999 for an overview), they all focus on language use as social interaction and highlight the social structuring of any discursive event, thus contributing to a *social conception of discourse* (cf. the seminal work of Halliday 1978 on the social interpretation of language in general). As a result, there is today a considerable level of agreement among theorists that discourse cannot be separated from the cultural, socio-political and ideological parameters in which it is produced, but rather entails a meaning-making process that is formed and defined not only by linguistic but also by non-linguistic – i.e. social, cultural, political, institutional, etc. – conditions (see Blommaert 2005:3).

As a consequence the acknowledgement of an ‘inclusive discourse’ foregrounds an understanding of inclusion as *social interaction* rather than as educational process, human right or ideal that are somehow isolated from a specific historical and social order. Inclusion is thus defined as a distinct social practice embedded within and determined by the social life of its practitioners. This notion has crucial implications for the conceptualisation of inclusion proposed here.

As Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:37) point out, all social practices constitute discourse, both in the sense that “practices are partly discursive (talking, writing, etc. is one way of acting)” and in the sense that “they [i.e. practices] are also discursively represented” (ibid.). Inclusion can be conceptualised as discourse in both senses: First of all inclusion is incessantly being talked and written about, holding an integral role in the current vocabulary of politicians, academics and education specialists. In fact, until recently, in some contexts the moniker of inclusion featured so heavily in social and educational policy, governmental statements and contemporary literature on disability issues that it had almost become a motto, often used light-heartedly without necessarily having a clearly defined content or an applicable frame of reference (cf. Rieser 2011). In addition, as we shall also see in the next chapters, today more than ever social policies, educational reforms and political developments at a national or international level are discursively represented as ‘inclusive’ (cf. Nguyen 2010). Even if both the conceptualisation and the implementation of professed inclusive initiatives vary significantly among the different educational contexts under investigation, inclusion has become a major topic in current educational discourses and has been at times presented by various social agents as the ultimate societal and educational goal (for instance, see Zoniou-Sideri 2000a regarding the Greek context of the late nineties).

Therefore, while the issue of defining the true meaning and actual purpose of the ‘inclusive ideal’ is profoundly problematic, what invites our attention is a constantly developing discourse of inclusion and, further yet, the fact that this discourse has reached today (at least within the contexts which inform the present study) an unprecedented, if contested, authoritative status. However, this latter contention calls for a caveat: the reference here is to a discourse of inclusion that is not unified and which, as we saw already, may not ultimately be deemed to take

equity and democracy as its starting points. The definitions of inclusion that constitute this discourse and the concepts of inclusion that may be deployed to account for its politics do not, as we shall see, always share the same content or purpose.

2.1.2 The hegemony of inclusion: Language, power and the social significance of discourse

Having clarified the discursive character of inclusion, the ensuing discussion returns to the initial argument regarding its dominant status in contemporary educational and social policy. It is important to note that this argument must not be construed as positing that inclusion has achieved supreme dominance over other discourses which have effectively become obsolete after the upsurge of this novel discourse. Rather, it postulates that *today inclusion is part of a range of dominant discourses* which are involved in a continuous process of competition and opposition with other discourses. These powerful, and often conflicting, discourses *co-exist* with the discourse of inclusion in policy making contexts and in terms of education ideals and practices, constantly competing for dominance over one another.

As Gillian Fulcher (1989) has argued, the critical examination of these competing discourses is crucial in disability theory, policy and practice. In all facets of social life, different discourses are deployed by diverse social actors with antagonistic agendas and, in turn, these discourses shape the social institutions which are responsible for the decision-making processes in education and broader society. Focusing on educational policy formulation and implementation, she points out:

“Policy is the product, whether written (laws, reports, regulations), stated or enacted (for example pedagogic practice), of the outcome of political states of play in various arenas. In these arenas there are struggles between contenders of competing objectives, either about objectives or about how to achieve them: in these struggles discourse is employed as tactic and theory.”

(Fulcher 1989:11-12)

From this perspective, Fulcher recognises that policy – and any other educational or social practice – is in essence political, forming part of “struggles to achieve objectives” (op.cit.:259), and emphasises the role of discourse in the development of moral ideas, policies and practices both within and beyond the field of education. Hence, with regard to the ‘arena’ of disability issues, Fulcher’s analytical approach underlines, as Cook and Slee (1999:329) point out, that the critical deconstruction of discourses on disability can expose “the epistemological foundations for the disablement of different identities”, thus “revealing the possibilities for intervention and change”.

This understanding of all aspects of the social plane as sites in which conflicting discourses struggle for dominance – and the focus on deconstructing the content and function of these discourses – inevitably leads to a consideration of power relations, generally within the structuring of what is called ‘organised society’ and more specifically within each society’s formal educational system. Beyond the truism that there is no such thing as a ‘non-social’ use of discourse (Blommaert 2005:4), the main concern here is to investigate the *social significance of discourse* and, with a particular focus on educational discourses, to explore “how discourse can become *a site of meaningful social differences, of conflict and struggle*, and how this results in all kind of social-structural effects” (ibid.; emphasis mine).

The discursive representation of social practices has a significant ideological element, in the sense that such representations produce, reproduce and sustain relations of dominance and submission within a social practice (see Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999:37-38). This conception of discourse as a constitutive force in the construction of unequal power relations draws on Foucault’s theorising of discourse, knowledge, power and their interconnection. According to Foucault (1980:100) “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together”. From this view, the notion of power is seen as embedded in and immanent to any discursive practice. As Felicity Armstrong (2003:60) explains, the Foucauldian framework entails a conceptualisation of power and knowledge as co-articulated and inseparable elements of discourse: “Power is embedded in forms of knowledge which are hegemonically constructed, reconstructed and reinterpreted through discourses which produce meanings, rules and practices”. It is through this pervasive and persuasive

force of hegemonic discourses that, as Foucault maintains, the notion of ‘truth’ is constructed and perpetuated in social life. Foucault conceives ‘truth’ not as an absolute, but rather as an evaluative and negotiated (hence, relative) frame for the organisation of human experience, which is invariably both constructed through and mediated by a discursive process. In his words:

“ ‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A ‘regime’ of truth.”

(Foucault 1980:133)

This Foucauldian conception of ‘truth’ is based firmly on a social constructionist theory of meaning, which also informs the present investigation of the social significance of the inclusive discourse. While physical things and actions exist in the ‘real’, material world regardless of their respective discursive representation, it is only within discourse that they take on meaning and become objects of knowledge (Hall 2001:73). What is more, the linguistic representation of ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ is not neutral, but rather entails a subjective construction, which inevitably echoes “effects of power” (Foucault: op.cit.). Since any discursive practice is conditioned by the specific social configuration in which it is produced, within a stratified society (such as England or Greece) discourses both express and reinforce power differentials among the various social groups. In other words, discourse is integrated into a network of social control and unequal power relations and thus each discursive representation mediates ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ in a distinct way, according to the particular aims and interests of its practitioners (cf. Foucault 1984).

This brief discussion of the social nature of discourse cannot encompass a full account of the various functions of discursive practices and their crucial role in the social production of inequality, power, ideology and authority. For the purposes of this study the focus of our discussion needs to turn to the concept of dominance or more precisely on the present *hegemonic status* of ‘inclusive’ discourses in the field of education.

The concept of ‘hegemony’, introduced into social theory through Gramsci’s analysis of Western capitalism (see Gramsci 1971) and a pervasive term in social and

political science ever since, offers a framework for theorising discourse which is compatible with the aforementioned Foucauldian approach to the term. By ‘hegemony’ Gramsci means a socio-political situation in which a particular social order – i.e. a certain way of life and thought – is dominant, an order in which “one concept of reality is diffused through society in all institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit... all social relations” (Williams 1960:587). Hegemony is thus identified in its ability to maintain the interests of dominant groups within society at the expense of subordinate groups. Hegemony, however, is articulated through a body of social relations and practices which do not necessarily hinge on coercion, but rather entail an element of direction and social control, not necessarily conscious. In other words, instead of relying on naked violence or mere economic power, hegemony is based on – and inevitably embedded within – the authoritative status of dominant discursive formations, i.e. Foucault’s ‘regimes of truth’ mentioned earlier. To be more precise,

“[Hegemony] ...relies on *winning consent* to the prevailing order, by forming an ideological umbrella under which different groups feel as if their concerns are being listened to (hence, rhetoric is essential in this process), but without dominant groups having to give up their leadership of general social tendencies.”

(Apple 1996:15; original emphasis)

This idea lies at the heart of the aforementioned argument on the hegemony of the inclusive discourse. In this view, the contemporary discourse of inclusion is strongly implicated in processes of social control and is systematically employed, both by national governments in various parts of the world and other national or international agencies, to articulate and sustain the interests of dominant groups within society in general and education in particular. In the same vein, the discourse of inclusion can be approached as a ‘regime of truth’. Foucault’s framework, by putting a new spin on the familiar saying ‘knowledge is power’, has highlighted the ability of modern liberal democracies to exercise control on their citizens by the pronouncements of expert discourse which sanction and legitimate particular social attitudes and practices (Cameron et al. 1999:141-142). Accordingly, subjects like ‘disability’, ‘educational needs’ or ‘inclusion’ (and other relevant concepts that constitute the focal points of this thesis) only exist meaningfully within the

discourses about them (cf. Hall 2001) and, hence, any attempt to describe and understand them entails a consideration of their discursive character.

The notion of inclusivity, in particular, has become such a pervasive and multi-dimensional term in current education theory and practice – often encompassing significant ambiguities – that, as Dyson (1999) argues, it would be more appropriate to talk about different ‘inclusions’. While, as will be argued in the ensuing discussion, it would be perhaps more useful – and more consistent with the aforementioned analytical framework – to distinguish different ‘discourses of inclusion’, the main matter of interest at this point is that inclusion is perpetually present in contemporary discussions of educational responses to student diversity. Regardless of the actual content and the contextual meaning the term has in a particular utterance, inclusion seems to hold an inherent positive connotation. Whether in an official policy document, in an academic essay or in a human rights manifesto, it has acquired a certain authority, a specific sense of embodying the ‘truth of the matter’, ‘what’s right’ or ‘what must be done’.

While this characteristic function of inclusion cannot in itself assert the afore-claimed dominance of contemporary inclusive discourses, it constitutes an integral part of what is described here as the hegemony of inclusion. With its normative status, i.e. its ability to set the rules which prescribe specific ways of talking about disability and education, the discourse of inclusion is instrumental in *the manufacture of consent* on social policy in general and on educational practice in particular. In the past the discourse of special education had the ideological function of legitimising the existing sorting practices of the school organisation and the subsequent segregation of students with ‘special educational needs’ (Tomlinson 1982; also see section 1.1.3). The contemporary discourse of inclusion has a similar ideological character. It serves to provide an apparently unified conceptual framework for the development of educational responses to student diversity, which is seemingly met with consent by all the social agents involved.

Hence, disabled people appear to espouse the discourse of inclusion in pursuit of social equity, non-discrimination, and the elimination of all the exclusionary practices which they still endure in their everyday life. Likewise, academics,

educationalists and disability theorists seem to uphold the discourse of inclusion as “a basis of hope” (Barton 2003), i.e. as a means for “the realisation of an inclusive society with the demand for a rights approach as a central component of policy-making” (ibid.:11-12). Finally, government officials and policy makers around the world are gradually adopting ‘the ideal of inclusion’, as it is made evident by the implementation in national and international policy statements of an inclusive vocabulary which is typically embedded in a human rights context. On an international level, for instance, inclusive education has become a key concept in the ‘Education for All’ (EFA) framework of the United Nations (see UNESCO 2000, 2007), which employs a discourse of ‘change in education’ as a means to ensure equal opportunities for all students (see Erten and Savage 2012:221). An equal consideration is afforded to the human rights discourse, as Harpur (2012) maintains, with the ‘United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’ (CRPD) that commenced operation in 2008: “The CRPD goes further than merely restating rights. It creates a new rights discourse, empowers civil society and renders human rights more obtainable for person with disabilities than any time in history” (Harpur 2012:1).

However, the abundance of references to inclusion within contemporary policy statements, the implementation of a human rights vocabulary in administrative discourses and the ostentatious endorsement of the principle of inclusive education in official documents both nationally and internationally (cf. Oliver and Barnes 2010) do not necessarily reflect an actual shift towards the formulation of a truly inclusive education and society. This remark does not of course constitute newfound wisdom. On the contrary, MacLure (2003:5) maintains that the “discursive nature of reality is pretty much an open secret these days, across a broad spectrum of cultural production”, and identifies “a kind of ‘discursive literacy’ at work – an understanding of the rhetorical fabric out of which institutions are built”.

As regards the unavoidably discursive character of educational realities, Barton (2003), when discussing the advancement of inclusive education as a ‘basis of hope’, is also prone to emphasise the pitfalls of inclusion as ‘a discourse of delusion’. In a similar vein, several writers in Greece (for instance, see Soulis 2002:326-328) have pointed out that the language of educational and social inclusion

is currently utilised in governmental discourses to sanction policies and practices that reinforce discriminations against disabled people and serve to sustain the socio-cultural constructions that support the existing exclusionary social reality. In reference to the British political context, F. Armstrong (2002:54) argues that the inclusion discourse is being systematically deployed to mask exclusionary and discriminatory educational policy and practice.

Similarly, discussing the agenda of international movements, Miles and Singal (2010:5) contend that, despite the ambitious inclusive vocabulary of the 'Education for All' (EFA) UN framework, "the rhetoric of 'all' has overlooked the issue of disability and failed to reach the poorest and more disadvantaged children". As Slee (2011:153) points out, "inclusive education has been popularized and adopted as a global organizing motif". However, "while *Education for all* as championed by UNESCO has received endorsement, the terms of this education for all remain *deliberately ambiguous*" (ibid.; my emphasis). In the same global context, Nguyen (2012) highlights the interplay of discourses in the struggles of competing social actors to achieve objectives – reminding us of Fulcher's (1989) analytical model. As he argues (Nguyen 2012:350), the discourse of inclusion employed by EFA is deeply ingrained in the hegemonic struggles "that policy-makers construct as a modern technology of control to win the consent of subordinate groups". Located within "the broader realm of new capitalism", Nguyen (op.cit.) continues, this 'inclusive' discourse "represents a hegemonic strategy to exercise the relations of power through the humanistic project of *Education for All* that it proclaims".

In the following pages this thesis will probe into the contingencies of current educational policies and practices (drawing mainly upon the relevant English literature) in its attempt to investigate how the elusive concept of inclusion can encompass a wide range of contextual and ideological meanings in the discourse of policy-makers, educationalists, theorists and activists, thus having the ability to appear simultaneously as the central motif in the distinct or even antithetical agendas of these social agents. At this point, however, the focus is placed elsewhere.

The foregoing discussion attempted to substantiate the hegemony of the inclusive discourse in the contemporary educational policy and practice. Regardless

of the divergent conceptions of what inclusion actually is, the omnipresent banner of inclusion seems indeed to function as “an ideological umbrella” – as Apple (1996:15) phrased it – under which the rights of disabled people (and other social minorities) are purportedly safeguarded. In the field of education, this typical understanding of inclusion as the only alternative for the wellbeing of marginalised social groups is translated into an existing impetus for inclusive education, which often seems to entail a straightforwardly positive appraisal of inclusivity without much deliberation on what the term really stands for or what its aims are. To employ Foucault’s terminology, the dominant rhetoric of inclusion appears to have created a new ‘regime of truth’, which frames the identity and experience of disabled people in a specific way.

As Foucault (1980) has argued, the generation and circulation of any dominant discursive formation is neither accidental nor neutral. It aims at winning consent to the prevailing order and functions as an instrument of social control. Still, he points out (*ibid.*) that discourses do not simply act to support the interests of dominant groups within society. A discourse of social oppression can be transformed to a discourse of resistance. Remember that this chapter’s opening paragraphs argued that, despite the common ‘hegemony of inclusion’ both within and across national educational systems, the struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses in all aspects of social life is continuous and unresolved.

A closer look to the specificities of a given social context reveals that intra-national inclusive discourses retain a relatively different authoritative status. The exact workings of inclusion as a discursive practice and how it can be used by different social agents both for oppression and for subversion will be discussed extensively at a later point. At this point, however, having argued for a conceptualisation of inclusion as hegemonic discourse, the following section will look into another important concept in the design of the present study: the notion of paradigm.

2.2 The discourse of inclusive education: Towards a shift of paradigm?

How is this apparent domination of inclusive discourse articulated and sustained? One of the most significant implications of Gramsci's idea of hegemony was, as we saw, the non-coercive imposition of ideas and practices. Such a move implies a negotiation between dominant and dominated groups and languages, which makes it difficult to establish a form of domination that remains unproblematic and uncontested. In the case of the inclusive discourse, a particular strategy for asserting this domination was the assertion of inclusion as a radical break with the past, which would subvert categories for understanding disability, and especially categories associated with the medicalised and individualist language of SEN.

This idea of radical break in systemic (educational and broader social) responses to disability, as we began to see in the introduction and will further discuss in the next chapters, was first conceptualised as such by disability activists and theorists themselves. In order to fulfil its emancipatory promise, the struggle for inclusion was understood as what we may designate as a *paradigm shift* involving the radical transformation of the established educational and social order as well as the concepts and models deployed in order to sustain this order. When the term 'inclusion' was adopted and appropriated by government and institutional educational programmes, the same idea of radical and comprehensive paradigmatic change was proclaimed. However, as we shall see, this appeal to a paradigm shift, both in Greece and elsewhere, served more to legitimise a conflicting notion of inclusion in which older categories of integration and special education were incorporated, and less to denote a radical change of concepts and practices for approaching disability.

In chapters 5-8 we shall be able to explore the dynamics of these two considerations of the paradigm of inclusion on the basis of our research data for the Greek case. In this context, we shall approach this notion of break by following descriptions of the advent of inclusive education by educationalists, policy makers or disability theorists in terms of paradigm constructs in Greece. Here, however I want to turn to the notion of paradigm and explore its theoretical importance and political implications for the critical appraisal of the discourse of inclusion.

2.2.1 The dual paradigm of inclusion

One particular and very substantial function of the discourse of inclusion in the field of education has been the establishment of what we called ‘inclusion paradigm’, over at least the last fifteen years within a broader Western European context and during the past decade or so within the Greek context. While this paradigm is not limited to educational policy, but expands into the totality of contemporary social, political and economic practices, infiltrating – through the force of discourse – every aspect of our present-day social reality, this section aims specifically at introducing the notion of an ‘*educational* inclusion paradigm’.

First of all, the term ‘paradigm’, a concept derived from theorisations of scientific discourse, calls for some clarification. Derived from the Greek word *paradeigma*, meaning model or example, the term paradigm can refer to any set of units with an overall generic similarity. Broadly speaking, paradigms provide a choice of units for the formation of a signifying whole. For instance, alphabet can be seen as a paradigm, whose units, i.e. letters, can be selected to form meaningful combinations, i.e. written words (see O’Sullivan et al. 1994:216). Accordingly, in the language of scientific research, the term applies to any type of theoretical framework within which theories, laws and generalisations are formulated.

In this sense, what is meant by the use of the term ‘educational inclusion paradigm’ is an understanding of inclusion as a particular framework for the formulation and development of a set of educational policies and practices sharing the common goal of including all students within the mainstream of education. Similarly, the acknowledgment of a paradigm shift towards inclusion in recent educational policy would imply that the old set of assumptions, theoretical constructs and practices, which constituted the paradigm of special education, has been effectively replaced in current educational reality by a radically different set of inclusive alternatives, which ensure optimal development for the objectives of the new inclusive agenda.

However, this broad definition of the term lacks the analytical clarity that is required in order to reduce the noticeable openness of the interpretation of paradigms

in general. What is more, this definition seems to be equally short of the necessary critical perspective that could advance a more challenging account of the specific paradigm under investigation, which would refute the aforementioned simplistic analysis of change and progress in educational policy (cf. Dyson 2001). In order then to move beyond this uncomplicated descriptive definition, we would briefly turn to Thomas Kuhn's seminal work on the concept of paradigms in epistemology.

Kuhn (1962) has argued that scientific knowledge is constructed and classified according to conceptual world-views, i.e. paradigms, consisting of an established set of theoretical and methodological beliefs. These beliefs form the foundation of scientific inquiry in all disciplines, helping the scientist to create paths of investigation, formulate questions, select methods with which to validate theoretical constructs, and to establish meaning. Hence, research is not about discovering the unknown, but, rather, about discovering what is, in a certain sense, known in advance, since it entails a strenuous attempt to force nature into the conceptual boxes supplied by paradigmatic assumptions (typically referred to as 'hypotheses'). Thus, Kuhn's approach differs from the previous definition in that it foregrounds paradigm not as a mere organisational frame for knowledge, but rather as *a constitutive force in the generation of knowledge*. As he explained repeatedly, doing scientific research is essentially like solving a puzzle. They both have rules and predetermined solutions.

Accordingly, in each field of scientific inquiry scientists typically conform to a prevailing paradigm, which is considered as the most effective instrument in analysing data and establishing precise measures of phenomena. Eventually, however, scientific research may generate insoluble problems or anomalies that expose the inadequacies of the prevailing paradigm or even contradict it altogether, despite the fact that within the frame of a paradigm novelty is not actively sought and received assumptions are generally not challenged. The accumulation of anomalies and the persistent failure to solve scientific puzzles according to the rules of the dominant paradigm generate a crisis that can only be resolved by a 'scientific revolution' which effects a paradigm shift, i.e. the replacement of an old paradigm with a new one. It is important also to emphasise that according to Kuhn (op.cit.) paradigms do not build on each other; a new paradigm gains authority by rendering

useless the established assumptions of its predecessor. Hence, the use of the term 'revolution', in order to illustrate that the history of science consists of long periods of conservative 'normal science' interrupted by radical 'paradigm shifts' in which one way of constructing knowledge is replaced by a mutually exclusive paradigm for organising and explaining the same set of data.

As Donmoyer (2006:11) points out, Kuhn's theorising, while originally developed with reference to the history of conceptual change in the physical sciences, has since been appropriated by numerous academic fields and, particularly within educational research, 'paradigm' has become a very popular theoretical construct, especially during the 1970s and 1980's. It is crucial to note here that, lately, several educational researchers have adopted a critical stance towards the persistence of 'paradigm talk' or, in Donmoyer's (1999) words, 'paradigm proliferation' within their scientific field. In this view, the omnipresence of paradigm in discourses that typify educational research can lead to *scientific entrenchment* by generating "hermetically sealed paradigmatic universes" (Donmoyer 2006:29) and thus resulting to communicative breakdowns among scientists seemingly in polar opposition. By the same token (i.e. the use of the term paradigm as a clearly defined and self-sufficient container of 'true knowledge'), other writers maintain that paradigm proliferation can also lead to *epistemic conflation* by subsuming difference into the same through a process of labelling and categorisation (Lather 2006:42), thus absorbing into its normative viewpoint any discerning or subverting theoretical deviations. Accordingly, Donmoyer (op.cit.:25) further argues that, rather than proliferating Kuhn's construct of paradigm, it might be more useful to characterise theoretical differences and methodological variation within the field of educational research in terms of *differing purposes* or *multi-dimensional perspectives*.

The Kuhnian-inspired paradigm talk in which this thesis has engaged is neither uncontested nor unproblematic. The decision to discuss here extensively the notion of paradigm must not be mistaken with an attempt to defend the proliferation of the concept discussed above. In any case, in order to evaluate the significance of paradigm talk in current educational research and decide upon its relative merits or demerits over the 'perspective approach' on variation and conceptual change within a scientific field, there is a number of epistemological and pragmatic reasons that

must be taken into under consideration. Such an endeavour lies beyond the scope of the present discussion. The hypothesis that I wish to test in deploying this category is substantially narrower and relates to the perception of what can be described as paradigmatic shift by social agents. My argument is that a critical evaluation of the form, content and function of contemporary inclusive education as discourse must account for the constitution of inclusion as a paradigm on at least two levels of analysis: a) the emphasis of disability scholars and activists on the need to regard inclusion as a *radical* transformative break with previous educational and social policy and practice regarding disabled students and citizens; and b) the self-presentation of an official governmental discourse of inclusion as also promoting a radical and comprehensive shift from previous discriminator conceptions of disability.

Thus, by considering inclusion as a paradigm the thesis draws attention to *the consistent and emphatic representation of inclusion as a total break with the past* within recent educational discourses and social policy statements including both dominant and counter-discourses. Yet, in uniting these two discourses by means of this proclamation of radical change, the question that arises is how each one of them conceptualises change as such, especially given the fact that disability activists and theorists criticise governmental discourses of inclusion for failing to formulate and implement inclusive policies. In the same vein, another pending concern is how different social groups deploy the idea of paradigmatic change effected by inclusion in the social and political struggle over the definition and practice of inclusive education.

As Nespors (2006:115, my emphasis) maintains, paradigms “can be used both to add complexity and diverse standpoints to inquiry *and* to build reductive boundaries that bleed out difference and obscure alternatives. Such effects emerge in practice”. As it is argued here, in practice the construct of an inclusion paradigm is used by critical discourses in order to unify a struggle for the advancement of equality and inclusion, but is also used in governmental and other official statements to the second effect, namely to obscure the existence of alternative and emancipatory conceptions of inclusion. As Len Barton and Felicity Armstrong point out,

“We have seen how open the language of inclusion is to being colonised by different groups and policies for all kinds of different purposes – many of them invested with values which far from embracing principles of equity and participation, are concerned with narrow notions of achievement and success as measured by attainment targets and underpinned by notions of competition and selection.”

(Barton and Armstrong 2007:3)

It is on grounds of this premise that the thesis will operationalise the notions of paradigm and paradigm shift. Following Kuhn’s theorising, the acknowledgement of a paradigm shift in the contemporary educational contexts underlines the argument that inclusion is discursively represented today as the dominant educational paradigm. In other words, it is often argued (especially in governmental discourses) that inclusion, through a radical process of reconstruction, has superseded the institutional framework of special education, thus constituting today the prevailing educational paradigm for understanding disablement. As Oliver (1996b:29) has described it, “the old individualised and medicalised paradigm [of special education]... has so many anomalies that a new paradigm, or indeed a series of paradigms, is in the process of emerging”. Today, about fifteen years later, the new paradigm is – discursively, at least – established.

Yet, does this mean that modern western societies have been finally transformed into inclusive societies? Do proclamations of paradigmatic shift effected by inclusion entail that the set of assumptions which enabled the development of special education have been effectively eradicated? To what extent do these proclamations attempt the invention of new terms that would overcome the contradictions and anomalies of the medical paradigm? More significantly how do these two appeals to paradigmatic change relate to one another?

A comprehensive response to these questions will be formulated in the following chapters. At the moment my focus is on justifying the importance of the appeal to paradigmatic change within the two fields of the inclusive discourse which compete with one another, governmental statements and the language of disability

theory and activism. The latter discourse has unequivocally designated radical and comprehensive change as the core of the struggle for inclusion. As Barton argues,

“Inclusive education is not merely about providing access into mainstream schools for pupils who have previously been excluded. It is not about closing down an unacceptable system of segregated provision and dumping those students in an unchanged mainstream system. Existing school systems in terms of physical factors, curriculum aspects, teaching expectations and styles, leadership roles, will have to change. This is because inclusive education is about the participation of *all* children and young people and the removal of *all* forms of exclusionary practice”.

(Barton 1998a: 84-85)

On the other side of this enterprise we encounter what Roger Slee (1999:127, my emphasis) has criticised as “an *assimilationist* agenda described in a language of inclusion,” wherein predominantly unchanged practices are merely described in new and politically appealing terms – especially the term ‘inclusion’. Inclusion, Slee goes on, is in fact practised in traditional ways by those who endorsed exclusion. The aim of this enterprise is to have ‘different’ children fit in a school that remains unaltered or changes minimally and without disturbing the educational equilibrium. Yet, this is assimilation, since “inclusive education ought to suggest a process of cultural reconstruction” (ibid.).

While Slee’s critique continues to be pertinent, and is especially relevant to a wide range of appeals to inclusion in Greece, it raises the question of whether the exclusionist practices are merely hidden behind an inclusive language, or whether the assimilationist agenda – or, as we shall see, the persistence of a logic of segregated education – is now inscribed into the official discourse of inclusion, thus rendering this discourse inconsistent, self-contradictory and ultimately unable to convincingly assert a break with the past. While Slee is right in maintaining that state-education systems retain their disabling nature, it is also true that the discourse of inclusion deployed in this context has not (adequately) challenged the set of assumptions which defined the paradigm of special education. In other words, appeals to the

inclusion framework have been so far ineffective in organising knowledge production in a way that promotes a radical change in education and society.

As Slee himself argues, in a recent discussion of the ‘absorption’ of the inclusion discourse into the mainstream of contemporary educational theory and practice, “inclusive education has become what Edward Said describes as a travelling theory” (Slee 2011:153); that is, a theory that has travelled to other times and situations and in the process has lost some of its original power and rebelliousness (Said 2000, cited in Slee 2011:64). In its “movement across time and space”, Slee (op.cit:153) goes on, inclusive education has lost its “original insurrectionary force” and has become “tamed and domesticated”.

While it is one of the main objectives of my thesis to investigate this contention, at this point this inconclusive remark has another purpose. In parallel with the recognition that truth and reality are mediated by discursive practice, the view that the inclusion paradigm is an evaluative frame for the organisation of human knowledge serves to challenge both the presumed neutrality of inclusion discourses and the apparent ‘righteousness’ of the notion of inclusion which is so prominent in the human rights approach to disability. To put the same issue in different terms, what is at stake in the analysis of the different discourses of inclusion is not only whether they are more or less effectively implemented in practice, but also whether the meaning attributed to inclusion acts to challenge the special education paradigm and reorganise our knowledge and practice in radically new terms promoting the equal participation of all students in the educational process.

Such a question does not invite straightforward answers. Instead it invites us to explore the confrontation of different discourses of inclusion in terms of their conflict over ‘radical’ change of meaning. From this view, it is useful to note how theoretical notions that we used up to this point account for this confrontation as one between domination and resistance. Foucault’s notion of discourse signifies both discourses of social oppression and discourses of resistance. Likewise Gramsci’s concept of hegemony allows for the presence of counter-hegemony, while Kuhn’s analysis of paradigms and paradigm shifts is characterised by the same dynamic conception of social life. Aiming to exploit further this idea, the following sections

will turn to the issue of change and transition in the establishment of the domination of the inclusive paradigm, focusing on shifts that do not constitute a linear history of improvement, but, rather the history of conflicts over the meaning of the term and the direction of change.

2.3 Conflicts in the history and design of inclusive education

2.3.1 Establishing the inclusive paradigm: A history of progress?

Even though the development of inclusive education in modern western societies has not followed a linear and parallel progression, the dominance of the inclusive discourse was instrumental in establishing the inclusive paradigm as, what has come to be seen by many, the single authoritative educational and social framework for disability issues. Particularly within the field of education, the ideal of ‘inclusion for all’ (as presented for instance in Ainscow 1995) has not only supported the rhetoric of inclusive education over at least the past decade, but has also strengthened a largely optimistic stance towards the history of special education.

To be more precise, the idea that “the passing of time is synonymous with ‘progress’ or improvement in the human condition” (Armstrong, F. 2003:54) epitomises the history of education that is embedded in or sanctioned by the dominant educational paradigms worldwide, despite the relatively different authoritative status of national education discourses. As Dyson (2001:24) points out, this viewpoint – premised on the idea of stable and uninterrupted improvement – foregrounds the scientific progress in the understanding of children’s difficulties, the technical progress in formulating responses to those difficulties, the moral progress in dominant attitudes to difficulty, and socio-political progress regarding the will to advance change. Hence, according to this view, the past is a time “when things were done less well than they are now, or, indeed, a time when entirely the wrong things were done” (Dyson op.cit.), since practice and policy in special education have significantly improved over time. As a result, it is further argued, in late modern societies, education systems are gradually becoming more inclusive, barriers to

learning are progressively being removed and thus everyday more children are successfully included – educationally and socially – into the mainstream.

Although this view is by no means limited to the field of educational policy and practice, but rather holds specific ideological functions within the wider socio-political discourses that surround contemporary educational policy, the myth of ‘stable historical progress’ is a particularly prominent feature of governmental discourses on social and educational inclusion. For instance, in 2004 the English government’s ‘Strategy for SEN’ ostentatiously asserted that “(w)e have never been so well placed to deliver such a wide-ranging strategy to transform the lives and life chances of these children” (DfES 2004:8). In a similar vein and in exactly the same year, the Greek minister of Education Marieta Giannakou mentioned in an interview that “despite the problems of the past” Greek education is now “facing present challenges more effectively” and is moving steadily towards “a better future for all students” (from the newspaper *Kathimerini*, 17/5/2004).

However, by celebrating the achievement of inclusion, advocates of this historical account suppress the fact that contemporary ‘advancements’ in ethics, science, legislation and educational institutions need to be evaluated against a wider political and social framework, which may not always accommodate the diverse needs of all disabled people. As Derrick Armstrong (2005:146-147) points out, the statistics suggest that in practice very little has changed within English education since 1978, when the Warnock Report (see DES 1978) first advocated the movement toward a more inclusive system. In the same vein, Oliver and Barnes (2010:547) argue that, despite the emergence of disability studies and its influence in recent years on national and international educational and social policy, “[i]t is evident, however, that the impact of these developments has been only marginal”. As they aptly comment (op.cit.:556), “whilst the foundations for meaningful change have clearly been made, progress has been limited and the reality of an inclusive society seems as far away as ever”. Discussing the current UK educational policy context, Len Barton (2012) paints a similar picture which problematises the narrative of the history of constant progress:

“[I]n England we are now witnessing a backlash against inclusive thinking and practices with support coming from government, academics,

representatives of residential segregated provision, teacher union representatives, parents and the tabloid press. Various arguments are being presented in support of these criticisms against full inclusion, including those who call for the importance of a continuum of provision in which special education is seen as essential; the call for ‘reasonable inclusion’ in contrast to what is described as ‘full inclusion’; the lack of expertise and resources within mainstream schools; finally, priority being given to the pursuit of excellence and high academic standards based on the centrality of competition and selection.”

(Barton 2012:3-4)

The current “contentious nature of the question of inclusive education” (Barton op.cit.:4) and the recent policy changes that step back from the advancements of inclusive pedagogy are not limited within the British context. Similarly, in Greece, Zoniou-Sideri (2005) argues that the progress of inclusive initiatives, which seemed to gain momentum in the turn of the century with the educational reform of 2000 (see Law 2817/2000), was counteracted in practice by the persistence and expansion of a national education system whose form and structure “promote the segregation not only of disabled students, but also of any student who deviates even slightly from its rigid norms”. Indeed, as Lampropoulou (2008) maintains, subsequent legislation on Greek special education (see the currently active Law 3699/2008) instead of expanding the scope of inclusive education – as one would expect following the reasoning of a history of progress – relegated inclusion to a marginal concern for the national system of education and postulated an administrative framework for special education that places today even greater limits than the previous legislation on who can be included in mainstream schooling. [We will discuss extensively the Greek policy context in the relevant chapters, i.e. Ch. 5 & 6]

What is more, this optimistic view of continuous progress seems to presume that inclusion is invariably beneficial, while – as Levitas (1998:187; my emphasis) aptly comments – “beyond the question of who is included and on what terms lies the question of *what they are included in*”. Undeniably, the movement for inclusion has had an impact both on the educational agendas of international organisations and,

in various countries, on how national systems of education respond to student diversity (cf. Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou 2010: Section 2). However, as D. Armstrong et al. (2011:37) comment, “in many cases inclusion has been reduced mainly to a change of language rather than of practice, and the more the language of inclusion is used in practice the more evasive it becomes”.

In order, then, to resolve the myth of ‘stable historical progress’, a critical approach to the historical production of educational responses to student diversity is needed. As Dyson (2001) notices, in here lies the risk of adopting a totally contrasting “*pessimistic view*”, which focuses exclusively on the ways in which vested interests in the education system and beyond are bound to subvert any progress towards more liberal practices and forms of provision. In this light, history becomes a “struggle for inclusive education” between liberal/radical forces and conservative institutions representing the current inequitable system, while the pessimism stems from a perception of the overpowering strength of the latter, which entails that change is always, in a sense, illusory (ibid.:24-25).

Arguably, this perspective assumes a self-critical stance that is absent from the optimistic view. Yet, both positions tend to define inclusion as a self-sufficient educational goal; not a means to an end, but rather an end-product in its own right, which is somehow isolated from its broader social and political context. Furthermore, it is somehow misleading to view the resilience of special education as the result of a self-perpetuating and presumably irresolvable struggle between ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ forces. As Apple (2005:271-272) points out, while it is important not to underestimate that education is “a site for struggle and compromise”, the matter of inclusive education or social inclusion cannot be reduced to being only about the economy or the struggle between dominant and subordinate social classes.

While such struggles have played a key role in promoting change, one cannot ignore the fact that, in the present situation, the ideal of inclusion has become part of the range of dominant discourses in the social arena of educational practice and has been integrated – even if only as discursive theory and tactic (cf. Fulcher 1989) – into the economic and social policy agendas of both ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’

governments world-wide (see Apple 2005; Armstrong, D. 2005; Nguyen 2010). One should therefore investigate how this ideal has been defined by the interplay of both conservative and liberal attitudes; how inclusion is neither free from vested interests and politics, nor devoid of the potential for advancing further change in education.

Resonating this perspective on the duality of inclusion, Richardson and Powell (2011) detect *continuing paradoxes* in the historical development of special education and the recent prominence of its inclusive alternatives. Instead of adhering to the linear narrative espoused by the idea of uninterrupted progress from exclusive to progressively more inclusive systems of education, they identify a “*simultaneous rise and co-existence of segregation and inclusion*” (op.cit.:206; original emphasis), which accounts for the contemporary paradoxes of inclusion. Using cross-national statistics and data from several Western European countries and the US, Richardson and Powell (2011:Ch.6) document that, despite the abundant rhetoric about ‘equity reform’ and ‘inclusive restructuring’, today an ever-larger proportion of students are being diagnosed as ‘having special needs’. As a result, they go on, over the past decades “international calls for inclusive education and the national and local movements needed to advocate for and implement such restructured schooling” have led in many cases not to ‘more inclusion’ but to “increases in the proportion of students schooled in segregated settings” (Richardson and Powell 2011:205).

In this respect, the acknowledgement of the non-linear history of special education and of the paradoxes associated with the rise of inclusive education point not so much to the ‘progress of’ or ‘failure to advance’ the inclusive ideal, as to the dilemmas, conflicts and contradictions that are inscribed in and articulated by the ideology and practice of inclusion. Since education is “one of the major arenas in which resources, power, and ideology specific to policy, finance, curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation in education are worked through” (Apple 2005:272), both the structure and the objectives of inclusion are constantly negotiated by the social agents at play; and, as the following sections will argue, inclusion – as educational policy, discursive practice or scientific paradigm – is a multi-dimensional and highly contested construct.

2.3.2 From inclusion to 'inclusions': Focusing on conflicts in education

As we discussed, the paradigm shift from special to inclusive education was not as definite and unambiguous as it is often described, particularly in governmental educational discourses. Moreover, we examined the argument that, although inclusion is discursively represented as an explicit aim of official educational policy in modern western societies, there is no unequivocal perception of what inclusive education entails as regards both its design and its wider socio-political objectives. This section will attempt to substantiate that within the seemingly uniform framework of contemporary inclusion-oriented education co-exist distinct or, possibly, *antithetical* conceptions of inclusion, which ultimately pertain to contrasting educational practices, as each one is based on a different understanding of the aims and function of education, and therefore promotes an alternative educational model. Furthermore, the differences that arise from this inherent antinomy in the foundation of inclusive education are not only technical in character, e.g. curricular differentiation, enhanced access to teaching facilities, etc. They also pose painstaking dilemmas of a social, political and ethical nature.

This does not entail a positivistic dichotomy between theoretical constructs and existing practice or, in other words, between the 'ideal of inclusion' and the 'reality of inclusion'. As Thomas and Loxley (2001) point out, analysts tend to separate policy formulation from policy implementation, since policies can be subjected to a diverse set of interpretations or re-evaluation by their practitioners, resulting to a variety of initiatives that are not always in resonance. However, this practical distinction does not imply that there is "a distinct and observable cut-off point between the two activities" (ibid.:98). Educational policy, inclusive or not, needs to be understood as a continual process, since formulation and implementation take place at all levels of an educational system. Furthermore, as Fulcher (1989) notes, the discrepancies observed between policy and practice cannot simply be seen as a technical issue. Traditional distinctions invoked between theory and practice – or rhetoric and action, policy and implementation – are problematic, according to Fulcher (op.cit.:11-12) in that they typically attempt to understand failures in an apolitical context, thus conveying little of the reality of the political struggle involved in both formulating and implementing policy. Similarly, the answer to the

complex question of what the humanitarian ideal of an inclusive educational and social system truly signifies cannot be pursued in a theoretical vacuum, isolated from the tangible socio-political reality that surrounds issues of inclusion (cf. Dyson and Millward 2000:157).

Accordingly, it is argued that the apparent consensus that surrounds inclusion consists in fact of a broad spectrum of differing interpretations of the concept. Like any other social institution, the framework of educational provision is effected by the actions of social agents who maintain their own agendas and, consequently, adopt competing roles. Accordingly, in the field of education, the present-day antagonistic social climate is translated into conflicting conceptual frameworks and contrasting practices in the formulation of educational responses to student diversity both in Greece and globally. Hence, in order to investigate the generic tensions in the design of social and educational inclusion, the ensuing discussion aims at identifying specific points of divergence. These issues will be revisited in the ensuing chapters with more attention to their specific manifestation in the Greek educational discourses. Yet, it is important at this point to introduce the most general frames and categories through which we will subsequently approach discrepancies and contradictions in educational policies and practices that are labelled as 'inclusive'.

i) Setting a broader agenda for inclusion: Between 'inclusive' education and social exclusion

Social exclusion has been a familiar term in the discourse of researchers and policy makers in the mainland of Europe for some time (Parsons 1999:37). In the last fifteen years or so, it has also found its way into British political debates and educational policies (see Leney 1999:33-34). In the UK, the term came to the fore with the setting up of the "Social Exclusion Unit" in 1997 and, subsequently, it became a major element of the New Labour government's agenda. In the official presentation of British social policy, social exclusion was viewed as a dynamic and multi-dimensional framework that relates the problems associated with poverty, disadvantage and disaffection to the process of marginalisation from the mainstream of society (see Oppenheim 1998; DfEE 1999). Consequently, the process of social inclusion involves access to employment, education, training and improved standards of living for all (Leney 1999:36). In fact, a New Labour inclusive policy document,

'Strategy for SEN' (DfES 2004), contextualised inclusive schooling within the broader policy outline for disadvantaged children presented in the Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' (DfES 2003), thus offering "the most complete articulation of inclusive education policy within New Labour's wider ideological vision of the inclusive society" (Armstrong, D. 2005:144).

Similarly, the commitment to tackle social exclusion gained visibility in the social policy agenda of European Union. The 'Joint Report on Social Inclusion' (European Commission 2002) was the first policy document on poverty and social inclusion that was endorsed by the EU. This signified a considerable shift in policy emphasis, as the report emphasised that EU's policy "should no longer confine itself to labour market issues but should tackle poverty and social exclusion in all its manifestations" (Middleton et al. 2003:1), focusing among others on low education level, disability, and ethnicity (European Commission 2002:24-26). In Greece specifically, the vocabulary of social exclusion has been a fairly recent addition in the discourse of Greek politicians, prompted substantially by the need to effectively regulate immigration. In this context, as Apospori (2003:87-88) maintains, the emergence of new forms of poverty, the weakening of the primary type of relationships (a traditional safety net for several unprivileged social groups such as unemployed youth or disabled people) along with the long-standing issue of fragmented or inefficient social support services, have brought the social inclusion debate to the fore of educational and social policy debates.

This wider perspective brought together forms of exclusions arising from the categorisation of students as having 'special needs' with other forms of direct or indirect discrimination and exclusion, as for instance those attributed to unruly behaviour, race, social class or religion (Booth 1995:101-102), thus foregrounding the significance of the specific social context for any educational process. From this view, inclusive schools, apart from responding effectively to the diversity of students' interests and abilities, must also provide the academic skills and enable the social preconditions required for the full inclusion of all students in the social life of the community. Accordingly, the pedagogies of inclusion must be concerned with the "personal well being and social cohesion as well as economic success" of all students (Hayton 1999:5). For excluded children, the aim of active and meaningful

engagement in the mainstream of society should be enriched by the experience of schooling, but by no means limited within the classroom. Hence, inclusive education involves a paradigmatic shift that is defined by radical educational and political change. As Barton has put it:

“Inclusive education is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end, that of establishing an inclusive society. Thus the notion of inclusivity is a radical one in that it places the welfare of *all* citizens at the centre of consideration.”

(Barton 1998b:84; original emphasis)

However, the abundance of references to social inclusion within recent policy statements and the implementation of a human rights vocabulary in governmental discourses do not always reflect the actual response to diversity that is adopted. As regards disabled people in particular, Hughes (2002:72) aptly comments that “although ‘trendy’ doctrines of social inclusion have acquired some of the rhetoric of the social model of disability, there is no real evidence that the exclusion experienced by disabled people has been mitigated in any fundamental way”. This weakness to effectuate tangible social change is characterised, according to Armstrong et al. (2011:37), by the “theoretical vacuum” in which inclusive education sits today and by the “lack of critical engagement with the realities of education and schools that the early movement for inclusive education had promised”.

Especially in the past few years, the “pragmatic watering-down of the underlying idealism of inclusion” (ibid.) within various national settings has limited the transformative potential of inclusion as both an educational and social practice. With regard to the British policy context, for instance, we have already referred to Barton’s argument about the current “backlash against inclusive thinking and practices” (Barton 2012:3). In the same vein and with similar wording, Rieser (2011:160) has argued that in the UK there has been in recent years “a backlash against the presumption of inclusion as a desirable and achievable goal”. In fact, Rieser continues, more recently the British government “has been putting forward the view that one can have ‘inclusion’ in special schools” (ibid.) Describing the present political situation, Rieser (ibid.) notes that “the Tory party is committed to challenging ‘ideological inclusion’, building more special schools and introducing

‘choice’ with vouchers which will further undermine inclusive education (Conservative Party 2010)”.

It is true that the emergence of the social inclusion debate has influenced social and educational policy developments, within the EU and elsewhere. Yet, as we see, the advancement of an inclusive society is far from being unambiguous. On the one hand, in the discourse of social theorists and disability activists the foregrounding of social exclusion has aimed to shift the responsibility for poverty, alienation and underachievement from particular individuals to society itself (see Oliver 1990), while simultaneously underlining the significance of policy responses to social exclusion in all aspects of community life. In this view, the question for inclusive education, as is posited by theorists and disability activists, is to operationalise the concept of social inclusion not in a way that enables disabled students, or other social minorities, to find a place in a basically unaltered exclusionary society, but in a way that reconstructs social norms, values and structures towards a more inclusive social reality.

On the other side, as Levitas (1998:191) points out, governmental discourses typically promote an understanding of social inclusion as an aspect of social cohesion, rather than of economic and social equality. Though Levitas refers primarily to the British political reality, her observation is also valid for the broader context of this discussion. Strategic planning at national and inter-national government level has emphasised – even if only in theory at certain occasions – the crucial role of education in tackling social exclusion (see Cooper et al. 2000:11-12). However, the notion of social inclusion that Levitas criticises does not promote an egalitarian society. Rather, it sustains a sense of interdependency among the different social groups within a stratified society and points towards the pragmatic gain for society by the incorporation of marginalised social groups into the mainstream.

Several researchers (see Hills 2002:227 and *passim*) maintain that this utilitarian interpretation of social inclusion may also generate contradictory ways of construing inclusion and its associated task in regard to disadvantaged young learners. While the broader agenda of social inclusion provides policy makers and practitioners with a more comprehensive framework in their effort to formulate

effective inclusive practices (cf. Parsons 1999:35-50), at the same time, there can be an underlying friction between the two approaches. As Dyson states,

“whilst the inclusion agenda focuses on presence and participation, social inclusion focuses much more on educational outcomes and, particularly, on the re-engagement of marginalised groups with learning, whether or not that engagement takes place in the context of the ‘common’ classroom, school and curriculum”.

(Dyson 2001:27; original emphasis)

From this view, while inclusion is a *process-oriented* approach to the education of pupils typically described as ‘having SEN’, social inclusion constitutes a move towards a *product-centred* pedagogy. If one retains a critical stance, it is possible to identify the fault lines in this product-oriented perspective. There is the imminent risk of constructing “a distinctly narrow and instrumental view of education” (Dyson 2001:28), a view that delimits the pedagogy of inclusion within the objectives of acquiring essential skills and surviving in a competitive society, and that disregards the inclusive aim of socio-cultural reconstitution. Yet, if education is divorced from its transformative potential, then the perpetuation of social exclusion seems inevitable.

This inconsistency of a notional commitment to inclusion through a product-oriented pedagogy that can be interpreted as antithetical to inclusion is one of the main tensions in the design of contemporary inclusive education. How the Greek educational system attempts to resolve this tension will be examined in chapters 5-8. At this point, however, the focus must be placed on a dilemma that lies at the heart of the social inclusion debate; namely, the issue of what constitutes effective schooling.

ii) ‘School effectiveness’, ‘achievement’ and the ‘crusade for standards’

One of the main objectives of inclusive educational policy is the enablement of mainstream schools to respond effectively to the diversity of students’ educational needs. Accordingly, the equalisation of opportunities for disabled children largely depends on funding policies and financial support. For this reason, a common denominator in the discourse of disability movements worldwide is that a government’s notional commitment to inclusion must be supported by additional

resources that will enable schools to deliver the curriculum to all students, i.e. spatial adjustments and school restructuring to increase physical accessibility to school premises, and within-class specialist support. Likewise, contemporary educational research has underlined the significance of school improvement for the implementation of inclusive practices (Mortimore and Whitty 1999:83), focusing on schools' responsibility for the development of the maximum educational and social potential of *all* young learners (cf. Slee et al. 1998).

Consequently, the notion of *school effectiveness* has been highlighted in the discourse of inclusive education (see Florian 1998:18), resulting in an increasing pressure for some sort of assessment that can provide evidence of a school's effective policy and practice. At a cross-national level, the placing of educational inclusion within the wider policy framework against social exclusion has emphasised that effective schooling entails, alongside the acquisition of both academic and social skills, the development of within-school strategies that will facilitate the unproblematic transition of disadvantaged students to adulthood and that will provide equal opportunities to all members of the student population (cf. European Commission 2002). What is more, educational research has underlined that equality of opportunity for all students is not simply about their access to mainstream schools, but also means the lowering of barriers to their participation in further/higher education, the labour market and all other aspects of social life (see Lloyd 2008). There is, however, considerable divergence between disability theorists and policy-makers both on what the concept of equal opportunity entails and on how education can effectively produce this end-result.

In other words, the modern discourse of policy-makers emphasises the importance of rooting the experience of schooling in the realities of the outside world, thus favouring a pedagogic focus on practical or 'useful' (academically speaking) quantifiable educational outcomes. In the UK, the 'rhetoric of excellence' lay at the heart of the New Labour's vision of inclusion, promoting a model of education according to which all children, regardless of physical and social disadvantages, are both entitled to high quality educational provision and expected to reach high academic standards (see DfEE 1997a; DfEE 1997b; DfES 2003). Thus, in this policy context, school effectiveness was defined by the abolition of 'low

achievement' and the success of inclusive education was measured by its ability to raise standards for students with disability. It is within this British policy context that Lloyd (2008:227) describes a significant policy development: the government's move "from assertions that the route to an equal educational opportunity for children with SEN is the removal of barriers to participation (DfEE, 1997[a]) to the more recent idea that the 'right to a good education' (DfES, 2004) will be assured by removing barriers to achievement". This administrative strategy, Lloyd (op.cit.:234) argues, "presents a simplistic view of inclusion that fails to recognize its problematic and controversial nature". As she comments,

"There is nothing in the strategy that challenges the mainstream of schooling to change in order to become accessible to all children, irrespective of ability, by expanding and changing the curriculum or developing and broadening what is meant by success and achievement or altering the way in which they are measured."

(Lloyd 2008:234)

Drawing on the same UK policy context, Maguire et al. (2011:4) discuss the pressure on the ideals of inclusion generated by the efforts of recent UK governments to reshape educational policy "in response to the imagined necessities of global economic imperatives, the knowledge economy and the shrill voice of alleged labour-market requirements". Consequently, "schools have had to give primary attention to the 'raising standards' agenda", while issues of equity, social justice and the moral imperatives of inclusion were progressively sidelined (ibid.).

However, these recent policy developments were not exclusive to the British context. In a similar vein, the EU's directives introduced a language of opportunity and competition into education. Highlighting the current demands of the contemporary knowledge-based economy for a workforce with a high level of skills, recent EU social policy statements (as, for instance, the ones signed at the Nice European Council, Dec. 2000) argue that the role of education must change in order to equip students for a place in a competitive job market.

In contrast, educationalists and disability theorists argue that there is an inherent tension in trying to create socially inclusive schools in a climate of

effectiveness. They underline that social inclusion is a long-term objective that goes well beyond the boundaries of educational institutions, and criticise the aforementioned conceptualisation of school effectiveness for its limited focus on academic excellence and the encouragement of a competitive classroom environment. As Mittler aptly asks, “when, as the government proclaims, excellence is the norm and there is zero tolerance for failure and for excuses, what happens to those who are not able to reach the targets?” (Mittler 2000:174). In this view, the re-engineering of school organisation with the aim to tackle social exclusion sometimes rests uneasily with the current emphasis on educational outcomes that can act as a reinforcement of an individualised and opportunistic attitude in the school ethos.

For this reason, Lunt and Norwich (1999) maintain that effectiveness phenomena must be carefully identified. In their view, school effectiveness has to be considered in terms of “schools’ capabilities to promote learning in different areas of learning, for different groups of students and for different time periods” (ibid.:17). Particularly within the agenda of social inclusion, the experience of schooling involves more than solely the provision of academic knowledge and practical skills. In this context, effective schools are those that respond effectively to diversity. Accordingly, the notion of school effectiveness integrates the acquisition of academic skills alongside the development of a healthy emotional and social conduct for all their students (see Booth and Ainscow 1998:240). This view foregrounds the restrictions of access to the capabilities essential to social inclusion in adult life which are imposed from early childhood through standards-driven educational institutions. As Evans et al. (2002:8) point out, this exclusionary process is reflected in any conceptualisation of effective education which downplays significantly the “psychological and social resources underpinning the *social* and *cultural capital* components of human development” (original emphasis) in favour of a more utilitarian educational purpose.

In the light of this discussion, it becomes evident that there is no uniform definition of ‘effective schooling’ or a single accepted formula for education to work at developing positive alternatives to exclusion. Disability theorists and educationalists have expressed the fear that “the excessive emphasis on performance standards, achievement benchmarks, competition, selection, cognitive abilities and

market driven policies will put at risk a larger number of students with or without impairments” (Vlachou 2004:7). Moreover, they have forwarded a critique that is centred around “the failure of policy and legislation concerning inclusion to challenge assumptions and misunderstandings, to define and clarify the underlying conceptual issues, and to address adequately issues of social injustice and equity in the education system, and indeed society itself” (Lloyd 2008:221). It appears, however, that contemporary policy-making has not reached yet an understanding of effective schools as equally attentive to social learning and community values alongside academic achievement and labour market merit for all students. To achieve this, it is necessary – as disability theorists have argued – to retrace the development of inclusion “back to the radical beginnings of the inclusion movement”, so that “we may better understand the potential of this movement as an educational reform project” (Armstrong et al. 2011:38).

The category of effectiveness itself legitimises the role of school in preparing students for an antagonistic society wherein the values of equality and solidarity are effaced, while citizens are only defined in terms of their moving positions within economic, social and cultural hierarchies. Yet a radical break with exclusionist concepts and practices would imply to challenge this notion of antagonism and to deploy the curriculum and the whole context of education in order to transmit to students a wholly different set of values. The designing and implementation of the curriculum as well as the constitution of the broader school ethos and culture, as Armstrong (1998:56) points out, are central to establishing social control and transmitting social and cultural values. The school has a reproductive role: it sustains “differences in class, culture and perceived ability by processes of assessment and selection based on a curriculum which recognises and privileges certain values and forms of knowledge over others”.

2.4 Contests over the inclusive paradigm

2.4.1 Inclusion as a contested concept

The foregoing discussion attempted to identify problems of social and educational policy which expose the enormity of difficulties and dilemmas in the efforts to create a more inclusive society. To that end, it singled out two characteristic parameters of contemporary inclusive education, namely the embedment of educational inclusion within the wider framework of social inclusion and the attempt to formulate policy on inclusion under the wider policy goal of raising the standards and improving the quality of educational provision as measured by specific performance criteria. Although this general analysis adopted a rather wide frame of reference, aiming primarily at a concise introduction to the problematics of policy in education, it has hopefully managed to challenge the presumed consistency of existing inclusive discourses and the apparent consensus on the form and function of the inclusion paradigm.

As it was argued, the current design of inclusion is fraught with conflicts and contradictions. For policy-makers and practitioners in the field of education, these contradictions surface as a series of dilemmas centred on the formulation of a systematic response to difference that is concomitantly sensitive to the individual needs of learners. With regard to disabled students the emergence of the disability movement and the subsequent placement of these dilemmas of difference within a human rights context (at least within the modern western societies) have attempted to establish inclusive education as the predominant response to student diversity. In this view, the exclusion of any student from mainstream schools is a discriminatory practice, leading to their subsequent marginalisation from the mainstream of society in their adult life.

Hence, from this perspective, inclusion encompasses the comprehensive ideal of an egalitarian educational system embedded in a humane, unprejudiced and truly inclusive society (cf. Barton 2001). Likewise, an educational process can be described as effective if it promotes the ideal of social inclusion, i.e. the notion of a

non-discriminating society. This pervasive viewpoint within disability theory and the sociology of education has been criticised as ideological, rhetorical or Utopian. Yet, as Thomas and Loxley (2001:124) maintain, its validity is worth defending, not only on the grounds that the tenets of tolerance, pluralism and equity are “goals to be striven for unapologetically”, but also because “the alternative, namely an education system geared around some menu of specialised and definitely effective pedagogies for different ‘problems’ is one that will seemingly forever elude us”.

This thesis advances the argument that the resolution of these dilemmas in the Greek educational system (and the broader EU context which informs this study) is both necessary and far from being straightforward. Currently, governmental policies seem to invest the terms inclusion and social inclusion with a distinctively different contextual meaning. In the relevant English literature it is evident that for policy-makers in England ‘inclusion’ refers primarily to an educational process aiming at the assimilation of disabled students in the mainstream. This process is typically ratified as a first step in promoting the ‘social inclusion’ of these individuals (typically referred to as ‘students with SEN’), a concept which retains a specific pragmatic orientation, namely that “the great majority of children with SEN will, as adults, contribute economically” (Blunkett 1997:4). This view, in resonance with the overarching EU social and education policy framework, promotes an understanding of social inclusion as an aspect of social cohesion rather than of social equality and seems to associate educational restructuring primarily with the imperative for a better equipped workforce in the present-day competitive job market (cf. Oliver 2001).

From this administrative perspective, effective schooling involves the re-conceptualisation of the educational process in terms set out by an antagonistic and hierarchical social context: evaluation, achievement, antagonism and chances for those who ‘deserve’ them, while – at the same time – it seems that inclusion is being pushed primarily as an inexpensive response to diversity. Yet, in contrast, disability theorists stress the value of opposing this agenda of assimilation, and underline the need for a “challenging engagement with the realities of difference as a field of political struggle” (Arnot et al. 2010:533). This emancipatory agenda can be promoted, as Julie Allan (2010:614) has argued, by refusing to reduce inclusive education to what Barton (2008) called ‘quick slick responses’ by governments, and

by “helping instead to articulate the complex and difficult demands associated with becoming inclusive”.

While inclusivity is the central discursive element in both the official social policy and the disability theory perspectives described above, the term actually evokes two antithetical social ideals; namely the notion of equity – as distinguished from ‘equality of opportunity’ – and that of social cohesion (see Levitas 1998:29-48, 128-158). The former involves a response to diversity that dissociates difference from the construction of social, cultural or political hierarchies. The latter points to an antagonistic society, in which the ideology of inclusion serves to repress the existence of hegemonic and unequal social relations (ibid.:178-179). The recognition of this inherent antinomy within the concept of inclusion is employed here to provide a different understanding of the established prominence of inclusive education.

That is to say, as the foregoing discussion attempted to illustrate, under the seemingly unchallenged and self-explanatory banner of inclusive education one can identify conflicting visions and divergent tendencies that are often mistakenly assumed to co-exist harmoniously. Accordingly, inclusion is understood as a “contested concept” (see Gallie 1962), in the sense that it is permeated by values, thus involving endless disputes about its ‘proper’ meaning and uses. This is not only because the term lacks analytical clarity, but – more importantly – due to its flexibility. In other words, the intangible concept of inclusion has the capability to encompass a wide range of contextual meanings in the discourse of different social agents, such as – among others – policy-makers, educationalists, academics and parents.

Based on the premise that inclusion is a contested concept, the present thesis attempts to approach educational and social inclusion not as an unambiguous imperative, but as a complex process of balancing conflicting aims and priorities (cf. Fulcher 1989). Concomitantly, by foregrounding the contentious nature of the concept, the study aspires to advance a different understanding of the said prominence of inclusive education in Greece (which is the main focus of the study) and elsewhere. This perspective calls for an analytical framework that moves beyond the human rights argument for inclusion and focuses on the constant negotiation in

the context of a concrete socio-political environment, about the true meaning and purpose of the ideal of inclusion.

2.4.2 Inclusive policy and practice as struggle: Competing agendas for inclusion

The recognition that contemporary conceptions of inclusion are fraught with contradictions and inconsistencies hints to the existence of systematic antinomies within the current framework for educational responses to student diversity in Greece and elsewhere. While, as it was argued earlier, inclusion as discourse and paradigm has become popular in contemporary educational and social policy within modern western societies, it is at the same time fragmented and incohesive. The hegemonic discourse of inclusion, as exemplified in the English and broader EU educational policy statements presented in this chapter, is constantly challenged both by residual and emergent alternative discourses (cf. McGuigan 1992:25). Hence, a critical analysis of systematic responses – inclusive or not – to student diversity within an educational system at a national or international level entails, as the foregoing discussion attempted to substantiate, a consideration of power relations, hidden agendas and competing discourses both in education and the broader social spectrum.

In this view, the field of educational policy constitutes a major arena of economic, political and cultural struggle for competing social agents as regards the content and purpose of educational provision as well as larger debates over socio-political hierarchies and transformations (cf. Apple 2005:272). With this in mind, my effort to understand and analyse Greek inclusive policy and practice calls for a close investigation of the discourse and respective agendas of policy makers, theorists and educationalists in Greece, contextualised within the overarching EU social policies and cross-national frameworks for inclusion.

Drawing upon this general introduction to the problematics of policy in inclusive education, the subsequent discussion will focus on the conflicts and contradictions which are at work within the Greek educational system, controlling to a great extent the shape, function and goals of educational (and social) responses to diversity at a national level. This social-constructivist approach on inclusive

education as struggle calls for a shift in the analytical focus from the unambiguous notion of inclusion as a value to the contingencies of inclusion as an educational process entailing the reformulation of pedagogies and institutional structures. In this context, inclusion involves a process of decision-making that conforms to a hierarchy of priorities. Thus, the following chapters will turn to a close examination of this 'hierarchy of priorities' in the current establishment of Greek education, as postulated and implemented by governmental policies, aiming to unveil both the discrepancies between governmental discourse and actual educational policy, and the antithesis between policy-makers on one hand and disabled people, educationalists and disability activists and theorists on the other hand, as regards the aim and function of inclusive education.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOCIAL MODEL FOR DISABILITY RESEARCH & THE STUDY OF DISCOURSE: METHODOLOGICAL PREMISES & LIMITATIONS OF THIS THESIS

3.1 Disability research and the politics of critique

"In our view it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society".

(UPIAS 1976:14)

This thesis follows the social model formulated in the context of disability studies in order to contend that disability, as was maintained by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in its manifesto *Fundamental Principles of Disability* (1976), is a form of social oppression. Disability, as Oliver puts it in his discussion of the UPIAS text quoted above, is a form of oppression that is socially constituted and needs to be resisted (Oliver 1996a:22-29). This claim presupposes a key distinction between impairment and disability, which has been crucial for the methods and orientation of disability research. According to this model, impairment is the "perceived abnormalities of the body and/or the mind, whether real or ascribed", while disability refers to the socially constituted barriers and restrictions imposed upon disabled people (Barnes 2003b:829; see also Oliver 1990).

Put forth in the last few decades, this distinction has shifted the focus of disability studies from individuals to society. As Barnes, Oliver and Barton point out, while the social model recognises the significance of impairment for people's lives, it rejects the consideration of disability as the mere product of individual failings or the experience of a personal tragedy. This model invites us, instead, to look at economic, political, cultural and social barriers, and to seek explanations for the changing character of disability in the organisation and structure of societies. "Rather

than identifying disability as individual limitation, the social model identifies society as a problem, and looks to fundamental political and cultural changes to generate solutions (Barnes, Oliver and Barton 2002:5). As Oliver observes, disability is not to have something wrong with you; it “is something wrong with society” (Oliver 1996a:129).

This forceful contention implied a political responsibility that exceeded the limits of the academy. The social model has set forth an emancipatory agenda that was directed, simultaneously, towards research methods and political activism. Having its roots in social and political movements, this model sought, in turn, to empower those movements by making it possible to identify and challenge restrictions imposed on disabled people by society. As a consequence, research was closely related to politics and the task of understanding disability in the past and present entailed the imperative of changing the future (Campbell & Oliver 1996). Oliver’s term ‘emancipatory disability research’, formulated in 1992 (Oliver 1992), is indicative of a wider debate about the need to consider and, indeed, focus on the ideological underpinnings and the practical implications of disability research. As Barnes observes, the key theme running through the various aspects of the new model is its transformative character and its capacity to empower disabled people:

“In essence, emancipatory disability research is about the empowerment of disabled people through the transformation of the material and social relations of the research production. In contrast to traditional investigative approaches, the emancipatory disability research agenda warrants the generation and production of meaningful and accessible knowledge about the various structures – economic, political, cultural and environmental – that created and sustained the multiple deprivations encountered by the overwhelming majority of disabled people and their families.”

(Barnes 2003a:45)

The ensuing critical accounts of the cultural, social and economic conditions that sustain the oppression of disabled people were not intended to be separated from emancipatory forms of political activism. On the contrary, the researchers that engaged with the social model recognised from the outset that theoretical and

practical challenges to disability need to operate in a continuum, wherein each frame acts to sustain and promote the other. Disabled people themselves, according to Oliver, have pointed out this interconnection in critical accounts of individualistic conceptions of disability. As they approached their segregation in terms of social oppression, they explored how “research has been seen as part of the problem rather than part of the solution” ultimately failing to “improve their material circumstances and quality of life” (Oliver 1992:106). The critique of the individualist model for understanding disability did not simply involve the rejection of languages and politics standing beyond the borders of research activity; what was rather required was a paradigm shift involving the transformation or, often, radical alteration of concepts and methods through which researchers made sense of disability and its role in modern societies.

This quest for new models implied a reflexive move that is central to the methodological framework of this study. To explore the social constitution of disability and its involvement in power structures cannot be advanced from a vantage viewpoint that is politically neutral. As Mercer points out, emancipatory research does not make any claims to neutrality and objectivity, and advances a partisan approach seeking to promote and facilitate the political struggles of disabled people. Moreover, the idea of emancipation involves the reversal of traditional hierarchies between researcher and researched in two, mutually interlinked, ways. It not only advances the active engagement of disabled people with the research process, but also proposes theoretical and conceptual frameworks which challenge the conditions – both material and social – that sustain established hierarchies (Mercer 2002:233). For instance, Val Williams’ recent study *Disability and Discourse* (2012) applies “conversation analysis” to the encounters of people with intellectual disabilities and the other people with whom they interact in order to explore how disabled people formulate their own distinct voice in their own affairs, but also in the context of policy-making issues and in research.

The reflexive move advanced in disability studies raises a number of questions about both the ‘subject’ and the ‘object’ of disability research: Who is to articulate a critique of disability and from which position in the established institutional and social frameworks of inequality and power relations? How is it possible to advance

research in the tension between the rejection of objectivity and the need to criticise the seemingly neutral ideas that sustain social divisions and legitimise inequality? As we saw in chapter 2, disability theorists have used Gramsci's concept of hegemony in order to explore how dominant conceptions and ideas act to reinforce the self-perception of helplessness, marginality and personal tragedy experienced by disabled people. Yet, if the language of disabled people is already appropriated by hegemonic discourses, what is the discursive frame through which they can construct new and reflexive considerations of disability? What is more, how can the researchers ever dissociate themselves from the institutional and material power structures which, in the current context, posit a relation of inequality between them and the research subjects? According to the social model, disability is closely linked to other forms of oppression in modern capitalist societies (Abberley 1987; Oliver 1990; Barnes 1996). But how is it possible to challenge forms of discrimination that affect disabled people in a context wherein other forms of oppression remain largely unaffected?

These questions invite us to begin this methodological discussion by recognising the inescapable limits and limitations of every attempt to challenge a system of power structures and relations from within the borders of this system. This recognition means that this thesis is imbued with a curious paradox. On the one hand, it advocates a politics of change through which discriminatory languages and practices will be eliminated, in the name of a society that takes the ideals of equality and equity (and therefore the accommodation of difference) as its starting point. On the other hand, the thesis puts forth a critique of the notion that has, until now, offered the main framework for challenging segregation in educational institutions, namely inclusion. This critique, as it must be clear by now, is not meant to reject inclusion; nor is it intended simply to oppose the forms of inclusion that have been advanced and established in Greece over the last decade. It is nevertheless intended to argue that these historically specific forms of inclusion do not adequately address the quest for equality; and that appeals to equality made in this context often act to obscure the involvement of the language of inclusion in the constitution of hierarchies, inequality, oppression and power relations. In short, to speak of inclusion, and particularly educational inclusion, is not to resolve the problem of inequality in disability studies.

The inadequacy of the idea of educational inclusion is twofold. At the most immediate level, educational inclusion remains enclosed within a framework of charity and volunteerism or, at best, partial equality – often identified in liberal democracies as ‘equality of opportunity’ – unless it is sustained by a wider social frame of inclusion and (substantive) equality, founded on what we will shortly discuss as a struggle for equity and social justice. The society that excludes and marginalises disabled people will unavoidably cancel all attempts to change their social position through school education. At a different level, inclusion itself is a term that betrays its origin in a context of inequality, insofar as it indicates a certain acceptance of disabled people by the social and political body rather than their full participation in it.

In his discussion of educational inclusion in a neoliberal world James Ryan usefully pointed out that inclusion is inseparable from social justice and the concept of equity: “inclusion and social justice will be achieved when institutions and communities are equitable – that is, fair” (Ryan 2012:9). Equity, however, Ryan goes on, needs to be distinguished from the notion of equality implying “a world where everyone is the same”. A social justice/inclusive perspective not only values diversity and contends that differences among people should be celebrated, rather than quashed, ignored or assimilated; it further contends that equity does not entail treating everyone the same. Such a treatment “will simply extend already existing inequalities” (ibid.). This is the reason why social justice perspectives advocate that

“... individuals and groups ought to be treated according to need; that is, they should be treated equitably. Equitable rather than equal treatment stands the best chance of compensating for existing unequal differences among people.”

(Ryan 2012: 9)

The distinction between the partial equality of neoliberal, capitalist societies and equality founded on equity and social justice leads directly to another distinction between inclusion and participation formulated by the philosopher Alain Badiou. In his view, inclusion presupposes a calculable trajectory which incorporates subjects into existing social and political structures; while participation evokes an unforeseeable trajectory, as it gives full power to define social and political issues to

members of the social body that, up to that point, lacked a position in the socio-political field (Badiou 2005:133). Similarly, Roger Slee (Slee 2011:39-40) draws on the work of Basil Bernstein and the French sociologist Alain Touraine in order to distinguish inclusion from absorption or communitarianisation and explore the danger of the first of these categories becoming a shield for the last two. The discourse of integration, as we began to see already, promoted precisely such an incorporation or absorption of disabled people into schools in the context of which the schools themselves were not challenged. The same danger lies behind forms of inclusion advanced against the background of antagonism and inequality in modern capitalist societies. As Barton (1993:36) points out, “in this world of economic-led decision making, schools will find it difficult not to be involved in the divisive process of exclusion”. This involvement has been traced in the ways in which educational institutions create and selectively transmit knowledge that acts to sustain and reproduce relations of inequality. As Phil Smith argues,

“Knowledge and education are created by and serve the needs of those in powerful, hegemonic and dominating cultural positions, subjugated by the needs of neoliberal capitalism and the so-called free market.”

(Smith 2010:48)

So, in the context of education, inclusion does not straightforwardly result in what we may describe as equality based on equity and substantive participation. Indeed, as we shall see, inclusive educational practices fail to achieve these aims if the structures and relations of power that define what Oliver called the *ethos* of educational institutions remain unchanged and schools only accommodate people with ‘special needs’. While practical changes in the schools are no doubt necessary and often significant goals for which to strive, as Oliver argues, they are not enough:

“There must also be changes in the ethos of the school which must mean that the school becomes a welcoming environment for children with special needs; that there is no questioning of their rights to be there and that organisational changes are part of an acceptance and understanding of the fact that the purpose of schools is to educate all children, not merely those who meet an increasingly narrowing band of selection criteria.”

(Oliver 1996a:87)

In the same line of argument, Slee's *The Irregular School* aptly points out that appeals to inclusion in the neoliberal context of competitive individualism need to be recognised as difficult to both maintain and apply in educational practice. A key reason for this difficulty, according to Slee, is a form of "collective indifference" that informs not only the choices of educational authorities, but also the choices of parents and the wider social body:

"Competitive individualism saturates education policy discourse and it drives the desires and hopes of individuals and families as they are pitted against each other to claim places at better schools, secure private tuition to leverage test performances, and dissuade schools from enrolling those who are perceived to compromise this drive to achieve rapidly multiplying government targets."

(Slee 2011:38-39)

All too frequently, Slee goes on, theories of inclusion focus on technical considerations relating to the implementation of inclusion and ignore this wider perspective on education and the social conditions of inequality that produce it. Yet, while the discussion of problems of implementation of inclusive practice is indispensable, Slee (op.cit.:39) emphasises that "[i]nclusive education commences with the recognition of the unequal social relations that produce exclusion".

This thesis argues that the process of recognising relations and practices acting to induce educational exclusion may itself commence with a critique of the present discourse of inclusion. Focusing on the Greek context, it explores how such a critique can reveal the tensions between appeals to the ideal of inclusion and the failure of specific conceptions of this ideal to articulate and sustain an inclusive ethos and practice. As we move from general and often triumphal appeals to inclusion to the specifics of the meaning of the term, we shall see how discourse becomes complex as it both deploys and undermines educational equity and social justice. By way of an illustration of the same point, Alan Roulstone and Simon Prideaux's study of disability policy invites us to "look at the social justice discourse of the UK Disabled People's Movement and contrast it with the market-oriented approach of government" in order to raise the question of "whether the British government and

the UK Disabled People's Movement are speaking the same language" (Roulstone and Prideaux 2012:134).

While this thesis will explore the distance between official governmental discourses and counter-discourses, it will not argue that the contradictions of the discourse of inclusion pertain only to the former. My research did not identify two radically different languages, an official one in which inclusion becomes a mere shell to hide the absence of equality and a language of opposition in which inclusion acquires its real meaning. The discourse of practitioners, researchers and activists (including parents and disabled people) was also characterised by contradictions that undermined the claims to the inclusive imperative and produced a complexity that does not allow us to consider it straightforwardly as the starting point of critique.

The subsequent chapters will mostly be centred on discussing this complexity and exploring the contradictions that comprise the Greek discourse of inclusion. Yet, in line with the self-critical perspective which this thesis seeks, it will also raise some wider and reflexive questions: How can inclusive education be identified as an ethical and political imperative, and at the same time work in ways which undermine or explicitly fail to help disabled children? What is the logic that sustains this contradictory discourse? How does the duality of the inclusive imperative relate to contradictions in the social and political field?

My attempt to engage with these questions begins with the assumption that research is itself political, not least because of the concepts it uses in the process of selecting the area of investigation, formulating its aims and theoretical premises as well as collecting, organising and interpreting data. The choice of my research object, that is, the contradictory discourse of inclusion in Greece, puts forth a political position, which is intended to operate as an act of critique. The thesis contends that the contradictions of this discourse are not confined to incidental failures or detours from the inclusive imperative; they rather stem from and act to reinforce the inadequacies of both the vision and the practical implementation of this imperative in Greek schools. It follows that the re-definition of inclusion within a discourse of equality, equity and social justice, offers the only answer today to the disempowerment and oppression of disabled people.

The perceived territories of failure of inclusion, as Julie Allan calls them, have been considered by some theorists and legislators (especially in Britain) as grounds for abandoning the idea of radicalising inclusion (see Allan 2008:9-23). However, as Allan points out, such a view not only falls short of addressing the causes of this failure in modern divisive and antagonistic societies, but also sustains the deepening of social segregation and oppression that is inscribed into educational concepts and practices. The response to the apparent failure of inclusion must be more effort to establish inclusion despite an existing context that constantly undermines this attempt:

“The conditions under which teachers are supposed to struggle for inclusion are somewhat bleak. They have to do so in a legislative and policy context in which attempts to create inclusion appear consistently to fail”.

(Allan 2008:23)

The transformative potential of emancipatory disability research pointed out by several theorists of the social model (see Barnes 2003a) can be realised through this process of radicalising and constantly striving for inclusion. For, as Oliver has argued, emancipation is not a quest for bestowing power on people from outside. Rather, it involves modes of self-empowerment which need to be facilitated and promoted by research (Oliver 1992:111). Self-empowerment cannot be attained in conditions of division and segregation; it presupposes a fully participatory and substantive inclusion. While this ideal is impossible to achieve in the antagonistic context of modern capitalist societies, this does not preclude steps towards deepening and radicalising inclusion in education. Yet, in the current context, the first step towards this process, which from the viewpoint of researchers is a process of putting the production of knowledge and research skills “at the disposal of their research subjects, for them to use in whatever ways they choose” (Oliver, 1992:111; also cf. Oliver 1997), is the critique of inclusion, including forms of self-critique.

3.2 The contentious discourse of inclusion: Research framework and hypothesis

The defining feature of disability theory, as Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare (1999:168) argue, is its focus on challenging the barriers embedded in policies and practices that put forth individualistic and medicalised approaches to disability. While recognising the materiality of such barriers, they go on, disability theorists argue that their removal goes beyond the gaining of control over material resources as well as the range and quality of services. Such a goal rather requires a fundamental re-appraisal of the meaning of disability; for it is this meaning that underlies the medicalisation of disability and legitimises the hostile physical and social environments that result in the multiple deprivations experienced by people with accredited impairments.

The question of how meaning underpins educational and social barriers as well as legitimises a discriminatory and exclusionist organisation of society as a whole has been a significant concern for social disability theorists. As John Richardson and Justin Powell put it, “how people are talked about, how dis/ability is understood and why certain terms are used in a particular cultural context cannot be relegated to the sidelines” (Richardson and Powell 2012:x). From a similar perspective Slee (2011:42) contends that there are at least two mechanisms whose concurrent operation constructs orders of inclusion and exclusion: a) bestowed understandings; and b) professional knowledge and interests. All of the categories which constitute these mechanisms are articulated discursively, including the category of interests, whose conception is mediated by language.

The link between socially constituted barriers and language presupposes that language is itself political and, indeed, a key medium for advancing, legitimising or resisting a certain politics. In a perspicacious account of the role of language in mediating the struggle of disabled people to articulate their experience, Oliver noted how this act depends on “taking control of the process of naming, defining and describing that experience” (Oliver 1994:4). From this viewpoint, Oliver argued that language – and its use – is not merely about communication, while contests over the meanings of terms are not just about semantics; it is about politics and therefore about conflicts, domination and control of others (Oliver 1996a:74).

This study aims to explore this politics by approaching discourse, i.e. 'language in context', as central to the configuration and legitimation of educational precepts and practices. Following Brown and Yule's (1983:1) theoretical approach to discourse analysis, it argues that "the analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the descriptions of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs". Although the term 'discourse' is linked to a variety of disciplines and approaches, from Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, as configured by Halliday, to what Foucault called archaeology of knowledge (Foucault 1972, 1974), the scope of this thesis is delimited by questions and debates formulated in the field of education. Thus, while it engages with questions and premises formulated in other frameworks (see chapter 2), it does not seek to comprehensively account for their implications, but to operationalise them in the context of educational debates. This means that discourse, as we began to discuss in the previous chapter, is deployed here in the sense of language in use within a given social context and language as a means of articulating social structures and power relations, but not in a sense that would evoke a strictly Foucauldian or Hallidayan method of analysis.

'Discourse' thus refers to a set of ideas, principles, values and idioms that take shape within a given social setting which they act to sustain, legitimise, but also interrogate and possibly challenge. The notion of 'national educational system', for instance, could only arise within the frame of the modern nation-states, whose constitution was reinforced by the unifying ideological structures upheld by this concept in the realm of education. This implies that the term 'discourse' presupposes an inextricable link between language and society. It allows us to explore how language articulates conceptions of disability and educational responses to it that pertain to historically specific societies. These concepts sustain or challenge a social order by naturalising and legitimising divisions, inequality and power relations or by acting to interrogate their validity.

Accordingly, this thesis explores how the concept of inclusion plays this dual role by articulating the egalitarian dimension of the ideal of inclusive education, while simultaneously marginalising the conflict between the appeal to educational

equality and the constitution of this appeal within an educational and social system founded on inequality and antagonism. Inclusion, in the sense that is used in educational settings, aims to promote and materialise in the school community the principles of equality and collaboration (see e.g. Thomas, Walker and Webb 1998:15-16). Yet, how do these principles relate to a society in which equality becomes a formal appeal to human rights (defined as the rights of individuals), while social inequality is legitimised by precepts such as meritocracy and competition? How can we speak of educational inclusion within the frame of wider social discourses sustaining individualistic antagonism, inequality and relations of domination in modern capitalist societies? In other words, is the concept unavoidably bound to become a constitutive part of these discourses?

While it is significant to be attentive to one's historical position, it is neither necessary nor fruitful to reduce all considerations of inclusion to the frames of a dominant inegalitarian discourse and society within which we all think and relate to one other. That is so because discourses are not one-dimensional and contain themselves categories that allow their (self) critique and subversion. As Ernest Gellner has argued,

“There is no language in which one cannot both affirm and deny. Even, or perhaps especially, a culture which maintains that the big issues have been finally settled within it, can yet conceive of the alternatives which are being denied and eliminated. It must give some reasons, however dogmatic, for selecting that which it does select and for excluding that which it excludes, and thus in a way it concedes that things could be otherwise.”

(Gellner 1993:166)

According to Gellner, every discourse offers the means for questioning the principles it serves to affirm and sustain. At the most immediate level, this capacity is manifested in the context of paradigmatic language change, as – for instance – in the succession of categories designating student diversity in the western world, from the notion of disability through the idea of ‘special educational needs’ to the concept of inclusion and the various approaches to it in contemporary educational research. Yet, on a different level, one may identify modes of self-questioning within a

synchronic discursive framework; that is, uses of language that bring concepts against themselves, either reflexively or in the form of contradictions and antinomies that are not necessarily brought to consciousness and analysed by the subjects of discourse.

This line of enquiry needs to begin by posing anew what Slee (2011:42) calls “first-order questions”. What is inclusion and exclusion? Who is in and who is out, and on what grounds a society makes this selection? How do we “learn to recognize, expose and dismantle” exclusion? Most crucially, “inclusion into what?” A similar quest for first-order questions is put forth by Devlin and Pothier (2006) in the context of Critical Disability Theory: a critique of the current conditions of educational exclusion (both discursive and practical) must not simply be centred on the failure of liberalism as a political response to the needs of persons with disabilities; it must also formulate a philosophical challenge to central liberal assumptions and ask questions about the conception of the self and society: “Who is a self? Is there such a thing as an authentic self? What is the significance of disability to the conception of self? ... How does the self relate to others?” (Devlin and Pothier 2006:16).

This reflexive critique constitutes a key aim of this thesis, which deploys the category of discourse within the frame of disability theory in order to explore the variety of meanings attached to inclusion and their philosophical consequences in different social settings and by different groups engaged with educational practice in contemporary Greece. The aim of the thesis is specifically to investigate the official discourse on inclusion formulated by the government, the definition of the concept by teachers and practitioners involved in special and inclusive education, and the discourse formulated by disability theorists and activists.

The positing of these discourses as a relatively unified research object does not imply their internal unity. On the contrary, the concept of inclusion that emerged from my research was diversified and internally contradictory. It thus affirmed Reinhart Koselleck’s definition of concepts as amalgamations of different, and internally conflicting, meanings, which encompass the whole range of distinct language uses within a given historical setting (Koselleck 1985:77-78, 125). For instance, the conflict we encountered in the introduction between social approaches

to student diversity and those indicating the bodily experience of difference or disability may both lead to an endorsement of inclusion; yet each of them assigns a distinct meaning to inclusion which is not presumed as such by the other. But the most interesting form of conflict arises from definitions of inclusion by the same individual or collective subject deploying simultaneously notions that contradict each other, such as equality and inequality, unity and antagonism, human rights and discrimination.

The investigation of such conflicts is not taken to entail a division between theory and practice, although it calls for a reflexive examination of concepts put forth by social agents in real-life educational settings. Traditional social science research has tended to assume a one-directional relationship between theory and practice, within which practice is seen as a set of concrete social frames to which theory is applied. In this view, improvements in practice, as Ainscow points out, have generally been considered to result from the elaboration of more adequate theoretical models enabling practitioners to apply theory more effectively (Ainscow 1998:15). This approach has been questioned by proponents of so-called 'action research' aiming to "understand schools from the inside", as Ainscow (op.cit.) puts it, and to explore how practice is not dependent on theory, but both theory and practice confront and challenge one another in an ongoing dialectical relation. Action research proponents thus take the school experience as their starting point, in order to juxtapose them with outsiders' accounts of inclusion and allow each perspective to interrogate and reformulate the other (ibid.:15-16). Such a viewpoint usefully criticises the exclusion of the school experience from the realm of theory and indicates the importance real life contests and struggles for the formulation of conceptions of inclusion and special needs education in the realm of theory.

However, by advocating that theory can challenge practice and vice versa, this model is in danger of repeating the opposition it sets out to interrogate. The experience of social agents participating in specific inclusive projects, including disabled students or teachers, is no less mediated by concepts than that of theorists observing these settings from the outside, while both groups develop their language within a shared social and political context. That means that education practitioners are already involved in the constitution of theory, while those engaging with theory

more directly in academic institutions are already part of an institutional and social framework that sustains certain forms of practice, while excluding or marginalising others.

There is no such a thing as empirical analysis of educational practice that could question theory, because this practice is mediated by concepts that are already part of a certain theoretical framework defining their meaning and social function. Thus, in order to explore how such concepts act to sustain certain educational institutions and practices, we need to investigate their use and social significance. As has been argued in a critique of action research focusing on the concept of inclusion:

“On its own, empirical analysis adds nothing to an understanding of the process of inclusion/exclusion because it can tell us nothing about the meaning and significance of these concepts as organising principles of social life. In the absence of any theorisation of the concept of inclusion in its particular social and historical contexts, appeals to credibility and to relevance merely legitimate at the level of practice those social forms and practices that at a more abstract level it is claimed are being critiqued: in this case the ‘normalising’ ideology of inclusion.”

(Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton 1998:41)

In other words, a presumably descriptive or empirical account of inclusive/exclusive practices appeals to its relevance to actual educational needs and conditions at the cost of concealing how these needs are mediated by particular concepts of inclusion; that is, concepts which define inclusion against the background of the exclusive and oppressive societies in which current educational institutions have developed. Therefore, none of these concepts can be said to be neutral and devoid of its involvement in the ideology that sustains these societies in the realm of education.

At the same time, theoretical concepts developed in the field of the academy are themselves equally subjected to the ideological determination of inclusion and need to be examined as such. There is a certain politics in ‘theory making’ that is inextricably linked to the institutional and social role that academics and universities are called upon to play in contemporary societies. As Slee suggests, the problem of

theory in special education raises two central questions: a) who produces theory? and b) to what ends are theories formulated and deployed? (Slee 1998a:127). These ends are not to be designated as individual intentions, but as articulations of a wider institutional framework that acts to construct the positions from which individuals theorise special education. In so far as this framework operates within an antagonistic and hierarchical social setting, it cannot totally expunge the ideas and values that would reproduce and legitimise divisions and hierarchies. Thus, even when individuals choose to challenge these divisions, their language will necessarily contain elements of the very discourse they seek to oppose.

This continuum between theoretical categories and discourse produced in the context of (inclusive) practice implied that the presentation of my research data associated with the field of practice (e.g. interviews with teachers) would be linked directly to the attempt at theorising inclusion. Thus, instead of reporting on this data in distinct sections of the thesis, I purposefully embedded their presentation and analysis in the wider theoretical discussion of the antinomies of inclusion. This form of organisation of the thesis aimed to facilitate and advance a reflexive line of critique indicating how the contradictions of inclusion produce a concept that is split from within, both on the level of theoretical analysis and on the level of practice. Unless this two-levelled conflict of inclusion is emphasised, the focus on language is in danger of documenting the history of education as a history of progress from segregated education to the advancement of inclusion. Yet, as we shall see, the continuous juxtaposition of theoretical categories and discourses of practitioners and activists in Greece challenges this linear and progressive narration by presenting contradictions and antinomies in all discursive realms constituting the concept.

These antinomies can at first be exemplified through an episode that I witnessed only incidentally, but nevertheless served as a key starting point for formulating the hypothesis that this thesis will argue. While discussing with an academic in Greece about the merits of inclusion, we were interrupted by a student with dyslexia who had arranged for an oral examination at a university level leading to a degree in Greek literature. The person I was speaking to commented on the event by observing, on the one hand, the importance of the contemporary institutional framework that offers “students with special needs” the opportunity to complete their

degree by taking for instance an oral exam – in the case of dyslexic students – and, on the other, the severe problems involved in his consent with “giving” a degree to a student who is “unable to write properly” and will thus be “less qualified than others” for a teaching position outside university. As he phrased it, “How can I give a degree to him, when I know he is less qualified than other students? I can only agree reluctantly with this practice”. When I questioned my interlocutor about the contradiction between the two statements (praising and simultaneously disagreeing with inclusion), he responded by stating that professional demands in the “real world” differ radically from those posed by the academic community and in any case tolerance of “mistakes” may occur in educational institutions – and especially within the academy – but is unavoidably limited outside them.

We shall return to the notions of ‘mistakes’ and ‘propriety’ in the next chapters. At the moment let us note that the antinomy of the concept that arises from this discussion – the idea of inclusion as both the right of all students and a problem – articulates a wider contradiction pertaining to contemporary Western societies: namely, that any attempt at advancing in education inclusive practices that sustain equality is necessarily undermined by the formulation of these practices within an antagonistic social framework, in which equality is reduced to equality of opportunity and pursued against the background of social opposition, competition and discrimination.

This implies that the category of inclusion, while partly articulating a predominantly universalising idea of equality and human rights (particularly children’s), points simultaneously to a different discourse, which has appropriated this framework to sustain and legitimise a society of unequal social relations and power differentials. Thus, the contradictory meaning of inclusion does not derive from a mere semantic ambiguity of the concept, but is linked to a conflictual social and political framework which both promotes and undermines ideals pertaining to human equality and rights. The notion of equal opportunity that serves as the basis for definitions of equality in liberal democratic societies is a form of equality that is tied with inequalities, since it implies that, while all children must have the same opportunities to develop their potential, only the best of them would achieve personal and social advancement. Yet, not only is such equality of opportunity impossible to

achieve in a society divided by social inequalities, which put children in different positions in the allegedly unified field of education, but also one wonders how a presumably egalitarian educational system may in fact result in reproducing a condition of inequality.

Is the idea of equal opportunity to be seen as the only articulation of equality? Is this form of equality able to produce – as earlier in this discussion Ryan (2012) appositely questioned – institutions and communities that are truly equitable? Or do we need to rethink this idea as the product of a certain social and political system, namely modern liberal democracy, in which forms of inclusion operate more on an imaginary than on an actually experienced reality and serve to legitimise educational and wider social exclusion? The founding concept of modern democracies, liberal individualism presupposes the homogeneity of students and future citizens, and grounds conceptions of equality in this presupposition. Yet, as Emily Russell (2011) has shown in her analysis of U.S. conceptions of citizenship and disability, the supposedly homogenous social body constitutes a discriminatory, rather than equalising concept. When confronted with physical disability the social body of liberal democracies is opposed to the ‘abnormal’ body, which becomes an ideological property in a political system that remains unable to make sense of the difference. Abnormality, as a concept, thus becomes the other of genuine citizenship that undermines inclusion at the very moment that it seeks to accommodate disabled people in the realm of citizenship.

The contradictions underlying the concept of inclusion, as we shall see, traverse the entire range of its uses, including both the language of education practitioners and the language of theory and research. Official discourses on inclusion in Greece and other Western societies have engaged with these contradictions and tried to negotiate them without however achieving their resolution. Greece in particular has recently manifested an intensified interest in promoting inclusion (see the relevant discussion in chapter 5), which not only reflected the need for Greek policies to be aligned with an overarching European legal framework, but also engaged with challenges posited by those who experience difference and translate this experience into political practice. This advancement, which is consistently described by state officials as a move towards a humanitarian

idea of unified education that sustains equal rights for children, needs to be approached critically. For the philosophy of education underlying the concept of inclusive practices is itself contradictory and confined to an idea of equality that remains short of challenging discrimination and exclusion.

Such an approach implies that our analysis has both a descriptive and a critical orientation. It sets out both to discuss the discourse on inclusion and to explore how this discourse reveals gaps, contradictions and inconsistencies in the vision of education and politics sustained by this concept. This dual direction implies that data gathering and descriptions had to be balanced against the requirement to explore the broader discursive and political context, in which these data would be situated. The subsequent choice to devote adequate space to both the analysis of this context and the reporting of research findings (Chapters 5-8) is made at the cost of not pursuing an otherwise desirable expansion of data collection and interpretation. However, this choice has made it possible to advance a “social model critique” (Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton 1998:41) of the idea of inclusion as articulated in a language that constructs divisions, but also allows their interrogation by means of alternative definitions and practices.

It is from this perspective, which focuses on the variable and contradictory meanings of the concept of inclusion while stressing its relationship to specific social conditions and practices, that it is possible to discern the historicity of principles associated with special education and to engage with them both conceptually and politically. This perspective is critical both in the epistemological sense of rejecting non-reflexive accounts of disability and in the political sense of standing against a social order that sustains the exclusion and oppression of disabled people, while purporting to promote inclusion. While starting as self-critique the ultimate aim of the emancipatory paradigm is a critique of society and politics. As Oliver has argued:

“The development of such a paradigm stems from the gradual rejection of the positivist view of social research as the pursuit of absolute knowledge through the scientific method and the gradual disillusionment with the interpretive view of such research as the generation of socially useful knowledge within particular historical and social contexts. The emancipatory paradigm, as the name implies, is about the facilitating of

a politics of the possible by confronting social oppression at whatever levels it occurs.”

(Oliver 1992:110)

3.3 Data collection and research strategies

One of the key contentions of contemporary approaches to society and culture is that no aspect of social research is politically neutral (see McCarthy 1996). From the process of designing and data collection through the choice of research strategies, to the implementation of theoretical principles in analysing data, academic research on disability is itself political not only in the sense of being determined by established power relations and social structures, but also in the sense of actively participating in forming disability politics, no matter whether this participation is openly acknowledged by researchers. The social model for disability studies has recognised the politics of research from the outset. As we saw, on the theoretical and conceptual level this political challenge was guided by the principle of emancipation. On the practical level of conducting research, the political challenge of emancipation must have particular targets in the research process (Barnes and Mercer 1997).

The quest for reflexivity advanced by this framework – alongside the specific insights into reflexive critique offered by the social model associated with disability studies – indicated from the outset that the language used in my research is not a neutral means of representation, but involves an interpretive process that is integrated into a network of social control and power relations (Smith 2002:40-41). The controlling role of interpretative processes is thus taken to permeate every stage of a research project: from the writing of interview questions through the selection of groups to be interviewed, to the editing and analysis of research data.

In the current project I identified two areas in which the question of emancipatory research had to be specified against specific conditions and approaches: a) the claims to objectivity, neutrality and total accounts of the research object; and b) the division between subject and object of research. While in both areas there has been a broad agreement as to the targets against which social

disability studies are oriented, there is no consensus as to the way in which to challenge those targets. This has been reflected on a relative lack of agreement as to the choice of research methods. As Barnes and Mercer point out, a striking feature of the turn towards socially oriented disability research “has been the lack of alignment with particular research methods or techniques”, although this has been changing over the last years (Barnes and Mercer 1997).

The wider lack of consensus within the field of inclusive education is also represented in socially oriented approaches. As Ozlem Erten and Robert Samuel Savage (2012) argue, the field of inclusive education has produced literature ranging from evocations of social justice to pure scientific objectivity and revealing a wide selection of experimental studies, case studies, ethnography, action research and so on. Moreover, as Armstrong and Barton (2008b:12) note, several new disciplines are now entering research and debates in education offering new directions and perspectives: “Disciplines such as linguistics and discourse analysis, social and cultural geography, and media studies – all of these fields provide fresh insights into issues relating to education systems and the way they respond to difference and diversity.”

This study evidently questions traditional claims to objectivity, which have long been dismissed both in the field of epistemology and its various appropriations by the human and social sciences. It does so by designing the collection of data in a way that highlights the juxtaposition of different discourses on inclusion, each of which challenges and interrogates the others. Both the choice of voices to be included in the research project and the formulation of questions were underpinned by the purpose of stressing the absence of a unitary concept of inclusion in contemporary Greece. This juxtaposition, however, had to be balanced against the need to formulate a critical account of official discourses on disability. While not claiming to be objective, this critique had to operate within the tension between acknowledging its partial character and still assuming a specific position from which I could identify contradictions and inconsistencies in the official discourse of inclusion in Greece.

This position was profoundly informed by a counter-discourse on inclusion, which was traced in the language of educationalists and disability activists. In contrast with traditional research methods in the context of which the researcher is posed as an expert who observes and analyses research objects from outside, the research strategies for this study were intended to challenge this division between subject and object of research. At the most immediate level this challenge was grounded in my dual role as a researcher and a teacher in a Greek special school, who is involved in the everyday practice of education, alongside other teachers interviewed for this study. On a different level, activists and teachers were seen as subjects that contributed to the formulation of questions and answers about the meaning of inclusion that are offered by this study. The research design involved therefore a self-transforming process allowing the questioning of my research assumptions. The use of the pilot study in particular aimed at shifting questions towards directions that are meaningful to people involved in the implementation of inclusion in Greek schools as well as disability activists who criticise the exclusionary politics sustained by the official conception of inclusion.

My research data consists therefore of the following different discourses on inclusion, whose juxtaposition forms a battlefield in which mutually opposed notions, approaches and politics encounter one another:

a) The discourse of the government: Greek governmental educational policy statements that compose the contemporary official framework for 'inclusive' education and have been published in the form of constitutional articles, laws, presidential/ministerial decrees and proclamations of the Ministry of Education. Official statements issued in the Greek mass media, the internet, information leaflets, published interviews by government officials, Members of Parliament and other political or institutional agents. Finally, an interview with Vasileios Kourbetis, the Senior Advisor of the Pedagogical Institute on Special Education in Greece.

b) The discourse of disability activists and theorists: Investigation of literature produced by disability activists and theorists alongside scholarly literature presenting a critical account of inclusive education,

both in terms of contemporary practices and in terms of its historical development in the Greek context. Also, an interview with the activist Kostas Gargalis, president of the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf.

c) The discourse of educationalists: Thirty interviews with educationalists working in Greek mainstream and special schools. These included interviews with disabled people working as teachers in the field of special education.

With regard to governmental discourses (presented in chapters 5 and 6 of the thesis) an archival online search for published documents and reports concerning legislation and policies about education, special education and inclusion was conducted. The data collected includes laws, directives and educational acts as well as public announcements of government officials. Existing discussions of these documents in the writings of Greek scholars (see for instance Lampropoulou and Padeliadou 1995, Vlachou 2006, Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006) guided me at an initial stage with regard to the main parameters and contexts of research. The interview with Mr Kourbetis (October 2007) was conducted at a point in which my literature research in this area had advanced substantially and I was well aware of the key concepts deployed in the present governmental discourses on inclusion. Accordingly, these concepts were introduced into the questions of the interview with Mr Kourbetis.

In the two chapters discussing governmental discourses, the study will focus on a close analysis of two laws (Law 2817/2000 and Law 3699/2008) that have provided the main legal framework for all policy developments from 2000 onwards in the education of disabled students in Greece. My textual analysis will examine the content and language of these key legislative documents, and explore their implications for educational praxis in Greece over the past decade or so. Such an investigation of textual significance, while linguistically informed, cannot be solely linguistically determined; rather, it calls for an understanding of the situational and broader social context within which texts are embedded. Hence, this close reading of Laws 2817 and 3699 entails – by design – certain elements of critique, in the sense that it is a mediating activity, an attempt to make inferences about and interpret the content and meaning of these two texts within the specific social environment that

produced them. Yet, as Alastair Pennycook (2001:6) argues, it is not enough “merely to draw connections between micro-relations of language in context and macro-relations of social enquiry. Rather, such connections need to be drawn within a critical approach to social relations”.

To that end, my textual analysis will draw upon the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which aims to “explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social structures, relations and processes” and “to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power” (Fairclough 1995:132). While not in itself a comprehensive critical discourse analysis of the examined texts, my analysis is influenced by the CDA framework, in the sense that it adopts a specific critical perspective that aims to make explicit the connection between discursive practices and social reality, and to uncover the ideological dimensions of language use in governmental discourses. This approach, as we will see, is consistent with the overall analytical orientation of my thesis and its attempt for a critical consideration of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic inclusion discourses, and of the dynamic relationship between these discourses and the social structures that sustain discrimination and exclusion within the modern Greek society.

As for the discourse of disability activists and theorists (see chapter 7 of the thesis) my research data consisted on the one hand of published documents in the form of political intervention and calls for action, including pamphlets, newspaper articles and scholarly works and, on the other, an interview with a notable proponent of the Greek disability movement, the activist Kostas Gargalis. An online research (conducted at the later stages of the study) produced a rich range of material originating in a diverse range of groups and political positions. The aim of this investigation was not to offer a comprehensive account of this discourse on disability and inclusion but to focus on precisely those points that would allow me to reflect upon the specific critique of governmental discourses on inclusion attempted in this thesis. The interview with Mr. Gargalis was arranged towards the end of my research (conducted in October 2011) and was intended to advance reflection on parameters and categories of such a critique. This interview was arranged for me by my own

instructor of Greek Sign Language, and so a connection was established before the interview process. Moreover, the discourse of activists was enriched by interviews with teachers engaged in disability activism as well as with personal communications with parents-activists over the past four years that I have been teaching in a special elementary school in Athens.

While literature review and the analysis of published material will hold an integral part in the discussion of governmental and activist discourses on inclusion, the interviews constitute the main technique used for the collection of data representing the teachers' discourse on inclusion (see chapter 8). The interviewing process involved two groups, each consisting of fifteen teachers working respectively in mainstream and special schools. More than half of the teachers working in mainstream schools have also been involved in teaching in inclusive classes operating within the schools or classes that focus specifically on specialised help offered to students with special needs within their school. All of the teachers had degrees in special education and may therefore be involved in either inclusive or special education in the future. Teachers to be interviewed were found through direct or indirect contacts in different educational institutions in two cities, Athens and Patras. All of them were responsive and eager to participate in the research. In order to maintain confidentiality of information provided by research participants, the study will not report identifying information of individual subjects and their answers will be quoted anonymously in the relevant sections of the thesis. The only exceptions are the two eponymous interviewees, Mr Kourbetis and Mr Gargalis, as it was deemed essential for the study to connect these particular interviewees with their responses.

Having identified the key contested concepts in contemporary discourses on inclusion in Greece, I attempted to operationalise the same set of concepts in all of the interviews conducted during my research. To that end, the questionnaire used for the interviews with educationalists was also the starting point and topic guide for my discussions with Mr Kourbetis and Mr Gargalis. It is important to note, however, that in both of these interviews the conversation extended beyond the structuring of the prescribed questionnaire, in an effort to target issues in which each respondent could offer unique insight due to their respective positions of authority. Hence, in the

interview with the education official Mr Kourbetis I chose to touch upon aspects of educational policy and practice that are not always present in official documents, educational legislation or formal administrative statements on disability and inclusion – such as the problem of funding, the failures of current policies and so on. In the interview with the disability activist Mr Gargalis, president of the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf, the discussion moved to issues regarding the history of the Greek disability movement and its progression over the past three decades as well as its current agenda and possible limitations.

In both cases this part of the discussion developed after the formal end of the interview. In attempting to generate a more relaxed and friendly environment that would allow them to further elaborate on their views, I decided on both occasions to switch off the tape-recorder and asked the permission of my interlocutors to simply take notes. This choice proved to be very fruitful as both speakers expanded substantially on previously expressed positions and probably felt less restricted by their official roles. The very length of these conversations, which lasted for about 30 and 45 minutes respectively (after the end of the ‘formal interview’ process), is indicative of the richness of the material collected, but also of the limitations of interviews with eponymous speakers representing a specific educational and political position.

A systematic snapshot of all steps taken in respect of empirical data collection (including pilot) is provided in the appendices. Appendix A provides information about data gathering activities, from archive work through online research to school based data collection. The appendix further provides a chronology of data gathering activities and indicates the specifics pertaining to each activity, including, for instance, time committed to each activity, number of institutions visited, numbers of people involved in different activities and so on. Appendix B presents the original questionnaire employed in the interviews with the teachers and Appendix C provides its English translation. [This translation and all other translated quotations from Greek original texts are mine throughout the thesis, unless otherwise noted].

After the process of collecting and transcribing data from the interviews was completed, a thematic analysis was undertaken in order to identify and select certain

key themes which emerged from the data. As Braun and Clarke (2006:10; original emphasis) point out, “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set”. In addressing the central, in terms of research design, question of ‘what counts as a pattern/theme’ in the interviewing data, my initial criterion was the quantitative prevalence of a pattern (i.e. space allotted or number of instances) both within each interview and across the entire set of interviews. Accordingly, my thematic analysis acknowledged in the discourse of Greek educationalists a number of prevalent patterns (represented in the research findings with various conventions, e.g. “the majority of participants”, “most of the respondents”, etc.).

Yet, as Braun and Clarke (ibid.) also argue, the ‘keyness’ of a theme within a data set “is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures”. It can also be determined in terms of whether a token (widespread or isolated in the data set) is identified by the analyst as capturing something significant in relation to the overall research question. Hence, my analysis also acknowledged themes that might appear in relatively little of the data set or that are articulated by only a limited number of the interviewees. These themes (in which prevalence is not quantitatively measured) capture, as I will argue, important – even if isolated or singular – elements of the discourse of Greek educationalists. Additionally, in certain cases they will help our discussion of the research findings (see Ch. 8) in identifying the absence of patterns that were expected to be prevalent in the data according to the original research hypothesis. I will discuss, for example, the limited use by research participants of the human rights vocabulary on inclusion. Here a theme emerges *in absentia*: contrary to my initial expectations, beyond a few scattered tokens (and the exception of a single respondent) the discourse of Greek educationalists does not give considerable space or attention to the rights- and equality-oriented inclusion vocabulary which forms an essential part of the social model approach to disability. [The origins and significance of this ‘absence’ will be discussed in section 8.4]

It is important, hence, at this point to acknowledge the active role that I, the researcher, played in the identification and selection of these themes. As Ely et al. (1997:205-206) aptly comment, a description of the analytical process that uses a

language of themes ‘emerging’ during the analysis “can be misinterpreted to mean that themes ‘reside’ in the data” waiting to ‘be discovered’ by the researcher. Yet, “if themes ‘reside’ anywhere, they reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them” (ibid.). From this view, thematic analysis involves a number of motivated and meaningful choices from within the analytical possibilities available to the researcher for the coding of data, the categorisation of patterns, the selection and reporting of themes. These choices are not ideologically neutral nor do they happen in an epistemological vacuum. As there is no one ‘correct’ or ‘ideal’ epistemological foundation for conducting research, what is important, according to Braun and Clarke (2006:8; original emphasis), “is that the theoretical framework and methods match what the researcher wants to know, and that they acknowledge these decisions, and recognise them *as* decisions”.

With this in mind, I must note that my method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes within the interviewing data is firmly rooted within a social constructionist epistemology. Similar to the critical discourse analytic approach applied to the investigation of governmental discourses, my thematic analysis views the language of interviewees as a ‘social semiotic’ (Halliday 1978), a meaning-making activity that is socio-culturally conditioned. Thus, my analysis attempts to examine the ways in which the experiences, attitudes, meanings and realities expressed in the discourse of the respondents echo the effects of a range of antagonistic discourses struggling to achieve dominance within society.

In a similar vein, resonating the overall analytical outlook of my thesis (aiming to deconstruct the content, function and interplay of competing inclusion discourses; cf. section 2.1.2), my analysis focuses on the identification of latent themes (Boyatzis 1998) in the discourse of the interviewees. A thematic analysis at the latent level moves beyond the semantic content, i.e. the explicit or surface meaning of the data, and “starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies – that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (Braun and Clarke 2006:13). This investigation of implicit meaning entails an active process of interpretation in identifying themes within the data set, and brings my analysis closer to what is typically referred to as ‘thematic discourse analysis’, in which theme identification

attempts to reveal the broader discursive practices and structures that underpin what is articulated in the data (see Taylor & Ussher 2001). Notice, for instance, how in the discussion of the research findings the development of themes in the interviewing data will attempt to trace in the discourse of Greek educationalists the effects of the same myths that, as I will argue, are exploited in hegemonic inclusion discourses to legitimise the continuing domination of the special education paradigm, and that also transcend into the counter-hegemonic discourses of disability activists/theorists and teachers (see section 8.3).

In this regard, my analysis can be characterised as a deductive or ‘theoretical’ thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998), in the sense that its interpretive orientation renders it a more explicitly analyst-driven, rather than data-driven, approach. This choice also maps onto how and why I have coded the data. As we will see in Ch. 8, the interviewing data were coded for quite specific research questions, which maps onto the more theoretical approach of my thematic analysis (see Braun and Clarke 2006:12) and facilitates the particular research focus of my thesis that inclusion is a construct shaped through conflicting interests and constantly renegotiated by competing social forces; therefore, a critical appraisal of the – often opaque – content and purpose of inclusion discourses entails an understanding of the broader discursive, social and political context in which the notion of inclusion is embedded (see section 8.2.1).

As a final comment on the interviews with Greek educationalists, it is noteworthy that participants’ responses yielded results with a degree of consistency that allowed me to explore their collective discourse as a distinct analytical unit, i.e. to examine the *discourse* of teachers rather than the *discourses* of teachers. This should not be misinterpreted as a claim that all responses to the interview data were homogeneous in character. An element of homogeneity is evident only in the third question of each questionnaire section (i.e. the one asking if teachers can recognise a difference between their own and the government’s conceptualisation/definition of the four contested concepts; see Appendix C). In this question, research participants unanimously acknowledged that there is significant divergence between the officially-sanctioned and their personal approach to all four of the targeted concepts (see section 8.4). As I will argue in my commentary, this signifies that the discourse

of Greek educationalists (as a single analytical entity and not simply as teachers' individual conceptualisations) does not comply with the language and politics of inclusion put forth by government and policy makers. As regards their responses to the remainder of the questionnaire, my discussion of the research findings will focus on recurring patterns and consistent structures in the data that will highlight the discourse of teachers as a cohesive and coherent (although consisting of multiple voices and fraught, as we will see, with its own inner tensions and paradoxes) frame of critique to the hegemonic inclusion discourse articulated by the administrators of Greek education.

Specifically for the interviewing project with Greek educationalists, a comprehensive discussion of the process of writing and conducting the interviews is provided in the relevant chapter (see Ch. 8). Therein I discuss issues such as the relation between pilot and main questions, the themes selected for inclusion in the interviews, specific interviewing techniques for icebreaking, advancing discussion without directing my interlocutors, the anchoring and modification of questions according to responses, the provision of information about confidentiality, the analytical framework and so on. In the remainder of the present chapter, however, we shall focus on the wider questions of data collection and interpretation that underpinned the entire corpus of my investigation.

My work is set within the broad framework of qualitative research focusing on the meaning and interpretation of the specific manifestations of discourse under study, rather than a wide-ranging collection of data. With regard to the above choices it must be stated that I could not and did not intend to offer an exhaustive account of the discourses of inclusion in Greece. Instead, the account I offer is self-consciously partial. It is partial not only in the sense that it includes a limited number of voices defining inclusion, but also in the sense that it takes place within a specific web of linguistic, cultural and social frames. So, I must note that the selection of the above groups and corresponding fields of discourse, wherein I conducted my research, excludes a number of voices that co-determine the Greek discourse on inclusion both within and outside educational and governmental institutions, from schoolchildren and their parents to wider social groups beyond schools. While such an attempt was impossible (not least due to practical restrictions) the discursive frameworks that

were chosen are central to what we previously described as the currently hegemonic definition of inclusion in Greece, on the one hand, and the movements and languages that challenge it, on the other. The investigation of these frames thus offers a context for considering the articulation of this hegemony, the battles involved in its establishment as well as the ways in which its formation has taken place interactively and through the encounter of hegemonic with counter-hegemonic discourses.

Crucial to this encounter was the language of teachers, whose views on inclusion offered the perspective of insider-practitioner. Such a viewpoint, according to Armstrong and Moore, plays a key role in sustaining action research: it highlights “processes of planning, information and evaluation which draw on insider practitioner enquiry and reflection and which focus on reducing inequalities and exclusion in education” (Armstrong and Moore 2004:2). We shall return to this notion in the following pages. At the moment let us note that the language of practitioners, as every other form of discourse examined in this thesis, did not offer a straightforward critique of inequality and exclusion in education. The interviews, as we shall see, rather reveal gaps, contradictions and inconsistencies, ranging from the acceptance of competition and inequality as intrinsic to human nature to critiques of the inevitable failure of partial inclusive strategies in modern capitalist societies. In order to challenge inequalities in education emancipatory research, as Barnes argues, we must focus on “the systematic demystification of the structures and processes which create disability” (Barnes 1992:122). This demystifying process did not evoke a presumably neutral viewpoint that was external to the language of research subjects; rather, it was centred on conflicts within that language in order to explore how the latter is split from within and capable of questioning itself.

The language of disability activists offered a perspective that was openly critical of official appeals to inclusion and allowed me to grasp both conceptual contradictions and problems of practical implementation of the category. This was particularly evident in the case of activists involved in organised political movements or groups working against current disability politics in both education and broader social policy. However, my perspective on inclusion and the ways it both undermines and sustains equality and participation was not always in agreement with the views of these groups. My intention was not to record the language of activists as always

critical of exclusionist concepts and practices. Instead, I sought to establish what Barnes identified as “a workable dialogue” between researchers, activists and, in this case, practitioners, aiming to advance forms of knowledge and skills which could potentially be put at the disposal of disabled people as means of emancipation (Barnes 1992:122).

According to Len Barton (2010:644), “if we [i.e. researchers] want to take seriously the question of disability, then it is absolutely necessary that we give priority to the voices of disabled people”. As Slee (2010:565) has noted in discussing the impact of Barton’s viewpoints to the consideration of the question of voice in disability research, “finding unity and authenticity in the research/activist alliance is not straightforward”. From this view, “the key to understanding the concept of voice is in our ability to listen” (Slee op.cit.:566). For Barton, this critical issue “is connected to the politics of recognition, which concerns more than access or resource factors”, and entails a multi-dimensional focus of research, which includes examining the content of the voices of disabled people, the context in which such voices are expressed and “the purpose of such articulations and their impact on the change process” (Barton 2010:646). Hence, the question of voice raises a series of other interconnected questions, which played an integral role in the formulation of my own research design and objectives. As Barton explains:

“Developing an informed knowledge and understanding of disability equality issues raises many difficult questions and challenges, both personally and professionally. How we approach this engagement is part of a learning process. This has, and continues to raise, for me, such challenging questions as: What does it mean to listen to such voices? What can we learn from their ideas, insights and questions? What are the implications for the nature and purpose of sociological thinking and analysis? What challenges does the process of engagement raise for the relationship between, the disability community and more generally, civil society and the academy?

(Barton op.cit.)

The notion of a 'relationship', as Barton put it, between the disability community and the academy or, in Barnes' words, of a 'workable dialogue' that endeavours for emancipation entails that none of the interlocutors has a privileged role in formulating questions or answers, and none can posit a one-sided closure to the discussion. Yet, any interview process — as the one that will inform our discussion on the discourse of Greek educationalists — makes it difficult to achieve this form of equality. As Oliver warns, in the interviewing process the interviewer "asks many structured questions in a structured way" and in doing so establishes a specific form of power relations. "It is in the nature of the interview process that the interviewer presents as expert and the disabled person [or, we may add, the educationalist] as an isolated individual, inexperienced in research and thus unable to reformulate the questions in a more appropriate way" (Oliver 1990:8).

So it is hardly surprising, as Oliver (*op.cit.*) suggests, that by the end of the interview "the disabled person has come to believe that his or her problems are caused by their own health/disability problems rather than by the organisation of society", while educationalists (in our case) would believe that they are not themselves in a position to criticise categories and politics of inclusion, nor can they link their individual difficulties in advancing inclusion to wider social structures and relations that prevent them from doing so. It is in this sense that Oliver describes the interview process as 'oppressive': by reinforcing onto individual (disabled) people the conviction that the problems they experience "are a direct result of their own personal inadequacies or functional limitations (*ibid.*), either with regard to their disability or with regard to their capacity to advance changes in educational settings.

In the context of the interviews with educationalists, the realm of communication created by the interview as a field shared by experts also generated a relation of power that had to be consciously negotiated and resisted. As Derrick Armstrong points out, the power to define the needs of others, as is the case of professionals engaged with assessing special educational needs, creates a form of dependency; for, once they are defined as being "in need", disabled people "relinquish or are deprived of their right to define their own interests legitimately in opposition to the political and social interests that have created their dependency" (Armstrong, D. 1995:1). In my research I sought to counterbalance this form of

exclusion by considering a third frame of discourse delimited by disability activists, including disabled people and their families. The juxtaposition of these discourses as well as my focus on the contradictions of the educationalists' discourse of inclusion were intended to question this discourse, rather than merely acknowledging it as the frame for defining the needs and identity of disabled students.

The idea of emancipation and action research involves an approach in which the relation of inequality between researchers, educationalists and disabled people is challenged and eliminated. Action research, as F. Armstrong and Moore point out, involves

“a transfer of power [...] from those who, in the context of the relationship between research departments, government agencies and schools, have traditionally carried out research to those who have historically been on the receiving end of change planned and imposed by outside agencies.”

(Armstrong and Moore 2004:2)

This objective has been further pursued through semi-structured research methods which give opportunities to probe and expand the respondent's answers (see Hitchcock and Hughes 1995:157). A semi-structured pilot interview has also been carried out with three teachers, one of which is working in a mainstream school with a number of (experimental) inclusive classes and has previous work experience in special school. The other two teachers are currently working in special schools, but also have work experience in mainstream schools. These interviews allowed me to begin to explore the range of information provided and clarify the issues of the study in ways that I could not have anticipated at the beginning of the research process. These pilot interviews raised a number of themes and questions, which will be discussed in relation to the process of designing the main interview questions (see Ch. 8). Moreover the semi-structured interview process offered several opportunities for revising categories, raising questions or moving towards new conceptions of inclusion and its social role. The same process of revision and reflexive questioning was pursued by the choice to present my research data alongside the theoretical discussion of inclusion, noted above. This choice made possible to indicate the absence of a singular perspective from which inclusion may be defined outside the

historically delimited frames of power differentials and inequality, while simultaneously offering provisional perspectives for advancing a self-critical understanding of the concept of inclusion.

The emphasis on reciprocity in the relationship between researchers and the educational context they investigate has been crucial to the social model for understanding disability. Indeed a number of disability theorists argue for a radical change in the relation involving the transfer of power to disabled people and their organisations. James Charlton's book title *Nothing About Us Without Us* (2000) posits this point succinctly. As Barnes also states:

“The emancipatory research agenda is about nothing less than the transformation of the material and social relations of research production. This means that in contrast to traditional approaches, disabled people and their organisations, rather than professional academics and researchers, should have control of the research process including project finance and the research agenda.”

(Barnes 2004:48)

The attempt to challenge the power relations between researcher and researched while simultaneously recognising practitioners and especially disabled people as experts is not always easy to attain fully. As Barnes and Mercer (1997) acknowledge, “this objective has proven difficult to translate into practice. Is the elimination of power differences always necessary or feasible? Is the relationship to be reversed or equalised in some way?”

The development of inclusive practices through emancipatory and critical research stumbles upon inequalities sustained by the very conditions in which this research takes place. As we shall see, while the language of activists and practitioners in education is central to the development of critical accounts of inclusion in Greece, this language also includes concepts and values that can be deemed as consistent with the hegemonic official conception of inclusion. Indeed, this hegemony would have been impossible to maintain had it not appealed to wider groups including those oppressed by it. Conflicts that are inherent to both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses are inevitable. As Armstrong and Moore argue, in

a society in which education has been defined by commodification and competition, becoming itself a commodity, there is conflict between different sets of values and goals. Yet, it is through this tension that one could hope to attain a critical view of established concepts and practices, and the possibility for transforming them:

“[I]t is at the points of confrontation that new perspectives on existing arrangements and taken-for-granted cultures and practices emerge, and new questions are raised. In this sense, critical research action on the part of practitioners is powerful in generating ideas and fresh theoretical perspectives.”

(Armstrong and Moore 2004:6)

3.4 Defining interpretive frameworks

In working on this thesis I have approached the task of research and interpretation as a non-disabled student and teacher working with disabled children. So any attempt at theorising disability by means of interpretation of data is unavoidably distanced from the conditions and experience of disabled people, and especially children. As the disabled scholar Mairian Corker has noted, pursuing the ideal of a theory of disability that would come as close as possible to explaining the reality of disabled people “may mean accepting that there will always be a gap between what any theory can offer and what disabled people need to know in understanding and changing their lives” (Corker 1999:627-8). At the same time, my research is not isolated from the social phenomenon with which it engages, but participates – even though indirectly and partially – in the process it is seeking to explore: the social production of the contradictory discourse of inclusion and its role in forming institutional structures and defining the lives and education of disabled children. As Clough and Barton put it, “research itself creates – rather than merely studies – the phenomenon of special education/disability”. As a consequence, the theoretical and conceptual constructs “which researchers bring to the work are important determinants not only of the success of the study itself but indeed also of the nature and direction of the field itself” (Clough and Barton 1995:3).

The thesis draws on my experience of being the teacher and friend of disabled people as well as my encounter with disability activists and organisations focused on disability movements. Writing from my specific perspective, I do propose a framework for understanding my research object, whose formation has been consciously open to transformation and critique. Moreover, the thesis offers an analysis of the different discourses of inclusion, whose conclusions will be modified and perhaps contested by subsequent studies. The key interpretive frame for analysing my data has been offered by the social model for approaching disability in education and in wider socio-cultural environments. The attainment of inclusion cannot itself be confined to the field of education, but rather calls for a broader process of social transformation and for modes of addressing the whole range of inequalities and exclusionary practices in contemporary societies.

From this view, antinomies and inconsistencies that define the current discourse of inclusion were interpreted as linked to a more profound contradiction between, on the one hand, the ideals of equality (in the sense of merely equality of opportunity) and human rights (in the sense of the rights of individuals) advocated by modern liberal democracy, and, on the other, the essentially antagonistic and hierarchical nature of liberal capitalist societies in which this democracy operates. The discourse of inclusion will thus be located within the conflicts of the social system in which this discourse has been formulated. While this assumption implies the interlinking of social and discursive practices, it does not assume a straightforward relationship of causality between the two. I do not argue that the material conditions of discourse determine language in a one-directional way. The thesis rather explores the reciprocity of the relation between material conditions and language, as this is expressed in the ways discourse not only sustains, but also interrogates the society in which and for which it is articulated.

The need to locate discourse within a wider framework of social relations presupposes a theorisation of the relationship between language and society that exceeds the specific case studies I considered. As a qualitative investigation, this thesis assumes an interpretative methodology which recognises the unique character of both the research object and the situation of the research process. As Williams (2002:126) has argued, interpretive qualitative research can be generally defined as

an “ideographic account” of a social group or agent: “an interpretation by a situated agent (the researcher) of a never to be repeated event or setting”. While this definition accounts for the specificity of social research, it does not, however, offer a means of interrelating isolated case studies or explaining canonicities in either the field of the research object or the domain of the research process itself. In an attempt to respond to these problems, Williams (op.cit.:136-138) suggests the concept of “moderatum generalisations”, i.e. generalisations that arise from a (minimum) degree of cultural consistency in the lifeworld.

Accordingly, this study, whilst recognising the uniqueness of its own research context, also focuses on shared themes and preoccupations articulated by distinct social agents in different settings. While the restricted focus of this work does not itself allow for wide-ranging generalisations, an attempt will be made to interpret the data with a view to developing some degree of consistency that could enable their relation to other research contexts and sustain their applicability at least within the Greek frame of analysis. This perspective has been pursued by other studies of inclusion focusing on national contexts while raising more general questions about inclusion. Simona D’Alessio’s *Inclusive Education in Italy* (2011), for instance, studies the historically ground-breaking policy of “*integrazione scolastica*” by drawing on specific historical and empirical data. Yet, the book also poses a more general problematic about the links between liberating movements in the field of education and hegemonic discourses and politics which continue to control and normalise disability even when the ideal of inclusion is seemingly pursued.

The quest to historicise the language of inclusion posits the problem of what we mean by history and society, and whose viewpoint is privileged when we use these categories. The deployment of the notions of history and society has been central to the critical and reflexive current of disability studies advanced by the social model. The attempt to criticise traditional conceptions of disability as “adjustment to tragedy” or “the management of stigma” has been made in the name of a turn towards “the historical process leading to the formation of cultural images of disabled people” (Oliver 1990:76), and specifically the social structures and relations formulated in modern capitalist societies that produce and sustain these identities. What are, however, the frameworks, that a historical view on disability

would evoke? Given the necessary process of selection in writing history, what is to be included in and excluded from historiographical narration? Moreover who is to be the narrator of disability history?

A comprehensive response to the above questions belongs to the field of theory of history and lies beyond the limits of this study. I evoke them here in order to briefly engage with the critical appraisal of certain aspects of the social model. I am referring specifically to a critique stating that the socio-historical orientation of research may tend to marginalise the individual and bodily experience of impairment, and its role in shaping the identity of disabled people. Without advocating a return to the individualist approach reducing disability to a mere medical condition, this view warns against the reduction of disability to the experience of social barriers and restrictions. As Shakespeare and Watson put it:

“Disability should not be reduced to a medical condition. It should not be overlaid with negative cultural meanings. Neither should it be reduced to an outcome of social barriers alone, however important these might be in people’s lives.”

(Shakespeare and Watson 2001:23)

The account of the personal experience of impairment cannot simply be excluded from disability studies as ahistorical. The writing of history constitutes itself a selective and historically constituted narration of human life and experience, which has variously focused on different aspects of the past and present. The territories of historical study and the very problem of what is history are themselves historical questions (see Bentley 1999). From this viewpoint, Shakespeare’s and Erickson’s (2000) appeal to an all-inclusive view of history is justified on the grounds that no aspect of the disabled people’s experience can be a priori excluded or ignored:

“We believe that an adequate social theory of disability would include all the dimensions of disabled people’s experiences: bodily, psychological, cultural, social, political, rather than claiming that disability is either medical or social.”

(quoted in Shakespeare and Watson 2001:20)

This quest for expanding the interpretive frameworks through which we understand disability becomes strengthened by Shakespeare's and Watson's arguments that people "are disabled both by social barriers and by their bodies" (Shakespeare and Watson 2001:17). Since "impairment is part of our daily personal experience", they argue, it cannot be excluded from social theorisations of disability or political strategies. What is more "if our analysis does not include impairment, disabled people may be reluctant to identify with the disability movement, and commentators may reject our arguments as being 'idealistic' and ungrounded" (Shakespeare and Watson 2001:15; see also Corker and Shakespeare 2002).

While the need to address the experience of impairment is indisputable – and has been recognised by scholars of the social model (cf. Oliver 1996c) – the quest for an all-inclusive account of disability posits certain theoretical and political problems. The task raises the question of who can attain this totalising view of disability and from what perspective. If the theory of disability is to include the dimensions of disabled people experience not as a mere accumulation of data but as part of a comprehensive and unified theoretical framework which includes cultural, social and political dimensions, one wonders whether anyone, either individual or group, can claim to have access to this totality and whether our historically specific and therefore partial positions can offer this access.

Moreover, we need to discuss further if the experience of disability is itself unmediated and straightforward. While the experience of the human body is irreducible to language and society, it also does not occur as meaningful outside their limits. We make sense of pain for instance, through specific categories that allow us to attribute meaning to the feeling of pain and encounter it as something we need to endure, cope with, suffer from, and so on. In other words, the very idea of personal experience is already historical and already mediated by language formulated in a certain social context.

From this view, my research focused on the social constitution of the discourses of inclusion and their political implications but nevertheless highlighted the issue of self-identification through the experience of impairment that emerged from the discourse of activists, and especially disabled people participating in

disability movements. As we shall see, the thesis explores questions that arise from this experience and seeks to analyse them in terms of the interface between personal understanding and the ways in which this understanding is unavoidably mediated by historically specific languages and thus depends on (without being merely reducible to) the social medium of discourse.

On the political level, the refocusing of disability movements on the continuum that constitutes disability and impairment is important, insofar as it makes it possible for disabled people to identify with the movement by relating to people with similar experiences. At the same time, no oppressed group that sustains a political movement can dispense with demands for social and political change. The personal experience of impairment, even though it can unify disabled people as a group formed on the basis of its shared identity, cannot promote changes with regard to the position of the group in the wider social and political body. How can a unique personal experience offer the basis for transforming conditions which are necessarily relational, that is, social and political conditions?

In his critique of accounts of disability proclaiming the identity of disabled people with others, Abberley observed how this move fails to document the actual differences between the lives of disabled and non-disabled people as well as the reasons for these differences that would direct a society towards change (Abberley 1989:56). The same danger exists for approaches to disability that focus on impairment in the sense of difference: by considering disabled people as different from others on the grounds of their experience, a theory of disability fails to locate these difference within a shared frame of responsibility, the wider social body, but also understates the quest for reasons and thus the quest for social change.

In the context of this thesis the socially-oriented approach was also dictated by the specific claims and problems of disabled students and citizens within the Greek frame of reference. In a society in which barriers to disabled people undermine and destabilise almost all aspects of their personal, professional and social experience, and where challenges to those barriers have not been seriously addressed by state-policies, it was deemed politically important to advance a critique of these issues. For disabled people, as Campbell and Oliver (1996) have argued, the social model is

politicising and valorising. Its political force arises from the insistence of disability as a social identity, rather than a tragedy arising from an objective condition that must be endured by disabled people (Campbell and Oliver 1996:28-45). The challenge to conceptions of disability as tragedy was deemed to be the most crucial political challenge that can lead to change in contemporary Greece. This perspective was further sustained by discussions with disabled people and activists who stressed the urgency of problems and the vital need for questioning current disability politics.

The broader social context in which I locate the languages of inclusion that arise from my research is Greece as a modern capitalist society, which in the last decades has followed certain postmodern directions and currents of thought, and which currently faces the consequences of a prolonged financial crisis involving major cuts in the government's educational and social policy budgets. This is a society which is defined by socio-political inequality, competition, exploitation and oppression but also by movements of resistance and critique, arising both from within and outside groups of disabled people. The inscription of this division into discursive practices was central to my attempt to interrogate the enlistment of the idea of inclusion in both oppressive and liberating languages. At the same time, there was no assumption that the society in question is neatly split into oppressor and oppressed, in a way that the researcher only has to take a position and name an opponent. As Barnes and Mercer (1997) have argued, this sharp division has been challenged, and studies with Black people, for instance, point to the cross-cutting sources of oppression formed in terms of gender, race, disability. In my research this diffusion of forms of inequality was articulated in terms of differences in educational opportunities as well as social class and status, the existence of which made it possible for certain families to be able to afford private education and better professional opportunities for their disabled children.

The final framework that needs to be discussed is that offered by a reflexive and self-critical account of the research process. According to Haney (2002:287), reflexivity, as an analytical tool, can imply "addressing the power embedded in the researcher/researched relationship" and "recognising researchers' own social locations and disentangling how they might shape the empirical analysis". Reflexive analysis, as we shall see, implied a constant transformation of the interpretive

contexts that I designated. Most crucially, it entailed the qualification of my original appraisals of special and inclusive education.

Thus, while at the beginning of this study, my (liberal) education and personal experience had predisposed me to adopt a straightforwardly negative view towards segregated provision, the interaction with teachers allowed me to qualify this viewpoint and begin to see how special schools might constitute for parents and teachers a certain (even though temporary) resolution to inherent and wider problems in the current educational system in Greece. Likewise, my inaugural and unqualified positive stance towards inclusion was modified when my preliminary research revealed the contradictory nature of the contemporary inclusive vision. This process follows May's idea of "referential reflexivity" (cited in Adkins 2002:336): a reflexive process that does not merely account for the researcher's experience and the worldview of the researched, as if the two were somehow separated, but actively seeks their encounter and integration.

The limits of this approach must also be acknowledged. The researchers' attempt to account for their own social and cultural position is mediated by conceptual tools that are already the product of this position. Hence, while central to self-criticism, reflexive accounts are also limited by the language that defines this position and shapes one's identity. This limitation was most evident in the conflict between the need, on the one hand, to account for the viewpoint of the researched subject without privileging an external or objective appraisal of it and, on the other, to account for the socially determined and, as we shall see, often ideological nature of this viewpoint. In the following pages, this conflict will be evident in the attempt to balance the need to illuminate what the researcher considered as ideological conceptions of the inclusive imperative in the various discourses examined with the need to deploy certain aspects of these discourses as the starting point of self-critique. As Slavoj Žižek has argued, a critique of ideology can only take place when we presume (temporarily) a position outside ideological constructs. Yet this position has ultimately to remain empty. It cannot be occupied by a presumably final theoretical and historical perspective or a positively defined entity, such as a community of researchers. As Žižek puts it,

“Ideology is not all; it is possible to assume a place that enables us to maintain a distance from it, but this place from which one can denounce ideology must remain empty, it cannot be occupied by any positively determined entity – the moment we yield to this temptation we are back in ideology.”

(Žižek 1994:17; emphasis as in the original)

In other words, there is no subject that can claim a permanent association with a neutral viewpoint; yet such a viewpoint must be theoretically presumed and subjects need to constantly aspire to its (temporary) occupation in order to be capable of criticising ideology.

3.5 Moving in and through cultural contexts: Translations of ‘inclusion’ and issues of cultural transference

The reflexive account of interpretive frameworks defining this work must finally focus on cross-cultural and cross-national contexts. While the object of my research is set in contemporary Greece, the work itself took shape for the most part in a British university and deploys concepts and frameworks deriving from the British and wider international debates on inclusion. In addition to theoretical concepts, the thesis evokes certain dimensions of the British paradigm of inclusion, since this has largely served as a model for the development of inclusive education in Greece (see Emanuelsson et al. 2005). This juxtaposition, however, is deployed to illuminate choices and tendencies in Greece and is not intended to offer a full comparison between the two systems. The same perspective underlies the investigation of accounts of inclusion developed in the context of the European Union and the ways these have shaped the Greek educational framework.

The tension between the theoretical framework that was acquired through my studies in Britain and the context of my research was evident from the outset. Disability studies, and the social model in particular, has had limited impact on both theoretical approaches and wider discourses of inclusion in Greece, including the language of disability activists. My attempt to deploy this paradigm and explore its

applicability to the Greek context was therefore far from straightforward, due to the lack of equivalent concepts and methods of interpretation. The categories offered by the social model in order to define inclusion could not be simply transferred to a new context. As Armstrong and Barton have argued, the cross-cultural application of inclusion cannot be seen as unproblematic:

“It is very clear that we cannot just apply the language of inclusion ‘uncritically’, assuming that meanings will be shared across cultures – or even within the same national context or educational authority. Neither can we talk about inclusive education as if it were an entity that can be clearly identified and defined, or free of historical context.”

(Armstrong and Barton 2008a:1-2)

What is required for the critical deployment of concepts in cross-cultural research? How can one deploy radical appeals to equality and emancipation beyond national borders without simultaneously becoming guilty of a cultural imperialism and colonialism that assumes to simply transfer knowledge from the Western centre to the periphery?

The first step towards this move would involve the recognition of the multidirectional and diversified character of the history of inclusive education and therefore the concepts of inclusion. Armstrong and Barton make this point when they argue that there is no such thing as a single ‘history of inclusive education’. On the contrary, the term signifies a diverse international movement, which has had several forms and pertains to “very different social and historical processes and conditions” (Armstrong and Barton 2008a:2). To focus on this difference means to focus on languages that offer no possibilities of direct movement but require the complex process of translation, in the sense that the term has been used in social anthropology and comparative literature in order to designate the cross-cultural rewriting and interpretation of meaning that can never be totally faithful to the original (see Geertz 1973, 1983 and Clifford 1997).

Such an act, as Talal Asad points out, sets aside the ideal of ‘perfect’ translation and recognises its partiality and its involvement in historically constituted power relations (Asad 1986). In seeking to use a vocabulary formulated in Britain in

my interviews with Greek people, but also in my analysis of data, my research is embedded in a framework of power relations that set Greece in the periphery of the Western world. There is therefore the risk of merely imposing on the Greek context a conceptual framework that developed outside its limits and for the purpose of analysing an educational and social system that remains unaware of the categories deployed in my analysis.

This risk is unavoidable for at least two reasons. The first is pointed out by Susan Lynn Gabel and Scot Danforth, when they argue that the current situation of education and politics is already globalised and thus requires of disability researchers around the world to explore the implications of this setting and enquire about its potential for challenging suffering, injustice and the exclusion of disabled people from full participation in their societies (Gabel and Danforth 2008:10). The second reason is the possibility of political movements generated in certain parts of the world to offer new routes for emancipation by highlighting inequalities that remain obscure in other contexts. It has been argued that the social model has played precisely this role of sustaining a political dynamism and an expanding range of diverse disability movements in Western countries and beyond them (Campbell and Oliver 1996).

This form of expansion would need to avoid the imperialist logic that dictates the transfer of knowledge from the centre to the periphery without considering the local constitution of language and culture. In working on this thesis I sought to encounter this problem both in order to question the power relations involved in a relation of inequality between the language of researchers and those of researched subjects, and in order to make the concepts I used meaningful to my Greek interlocutors. In conducting the interviews in Greek I did not simply transfer categories, but engaged in a cross-cultural translation which sought to reformulate terms in the specific context of Greek educational and wider social discourses. In writing the thesis the discourse of interviewees was translated back into theoretical language which remained open to challenges and transformation arising from the Greek discourses of teachers and activists. Thus, the concepts of inclusion, effectiveness and achievement, which constitute the analytical foci of the

interviewing process, were partly modified and ‘translated’ in terms that convey the specificity, the meaning and connotations of these concepts in the Greek context.

The difficulty involved both the transfer of English terms into Greek and vice versa. As we shall see, the term inclusion, for example, which evokes in English a long tradition of debates and practices acquires a distinct range of meanings in the Greek tradition which are not always reducible to the English or western European use of the term. Likewise, the juxtaposition of the established English term ‘disabled people’ and the Greek equivalent *άνθρωποι με αναπηρία*, whose literal translation is ‘people with disability’ also presents a case of cross-cultural transference. The latter term is favoured in Greek discourses: it is the formal expression employed in the most recent legal documents on disability issues and, more importantly, it is the term used by disabled people in Greece as the preferred linguistic medium for self-determination and designation. It is also significant to note that, as in English the term ‘people with disability’ cannot be used interchangeably with ‘disabled people’ in a neutral manner, similarly in Greek discourses the literal translation of the English token ‘disabled people’ (i.e. *ανάπηροι άνθρωποι*) could not be deployed without having at least mildly offensive connotations. [The issue of translation will be discussed further in section 8.2.2 of the thesis presenting the theoretical framework, methodology and design of the interview study of teachers’ discourse].

The dialogue between local and a wider cross-cultural framework of knowledge goes beyond mere problems of translation and serves a twofold political agenda. On the one hand, it seeks to offer a starting point for advancing action research at a local level entailing what Armstrong and Moore (2004:2) defined as “local changes”, which do not presume a unifying and unified framework of objectivity. On the other hand, it attempts to reflect on the ways in which local changes can, in turn, inform wider theoretical and political languages that enable cross-cultural communication and collaboration among disability movements, without allowing the imposition of certain cultural and political traditions on others. As Gabel and Danforth pertinently ask, what role can researchers play in supporting an international record of local knowledge, in other words, broad disability rights discourses that make sense within specific cultural contexts? (Gabel and Danforth 2008:10).

This political agenda posits the final frame of this study to be discussed in this chapter. Conducted in an educational and social context set at the European periphery, my research seeks to avoid on the one hand the imposition of concepts that are merely transferred from centre to periphery, without accounting for local forms of experience and knowledge, and, on the other, the assumption of a certain impossibility of translation that prevents cross-cultural communication of experience. It is precisely this communication, which is capable of transcending local boundaries, while simultaneously respecting the meaning of them, that is seen as central to the development of the disability movement, especially beyond the centre of Europe. Unless the experience and dynamics of a movement can be transferred beyond its limits, it is impossible for this movement not only to advance emancipation but even to maintain itself.

The process of identifying and discussing the methodological premises and limitations of this study cannot be completed without noting that, in the end, this work ultimately constitutes a personal attempt to collect, present and analyse the data. My engagement with this topic was shaped by my personal interest in language and the ways it shapes cultural identities, but also by my personal experience as a teacher in a special school of the evoked ‘establishment’ and ‘failures’ of inclusion in Greece.

My identity as a practicing teacher for the past four years eased in most cases my communication with educationalists, who often viewed me as a colleague rather than someone external to the profession. Yet, throughout my research I wondered how well my study of scholarly literature prepared me to also step out of attachments, affiliations and premises created by this identity. In particular, I often wondered whether I managed to distance myself from the realm of classroom teaching, wherein everyday concerns present themselves with undiminished urgency, in order to locate these concerns within broader social and political frameworks. In parallel, I was well aware of the fact that no teacher can afford to ignore the urgency of such concerns and diminish their significance.

The different frames of discourse that will be presented in the following chapters – that of government officials, of activists and of educationalists – will

hopefully indicate the tension that needs to be maintained between these two positions. At the same time, the obstacles and limitations encountered will prompt further reflection on how to revisit the question of inclusion in future research endeavours.

CHAPTER 4

THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PARADIGM: THE PAST OF INCLUSIVE DISCOURSES IN GREECE

4.1 'Official' histories of special education

While in Western European societies quests for inclusion began to formulate around the early 1980s as a challenge to segregated educational provision in the context of the SEN paradigm, this challenge took contrasting forms – principally related to 'integration' and 'inclusion'. It is, thus, important to emphasise the unevenness of these developments within national education systems, as local authorities have, historically, interpreted 'inclusive' policy in different ways. In each national setting, policy developed in response to different power relations between uneven and context-specific discourses for inclusion, as for instance the values and political vision of those in power, the attitudes of parents and the perceptions of activists for or against inclusion within each locale. Defined by the interplay of heterogeneous and often competing socio-political agendas, and influenced by diversified social and cultural surroundings, this 'quest for inclusion' in Western societies has been neither uniform nor steadfast.

In a similar manner, Greek education followed its own distinct route towards challenging the SEN paradigm. As Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideris (2000:27) point out, Greek special education "has not evolved (at least chronologically) along lines similar to those in other industrialised countries, even though the dominant policies have been highly influenced by policies and practices of other Western countries". One of the most significant differences, as we shall discuss, is the relative absence of critiques of special education after the sixties; that is, a period when disputes of social forms of discrimination, including the idea of disability, became part of the wider European political movements against the status quo.

This chapter turns to the diachronic axis of special education and 'inclusive' education policies in order to explore how the historical establishment of the SEN

paradigm in Greece continues to affect, directly or latently, the legal, institutional and discursive frameworks of inclusion. While the analytical focus of my research is on the synchronic axis, this account of the diachronic context, i.e. the development and transformations of special education in Greece before 2000, will allow us to understand certain aspects of present-day 'inclusive' initiatives, and especially the origin of 'remaining' conceptions and institutions of special education within a discursive framework which is apparently advocating inclusion. The chapter examines how the SEN paradigm, seen as the past of Greek inclusive discourses, is not reducible to a set of ideas and institutions which have by now been rendered obsolete. Despite claims of policy makers for a paradigmatic shift that has made the long-established educational policies of exclusion and discrimination a concern of the past, we shall see that many of the categories and practices associated with SEN would be deployed again in the new discourses of inclusion, thus undermining the emancipatory and transformative potential of inclusive educational theory and practice.

The significance of this historical positioning of inclusion has been stressed by historians of education, such as Katsikas and Therianos (2004:i-ii) pointing out the need to put educational advancements within a historical perspective. Regardless of their spatial or temporal frame of reference such attempts at historicisation serve both as a means for developing a critical stance towards current policy and practice (see Popkewitz et al. 2001), and as a constant reminder of the variability of educational settings and their interdependence with broader economic and socio-political parameters within society as a whole (Simon 1993).

Yet, the task of sketching the historical picture of concepts so fraught with contradictions such as 'special education' and 'inclusion' is far from straightforward. Historical 'truths' and processes can be approached from different angles, each with a distinct focal point, favoured perspective and/or predefined goal. As Derrick Armstrong (2003:23) observes, "history is not simply a set of facts about the world, but it is rather *a set of contested perspectives*" (my emphasis). Concomitantly, it is necessary to underline that the writing of history presupposes forms of *interpretation*, as it is ultimately conditioned by "the writer's own understanding

about how knowledge is constituted and existing accounts interpreted” (Armstrong, F. 2003:55).

A critical account of special education as the historical past of inclusion in Greece has yet to be written, but lies beyond the scope of this thesis, whose focus is the present uses of the concept and discourse of inclusion. We may observe, however, that such an account would not attempt to unify the available historical resources into a single, coherent ‘History’ of Greek special education. Rather, it would need to present in their separate narrative lines the distinct and occasionally ill-assorted histories of different social agents, including especially those whose voices have been silenced and expunged from the official histories, such as the voice of disabled citizens or disability activists who challenge the history of progress represented in official accounts of the ‘past’ of inclusion.

Moreover, a critical account of the production of educational responses to disability forming the past of inclusion must acknowledge the hierarchically organised presence of discursive voices in this process. Since the power relations among different groups of social agents have prioritised governmental discourses in the formulation and implementation of educational policy, it is crucial to acknowledge that it is an ‘officially sanctioned’ perspective on educational history that is placed at the centre of established narrative accounts of special education and inclusion in Greece. Specifically in the Greek context, we shall see in the next chapters that the intervention of disability activists and theorists into the official historical narratives is strikingly limited and is mainly confined to isolated revisions, rather than the systematic writing of alternative histories.

Further research into alternative historical sources may uncover forms of resistance to special education before the establishment of the inclusive paradigm, thus resulting in rewriting the history of disability activism in Greece. Still, the aim of this chapter is to focus on the official account of the past of inclusion and look into the history of responses to student diversity, adopted by the formal Greek education systems and the political administrations responsible for their production and enforcement. Accordingly, the chapter is centred on *systemic responses to students’ diversity* as enforced by the Greek state. In the present context, the term

systemic is employed to signify that these responses form part of the explicit structure and function of the Greek education *system*, rather than of singular initiatives of teachers, parents or other individuals that circumvent nation-wide administrative policy-making.

It is beyond the aims of this work to cover all policy documents, educational legislation and the general governmental rhetoric that form what can be called the ‘official’ past of Greek inclusive discourse. Rather, the chapter will focus on those aspects of the SEN paradigm that are deemed to be consequential for the present state of inclusive discourse and practice – in other words the aspects of the SEN paradigm that constitute the past of inclusion. As must be clear by now, the concept of special education around which I organise the discussion of the past of inclusion is not deployed as a neutral concept, but as one arising from and acting to sustain the dominant approach to the history of disability, special education and inclusion in Greece and beyond it. So, this concept underlies a view of the past that is based on accumulated legislation, government reports and education policy landmarks. The ensuing analysis of the SEN paradigm in Greece, however, aspires to evaluate critically this particular historical perspective, rather than simply to recite legislative documents and educational policy statements of the past. For this purpose we shall begin our discussion by identifying certain shared themes in the production of dominant national education accounts regardless of their respective local context, in order to subsequently look into the specificities of the Greek history of special education policy and practice as the past of inclusion.

4.2 Shared themes in ‘official’ histories of special education

Unsurprisingly, dominant accounts of Greek special education history share a number of common places with similar ‘official’ histories situated in other western European countries and elsewhere. While it does not fall within the scope of this brief overview to discuss exhaustively the cross-national traits of the historical accounts of special education, three commonalities are of particular interest to this study and merit explicit reference.

The first point of notice is what F. Armstrong (2003:55) has identified as “the almost total absence of the voices and perspectives of disabled people in dominant accounts of the history of disability and education”. Historically, disability has been at the margins of any public debate and a peripheral (to say the least) element of the Greek education reforms in the previous century (Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006:279). At the same time, the limited educational and social policies concerning disabled people (and other socially and educationally excluded groups such as immigrants, Roma or Muslims) were developed and enforced following a state-initiated ‘top-down’ model (see Bouzakis 2005), which could not (or would not) accommodate the voices of disabled people themselves. As Lampropoulou and Padelidou (1995:49) point out, all major changes in the design of Greek special education and nation-wide ‘inclusive’ education policies “have occurred through administrative actions, rather than as an outcome of the pressure of the people involved”, an effect echoed in the historical writings on disability and education in Greece through the absence of any reference to disabled people as ‘actors’ in the formation of educational policy.

The second point of interest pertains to what was – in retrospect – defined by disability theorists as a ‘common-sense’ view of disability (see Handley 2003; Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006), a term signifying that this approach is typically presented as ‘natural’ and straightforward, being as it is “more part of the mental furniture of common sense than anything consciously constructed by anyone” (Bickenbach 1999, quoted in Handley 2003:110). This mental furniture has been traditionally at the core of both educational and broader social discourses of disability. As Popkewitz (2001:336) argues, the processes of exclusion and marginalisation to which a social minority group can be subjected are historically produced through and sustained by the systems of recognition and categorisation that construct reason and ‘the reasonable person’. In his words:

“The norms in pedagogical discourses have no way of accounting for difference except in terms of deviation from certain universal standards. In this way, diverse groups are only seen from the perspective of a ‘being’ that is different from the norm... It is thus implied that the best thing that can happen to such a person is to become ‘like the normal person’.”

(Popkewitz 2001:336-337)

The simplistic yet seemingly self-evident logic of this 'reasonable' argument adheres to a clear-cut distinction between 'able' and 'dis-abled' individuals, between the majority of 'us' and the minority of 'them' (Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006:282), thus allowing for an ostensibly unproblematic definition of disability as otherness. Ultimately, this definition advocates an uncritical understanding of the concept, since it is routinely presented as default and given. In the context of the special education paradigm, this view of disability as deviation from the norm underpinned the individual deficit model that informed – until fairly recently – education policy and practice at an international level (see Handley 2003), and is consequently evident in any official history of special education regardless of its localisation.

What is more, as several disability theorists point out, this common-sense approach has shown remarkable resilience to the growing critique on medical discourses of defectology and the subsequent emergence of socio-politically and culturally constructed perceptions of disability within educational and sociological theory in the last quarter of the 20th century. Armstrong and Barton (2007:7), for instance, emphasise the relevance of Popkewitz's aforementioned statement for English educational policies of the past twenty-five years, a period in which the increasingly coercive and restrictive construction of what counts as 'reasonableness' in educational theory and practice has been employed to mitigate the effects of inclusive initiatives by promoting the notion of a 'reasonable inclusion' instead of the 'utopian aspiration' of full inclusion.

Similarly, in relation to the Greek context, Zoniou-Sideri et al. (2006:282-284) not only underline the prevalence of this common-sense approach to understanding disability within the historical axis of national education policies, but also identify its continued existence in dominant representations of disabled people in the Greek media, as well as in contemporary educational and socio-political discourses of disability. This view is one of the most resilient ones in the Greek context. A recent article in the newspaper *Eleftherotypia*, for instance, points out the unceasing use of the terms 'people with special talents', 'heroes of life', or 'winners of life', when disabled people are presented in the mass media (Skordilis 2006). The employment of euphemisms or highly emotive expressions does not only reveal the apparent awkwardness of the reporter/newscaster in the era of a PC-prone media language, but

also promotes an individualistic view of the disabled person as an exceptional case of victim/hero, thus perpetuating “old perceptions of ‘abnormality’, pity and charity that are incompatible with citizenship” (Zoniou-Sideri et al.:283).

Finally, any officially sanctioned history of the movement from special to inclusive education is typically permeated by the idea that the linear progression of time is equivalent to stable and uninterrupted improvement in all facets of social life (see Dyson 2001). In regard to the education of disabled people, this view is translated into the conviction that formal education systems are gradually becoming more inclusive, as they steadily advance from policies and practices of segregation towards the making of inclusive schools that will eventually remove all barriers to learning and social participation. This notion does not imply that political rhetoric is not prone to criticising the fault lines in educational policies of the past, especially the ones implemented by the previous administration. Rather, it signifies a naïve optimism of progress, anchored on the tenuous idea that any novel administrative action or policy reform in education is unequivocally beneficial, providing a better alternative than its predecessor as it capitalises on a presumably constant scientific advance, economic growth and conceptual change. In this sense, the notion of progress evoked in this context constitutes a form of anti-political discourse, in so far as it uses time in order to depoliticise the questions of inequality, social disadvantage and power relations both in the field of education and in the broader social status quo: by evoking some kind of automatic development the idea of progress silences altogether the social underpinning of educational policy making and implementation.

This uncritical outlook on time, history and social progress has already been challenged in the introduction, where it was identified as a central ideological artefact of current hegemonic discourses of inclusion. At this point, however, a short reiteration is required in order to discern the role and function of this discursive construct specifically in official histories of special education. In brief, this myth of ‘continual progress’ serves to sanctify contemporary policy reforms and to present rhetorical strategies as fact. It is typically employed in culturally and politically dominant representations of disability that fail to acknowledge the social origins of impairment and the socio-political disadvantages inflicted on impaired people (cf. Abberley 2006:34), since they straightforwardly present disableness as the result of

human nature rather than the historical product of a specific social and political order.

Official histories of education typically posit policy reforms as “strategies to make schooling more democratic, more progressive and socially responsive” (Popkewitz 2001:337). Yet, a critical approach to the historical production of school reforms as social practices reveals that their “logic and reasoning can be understood as having paradoxes and ironies that are the effects of power” (ibid.). Such a paradox, for instance, can be identified in the discourse of a recent Greek Minister of Education, Mr Stylianidis (although, as will be argued in the following chapter, the paradoxes and ironies are not by any means limited to the discursive plane). In his press release for the ‘International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2007’, Mr Stylianidis described the “expansion of special schools” as one of “the basic parameters” of the government’s efforts to advance a policy of reform that would be capable of “alleviating the social exclusion of people with disabilities”. Interestingly, a couple of sentences later, he asserts that “the promotion of co-education will be at the core of our policy for the social and educational inclusion of individuals with special educational needs” (Stylianidis 2007; my translation).

As Simon (1993:25) argues, modern industrial societies are divided by conflicts which are necessarily inscribed into their education systems. From this view “education becomes, and is best seen as, a site of struggle between what are often opposing, or at least antagonist social forces” (ibid.). This critical awareness, however, is (more often than not) absent in dominant accounts of educational change. In a similar vein, official histories of special education in Greece or elsewhere fall short of unveiling the power relations that underpin the formulation and implementation of social policy and routinely avoid interpreting policy change in the light of competing social interests and their political manifestation (cf. Abberley 2006; Simon 1993).

4.3 Establishing the domination of the SEN paradigm:

A national history in three phases

The three common characteristics of dominant historical accounts of special education discussed so far (namely, the absent voices of disabled people, the proliferation of a common-sense view of disability as deviation from a desired norm, and the rhetoric of stable and continuous progress in social and educational theory and practice) are prominent features of the Greek official history of special education. The acknowledgement of this set of unifying traits facilitates this study's attempt to question the presuppositions behind dominant accounts of educational history and their discourse of continuity (cf. Varela 2001:108), and will be revisited in the ensuing chapters with the purpose of providing a better understanding of the logic behind the formulation of contemporary Greek education policies.

According to Lampropoulou and Padeliadou (1995:50-54), despite the lack of systematic and reliable data regarding the deployment of inclusive projects or initiatives, it is possible to detect three different phases in the development of special education and inclusive alternatives in Greece within the context of the SEN paradigm. Namely, from the first years of the 20th century to 1984, when the case for inclusive education was either totally unheard of or, at best, limited to individual initiatives (op.cit.:51); from 1984 to 1989, a phase characterised by the expansion of special classes or resource rooms within mainstream schools (ibid.); and finally from 1989 onwards, a period in which "the European influence" (op.cit.:53) has been the main determining factor of the Greek special education framework. Although, as will be argued, the determining traits of this third phase are still present in the contemporary form and function of Greek education, for practical reasons this historical overview will set its end point at the year 2000, which marks the enactment of Law 2817 for Special Education. Since, as we shall see, this document has set the stage for the currently active educational policy and practice in Greece, it will be examined comprehensively in the next chapter.

i) 1st phase: Early 20th century - 1984

Throughout its entire first phase the design of Greek special education was based on policies of segregation and exclusion for disabled individuals. These were

legitimised by claims of offering enhanced provision and protection from the harsh realities of an unsympathetic and unforgiving society (cf. Dellasoudas 2003:35). The earliest steps in the establishment of special education are usually dated back to the first decade of the 20th century, stemming from the individual efforts of private charity institutions or the church (see Zoniou-Sideri 1996). The special services provided by these charitable organisations (in most cases, funded and organised by foreign institutions based in England, France or USA) were oriented predominantly towards the care-taking, sheltering and vocational training of children with motor or sensory impairments, having usually a strict institutionalised structure (see Lampropoulou and Padelidou 1995:49; Soulis 2002:276-279).

Spurred by the contemporary emergence of eugenic ideas and public health discourses in the post-industrial revolution Western Europe (cf. Thomson 1998), this charity-based approach on disability highlighted the biological deficiencies and functional shortcomings of disabled people and other groups of social rejects, i.e. the “insane” or the “idiots”. This approach was motivated not only by the philanthropic ideal of ‘moral treatment for the disabled’, but also by the impetus for a healthy workforce fitting the demands of the industrial economy of the era, as well as by the professional and financial interests of an emergent group of public health specialists (see Wright 2001).

The involvement of the state in special education was initiated some thirty years later with the enactment of Law 453 in 1937, which founded the first – and only until 1972 – public school for “abnormal and retarded children” (cited in Soulis 2002:278; my translation). Law 453/1937, which was interestingly the product of the educational policy of General Metaxas’ dictatorial regime, mirrored both the ideology of political administrations and the dominant attitudes towards disability within Greek society at that time. Informed exclusively by a ‘personal tragedy’ medical model of disability, Law 453 adhered to a straightforward dichotomy between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ individuals, defining the latter as “incapable of education” and “stupid”.

Accordingly, special education was understood as a means for protecting the well-being of ‘able’ students and enhancing the quality of education provided to

them by marginalising and ‘safe-keeping’ those who were deemed as disabled. What is more, this argument – despite a mild modification of the vocabulary employed to support it – would remain at the core of special education debates in Greece throughout most of the previous century (see Zoniou-Sideri 1996), showing significant endurance against ensuing discourses of inclusion. As a result, the emergence of inclusive initiatives would appear with considerable delay – in comparison to other western societies – within Greek formal education (Lampropoulou and Padelidou 1998:158).

In the 1950s, collective reflection on the atrocities of World War II made the protection of human rights an international priority. At the same time, WW2 played a “curiously progressive role” (F. Armstrong 2002:441) in allowing greater freedom and opportunity to oppressed groups, such as disabled people, by providing enhanced access to social arenas and activities not typically available to them up to that point. This novel worldwide momentum for the active protection and promotion of human rights as well as the need, which grew out of the disasters of WW2, to incorporate marginalised groups into the mainstream of society gave rise to a new understanding, on the part of some, of disability not as a personal tragedy but rather as a human rights issue; a perspective that entailed “moving away from viewing people with disabilities as problems towards viewing them as holders of rights” (Quinn and Degener 2002:1).

Although this shift to the human rights perspective on disability did not necessarily result in tangible educational and social policy reforms by national governments at the time, it was at least reflected in the active involvement of the new-found United Nations organisation in the protection of the fundamental rights of disabled people. Even in early attempts to develop a comprehensive statement of human rights (as, for instance, the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” in 1948 and the “Declaration of the Rights of the Child” in 1959), the UN voiced its concern for the active participation of disabled people in all aspects of the social, political and cultural life of their country and encouraged the integration of disability issues in the activities of treaty-monitoring bodies and human rights associations at an international level (see Quinn and Degener 2002). At the same time, despite the continuing marginal positioning of disability in governmental discourses, numerous

human rights institutions and pressure groups began to take an active interest in the protection and promotion of disabled people's right to work and education at a national level.

In Greece, however, the effects of this international impetus for the human rights of disabled people were minimal. The end of WW2 found the country entering a particularly troubled era of its history, marked by political and social upheavals, spanning from the Civil War of 1945-1949 up to – and including – the military junta of 1967-1974. The political and social legacies of the Second World War, the four year German Occupation and the animosities of the Civil War that followed, entrenched Greek society in a fratricidal struggle of considerable intensity, which led the country to a socio-political standstill. While in the Western liberal democracies of the 1950s and 1960s numerous human rights movements advocating social change were beginning to foreground disability issues and to protest against the exclusion of disabled individuals and other marginalised social groups from the mainstream of society, in Greece civil liberties were being suppressed, political parties were being dissolved and thousands of political activists were being declared 'enemies of the state' and subsequently imprisoned or exiled (see Mazower 2000).

In this turmoil of violent political clashes, discourses of disability as a human rights issue were sidelined from the mainstream of Greek politics, if not totally disregarded, as a secondary matter of a lesser priority for a society still struggling for basic civil liberties. As a result, despite the quantitatively considerable increase in special services (more special schools, greater concern for the treatment of war-induced impairments and more medical facilities for the rehabilitation of 'handicapped veterans'), the framework of post-WW2 special education in Greece remained both heavily institutionalised and firmly grounded on either a private charity or a social welfare model which further promoted the existing dividing lines and social discriminations between 'able-bodied' and 'disabled' (see Soulis 2002:284).

Significantly, more than 35 years after the education reform of the Metaxas' dictatorship, it was again a dictatorial regime that attempted to reshape and reinforce the state's role in the design of Greek special education. The education reform of the

Greek junta in 1972/73 proclaimed the state's will to cater for the education of those disabled children that were deemed "educable" and announced the founding of the first public schools for "the mentally retarded" across the nation (cited in Soulis 2002:283-284). As a result, 18 special primary schools were founded in 1972 and 20 more in the following year.

While it may at first seem strange that the two modern Greek dictatorial regimes were, up to that point, the only administrations that put forward legislation for the active involvement of the state in special education, it must be noted that this, in essence, forms part of a common propaganda strategy typically utilised by most 20th century western military dictatorships. Like in Spain or several Latin American countries at that time, the Greek dictators strove to draw support for their coup predominantly from the poorest working classes and the underprivileged social groups that had been neglected by previous (democratic) governments, i.e. the rural poor, the low-middle class urbanites and the low income blue-collar workforce (see Couloumbis 1974). Although in practice the junta imposed a centralist form of government in which a small group of elites held power by suspending (brutally when needed) the sovereign independence of the republic, its ideological facade relied on a populist propaganda that portrayed the coup as a 'public revolution' protecting the interests of the 'common people' whether the enemy was 'international communism' or the 'corruption of parliamentary democracy' (see Sakellaropoulos 1998).

Hence, this seemingly heightened sensitivity towards disability issues must be construed as an element of a wider rhetoric employed by a totalitarian regime in an attempt to establish itself as an administration that 'protects the poor and the weak', striving for social justice. In this rhetoric, civil liberties and constitutional rights are traded away for the purported safety and well-being of the poorest members of the society, the same people who in reality are the most vulnerable when a democratic constitution is abolished and the ones that suffer the most under the reign of dictators. With regard to the rights of disabled people, the Greek junta's educational 'reform' perpetuated and solidified existing social norms, prejudices and discriminations. As Kardarakos (2007) points out, while the dictator Papadopoulos was more than happy to be photographed at the inauguration of special schools (thus

promoting his populist public image), these special schools operated without proper funding, administrative support or even formal curriculum until the fall of the junta.

More importantly, the conservative and authoritarian social policy of the junta acted to suppress the expansion of alternative understandings of disability as a human rights issue, that were starting to surface in Greece as part of broader socio-political discourses of the 1960s (see in Bouzakis 1995 the discussion of the 1959 and 1964 Greek education reforms). These discourses focused, among other things, on the transformative potential of education and highlighted its significance in promoting issues of citizenship and human rights, as well as social and cultural change (Provata 2002:148). Yet, the junta, by labelling this line of thinking as 'politically deviant' and by silencing the voice of the majority of disabled people and disability activists as well as of any other social group with a human rights agenda, managed to curtail this process of modernisation of Greek education (see Bouzakis 2005).

The collapse of the military regime and the restoration of democracy in 1974 triggered the liberalisation of educational and social policy in tandem with wider attitudinal changes in the Greek society which foregrounded, for the first time in modern Greek political history, a notion that was to become of central importance to the subsequent discourses of inclusion: the notion of *social cohesion* and the necessity of incorporating successfully into the mainstream of social life the large number of up to then marginalised or disenfranchised minority groups (social, political, ethnic or other). As regards disability issues, this process of democratisation gave rise to a re-evaluation of the established framework for special education and challenged the existing exclusionary and segregationist educational policies and practices, attempting to introduce an integrationist public policy agenda for students with disability (see Stasinou 1991).

Hence, in 1981 the governing party of 'New Democracy' introduced the first Greek law specifically devoted to special education. Law 1143/81 distinguished between "normal" students and "students deviating from the norm", classifying the latter into 10 categories and labelling them according to their disability. Concomitantly, it proclaimed the state's obligation to cater for the needs of the entire

students' population and established the types of special provision available to each category of disabled students. Law 1143 is arguably "a significant legislation document for the history of the Greek special education" (Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006:285), as it represents the first documented legislative effort of the Greek state to formulate a comprehensive framework for special education. Yet, it failed to encapsulate both the growing critique of the scientific community towards the segregationist structure of special schooling and the public impetus for social cohesion and unhindered participation into the mainstream (ibid.). On the contrary, it was firmly rooted in the established paradigm of the medical model for understanding disability and upheld the same forms of impairment-led thinking and practice that preceded it.

As a result, Law 1143 received negative reactions and was almost instantly subjected to much criticism (see Tafa and Manolitsis 2003:156). Specialists and educationalists involved in special education argued that this Law emphasised segregation and maintained the existing dichotomy of special vs. general schools and able vs. disabled, since it focused predominantly on the establishment of medically informed disability labels and functional categorisations (Stasinou 1991). At the same time, disability activists and interest groups with a human rights agenda criticised the Law both for its inability to confront conventional norms and formed stereotypes by adopting a conformist medical-model approach on disability and for its formulaic and outdated vocabulary which draw heavily on traditional discourses of defectology within special education (see Xiromeriti 1997). It is noteworthy, for instance, that the law explicitly separated 'regular' from 'irregular' students (or in the legislators' words: "deviating from the norm") from its very title!

In practice, however, Law 1143 was never fully implemented, since only a couple of months after it was put into effect there was a change in government. The 'socialist' party 'PASOK' (to draw a rough analogy to British political reality, one could describe PASOK and New Democracy as somewhat corresponding respectively to the UK's Labour and Conservative Parties) came to power in October 1981 and remained in office (with a brief interruption in 1992-'93) until March 2004. PASOK introduced two major reforms in educational policy, one in 1983/84 and another in 1997, both of which incorporated an attempt to remodel the existing

framework for Greek special education. As most researchers point out (see Lampropoulou and Padeliadou 1995), the first of these educational reforms has such a historical significance that it is typically regarded as the marking point for the introduction of a new phase in the development of Greek special education and 'inclusive' education policies.

ii) 2nd phase: 1984 - 1989

Even though Law 1143/81 upheld a rigid boundary between special and mainstream schools, in the early 1980s Greek education witnessed the first recorded cases of inclusive initiatives for disabled students, when in 1981-82 children with mild cognitive disabilities were included at the elementary and secondary level for certain school subjects. Those cases were exceptional and represented mostly the individual efforts of pioneer educators, preceding any legal or state initiative in support of inclusive education (Lampropoulou and Padeliadou 1995:51). They did, however, mirror the existing momentum for a re-conceptualisation of special education (which the 1981 Law had failed to undertake) and set the tone for the drafting of a new legislative framework.

It is important to note at this point that the political strength of pressure groups, lobbyists and special interest organisations in modern Greek politics is not insubstantial. This does not imply that disability activists, for instance, are a major force behind the formulation of contemporary education policy-planning. Rather, as Mr. Kourbetis, the Senior Advisor of the Pedagogical Institute on Special Education put it (when interviewed for the purposes of this research), it denotes that the advancement of legislative frameworks for education in Greece's modern history "is not as much the outcome of scientific developments, educational research findings or political philosophy of the governing party", as it is the by-product of "a hasty and ill-considered attempt to capitalise (in terms of political profit) on popular trends, political sentimentalism and relations of patronage between administrations and electors" (Kourbetis 2007:2).

Arguably, this general remark is not specific to the 1985 educational reform (as will be further discussed) and, regardless of its incentives, the 1985 Education Act (Law 1566/85) challenged the value and effectiveness of special schooling, and

proclaimed the state's aim to incorporate special education in the framework of general education. Law 1566, drawing mainly upon the vocabulary and theoretical constructs of the Warnock Report (DES 1978) and other contemporary English policy documents (see Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideris 2000), offered the legal base and institutional restructuring needed for the integration of disabled students in mainstream schools. Furthermore, it introduced the internationally accepted (at the time) term of 'special educational needs' (SEN) in Greek educational policy documents, a moniker which, from then on and up to this date, replaced in administrative discourses the anachronistic labels 'abnormal' or 'retarded'. Finally, the new law acknowledged that students identified as 'having special educational needs' can be "effectively educated within the general curriculum by providing services in the general classroom whenever necessary" (Tafa 1997, quoted in Tafa and Manolitsis 2003:156).

Yet, at the same time, Law 1566/85 did not abandon the rigid categorisation and labelling process of its predecessor. Rather, it sustained the authority of the 10 functional categories of "handicap" that pre-existed, thus upholding the typical medical-model approach to special needs that continued to permeate officially sanctioned discourses on disability in Greece despite the novel integrationist turn in the government's educational agenda (see Vlachou-Balafouti 1999; Zoniou-Sideri 2000a). In addition, the new law promoted the operation of "special classes within ordinary schools" as a means of integrating so called 'students with special needs' into the mainstream. To clarify, the Greek 'special class' functioned similarly to what in USA is described as 'a resource program' or in the UK as 'part-time withdrawal in a learning support base' (see Vlachou 2006:41). For that reason, the terms 'support room' or 'resource class' are usually preferred in the bibliography with an international readership and will be employed here in a similar manner.

Under the integrationist banner of the 1985 Education Act the support room became "very fast – and without the backup of formal assessment and evaluation – [...] the dominant model of special needs provision" (Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006:285). In other words, they were hastily introduced without the necessary preparations and the systemic changes required for the effective implementation of the 'resource program'. The number of special education resource rooms in Greece grew from 7

(in 1984) to 520 (in 1991), serving mainly children with behavioural problems, moderate learning difficulties and mild cognitive disabilities, while a small number of these classes consisted of students coming from socially deprived groups or ethnic minorities (see Booklet of Information on Special Education 1994). In most cases the resource classes functioned “without specialist personnel, without specially selected material, and often without special organizational arrangements” (Lampropoulou and Padeliadou 1995:52).

In this context, the practice of support rooms, instead of promoting inclusion, facilitated the expansion of special education, since it attempted to accommodate disabled students in a basically unaltered school culture and organisation without the transformative actions necessary for the restructuring of education. As Zoniou-Sideri (1996) has argued, this dominant integrationist model in Greek education during the mid to late 1980s has striven to regulate the management of student differentiation through functional segregation, avoiding by any means the ‘contamination’ of the mainstream educational praxis with the contingencies of inclusive schooling. In other words, the persistent expansion of resource classes in contemporary Greek education, above and beyond the inadequacies in its implementation and the still unsolved practical problems in its execution, hints to the absence of a truly inclusive ethos (able to encompass all the varieties of ‘deviant students’) both within school culture or structure and in the principles underlying the formulation of educational or broader social policy in Greece.

This process, however, of relocating children identified as ‘having SEN’ from segregated learning institutions into the environment of mainstream schools entailed the gradual increase of pressure from education specialists and disability activists (see Stasinou 1991) for ‘more integration’, both quantitatively and qualitatively, thus opening the way to a new stage in the historical development of Greek special education. In this (the latest) phase, the term ‘inclusion’ was introduced into the design of Greek formal education, under various formats and in diverse pragmatic contexts or discursive modes, becoming the new buzz-word of the educational community in its attempts to enhance the quality of educational provision for all students, regardless of their abilities or ‘needs’.

iii) 3rd phase: 1989 - 2000

Law 1566/85 remained for the next fifteen years the core legislative statement for Greek policy makers, until it was replaced in 2000 by the law that largely defines the current legal and institutional framework for disability issues in Greece (i.e. Law 2817/2000). Yet, despite the absence of new legislation, the period from 1989 onwards is acknowledged as a new phase in the history of Greek special education and 'inclusive' education initiatives, since it is characterised by the advancement of novel organisational structures as well as the implementation of administrative regulations aiming – according to the official policy statements that accompanied them at least – to enable “mainstreaming special and ordinary education into a unified educational system” (Barbas et al. 2006:217). Since the year 2000 marks the inception of the legal framework that still defines, as we shall discuss in the ensuing chapters, the present of inclusive education policy in Greece, it provides a suitable endpoint for this review of the past of the inclusive paradigm – with the necessary caveat, however, that the educational structures, socio-political conditions and attitudinal frames delineating the 3rd phase often transcend this barrier and maintain their relevance within the present status of inclusion in Greece (see chapters 5 & 6).

For Lampropoulou and Padeliadou (1998:153) this 3rd phase is best described as “the period of the European influence” although it would be more appropriate to label it “the period of the EU influence” in order to shun the conflation of ‘European’ with ‘member of the EU’ that commonly appears in social, economic, political and even academic discourses. Arguably, the EU has been the main formative factor behind Greek socio-economic policies and practices ever since the country’s induction in 1981. This signified, among other things, a change of direction for Greek education towards a more market-responsive educational system, meeting the demands of a new, EU-oriented, economy (Bouzakis 2005). At the same time, Greece’s EU membership multiplied the communication channels with Western European societies and augmented the influence of Western European social, political and educational discourses on the new member State. This new-found ‘European orientation’ (a buzz-phrase in Greek political rhetoric of the 1980s) instigated a “discourse of crisis” centred around the exigency of modernisation if Greece was to address successfully the challenges of the EU politico-economic and socio-cultural space (Zambeta 2002:638-639).

While this process of EU convergence began in the early 1980s, its effects were first and foremost visible in the design of Greek economy and the marketplace. In the field of education, this transition was partially discernible in the 1983-85 reform efforts, but it became more conspicuous and influential in socio-political and educational discourses adopted by Greek administrations during the 1990s (*ibid.*). For special education in Greece, the year 1989 is particularly important as it marks the starting point of the EU programme HELIOS (i.e. 'Handicapped people in the European community Living Independently in the Open Society'). While the HELIOS project has since evolved into a multifaceted observation platform monitoring a large number of thematic policy priorities within the EU (see HELIOS Report 2007), in 1989 it constituted for Greece, as Dellasoudas (2003:126) comments, the first methodical attempt at tackling disability issues by focusing on enhanced access to learning for all, secured personal development and right to citizenship, as well as increased opportunities for independent living and full social participation for disabled people (see EU C88/231).

Concomitantly, inclusive discourses were strengthened in Greece during the 1990s by EU and international processes pertaining to human rights issues, which increased pressure on the socio-political life of the country for changes on both governmental policies and social attitudes concerning disability. Apart from the integration efforts within the HELIOS framework which gained the increasing support of the Greek State, the case for the educational and social inclusion of disabled people was promoted by the ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) by the Greek Parliament in 1992 and the adoption of several directives issued by the European Ministers Council and the European Commission. In 1990, for instance, the 'Resolution of the Council and the Ministers for Education concerning integration of children and young people with disabilities into ordinary systems of education' (EU C90/162), proclaimed the commitment of the member States to consider "full integration into the system of mainstream education" as a "first option" for students with disabilities (EU C90/162:Par.1). The development of this new 'inclusive' orientation in Greek socio-political life was helped further by U.N. and UNESCO Resolutions, Declarations and Acts such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994).

Yet, the propagation of inclusive discourses in the 1990s went hand in hand with the emergence of a contradiction “between the rhetoric of inclusive education and the reality of the expansion of special provision for an increasing number of students” (Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006:279). While the ideal of inclusion was beginning to gain momentum within the Greek society, educational policy and practice remained focused on organisational structures and modes of expression that reduced inclusion to a peripheral element of Greek education, synonymous (in most cases) to locational integration (see Lampropoulou and Padelidou 1995:53-55). The continuing expansion of the support room model was deemed, with few exceptions, as ‘adequate inclusion’ for students identified as ‘having SEN’ (Ministry of Education 1988), at the same time that “the pedagogical characteristics of the educational environment were ignored” (Barbas et al. 2006:217). Factors such as the attitudes and knowledge of mainstream education teachers, the content of curriculum, the establishment of an inclusive school culture and the development of the socio-economic presuppositions of inclusion were sidelined in the discourse of policy makers (Vlachou 2000:34).

Although disability had left the margins of Greek socio-political discourses in the 1990s, the significant change of social attitudes and political rhetoric was not unequivocally translated into new governance structures or educational policies promoting inclusion. As Zoniou-Sideri et al. (2006:280) argue, this kind of “simplistic optimism” would be both misleading and incapable of “acknowledging the complexities and contradictions of the Greek inclusive discourse”. It was, however, in this context of an unprecedented visibility of human rights, social cohesion and disability issues in political discourses that a new law for special education, Law 2817, was produced in 2000. With this in mind, we shall now turn to explore the contradictions of this new discourse and its implications for educational praxis, shifting the analytical focus from the past to the present and future of inclusive education in Greece.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCING 'INCLUSIVE' EDUCATION IN GREECE: GOVERNMENTAL DISCOURSES, NATIONAL POLICIES & THE ONGOING HEGEMONY OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PARADIGM (2000-2008)

5.1 Placing the focus on governmental discourse

In 2010 the National Coalition of Disabled People in Greece (NCDP), a political organisation representing the Greek disability movement on a national level, submitted a letter to the ministry of education in which it stressed the continuing exclusion of disabled children from schools. As they wrote,

“Thousands of students with disability have remained excluded from all grades of the national educational system. [...] Many children with disability have not had the joy of listening to the school bell on the same day as every other student in this country, while for many others the school-year never started.”

(quoted in the newspaper *Eleftherotypia* 2010b)

Over the last few years governmental legislation on Special Education declared the advancement of inclusive policies as the key and only aim of disability politics coming from both socialist and conservative governments. Yet, disabled children are still prevented not only from full participation in educational processes but even from attending schools.

This contradiction constitutes the starting point of this chapter, which investigates the discourse of government and other political and institutional forces that produce and sustain the official responses of the Greek education system to student diversity at a national level. The discussion draws predominantly on my research into educational policy statements that compose the contemporary official framework for 'inclusive' education and are published in the form of constitutional articles, laws, presidential decrees and proclamations of the Greek Ministry of Education. A close analysis of Law 2817 (passed in 2000) will act as the focal point

of the study. This “Law on Special Education” (as its subtitle reads) provided the legal foundation for all developments in both special and ‘inclusive’ education during the past decade. Although a new Law on SE came into effect in 2008 (Law 3699, ratified in October 2008) the main body of the legal and regulatory propositions of Law 2817/2000 remained intact and practically still governs the form and function of Greek SE to the present day. With this in mind and considering that most of the administrative decisions postulated in the recent law have not been put into operation yet (only some minor amendments were effectuated in the school-years 2009/10 and 2010/11), Law 3699/2008 will subsequently be discussed in the next chapter which will focus on the current status and future perspectives of inclusive policy and practice within Greek education.

While the central theme of this chapter will be the critical analysis of the existing legislative and regulatory framework, in tandem the ensuing discussion will also draw heavily upon the publicly available general political discourse on inclusive policy and practice, as presented in the Greek mass media, the internet, information leaflets, interviews and elsewhere by government officials, Members of Parliament and other political or institutional agents, as for instance the Senior Advisor of the Pedagogical Institute on Special Education (who was interviewed for the purposes of this research).

We must note that only dominant political discourses will be discussed in this chapter. Hence, our analysis will focus mainly on the official discourses on inclusion and inclusive education by the two major political parties in Greece, namely the socialist/centrist PASOK and the conservative New Democracy. These parties have been alternating in government for the past 35 years and, thus, are responsible both for the formulation of the current mainstream political discourses on inclusion and for the implementation of nation-wide social policy and formal education planning since the *Metapolitefsi* (i.e. the 1974 transition from dictatorship to multi-party democracy). Certain aspects of alternative and peripheral political discourses on inclusion, as for instance those articulated by the smaller (in terms of electoral percentage and access to power positions) parties of the Greek left, are, on certain occasions, voiced in the frame of the counter-discourses on inclusion by Greek

disability activists and educationalists that will be discussed in chapters 7 and 8, respectively.

Furthermore, the study will refer to the more recent general directives and educational policy reports and statements of the European Union, aiming to contextualise the current form and function of 'inclusive' education policy in modern Greece within the overarching EU agenda on social policy and education. Touching upon issues of educational theory transference and policy borrowing, I shall attempt to underline the ineffectuality of a nation-wide policy analysis (in this case, the Greek government's national policy on educational and social inclusion for disabled people) outside the formative context of broader political and institutional forces, which are to a great extent responsible both for the production and for the ratification of this policy. Hence, the discussion of the Greek education context in this chapter will also take into consideration the European Union's general rhetoric on educational inclusion, as expressed through human rights statements, EU legislation and specific directives for its member states on educational policy.

Following the socially-oriented theoretical framework discussed in previous chapters, my analysis will suggest that the governmental discourse on inclusion is shaped by a network of social and economic factors which are inscribed into the official language of inclusion. These factors operate both at the macro-political level, such as the increasing globalisation of Greek economy and the demands of a market-oriented educational system (especially under the current climate of global economic recession), and at the micro-political level of Greek educational policy, such as the interplay between politicians and groups of professionals with vested interests in the field of education.

With this consideration in mind, this chapter aims at a wider socio-political account of governmental discourses on inclusion in Greece, by foregrounding the salience of economic relations, cultural assumptions and ideological forces in the development of inclusionary or exclusionary policy and practice within the national education system. In doing so it explores how educational policies, as Oliver (1988:13) has argued, "have not developed separately from other initiatives in the areas of health, housing, social security, family support and so on", but also from the

wider social and political situation in which they take shape. In this context, policies are not simply administrative measures, but “contain implicit and sometimes explicit assumptions about the nature of the problems they are set up to tackle” (op.cit.). As will be argued, although in Greece (as in other EU countries) there is nowadays evidence of an increasingly ‘inclusive’ vocabulary within the discourse of policy-makers and a nominal prominence of human rights issues within legislative documents, this is not accompanied by an equally palpable policy shift towards the formulation of a more inclusive public education system. What is more, as this close examination of the ‘inclusive’ initiatives within contemporary Greek education seeks to reveal, there appear to be significant discrepancies between stated and enacted educational policy as well as wider social policy and practice. This is a tension that introduces into governmental discourse contradictions and conflicts that are central to all official appeals to inclusion.

The political significance of official discourses and practices of inclusion, as we saw, has been variously highlighted by scholars investigating the recent turn to the concept within western European societies. Lately, a similar problematic has begun to emerge in the Greek context. As Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideris (2000:30) point out, although “legislation is not in itself sufficient to meet the vision of a barrier-free society”; yet it still constitutes a significant parameter of “the process of overcoming disabling barriers”. Moreover, a critical evaluation of the current legal framework for Greek special education and its ‘inclusive’ counterpart is a prerequisite for understanding “to what extent successive governments [in recent Greek political history] have had the political will to promote and support the creation of inclusive education” (ibid.). Hence, to facilitate this analytical focus, the ensuing sections will examine the governmental discourses on inclusion.

After a concise presentation of the current administrative structure of the Greek education system, the discussion begins with an investigation of ‘inclusive’ policy planning and governmental rhetoric over a period of changes between a socialist and a conservative government, namely PASOK and New Democracy. It starts with the PASOK administration from the inception of Law 2817/2000 to the 2004 national elections when the New Democracy party rose to government (until the elections of September 2009 which brought PASOK back to power). The first period of the New

Democracy administration (2004-2008) will be subsequently analysed in a separate section, before finally turning to the present state and future perspectives of inclusive education in Greece by examining the most recent legislative changes (Law 3699/2008, voted with New Democracy in office) and the policy revisions put forward by the current PASOK administration.

At this point it must be noted that, while the different administrative eras of the socialist/centrist government of PASOK (2000-2004, 2009-present) and the conservative government of New Democracy (2004-2009) will be discussed in separate sections, this choice does not entail a qualitative distinction between the two parties as regards the form or content of enacted educational policies. The division seeks to represent the temporal and historical routes of the language of inclusion in Greece and offers two time-frames which are posited as distinct by official discourses. However, both administrative eras will finally be appraised in unison. As we shall see, despite all declarations to the contrary, they both shape collectively the modern design of Greek education, presenting a consistent and rather unified political vision on education governance and broader social policy formulation. Hence, with this significant caveat, we can now turn to the current administrative structure of the Greek education system and examine its development over the past decade.

5.2 Introducing ‘inclusive’ education in Greece: Policy changes and the resilience of special education

5.2.1 Disability politics in a centralised system: The administrative structure of Greek education

The provision of free education to all citizens and at all levels of the public education system is a constitutional principle of the Greek State, as stipulated by Article 16 of the Constitution (Constitution of Greece 2001: Article 16, par. 4). In its latest revision (2001), the Constitution also introduces a reference to “people with disabilities” and guarantees their rights with regard to self-sufficiency, educational

inclusion, professional advancement and social participation (Article 21, par. 6). Accordingly, the state retains the right to control and the obligation to finance all aspects of the process of educational provision for the entire student population ('abled' and 'disabled') in state institutions. It is, therefore, responsible for the full range of educational arrangements, from the allocation of resources and the employment of tutors, to the designation of curriculum, the distribution of textbooks, the sanctioning of teaching methods and so on. The operation of private universities is prohibited (Article 16, par. 5) and the activity of the private sector within primary and secondary education is strictly regulated by the Ministry of Education.

Article 16 has been under political scrutiny for the last few years and is currently the subject of a confrontational public debate in view of a pending amendment of the Greek Constitution. Both the present centrist Cabinet (PASOK) – although very recently, at the end of 2011, an interim coalition government was appointed with broader parliamentary support, the vast majority of the PASOK cabinet, including the Minister of Education, remained in position – and the main opposition party (New Democracy) have expressed their intention to revise Article 16. While it is unclear at the moment what this revision entails, political discussions have focused particularly on modifications which will allow for the establishment of non-state owned universities, in accordance with EU directives on the operation of private tertiary education institutions. Yet, the continuing and unaltered impact of this constitutional article on Greek educational legislation during the past three decades (Article 16 was included in the Greek Constitution of 1975 and was not modified in the constitutional amendments of 1985 and 2001) has been instrumental in creating “a very consistent picture regarding school management, resources, curriculum content and teaching arrangements across the country” (Vlachou 2006:41).

More specifically, this ‘consistent picture’ entails that the central administrative agency is the ‘Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs’ with its general and specific authorities. In each area the schools are directly administrated by the local education authority and are supervised by the regional ‘Directorate of Education’, which reports directly to the Ministry. Although the country is divided into geographical regions for administrative purposes, there are no

independent departures from the nation-wide uniformity in administrative structure and implementation of educational policies (cf. Kassotakis & Lambrakis-Paganos 1994). Regarding decisions on curricula, textbooks, teaching methods and pedagogy, a number of expert authorities are bestowed with the role of specialised consultants reporting directly to the Ministry and assisting in fulfilling its functions. The most significant and influential of these authorities is the 'Pedagogical Institute' (*Paidagōgiko Institutouto*), an independent public institution focusing on educational research, curricula planning and educational policy formulation.

General education is offered in two levels: Primary education, which includes kindergartens (ages 5-6) and elementary schools (ages 6-12), and Secondary education, which includes the Gymnasium (ages 12-15) and the Lyceum (ages 15-18). The Greek State enforces 9 years of compulsory education (Constitution of Greece 2001: Article 16, par. 3), starting at the age of 6 with the enrolment at the 6-grade elementary school and expanding up to the end of the 3-grade Gymnasium (see Ministry of Education 2008). In 2009 one year of pre-primary education (at the age of 5) was added to the compulsory education years. It is crucial to note that, although Article 16 refers to compulsory education without differentiating between non-disabled and disabled or any other category of students, the subsequent educational laws (including Law 2817/2000) allowed for the exemption of students with disabilities from the 9 years of compulsory education, usually by providing the option of home-schooling as a valid alternative. It was not until the recent Law 3699/2008 (which will be discussed in the next chapter) that the Greek State attempted to amend this legislative loophole.

An equally centralised administrative framework also regulates the functioning of Greek special education. Its top management is appointed to the central body of the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for determining a common national curriculum for all students identified as 'having Special Educational Needs' (SEN). At the same time, the ministry oversees the allocation of resources and regulates the operation of the designated evaluation and support services, such as the 'Diagnostic, Evaluation and Support Centres' (or KDAY) introduced in Law 2817/2000 (and subsequently renamed to KEDDY with Law 3699/2008), that are responsible for the assessment and subsequent placement of disabled students in mainstream, inclusive

or special educational settings. A 'Special Education Directorate', operating within the ministry, monitors the implementation of legislation on special education and supervises the 16 localised 'Special Education Advisors' that co-ordinate educational provision for 'students with SEN' in their area of responsibility. Outside the main ministry's structure, a number of public officials hold assistive roles as consultants, typically with a regional focus, in cooperation with the 'Senior Advisor of the Pedagogical Institute on Special Education', the most influential of the independent consultants on disability issues, appointed by (and reporting directly to) the Minister of Education.

Since Greece has ratified most of the major EU and UN conventions as regards access to education and employment for disabled people, the legal and administrative educational framework prioritises, in theory at least, the process of mainstreaming for students categorised as 'having SEN'. It is thus declared that the function of Greek special education "aims to meet the Constitutional obligation to include and re-introduce children with special needs into the educational system" (Open Society Institute 2006:33). Yet, this declaration has been disputed by the European Union's monitoring agencies (EUMAP), which have criticised Greece for the lack of "a specialised body to address discrimination issues on any grounds" and the absence of a "unified definition of intellectual disability in Greek legislation" (op.cit.:25).

In practice this inclusive principle is systematically violated by the limited range of options offered to disabled students. Indeed, despite the scarce availability of official statistics regarding educational provision for Greek disabled citizens, independent research indicates that only a small number of disabled children are included in the general school population, either in the mainstream classroom or in special classes within the mainstream school. At the present moment, the majority of "students with disabilities" (a term which is favoured within Greek official education policy documents in lieu of the term 'disabled students') is educated in special settings (see Open Society Institute 2006:14-15). Segregated educational provision in Greece is typically supplied in special elementary (ages 4-14) and secondary (ages 14-22) "schools for the deaf, the blind and children with intellectual disabilities" (see Law 3699, Articles 6 and 7), as well as in a number of vocational training facilities. All of these educational institutions operate under the direct control of the state,

whether they are state owned (the vast majority) or funded by the church and other charitable organisations.

The tension between declared political intentions and implemented practices is highlighted by the fact that, in this centralised administrative system, the Ministry of Health remains a key authority in special education. Although the recent educational laws attempted to provide a comprehensive administrative framework for special education, coordinated exclusively by agencies encompassed within the structure of the Ministry of Education, several issues pertaining to the education of disabled students – as, for instance, certain evaluation processes and, in some cases, the allocation of supplementary teaching resources – remain under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health (we shall return to this issue). At the moment it is also important to note that, although the introduction of ‘Diagnostic, Evaluation and Support Centres’ (KDAY) with Law 2817/2000 offered a means for the formal identification of ‘special needs’ and the placement of students in special schools, there is currently neither an official procedure, nor a specific re-examination process established for the possible reintegration of these students into the mainstream.

The centralised organisation of the Greek educational system could have facilitated changes that would have promoted inclusion due to its increased power for obtaining data on disabled students in order to plan and implement policies on a national level. However, the lack of concrete official statistical information (Open Society Institute 2006:29) is a continuing and significant obstacle in any state-driven effort for an effective response to student diversity. The 2001 census sought no data on ‘disability and the most recent representative data is from the 1991 census, which greatly underestimates the total number of people with intellectual disabilities at around 150,000 in a population of 11 million (Padeliadou 2003:70). (At the time of completing this thesis there is yet no published data from the most recent census carried out in May 2011.) In their attempt to assess the numbers of disabled people, Greek researchers usually follow the officially sanctioned EU statistical methodology as a more reliable source concerning the exact number of students experiencing difficulties relating to ‘special educational needs’ or any type of ‘learning difficulty’ in Greece. This estimates that “at least 10 per cent of the EU population will be affected at some point in their life by a disability” (European

Commission 2004:5). Accordingly, it is postulated that Greek primary and secondary education should cater for at least 100,000 students with general or specific learning difficulties out of the over 1,000,000 students from ages 6-18 (National Statistical Service of Greece 2008), while other international statistics raise the anticipated number of school age disabled Greeks as high as 200,000 (cf. Eurydice 2010).

The use of these statistical data highlights the degree to which disabled students are in fact excluded from schools. A recent statistic, regarding the school-year 2007/08, reported that out of the 1,074,031 students enrolled in compulsory education (primary and lower-secondary school levels, ages 6-15) only 23,470 students enrolled in programs of special education, of whom 16,118 attended mainstream schools (either in 'special' sections or 'regular' classrooms), while 6,659 attended special education schools of all levels and types (Eurydice 2009:1,7). For the following school-year 2008/09, a similar EU survey provided almost identical numbers: 23,599 students (including those enrolled in continuing education programmes; Eurydice 2010:207). For 2009-2010, the Ministry of Education reported a slight increase: 30,006 students identified as 'having SEN' were enrolled in Greek schools (Eleftherotypia 2010c). Although this number corresponds to a 90% upsurge when compared with the respective statistics from 2004 (ibid.), it still represents only a small fraction of the estimates for school age disabled Greeks.

In other words, the number of students receiving any sort of special educational provision (either in special or mainstream settings) is limited to approximately 2% of the total student population, while one must assume that the remaining number of disabled students (nearly 80,000 children according to the most modest estimation) is offered no special education or, perhaps, no education at all. Taking also into consideration that the number of students that might require additional (or 'special') learning support is not restricted to the children that are labelled by official statistics as "students with disability", this limited SEN provision raises questions about the ability of Greek education to provide an effective and timely recognition of learning difficulties within the student population (see Lampropoulou and Padelidou 1995:57-58). This failure is intensified by the centralised organisation of the national education system, which prevents teachers in schools from effectively engaging in collective action that could address the problem.

Most importantly, from the viewpoint of this thesis, the statistical data point towards the inadequacies of the formal identification and intervention methods currently adopted by Greek education administrators (Vlachou et al. 2006:203-204), which interrupt the consistency of official appeals to educational equality and contradict similar appeals to educational inclusion. The key contradiction that arises from this move and will concern us throughout this chapter is the one between the evocation of equality that sustains the centralised organisation of Greek education and the routine failure of that formal education system to set the conditions for challenging the exclusion of disabled children.

Arguably, from this brief overview of the administrative structures in the Greek education system already emerges a valid sense of top to bottom policy formulation and enforcement, which delineates a rather restrictive *modus operandi* for the individual schools and teachers. As Vlachou (2006:41) observes, the Greek education system has always been and still remains “extremely centralised and firmly controlled by the state”. Despite considerable changes in the design of formal education over the past 25 years and attempts to democratise education through decentralisation, democratic planning and the localisation of governmental processes (Zambeta 2002:638), the “bureaucratic, hierarchical and centralist character of educational governance in Greece remained largely unchanged” (Kazamias 1990, cited in Zambeta 2002:638). The Ministry of Education exercises a rigid control over virtually all school procedures and enforces specific timetables, common school policies and a fixed national curriculum with detailed instructional guidelines and identical textbooks (see Kassotakis & Lambrakis-Paganos 1994:95).

Governmental discourses, as will be argued in the next pages, typically attempt to legitimise the uniformity of the Greek education system through a political rhetoric that foregrounds the ideal of social equality and a commitment to the democratisation and modernisation of education (see Kazamias 1990). However, as we shall see, the meaning of these concepts is contestable and has been challenged precisely by those groups that they are supposed to empower. As Papadopoulos (1997, cited in Vlachou 2006:41) aptly comments, the centralised Greek education system, while purporting to sustain democratic processes, “demonstrates the unwillingness of an inflexible and under-resourced system to negotiate educational

processes and outcomes and meet the diverse needs of its pupils”. Likewise, although the emergent forms of education governance in Greece today are based on the construct of modernisation as an inevitable process following globalisation and EU integration (Zambeta 2002:637), it is neither clear nor uncontroversial what this task of modernisation entails. In practice, as several commentators have pointed out (see Kazamias and Zambeta 2000), this pursuit of modernisation has intensified the presence of such notions as ‘competitiveness’, ‘entrepreneurialism’ and ‘effectiveness’ within Greek education during the past two decades, particularly with regard to the intended form, structure and purpose of post-compulsory secondary (i.e. the Lyceum) and tertiary education.

The ensuing discussion, focusing on the recent Greek legislation on special education and the concurrent governmental rhetoric on educational and social inclusion, follows a twofold route. On the one hand, it seeks to explore how concepts such as inclusion, integration, democracy, equality and modernisation of education are presented by dominant official discourses as ideals that are presumably empowering for disabled people and capable of sustaining social cohesion. On the other hand, it will seek to discuss how this discourse is not only violated by politics, but is itself contradictory and fraught with paradoxes and tensions. The critique of the official Greek discourse on inclusion will be fully developed in chapters 7 and 8, wherein my language of critique will merge with the emancipatory and critical discourses of political activists and educationalists. However, the discussion of conflicts that split governmental discourses from within will challenge the idea of a unified purpose of inclusion that is claimed by government officials and will allow us to investigate which conceptions of inclusion are profoundly embedded in a political system established on antagonism, socio-economic inequalities and asymmetrical power relations.

5.2.2 The persistence of impairment: Law 2817/2000, ‘inclusive’ policies and governmental discourse (2000-2004)

Although several legislative Acts of the late 1980s and 1990s contained marginal references to special education (see Dellasoudas 2003:161), the core

administrative framework for Greek special education until the advent of the new millennium was provided (with few minor amendments) by Law 1566, which was enacted in 1985. Significantly, the 1997 Education Act passed under the socialist/centrist PASOK administration (Law 2525/1997) made no reference to educational provision for disabled students and left the dated legislative structure intact. However, at around the same time, the government circulated a separate draft law for special education, which was finally voted for by the Greek Parliament in March 2000, after “a long process of ‘negotiation’ and redrafting” (Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006:285).

The introduction of the 1985 Education Act was based, according to governmental claims at least, upon the noble notions of inclusion and equality of opportunity, which have become “quite suddenly very popular in political discourses” (Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideris 2000:33-34). Yet, in its 15 years course, as we saw in the previous chapter, Law 1566 had completely failed to reshape the exclusionary structure and orientation of the Greek educational system. Premised on the dominant individualistic conceptualisation of disability, Law 1566 manifested an underlying ideology that singled out impairment as “the direct cause of disability and social exclusion, without any consideration of the relative nature of ‘special needs’ and the importance of socio-political factors that construct the mechanisms of exclusion” (Vlachou-Balafouti 2001:117).

Next to this impairment-led conceptual framework, the reforming potential of the 1985 Education Act was further hindered, at a practical level, by the lack of follow-up legislation that would ensure its thorough implementation, as most of the Presidential Decrees that were mandatory for the ratification of several Articles in Law 1566 were never enacted (see Dimitropoulos 2001:255). In addition, the fiscal stringency which ruled the Greek public sector in the 1990s resulted consistently in funding constraints and scanty financing for special education projects as well as for any inclusive education initiatives. In 1998, for instance, the official data provided by the Ministry of Education show that “the budget allotted to Special Education Units corresponds to only 1% of the total budget for education in Greece” (study conducted by the Greek National Centre for Social Research, cited in Vlachou-Balafouti 2001:113). The lack of special education infrastructure and the scarcity of

financial resources for the education of students identified as ‘having special needs’ within a Greek education system that, at the same time, actively promoted the expansion of special schools and classes (see Ch. 4) is of particular interest to this study. Although this type of political decision-making is typically justified under the pretext of economic rationalism, in essence, it has more to do with the ideological constructs that inform social policy formulation and implementation.

Hence, as the criticism directed towards the shortcomings of the existing legal and regulatory framework was growing stronger – a criticism that was embarrassingly for the government exposing its inability to fully meet the educational needs of disabled students – the announcement of an imminent new law for Greek special education, was hailed by many academics, educationalists and activists (see Efstathiou 1999) as an overdue amendment to the outdated integrationist agenda of Law 1566. For instance, Andreas Dimitropoulos, a teacher with a significant research record and many years of teaching experience in Greek special schools, contended at the time that the new law would offer “the framework for implementation of new ideas toward a school for all students regardless of differences and individualities” (Dimitropoulos 2001:251).

Moreover, the 1990s marked a significant change in the orientation of Greek educational and broader socio-economic policies (cf. Ch. 4). In this period, a plethora of new legislative and administrative acts were introduced with the main intent to support and enhance the country’s convergence with the European Union’s overarching socio-economic agenda. These EU convergence efforts did not sit comfortably alongside the outdated terminology, administrative perspective and ideological formations embedded in Law 1566/1985. Hence, the introduction of a new special education Act was welcomed as a major opportunity for Greek legislation to encompass and solidify the contemporary EU policy advances towards the implementation of a more inclusive educational reality for students with disabilities. In this vein, Lampropoulou was writing in 1998 that “[r]ecently the Ministry of Education under the influence of European programs such as HELIOS has been moving towards a policy of inclusion and new legislation is being drafted at the present time for this purpose” (Lampropoulou 1998:194). In a similar vein, Vlachou-Balafouti and Zoniou-Sideris (2000:39) noted that the contemporary policy

trends in the Greek education system render the integration of disabled children and adults within the wider community “more visible” in comparison with the past and that “[t]he underlying values and assumptions informing official educational policies have begun to be questioned” (ibid.).

While the discourse of Greek academics and educationalists in the late 1990s / early 2000 mirrors a heightened concern for issues of social and educational inclusion, egalitarianism, human rights, as well as the demand for a regulatory framework that would actively promote inclusive education, there was arguably no consensus among the various social agents involved in the field of education as to the design, structure and function of the emerging new form of governance for special education and its inclusive alternatives. Hence, the formation of Law 2817/2000, was neither straightforward nor uncontested; rather, as Vlachou-Balafouti (2001:119) points out, it was at the end “an effort to compromise different conflicting interests among different groups surrounding the area of special education”.

Before expanding, however, on the contested nature of the new education Act, a close analysis of the language and content of this legal document is required (with my translation of the quoted excerpts of the law, unless otherwise stated). To organise this discussion, I identified four distinct areas of interest in the discourse of Law 2817. These will constitute our focus of analysis in the next pages.

i) The reaffirmation of the integrationist agenda

Building upon the previous law’s integrationist vocabulary (see Law 1566, Article 32:1-5), Law 2817 mandates the free and public education of children identified as ‘having special needs’ within the established formal education system, prioritising mainstream schooling as the preferred option for all students, regardless of their (dis-)abilities and learning needs. As specified in Article 1, par.11 of the law, the Greek State assumes the responsibility to support any mainstream school with the allocation of auxiliary personnel, supplementary resources and pedagogic assistance according to the acknowledged ‘special educational needs’ (SEN) of each individual student in the school’s community. Within mainstream schools, ‘students with SEN’ can be educated in either of two settings: a) the mainstream classrooms, with the assistance of a ‘special education tutor’, or b) the ‘inclusive units’ (i.e. ‘special

classes' or 'resource rooms') that operate within the mainstream school, but are separated from the mainstream classes, and are staffed by properly trained 'special educators' (see Article 1).

The sequencing of the two options appears to convey a sense of hierarchy; the mainstream classroom is prioritised and the alternative of the special class is added as an auxiliary recourse for the students that for some reason cannot be accommodated within the mainstream classroom. To secure the process of shared education and the functional integration of students identified as 'having SEN' in the general school community, Law 2817 further stipulates the implementation of "parallel support services" in the form of assistive teaching materials and the presence of an additional "special educator" in the mainstream classroom facilitating "the active participation of students with SEN" in the learning process (Article 1.11). In this context, the resource room alternative appears to be, in principle at least, a fallback option in case the goal of full inclusion is unattainable. Yet, Law 2817 does not explicitly confirm this perceived hierarchy, thus allowing for a different or even contrasting interpretation (and, as will be discussed in the following section, a divergent implementation) of the prescribed administrative priorities regarding inclusive educational practices.

When it comes, however, to special schooling, the legislators state their intentions clearly and in detail. The option of segregated educational provision is applicable only "(w)hen the education of students with SEN in mainstream schools or inclusive classes becomes extremely difficult due to the type and degree of their problem" (Article 1, par. 12). The law stipulates three alternatives to mainstream schooling: the placement of a student in a) an independent special school, b) an educational facility within a hospital, rehabilitation centre or similar institution, and c) the final option ("in extreme cases", as the legislators put it) of home tutoring (*ibid.*). Notice that, again, there is an implicit hierarchical classification of the three allocation choices, prioritising the independent special school over the other forms of segregated educational provision for students identified as having severe learning difficulties. It is also noteworthy that the legislation does not enforce any type of compulsory formal education scheme for disabled students, allowing for (albeit as a

'last resort') the option of in-home tuition without the caveat of any sort of formal assessment or official verification process for this type of educational provision.

In effect, despite the nominal preference to mainstream schooling for "students with SEN", Law 2817 perpetuated the integrationist educational framework that was established with the 1985 Education Act and was consolidated during the 1990s. As Zoniou-Sideri et al. (2006:285) have argued, the pedagogic vision of the new law can be described as inclusive only if the meaning of inclusion is delimited to the accommodation of disabled students "in an educational system that is characterised by uniformity at a structural, organisation and curriculum level", rather than "a conscious attempt to restructure education". This lack of re-reforming potential and the unwillingness to challenge existing institutionalised assumptions about education are conspicuous by the absence of any proposal aiming to reshape the structural arrangement and pedagogic function of the mainstream classroom, as well as by the lack of any reference in the body of the law to strategies targeting the development of an inclusive school culture and social ethos.

Article 1:6, for instance, designates as one of the main priorities of Law 2817 the "integration or re-integration [of disabled students] into the mainstream of the educational system and their coexistence with society". Yet, at the same time, it stipulates that this will be achieved with "the enhancement of the skills and abilities" of the "students with SEN" (Article 1:6.b), rather than with the restructuring of the existing educational norms or social status quo. Thus, by focusing on the 'disabled individual', Law 2817 fails both to effectuate any substantial change in the design of Greek special education and to identify institutional, economic or cultural barriers to the participation of disabled people in the Greek social mainstream. Hence, in this context, the issue of inclusion is reduced to a special education concern, that leaves unaltered the established mainstream educational and social order.

The law follows the logic that has been recognised by social disability theorists as oppressive of those people that claims to liberate (see the relevant theoretical discussion in chapters 2 and 3). By defining disability as a medical and individual problem that can only be addressed by helping the disabled person to overcome *their* problem, the law does not require that the mainstream schools change in order to

accommodate disabled people; rather, it requires that disabled people would be helped to change themselves in order to be integrated into schools. In doing so it advances an individualist and 'personal tragedy' view of disability over which disabled people have little or no control and whose politics sustain their oppression. The very setting of the school that continues to divide between mainstream classes and classes for 'children with SEN' acts to reinforce a disabled identity, which, as Oliver notes, is not formed through psychological processes, but is externally imposed on them (Oliver 1990:77). In this case, the disabled identity is imposed by the construction of educational space and the symbolic role of outsiders that disabled children are called upon to play in this space.

ii) The ostensible terminology shift

Law 2817 was published in the Government Gazette on March 14, 2000 with the title "Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs", a heading that conveyed a shift in terminology as the banners of 'Special Education' or 'Special Needs' (that typically appeared in the titles of previous laws with a similar content) were replaced by the SEN qualifier. Although the term SEN was introduced in Greek educational legislation with Law 1566, a rudimentary linguistic corpus analysis attests to the prevalence of the 'special needs' moniker in the phraseology of the 1985 Education Act (occurring 11 times within the 4 pages of the law devoted to special education, while the term 'SEN' is employed only twice -in Article 2, par. 4 & Article 33, par. 4). A similar quantitative analysis in Law 2817 reveals 22 occurrences of 'SEN' versus 15 of 'special needs', with the two terms seemingly used interchangeably.

However, there appears to be a qualitative variation in certain instances. Namely, although Article 1, par. 1 of Law 2817 clearly defines SEN as "any considerable difficulty to learn" due to "physical, mental, psychological, emotional and social singularities", the token 'SEN' is used as a comprehensive term encompassing any type of learning difficulty, while 'special needs' seems to be favoured when referring specifically to students with physical or mental impairments, as for instance in the paragraphs regarding the operation of special vocational training workshops (Article 1:10) and special schools (Article 1:12-15).

Significantly, the words ‘disabled’ and ‘disability/-ies’ are altogether absent from Law 2817.

In a similar shift in terminology, the special classes of mainstream schools (a practice introduced in the Education Act of 1985 and proliferated throughout the 1990s) were renamed as ‘inclusive units’ (Articles 1:11c and 5:1). This revision of terms, however, did not entail a corresponding change in the implementation of the special classroom policy. Apart from the conspicuous introduction of the ‘inclusive’ adjective, the law does not specify any form of modification to the function, content and pedagogic purpose of these classes, thus accepting and reinforcing their integrationist role within the Greek education system as stipulated in the 1985 Education Act. In other words, the newly baptised ‘inclusive’ classes remained a form of segregated educational provision for students that could not be accommodated by the pedagogy of the mainstream classroom, preserving (in essence if not in name) their special education status as the place where members of the student population are cast in case of documented learning difficulties that prohibit their participation in the mainstream classroom (see Law 2817, Article 1, par. 12).

The frivolous usage of the terms ‘SEN’ and ‘inclusive’ is indicative of a partial and relatively crude attempt to modernise the vocabulary of educational legislation and administrative discourses without a corresponding change in educational or social structures and pedagogic perspectives. The shift from the special education paradigm to its inclusive alternative cannot be reduced to an amendment of terminology, made in the interests of political correctness or in the name of the modernisation of education; rather, it entails a fundamental transformation of frameworks and attitudes that is not envisaged by Law 2817. Only a few months after its enactment, Vlachou-Balafouti (2001:117) argued that “a shift in terminology without a shift in the ideological and educational policy – practices that render school exclusionary in its nature will bear little impact on promoting more inclusive school communities”. Five years later, Zoniou-Sideri et al. (2006:285-286) reaffirmed this critical stance towards Law 2817, by stating that inclusion is a non-existent practice in the present design of Greek education, since the official ‘inclusive’ policy professed in recent educational legislation “is translated into a steady expansion of special provision”.

Theorists of disability outside the Greek context have also highlighted the inadequacy and, indeed, deceptiveness of political correctness. As Barnes points out, following Oliver's argument, disability "is about far more than 'political correctness'. It's about the crucial issue of causality, the role of language, its normalising tendencies and the politicisation of the process of definition" (Barnes 1999:578). In his study of the use of political correctness in the media, Paul Anthony Darke (Darke 2004:101) made an equally critical observation when he noted that current uses of politically correct terms constitute a mere "sanitisation of past unpleasantries or objections of extreme examples of abuse against impaired individuals". So whereas in the past people would routinely use terms such as 'cripple' or 'handicapped' they now routinely use the term 'disabled', but actually continue to have as little understanding of the politicisation of the issues involved in the change as they did before. The same critique can be made of the use of vocabulary in the case under consideration: the deployment of terms offers an answer to the pressing need for political change that is not only inadequate, but also misleading insofar as it sanitises practises of exclusion and oppression that remain largely unaltered.

iii) The proliferation of labelling and categorisation

One of the issues that pervaded the public discussions between political administration and educational community during the drafting of the new legislation for special education in the late 1990s was the rigid categorisation and labelling system that characterised the existing legal framework (see Zoniou-Sideri 2000a). Law 1566/1985 specified 10 functional categories of "handicap", based predominantly upon traditional medically informed disability labels within special education. The main difference in the new law was that this number was reduced to 6 all-encompassing categories of 'SEN', namely:

1. Mental retardation,
2. Severe visual or hearing impairment,
3. Severe neurological or orthopaedic impairment or other severe health problems,
4. Speech and language impairments,

5. Special learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, dysarithmia or dysorthographia,
6. Severe cognitive, emotional and social difficulties, autism and developmental disorders.

(Law 2817, Article 1:2)

Additionally, in this new legal document the definition of “students with SEN” also included “preschool aged children or adolescents who do not match any of the above categories, but they do need special education and care for a certain period or even throughout their entire school life” (Law 2817, Article 1:3).

Yet, apart from this minor regrouping of the operational categories for special needs, the new law did little in response to the ample critique towards the established medical-model approach to disability and the dominant discourse of defectology that produced the prevailing disability labels in Greek educational legislation up to that point. Although in a broader European context the 1990s saw the emergence of new trends in educational governance, which questioned the conventional paradigm of special education and challenged the dominant conceptualisation of the disabled individual as ‘being special’ and requiring special provision within the more ecological framework of inclusive education (Dyson 1991), Law 2817 appears impervious to this paradigmatic change.

Greek disability scholars have approached this point as an attempt to modernise the language of law according to a direction provided by Western traditions. As Soulis (2002:294) points out, the terminology shift in Law 2817 tried to modernise the vocabulary of Greek legislation by rephrasing ‘special needs’ as ‘SEN’, thus seemingly placing the focus on the educational parameters of learning difficulties rather than on their ‘special-ness’ or biological causes. As an attempt to challenge the biological definition of disability the shift is, indeed, significant and a step towards inclusion. However, equally significant to the chosen vocabulary and preferred wording is what is being omitted from this legislative discourse. Law 2817 fails to acknowledge explicitly or implicitly that educational needs become ‘special’ when “there is a mismatch between pupil characteristics, teacher strategies and curricular tasks demanded of the learners” (Bayliss 1996). So the continuing use of

the term ‘special’ carries with it a persistence of the biological and individualist understanding of disability. The label itself, as Linda Graham and Roger Slee point out, is complicit with a hierarchical system that acts to sustain power differentials:

“When we identify categories of children, whether we refer to children at risk or children with a disability or children whose first language is not English, we not only make difference *visible* but work to maintain power imbalances and structural inequity by reifying *unnamed* attributes that carry social, political and cultural currency.”

(Graham and Slee 2008:92-3; original emphasis)

Moreover, the absence in the law of any reference to policies aimed at improving the ability of mainstream schools to accommodate in practice a diversity of needs shifts the focus onto the typology of disabilities or learning difficulties, rather than being directed towards the educational, cultural and social barriers to learning that are currently entrenched in school structures and, more broadly, in the attitudes and organisation of society. Hence, given the lack of provisions for the practical removal of barriers to disabled people, the proliferation of labels and categorical distinctions ties the new legislation to the assumption that difficulties have their source within the individual and that disability is a fixed personal trait rather than a socially and culturally constructed notion.

Law 2817 presented a striking lack of an inclusionary perspective capable of promoting (or even implying) a major shift in attitudes. In similar fashion, it demonstrated the lack of determination on the part of policy-makers to transform existing practices in the mainstream of Greek education towards a system less dependent on labels or categorisations and, more importantly, towards a truly inclusive educational reality. It must be acknowledged, however, that Law 2817 introduced an important modification in the way these labels were officially sanctioned or, in other words, in the process of formal evaluation and assessment of disabled students. According to Article 1, par. 5, the special educational needs of children are to be formally assessed by the newly established ‘Diagnostic, Evaluation and Support Centres’ (or ‘KDAY’). These will be located in the big cities or, to be exact, one KDAY will operate in each Greek prefecture (54 in total), providing their services free of charge to all Greek citizens. Each support centre will be staffed with

an evaluation team of educationalists, psychologists and medical experts (Article 2:1-4), whose responsibilities include: providing diagnoses for the purpose of determining special educational needs; recommending the optimum educational placement (mainstream or special) for students identified as 'having SEN'; providing early intervention services; providing advisory services and guidance to pupils, parents and teachers (Article 2:3).

It is important that for the first time in Greek educational history the assessment of 'SEN' is officially provided by state institutions and the process of allocating students and assistive resources is incorporated within the core legislation. Still, the issue, once more, is what is *not* included in the legislative discourse. In particular, Law 2817 does not supply a mission statement of any sort for these support centres, nor does it specify their strategic orientation. While the operation of the KDAY network is arguably pertinent to the state's attempt to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of special educational provision, the legislators offer no indication as to what might constitute effective provision for 'students with SEN'.

In this context, the role of the support centres seems limited to the introduction of a new 'special needs' resourcing policy, which will facilitate the education system in the distribution of funds and resources to the recognised categories of 'special need', as established within the given legal framework. When considered in conjunction with the aforementioned rigid categorical resource mechanisms and over-dependence on disability labels that characterise Law 2817, it is not difficult to see how, in practice, the lack of specificity on the (inclusive?) orientation of the KDAY could lead to the stereotypical pigeonholing of students with disabilities, especially for the children that "find themselves in an amorphous space somewhere between 'disability' and 'normality'" (Graham 2007:592). Similarly, this new evaluation process could serve as a political mechanism to place limits on who can be included in mainstream schooling (rather than expanding the scope of educational inclusion) or who can lay claim to expensive 'special' resources (ibid.).

iv) The discourse of modernisation and the continuation of exclusion

The final and most crucial characteristic of Law 2817 relates to the fact that both the content and language of Law 2817 subsume significant elements of the

modernising process that typifies the Greek educational and broader social policy of the past decade. During the 1980s the discourse of educational change in Greece was markedly shaped by the ideas of enhanced social participation, egalitarianism and democratisation of education (see Zambeta 2002:638). Yet, the emerging social and educational policies of the 1990s reflected the impact of global pressures for modernisation, as newfangled political discourses linked education to the unfolding exigencies of a globalised society and the ongoing process of convergence with EU (Lindblad and Popkewitz 2001:41), emphasising “the importance of economic growth and of raising the competitiveness of the Greek economy” (Zambeta 2002:640) and advocating a corresponding reform of the Greek education system.

The ostensible terminology shift in Law 2817, discussed above, is a discernible trace of this ‘modernisation imperative’, even if solely at a discursive level. More substantially, this imperative instigated the acknowledgement of the Greek sign language as “the official school language of deaf and hard of hearing students” (Article 1:4.a). This was a noteworthy legislative development that established the knowledge of sign language as a prerequisite for the positioning of tutors and teacher assistants at schools that host students with hearing impairment (Article 1:4.b), and sanctioned the right of deaf students to educational material accessible through the use of the Greek sign language.

The most conspicuous influence, however, of the quest for modernisation on Law 2817 can be identified in the proposed administrative changes aspiring to decentralise decision-making and enhance the effectiveness of education governance. To that end, the new law established a ‘Department of Special Education’ within the Pedagogical Institute and appointed a ‘Senior Advisor of the Pedagogical Institute on Special Education’ (Article 2:17). Yet, although this position was proclaimed in Law 1566/85, the Ministerial Decree that would set up the procedure for appointing this consultant was never enacted. Furthermore, the new law postulated considerable rearrangements in the bureaucratic structures both within the Ministry of Education and regarding the network of its independent advisors, aiming to enhance support for SE teachers and to raise the standards of educational provision for students identified as ‘having SEN’ (Articles 3 & 4).

Arguably, these changes target emerging issues in modern Greek educational policy, like teacher education and professional development (Article 4.e), fighting truancy and ensuring school attendance for disabled students (Article 2:3.e), easing their transition from education to employment by improving vocational training services (Article 1:18 and 23), incorporating new technologies in special education (Article 2:18.e) and developing techniques for the evaluation of educational personnel, curricula and materials (Article 2:18 and 22). Yet, their effectiveness is tied to the political resolution to advance broader and deeper changes in the sphere of social policy, particularly during a time of financial stringency for the public sector, and can be appraised only within the context of concurrent political advances on issues of civil rights, equity and social participation. Otherwise, the discourses of modernisation are in danger of being reduced to empty phrases, a hollow discursive mechanism void of any point of reference or specificity other than to capitalise politically on a seeming consensus about social change and ‘progress’ (Lindblad and Popkewitz 2001:41-42).

In this broader context, a comparison between the directives of the new law and their actual implementation up to the end of the PASOK administration (March 2004), under which Law 2817 was drafted and enacted, reveals significant inconsistencies between legislative initiative and educational reality. For instance, the nominal commitment to educational materials accessible to deaf students in the Greek sign language was never fully put into practice, as in most schools students with hearing impairments typically continue to receive educational material only in written Greek form (Karpouzis et al. 2007:55). In similar fashion, the administrative framework required for the management of the KDAY system was not implemented in its entirety. Despite the extensive responsibilities that the new legislation postulated for the KDAY network, the operation of the newfound support centres was not supported with sufficient staff, funds and assistive localised social care structures that would enable the KDAY to meet the existing needs of the education system. By April 2004 only 22 of the 54 announced support centres had actually started operating (Open Society Institute 2006:34), most of them understaffed and unable to provide, monitor or co-ordinate effectively ‘evaluation, assessment and support’ services for people with disabilities, particularly in peripheral regions such as the smaller Greek islands and remote rural areas (op.cit.:37-38).

Furthermore, Law 2817 either addresses partially or overlooks entirely several crucial issues that were highlighted during the public debate leading up to the drafting of the new legislation. Despite being touted as ‘the first comprehensive law on Greek SE’, the influx of supplementary legislative acts following its enactment (and introduced by the same administration that passed Law 2817) was representative of its oversights and limitations. As these amendments mainly strove to regulate the practical aspects of educational policy implementation (see, for instance, Law 3194/2003 with two Articles addressing ‘workable’ omissions in the previous law), they typically succeeded only in fragmenting even further the existing disjointed legislation instead of putting together a cohesive administrative framework. Recent Greek governments of the past two decades, both socialist (PASOK) and conservative (New Democracy), have amply advertised their intent for a national dialogue about education aiming to increase social participation in the formulation of comprehensive educational policies (see Kassotakis and Lambrakis-Paganos 1994:95). Yet, in reality, the proposals made by the acting government were seldom altered and, if so, only in matters of minor importance (cf. Law 3194/2003).

The tension became evident in the case of one of the major concerns for disability activists and educationalists: the gap in legislation regarding the compulsory education of disabled children (see National Association of Special Educators 2006:1). As the existing legal framework provided parents with the option of home-schooling for children with severe learning difficulties, certain members of the student population were in reality exempt from the 9 years of compulsory education. In most cases the children who were deemed ‘unfit’ for schooling were those that are routinely categorised as having ‘severe and profound intellectual disabilities’. Yet, as Law 2817 did not postulate a specific framework regulating the form, content and quality of home-based educational provision, recent research data reveals – quite unsurprisingly – that “in practice, very few children in Greece actually receive lessons at home” (Open Society Institute 2006:18). The Ministry of Education reported that 60 home-schooling cases were accepted for the academic year 2001-2002 and this number was increased to 130 cases for the next academic year (op.cit.:50). As, however, there is no official monitoring of the implementation of home-schooling practices, it is doubtful if even in these cases the children were adequately educated at home.

Thus, in essence, this legislative gap facilitates not only the educational exclusion, but also the social segregation of the children who are confined to their homes, serving mainly to absolve the Greek State from its constitutional obligations towards the group of students identified as having the most severe and complex 'SEN'. As Soulis and Andreou (2007:777) have argued, posited upon the assumption that families are the best providers of support to children with disabilities, the Greek State invariably operates on a policy of minimal intervention, which often turns a blind eye to the likelihood that family life for these children "can be characterized by a cycle of over-protection, dependency and social isolation". Yet, despite the widespread demand for legal measures ensuring that the mandatory nature of school attendance is equally enforced for all children regardless of their (dis-)abilities, Law 2817 remained silent on this matter.

In a similar vein, although the law acknowledges the issues of decentralisation in education governance and of successful early intervention services, which were prominently featured in contemporary discourses of parents and educationalists (cf. National Association of Special Educators 2006), it fails to articulate a concrete legislative response to either point. On the first count, the processes of decision-making remained largely in the hands of the central ministerial agencies. Despite the minor reshuffling and purported modernisation of the existing bureaucratic system, Law 2817 does not shift power to smaller, localised education authorities, such as school districts or in-school organisational structures, and does not promote the active engagement of SE teachers and parents associations in school-based administrative tasks (Soulis 2002:296-297).

On the second count, despite the establishment of the KDAY network with the purpose of providing evaluation and support services for disabled people at a local level, their function was problematic; not only because four years later less than half of the announced centres were operational but also with regard to the issue of early intervention. While successful early intervention is instrumental in mitigating the effects of impairment and maximising the child's psychological development and social competence, Law 2817 does not specify the optimal age range for diagnosing disability. The available assessment services typically focus on post school-starting age intervention, as the first priority of the KDAY network is providing diagnoses

for the purposes of educational placement. As a result, the inadequate number of support centres, their limited resources and their focus on the school-age population has led, according to independent educational research, “to a near total lack of multidisciplinary early intervention services in most areas” (Open Society Institute 2006:15).

What is more, as KDAYs are located in the larger cities, they are not readily accessible to families in remote Greek islands or rural areas that are forced either to travel long distances or seek private alternatives (when available). According to a recent study only 196 of 759 students in ‘inclusive classes’ across the country had been referred through a KDAY assessment (Vlachou et al. 2006:204). As a consequence, the limited accessibility of KDAY services for children with disabilities alongside the absence of a legal framework specifying the age at which disability should be diagnosed not only limits the chances for successful early intervention, but also renders the formal ‘SEN assessment procedure’ uncoordinated, inconsistent and, hence, ineffective.

Arguably, despite its shortcomings, the institution of the KDAY system is the most far-reaching component of the new legislation (Tafa and Manolitsis 2003:156). Yet, embedded in the special education framework provided under Law 2817, this ‘support centre’ scheme is unable to advance the right of children with disabilities to equal educational opportunities and social integration. Because, ultimately, the educational policies prescribed by the new legislation, beyond the unfolding critique on the conspicuous problems arising from sketchy implementation or inadequate financial and bureaucratic support from the acting political administration, must be primarily questioned in respect to their expressed educational outlook and condoned pedagogic orientation. In this regard, the main point of criticism towards Law 2817 argues that it is essentially a law on special rather than on inclusive education, lacking the political will to confront the hegemony of established cultural, social, pedagogic and administrative norms of special education that preserve their dominant status in Greek educational and social reality.

Concluding the analysis of these four areas, I would argue that Law 2817 proliferates the paradigm of special education, failing to prioritise the promotion and

development of full educational and social inclusion for disabled people. Appraised individually as a discrete legislative document, this law undoubtedly constitutes a considerable improvement over its predecessor, since it attempts to modernise the discursive and administrative content of Greek special education following calls for inclusion and the provision of a better quality of education for disabled students formulated in Western Europe, and in the context of the European Union. Yet, as we saw, this process is ambivalent and contradictory, and has failed to challenge segregation on both the discursive and the practical level. As Zoniou-Sideri (2000b:36) has argued, the law sustains the separate structures of special education, developing a self-enclosed system of special needs provision that operates in parallel with and distinct from the framework of mainstream education. Hence, Greek education's response to disability issues, as regards both the legislative framework and the attitudinal plane, remains tied to the epistemological constructs of impairment-led thinking and practice that characterise the entire historical course of Greek special education, as has also been pointed out by disability scholars and activists (cf. Polychronopoulou 2001).

Moreover, the law preserves a social welfare mentality and administrative configuration, focusing on ensuring special treatment and meeting quotas (see Gavalas 2004:4-5), rather than promoting a human rights approach to disability, emphasising civil liberties and procedural anti-discrimination. As Barnes and Mercer (1995:34) point out, this outlook permeates government social policy on a global scale, as national social policy measures typically involve "ranking disabled people for benefits and services according to their functional capacity and assumed dependency". Yet, as Michael Oliver reminds us, all disabled people experience disability as a concrete form of oppression entailing a number of social restrictions (see Oliver 1990:xiv) that are not limited to scanty services and resources issues. Rather, the alleviation of this social oppression entails a struggle against preconceived social attitudes, institutional discrimination and abuses of human rights, as well as a struggle to promote the empowerment of disabled people in order to overcome the social prejudice, economic disadvantages and lack of control that they experience in their daily lives (Barnes and Mercer 1995:45).

In this context, the restructuring of identification and evaluation procedures with the KDAY framework did little to advance the educational and broader social inclusion of disabled people in Greece. The novel scheme failed to challenge the principles of ordering and classifying or the functional outcomes of disability labels and categorisations. Rather it generated new divisions within the school organisation that were also accompanied by “new systems of dividing children through the newly created monitoring and assessment systems” (Lindblad and Popkewitz 2001:12). This effectively meant that very few disabled students were being included in the mainstream of Greek education as a result of systematic policy implementation efforts. For the academic year 2002-2003, for instance, official statistics reported that “only 1,000 children with intellectual disabilities are mainstreamed”, although “it is likely that, in areas where there are no services or facilities for children with special needs, many more children with intellectual disability study in mainstream schools without any support” (Open Society Institute 2006:15-16).

For the students that are ‘being mainstreamed’, the integrationist legislative framework typically entails their locational integration within the special classes of mainstream schools. This offers limited opportunities for their functional inclusion into the general school population without any planning for a shared curriculum and a common pedagogical scheme. For the vast majority of ‘students with SEN’, whether in special or inclusive settings, the ostensible terminology shift in Law 2817 partially amended the vocabulary of ‘special needs’ in official educational discourses, but had little impact on the fundamentally exclusionary ethos of Greek schools (see Vlachou-Balafouti 2001). The proliferation of labelling and categorisation legitimates the practices of normalisation and division that produce the notion of SEN and are responsible both for the dominant conceptualisation of disability as deviation from a fixed norm and for the subsequent educational and social exclusion of the students that do not match what is identified as ‘normal’ (see Lindblad and Popkewitz 2001:7). Finally, the discourse of modernisation, while indicative of a vague political inclination to advance seemingly far-reaching changes in the sphere of public policy, is in essence void of any real content and unwilling to promote a holistic reform of Greek education.

It is important to note at this point that, although Law 2817 was drafted and enacted with PASOK in government, the major opposition party of New Democracy seemed at the time to articulate a political viewpoint on special education that shared a number of common themes with the enacted policies of the PASOK administration (see Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006:285-287). While New Democracy typically criticised PASOK for the “amateurish implementation” and “opportunistic character” of its educational policies (New Democracy 2003-2004:1), beyond this polarity at the level of educational micro-management and administration there appeared to be a significant degree of consensus in the area of special education among the two major political parties in Greece (a point further discussed in the next section).

In this context of consensual policy-planning on disability issues, in which Law 2817 was enacted, several relevant Decrees, Laws and complementary legislative initiatives were ratified during the two consecutive terms of PASOK administration (from 1996 to 2004). They claimed that they aimed predominantly to modernise the national legal framework on human rights, citizenship, self-advocacy and social inclusion, in compliance with Greece’s obligations as a signatory to the major EU and international conventions on anti-discrimination, and targeted a number of disenfranchised social groups, including ‘people with disabilities’. The vast majority of these legal documents remains in effect today, constituting the contemporary legal foundation for Greek social policy. The central policy-making document on disability issues is Law 2430 on ‘People with Special Needs’, enacted in 1996 and legislating the civil rights of disabled people for equal treatment and opportunities in education, employment, health care and social services (see Law 2430/1996, Article 1). Law 2643/1998 regulates “employment issues for disabled individuals”, stipulating measures for incorporation in the marketplace and vocational rehabilitation, and Law 2646/1998 establishes a national system for “community care” directed towards the deinstitutionalisation and enhanced social participation of people with disabilities. In a similar vein, the Greek Constitution was revised in the constitutional amendment of 2001 to include explicit references to the established rights of “people with disabilities” and to stipulate the adoption of positive measures for promoting equality (see Constitution of Greece 2001: Articles 16, 21 and 116).

This array of legislative initiatives has arguably helped Greece to take important steps forward in “lowering the levels of institutionalisation and increasing community care options” (Open Society Institute 2006:13). Yet, despite the obvious emphasis placed by the new legislation on a civil rights approach to disability issues, its impact on enacted social policies of the last decade is questionable. Similarly, while sporadically disability issues might have gained visibility in political discourses or the media, as for instance with the proclamation of the ‘European Year of People with Disabilities’ (EYPD) in 2003 and the Special Olympics in Athens 2004, conventional social attitudes and cultural stereotypes on disability are not systematically called into question. A survey for the EYPD 2003, for example, reported characteristically that 72% of the Greek respondents believed that “people with severe physical or intellectual disabilities should only work in sheltered workshops” (European Commission 2004:5).

Moreover, the human rights approach to disability, as we discussed in the previous chapters, is not straightforwardly compatible with a politics of inclusion, since the idea of human rights has been appropriated by discourses pertaining to capitalist antagonism and power structures. On educational issues that are designated by the institutional framework in question, the language, attitude, administrative focus and pedagogic orientation of Law 2817 seem to borrow little or nothing from a rights-based approach to disability that overcomes this attachment to the rhetoric of bourgeois antagonism, which only caters for disabled members of a society by means of charity.

Indeed, the legal framework that for the past decade defined educational provision to disabled students at a national level resonates the welfarist and charity-based logic that has been strongly anchored in the design of Greek special education before Law 2817/2000 (see chapter 4) and continues to permeate social and educational policy formulation and implementation in modern Greece. In this respect, one may argue that Law 2817 even fails to incorporate the imperatives implied by EU legislation, despite the fact that it professes to include them. As Gavalas (2004:4) argues, the human rights discussion was transposed into Greek public policy from Western Europe, alongside the adopted EU and UN directives, but remains rather elitist and with limited visibility in the broader political life of the

nation, staying “either purely academic, or just providing a tool for ideological or political activism”. The following section will attempt to support with further data and substantiate this argument, by examining the era of New Democracy’s administration, from its coming to power in 2004 to the enactment of the most recent Law 3699 in October 2008.

5.2.3 An inclusion-oriented politics? Discourse and policies during the New Democracy administration (2004-2008)

In the national elections of March 2004 the two main political parties in Greece exchanged positions, with New Democracy taking office and PASOK placed in opposition after 8 years in government. In their pre-election programmes both parties foregrounded the need for an education system that encompasses “citizenship” and “social inclusion”. At the same time, both subscribed to the notion of an education system that “is constantly connected to the production process and the demands of the market” (New Democracy 2003-2004:2), and which takes “bold measures for the incorporation of young people in the new realities of the marketplace” (PASOK 2004:13). The conflicts that define the conjunction of these distinct educational imperatives, i.e. the exigencies of labour market-oriented schooling and the practices of inclusive education remained unrecognised by both. Predictably the change in office was of little consequence to the design of Greek special education, as the new administration appeared both hesitant to legislate significant policy changes promoting the educational and social inclusion of disabled people, and ineffective in amending the apparent shortcomings of the established policy implementation process.

As Mr Kourbetis, the Senior Advisor of the Pedagogical Institute on Special Education pointed out (when interviewed for the purposes of this research), in his seven years in office (i.e. from 2000 onwards) all acting administrations “have demonstrated an unvarying indifference for special education and the matter of inclusion”, a topic which seems to gain a moderate amount of attention by the two major Greek political parties “only in their pre-elections rhetoric” (Kourbetis 2007; material from interview to Ioanna Lianeri, Athens, October 2007). With this in mind,

it is not surprising that one of the most useful resources for my investigation of Greek political discourses on special education and the matter of inclusion came in the form of publicised pre-electoral programmes, in which the two parties reveal their political vision and public policy planning.

In the political arena of the 2004 national elections, despite the prominence of educational issues in the electoral agenda of both parties and the coincidental increased visibility of disability discourses in the Greek media, due to such unrelated events as the 'European Year of People with Disabilities 2003' and the 'Athens 2004 Paralympic Games', the topic of inclusion was either marginalised or entirely non-existent. On the one hand, PASOK's programme of governmental proposals does not contain even a single reference to inclusive education, while the term 'social inclusion' is mentioned once, in the context of adult education (as one of the goals of continuing education and vocational training), without any further deliberation. In the limited space devoted to special education the programme contends that "having as a basic and inviolable principle the equal access of all children to education" the government of PASOK has managed to develop the necessary infrastructure at all levels of education (PASOK 2004:137) and goes on to enumerate the increases in special educational provision since the enactment of Law 2817 in 2000:

"By now operate: 1074 Inclusive Classes in primary (PE) and secondary education (SE), 281 Special Education units in PE and SE, 50 workshops of Special Technical and Vocational Education and Training. In total, 1405 units operate catering for 18,585 students. In addition, 11 educational units operate within hospitals."

(PASOK 2004:137-138)

It is significant that the different types of educational provision for disabled students are all presented uniformly as valid and seemingly interchangeable educational alternatives. Under this logic, the system of locational integration with the 'inclusive class', the segregated setting of a special school and the institutionalisation in a hospital-based educational unit are aggregated in an effort to illustrate the purported enhancement of educational provision for disabled people during the PASOK administration. Hence, the medicalised conception of disability persists not despite of, but within the idea of equal access to education. In the above

extract, as Zoniou-Sideri et al. (2006:286) point out, “it is interesting to note how the principle of ‘equal access’ is translated into specialised provision”.

New Democracy’s programme, on the other hand, starts the section on education with an extensive critique of the policies enacted by the previous administration (see New Democracy 2003-2004:2-4), targeting predominantly the latest attempts for an educational reform with PASOK’s Education Act of 1997-98. Importantly, in this harsh appraisal of the PASOK educational policies there is no mention of Law 2817/2000 or the broader legislative and administrative framework for Greek special education. The programme only contains a limited remark on “the condition of schools that students with special problems of education attend”, which is argued to be “far from what one would expect from a state with sensitivity for these children” (New Democracy 2003-2004:3). In a similar vein, the programme refers only once to the notion of social inclusion, mentioning it in passing as a desired outcome of formal education (op.cit.:1) outside the context of disability issues and in the generic sense of ‘social participation for all’, rather as a specific educational, cultural and social process with clearly defined content, form, function and goals.

Overall, however, it is possible to identify “a more explicit inclusive stance” (Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006:287) or, at least, a more ‘inclusion-oriented’ rhetoric in the New Democracy programme. The points that are indicative of this trend include the reference to the practice of “additional teaching for students with learning difficulties” (New Democracy 2003-2004:10), the highlighting of the importance of early identification and intervention for children with “special needs or abilities and talents” at the level of pre-primary education (op.cit.:8), as well as the proposal of measures aiming to minimise school truancy and dropouts from compulsory education (ibid.). Moreover, the section devoted to “the education of children with special needs” begins with the assertion that

“[t]he right of children with special needs to live in their normal environment, which is their natural family and the ordinary school of their neighbourhood, constitutes internationally one of the most important elements of change in the field of education.”

(New Democracy 2003-2004:21)

This declaration constitutes a key step, at least at the level of discourse. Despite the outdated vocabulary (i.e. “children with special needs”, “normal environment”, “ordinary school”) this was an important mission statement from the upcoming government regarding the formulation of educational policies and administrative responses to student diversity in the impending ‘redesign of Greek education’ (advertised throughout New Democracy’s pre-election programme). Even though the word inclusion is not used, the text foregrounds the importance of social and educational inclusion on the basis of a human rights rationale which had not been evoked before in these terms. In order to achieve this goal, the statement goes on, the new governing party aims to “take measures that will increase the number of students with special educational problems in the ‘common’ schools, with the implementation of supportive programmes for school integration” (ibid.). New Democracy’s programme on special education further mentions the strengthening of the support teacher practice for “students with SEN” in mainstream schools, the expansion of vocational workshops and the advancement of teacher re-education and training for educationalists working in special and inclusive settings.

Yet, the rhetoric deployed does not abandon the medically-oriented conception of impairment as a problem of the individual who suffers from it. Indeed, as Zoniou-Sideri et al. (2006:287-288) have put it, New Democracy’s ‘inclusive’ rhetoric proffers a limited view of inclusion, based on a discourse of individual needs and difficulties that students belonging to different ‘special’ groups bring to the standard everyday processes of schooling. From this view, the concept of educational inclusion is still understood as an add-on practice, restricted to specific groups of children – in this case children identified as ‘having SEN’ – outside and separate from the structural characteristics of the main education system. Hence, ultimately, in both PASOK’s and New Democracy’s programmes,

“the inclusive education discourse is silenced to different degrees, not only because it is not a main strand of developing educational reform, but also because it is seen as a separate aspect of an educational system in which policies and practices are fragmented and sometimes contradictory.”

(Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006:287)

This contradiction becomes evident, for instance, when New Democracy's programme stipulates the expansion of educational assessment and evaluation as a means for enhancing teachers' abilities, students' progress, school effectiveness and learning outcomes (op.cit.:13-16) without acknowledging the implications of these intensified evaluation processes for inclusive policies and practices regarding students who might fall short of the prescribed standards of excellence. In practise, as Roger Slee has pointed out, the "narrowly defined terms of performativity" within typical administrative discourses of school effectiveness and improvement tend to facilitate the exclusion of 'problematic' students "in order to protect the demand for goal certainty" advocated by administrators and government officials (Slee 1998b:101-102).

What is more, this ostensibly 'inclusive' rhetoric was rarely translated into actual government policy during the past decade. The Athens 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games, for example, highlighted the absence of infrastructure in the Greek capital that would provide the best possible accessibility conditions for disabled people. Hence, a key priority for Athens 2004 was seemingly to raise the existing accessibility standards in public spaces and to secure that athletes and spectators, visitors and citizens would not be denied access to an athletic event or a city activity based on their disability (see Ministry of Culture 2002). Yet, in practice this 'priority' resulted in the construction of Olympic-size athletic venues with enhanced disability access, but failed to produce significant and constant positive effects on the everyday quality of public life for disabled people. After the Games the majority of Athenian open spaces, public buildings and general schools remained inaccessible to disabled citizens, as the architectural and organisational interventions to the city's infrastructures were fragmentary and short-lived (cf. Christofi 2005). What is perhaps more important, up to this point there is no legislative framework regulating explicitly the accessibility provisions of public buildings (see Bernidaki-Aldus 2006). Thus, even the newly constructed educational facilities, public recreation areas and government buildings still do not cater for the accessibility needs of all citizens according to officially certified standards and codes of practice.

In the field of educational policy, New Democracy's programmatic rhetoric had analogously limited effects, as it was not transformed into a substantial redesign

of Greek special education. Apart from a few Ministerial Decisions focusing on specific bureaucratic issues, the new government did not produce any significant legislative output on special education during its first term in office (2004-2007). Rather, the administrative framework of Law 2817 was retained unaltered, regulating the form and function of enacted educational policies. This absence of legislative advances was acknowledged by the governing party, which circulated in the last months of 2006 a new draft law for special education. It took nearly two years for this new Bill to be introduced for discussion in the Greek parliament (Summer 2008) and it was finally scheduled for voting in the winter plenary sessions (2008-2009). This delay reflects the low priority of special education issues and the marginalisation of inclusive policies in the actual political agenda of this administration (see Lampropoulou 2008).

In the absence of educational legislation promoting reform, the new government focused on the “more methodical implementation” (New Democracy 2003-2004:2) of the special education policies fragmentarily enacted by the previous PASOK administration. In other words, New Democracy upheld and intensified the integrationist agenda of Law 2817 we discussed above, and the resultant proliferation of the resource room practice, i.e. the ‘special classes’ of Law 1566, renamed ‘inclusive’ in the subsequent law, that promoted locational integration, instead of functional educational inclusion. In essence, the political administrators of Greek education, regardless of their distinct political affiliation, seem to operate in unison under the “strong assumption that support rooms and part-time withdrawal are the most effective ways of promoting the educational and social inclusion of children defined as having special needs” (Vlachou 2006:39).

This argument is corroborated by an overview of the official statistics on special educational provision during the 2004-2007 New Democracy administration. According to a report by the Directorate of Special Education, the number of ‘inclusive classes’ in mainstream schools has increased substantially in the years 2004-2007. More specifically, in pre-primary education, only 113 ‘inclusive classes’ were operational in the school year 2003-2004; by 2007 the Ministry has established 155 additional classes. In primary education, the 768 ‘inclusive classes’ in 2004 were doubled by 2007, with 772 new functioning classes. In secondary education, the 104 ‘inclusive classes’ in 2004 were nearly tripled by the school year 2006-2007, with

213 additional classes. Hence, in total, the number of 'inclusive classes' at all levels of compulsory education has risen from 985 (in 2004) to 2,125 (in 2007) according to official statistics (source: Directorate of Special Education 2008).

Furthermore, despite the lack of consistent and reliable official data on the type and quality of systematic special educational provision for students characterised as 'having SEN', administrative discourses profess that the process of mainstreaming has expanded significantly under the government of New Democracy, at least according to quantitative indicators. As Mr Kourbetis, the Senior Advisor of the Pedagogical Institute on SE, commended during our interview, "since 2004 the number of children attending special schools is in a constant decline, [...] very few special schools have opened, [...] and the state has taken an explicit stance in favour of mainstreaming" (Kourbetis 2007; interview material). The Ministry's 'Review of Actions for SE in 2004-2007' further supports this claim by referencing the increased numbers of appointed special educators, teacher assistants and specialised personnel (i.e. speech therapists, psychologists, social workers, etc) in mainstream educational facilities and throughout the support centres network (Directorate of Special Education 2008:2-3).

However, this quantitative upsurge in special classes and relevant support services cannot be unproblematically construed as promoting the implementation of more inclusive practices within the Greek education system. Firstly, the increased number of functioning 'inclusive classes', while arguably impressive when compared to the perfunctory implementation of this framework by the previous administration, is nonetheless inadequate to cater for the demands of the actual student population. According to the EU monitoring agency (EUMAP), there is a significant shortage of pull-out programmes and resource room services at the level of secondary education that forces disabled students either to enrol in a special school or drop out of the school system when they reach high-school, adopting the alternative of private tutoring when this option is available and if their families can afford it (Open Society Institute 2006:47). Similar deficiencies concerning all levels of formal education were identified in the remote rural areas of mainland Greece and the smaller Greek islands, where the concomitant lack of general social support structures typically

entails that disabled people in these areas have limited or no access at all to formal education (ibid.).

Secondly and most importantly, the unquestioned expansion of the resource room framework has hindered in practice the formulation of an educational environment that could facilitate the development of a truly inclusive school community by implementing the functional inclusion of disabled students within the design of Greek general education. Although the recent administrative arrangements of Greek SE, as specified under Law 2817/2000, prioritise in principle the option of shared education within the mainstream classroom for all children regardless of their individual 'differences' or 'difficulties', in practice the additional support schemes that are required for the functional inclusion of students identified as 'having SEN' in the mainstream class are rarely implemented (Open Society Institute 2006:47).

Law 2817 (Article 1.11) stipulated the implementation of "parallel support services", i.e. the provision of assistive teaching materials and the presence of additional special educators or teacher assistants, aiming to secure the integration of students with learning difficulties in the pedagogy of the mainstream classroom. Yet, a year after its enactment the Ministry of Education (under the PASOK administration) reported that "the programme of parallel support, meaning shared or inclusive education and co-teaching, is implemented only in exceptional circumstances" (Directorate of Special Education 2002, cited in Open Society Institute 2006:47). It is indicative that in the school year 2003-2004, according to official nation-wide statistics, there were only five students receiving parallel support in mainstream classes (Directorate of Special Education 2008:2).

In a similar fashion, during the years 2004-2007 the implementation of inclusive education policies remained a marginal concern for the New Democracy administration. Arguably, there was an increase in the number of students receiving parallel support services: 113 parallel support applications were approved by the Directorate of Special Education for the academic year 2004/05, 207 applications for the year 2005/06 and 330 for the year 2006/07 (op.cit.). However, as the Senior Advisor of the Pedagogical Institute on Special Education points out, "only about half of the actual applications for parallel support are approved each year" (Kourbetis

2007; interview material). What is more, the approval process is lengthy, convoluted and has to be repeated on an annual basis. As a result, even when the application is approved, disabled students attending mainstream classes will most likely spend a great part of the school year without the aid of a teacher assistant or any other form of in-class support, having to go over the same procedure again in the following school season. Thus, “in reality, the ‘parallel support’ scheme described in Law 2817 is rendered ineffective” and the process of including all students in the mainstream classroom “is left upon the good will of the teachers, the parents and the children themselves” (ibid.).

In this educational context, the fact that in certain cases disabled students are integrated in mainstream schooling does not justify the governmental rhetoric on “the imperative of inclusion” and “the right of equal access to education and employment” (New Democracy 2003-2004:2 & 21, respectively). On the quantitative plane, that is featured prominently in recent administrative discourses on education (cf. Directorate of Special Education 2008) under the unsophisticated assumption that “more educational provision is invariably better” (regardless of its type, form and aspirations), the official statistics on SEN provision do not validate the political claims of “inclusion-oriented policies”. According to the National Statistical Service of Greece (2008), approximately 23,000 students received “special educational provision” of any type during the school year 2007/08, within a total student population of 880.000. It is estimated that less than 1,000 of them were officially integrated in mainstream schooling and only 330 of those mainstreamed students received parallel support in the general classroom (Directorate of Special Education 2008).

On the qualitative plane, which is persistently sidelined or even silenced in modern political discourses on education, the purportedly inclusive orientation of contemporary educational policy is translated into the practice of enduring special education arrangements (through the proliferation of segregated schooling, medically informed disability discourses and welfare state mentality). At best, inclusion becomes synonymous with locational integration through the unchallenged prioritisation of the resource room scheme. While educational research has challenged the legitimacy of special classes as opposed to full-time participation in

the mainstream classroom (cf. Booth and Ainscow 1998; Zoniou-Sideri 2000a; Vlachou 2006), the uninterrupted authority of Law 2817/2000 has systematically promoted the special class formula. Accordingly, the special class (an integral part of Greek education since the late-1980s) was established as the preferred administrative response to student diversity in Greece during the past decade, either in the form of full-time educational placement or as a part-time teaching resource.

In consequence, the hegemony of the special education model remained largely unchallenged by the New Democracy administration. Despite the newfound prominence of a human rights rhetoric within dominant political discourses in contemporary Greece, the policies and practices required for a paradigmatic change from an exclusionary to an inclusive social reality were never incorporated into the design of Greek education.

This mismatch between a human rights-based governmental rhetoric and the administrative choices that proliferated special education is vividly exemplified in a December 2007 press release for the ‘International Day of People with Disability’ by E. Stylianidis, then Minister of Education. As one might anticipate, this public statement advocates the government’s desire to “tackle discrimination on any level” and its determination to enhance disabled people’s access to education, employment and social life in general (Stylianidis 2007:1). Drawing heavily upon an ‘equal opportunities’ vocabulary, the Minister expresses his intent to “combat social exclusion” by actualising a series of ameliorations to the existing educational system. Along those lines, Mr Stylianidis presents the key objectives for New Democracy’s administration, starting off with the Ministry’s aim and efforts to “*expand the network of special schools*” (ibid.; my emphasis). In the same bulletin, the various developments in the education of disabled students (from the impending inauguration of 43 new special schools to the significant increase in the number of disabled students attending inclusive classrooms) are listed indiscriminately as “improvements in the design of special education” aiming to provide “equal opportunities for access to education” and “inclusion to a unified society that respects all of its members without discriminations, exceptions and exclusions” (ibid.).

Arguably, Mr Stylianidis' statement fails to take into account the tensions that arise from attempting to 'combat exclusion' and 'tackle discrimination' without challenging the established educational practice of segregated schooling. Lacking any acknowledgement of the limitations of special education and its negative effect to the formulation of a 'unified society', this document offers a striking example of how Greek governments of the period have approached the concept of inclusion as an abstract ideal, rather than a social imperative entailing *a concrete radical restructuring* of educational and social norms. Similarly, it illustrates how recent administrations have relegated inclusive education to a marginal concern for their policy planning, as the proclaimed modernisation of education seldom ventured outside vociferous political proclamations, while human rights-based rhetoric was rarely translated to concrete policies and practices that could effectuate an inclusive social reality.

Only a couple of months after this press release (March 2008) the same administration announced its intent to replace Law 2817/2000 with new legislation and circulated a first draft of the new law for public consideration. In October 2008 this draft, with only a few minor amendments, was transformed into a "New Law on Greek SE", Law 3699/2008. As will be argued in the next chapter, this law is characterised by the same conceptual conflation and functional syncretism that were exemplified in the aforementioned statement by the Minister of Education and were equally evident in the legislative documents preceding it. Furthermore, the new law was hardly a major departure from the existing legal framework, consisting mainly of perfunctory adjustments to specific statutory clauses of Law 2817, thus doing little to promote a paradigmatic shift in educational provision for disabled people in Greece.

As a final comment, it must be noted that almost four years after its enactment, Law 3699 has not yet made a significant impact on the design of formal educational provision for disabled people in Greece. Only a small percentage of the policy changes introduced in the new law were enforced during the school year 2009/10. While Law 3699 remained in effect up to the time of writing this thesis (i.e. early 2012), for a number of reasons that we will discuss in the ensuing chapters (chief among which a change in government with the 2009 national elections and the Greek financial crisis that surfaced towards the end of 2009), its implementation has

been sparse and fragmentary. The discussion of this new legal document will provide the starting point for the following chapter, which attempts to examine current trends and future perspectives for Greek inclusive education. I must emphasise, however, that this structuring aims simply to enhance readability. An appraisal of the contemporary legal and institutional framework of Greek 'inclusive' education cannot overlook the continuing effect of Law 2817 in the present status of the national education system. For this, I must urge the reader to take into consideration both the present and the following section in unison.

CHAPTER 6

STEPPING BACK FROM INCLUSION: CURRENT TRENDS & FUTURE PERSPECTIVES IN 'INCLUSIVE' GOVERNMENTAL DISCOURSES & POLICY PLANNING (2008-2011)

6.1 Pursuing inclusion through special education:

The antinomies of Law 3699/2008

In June 2010 the Greek lawyer and disability activist Polina Papanikolaou began a signatures protest against the use of term 'people with special needs' in announcements and documents of the Athens underground and called for its replacement with the term 'people with disabilities' (see Eleftherotypia 2010a). Papanikolaou, who is herself disabled, explained that the matter is far from trivial for disabled people, and a significant number of signatures to support this movement have been collected. As she explained, there are several reasons for this quest. The first is that the term 'people with special needs' is, in fact, empty of meaning. Its establishment only evokes the inability of successive governmental policies to create the conditions under which disabled people have access to basic social rights and goods. The use of the term has served to mystify this inability and the ways it violates the principle of equality safeguarded by the Greek constitution.

Still, according to Papanikolaou, the most crucial violation is that of the right to self-definition. Disabled people in Greece have rejected the term 'people with special needs' as obsolete and reactionary about ten years ago. So the insistence on the use of the term constitutes a direct denial of the right of disabled people to define their identity and an insult evoking discriminatory attitudes. As Papanikolaou puts it,

“The use of the term 'people with special needs' ... on the one hand fails to account for the contemporary scientific, political and social consideration of disability as a condition and reflects a range of long-abandoned, medically-centred and paternalistic approaches that are centred on one-dimensional ideas of deficit and inferiority. On the other

hand, the term has been replaced by the term ‘people with disability’ after the unanimous decision of 22nd May 2001 of all states that are members of the World Health Organisation ... thus shifting the interest of the international community from damage to inclusion, to equal access and, finally to approaching disability at all levels in terms that safeguard dignity.”

(quoted in Eleftherotypia 2010b)

The protest’s focus on the language used to designate disability points to the politics involved in the use of a term which, as we discussed, works both to sanitise the problem of disability and to position disabled people in a way which rests on the presumption that they are unable to designate their identity themselves. Only two years before this protest a new education Law was passed in Greece which, according to the government’s declarations was intended to further advance and consolidate inclusion. Ironically, for the Minister of Education at the time, Mr. Stylianidis, it was firstly the title of Law 3699, i.e. “Law on Special Education & Training for People with Disabilities or Special Educational Needs”, that attested to the purported inclusive orientation of the new legal framework. In the Minister’s view, this title epitomises “the determination of the government to promote substantially the social inclusion of people with disabilities” (Ministry of Education 2008a:1). The differentiation from the previous title is minimal: the established heading of “special education” (used in all similar legal documents of the past 30 years) is replaced in the new law by “special education *and training*” and the reference to “people with SEN” (employed in the title of Law 2817) is rephrased as “people *with disabilities or SEN*” (emphasis mine).

The use of the word ‘disability’ for the first time in the heading of a Greek legal document on special education is no doubt a positive development. As previously mentioned, the ‘SEN’ moniker was prevalent in the existing legal phraseology and the words ‘disabled’ and ‘disability/-ies’ were altogether absent from the preceding laws (see chapter 5). Yet, even before we move to the question of palpable changes in the statutory provisions of the new legal framework, we need to note the use of the term ‘special educational needs’ and its establishment as equivalent to the term disabilities. As we saw, the previous legal framework, Law

2817 replaced the term 'special needs' with 'SEN' in a crude attempt to modernise the vocabulary of educational legislation and without envisaging a fundamental transformation of administrative frameworks and attitudes towards disability. By the end of this chapter we shall see that this law continues the same pattern and the introduction of the term 'disability' is again indicative of a rather crude attempt to downgrade the imperative of inclusion to a shift in terminology, made mainly in the interests of populist appeals to political correctness.

As was quickly observed by the law's critics, there is nothing in the body of Law 3699 that would give substance to this amended heading with a corresponding redesign of educational policies and administrative propositions (see Lampropoulou 2008:4). The language shift in question is indicative of this failure. The process of naming a group of students that acts to make this group different from the 'main one', because of the concomitant *non-naming* of the latter, as Graham and Slee point out, implies a certain naturalisation of able-bodiedness and ability, while simultaneously rendering disability different from the 'norm' of what is 'natural' for students (Graham and Slee 2008:92-95). Moreover, when this naming fails to recognise the right of a group to name itself, it sustains a relation of power that would be subsequently inscribed into the specific provisions of the law and the educational practices it promotes.

The configuration of Law 3699/2008 by the conservative party (New Democracy) emerged as the outcome of a long period of procrastinations, debates and conflicts between it and the centrist party PASOK that had ratified the previous law. At the time PASOK enacted Law 2817/2000, New Democracy (then being the main opposition party) criticised the government for lacking the political will to formulate "a comprehensive and systematic administrative framework" which could actualise the "radical changes required for the modernisation of the national system of education" (see New Democracy 2003-2004, Section 2: The Crisis of the Educational System). After winning the 2004 national elections, New Democracy was quick to lay blame on the former administration for a "legislative chaos" in Greek special education, arguing that the statutory provisions of Law 2817 were of a limited scope and failed to anticipate the imminent developments in the fast-changing landscape of special education. For this reason, as the new government

contended, after the enactment of Law 2817 PASOK was forced to issue over 350 complementing legislative acts (in the form of presidential decrees and ministerial decisions) in an effort to mitigate the numerous omissions and gaps in the new law (see Ministry of Education 2008a:1).

Yet, despite this criticism, New Democracy did not enact a new comprehensive law for special education during its first term in office (2004-2007). It was only after winning the September 2007 national elections that New Democracy publicised a “First Draft of a New Law for Special Education” (March 2008) that would substitute Law 2817 aiming to amend the apparent shortcomings of the established legal framework. After several months of delay and confrontational public dialogue, the new law was ratified by the Greek Parliament in the fall of 2008 (Law 3699, published in the Government’s Gazette on October 2, 2008).

At the time of writing this thesis, there is still limited empirical evidence to support any sound conclusions on how effective, if at all, this new legal document has been in procuring significant changes in the design of Greek education. What can be discussed and appraised, however, is the political philosophy of the legislators and their purported intentions for an inclusive orientation in educational policies and practices. To that end, the ensuing discussion will mainly focus on administrative discourses from the inception of Law 3699 in 2008 and onwards, examining the current trends and future perspectives for Greek ‘inclusive education’, as expressed both within the discursive content of the new legislation and in the broader context of concurrent governmental discourses targeting educational and social inclusion for disabled people in Greece today. Our discussion of present-day official policy will set its endpoint towards the end of 2011, more specifically November 2011, when the PASOK administration (elected in 2009) gave its place to an interim coalition government that would stay briefly in office (with a limited administrative agenda) until a new election date could be set. Still, as the political life of this coalition was extended longer than projected (national elections were finally held on May 6, 2012), the discussion will comment on certain official policy acts of interest during the first months of 2012 and up to the final submission of the thesis (May 2012).

When the first draft of the new law was publicised, the New Democracy administration claimed that it would prioritise the goals of educational and social inclusion by abandoning the dominant exclusionary scheme of special education in favour of an inclusive educational system and a human rights-based approach to disability. According to governmental rhetoric, the draft expressed the “political will” of the cabinet to administer significant changes to the design of special education and defined as “the main objective of national educational policies” the inclusion of disabled students in general schools (Ministry of Education 2008a:1-2). Furthermore, it “redefined the purpose of special education and training”, which was now primarily focused, as the Ministry maintained, on securing “equal opportunities for full participation, independent living and financial self-reliance for people with disabilities” (op.cit:2).

In a similar vein, during the discussion of the law in the Greek Parliament (in September 2008), Mr Stylianidis, the Minister of Education, argued in his plenary speech that Law 3699 provides a comprehensive legal framework that addresses the vast majority of issues that have been plaguing Greek special education for the past thirty years. In his words, the new law “transforms our educational model from *divisive* to *inclusionary* by promoting *co-education*” and develops “a modern administrative scheme” that “fights *truancy*” and “secures *equal opportunities in education and employment*” for disabled people (Ministry of Education 2008b:1; emphasis as in the original). Yet, as we shall see, there are significant discrepancies between this governmental rhetoric and the actual content of the new law.

A close analysis of its main Articles reveals that not only the title but also the actual content of Law 3699 is permeated by a superficial modernisation of legislative discourse lacking a substantial shift from the special education paradigm to its inclusive alternative. Article 1, for instance, begins with a valiant attempt to provide a social definition of disability for the first time in a Greek legal document – a change that indicates a certain dissemination of the social model in the Greek context. The article acknowledges disability as a “complex social and political phenomenon” that must be approached as an organisational problem for society rather than as a medical problem for the individual (Article 1, par. 1). Accordingly, it foregrounds the “responsibility of the state” to remove all systemic barriers that

exclude disabled people from social participation and to secure “equal opportunities” for their access to education, professional development and social inclusion (ibid.).

Yet, Article 3 returns to the medically-informed labelling system of Law 2817 by expanding on the operational categories for special needs established in the previous law. At the outset (Article 3.1), a novel classification scheme that distinguishes between “students with disability” and “students with SEN” is introduced. Without proffering any grounds for this distinction and without reference to the administrative or pedagogical implications of this categorisation, the remainder of the Article is devoted to enumerating the same functional categories of special needs that were introduced in Law 2817, with only a few minor - and at times absurd - changes in terminology. One notes, for instance, how the expression ‘mental retardation’ is fittingly replaced with ‘mental impairment’ (op.cit.). One can argue, however, that the rephrasing of ‘visual or hearing impairment’ as ‘sensory deficiency of sight or hearing’ (notice the tautology!) is nothing more than a conspicuous attempt to modernise vocabulary, which fails to countermand the defect-driven disability labels that have been prevalent in Greek educational legislation so far. Behind the amended heading and the ‘inclusive’ rhetoric of its introductory article, the discourse of defectology, that is dominant in the body of the new law, upholds the established medical model of disability and, consequently, prioritises segregated learning environments as the most effective way to deal with ‘individual deficiency /impairment’. Hence, although once again there is a trivial remodelling of some terms, Law 3699 falls short of establishing a language that moves beyond the medicalised model for understanding disability. As such, it fails to advance inclusive education as a systemic response to the social and political phenomenon of disability.

A significant indication of this ostensible vocabulary-modernisation effort can also be traced in the new name that Law 3699 coins for the centres responsible for the diagnosis and assessment of special educational needs. The ‘Diagnostic, Evaluation and Support Centres’ (or ‘KDAY’) of Law 2817 become ‘Centres for Differential Assessment, Diagnosis and Support of Special Educational Needs’ (or ‘KEDDY’) in Law 3699 (Article 2.2). Reiterating the extensive responsibilities that the previous law postulated for the KDAY network, Law 3699 entrusts the KEDDY with the provision of the same array of support services for students and schools (see

Articles 2, 4 & 12): from early intervention services and the formal assessment of SEN at all school levels to recommending the most appropriate type of schooling and drawing up individualised educational programmes for students identified as ‘having SEN’.

Apart from the title, there is little to differentiate the form and function of KEDDY from that of KDAY, despite a minor attempt by the legislators to promote a limited number of changes. Answering to the complaints of teachers and parents alike that the KDAY system was seriously understaffed and provided extremely low quality of support services (see Section 5.2.2.iv), Law 3699 supplements each KEDDY staff team with more medical personnel and formulates an evaluation process for their effective operation (through an annual evaluation report by the Ministry of Education). There is also a more detailed description of the formal assessment methods (see Article 5) and an explicit focus on the interdisciplinary approach to SEN assessment (hence, the inclusion of ‘differential’ in the KEDDY moniker). The “interdisciplinary evaluation committee” responsible for each assessment is redesigned to include three medical professionals, one social worker and only one educationalist (see Article 4.1). Finally, in an attempt perhaps to counteract the preponderance of medical personnel in the assessment process, Law 3699 introduces a “Diagnostic Evaluation Committee (EDEA)” in each special school unit (but not in mainstream schools as well), which is comprised mainly of special educators and plays the role of ‘educational advisor’ to the KEDDY assessment team (Article 4.2).

Still, the main problems associated with the administrative scope, educational direction and effective management of the existing support centres network are left untackled in this trivial remodelling. Despite the prominent role that Law 2817 postulated for the KDAY, the absence of specific financial provisions and the ultimate refusal of the state to back up the operation of KDAY with sufficient resources (i.e. staff, funds and assistive social care services) has curtailed their authority and significance. In a similar fashion, Law 3699 reaffirms nominally the state’s intent to widen and enhance the impact of support centres on Greek education (see Article 4.1-2), but does little to articulate and advance concrete changes in the

existing administrative structures that would enable the KEDDY to meet the needs of the education system.

Moreover, beyond the issue of effective actualisation, both the previous and the novel support centre schemes do not operate under an explicitly inclusive educational orientation. Consequently, the role of these support centres, whether named KDAY or KEDDY, remains limited to the administration of a ‘special needs’ resourcing policy aiming predominantly to facilitate the state in the distribution of funds and educational resources to the acknowledged categories of ‘special need’ within a given legal framework. Paired with the proliferation of medically informed disability labels in Law 3699 and with a formal SEN assessment process that shifts focus from educational evaluation and intervention to medical diagnosis and treatment, the KEDDY system is therefore likely to sustain the stereotypical pigeonholing of disabled students even more than the KDAY system did in the past (see Lampropoulou 2008:7-8). As a result, instead of expanding the scope of educational inclusion, the prescribed operation of the KEDDY is at risk of placing even greater limits on who can be included in mainstream schooling. Particularly since the mitigating factor of the educationally oriented EDEA is only present inside special schools, the expansion of segregated schooling for those children that are deemed ‘medically unfit’ for inclusion in the general student population seems inevitable.

The backward step in the form and function of the support centres scheme, however, is not the sole institutional barrier to the participation of disabled people in the educational and social mainstream that Law 3699 reinforces. In a similar fashion, the absence of concrete legislative advancements that could effectuate substantial change in the design of Greek education characterises equally the provisions of the new law regarding educational placement options. In its opening clauses, Law 3699 establishes the compulsory nature of education for “students with disability and recognised special educational needs” and affirms that it is “an integral part of free public education”, resonating the state’s effort to “secure their [i.e. disabled students] rights to learning as well as to social and professional inclusion” (Article 1.1).

Yet, there is nothing in the new law that links professional, social, civic and cultural inclusion for disabled people with the advancement of inclusive educational policies. Minister Stylianidis argued in the Greek Parliament that Law 3699 promotes the principle of “integrated education” (see Ministry of Education 2008b:1-2), thus returning to a term that paradoxically undermines the idea of fully inclusive education he proclaims to support. In the same speech he foregrounded as tangible affirmation of this principle of “integrated education” the government’s plan to expand the existing special education network with 55 new special schools by the end of 2012 (roughly a 30% increase in the total number of independent special school units). This blatant contradiction is more easily accounted for by taking a closer look at the limited scope that Law 3699 prescribes for the notions of ‘integration’, ‘co-education’ and ‘inclusion’.

As several theorists have pointed out early on in the development of the social model of disability, integration is not an end in itself, at least not in terms of the quest for emancipation and equality posited by the disability movement. The end of education needs to be full inclusion in society and from this perspective integration must be oriented towards its destruction (Branson and Miller 1989:161; Barton and Landman 1993:47-48). Yet, this interim and transitional nature of integrationist practices is not acknowledged in the pedagogic outlook of Law 3699. As explained in Article 6, education for “students with disability and SEN” is provided in either mainstream or special schools depending solely on the type and the degree of disability that a student has. Accordingly, Law 3699 prioritises inclusion in mainstream schools only for students with “mild learning difficulties”, attending either the ‘regular classroom’ with parallel support or special sections/classes (i.e. ‘inclusive units’) of the school (Article 6.1). For all other categories of ‘SEN’ the new law, echoing not only the mentality, but also the phraseology of the previous legal framework, prioritises the independent special school as the preferable educational setting when it is “difficult” for a student to attend a mainstream classroom or an inclusive unit (Article 6.4). Hence, for students with “more severe learning difficulties” inclusive education is not a priority, but rather a last resort, when the option of special educational provision is not available (cf. Article 6.1.b). Yet, an inclusive agenda would have recognised that the difficulty in question does

not lie with the disabled students, but with the educational system that fails to offer them an educational framework that is fit for them.

It is easy to discern that not much has changed from the integrationist agenda of Law 2817 (see chapter 5). Despite the ample critique of the scanty implementation of the ‘inclusive classes’ policy and of the limited scope and perfunctory function of the parallel support services established in the previous law (cf. Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006), the new law does not incorporate any relevant amendments. On the contrary, it further delimits the inclusive potential of these policies by removing from the legislation the only reference to the state’s responsibility to “support any mainstream school with the allocation of auxiliary personnel, supplementary resources and pedagogic assistance according to the acknowledged ‘special educational needs’ of each individual student in the school’s community” (included in Law 2817, Article 1.1). Yet, in a state-dependent and centralised system of education (cf. the relevant discussion in chapter 5), there are no other means for supporting schools and so the removal of the statement profoundly undermines the sustainability of inclusive education.

The previous law maintained at least a nominal preference for inclusive education, by conveying a sense of hierarchy in which the mainstream classroom was prioritised (even if only on the discursive plane) as a learning environment, the ‘inclusive unit’ was added as a fall-back option and special schooling was an alternative only for students that ultimately could not be accommodated within the mainstream school. In contrast, this perceived priority of educational inclusion, as an integral presupposition for the social inclusion of disabled students, is altogether absent from the content of Law 3699. In an interesting choice of words, the legislators profess that one of the main goals of ‘Special Education & Training’ is “their [i.e. disabled students] inclusion *according to their abilities* in the educational system, social life and professional activity” (Article 2.5.c; emphasis mine). Once again, the imperative of reforming the structural arrangement and pedagogic function of mainstream education so as to enhance its capacity to accommodate all levels of student diversity is conspicuous by its absence.

In addition, one might argue that, while Law 2817 'aspired' (but failed in practice) to promote inclusive education, Law 3699 abandons altogether the idea of an inclusive educational reality for all students. In the new legal framework special education is no longer presented as a 'necessary evil' in the layout of the Greek education system; rather, it is sanctioned by policy planners as the optimum educational mechanism for safeguarding presumably both the right to learning and the future social inclusion of those students that are simply 'not able' to fit into the mainstream of education. Following this (faulty) reasoning, it is perhaps not that difficult to understand how Minister Stylianidis fails to grasp the antinomy in advocating "equal opportunities", "social inclusion" and "the building of an anthropocentric education" (Ministry of Education 2008b:5) as advanced by the concomitant expansion of segregated educational provision for disabled students.

It would be perhaps a mistake to dismiss Law 3699 in its entirety as nothing but a giant step backwards for Greek educational legislation. In addition to a critical appraisal, we must recognise that the law incorporates several amendments that target some of the perennial problems of special education in Greece. There is a number of clauses that focus mainly on practical issues: facilitating the access of students and schools to new assistive technologies (see, for instance, Articles 7 & 8); supporting the role and function of the Pedagogical Institute's special education services (Article 14); solving issues regarding the formal requirements, appointment, school placement and payment of special educators, teaching assistants and supplementary personnel (Articles 16-23); or, enhancing teacher training and continuing professional development (Article 25).

Without a doubt, the most noteworthy legislative amendment pertains to securing the compulsory nature of formal education for disabled students. Although the Greek Constitution of 1974 (Article 16) established a 9-years compulsory education system for all students, the subsequent educational laws (including Law 2817/2000) allowed for the exemption of students "with severe learning difficulties" through the loophole of in-home tuition without the supervision of the state. Law 3699 makes, for the first time in Greek educational legislation, an explicit reference to the "compulsory status of Special Education & Training" (Article 1.1). More importantly, aiming to combat school truancy for disabled students, it regulates the

option of home-schooling with the caveat of formal assessment in the form of a strict official verification and evaluation process for this type of educational provision (Article 6.4.c).

Still, these limited – in both range and effect – stipulations fail to address in their totality the legislative and administrative problems regarding the quality and quantity of learning conditions currently offered to disabled students. A significant illustration of the problem arises from the issues associated with the lack of early identification and intervention policies for children with learning difficulties. This was a major shortcoming in the operation of the previous support centres scheme which continues to be ignored in the design of the novel KEDDY system. Similarly, Law 3699 does not tackle the perennial absence from Greek legislation of a comprehensive continuing/adult education scheme and a vocational training framework that would link special education with the job market and facilitate the professional (re-)habilitation of disabled people. Both ‘early intervention’ and ‘adult education’ are acknowledged as important issues in the new law. However, the proposed amendments, i.e. expansion of the KEDDY services to kindergarten pupils (as a policy for early intervention) and extension of the maximum age limit for high-school attendance to 23 years (i.e. the law extends the years of high-school attendance as a form of ‘adult education’ provision), are trivial and largely inconsequential.

What is more important, the intrinsic contradiction between the nominal commitment to social inclusion and the actual expansion of the special education paradigm that characterises Law 3699 outweighs any positive impact on Greek education that these patchy ‘problem-specific’ statutory provisions might have. No matter how many legal loopholes are closed or how many practical issues are addressed, the new legal framework remains void of any conscious commitment to paradigmatic change in the design of Greek education and lacks concrete policies for the development of an inclusive pedagogy, an inclusive school culture and an inclusive social ethos. Inclusive education, as Armstrong and Barton (2008:3-4) have argued, constitutes a challenge falling within a broader agenda of social, cultural, political and economic conditions. Failure to address these conditions and challenge them through education implies the failure of any inclusive agenda. For this reason,

Law 3699 inevitably raises more institutional barriers to the participation of disabled people not only in the mainstream of Greek education but also in the mainstream of Greek civic, cultural and social life.

As this overview of Law 3699 attempted to substantiate, the same points of criticism that this thesis raises with regard to Law 2817/2000 in the previous chapter are still germane, almost a decade later, in the discussion of the current legal framework for Greek special education: *the reaffirmation of the integrationist agenda*, which limits inclusion to the accommodation of some “children with mild/moderate SEN” in the established educational status quo; the impairment-driven approach to disability, with *the proliferation of labelling and categorisation*, that strengthens the dominant conceptualisation of disability as deviation from the norm and legitimises the educational exclusion of those students that don’t fit into this norm; *the superficial modernisation of administrative discourses*, traceable in *the ostensible terminology shift*, that remains immaterial as it is not linked to the concomitant remodelling of educational policies and practices.

There is, however, one essential difference. Law 2817, on the one hand, can be criticised for failing to corroborate its apparent discursive preference for educational inclusion with concrete strategies that could support a paradigmatic shift from special to inclusive education. On the other hand, Law 3699 attempts to legitimise the same lack of potential for reform and the same unwillingness to challenge existing educational norms by accepting special education as a valid pedagogic perspective for a society that supposedly strives for the unconditional inclusion of disabled individuals. Consequently, Law 3699 reduces the issue of inclusion to a special education concern not only because once again the political administrators of education contrive a legal framework that postulates an inclusive social reality, but it also fails to overturn in practice the established exclusionary reality of Greek education. Rather, this new legal framework paradoxically prescribes the expansion of special education as a prerequisite for social inclusion.

Hence, in conclusion, although on a practical level Law 3699 does not represent a major departure from the preceding legal framework, it marks a significant turn in the philosophy of Greek educational legislation. A turn away from

the first indecisive steps (that Greek education has been striving to make during the past decade) in the direction of the implementation of nation-wide inclusive policies and towards the *de facto* revalidation of the exclusionary policies and practices of special education as the prescribed response of the Greek formal education system to student diversity.

As the ensuing section will discuss, this backward step in the attitudinal frame and functional direction of educational policy that typifies Law 3699 (enacted by the conservative New Democracy administration) remains largely unchallenged in present-day governmental discourses on educational provision for disabled students, despite the government changes (with PASOK returning in office, either as the sole governing party or as the main participant in a governmental coalition). This legitimisation of the special education paradigm in dominant disability discourses, in conjunction with the on-going financial crisis that has impacted significantly on both the quantity and quality of a broad spectrum of social policies in present-day Greece, paints a rather bleak picture for the future of inclusive education in the country. In this dire economic climate, more limits are placed by the struggling national economy on who can lay claim to expensive educational resources. Hence, as will be argued, Greek education seems to be facing a future in which the imperative of inclusion is in danger of being put indefinitely on hold, since the structural rearrangements required for the inclusion of disabled people in the mainstream of Greek education and social life are systematically curtailed, if not totally abandoned, as a presumably ‘unaffordable luxury’ for the indebted state.

6.2 Putting inclusive education on hold:

Current status and future perspectives of Greek ‘inclusive’ education policy

The antinomy between acknowledging the ideal of an inclusive society and sustaining the exclusionary reality of segregated educational provision for disabled students is evident not only in the recent Law 3699, but also in the entire spectrum of educational legislation and policy advancements in Greece during the past decade. While the notion of social inclusion is generally foregrounded as a moral imperative in the modernisation agenda of recent Greek governments, the educational and

broader social policies of the past decade have failed to formulate the necessary strategies that would combat the institutional, political and cultural conditions propagating social exclusion. Specifically in the field of education, contemporary administrative discourses have consistently framed social inclusion as a self-evidently desirable and unequivocal human right. Yet, as we saw, the two main educational legislation documents of the last twelve years have relegated the significance of inclusive education for the construction of an inclusive society to a marginal concern for the Greek formal education system; either by failing *de facto* to challenge the hegemony of special education (Law 2817) or by attempting *de jure* to legitimise its proliferation (Law 3699).

Significantly, this uniform deficiency of educational legislation eludes both political parties (PASOK and New Democracy) that have been alternating in the administration of Greek education over the past 35 years and are responsible for the enactment of that legislation. Quite unsurprisingly, when the New Democracy administration presented Law 3699 for discussion in the Greek Parliament, PASOK (then being the main opposition party) voted against the enactment of Law 3699 ‘on principle’ (as New Democracy has voted against PASOK’s Law 2817 in 2000) and announced its intention to revise it when in office. The criticism focused on the apparent curtailment of the “inclusive educational orientation” of the existing legal framework. PASOK’s Plenary speaker argued against the “anachronistic” and “impairment-led” philosophy of the new law, which neglected the “social underpinnings of impairment” and “approached disability from an individual deficit perspective” rather than “as a complex social and political phenomenon” necessitating the “structural remodelling” of the established educational system (see Dragona 2008:1-2).

Yet, even though PASOK won the National Elections a year later (October 2009), the design of Greek education remains bereft of a structural remodelling. A closer look at the limited references that PASOK’s pre-election programme makes to disability issues might account for this shortfall. The new administration’s disability agenda is permeated with the same discourse of modernisation that typifies contemporary Greek educational policy in general and Law 3699 in particular; that is, a discourse that not only fails to challenge the wider material and cultural barriers

that prevent social inclusion, but also ignores divisions and discrimination within the educational context itself.

The one page of the programme devoted to disability issues, under the emotive heading “People with disability: Equal participation in life” (see PASOK 2009:47), is filled with an all too familiar political rhetoric that appropriates a human rights-based vocabulary of equal opportunities and highlights the perils of social exclusion, thus misleadingly seeking the route to inclusion in the exclusionist capitalist premises of individualism and social antagonism. Indeed, the category of ‘life’ conveys so vague a meaning that it is doubtful whether it even evokes a social context in which disabled citizens are meant to participate. Predictably, the programme fails to link this nominally inclusive attitude with concrete social policies and practices that could successfully combat exclusion. The one paragraph referring to educational provision for disabled people takes one step closer to discursive conformity with Law 3699, as it borrows the heading “Special Education & Training” and echoes the moral imperative of “equal access to education” for disabled students without a single reference to inclusive education either as a programmatic aspiration or as a concrete policy statement (ibid.:55). It is striking that although the term ‘inclusion’ is used, with or without the ‘social’ qualifier, many times throughout the document in relation to several policy proposals (intercultural communication, immigrant education, unemployment issues, etc), the term is altogether absent in the sections discussing PASOK’s social or educational agenda on disability.

From this perspective, it comes as no surprise that the current PASOK administration has not prioritised the implementation of educational policy changes that would enhance the visibility of inclusive education issues. Law 3699 remains in effect as the present-day regulatory framework for the provision of educational services to disabled students in Greece. Moreover, in the current climate of global financial crisis, which has pushed the country into a steep economic recession, the government not only appears unwilling to instigate a far-reaching educational reform in the name of inclusion but also seems unable to back the few practical amendments to the type and quality of special educational provision envisaged in Law 3699. Without a doubt, the enforced budget cuts and the government’s explicit objective to downsize public sector’s expenses (in order to meet the country’s debt obligations

towards the International Monetary Fund and other international lenders) had a grave impact on education (cf. Reppa 2009).

This impact is expected to widen in the following years, as the national economy continues to deteriorate with critical side effects to the nation's social life. The British newspaper *The Guardian*, for instance, recently reported that “painful austerity measures and a seemingly endless economic drama” are the main cause – according to experts – for an extraordinary 40% increase in the country's suicide rate during January-May 2011 (compared to the same period in the previous year): “As poverty has deepened, unemployment has hit an unprecedented 18%”, while the homeless now exceed “20,000 in central Athens alone” and “crime has skyrocketed in a country heading for a fifth straight year of recession”. As a result, “Greece's social fabric is fraying in ways once unthinkable” and “the economic crisis has morphed increasingly into one of mental health with depression, neuroses and cases of self-harm also surging (Smith 2011; from *The Guardian*, 18 December 2011). What is more, the country is not expected to emerge from the debt crisis in the near future: a recent amendment (in February 2012) to the Memorandum signed by the Greek government and the country's international lenders postulates strict austerity measures until at least the year 2020 (see ‘Wikipedia 2012: Greek government-debt crisis’ for more details).

As regards the logistics of special education in particular, the lingering fiscal stringency has already claimed a heavy toll. As we shall see in the following chapters, Greek disability activists and educationalists point out that the public sector cutbacks have already curtailed the amendments in Law 3699 regarding the implementation of new assistive technologies, improvements in school accessibility, student transport and hiring of teaching assistants or supplementary personnel for special schools and inclusive unit. Recently, Anna Diamantopoulou, Minister of Education, announced that in addition to an indefinite salary freeze and a hefty reduction in teachers' allowances (including special educators) there will be a significant decrease in the hiring of teachers, as part of a general governmental plan to reduce the number of public sector employees (see Diamantopoulou 2010). No specific plan, however, was announced in order to ensure that these budget

constraints will not lead to further deterioration in the already seriously insufficient staffing levels in special schools, parallel support units and inclusive classrooms.

Similarly, the implementation of the KEDDY framework, the support centres scheme established in Law 3699 with the purported aim to revamp the previous KDAY system, remains problematic. For instance, it was recently reported in the national press that the two KEDDY centres located in Thessaloniki (the second biggest city in Greece) had at the end of the 2009/10 school-year, i.e. May 2010, almost 500 students placed on waiting lists for SEN diagnosis pending availability of an evaluation committee (see Papadopoulou 2010). A student in Thessaloniki usually has to wait up to five months for an initial KEDDY evaluation (*ibid.*) and sometimes longer for a follow-up meeting, which is typically required when a student is identified as 'having SEN' in order to verify the type of difficulties they may experience and approve the cost of support services afforded to them by the KEDDY. In practice, this means that many students who experience learning difficulties are stranded for most of the school-year (if not permanently) in either general or special education units without a formal assessment of their 'special educational needs' and without any type of individual support or personalised assistance.

Similar complaints have made the news recently regarding the Athens-based KEDDY (see Rizospastis 2010a). Although there is no official data available for the present-day operation of the support centres, there are various reports from educationalists and parents concerning the lack of facilities, the insufficient staffing and the inadequate number of currently operating centres both in Athens and Thessaloniki (*cf.* Papadopoulou 2010). Moreover, if the KEDDY are understaffed and unable to provide timely and effective evaluation, assessment and support services for disabled students in the main metropolitan areas, it is reasonably safe to assume from past experience that the situation is far worse in peripheral regions, such as the smaller Greek islands and remote rural areas, that typically have less access to funds and educational resources (see Open Society Institute 2006: 37-38).

The deficiencies and disorganisation of the KEDDY network, however, is not the only repercussion of the state's dire fiscal straits for disability issues in Greece.

Perhaps the most alarming side effect is the overall absence of disability-related subjects from dominant political discourses in present-day Greece. Arguably, disability issues have perennially played a marginal role in the formulation of social policy in contemporary Greece (cf. Soulis 2002; Kourbetis 2007). But their current status has been relegated from a marginal position to a practically nonexistent one, since governmental discourses are consumed by the pressing reality of the national economic crisis. It is interesting to note that this 'pressing reality' led very recently (in the end of 2011) to a government reform that weakened further the visibility of disability issues. A temporary coalition government (with a new Prime Minister but with the vast majority of the standing PASOK cabinet remaining in office) was appointed with the support of new Democracy (the main opposition party) as part of a deal with the country's international lenders to tackle the debt crisis (see BBC News 2011). As the sole item in the agenda of this interim government is the implementation of an EU 'bailout package' for Greek economy (the plan envisages elections when this supposedly short-ranged goal is achieved), all discussions on other social and political issues, including disability, have been suspended.

Yet, it is in this period of austerity that disability issues must gain prominence in the governmental agenda. As the urgent need to reduce public sector expenditure places insurmountable pressure on social care policies in general, this administrative trend is bound to affect exponentially the most vulnerable members and marginalised groups of Greek society. Hence, without concrete policies that would target exclusion, disabled people and other social minorities are inevitably at risk of further marginalisation and alienation from the mainstream of society.

Greek governments, however, seem unwilling to acknowledge that uniform austerity measures, when applied to a non-uniform socio-economic reality become both socially unjust and detrimental to social cohesion (cf. Reppa 2009). As regards special education in particular, this governmental stance (which remained unaltered with the nominal change from a PASOK-only government to a PASOK-centred government with broader parliamentary support) is translated as a total absence of legislative or administrative initiatives that, if not aiming to enhance, could at least secure in these critical times the existing quantity and quality of educational services afforded to disabled students. Handled in terms that further discrimination against the

most marginalised groups, the crisis, as Marcia Rioux aptly points out, is not merely a financial one; it is also a crisis of social justice, a crisis of equality and a crisis of fairness (Rioux 2002:223).

Specifically in the field of education, the most characteristic example of the government's indifference towards disability issues can be found in the 'New Bill for Education', entitled "New School: Students First", that the Minister of Education Ms Diamantopoulou publicised in March 2010. Despite the carefully chosen wording of the title, which seems to prioritise students' rights to learning ('students first') as the driving force for change in education ('new school'), there is little in the body of this bill to support the discursive focus of its headlining on students' rights. On the contrary, as teachers' unions, academics and social activists have argued from a wide range of perspectives, the main function of this new educational bill is to lay the legal bases for the expansion of the government's public sector austerity plan into the field of education from primary to university level, without stipulating the necessary caveats that would safeguard the educational rights of the students in this imminent 'remodelling' of Greek public schools (cf. tvxs 2010).

In addition to the negligible presence of disability issues in the current governmental agenda, the new bill makes a minimal reference to both inclusive and special education. More specifically, Section C6 under a heading proclaiming that "All [students] move forward without any exclusion" devotes only one page to "inclusion" and one page to "special education" (see Ministry of Education 2010:30-31). It is striking to note that the subsection on inclusion makes no reference to disabled students. Rather, the goal of "including all children" is limited explicitly to immigrant education and students belonging to ethnic (i.e. Roma) or religious (i.e. Muslim) minorities (op.cit.:30).

Although the subsection on special education begins with the assertion that soon the Ministry will submit a comprehensive new framework for special education "in the logic of inclusion", this is followed by a bulletin list of a few trivial amendments to the existing framework (op.cit.:31), all of them firmly placed within the 'logic' of special education. The bill includes a clause stipulating the formation of a committee that will examine and revise, where needed, national educational

legislation documents so as to conform fully to the requirements of the ‘UN Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (March 2007)’, which was ratified by the member states of the EU in 2009 (see Strati 2009). It fails, however, to stipulate direct strategies for the implementation of disability discrimination legislation at a school level. In contrast, when the focus is turned on the reality of everyday schooling, the policy proposals of the new bill seem to assign a very restricted meaning to the concept of ‘disabled people’s rights to education’.

For the current administration the foremost concern of present-day special education policy is to secure that “no child with disability or SEN will be deprived of the benefit of education” (ibid.). Yet, in the policy content of the Bill there is no qualification of the type of education that students categorised as ‘having SEN’ have a right to. From this view, the ‘logic of inclusion’, to which the legislators allude with regard to policy planning, entails the accommodation of disabled students in some sort of formal teaching environment within the system of compulsory education, but does not necessitate the annulment of segregated educational provision. On the contrary, as Law 3699 exemplifies, this integrationist agenda can be used to legitimise the proliferation of special education in Greece as the ‘most effective’ administrative mechanism for safeguarding ‘the benefit of education’ for disabled students. Accordingly, in this new bill the ‘right to education’ for disabled students acquires the meaning of the ‘right to special education’, since once again there is a total lack of concrete policy initiatives that would advance the formulation of an inclusive educational framework.

Following faithfully the overarching agenda of lowering the cost of public education as part of the government’s general austerity plan, Minister Diamantopoulou mentioned in a recent interview that the “challenge” for her administration is “to yield better results” with “less recruitments” and “reduced funding” (see Diamantopoulou 2010). In the same vein, the Bill’s policy proposals focus on monitoring the effectiveness of the active teaching personnel and the currently available educational structures. Three of the seven special education policy proposals included in the bill pertain to enhanced charting and evaluation procedures, aiming explicitly to “increase measurable results” (op.cit.:31). The legislators, however, ‘neglect’ to introduce even one concrete policy targeting the

acknowledged deficiencies of the established special education structures. What was, instead, suggested was the closure of a school for deaf and hearing-impaired children, discussed at the very beginning of the thesis, as one of the measures that were purportedly taken for cutting down costs in education.

Arguably, the lack of consistent special education charting and effective formal evaluation processes both for special educators and for public sector officials working in this sensitive field has been a perennial thorn in the side of the country's special education system (see Soulis 2002; Dellasoudas 2003). Yet, the new Bill seems to foster the misguided assumption that the enduring problems plaguing the quantity and quality of educational provision afforded to disabled students in Greece can be amended simply by a more effective micro-management, directed at reprimanding 'incompetent' educators and 'unproductive' public servants. Despite proclamations to the contrary, the shortcomings of the Greek education system that persistently curtail the right of disabled students to learning remain on the sidelines of present-day educational policy formulation. The understaffed social care and SEN support services, the unaccommodating functional arrangements of mainstream schools, the lack of pedagogic practices that could lead 'students with SEN' to better attainment and many other critical failures are not addressed in practical terms and remain blatantly excluded from contemporary official appeals to inclusion.

At the same time, the matter of inclusion has moved entirely out of the picture of policy planning for the current administrators of Greek education. While immaterial references to equal rights, social cohesion and inclusion appear sporadically in the discursive content of the latest educational Bill (see, for instance, pp. 5-6, 10-11, 26 and 30-31), the policy proposals included in the document are devoid of any reformative elements that could advance inclusive education as a presupposition of the broader goal of social inclusion. On the contrary, under the pressure of a struggling national economy, PASOK's educational policy (both under the one-party government from the 2009 elections to November 2011 and within the interim coalition government of the past three months) is increasingly preoccupied with limiting expenses.

It is interesting to note, for instance, that recently a new proposal was submitted by the Ministry of Education regarding the general administration of special education and the operation of the centres for evaluating and diagnosing disabled students (KEDDY). In March 2012, under the interim coalition government and just a few days before resigning from office as Minister of Education, Ms Diamantopoulou suggested, on the one hand, the cancellation of the administrative section of the Ministry responsible for students with disability and, on the other, the closing down of the special centres for evaluating disabled pupils and the transfer of evaluation procedures into existing school committees (i.e. EDEAY) that are part of the administrative system for mainstream school units (see Alfavita 2012). Both the timing of this change (i.e. after the completion of my thesis) and its tentative character as a proposal that has not yet been officially ratified prevent me from commenting on it at some length. However, it is worth noting that educationalists involved in KEDDY have severally criticised this proposal as being solely concerned with reducing the cost of diagnosing learning difficulties and for replacing *educational* centres of evaluation with administrative committees (see OKPE 2012). It seems to me that this change exemplifies the pervasive preoccupation of the administrators of Greek education with logistics, as it involves a shift of focus from disabled students to the 'efficient' and proportional handling of financial and other resources with regard to a purportedly homogeneous students' population, within which the distinct 'needs' of disabled students are effaced.

This administrative categorisation of educational policies solely according to cost not only lowers the standards of special education services available to 'students with SEN' but also inevitably dismisses more expensive inclusive education initiatives as an 'unrealistic dream' for the indebted public sector. Although this evocation of the economic crisis as the reason for the marginalisation of inclusion or, for that matter, any substantial provision for the education of disabled people has been criticised by disability activists as profoundly misleading (as we shall see in chapter 7), it is still routinely employed in contemporary governmental discourses to legitimise exclusion and validate the enduring dominance of the special education paradigm within the Greek system of education. In the following chapters we shall revisit this discursive tactic of conceptualising full inclusion as a utopian aspiration

and we will discuss both its appeal for hegemonic inclusion discourses and its normalising effect to counter-hegemonic discourses.

At this point we can conclude that the new education bill closes a certain circle for the limited – in volume, duration and conceptualisation – historical course of inclusive education in Greece. Starting from the first attempts to implement some form of inclusive policies in the late '90s, which culminated in the nominally inclusion-oriented Law 2817/2000; moving, during the biggest part of the past decade, to the pragmatic enforcement of an integrationist educational agenda, despite the concomitant prioritisation of equal rights and social inclusion in governmental discourses; then in 2008, with Law 3699, to the reaffirmation of the special education paradigm and the legitimisation of segregated educational provision as the 'optimal mechanism' for safekeeping the prospect of social inclusion; finally, with the recent bill, to the effective abandonment of inclusive education, as the right to education for disabled people is delimited to their right to *special* education and the ideal of inclusion is rendered synonymous to 'non-exclusion from any type of formal education'.

These retrograde steps in the design of national education policy and practice outline a rather discouraging image for the official vision of the future of inclusive education in Greece. As the current government defers the formulation of inclusive schooling for a distant and 'more auspicious' time, disabled people face today an increasingly exclusionary formal education system. In a social reality proliferating educational and institutional norms that incessantly generate divisive lines and raise barriers to participation, immaterial political discourses on human rights and equal opportunities are rendered ineffective in fostering the essential attitudinal change required for the successful inclusion of disabled people in the mainstream of educational, cultural and social life. Yet, for the administrators of Greek education the notion of inclusion remains limited to a discursive construct, void of any substantial content and unable to effectuate concrete educational and broader social policy change. Rather, the term can be fittingly adjusted to carry a meaning that is in accordance with the dominant political agenda of the time, regardless of how much the notion of inclusion must be restricted or distorted in order to accommodate these different interpretations.

The impact of the current financial crisis on education is not a uniquely Greek phenomenon. Studies in different historical contexts indicate that within modern capitalist societies in particular State fiscal stringency generates a discursive and a political practice that puts disabled children's rights in danger, (cf. Gadour 2008). However, the issue at stake, as we began to discuss, cannot be reduced to a question of causality, wherein the financial deficiencies lead straightforwardly to the inability to offer provisions for inclusive education. In the hierarchical context of modern industrialised societies, as Barton points out, what is crucial is the centrality of an 'economic rationality' and its role in the process of decision-making in education, at both a central and local level. It is this rationality that "ushered in a series of significant changes in the values, priorities and outcomes of education" (Barton 2004:63). In other words the question of how to allocate resources and whether a government should prioritise investment in inclusive education or, for instance, in a spectacular Paralympics, is a choice that is not simply financial, but also – and indeed, primarily – political.

The politics of the choices made by the Greek governments over the past twelve years and the transmutations of such contested concepts as 'inclusion' and 'human rights' in dominant socio-political discourses will continue to hold our attention in the next two chapters of this thesis. Therein the opinions of Greek disability activists and educationalists (to be presented in Ch. 7 & 8) will point to a different understanding of these and of other related concepts, which will further underline the failure of official discourses and policies in Greece to promote and sustain inclusion. As will be argued, the main points of criticism highlight the discursive exploitation of inclusion in present-day political discourse and censure the enduring hegemony of exclusion in the design of Greek education. Moreover, both disability activists and educationalists foreground the significance of placing the moral imperative of inclusion back into the picture, not for future, but for *present-day* educational policy, as they underline the futility of attempting to create an inclusive society in an institutional void, without an inclusive school ethos and a *paradigmatic* redesign of education. A redesign that, as both educationalists and disability activists will argue, should not only be 'able to advance', but rather must be *founded on* the goal of including all students in the mainstream of education as an unequivocal basis of social inclusion.

CHAPTER 7

IN SEARCH OF A CRITICAL CONCEPT OF INCLUSION: THE DISCOURSE OF GREEK DISABILITY ACTIVISTS & THEORISTS

7.1 The Greek disability movement as a frame of critique

7.1.1 Towards a critique of 'inclusion'

At the beginning of the school year in which the effects of the current financial crisis in Greece began to be crystallised, the year 2010-2011, a group of disabled activists, the 'Disabled Citizens Movement' called attention to the "dramatic conditions" of disabled students in both mainstream and special schools. In a pertinent critique of the official concept of inclusion they pointed out that:

"The programs of co-education, inclusion and parallel support essentially fail to cover the actual educational needs of disabled students, while the process of inclusion in mainstream schools is used as an alibi for the longstanding abandonment by all governments of the last decades of students with disability."

(Disabled Citizens Movement 2010b)

Significantly, the group challenges evocations of the financial crisis as an alibi for the further degradation of the disabled students' condition. As they say, the crisis "cannot constitute a starting point for cutting down educational programs and resources". On the contrary, all students with disability have the right to "an educational system that is provided to them freely by the state and that guarantees a high quality education which contributes to social inclusion and entails their participation as citizens in a society of equals" (ibid.).

This forceful statement constructs a notion of inclusion that is incompatible with and explicitly critical of the uses of the term in governmental discourses. This chapter will explore how this notion and a wider discourse of inclusion formulated

by disability activists and theorists in the context of the disability movement in Greece acts to challenge the official language of inclusion. In the last three chapters our analytical focus was centred on the policy choices made by the administrators of contemporary Greek education and the transmutations of such contested concepts as 'inclusion', 'special education', 'special educational needs' and 'disability rights' in governmental and administrative discourses on inclusive education, first in the context of the special education paradigm (Ch. 4) and then in the context of battles over inclusion during the last decade (Ch. 5 & 6). Both the notion and the educational politics of inclusion will continue to provide our analytical focus for chapters 7 and 8. The ensuing discussion, however, will move away from educational legislation or similar administrative discourses and will look at alternative and critical socio-political discourses.

Having investigated the discourse of government and other political or institutional forces as systemic official responses to student diversity at a national level, we will now attempt to juxtapose and associate critically this dominant discourse of policy makers with the discourse of social agents that engage directly with the question of educational and social inclusion. While these social agents are implicated directly in the fields of special and inclusive policies their voice is routinely marginalised in the decision-making process that effectuates these policies – stated and enacted – in Greece. With this in mind, the thesis aspires to highlight and foreground the discerning, and often dissenting, voices of those social groups that are typically underrepresented in, if not altogether excluded from, the dominant governmental discourses on inclusion.

In this chapter, the focus is placed on the critical discourse of the Greek disability movement, which is examined alongside the discourse of Greek theorists (mostly academics in the fields of disability studies and special education), with the purpose of identifying a new hierarchy of priorities set for the inclusive agenda. Drawing upon the predication that inclusion is a contested concept, the aim here is to weigh the use and content of certain key terms in discourses on inclusion within the Greek disability movement against the employment of the same terms in the espoused educational policy of the Greek government. The underpinning assumption is that such a correlation will not only unveil discursive fissures in the dominant

interpretation of the seemingly unambiguous ‘ideal of inclusion’, but will also reveal significant tensions and contradictions in the making of inclusive education in present-day Greece.

To that end, the thesis will look into the discourse of disability activists, pedagogists, researchers, academics and educational sociologists in Greece, whose writings address the theoretical underpinnings of contemporary educational policy offering a critical prism for the investigation of officially sanctioned inclusive initiatives. Alongside academic articles, news reports and mission statements or public declarations by activist groups, the ensuing discussion will also draw upon an interview conducted for the purposes of this study in October 2011 with Kostas Gargalis, the president of the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf. While these Greek critical discourses will provide the main frame of reference, I will also seek to contextualise them within the wider frame of social disability theory. The aim of this contextualisation is to associate Greek categories with theoretical perspectives from an international critical framework which is, as we shall see, often evoked by Greek activists and theorists themselves.

The discussion that follows will call attention to educational inclusion, social inclusion and other contested concepts such as school effectiveness and student success. The same concepts were also at the epicentre of concern during the preceding examination of the discourse of policy makers (see Ch. 5 & 6). Yet, as we shall see, the understanding of these concepts by Greek disability theorists and activists reveals the presence of conflicting conceptual frameworks and contrasting practices as regards educational responses to student diversity in Greece today. This discourse interrogates both the pedagogic value and the political footing of contemporary educational policy-making, and accentuates specifically the contradiction between the government’s nominal commitment to social inclusion or disability rights and the enactment of educational laws that proliferate the hegemony of special education and dismiss inclusive policies as a luxury currently unaffordable by the indebted Greek state. The voices of activists and theorists comprising the Greek disability movement challenge directly this purported ‘inevitability’ of educational and social exclusion. As they argue, the attack on inclusive and free public education is not the straightforward outcome of a fiscal stringency that

purportedly affects uniformly all sections of a society, but the product of certain political choices that allocate existing resources, marginalise disabled students and the value of education as such, and display a blatant absence of commitment to the ideals of (educational) equality and democracy.

7.1.2 A diversity of voices and a quest for self-critique

The Greek disability movement is neither homogeneous with regard to the social subjects participating in it, nor unified with regard to theorisations and political positions articulated within its frameworks. While there is no comprehensive historical account of the movement, short overviews produced by disability activists trace back its roots in the sixties, when the first organisations of disabled citizens and parents of disabled students began to form. Yet, as we began to discuss in chapter 4, there is a profound discrepancy between the development of the disability movement in Greece over the sixties and seventies and the growth of similar critical movements in Western Europe. Specific historical circumstances, including particularly the seven year dictatorship (1967-74), made it difficult for any movement to develop in this period, throughout which, as G. Fyka puts it, “there is no public discussion of inclusion”, while the medical model enjoys an undisputed domination both in the social and the educational plane (Fyka 2010).

In the seventies and eighties, as Fyka points out (op.cit.), both parents of disabled children and disabled citizens themselves participate more actively in a movement that begins to form itself around demands such as financial provisions, the participation of parents and disabled people in the administrative councils of schools and other official bodies, as well as demands for the modernisation of education and the advancement of social inclusion. The founding of specialised Education departments at universities in the eighties has further facilitated the creation of an academic discourse on special education and inclusion, which is often united with the discourse of activists in a critique of the status quo and helps to introduce into the Greek educational languages categories of disability and inclusion produced in the broader European context.

Yet, discrepancies are also evident from the outset. In the newly founded departments, for instance, the number of teaching positions focusing on special education is very limited (usually one for each department) and the fields of research frequently echo the established medical model of disability. It is indicative that a university position on special education was announced in the field of 'Optical and Hearing Disorders; Resolutions', with regard to which Fyka (2010) critically observes that the main characteristic of deaf and blind children is not *their* disorder, but that of an educational system that does not provide alternative routes to education.

Disability activists have often advanced more critical and polemical attitudes, and further acted to translate these attitudes into political practice. An event marking the symbolic beginning of active resistance to the oppression of disabled people is worth mentioning in order to indicate its critical distance not only from governmental but also from certain academic discourses on disability. In May 1976 about 100 students and 200 people previously or currently working in the 'House for the blind' in Athens – then owned by church authorities – demanding, among other things the transfer of the property wherein the House operated to the state in order to be organised as a school for the blind. The occupation was characterised by police officials as an 'immediate national danger', and the blind people that carried on the occupation were 'warned' to stop it immediately. A few days later, the continuation of the struggle brought more than 20,000 people in a field demonstrating in its support, as well as international media coverage and declarations of support of intellectual and public figures such as Sartre, Beauvoir and Foucault. Three years after the event subsequently called 'May of the blind', the process of transforming the House into a 'Centre for Education and Rehabilitation' of the blind was completed, while this act of emancipation continues to be evoked not only as the inauguration of the disability movement in Greece, but also as an attempt of disabled citizens to articulate their demands themselves outside the mediation of other groups and social agents (Eleftherotypia 2010c).

The last two decades have witnessed both the intensification and the self-critique of the disability movement. In 1989 there was the first national coalition of people with disabilities, while in the next years groups were organised throughout

the country. As K. Theodoropoulos (2006) observes, however, several of these organisations were not the product of self-organised initiatives taken by disabled people, but the outcome of the need to organise an institutional framework in order to take advantage of available funding from the Greek state and the European Union. Thus by the 1990s it was possible to speak of a powerful network of organisations of disabled people, some of which had their roots in critical movements starting from the grassroots. Yet, these organisations were gradually transformed into centres for exercising political power, closely affiliated with the dominant political structures that appropriated these groups in attempts to control the social minorities associated with them (Theodoropoulos 2006). The establishment of a wide variety of groups and organisations went hand in hand with a fruitful internal dissenting debate, focusing specifically on the ways in which aspects of the movement, as certain organisations and activists pointed out, came to be dangerously close to governmental discourses and abandoned the vision of a radical educational and social movement advancing inclusion (see for instance Fyka 2010 & the 'identity' and 'mission' statements of the Disabled Citizens Movement 2010c/2010d).

The exploration of the diverse discourses and practices of the Greek disability movement, as these developed in the course of its recent history, opens a field of research that cannot be discussed in the context of this thesis. Yet, it is important to note how this diversity will inform the following discussion of the critical discourses of inclusion. The next sections will investigate how the discourse of disability theorists and activists offers the means to debunk some of the popular myths that serve to legitimise the production and reproduction of the common-sense approach to disability rights, in which the ideal of inclusion is separated from its material presuppositions and the rhetoric of human rights is divorced from its reforming potential for social policy. However, we shall also see how these discordant voices have not always been overtly critical of the discursive repositioning of special education within the mainstream of contemporary educational and social policy making. Moreover, there will be an attempt to explore limitations of the concepts of disability and inclusion posited by activists and theorists within the frame of the disability movement in order to indicate how this discourse not only arises from distinct positions, but also needs itself to be appraised reflexively and self-critically.

7.2 Debunking the myths about Greek special education: The discourse of the Greek disability movement

7.2.1 The failure of special education and the postponed ‘ideal of inclusion’

“Rooms that resemble cages, functional gaps, inability to offer specialised educational equipment and media, teachers having only the basic level of specialised learning, classes that begin several months after the beginning of the school year, all these constitute the gloomy picture of a section of the educational system belonging to the purportedly ‘European’ Greece of the 21st century.”

(Antoniadi 2010)

Published first as newspaper article and subsequently uploaded on the Disabled Citizens Movement website, K. Antoniadi’s text describes Greek special schools, pointing out how “obstacles to life and learning” in the structure and operation of these schools imply that the school year “will not begin in equal terms for all students” (ibid). Parents’ organisations report each year how special schools fail to open at the outset of the fall term due to “lack of funds and specialised staff” and, when they do open after several months, they are profoundly understaffed (see for instance Barbas 2010, Rizospastis 2009).

Despite the prominence of the moral imperative of social inclusion in the government’s discursive agenda, inclusive education remains – at best – a matter of minor importance for the educational policy planning of the current administration, as we discussed in the previous chapter. Especially today, in a time of a global financial crisis and under the pressure of domestic fiscal stringency (see The Independent 2010), political rhetoric in Greece attempts to legitimise the continuation of the existing special education framework under the banner of cost-effectiveness, while the government seems to defer the advancement of inclusive schooling for another ‘opportune time’ in the distant future. At the same time, however, budget constraints not only curtail the implementation of ‘costly’ inclusive education policies, but also undermine both the quantity and the quality of special education services currently available to students categorised as ‘having SEN’.

Under operational conditions that appear to be worsening progressively, as Antoniadi (2010) poignantly observed, the long-lasting functional difficulties of Greek special schools seem to have become insurmountable at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year.

Given this unsatisfactory operation, how can one explain the persistence of the special education paradigm in Greece? If we restrain from assuming that special schools are cost effective for the Greek state, simply because they remain closed, on what basis can special education continue to claim legitimacy? In what ways the myths that sustain this legitimacy are being challenged by the disability movement?

The administrative argument for the unremitting hegemony of Greek special education, while markedly at odds with the present-day educational reality experienced by disabled students, has been solidly based on a number of perennial myths regarding both special and inclusive education. These myths have been overtly prominent in the normalising discourse of the administrators of Greek education for the past twelve years and are instrumental in the perpetuation of segregated educational provision for disabled students in Greece to this day, as was highlighted in the preceding chapters 5 and 6 investigating contemporary (i.e. from the enactment of Law 2817 in 2000 and onwards) educational legislation and governmental discourses on inclusion in Greece. A shared characteristic of the dominant myths surrounding Greek special education is that they acknowledge inclusion as a seemingly unambiguous imperative, an undisputed ideal that merits no qualification. With equal haste, however, these myths censure any real-life endeavour to effectuate inclusion 'here and now' as idealistic and nonviable, a quixotic quest that should better be postponed for another, more auspicious, time in the future. Predicated on the same myths, the political rhetoric of contemporary Greek governments, as we saw in chapter 6, reaches effortlessly the same conclusion: There is no denying of the moral imperative of inclusion; yet, segregation – educational or social – is at the same time described as an unavoidable necessity for the protection of disabled people, until the advent of the ideal society which will fulfil the conditions for total inclusion.

Hence, it is not by chance that the discourse of social agents that actively combat this disabling social order and refuse to defer educational and social inclusion to a distant future points to a different understanding of inclusion as well as of concepts such as ‘school effectiveness’ and ‘student success’ that play an integral role in the making of the Greek special education myths. The failure of official policies in Greece to promote inclusion is inextricably linked to the discursive exploitation of the paradoxical link between special education and the ideal of inclusion. Accordingly, it is crucial to explore how these counter-hegemonic inclusion discourses (i.e. the discourse of the Greek disability movement in this chapter and the discourse of Greek educationalists in the next) attempt to debunk dominant myths about Greek special education by highlighting inclusion not as an unambiguous imperative, but as a political idea whose implementation entails a battle against existing power differentials, disablist mentalities and discriminating practices.

The first of these myths, which pervades all official responses to student diversity, is the myth that evokes inclusion as an ideal that – unfortunately, yet also inescapably – pertains to an ideal social and educational order. This myth became especially prominent when the present socio-economic context was declared as exceptional thus allowing the evocation of urgent matters of economy to postpone educational questions such as that of inclusion. In this context inclusion is also presented as a wholly new enterprise that cannot be attempted during this time of crisis, so “the second best alternative”, as Kostas Gargalis – president of the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf – phrased it during our interview, “was to at least ensure the quality of special education” (Gargalis 2011; material from interview to Ioanna Lianeri, Athens, October 2011).

In an attempt to draw attention to problems impeding the provision of good quality education to disabled students in the coming school year, teachers and parents associations addressed an open letter to the Ministry of Education in August 2010, alerting the Minister Ms Diamantopoulou to the fact that shortage of appointed educationalists and assistive personnel, lack of suitable teaching materials and inadequacy of accessible buildings have severely diminished the ability of special school units to cope with student differentiation and to cater to disabled students’

learning needs for the coming school-year (see Rizospastis 2010a). When a month later the Minister had still not deigned to reply, teachers and parents commented in the media how “in the coming school-year [the functional] problems are expected to multiply for the already degraded Greek special education” (Rizospastis 2010b). At the same time, they estimated, “approximately 185,000 children with ‘special needs’ will remain outside the formal education system” (op.cit.). With this statistic in mind, Mr Yannis Vardakastanis, president of NCDP (the National Confederation of Disabled People in Greece – *ΕΣΑμΕΑ*), pointed out in a newspaper article that today, despite the recent ratification of the 9-year compulsory education directive for disabled students, this stipulation “remains unattainable”, a promise “void of any actual content” (Vardakastanis 2010).

There is a contextual basis for this protest that cannot be ignored and has to do with the neglect of inclusive education infrastructure by the government. Hence, before we move on to examine how activists’ claims for improvement in special education services are formulated, we must acknowledge another frame of protest advocating inclusion not as an ideal future alternative, but as a practical concern for the present. In this vein, Mr Vardakastanis, in the same article – a published only a few days before the start of the 2010/11 academic year – questioned the readiness of the national education system to “include all students with disabilities” and urged the Ministry to “provide answers here and now” (ibid.).

Similarly, in its July 2011 editorial, the ‘Disability Now’ magazine censured the current political administration for utilising the enduring financial crisis as a pretext for the continuation of exclusionist policies that marginalise disabled citizens and propagate institutional and cultural discrimination in both education and broader society. The magazine argues that “[Greek] past governments have kept the disabled community on the periphery of social, political and economic life”, as “even under more favourable financial conditions” they have failed to “implement policies promoting the independent living of disabled people” (Disability Now 2011b). “What can we expect from the current administration”, the editorial inquires, “given the ‘alibi’ of the financial crisis?” For the Greek disability movement, as ‘Disability Now’ points out, educational and social inclusion is not a mere aspiration for the distant future, thus urging government officials to prioritise the rights of “disabled

people themselves” instead of funding “asylums and charity programs that claim to benefit disabled people” (op.cit.).

At the same time, however, we need to note that the greatest number of protests by parents’ associations and activists’ groups, while they continue to espouse the idea of inclusion, formulate their quests around the improvement of special education. The discrepancy can be understood as a response to the material conditions and the dominant discursive formulation of disability in Greece. When the Ministry of Education publicised a ‘New Bill for Education’ in March 2010, the national economy had already entered a phase of severe fiscal stringency, which is widely acknowledged as the worst recession in the country’s modern history and is still today plaguing the Greek economy. In this context, the thoughtfully phrased heading of the recent Educational Bill “New School: Students First” (see Ministry of Education 2010) appeared as a conscious effort on behalf of the government to ascertain that the proposed educational changes would not jeopardise students’ rights to learning. In the same vein, the Minister of Education, Ms Anna Diamantopoulou, in an interview for the newspaper *To Vima* at the time the bill was made public, proclaimed her determination “to yield better results” in education despite “reduced funding” (see Diamantopoulou 2010a). In another public statement regarding the ‘Students First’ bill, she contended that “in a time when crisis and international turmoil change everything, every citizen has the right to access the largest chapter of our time: knowledge” (Diamantopoulou 2010b); a right which, according to the Minister, the government was “committed to secure” with the new educational legislation (ibid.).

Yet, this discursive prioritisation of rights in education failed to mitigate social scepticism toward the new bill. Teachers’ and parents’ unions expressed reasonable fears that the impending educational law would primarily serve as a vehicle for the implementation of the government’s public sector austerity package in the field of education, without the essential policy provisions that could shield the rights of all students from this bleak economic climate (see tvxs 2010). The same scepticism informed the response of the activist Kostas Gargalis, when invited to discuss this issue for the purposes of this study. As he said,

“Since they [i.e. the government] are unable to provide the infrastructure for inclusive schools, they could at least continue to provide money for teachers in special schools. Otherwise, these will all close in a year or so and kids will remain at home.”

(Gargalis 2011; interview material)

Actual delays in the practical advancement of changes intensify this conviction that inclusion may be desirable but also difficult or impossible to implement at present. Arguably, over the past year, the PASOK administration has struggled to overcome social reactions to the implementation of its austerity plan not only in education but also in all areas of the public sector (see The Independent 2011). With this in mind it is not surprising that, given the overwhelming discontent of students, parents and teachers with the government’s educational agenda, almost two years after its publication, the bill has not yet been made into an actual law. Instead, it remains in a draft form as an “open matter of public negotiation” (see Diamantopoulou 2011). In April 2011 (thirteen months after the first release of the draft bill), the Ministry of Education finally announced that “the public consultation has been concluded” and that “final proposals” for a new educational law will be brought forward in the near future (see Ministry of Education 2011). So, although the Ministry regurgitates in its latest announcement the ‘Students First’ hallmark of its educational agenda (see Ch. 6), it is unclear at this point what changes will be incorporated into the redrafting of the bill. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, in the body of the existing draft bill there is little to support the governmental rhetoric professing the prioritisation of students’ rights. As regards disability rights in particular, the bill makes only a nominal reference to inclusion and remains in its entirety void of any concrete policies that would advance inclusive education. On the contrary, it stipulates only trivial amendments to the existing educational framework that fail to challenge the current hegemony of special education (see section 6.2).

Confronted with a politics of postponement, the most critical route taken by the disability movement has been formulated more in negative terms, as the identification of the radical failures of segregated educational provision, and less in a positive language, as specific questions and proposals about the implementation of

inclusion. A rhetoric pointing out the frustrating collapsing of special schools permeates most critiques of current educational policy. Using an apt metaphor, during our interview, K. Gargalis drew a parallel between the structural problems of a school-building and the problems of special education as such:

“Their system is about to collapse. Just as the walls of the school building are about to collapse and no one seems to care about the problem. Can you see any future in this thing called special education in this country? I can’t!”

(Gargalis 2011; interview material)

The critique of Greek special education is couched here in negative terms, as the perception of the future absence of special schools, but not, in this case, as a positive proposal for an inclusive alternative. This ‘negative’ language has become the most often deployed tool for expressing discontent with the educational system. Several disability activists point out that the PASOK administration has been slow to enact new educational legislation in support of disabled students’ rights during this time of crisis and as a result the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year found the Greek special schools facing insurmountable difficulties in their everyday operation (see Antoniadis 2010). Others evoke statistical evidence sustaining the claim that special schools remain closed in practice. Although there are no official statistics for the current school year, journalist reports cite increased numbers of both special and ‘inclusive’ education units that were not operational in the beginning of the new school year. On the basis of last year’s official statistics, it is noted that an alarmingly high number of special school units were unable to open their doors in September 2010: in the school year 2009-2010, as the Ministry of Education itself made known, 139 out of 604 special high schools, 526 out of 2,262 special elementary schools and 217 out of 561 special kindergartens did not operate (see Eleftherotypia 2010d; Antoniadis 2010). The abundant media reports made by activists and reporters on the accumulated problems in the operation of special education units for the current school year paint a bleak picture of today’s school-life for Greek disabled students.

Hence, it is recognised that today disabled people not only face an increasingly exclusionary formal education system which is based on what Gargalis (2011)

described during our interview as an “administrative framework that hesitates to acknowledge any alternative to segregation when it comes to educating disabled children”; rather, these children are to a large extent entirely excluded from any form of public education. As a report points out, according to the Ministry’s acknowledgment, only 30,006 students identified as ‘having SEN’ were enrolled in Greek schools for the school year 2009-2010 (see Eleftherotypia 2010e), while by any international standard the anticipated number of school age disabled Greeks is well over 200,000 (cf. Eurydice 2010). As for the ‘students with SEN’ that are currently accommodated by the national education system, the continuing deterioration of ‘special services’, within an institutional systematisation that paradigmatically fails to include all students in its mainstream and thus generates perpetually the need for non-mainstream ‘extra’ structures and services, is inevitably translated into lack of equal opportunities and discrimination not only in education but in all facets of social life.

As the NCDP (i.e. the National Confederation of Disabled People in Greece) points out in a declaration for the ‘International Day of People with Disability, 3 December 2010’, institutional discrimination is notable today more than ever before in the current disintegration of the public health services, the rising unemployment rates and the virtual collapse of social welfare and benefit agencies (NCDP 2010). In this declaration, aptly titled “Nothing for the disabled without the disabled”, Greek disability activists emphasise that their social struggles against disablism, their “quest for self-determination” and their efforts “to take control” of their own lives are not contained solely within the field of the – still elusive – Greek inclusive education. Rather, “they extend to any and all social institutions”, and call for the strengthening of the voice and impact of disability rights advocates in all aspects of enacted social policy (ibid.).

So, despite recent progress in developing a legislative framework to support disability issues during the 1980s and 1990s, and in contrast to the nominal prioritisation of disability rights in contemporary political discourses, Greek disability activists point to an everyday social reality of post-millennium Greece in which disablism remains rife, both in and outside of school. Throughout our society, as the NCDP argues, disabled people continue to face the same, if not increasing,

barriers that they have always faced. In this view, the educational exclusion of disabled students is simply one aspect of the institutional discrimination that impacts today on the lives of disabled people. Beyond education, disablism remains today “evident in the policies and practices of all kinds of social organisations and systems that result in disabled people being denied the same treatment or access to goods and services as non-disabled people” (Barnes 2006:4).

Still, on a personal level, the case of special education signifies for me perhaps the most characteristic manifestation of institutionally sanctioned discrimination within Greek society. For it seems that in no other sphere of public life has the political rhetoric of ‘protecting the disabled’ been so straightforwardly translated into policies that systematically sideline disabled citizens and discriminate against their right to be included in the mainstream of the society as it has within the sustained framework of Greek special education. This subjective perspective is obviously rooted in my personal experience as a teacher working in a Greek special school for the past four years. It is interesting to note, however, that the discourse of disability activists, as the ensuing discussion will reveal, appears to embrace a similar understanding of Greek special education as an institutional mechanism of discrimination and exclusion. In this view, as Mr Gargalis pointed out during our interview, “there is, first and foremost, a moral imperative for activists and educationalists alike to highlight an alternative role for education: a role that will prioritise vocational reintegration and independent living; a role that will give rise to emancipation” (Gargalis 2011). Yet, is this role attainable for a national education system in which the special education paradigm maintains its authoritative status?

In an effort to foreground this critical perspective, the present chapter will reappraise through the discourse of the Greek disability movement the fundamental administrative arguments for the sustained hegemony of special education in Greece. These are based, as will be argued, on several perennial myths regarding both special and inclusive education. Hence, the ensuing discussion will investigate the most prominent of these myths: First, the myth of the higher cost and resulting impracticality of educational inclusion in a time of financial crisis; then, the myth regarding the potential for social inclusion in the absence of educational inclusion and through a system of public education that fosters segregation; then, the myth

advocating the effectiveness of special schooling versus the risks and uncertainties of inclusive education; finally, these myths culminate in an overarching myth that prescribes special education as a safe harbour and the only way to secure both the educational and the future social success of disabled students.

While the content and function of these myths will remain under scrutiny throughout the remainder of this thesis, our analytical focus will move away from educational legislation and the discourse of policy makers. This chapter will hinge on the criticisms of disability theorists and activists, while the following chapter will turn to educationalists. In both cases our intent is to determine how these myths that shape the dominant interpretation of educational and social inclusion, school effectiveness and student success are problematised in the discourse of those social agents that – through their everyday life and work – are situated firmly within the reality of contemporary Greek special education. From the outset, this thesis has approached inclusion as a contested concept susceptible to a wide range of contextual meanings and involving endless disputes about its ‘proper’ form and function. Once again the juxtaposition of hegemonic governmental discourses on inclusion and counter-hegemonic discourses of disability rights advocates will help us expose the tensions within the politics of disability and the intrinsic antinomies in the conceptual framework of inclusion, as well as the social struggles that underlie the making of inclusive schools and the formulation of a truly inclusive Greek society.

7.2.2 ‘Cost-effective’ special education vs. ‘unaffordable’ inclusion?

Let us begin with a myth that has lately gained considerable prominence due to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the Greek economy, i.e. the myth about the impossibility of advancing educational inclusion due to the enduring domestic and international financial crisis. While the current crisis is not merely economic, but also deeply political and institutional, a comprehensive investigation of the micro- or macro- economic causes and the pathologies of the Greek socio-political system, such as bureaucracy and corruption, that fuelled this crisis (see Tzogopoulos 2011) lies outside the scope of this thesis. Furthermore, the Greek debt crisis has been

covered extensively in the European and international media over the past year (op. cit.), thus curtailing the need for an expansive analysis.

In this context, evocations of ‘crisis’ have, indeed, become the most effective alibi for all financial cuts and regressive steps in the field of educational inclusion. In the broader field of cultural education, let us note in passing the recent cancellation – for financial reasons attributed to the crisis – of the pioneering film festival “Emotion Pictures: Documentary and Disability”, which operated on both national and international level and provided, among other things, an educational package of award winning movies that was sent to about 3000 schools in Greece (see Emotion Pictures 2010). In the more restricted institutional context of schools, severe budget constraints have been put into force over the past year throughout all sectors of public education. Yet, the crisis appears in practice to have had a greater impact on Greek special education, as regards both long-term policy planning and the present-day operation of schools.

Relating to the school-level reality, disabled students in Greece, as Antoniadi’s article and the statements of parents’ organisations point out, experience today an unprecedented deterioration of ‘special’ educational services being afforded to them. Special schools and inclusive classrooms throughout the country are either being suspended or continue to operate under enormous difficulties, while the majority of the disabled student population remains totally excluded from any type of formal educational provision. As for policy planning, the PASOK administration has kept on hold its ‘Students First’ Education Bill for almost two years. At the same time it has failed to undertake significant legislative initiatives or enact amendments to the existing legal framework in order to insulate the quality of educational provision for disabled students from the repercussions of the financial crisis.

As disability theorists argue, for the past two years the scarce educational policy initiatives that have been carried out by the government concentrate solely on the operative task of “implementing the government’s public sector austerity plan into the field of education”, without any mitigating provisions for special or inclusive education (see Steering Committee for Disability Rights 2011). In an interview for the newspaper *To Vima* in March 2010, the Minister of Education Ms

Diamantopoulou proclaimed that the government “is determined to carry through a comprehensive educational reform”, in which the “new school” will be founded upon “modernised curricula”, “novel teaching methods” and “advancements in inclusion” (Diamantopoulou 2010a). Still, in the past two years, the PASOK administration did not implement any concrete changes to the framework of Greek special education and the interim coalition government currently in office operates by design under a short-term agenda that is exclusively focused on fiscal measures targeting the country’s debt load, while relegating any other political issue – including educational policy – to a ‘future concern’ for the post-elections Greek political scene.

The PASOK administration that was elected in 2009 has since invested substantial political efforts to validate the perpetuation of the dominant special education framework based on the myth of efficacy and cost-effectiveness – an argument that evokes the condition of crisis as the cause of this choice and, in some cases, contains vague promises for future changes towards inclusion. In practice, as is especially pointed out by disability activists, the implementation of the government’s austerity package in education has simply precipitated the disintegration of special educational provision, which was itself deemed to be too costly for the budget-constrained public education system. The educational legislation currently in effect, i.e. the recent Laws 2817 of 2000 and 3699 of 2008, postulates a salient dichotomy between mainstream and special education (see Lampropoulou 2007). The pending new educational law, as Greek academics and disability theorists argue, far from the professed ‘advancements in inclusion’, intensifies this dichotomy of special versus mainstream education and relegates inclusion to a marginal concern for present-day policy planning (see PESEA 2011).

In a setting that forces disabled students into segregated special pedagogies and services, a number of activists, especially those participating in parents’ organisations, complain about the absence of specialised staff or the closing down of special schools (see Barbas 2010). Yet others raise some more provocative and germane questions:

“What alternative is afforded to disabled students now that the design of public special special education is falling apart?”

(Panhellenic Federation of Special Education Workers 2011)

The financing of special needs education is a perennial dilemma for national education systems and one of the most important factors determining either the realisation of inclusion or the perpetuation of exclusion (see Greve 1999:7). According to policy makers, inclusive education cannot be considered as a realistic alternative under the current financial conditions. Predicated on the speculation that inclusive policies might further drain resources away from the general student population, the myth of the pragmatic utility of special education remains a popular riff in dominant administrative discourses, even when the functionality of special institutions and services is severely curtailed by budget cuts.

Disability activists address this myth by first pointing out that the current PASOK administration seems to have altogether dispensed with this dilemma of inclusive vs. special education by failing to finance either option. Making a case in point of this failure Mr Efstathiou, President of the Panhellenic Scientific Association for Special Education (PESEA), recently criticised the government for closing down 9 special schools in Athens at the same time that it announced extensive mergers affecting the 700 inclusive classes that operate in the same school district (see Eleftherotypia 2011). As Mr Efstathiou posits (*ibid.*), how can this uniform downsizing in both available options for special needs education be justified, particularly within an existing system of education that was – before the cutbacks – able to meet the needs of only 30,000 out of the estimated 200,000 students ‘with SEN’?

This response does not however directly address the narrative adopted by the government in order to postpone the advancement of inclusion. In dealing directly with this issue activists and theorists follow two distinct routes. The first evokes the absence of factual evidence supporting the cost-effectiveness of special education. The second takes a more radical turn suggesting that even if there were factual evidence indicating that inclusive education costs more than segregated provision, this does not constitute an argument in favour of maintaining special schools. In this view, discussions about cost must be subsumed to the need to orient educational institutions towards the safeguarding of students’ equality and rights, including their right to enjoy the best learning conditions for their distinct and diversified educational needs.

We must not be quick to reject the attempt to dismantle the myth of an expensive inclusive education. As was stressed by Mr Gargalis, when invited to comment on this issue during our interview, “we can advance inclusion here and now when we persuade everyone involved in educational policies that it is pragmatically possible to do so”. Moreover, as P. Kosmetatos points out in the context of a conference of the Greek Institute of Applied Pedagogy and Education, by not addressing the issue of funding, inclusive classes will continue to be undermined by lack of specialised teachers and by the absent infrastructure to sustain any inclusive initiative (see Kosmetatos 2007).

Following this route it is possible to argue that, on the one hand, the Greek education system in its historical course has never, in fact, advanced any concrete large-scale inclusive policies that could be quantified and measured so as to assess the purported high cost of inclusion. For the limited, both in quantity and in quality, inclusive initiatives that have actually been implemented, there is no statistical data documenting either their efficacy or their cost-effectiveness. On the other hand, as regards budget allocations for special education, the most recent statistical cartography of Greek special education dates from the academic year 2003-2004 (see Ministry of Education 2004). If we also consider the concomitant absence of any official statistics or independent studies regarding the present-day cost of educational provision for disabled students in Greece (see Eleftherotypia 2010e), the administrative claim that inclusive education is indeed more expensive than special is bereft of any tangible and quantifiable verification.

The rationality of measurement underlying the above argument only makes sense as strategic and self-consciously incomplete response to the categories of ‘cost-effectiveness’ formulated in relation to the crisis. Yet, the same argument, as we shall see, needs to be abandoned when we begin to reflect on inclusion in terms of the values and priorities set by the ideal of educational equality. Before we move on to this discussion, however, let us dwell for the moment in the frame set by this perspective in order to consider data beyond the Greek national framework.

Contrary to the assertions of Greek governmental discourses regarding the higher costs of inclusion, the international movement for inclusive education has

advocated from its inception “the financial desirability of inclusion”, as D. Armstrong et al. (2011:34) point out. As they note (op. cit.:34-35), “the cost-effectiveness aspect of inclusive education is reiterated in the international organisations policy and documents (Peters 2004; UNESCO 2005)”. In the 1990s, when several national governments started to place inclusive education on their agenda, a number of international statements made the case for inclusion by emphasising that educational responses to student diversity that are not encompassed by the structures of mainstream schooling, thus necessitating some sort of ‘special’ arrangement, are typically associated with higher operating costs compared to the responses provided within an inclusive setting (see European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 1999:168). Similarly, UNESCO’s seminal Salamanca Statement asserted that inclusive schools “improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system” (UNESCO 1994:3).

This is of particular importance considering that the inflated costs of special educational services have been perennially – and continue to be – a major concern for national governments (cf. Armstrong et al. 2011). A report by the USA-based ‘Center for Special Education Finance’, for instance, recognised that, while any type of learning assistance services – whether in mainstream or special settings – is by definition an added cost to the educational budget, for students that are out-placed to special schools the public expenditure is increased exponentially (see SEEP Report 2003). In another example, during the period 2003-2007 the British government was compelled to triple its spending on private placements, i.e. in ‘out of authority’ educational facilities, for students with “needs that could not be met by their local schools”, raising public concerns for the “spiralling costs of special needs education” in the UK (BBC News 2007).

Continuing to speak in financial terms, while international research has documented that the exclusion of students from mainstream education due to the insufficiencies of conventional school structures and pedagogies has significant costs attached, which rise as the number of excluded students increase (see Piuma 1989), the question of ‘gains’ and ‘losses’ must not be confined to the operation of the school-setting. As Parsons and Castle have argued (1998:277), beyond the short-term operating costs associated with exclusion, consideration must be given to the longer-

term returns on that expenditure, both for education and for the full spectrum of social care agencies caught up in the aftermath of exclusion. As their research on the inclusion of behaviourally disruptive pupils indicates, exclusion policies not only yield increased costs for public education and associated civil service agencies, but also engender the additional risk that the long-term costs for the broader public sector may be even higher “if continued full-time education is not assured for young people to equip them to become citizens” (op.cit.).

In a similar vein, recent studies in economics subscribe to the argument that the exclusion of disabled people – initially from mainstream education and later from the mainstream of society and the workplace – carries severe consequences for national economies (see Buckup 2010). In this regard, policy-makers are urged to frame the educational and social exclusion of disabled people not only as a matter of rights and social justice but concomitantly as an economic concern, especially in times of crisis when governments are forced to limit expenditures and reduce budget allocation (ibid.). The perpetuation of the myth about the cost-effectiveness of special education is therefore to be disputed first in its own terms – that is the term of managing an economy in crisis.

Yet, when it comes to education, discussions about cost-effectiveness are ultimately misdirected. It is worth mentioning here something I heard from an activist – and mother of one of my pupils – during a PTA meeting at my school:

“In my opinion to consider the cost of educating disabled students reminds me of that representation of fascism in Roberto Begnini’s film *Life is Beautiful*. At some point in the film two soldiers discuss about people with disabilities in terms of the increased cost required in order to keep them alive. Well, to consider the cost of educating disabled students is not that far from this view.”

This individualist view of social organisation and human relations, however, operates by transforming people to numbers. It denotes a position in which the discourse of the economy becomes, in the context of capitalist economies, the foundation of social and political values, and thus provides the measurement against which human worth becomes higher or lower according to its contributions in the

fields of production and profit-making. This material foundation of the production of disability has been aptly criticised by Oliver as the basis of the dividing and exclusionist discourses that the parent/activist evoked. As Oliver put it,

“Hence the economy, through both the operation of the labour market and the social organisation of work, plays a key role in producing the category of disability and in determining societal responses to disabled people. Further, the oppression that disabled people face is rooted in the economic and social structures of capitalism which themselves produce racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism and disablism.”

(Oliver 1996:33)

The effect of this transfer into education of economic language has also been pointed out by Greek theorists and activists observing how the current disintegration of ‘special’ services and the concomitant unavailability of ‘inclusive’ alternatives within the design of public education is closely linked to the quest for privatisation of public provisions and the attack on all established rights to education, health or basic goods. The current orientation of state provisions entails by default the resultant privatisation of special needs education. Venetta Lampropoulou, Professor of Deaf Education at the University of Patras, has emphasised that political indifference towards the continuous shortcomings of Greek special education has given rise to the economic exploitation of disabled students and their families by private ‘consultants’ and ‘special needs experts’ (see Lampropoulou 2007, 2008). In her words, the failure of successive Greek governments to address effectively the financing issues of education has facilitated “an army of ‘specialists’ with no specific knowledge, no credentials, no genuine scientific interest and no prior contribution to the education [of disabled students] ... to encroach all areas of Special Education” (Lampropoulou 2008:2). Moreover, it has allowed them, as Lampropoulou argues, to “dictate national policy, thus contributing to the procrastination and deconstruction of [public] Special Education” (op.cit.:3).

7.2.3 The myth of social inclusion without educational inclusion

On top of the recent myth of cost-effectiveness, the furtherance of Greek special education has been based on an equally prominent myth professing the attainment of social inclusion in the absence of educational inclusion. As we discussed in the previous chapters, during the past decade, dominant administrative discourses in Greece have claimed consistently that a system of public education fostering segregation does not, in fact, inhibit the process of including disabled people – or any other marginalised social minority – into the mainstream of the society (see Ch. 5 & 6). In this regard, the human rights imperative for social participation and equality does not entail the abolition of educational segregation through a re-structuring of special needs education based on the ideal of educational inclusion. On the contrary, drawing also upon the myth that inclusive education is unaffordable, the argument continues that the established orthodoxy of special education will ultimately be more effective in securing the future social inclusion of disabled students.

Greek disability theorists and activists have challenged both the validity and the moral orientation of this administrative rationale defending the sustained framework of special education. Questioning the ethical underpinnings of segregated educational provision, the NCDP (National Confederation of Disabled People in Greece, i.e. *ΕΣΑμΕΑ*) has repeatedly argued that educational inclusion is in itself “a disability rights imperative” of equal value to other embodiments of the ideal of inclusion (NCDP 2006a: 6-7). As a human rights issue, educational inclusion is embedded by the Greek disability movement within the wider framework of social inclusion, representing one indispensable aspect of this multi-faceted concept. Hence, the perpetuation of institutional discrimination within the system of education cannot be vindicated under any pretext of ‘practicality’ or ‘affordability’ (cf. NCDP 2007). As disability activists remind us,

“The link between social exclusion and educational exclusion is bilateral. The first creates the second and the second leads back to the first. [...] Today there is finally a general consensus that values such as equality and human rights should form an integral part of a nation’s social policies. Yet, ‘equality’ does not mean that we are all the same or that we

can be treated in the same way. The meaning of equality lies in equal opportunities for full participation in life. [...] This can only be realised through an overall policy of inclusion that promotes the full and equal participation of disabled students in education with concrete supporting measures.”

(NCDP 2006b)

In this view, beyond the unequivocal moral imperative of inclusive education, disability activists emphasise that the elimination of exclusions in education is a prerequisite for the ensuing removal of further institutional barriers to the full participation of disabled people in all facets of social life. As another NCDP declaration points out, “the adverse conditions of discrimination and exclusion” experienced by disabled students at all levels of education “have been an integral component of our education system since its inception”, thus necessitating today “a comprehensive reform” that will enable Greek education to become “a key parameter for the inclusion of disabled people in the mainstream of society and the workplace” (NCDP 2011). What is more, disability activists underline that the attempt to formulate inclusion-oriented educational policy must be subsumed under the wider policy goal of raising the standards and improving the quality of free public educational provision for all, especially “within the current climate of financial crisis that impacts more forcefully the underprivileged and marginalised social minorities” (Vardakastanis 2010).

Accordingly, the Greek disability movement has been profoundly critical of the current administration’s disability agenda, which highlights discursively the ideas of social cohesion, inclusion and equal rights, but in practice refuses to commit to any substantial educational or broader social policy initiatives that could actively uphold disability rights in education or social participation. In its declaration for last year’s ‘International Day of Disabled People’ the NCDP denounced the government’s austerity drive for failing to stipulate any protective measures regarding disability rights (see NCDP 2010). As they point out, despite its nominal commitment to human rights, the government is unwilling to acknowledge that uniform austerity measures, when applied to the profoundly stratified socio-economic reality of post-

crisis Greece, become detrimental to the rights of the most vulnerable members of our society (cf. Reppa 2009).

Yet, social policy research (see Zartaloudis 2007) has emphasised that income inequality and, consequentially, socio-political inequality are not simply the unintended outcomes of inadvertent economic and social processes operating outside the control of the society they affect (i.e. the global financial crisis). Rather, inequality is the result of concrete political choices taken by the policy-making mechanisms of each society (op.cit.:20). In a similar vein, disability rights advocates in Greece argue that the moral imperative of inclusion should also entail “specific political choices combating disablement and exclusion” (NCDP 2010). However, even though today’s governmental discourses typically frame inclusion as a moral imperative, they fail to articulate the political decisions and actions required to alleviate the material underpinnings of social exclusion.

It is important to note that the discourse of Greek disability activists, by calling attention to this discernible antinomy between political discourse and enacted social policy, enables us to unravel the actual role and intended function of the myth professing the potential for social inclusion in the absence of educational inclusion. That is, it helps us understand that, by separating the concept of inclusion from its concrete institutional foundations, this myth can serve to legitimise a contemporary political rhetoric that utilises an abstract ideal of ‘inclusiveness’ in order to achieve its agenda, while discarding at the same time the social, political and material prerequisites that are essential for the actualisation of this ideal. In this regard, inclusion is reduced to a discursive notion, devoid of any social or political content and lacking any reforming elements that could challenge what Oliver (1990) appositely described as ‘the politics of disablement’, i.e. the material socio-economic and cultural processes that foster discrimination and exclusion. The politics of the choices made by the administrators of Greek education over the last decade are permeated by this idealistic approach that constitutes the hegemonic discourse of inclusion in present-day Greece. A discourse refusing to “recognise that inclusion is a process of changing a divisive system” (Swain 2008:xv) both in education and in broader society, and attempting instead to validate an inconsequential rhetoric of ‘rights and equality’ in a vacuum of social policies that could effectuate change.

A recent example encompassing this “tragic antithesis between political rhetoric and social policy” (NCDP 2010) and offering the chance to see the interplay between this hegemonic inclusion discourse and its critique, is the case of the ‘Athens 2011 Special Olympics Games’ which was challenged directly by the disability movement. This event was funded by the Greek government with a budget of 26 million euros, of which only a tiny fraction returned to the national economy through proceeds (see NewPost 2011), in a time when cuts in education and other provisions for the everyday life of disabled citizens are being intensified. The PASOK administration advertised its involvement in this venture as a token of its political will and determination to promote an active disability rights agenda. Prime Minister Papandreou greeted the Games as a “message of hope” and “an opportunity to show a different Greece, a more humane Greece” that “does not exclude but includes; it includes people in society and participation” (Office of Prime Minister 2011). In other words, the debt-stricken Greek state, struggling to reduce public deficit through stern austerity measures in the form of tax increases, wage cuts and radical public expenditure pruning in health, social welfare and education, was willing to spend on the Special Olympics a sum equal to 1/4 of its total budget allocation for primary and secondary public education (i.e. 96 million euros for the fiscal year 2011/12; see Fokida Education News 2010).

Moreover, as several representatives of the disability movement have argued, the money invested in this event was spent only for “appearances”, as the president of the NCDP put it, and without any reporting on the relation between cost and benefit – let alone a similar provision for the everyday educational and social experience of disabled people (see Vardakastanis 2011a). Considering that the government has already reduced this year’s public education budget by 22% (compared to the last fiscal year; source: Fokida Education News 2010), it is not surprising that parents, educationalists and disability activists have taken a united stance against the organisation of the Athens 2011 Special Olympics. According to the NCDP (see Disability Issues 2011:11), the government’s resolve to carry out the Games in the current economic climate “goes against common logic” and lies in contradiction with its “total lack of commitment” to securing funds for the operational costs of special needs education or other social and welfare services for Greek disabled citizens. Hence, the political choice to prioritise the Special Olympics

over the enactment of social policies that could enhance the educational and social support mechanisms for the disabled “negates any benefits that the Games could produce in terms of raising the visibility of disability issues” in today’s socio-political agenda (op.cit:12-13).

What is more, as Vardakastanis (2011b) comments, the logic of the Games “is manifestly disparate to a rights approach to disability, since it is based on a charity mentality [...] that presents the disabled person not as the subject of rights, but as the object of mercy and pity”. Throughout the course of the twentieth century, mass media and prevalent socio-political discourses popularised a structuring of disabled identities that, as Oliver (1990:61) points out, typically portrays disabled people “as more than or less than human, rarely as ordinary people doing ordinary things”. These portrayals “see disabled people either as pathetic victims of some appalling tragedy or as superheroes struggling to overcome a tremendous burden”. This framing of disabled identities in extremis, i.e. at the outskirts of human conduct and beyond the realm of ‘normality’, is equally identifiable today in dominant representations of disabled people in the Greek media, in the use of euphemisms or highly emotive expressions such as ‘people with special talents’, ‘heroes of life’ or ‘winners of life’ (cf. Skordilis 2006) that are stereotypically employed in popular discourses on Special Olympics. Media representations of the ‘special athletes’ are fraught with this politically-correct language that engenders an individualistic view of the disabled person as an atypical case of ‘victim turned hero’ and perpetuates the structuring of disabled identity on the basis of ‘abnormality’, pity and charity that are at odds with a human rights approach to disability (see Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2006:283).

Hence, instead of ‘promoting social inclusion’, the Special Olympics were utilised by the government, as activists pointed out (see Perivolakia forum 2011; AMEAGreek 2011), in order to disorient both the public opinion in general and the disability movement in particular. As the president of the NCDP commented at the eve of the Games, the political promotion of the Special Olympics formed part of a governmental “media tactic” that aimed mainly “to curb public reaction to the constant absence of funding and marginalisation of state-education and social care” by depoliticising the present-day agenda of disability (Vardakastanis 2011b).

7.2.4 The presumed ‘efficacy’ of special pedagogy vs. the ‘risks’ of inclusive education

Despite the critical voices of disability theorists and activists, Greek governments have failed to address the causal links between education, social policy and social exclusion. Instead, they have subscribed to the myth of the ‘self-appearing’ social inclusion, i.e. the illusion that the systemic barriers and cultural stereotypes on which social exclusion is founded can somehow wither on their own and independently from the material processes that foster disablism in education and society. Propagated on an immaterial discourse of ‘the ideal of inclusion’ that repudiates the importance of concrete inclusive strategies – both within and beyond the field of education – for combating discrimination and exclusion, this myth divorces the quest for an inclusive social reality from the prerequisite of an analogous tangible change first in educational and social policy planning and implementation. Perhaps not of the same consequence, but equally supportive of the enduring hegemony of the special education framework, comes another popular myth, which advocates the effectiveness of special schooling compared to the presumed uncertainties of inclusive education.

As we discussed earlier in the thesis, policy makers and education officials in contemporary Western societies emphasise the importance of quantifiable educational outcomes. Consequently, the notions of school effectiveness and student success have been historically prominent in education discourses, resulting in an intensification of procedures assessing the effectiveness of school policy and practice (see Florian 1998:18). The discourse of activists and theorists indicates the ambivalence of this notion of efficacy and its dependence on the specific educational and social circumstances in which the term is used. Indeed some go as far as to suggest that the vagueness of the term makes it inappropriate as a starting point in the struggle for inclusion. As Mr Gargalis commented during our interview,

“I do not really understand what ‘efficacy’ means. Efficacy compared to what? The other kids? To what the teacher expects? There are so many views here that I wouldn’t know where to start when it comes to special education and inclusion.”

(Gargalis 2011; interview material)

The idea that efficacy is a relational concept that implies the evocation of certain standards of evaluation is crucial here. Inclusive pedagogy evokes standards of efficacy and evaluation that differ radically from those informing segregated educational provision, so a comparison that deploys the notion as if it were shared by both paradigms is misleading. Thus, research and activism at a cross-national level indicate that the advancement of inclusive pedagogy spurred a re-evaluation of what the concept of effective schooling entails (cf. Booth and Ainscow 1998), linking it not only to the acquisition of academic and social skills, but also to the imperative of equal opportunity and participation in the labour market and the mainstream of social life outside the microcosm of the school.

The distinct goals of inclusive education are realised in a time frame that cannot be appraised in conventional terms. The incompatibility of viewpoints as to the meaning of efficacy, noted by Gargalis, points towards the consideration of a tension manifested in the temporal scale as one between the long-term objectives of inclusion and the often delimiting conceptualisation of student success as academic excellence realised in a narrowly conceived time-frame and context (see Mittler 2000). This is a point, however, that emerges only rarely in the discourse of the disability movement. There is a structural limitation to conceptions of disability produced in the context of the antagonistic order of modern capitalist societies, which is difficult to overcome, especially from the viewpoint of parents/activists worrying about the future position of their children within this order. As the mother of one of my students confided in me during a personal communication,

“My biggest fear is what will happen to my daughter after I’m gone. I want my child to be able to survive by herself. She has to learn something useful, to have a job tomorrow. She cannot keep up with the other kids, and time goes fast, you know. I will not always be here for her.”

What lies behind the fear expressed here is the actual lack of infrastructure and organisation to sustain inclusive education. The inclusive class is perceived as the positioning of disabled kids in an environment in which they cannot keep up with others. Yet this idea has more to do with the misdirected and incomplete

implementation of inclusion in Greece than with the inclusive imperative as an imperative for educational equality.

Drawing upon the same political rhetoric that renounces inclusive education as unaffordable and separates the moral imperative of social inclusion from its educational and social policy material grounding, the administrators of Greek education advocate the efficacy of the special education paradigm by prescribing a different meaning to the concept of effective schooling. A meaning that takes into consideration neither the abolition of low achievement nor the lowering of barriers to vocational integration and social participation. On the contrary, it reduces the concept to signify the sheltering of disabled students in special educational structures with the sole aim of insulating them from the risks and difficulties of the 'real world', a hazard which is inherent – according to the same logic – within the territory of inclusive pedagogy. However, Mr Gargalis made a comment during our interview that offers an interesting deconstruction of this logic:

“I often hear from politicians the argument that special schooling can offer better psychological support and prepare disabled students for the problems they will encounter in real life. It is strange how they seem to use the word 'real' with the meaning of 'impossible to change'. Why is it that they never argue about the need to transform the 'real world' so that it can embrace those students? I always thought that the purpose of education was to help us improve our society not to give us the strength to endure its failures!”

(Gargalis 2011; interview material)

This discursive construction of a fixed social reality – that one must 'strive to accept' instead of 'foolishly trying to change' – is often employed, as activists argue, by education officials in an attempt to hamper the complaints of parents on the low quality of educational services afforded to their children. The 'cautionary tale' on the perils of inclusive schooling within a world that is seemingly impervious to improvement plays on the reasonable worries and insecurities of parents who prioritise their children's safety over any potential learning outcomes. Yet, as activists point out, inclusive initiatives within the Greek system of education have failed to gain the trust of parents not due to the unyielding nature of social reality,

but because “the existing programmes of co-education, integration and parallel support do not meet the actual needs of disabled students”, and because the poorly funded process of inclusion in general schools “is in practice used solely as an excuse for the abandonment of disabled students by the government” (Disabled Citizens Movement 2010b).

As a result, in the aftermath of school mergers or closures, personnel cuts and lack of specialised teaching materials, parents are willing to concede to a type of formal education system that – instead of endeavouring to effectuate change in society and education – routinely unloads disabled students into special schools that are “neither expected nor given the means by education officials to provide anything more than daycare services” (ibid.). In this context, the activists continue, if the aim of schooling is robbed of its radical and transformative potential, and becomes instead limited to providing child care and shelter from the dangers of life, the goals of educational achievement and student success are unavoidably discarded along with the forsaking of the struggle for a better society through education (cf. Disabled.gr 2009).

The response of parents and activists who express fear about the efficacy of inclusion has a very specific material basis. According to official statistics only a small number of disabled students manage to complete the 9-year compulsory education, as the majority leaves formal education after primary school. In numbers, for the 2009/10 school year, out of the 23,599 public education students identified as ‘having SEN’ 17,949 were enrolled in primary education (Eurydice 2010:207). Limited access to secondary and higher/further education is followed by limited access to vocational education and training workshops (only 2,263 students; same source), and consequently by high unemployment rates. In 2009, and the context of the pre-crisis Greek economy, 84% of disabled citizens were unemployed (see Siskou 2009), a daunting percentage which current estimates place even higher due to the economic recession and the generalised unemployment that plagues the country.

At the same time this fear is profoundly misplaced. As is evident from the critiques of activists pointing out the material insufficiencies of inclusive education

in Greece, it is the education system – and not the process of inclusion - that has failed terribly to meet the learning needs of disabled students by failing to take equal access to continuing education, vocational rehabilitation and social participation as the yardstick of effectiveness. If the intended purpose of education for disabled students is limited to safekeeping and providing protection from the ‘perils of life’, then segregated education not only becomes a valid pedagogic option, but is instantly legitimised as a safe haven for those students that are routinely positioned outside the scope of mainstream education due to their ‘individual deficits’ and ‘special needs’. Yet, as Gargalis (2011) argues:

“How can we accept this culture of low expectations for disabled students? If we accept that ‘safekeeping’ is the best that education can offer to these students then we must accept a social reality in which disabled citizens are not allowed to fully participate because it is ‘not good for them’ and the best option is to keep them out of harm’s way in special places...”

(Gargalis 2011; interview material)

Gargalis’ comment, by moving the referential frame from educational to social reality, brings very clearly to fore the societal and cultural corollaries of a pedagogic perspective that attempts to validate special education as a safe haven. Yet, this perspective has managed to retain its appeal in modern-day conceptualisations of education and learning for disabled people through the myth of the perceived pedagogic efficacy of special education. The argument on the perils of inclusive pedagogy continues to permeate governmental discourses in Greece as a logical continuation of the aforementioned myths about the ‘unaffordable’ inclusive education and the ‘self-appearing’ social inclusion. Operating in unison these myths give rise to the comprehensive myth that frames inclusive education as idealistic and advocates the framework of special education as a ‘necessary evil’, in the sense that, despite its shortcomings, it remains the only feasible – as the myth goes – systemic response to student diversity within the existing social order.

The discourse of disability theorists and activists, as presented in this section, has raised critical concern about the validity of this administrative reasoning for the continued dominance of the special education paradigm. Yet, as John Swain

(2008:xv) reminds us, “debates are controlled and given meaning by those in power”. In this debate over the political premises of the ideal of inclusion and its implications for educational policy and practice, the discerning voices of disability rights advocates remain marginalised. The hegemonic discourse of governance, that defers inclusion until the advent of a crisis-free social reality in the distant future and vindicates through a series of interconnected discursive myths the problematic present-day framework of special education, retains control of the production and dissemination of the popular common-sense approach to disability. An approach conceptualising disability as an individualistic matter of personal needs, rather than “as a result of the oppressive material arrangements in existing societies, or as a corollary of the prevailing cultural values, ideas, attitudes, and language that produce and shape human reality” (Vehmas 2004:34).

At the same time, groups in the Greek disability movement often remain captive of the myths of special education, including the myth of efficacy or, as we shall see, other dominant myths proclaiming the paradoxical desirability and concomitant impossibility of inclusion. This limitation of the movement will later be appraised within the formative context of the relationship between Greek activism/syndicalism and executive authority, as having a normalising effect leading to the appropriation of certain currents of the movement by governmental politics and calling for a critical re-assessment of the reforming potential of the rights-oriented inclusion agenda in Greece.

7.3 The impact of ‘reasonable inclusion’ and the ‘inevitability’ of special education: A lost opportunity for the disability movement to promote a paradigm shift?

The government’s strict financial measures that began in late 2009, and are still in progress, have triggered a wave of social reaction, which has also mobilised the Greek disability movement (cf. NCDP 2010). The movement against the government’s austerity plan for educational and social policy has been crucial in highlighting the rights of disabled citizens in the contemporary Greek socio-political scene. Moreover, the critique advanced by activists regarding both special education

and the prevalent culture of exclusion is central in the struggle for confronting the dominant individualistic conceptualisation of disability within the modern Greek society. This conceptualisation is fuelled today, as the disability activist Kostas Theodoropoulos contends, from neo-conservative political discourses of defectology engendering a new socio-economic model of charity mentality that he has aptly been termed “modern neo-philanthropism” (Theodoropoulos 2011). Hence, the critical discourse of Greek disability activists and the upsurge in efforts of self-organisation and direct action constitute a challenge to “prevailing stereotypes of powerlessness and objectification” (Shakespeare 2006:68), as they form part of an essential struggle to structure self-identity and of an – equally essential – process of “breaking down patterns of prejudice and discrimination” (ibid.).

At the same time, however, the Greek disability movement, as argued above, has not underlined in a consistent way the material link between the struggle against disablism and the dissolution of special education. It is mainly their pertinent critique of special education that may be taken as a starting point for a discourse advancing the practical implementation of inclusion. Disability theorists have pointed towards such a direction noting how the practical absence of investment in special education could be seen as the basis for advancing a new educational framework founded on inclusion. As Zoniou-Sideri et al. (2005) point out, the national education system has always included a low number of students identified with ‘special needs’ that were, in turn, afforded limited provision of special education services. This educational trend is not to be attributed to an ‘integration movement’, but rather to financial restrictions resulting in the exclusion of a vast number of disabled children that were placed either outside the structures of public education or who did not receive any education at all. In this regard, it is argued,

“the lack of a comprehensive special education infrastructure (special schools, services, specialists, etc.) and of a segregation tradition could be an advantage in the development of inclusive policies and practices.”

(Zoniou-Sideri et al. 2005:10)

Yet, as they conclude, this was “a lost opportunity” (ibid.). It was a lost opportunity, first and foremost for the education authorities. As several disability theorists point out, the legislation of the past twenty-five years has failed to create

the conditions for a restructuring of public education through inclusive policy planning. Consequently, the special framework has not only expanded but, in the post-millennium Greek education system, it has become so elaborate that students, parents and educationalists are often unable, as recent attitudinal research has indicated (see Zoniou-Sideri & Vlachou 2006; Kalyva et al. 2007), to contemplate today an educational future outside the realm of the all-embracing structure of special education. Yet, as we shall see, this has also been an opportunity that has not yet been fully explored by the disability movement.

Despite their extensive critique of governmental rhetoric and lack of political commitment to the promotion of disability rights, the Greek disability movement is, as we saw, more concerned with the disintegration of special needs educational provision afforded to disabled students today than with the active promotion of inclusive education. Notably, their criticisms and argumentation (as discussed in the previous sections) often contain minor references to educational inclusion and do not highlight consistently the interdependence of discrimination and social exclusion with educational segregation.

As Vlachou (2006:44) observes, over the past decade Greek policy makers were able to advance *with minimum critical discussion* an integrationist educational agenda that was void of any re-formative potential. Based on the retrograde steps on educational inclusion of the last years, one can argue that parents, teachers and activists – despite their expressed disapproval of this agenda – have not been able to countermand the government’s unwillingness to draft concrete educational legislation that could challenge the hegemony of special education and would incorporate strategies targeting the development of an inclusive school culture and ethos. Given the perennial lack of political strategy to finance an inclusive education that adheres to high standards for all students, a great part of the Greek disability movement – as well as many parents and educationalists – seems to have conceded to the argument that any type of special needs education is preferable to no education at all.

Particularly under the pragmatic pressures of the current socio-economic crisis, the danger that the dismantling of special services will result in the total

abandonment of public special needs education arrangements often compels disability activists to defend the existing design of special education. This is the reasoning, for instance, behind their heated protests against the closure of special schools, at the same time that parents, teachers and activists alike acknowledge that this design perpetuates institutionalised assumptions about education and hinders the development of policies grounded on the imperative of inclusion (see Steering Committee for Disability Rights 2011). In a similar paradox, Kostas Gargalis defended repeatedly during our interview “the moral, social and pedagogic necessity”, as he phrased it, of inclusive education. Yet, when faced with the – purposely polarised – dilemma ‘what is today the best course of action for the Greek education system: more and better special education or the strengthening of ‘one school for all’ with unmitigated inclusion?’, he replied: “It depends. There are some students that cannot succeed in the general school and can get more support in the special school” (Gargalis 2011; interview material).

In this regard, the Greek disability movement condones the pragmatic mentality that subscribes to the perpetuation of special education as a ‘necessary evil’, under the pressure of “the global confluence of neo-conservative education policy and economic forces” (Slee 2008:178). Neo-conservatism has been a dominant formative factor in Greek educational policy since the late 1980s constituting a structural limitation for the discourses of the Greek disability movement. A reflexive account of the movement must thus begin with acknowledging that forms of resistance developed in a period of a neo-conservative and neo-liberal dominance affecting particularly countries, such as Greece, operating at the periphery of the capitalist economic centres. Grollios and Kaskaris point out (2003) that, as over the last two decades of the twentieth century neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies gained prominence at a global level, the Greek ‘socialist’ administrations of the 1980s and 1990s drew back from a social-democratic educational policy in favour of certain versions of neo-liberal ideological postulations. In this context the disability movement had to face what Grollios and Kaskaris describe as the abolition of “any significance in terms of the social foundations of education” and hence “empowering the neo-liberal/neo-conservative hegemony in Greek education” (ibid.).

In addition to the current financial crisis which has intensified the economic constraints on educational and social policy implementation, this framework precipitated the fear of activists that the fiscal stringency imposed on the public sector will lead to inexpensive homogenising education policies under the mere pretext of 'inclusiveness'. With the demise of free public special education, Greek disability activists voice their concerns that policies subscribing to the logic of 'inclusion on the cheap' will only force disabled students and their families to abandon state education and attend some form of privatised special needs institution. As they put it, "the problematic funding of public education is just the tip of the iceberg" in a socio-economic crisis that "crushes the disabled community", thus urging the government to "uphold the free and public nature of educational and social policies for disability" as "the only effective counter-measure against the discrimination and social exclusion experienced by disabled citizens" (NCDP 2010:22-23).

The persistence of special education under the utilitarian mentality of the 'necessary evil' in today's neo-conservative socio-economic agenda and its repercussions to public education is an issue that transcends the boundaries of Greek society. As Len Barton has argued:

"Within this period of conservative restoration the impact of market ideologies has profoundly influenced how we think and talk about education. We view education through the lens of a form of economic rationality in which cost effectiveness, efficiency, and value for money has entailed the generation of a more competitive, selective, and socially divisive series of policies and practices."

(Barton 2004:64)

In a similar vein, the discursive exploitation by education administrators of the myths on the purported value of special education (see the previous section) is also not a Greek-only phenomenon. Discussing, within the British context, the relationship between special and mainstream schooling, Barton goes on to underline five ideological assumptions underpinning the claims on the inevitability of segregated educational provision:

1. Such schooling is essential in order to provide the *type* of education and curriculum these children need.
2. Disabled children and young people need *protection* from the harsh and cruel realities of the world, including those to be found in mainstream schools – their size, the attitudes of staff and pupils, and verbal and physical abuse.
3. Normal pupils need to be protected *from the damaging influences* that disabled pupils will have on their development, especially their academic achievements.
4. Special schools are staffed by teachers *who have those special qualities* of patience, dedication, and love. Such schools provide good interpersonal relationships with staff and the necessary staff-pupil ratios.
5. Special schools are necessary *on administrative efficiency grounds*. Thus specialist teachers, equipment, and support services are most effectively deployed.

(Barton 2004:68; original emphasis)

Barton's critique on the impact of neo-conservatism on educational policy and his exposition of the claims for the inescapability of educational exclusion are resonated in the comparable Greek myths advocating the necessity of educational exclusion. The same set of inferences informs this systematic legitimacy of special education both within and outside the Greek setting: the purported cost-effectiveness of special education, the rationalisation of divisive educational policy as inconsequential to social exclusion, and the efficacy of segregated education versus the inherent dangers of inclusive pedagogy. Hence, the continuing cross-national appeal and successful political exploitation of these tenets supporting the hegemony of the special education framework beyond the confines of Greek education can help us contextualise the way in which the Greek disability movement limits its critique to a negative discourse, which paradoxically, fails to amount to an unmitigated stance against educational policies of segregation.

As is argued by some of the most radical currents in the movement, Greek disability activists remain captive of the overarching myth prescribing special education as a 'safe harbour' for disabled students in this time of crisis. As is put by

the Disabled Citizens Movement, several strands of activists fear today that the prioritisation of an inclusion-oriented educational agenda might further the degradation of free public education and facilitate the privatisation of special needs educational services (see Disabled Citizens Movement 2010a). As a result, they are still hesitant to centre on the implementation of concrete inclusive education policies as a prerequisite for challenging educational inequality and exclusion as well as social exclusion and discrimination against the rights of disabled citizens. Rather, their efforts remain confined, for the most part, to what they perceive as a more 'realistic' and 'reasonable' objective, i.e. the enhancement and renovation of the established integrationist framework of the Greek system of education in lieu of a paradigmatic shift in the form and function of education on the imperative of inclusion for all.

The normalising impact exercised by 'commonsensical' socio-economic discourses on counter-hegemonic discourses of rights is not limited within the modern Greek social reality and critiques of similar tendencies in other contexts allow a more profound understanding of the Greek context. In discussing the English educational framework F. Armstrong and Barton (2008:7) comment that over the past twenty-five years narrow conceptions of 'reasonableness' and economic rationality have been at odds with the social movement's attempts to promote changes in policy based on principles of equity. The notion of 'reasonable inclusion', as Armstrong and Barton appositely label it, is typically used "as a formula for criticism against those who would advocate 'full inclusion' as if the latter were irresponsible wreckers or dreamers" (op.cit.:7).

In a similar manner, the Greek disability movement, under the pressure of normalising discourses focusing on the exigencies of a continuing financial crisis, retreats to an apologetic standpoint for special education's dominant discourse and school structures. Hence, despite the accumulated social critique against educational segregation, the nature and applicability of inclusive education policies in Greece remain contested not only in hegemonic but also in counter-hegemonic educational discourses that concede to the validity of 'reasonable inclusion' instead of highlighting and challenging the intrinsic link between educational exclusion and social discrimination.

What is more, beyond this homogeneous cross-national socio-economic context controlling the development of inclusion discourses at a local level within an increasingly globalised economic and cultural context (cf. Derrick Armstrong et al. 2011), the limited challenges posed to the special education paradigm must be linked to certain structural features of the disability movement in its development in its links to other activists' movement and labour unionism. In examining aspects of the history of the disability movement at the outset of this chapter we discussed a certain tendency towards the de-radicalisation of claims and the appropriation of associations by the state institutions on which these associations depend financially. As Theodoropoulos (2011) points out, the long-established modern Greek welfare state has been undermined by corruption and relations of dependency and patronage through which 'independent' unions and activist organisations have been linked to government bureaucrats and the dominant political parties. Under these conditions, Theodoropoulos maintains, the fair distribution of state resources and the development of equitable social policy have been perennially unattainable. This "state-controlled and patronage-oriented unionism", as Gargalis (2011; interview material) phrased it, has equally entrenched the Greek disability movement over its historical progression, as many of its members – including Gargalis – admit today.

Similarly, in a recent editorial, the magazine 'Disability Now' points out that, despite a few critical voices warning against the persistent charity mentality characterising the demands of the disability movement in the past two decades, "the community of disabled women and men continued to be content with the passive role of receiving welfare benefits and other forms of state-funded charity" (Disability Now 2011a:2). Hence, when the financial crisis brought about the collapse of the welfare state, a great part of the disability 'movement' had become unable to react through self-organisation and collective action. Moreover, as the writers in *Disability Now* conclude, accustomed to rely on the patronage of the state economy, now that the public sector debt has resulted in welfare cutbacks and the decline of state-funded philanthropy, Greek disability activism is usually limited to protesting against the pruning of benefits and the downgrading of charity-oriented welfare services in today's governmental agenda (ibid.).

Accordingly, in the field of education, this “state-affiliated activism”, as Theodoropoulos (2011) aptly puts it, has been unable to distance itself from the neo-philanthropism of the administrative discourses advocating segregated education as the safest way to protect the well-being of disabled students. In this regard, the Greek disability movement’s concession to the discursive myths on the continued value of special education has something to do with certain activists’ fear of losing their privileged status as a ‘vulnerable minority’ in need of ‘special protection’ in the form of state-funded benefits (see Disability Now 2011a), rather than with the government’s ability to exploit these normalising myths within the context of Greek education and social policy. Within an activism movement eroded by the conservative ideology of neo-philanthropism, the unmitigated prioritisation of full inclusion, both in education and in society, constitutes a threat not only to the hegemonic discourses that nourish the politics of disablement but also to the corporatist mentality of a disability movement inextricably bound with the welfare state.

Both in the recent history of Greek education and particularly in the current climate of socio-economic crisis, the myths sustaining segregated educational provision have been instrumental in the continuous efforts on the part of policy makers and education officials to modernise the educational vocabulary of a political agenda that refuses to re-conceptualize, reform and restructure the actual design of special needs education. As Slee (2008:179) points out, the sustained hegemony of special education entails the continuous efforts “to reconcile the epistemological and structural needs of education departments not intent on fundamental changes to the fabric of schooling”. Advancing itself through “a partially modernised lexicon”, Slee argues, special education “was able to accommodate a threatening social movement by relocating itself to the mainstream and describing itself in contemporary discourse” (ibid.).

In so far as these myths are proved to be self-contradictory it may not be straightforward that the missed link between education and social exclusion will continue to mark a lost opportunity for the Greek educational movement. As this chapter sought to explore, even the most conservative aspects of the movement that simply protest over the closing down of special schools contain germs of a more

radical discourse, or at least a discourse that can be radicalised in order to move from the negative critique of special education to the positive affirmation of inclusion. Yet, the most discerning voices in the disability movement are today those which do not remain confined to a critique that would ultimately perpetuate the status quo (even with improved provisions for special services), but attempt to challenge the idea of segregated educational provision and the myths that sustain it.

The wide appeal of the notion of ‘reasonable inclusion’ and the resilience of the special education paradigm will remain at the centre of our attention for the next chapter of this thesis, which will examine the discourse of Greek educationalists. Therein the administrative myths legitimising educational exclusion will be revisited and juxtaposed to the counter-discourse of teachers working in both special and integrated settings. Once again, the aim is to highlight the intrinsic tensions and contradictions in the discursive and practical articulation of Greek inclusive education. Similarly to the case of Greek disability theorists and activists, the discourse of Greek educationalists will problematise the discursive exploitation of inclusion in present-day political rhetoric and will highlight the inconsistencies underlying the immaterial inclusion discourses that shape contemporary educational policy in Greece.

CHAPTER 8

IN SEARCH OF A CRITICAL CONCEPT OF INCLUSION: THE DISCOURSE OF GREEK EDUCATIONALISTS

8.1 Towards a critique of 'inclusion': The vantage point of Greek educationalists

Alongside and interrelated with the discourse of academics, disability theorists and activists, the discourse of Greek educationalists represents another distinct voice that our investigation of the politics of educational and social inclusion in contemporary Greece must take into careful consideration. More so considering that, in comparison with other social agents with vested interests in the field of special education, the constant presence and day-to-day involvement of teachers in the education of disabled students, whether inside the special classroom or in an integrated setting, affords them a vantage point in the inner-workings of the Greek special education structures. Yet, the opinions and attitudes of educationalists are rarely acknowledged in the decision-making process that informs educational policy in Greece, and their perspective is typically sidelined in socio-political discussions of inclusion by the dominant administrative discourses of education officials and policy-makers.

With this in mind, the present chapter will focus on the discourse of Greek educationalists. Similar to our analytical efforts in the previous chapter on disability theorists and activists, we will now attempt to investigate the relationship between the governmental inclusion discourses and actual policy agenda on inclusive education, on the one hand, and the viewpoints of practitioners and individuals called upon to implement inclusive policies at the school level, on the other. Once again, as in the previous chapter that centred on the discourse of activists, the study aspires to a critical rather than simply descriptive association. Hence, we will set out not so much to account for subjective attitudes, but to explore how the juxtaposition of

government's and educationalists' inclusive discourses problematises the existing dominant vision of social and educational inclusion in Greece.

As already discussed in the methodology section of the thesis (see Ch. 3), while this study makes no claim of offering an exhaustive account of all the voices that co-determine the Greek discourse on inclusion, both within and outside educational and governmental institutions, it is important to reiterate that the discursive frameworks that were incorporated in the thesis (namely, policy-makers, activists and educationalists) are central to what we have repeatedly described as the currently hegemonic definition of inclusion in Greece and the counter-hegemonic social movements and discourses that challenge this definition. Hence, our extended investigation of these particular frames offers a context for considering both the articulation of this hegemony and the ways in which its establishment is constantly renegotiated and challenged by the confrontation of dominant with marginalised conceptualisations and discourses of inclusion in Greece.

Paramount to this confrontation is the language of teachers, whose views on inclusion offer the perspective of insider-practitioner. Accordingly, the ensuing discussion aims to interrelate critically the counter-hegemonic discourse of educationalists with the hegemonic discourse of the administrators of Greek education. The underpinning assumption remains that such a correlation will not only re-emphasise discursive fissures in the currently dominant and ostensibly unproblematic interpretation of the ideal of inclusion, but it will also highlight the intrinsic antinomies in the modern design of Greek special education and the battles entailed in the actualisation of inclusive education in Greece today. Moreover, by recognising the underlying shared themes and common preoccupations, as well as specific points of divergence articulated by the different social agents within the Greek setting, the present study will attempt to interpret the data from this specific situational context with a view to developing some degree of consistency that could possibly enable their relation to a broader international (or at least Western European) context.

Accordingly, we will need to revisit the same contested concepts that held our attention during the preceding examination of the discourse of policy makers and

disability activists (see chapters 5-7), such as ‘educational inclusion’, ‘social inclusion’, ‘school effectiveness’ and ‘student success’. In the fieldwork underpinning this chapter, however, interviewing has been employed as the main technique for the collection of data and secondary research in the relevant literature will hold a complementary role. In contrast with traditional research methods in which the expert/researcher observes and analyses research objects from outside, my dual role as a teacher in a special school who is involved in the everyday practice of education, alongside other teachers interviewed for this study, is intended to challenge this division between subject and object of research. Furthermore, it is hoped that the interviewing process will not simply yield what Williams (2002:126) has described as an “ideographic account” of the research participants (cf. section 3.4 on the interpretive frameworks of the thesis). Rather, it will allow for a much wider exploration of teachers’ conceptualisations of ‘inclusion’, ‘disability’, ‘effectiveness’ and other key concepts of the study, by interrelating individual perspectives and by contextualising the respondents’ answers with the parallel investigation of Greek educational policy and current theoretical frameworks for inclusion.

As will be argued, Greek teachers approach these contested concepts in a manner that is related to the criticisms proffered by disability theorists and activists, while concomitantly bringing forward their own distinct points of interest. They raise, for instance, similar questions concerning both the pedagogic outcomes and the ideological underpinnings of contemporary educational policy-making, while not always resonating the activists’ mind-set on these issues. In a similar vein, the limitations of the Greek disability movement, acknowledged in the previous chapter, will also resurface in the investigation of the discourse of educationalists. Together with – and perhaps even more than – disability activists, Greek teachers remain captive, as we will argue, of the perennial appeal of the myth prescribing special education as a ‘safe harbour’ for disabled students, especially in the current climate of a prolonged national financial crisis. Likewise, the pressure of pragmatic socio-economic discourses on the disability rights discourse of activists has had a comparable normalising effect on the discourse of Greek educationalists. As a result, their opinions and attitudes are comparably confined to the notion of a ‘reasonable inclusion’, failing to underline unequivocally the causal link between our existing disablist society and the established integrationist system of Greek education.

Still, while the ensuing discussion will attempt to trace both certain parallel lines and significant points of divergence between the inclusion discourses of activists and educationalists, its aim is not to juxtapose and compare the similarities or dissimilarities of these two distinct frames of critique to the concept of inclusion. Rather, it aspires to highlight the discerning voice of educationalists, alongside and in continuation of the equally discerning voice of activists, thus offering new insight in our ongoing investigation of the politics of inclusion in contemporary Greece and the contradictions in the design of Greek 'inclusive' education as envisioned and enacted by policy makers and education officials at a national level. Similar to the discourse of the disability movement, the informed perspective of a social group that is confronted on a daily basis with the actuality of the Greek education system will foreground the antinomies of the hegemonic inclusion discourse and the correlated educational agenda implemented by the Greek governments of the past decade. In other words, it will enable us to reveal, once again, the contradiction between a seemingly unambiguous governmental discourse of 'rights', accompanied by an inconsequential nominal commitment to inclusion, and the systemic proliferation of a 'special' pedagogy, inequitable social welfare policy and a cultural ethos that approaches disability with a charity mentality, all of which are components of the exclusion and discrimination that disabled citizens experience in our modern Greek society.

8.2 Investigating the discourse of educationalists:

A qualitative interview approach

8.2.1 Research objectives and rationale for the interviews with educationalists

From an early stage in my research on the historical development and present status of inclusive policy and practice within the Greek education system, both my review of the relevant literature and the initially collected data pointed towards the antinomies underlying the systemic responses of Greek formal education to student diversity. These antinomies were manifested not only in the form of divergence between stated and enacted educational policy or of disparity between educational legislation and its implementation at a national level, but also in the form of

conflicting conceptual frameworks and contrasting practices adopted by the political, institutional and wider social forces that play an integral part in the formulation of inclusive initiatives within the contemporary system of education.

On this premise, my research was positioned critically towards the realisation of the 'ideal of inclusion' in contemporary social and educational policy. Accordingly, my thesis adopted a concrete analytical orientation (as discussed extensively in the methodology section, i.e. Ch. 3), setting out to juxtapose the discourses of three social agents; namely, policy makers, disability activists and educationalists. By weighing the employment of certain key concepts in the vocabulary of the administrators of Greek education against the divergent use and content of the same concepts in the discourse of activists and educationalists, my thesis endeavoured to underline the encounter between two distinct educational visions and, consequently, two competing educational agendas: the hegemonic discourse of policy makers and the counter-hegemonic discourses of activists and educationalists, whose interplay forms a decisive factor in the structure, content and aims of inclusive education in Greece today.

As regards governmental discourses and the inclusion agenda of the Greek disability movement, the study has drawn its material for the preceding chapters by employing secondary research methods, i.e. close analysis of various formal educational policy statements (including press releases, ministry reports and official declarations) and review of the available literature (from academic articles to media reports of public protests), respectively. However, in order to account for Greek educationalists' perceptions of inclusion, the study employed interviewing as its main source of information and secondary research in the relevant literature had a limited presence, used sporadically in the ensuing discussion as a means to locate these perceptions within the broader context of current educational policy and practice in Greece.

This conscious switch to an alternative technique for data collection was dictated by both quantitative and qualitative limitations. On the quantitative plane, there is a scarcity of apposite academic sources on the inclusion discourse of Greek teachers. As Tafa and Manolitsis (2003) point out, the bulk of attitudinal research in

inclusive education comes from countries in which there have been on-going debates about, and some attempts – albeit limited – to adopt inclusive policies for some years. In Greece, however, inclusive education has only recently become part of official policy planning and implementation, with Law 2817 in 2000 representing the first core legislation document with reference to inclusive initiatives. From the onset of these initiatives Greek academics have argued that “research on all factors involved in this new process for the education of children with SEN is of paramount importance” (Tafa and Manolitsis 2003:158). Yet, the scant implementation of inclusive policies over the past decade and the retrograde steps for inclusive legislation in the years following Law 2817 signaled the concomitant lack of extensive attitudinal research on inclusion in general and with regard to teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education in particular (with a few notable exceptions; see Sideri and Vlachou 2006, Kalyva 2011).

Additionally, on the qualitative plane, the analytical aim of my research extends beyond the investigation of teachers’ general attitude towards inclusive education. As Sideri and Vlachou (2006:392-393) maintain, there is a need in contemporary educational research to “widen the scope of the analysis and include Greek teachers’ belief systems about disability and inclusive education” in a way that relocates the research focus onto “teachers’ beliefs and dominant political assumptions concerning teaching and learning, success and failure, normality and disability”. This critical repositioning from broader attitudinal stance to the discourse and politics of specific notions underpinning the inclusion movement is based on the argument that “studies of this nature carry the potential of deepening our understanding of the complexities of inclusion, and provide directions for change or continuity of provision as appropriate for the education of all children” (op.cit.:393).

In a similar vein, while the interviews I conducted seek to account for Greek educationalists’ conceptualisations of inclusion (and other key notions of inclusive education), they do not form part of an attitudinal survey aiming to describe teachers’ feelings and attitudes towards educational inclusion. Rather, drawing upon Gallie’s (1962) notion of “essentially contested concepts”, both the interviewing project and the overall design of the research (as discussed extensively in Ch. 3) aim to forward the argument that inclusion is one such concept, involving endless disputes about its

‘proper use’ and ‘true meaning’ on the part of the people who use it, or even that there is something about the way the concept of inclusion is approached in contemporary educational theory that makes disagreement inevitable and in some ways irresolvable.

Accordingly, the present interviewing project adopts, not only a descriptive, but also a critical orientation, with the desire to move beyond the recount of personal attitudes in order to investigate how these attitudes reveal conflicts and inconsistencies in the way inclusion is both conceptualised and put into practice by the different social agents that have an active role in the present Greek educational system. This particular research focus is based on an initial hypothesis that inclusion (as any other socially constructed concept) is shaped within a process of conflicting interests and is constantly renegotiated by competing social forces, thus negating any attempt for a singular comprehensive definition of the concept. On the contrary, it is argued, the structure and function of inclusive education are conditioned by the different subjective goals and divergent agendas of distinct social agents and, therefore, a critical appraisal of the content and purpose of contemporary inclusive policy and practice entails an understanding of the broader discursive, social and political context in which the notion of inclusion is embedded.

On this premise, the ensuing discussion, aiming both to investigate the discourse of Greek educationalists and to appraise it in critical association with the discourses of policy makers and the Greek disability movement (examined in the preceding chapters), will draw mainly upon a set of interviews that I conducted with the specific purpose of exploring issues related to my doctoral research. In an assistive role, secondary research in the relevant literature will be employed in the discussion as a means to locate the perceptions of teachers within the broader context of educational policy and socio-political reality in present-day Greece. While the theoretical underpinnings of this interviewing project – and of my research as a whole – were presented in chapter 3, the following section on the design of the study will also reiterate in brief certain key points in the theoretical framework and methodology of the interviewing process, highlighting issues that will be of value in the discussion of the research findings (in sections 8.3 & 8.4).

8.2.2 Theoretical framework, methodological issues and design of the study

My attempt to investigate the discourse of Greek educationalists follows the same working hypothesis on the antinomies in the design of Greek inclusive education that has provided the premise for my investigation of the discourse of policy makers and disability theorists and activists. Likewise, my analytical efforts remain firmly rooted within a qualitative research framework. Accordingly, the interviewing study assumes a non-positivistic worldview (cf. Kvale 1996:61-63), seeking to employ an interpretative methodology that recognises the socially constructed nature of the interviewees' conceptual frameworks.

In a similar vein, interviewing is approached as an interactive meaning-making process for both interviewer and respondent, in which the production of meaning is not entirely a function of the participants' reconstruction, but also – to some extent – a function of their interaction with the interviewer (Seidman 1998:16). From this perspective, the study seeks to adopt a self-critical and reflexive stance by acknowledging the controlling role of the research process utilised to transform the empirical findings into an object of knowledge. At this point we should also underline that the language of social science research, far from being a neutral representation of reality, involves invariably a process of interpretation. This interpretative process is integrated, as several researchers have emphasised, into a network of social control and power relations (see Smith 2002:40-41), thus being itself another formative factor of the social reality under investigation.

The aforementioned social-constructionist and interactionist theoretical underpinnings of the research project led me to the choice of a semi-structured form for the interviews, containing open-ended questions. In doing so, I aimed at facilitating respondents to express themselves freely and in their own words, as well as to have the opportunity to probe and expand their answers (see Hitchcock and Hughes 1995:157).

Given the central role of these interviews in the design of my study, I deemed it necessary to pilot the research questions on a small sample of interviewees. Hence, early in my research I carried out a pilot study with 3 respondents (drawn from the

same target group) in order to ascertain the validity and reliability of the interviewing process. The decision for the pilot study was further supported by the need to test the functionality of the research questions and their capacity to channel the required information from the respondents to the interviewer. In other words, its aim was to unveil aspects of the research questions that could cause the interviewer to have difficulty in the subsequent analysis of the data (cf. Foddy 1993:185), as well as uncovering characteristics of the interviewing process that could prevent the interviewees from answering the questions, i.e. not clearly defined topic, potentially threatening questions (ibid.:113) that influence the respondent's willingness to reply, complexities in the phrasing of the question that prevent respondents from assimilating its meaning, etc. The pilot interviews were also semi-structured, aiming mainly to explore the range of information provided and to solidify the key issues under investigation. Open questions were also included in the pilot, so as to examine whether the respondents would raise alternative questions and themes (implied or hinted upon, but perhaps not adequately addressed by the questionnaire) that could be incorporated into the study.

Considering the broad range of the original research hypothesis regarding the contradictions in contemporary conceptions of inclusion, a choice had to be made, while designing the main interview questions, with regard to both the number and the thematic scope of the questionnaire. My decision was to include fewer and more open questions, opting for an in-depth analysis of a small set of 'inclusion-related concepts' rather than a broader focus on a wider number of themes that perhaps could not be adequately discussed in the context of this research. Accordingly, four such concepts were targeted: educational inclusion, social inclusion, school effectiveness and achievement. All of them appear repeatedly in the relevant literature and are constantly featured or even highlighted in official educational policy documents and other governmental statements on inclusive education or disability issues. Apart from this quantitative basis, it was hypothesised that there would also be a significant qualitative distinction between the educationalists' conceptualisations of these notions and the way the same notions are employed in governmental or institutional discourses on inclusion.

What is more, these four contested concepts correlate to the four perennial myths on which the administrators of Greek education have established the argument for the ongoing hegemony of special education, as this thesis attempted to substantiate in the preceding chapters. Having already identified in the body of my thesis the discursive exploitation of those myths in the inclusion agenda of policy makers and after examining their normalising effect in the discourse of the Greek disability movement, I wanted to investigate the employment of the same concepts in the discourse of Greek educationalists. The working hypothesis is that by targeting these concepts the interviewing project could offer the opportunity to trace in the inclusion discourse of teachers the presence of the same Greek myths regarding special education and inclusion.

More precisely, by focusing on the notion of educational inclusion the interviewing study aims to link the perceptions of educationalists on this topic to the related myth on the unattainability of inclusive education in the present-day socio-economic climate. The questions on social inclusion touch upon the content of the second myth; namely, the potential for the development of an inclusive society through an exclusionary system of education. Similarly, the third concept examined in the interviews, i.e. school effectiveness, forms part of the equivalent myth advocating the efficacy of special schooling compared to the pitfalls of inclusive education. Finally, the notion of achievement relates to the myth that prescribes special education as a safe harbour securing the educational and future social success of disabled students. As in the section examining the discourse of disability activists (see Ch. 7), my intention is once again to determine how these myths that shape the dominant conceptualisation of educational and social inclusion, school effectiveness and student achievement operate – and are perhaps problematised – in the discourse of another social group that is situated within the ground reality of Greek special education, i.e. the discourse of teachers.

Another concern for the interviewing project was to match the aforementioned concepts (from the English-speaking literature) with the corresponding Greek concepts. The issue here was not simply to translate the four English concepts into Greek, but rather to discern in the Greek-speaking discursive context the lexical items that carry a similar semantic meaning to the analogous English concepts,

paying particular attention to both the co-textual and the broader contextual factors that could affect the denotative and connotative meanings of the Greek terms in use.

For instance, the terms '*ensomátosi*' and '*éntaksi*' (both literally meaning 'incorporation') are used interchangeably in political, scientific and mass media discourses with reference to the placement of disabled students into mainstream schools. During the last decade, in Greek educational literature several other terms have been employed (along with the two already mentioned) by disability theorists in their attempts to interpret the term 'inclusion' (see Dellasoudas 2004:91-94). Today, it is literally impossible to discern which one of the proposed terms is prevailing. However, the term '*éntaksi*' is currently prioritised in official policy documents and governmental discourses on educational inclusion (see Law 2817/2000) over the formerly used '*ensomátosi*' and '*sinekπέdefsi*' (i.e. 'co-education'). Thus, for the purposes of the present interviewing project, the term '*ekpedeftiki éntaksi*' {εκπαιδευτική ένταξη} is being used to denote 'educational inclusion' and '*kinoniki éntaksi*' {κοινωνική ένταξη} to denote 'social inclusion'. Similarly, 'school effectiveness' was translated into '*apodotikótita tou scholiou*' {αποδοτικότητα του σχολείου} and '(educational) achievement' into '*(ekpedeftiki) epitichía*' {(εκπαιδευτική) επιτυχία}, following the terminology that is currently preferred in the official policy statements on inclusive education in Greece.

The final form of the questionnaire for the interviews with the Greek educationalists consisted of five closed questions aiming to elicit required factual data (e.g. name, years of teaching experience, training and educational background in special education or/and inclusive initiatives, etc.) and thirteen open-ended questions focusing on the four inclusion-related concepts targeted by the present research. The small set of closed questions was used to open each interview and had the additional function of a 'warming up' session. The open-ended questions were structured according to their concept of reference, with the questions referring to 'educational inclusion' being first (marked section A in the questionnaire), followed by those regarding 'social inclusion' (section B), then 'school effectiveness' (section C) and finally 'achievement' (section D).

Apart from the final question (the ubiquitous “Would you like to add anything else?”), the same set of three open-ended questions (marked Q1, Q2 and Q3 in each section) was posed for each of the four concepts (resulting to a total of twelve questions). The first question in each set (Q1) asked for the respondent’s personal view and subjective definition of the respective concept. The second question (Q2) enquired if the respondents felt that there was an agreement between their own and the government’s definition of the concept, and – if not – to specify the incongruities they distinguished between the two conceptualisations. Finally, the third question (Q3) examined if the respondents believed that the current educational system enables the promotion of the particular concept (as they have defined it) and asked them to suggest possible changes and improvements to the existing situation. [For the full text of the questionnaire in Greek and its English translation see respectively Appendices B and C]

In the course of the interviews, the questionnaire was employed as a rough guide instead of a strictly formatted set of standardised questions, aiming to stimulate the conversation and keep the interview moving. From this perspective, the questionnaire provided a checklist with all the basic topics to be discussed and was more helpful in setting a response framework for the interviewees (cf. Foddy 1993:89), rather than controlling the content of their answers in order to provide comparable findings. Each interview lasted approximately half an hour, which proved to be enough time both for eliciting concrete responses to the prepared questions and for discussing relevant issues raised by the interviewees.

Finally, there was the issue of choosing the appropriate sample of respondents from the target population. Over the course of two academic years (2007/8 - 2008/9), I interviewed 30 educationalists, 16 men and 14 women. Half of the participants were teaching (in the time of the interviews) in special settings and half in mainstream schools. 7 of the 15 teachers in mainstream schools were teaching at the moment or have taught in the past an inclusive class, but 8 had no teaching experience in special education, although all 30 participants have significant teaching experience (ranging from 5 to over 20 years) in education and some sort of formal training or educational background in special pedagogy (including the 8 that have not taught in special/inclusive education). An effort was made to diversify my sample as

regards age criteria and specific professional status (i.e. teachers, schoolmasters and school psychologists), although these parameters were not considered as affecting the sampling principals for the selection of research participants.

Prior to the interviews, I informed the participants about the general structure, content and purpose of my doctorate research, as well as the intended confidential use of the interview data, without disclosing any information about the specific topic selection and analytical objective of the interviewing process. All of the interviews were recorded (with the consent of the respondents) and later transcribed for the purposes of the analysis. In order to maintain confidentiality of information provided by research participants, the study will not report any identifying information of individual subjects and their answers will be quoted anonymously throughout the chapter. The English translation of all interview material is mine, although in certain instances some of the respondents made use of the English terminology themselves (typically for clarification, e.g. specifying the use of *ensomátosi* with the meaning of 'integration' instead of 'inclusion').

While for the pilot study time constraints and practical limitations, such as the unavailability of participants and my teaching obligations, forced me to conduct telephone interviews, I realised that the lack of face-to-face interaction in these interviews added an additional obstacle to the meaning making process for both the respondents and the researcher. What is more, the subsequent analysis of the pilot data, having no access to bodily expressions and other non-verbal elements of the respondents' discourse (i.e. "kinesics" in Semiotics; see O'Sullivan et al. 1994:159), was forced to employ an interpretative methodology which neglects the "bodily situatedness of the interview" (Kvale 1996:292). Hence, in order to avoid what Kvale (ibid.:293) has called "the verbal fixation of interview research" my ensuing research was based on a face-to-face interviewing process. Additionally, when possible, I tried to videotape the interview in order to retain access to the interpersonal dynamics and non-linguistic elements of the interviewer – interviewee communication.

As it was suggested in the foregoing discussion, the data obtained from this limited number of interviews cannot be quantified dependably as a representative

sample of overall Greek teachers' perceptions of inclusion. Although a fair amount of coding and structuring were involved in the design of this study with the aim of eliciting consistent responses susceptible to analysis and meaningful comparison, this research was intended from its inception to yield qualitative insight into teachers' beliefs and political thinking on certain key concepts of educational and social inclusion. With that said, however, it is interesting to note that the responses of the teachers that participated in this research exhibit a significant degree of congruence. Thus, with the necessary caveat for the non-quantifiable nature of the analysis, the subsequent discussion of the research findings attempts to identify these common themes in the discourse of Greek educationalists and to associate them critically with the previously investigated myths about Greek special education and inclusion.

8.3 Debunking the myths about Greek special education: Contested concepts in the discourse of educationalists

In the previous chapter we began our investigation of the discourse of the Greek disability movement by exploring the myth of the cost-effective special education versus the high cost of inclusive policies. Similarly, our discussion on the discourse of Greek teachers sets off with the concept of 'educational inclusion'. In a parallel line with the dominant – in administrative discourses – conceptualisation of inclusion as a seemingly unambiguous ideal, the *prima facie* impression in examining the answers of teachers is of an apparently congruent understanding of inclusion as an indispensable educational and social value. Yet, if one looks beyond the 'ideal of inclusion' in the responses of the interviewees, this presumably unified conceptual framework dissolves. Accordingly, the following analysis aims to underline this critique and detect the inherent antinomies in the making of Greek inclusive schools by drawing on the present research findings.

8.3.1 On the concept of 'educational inclusion'

When asked to define educational inclusion, the respondents in our interviewing project approach uniformly the notion as an indispensable pedagogic

and social value. This impression appears to be consistent regardless of educational setting, i.e. both for the teachers working in special and for those in mainstream schools, and unanimous as far as our research participants are concerned. Many informants focus on the functional goals of inclusive education, highlighting “the alleviation of barriers to school life participation” and the potential for disabled students to create and establish relationships that would allow children to “experiment with and practically accept diversity in real life circumstances within classroom activities”. In the words of an interviewee, educational inclusion enables disabled students “to become members of a group that would accept them for what they are and what they can do” and “to have a motive for development and for sustainable effort/achievement”.

However, when teachers are asked if they think that the notion of educational inclusion has the same meaning in the context of the official educational policy and if the current educational system fulfils the requirements for the educational inclusion of disabled children, their answers reveal significant contradictions between the hegemonic discourse of governance and the perceptions of Greek educationalists. In other words, the dilemmas of inclusive education surface in the data when the analytical focus is shifted from the ostensibly unambiguous notion of inclusion as a value to the contingencies of inclusion as an educational process entailing the reformulation of pedagogies and institutional structures. In this context, inclusion involves, according to educationalists, a process of decision-making that conforms to a hierarchy of priorities. It is this ‘hierarchy of priorities’ in the current establishment of inclusive education, as postulated and implemented by governmental policies, that the discourse of Greek teachers problematises.

The vast majority of the respondents underline that the government’s notional commitment to inclusion is not today – nor has been in the recent past – accompanied by an active implementation of inclusive policies and practises. As one interviewee put it, “inclusion is a fad, a buzz-word; you hear many good things about it, but in practise it hasn’t brought any substantial change to the daily life of the children I teach”. Another respondent focused on the exploitation in contemporary political rhetoric of the notion of equal opportunities: “The equalisation of opportunities for children with special needs largely depends on funding policies and

financial support”. Yet, in most cases, schools are unable to respond effectively to the diversity of students’ learning needs “due to a shortage of resources”.

In this regard, the discourse of Greek educationalists – resonating similar criticisms raised by the Greek disability movement – underlines that a notional commitment to inclusion must be supported by additional resources that will enable schools to deliver the curriculum to all students. The answers of the interviewees on this issue highlight, for instance, the importance of spatial adjustments and school restructuring to increase physical accessibility to school premises, as well as the need to address the perennial shortcomings of within class specialist support for the operation of special or inclusive classes within mainstream settings (cf. the relevant discussion in chapter 5).

Although the interviews were conducted in a time when the global financial crisis had not yet impacted on Greek economy with its full force, all of the respondents accentuate the salience of the material presuppositions for the advancement of inclusive education. Over the past couple of years, during which the national economic crisis has brought budget constraints throughout all areas of social policy, the teachers’ unions have participated regularly in the anti-austerity protests (cf. the declaration of the Panhellenic Federation of Special Education Workers 2011). Taking part in the demonstrations of the increasing public dissatisfaction with the financial belt-tightening agenda of the government, teachers alongside parents, academics and disability activists have voiced their concerns regarding both the deterioration of ‘special’ educational services and the continuing exclusion of the majority of the disabled student population from any type of formal educational provision (see for instance Eleftherotypia 2011; Barbas 2011). Likewise, they have repeatedly criticised the current PASOK administration for failing to undertake significant legislative initiatives that could safeguard the quality of education afforded to disabled students from the ramifications of the ongoing financial crisis (see Antoniadis 2010; tvxs 2010; Vardakastanis 2010).

Still, as Anne Borsay (2006:161) has argued within a contemporary British educational frame of reference, “even if the economy was buoyant enough to fuel an extended welfare state, all-embracing policies towards disability would still be

frustrated because of the primacy which is given to economic over social goals". During the interviews many of the respondents touched upon the complex topic of financing in education with comments that resonate this perspective. In their answers most of the teachers maintained that funds management, resources allocation and "the logic of public investment in inclusive education" are primarily a matter of value, choice and political determination, rather than simply the result of inescapable economic imperatives. It is interesting to note that more than half of the informants refer explicitly to the concept of choice with regard to budget distribution for inclusive education, invoking almost identical phrasing (i.e. "political option", "executive choice", "budget priority to inclusion", etc), although there was nothing in the coding or wording of the questionnaire to direct the interviewees to such a response.

In a similar vein, echoing concerns articulated by Greek disability theorists and activists, a noteworthy number of teachers (about one third of the participants) expressed their fears that the current disintegration of 'special' services and the concomitant lack of political will on behalf of the government to promote 'inclusive' alternatives within public education will inevitably lead to the privatisation of special needs education. As one teacher mentioned,

"It is very difficult to have to say to the family that you cannot help their child, because the school lacks personnel, funds or facilities [...] In the present situation, parents are required to put their hands deep in their pockets and we [the teachers] feel that we can do nothing about it".

Hence, it seems that even before the visible effects of the crisis on Greek education Greek teachers were considerably apprehensive of the financing issues affecting the enactment of inclusive policies. Still, while all of the respondents – with no exception – emphasise in their answers that financial support is "a mandatory prerequisite" for the successful implementation of inclusive education, not all of them subscribe to the prevalent myth of the cost-effectiveness of special education. On the contrary, most of the interviewees – especially those working in special schools – argue that policies of segregated schooling carry increased costs for the state, in the form of special services outside mainstream schooling with high operational costs. Moreover, they also engender the long-term risk that "excluded

students will later become excluded citizens”, as one teacher with over twenty years of experience in special education phrased it.

8.3.2 On the concept of ‘social inclusion’

Expanding on the last comment, it should be noted that all of the interviewees conveyed their hope – either explicitly as the aforementioned teacher or implicitly with their body language, facial expressions or off-topic banter – that inclusive schooling can have a wider impact upon the institutional processes of social exclusion that are at play in today’s society, thus becoming a gateway to a truly inclusive social reality. Still, as Dyson and Millward (1999:162) point out, while similarly in inclusive education literature there are many writers who “see inclusion and exclusion in the education system as part of a wider pattern of social inclusion and exclusion”, these two processes do not always advance in parallel lines. In other words, there is often a tangible mismatch between educational inclusion and the exclusion processes that to a greater or lesser extent continue to characterise the adult world (op.cit.:161).

Both for the design of my interviewing project and for me as educator, this raised a series of questions: Does educational inclusion necessarily yield inclusive societies, especially in a time when “the overarching political strategy of which inclusive schooling is a part, is far from clear” (op.cit.:162)? If not, what is currently the missing link between inclusion in schools and inclusion in the ‘real’ world? How can we the teachers promote inclusive educational initiatives that can strengthen the transformative impact of school-level inclusion to the broader social patterns of exclusion?

With these issues in mind, the second section of the questionnaire was focused on the notion of social inclusion. Interestingly, the interviewed teachers appeared apprehensive of the same issues that concerned me when designing my research. As they often conveyed in their answers, for disabled children the opportunity to become integral members of the society is a complex issue, which involves a lot more than educational reforms. Among other things, teachers pointed out that social

inclusion necessitates alterations in legislation (almost two thirds of the respondents made reference to gaps in the existing legal framework on disability issues), as well as an essential transformation of attitudes (a shared theme in the answers of all teachers) in the wider social context in which pupils will live after completing their education. As one of the youngest participants (with only four years of teaching experience in general education and at the time of the interviews in her first year as a special school teacher) put it:

“[Social] inclusion means that people with disabilities should have equal rights and equal chances with every other person. But it is not enough to “allow” [respondent used air-quotes in the interview] people with disabilities to feel and be a creative, useful part of their society. We also need to educate society on inclusion issues, so that inclusion becomes an everyday practice, not a special practice.”

Still, in the same set of answers, teachers also emphasise that education and wider society exist in a state of reciprocity. As one informant points out, “from their early childhood, individuals with SEN are exposed to the social value system concerning impairment through their daily experiences inside the classroom”. Thus, he continues, “the idea of a more inclusive social life cannot be separated from the [critical] interrogation of our teaching practices”.

As most of the respondents contended, the advancement of inclusion pertains to a complex network of interdependent factors. One interviewee resonates this generalised (at least in our research findings) belief, when saying that it is important “to be realistic about the limits of classroom-level pedagogies or school-based initiatives” and “to be able to acknowledge the significance of social structure and material roots for the academic achievement and educational progress [of disabled students]”. In this regard, the discourse of Greek educationalists reminds us that the construction of inclusive schools cannot be pursued in isolation from the social reality that surrounds them.

At the same time, however, for the teachers this reciprocal relationship entails the advancement of concrete school level policies and practices that can promote the social inclusion of disabled students. As many of the respondents point out, broader

socio-cultural perspectives and attitudes on inclusion are solidified in interaction with an inclusive school ethos and specific classroom strategies that discard educational exclusion on the basis of core ethical values; because, in the words of an interviewee, “segregation is immoral” and because

“... exclusion from education and exclusion from society go hand in hand and cannot be conceived as two discrete and separate acts. The classroom and the schoolyard form the bigger part of a child’s social life anyhow. How can we expect them to understand what social inclusion is all about, if they don’t experience it first in their everyday life? [...] Inclusion can only be understood if it’s a way of life, a moral principle that defines who we are and how we live, not an abstract idea that we talk about.”

It is noteworthy that this reference to inclusion as a moral issue resonates a key feature of the social model approach to disability, as it highlights the social imperative of inclusion on the basis of human rights. From this view, as Barton (2008:7) has argued, it is important to recognise that “the grounds for the pursuit of inclusive thinking and practice are based on the informed conviction that something is wrong and offensive about the current situation in education and society”. Thus, inevitably, “the question of inclusion is fundamentally about questions of human rights, equity, social justice and the struggle for a non-discriminatory society” (op.cit:5). However, only a small number of the research participants made explicit reference to this moral imperative. Interestingly, it was the teachers working in special schools that foregrounded this perspective, while the teachers in mainstream settings seemed to prioritise in their answers the economic and political grounding for the pursuit of inclusion. It might also be worth noting that the aforementioned reference comes from a teacher who is disabled and has thus experienced the ‘immorality of segregation’ not only as an educator but also as a segregated student and a segregated citizen himself.

Yet, although it is not clear which conceptual premise for the advancement of inclusion weighs more heavily in the answers of our research participants, it is clear that according to our respondents the notion of educational inclusion encompasses the comprehensive ideal of social inclusion; or in their words, an “egalitarian

educational system” embedded in a “humane, unprejudiced and truly inclusive society”. It is in this context that the discourse of educationalists also calls attention to one of the prominent myths about Greek special education that we explored in the preceding discussion; namely, the myth that divorces the concept of inclusion from its institutional foundations and professes the potential for an inclusive social reality in the absence of educational inclusion. Similar to the criticisms put forth by Greek disability activists (see section 7.3.2), the majority of the answers in this section of our questionnaire expose the fault lines in a currently dominant rhetoric that exploits the ideal of inclusion and a human rights vocabulary as a means to its own political ends, while concomitantly casting aside the material preconditions on which social inclusion should be established. As one interviewee, currently teaching an inclusive class in a mainstream school, put it:

“We [i.e. the teachers] hear from government officials that inclusion is a ‘good thing’ and that we should promote it. But, in practice, how can we promote inclusion simply by positioning a disabled child in a mainstream setting and not doing anything else? Will it be easier this way for him/her to find a job later on? Will s/he be able to make more friends? Are we accepting diversity or are we masking our indifference or incompetence by disregarding the distinct special needs of the individual student? For me, inclusion must be *first* about recognising difference, not ignoring it, and *then* accepting it in the mainstream [...] But I guess this needs a lot more than just talking to achieve...”

In their answers our research participants pinpointed several of the functional and ideological shortcomings of the current integrationist Greek education system and underlined repeatedly the urgent need to back pro-inclusion rhetoric with concrete initiatives and corresponding educational and social policy planning. At the same time, however, they consistently communicated their fear that despite their personal and professional commitment to the ideal of inclusion, their efforts carry little impact for the social life of disabled children outside the school. As one respondent stated,

“No matter how much you try, you constantly question yourself, your teaching methods and the value they have for the children. I mean deep

down you are aware that every day when the kids leave the schoolyard the same apathetic world will be out there waiting for them.”

As a final note on the discourse of Greek educationalists regarding the concept of social inclusion, I have chosen a particular answer, by one of the special school teachers with many years of experience in special education, which points exactly to this feeling of abandonment experienced by teachers amidst this inconsequential rhetoric of ‘rights and equality’, void of any material defence and support, which characterises the choices made by policy makers over the last decade in the field of Greek special education:

“There is no clear [educational] policy for inclusion. Although in theory the government claims that people with disabilities must be socially included, in practice it is very difficult to achieve it when there is not a thorough inclusive educational policy that should be followed. Teachers have a role to play in the development of more inclusive conditions, but they cannot magically ‘produce’ inclusion without the help of the state and the society [...] So, instead of inclusion the majority of disabled students is still segregated in special settings; not only in special schools but also in special classes within mainstream schools, that are always advertised as ‘the appropriate ones’.”

8.3.3 On the concept of ‘school effectiveness’

Moving on to the second half of the interviews, sections C and D of the questionnaire targeted, respectively, the concepts of school effectiveness and student achievement. Interestingly, the interviewees, as it was evident not only from their replies but also from paralinguistic elements of their discourse – such as hesitation and lapses in continuity – had more difficulties expressing their opinions and beliefs on these topics than on the concepts of educational and social inclusion which formed the first part of the questionnaire.

More specifically, when asked to define the concept of school effectiveness, first according to their own system of beliefs and then in the context of official

educational policy, the interviewees appeared – in both cases – somewhat unassertive in describing the content and aims of the concept. As regards their own conceptualisation of school effectiveness, the insecure approach of the interviewed teachers to the concept hints to a notable concern that has not been voiced before in our study. Namely, that the recent developments in educational policies and practices have created, as education theorists have argued (see Agorastou et al. 2009), many demands for Greek teachers working either in mainstream or special educational setting “who have to face the increasing challenges of a diversified population of students with SEN” (Kalyva 2011). This entails the re-conceptualisation of the role of teachers in both special and mainstream schools, as well as the attempt to formulate new methods and practices that could best respond to the needs of diversified inclusive classes (cf. Farrell 2001:8).

Yet, as the interviews suggest, teachers often feel unable to adjust to this new pedagogic reality, in which schools – amidst the acknowledged deficiencies in educational legislation and official policy implementation – strive to advance inclusive processes, to accept diversity and to provide equal opportunities. Most of the teachers’ answers refer to their efforts to develop effective classroom strategies and teaching methodologies that could significantly capitalise on the learning potential of disabled students. As one respondent put it,

“Most of the times teachers kind of improvise, based on their own education and teaching experience, trying to include all children as much as possible [...] But there is no common ground and no way of evaluating practice or making meaningful changes.”

In a similar vein, many of the teachers also expressed their frustration at being unable to implement within the daily school-life the “promise of inclusion”, as one of them phrased it. In other words, as Whitty (2002:124) points out, educators are often entangled in a divisive context, in which governments often proclaim unrealistic educational goals while being unclear about “what schools cannot be expected to do and what support they need”. At the same time, they criticise schools for the problems of society and “demand more and more targets with less and less support”, thus creating “a culture of ‘shame and blame’ of schools and teachers” (Barton 2008:9). As one respondent commented,

“It’s not just the disabled students that are ignored and brushed aside by the government; it’s also the teachers and mostly those of us working in special schools. [...] We all feel we can’t make much difference for the children. I mean inside the classroom there’s always a struggle to do your best. But outside of it nobody cares about what we teach and how we teach it or if the children are getting something out of it...”

Accordingly, most teachers approach the notion of school effectiveness by focusing on the acquisition of social skills and the development of interpersonal relationships, rather than on academic excellence. Still, many answers are representative of the teachers’ conviction that within a mainstream setting children were also more likely to excel academically, since – as one teacher suggested – “the healthy competition of the inclusive classroom motivates students [identified as ‘having SEN’] and yields better learning outcomes”. At the same time, the imperative to move “from the [locational] integration to the active participation of children with SEN in mainstream classrooms” remains a major concern for all respondents.

It is important to mention, however, an added element which emerged in the answers of teachers working in special schools that is missing from the answers of their colleagues in mainstream settings: the notion of under-achievement, which – as nearly all special school teachers mentioned – is a typical ‘by-product’ of the special school pedagogy. As one interviewee stated,

“Having worked in both settings I can say with confidence that mainstreaming offers better opportunities for learning. In the special school I have the feeling that they [i.e. education officials] don’t really care if we teach children [...] I think they only want us to look after them for a few hours each day, until their parents come back from work”.

This comment brings to mind the third myth about special education, i.e. the myth advocating the pedagogic efficacy of special schooling compared to the perils of educational inclusion. As we previously discussed, disability activists have extensively criticised the current special education framework for routinely unloading students identified as ‘having SEN’ in special schools that on the whole

operate as daycare centres (see Disabled Citizens Movement 2010b). In a similar vein, many of the informants in our study referred to the lack of a policy orientation that would take into consideration the academic performance of disabled students within the formal system of Greek education, as well as their enhanced access to continuing education, equal opportunities for employment and active participation to the mainstream of social life. As one of the teachers working in special school noted,

“There is no curricular differentiation. We [i.e. in the special school] use the same books as in the general school. Nobody asks what kind of learning difficulties the children have [...] At the end of the year we [i.e. the teachers] write reports about the taught curriculum and student’s progress etc. But do they really learn anything..? Well, I don’t really think so... Nobody checks to make sure that they did [...] and most teachers, after a few years of trying, become eventually unconcerned with these low expectations...”

It is not surprising, hence, that when asked if the current educational system fulfils the requirements for the ‘effective schooling’ of disabled children, all of the respondents – without exception – gave a negative answer. As most of the interviewees suggested, there seems to be a divergent referential frame between educators and policy makers on this topic. More exactly, our research participants gave prominence to “the development of social skills” and “the enhancement of social participation for disabled children” as the key criteria on which school effectiveness must be measured. On the contrary, the interviewees argued, formal policy and education officials tend to reduce the pedagogic objectives of special education to the exact opposite, i.e. “the sheltering of disabled children from the dangers of social participation”.

It is noteworthy that the absence of concrete policies for the inclusion of disabled citizens in the workplace and the mainstream of social life forms an integral part of the criticisms expressed by Greek teachers against the government’s latest legislative efforts on special education (see Law 3699/2008 and the ‘Students First’ Bill of 2010). As the Scientific Association of Special Education (PESEA) has argued, “an educational reform should not simply target exclusion in education, but

must also be oriented towards combating the social exclusion of disabled people” with “direct and substantial educational policies” (PESEA 2007).

From this view, Greek educators are overtly critical of the *in*-effectiveness of the formal education that is afforded to disabled students. Their answers underline once again (as the proponents of the Greek disability movement did in the previous chapter) the education officials’ total lack of interest in the academic performance of students categorised as ‘having special needs’, in their equal access to higher or continuing education, in their inclusion in the workplace and in the development of initiatives that could render the process of schooling more effective as regards issues of citizenship and social participation. As one interviewee noted,

“They [i.e. the government] put one teacher with no other help in a special class and that’s it. They don’t really expect much [...] If all the pupils are safe and sound by the end of the lessons, they think the school has done its job.”

8.3.4 On the concept of ‘student achievement’

Closely related to the concept of school effectiveness is the issue of individual student achievement both within the structures of special schooling and in the mainstream settings that include disabled students. The significance of school improvement for the implementation of inclusive practices has been underlined by educational research on an international level (Mortimore and Whitty 1999:83). Consequently, the notions of school effectiveness and student success have been highlighted in the discourse of inclusive education (see Florian 1998:18), resulting to an increasing pressure for some sort of assessment that can provide evidence of school policies and practices that yield tangible learning outcomes.

Yet, the answers of our research participants in the final section of the questionnaire, targeting the notion of student achievement, indicated that this pedagogic objective is practically non-existent within formal education services afforded to Greek disabled students. “When a pupil is labelled as ‘having special needs’, it seems that for the state this primarily means the lowering of expectations”,

one teacher mentioned. Many of the interviewees shared this perspective, with most of them emphasising that “academic excellence is only in theory a teaching goal” as in practice “student success [for disabled children] is limited to the bare essentials of learning”. “Apparently, just being in school is deemed enough by the state!”, one teacher remarked. As virtually all of the interviewees that teach in special schools commented, “under-achievement is a by-product of Greek special education”, while both groups of participants, i.e. teachers in special schools and teachers in mainstream settings, expressed consistently their conviction that this aftereffect is mitigated within inclusive educational settings. Therein children “have a better chance to excel”, since “the healthy competition” of the inclusive classroom forms “a decisive motivational factor” for academic achievement, most of our informants argued.

Although the relevant literature stresses that empirical research has yielded so far inconclusive evidence as to the relative academic merits of inclusive over special education (see Farrell 2000:157-158), the concept of student achievement goes arguably beyond a simplistic evaluation of academic excellence based on assessable outcomes of schooling. As many scholars have acknowledged, there is an intrinsic tension in trying to create inclusive schools in a climate of effectiveness. While the accentuation of educational achievement “is usually justified in terms of all children having to succeed in a ‘real world’ in which we live rather than one we might want to live in” (Whitty 2001:288), this tendency has also been criticised for its limited focus on academic excellence and the encouragement of an antagonistic classroom environment (see Mittler 2000:75). In an evaluative framework, as Coffey (2001:12) has argued, measurable factors, such as academic knowledge and practical skills, are typically given preference over less tangible or tacit factors, such as socialisation and emotional development.

It is important, therefore, to underline that, particularly within the agenda of inclusion, student success is not limited to academic knowledge and practical skills. On the contrary, as Allan (2008:110) points out, there is an inherent tension between the narrow goal of raising academic achievement and the pedagogy of inclusive education, in which issues of social justice, equity and participation are central. In this context, the notion of successful learning not only calls for “educational

outcomes associated with cognitive development, such as literacy in the childhood and educational qualifications in the teens”, which form the basis of *human capital*, but also highlights the parallel utilization of “psychological and social resources underpinning the *social* and *cultural capital* components of human development” (Evans et al. 2002:8).

Most of the teachers in our research referred empathetically to the significance of targeting “the whole-learning person” and the need to “look at the wider curriculum” when it comes to measuring achievement. According to our informants, this predominantly entails the “development of interpersonal relationships” and “active participation in social life both within school and in the wider community” rather than “only targeting the physical and educational needs of each student”. Yet, as most of the teachers argued, in Greek special education academic underachievement “goes hand in hand with a lack of interest for social learning”. In other words, the established pedagogic norms remain inattentive not only to the human capital component of learning but also to the advancement of the social and cultural capital that are instrumental for the social inclusion of disabled students.

From this view, Greek teachers remind us that the field of education is today inextricably related to exclusionary practices. Not simply through the locational segregation or functional exclusion of disabled students from the mainstream of education, but also due to the restrictions of access to the capabilities required for inclusion in social life that are imposed on disabled people systemically through the educational institutions from early childhood to adult life. Hence, exclusion is perpetuated due to the under-development of the human, social and cultural capital of disabled students within a formal education system that, as one respondent argued, “seems to be interested only in those students that are deemed as ‘able to succeed’ and purposely lowers the bar of expectations for the rest”. This way, as another teacher appositely commented, “the Ministry can claim that if the disabled students don’t fail, then the education system doesn’t fail also”. “As a result”, she continues, “it validates the total abandonment of disabled children” in an apathetic education system that “fails by default to prepare them for the demands of the adult world in today’s competitive society”.

It is not surprising, hence, that when asked if the current educational system fulfils the requirements for the ‘success’ of disabled students, all of the interviewees – without exception – gave again a negative answer, as in the similar question of the previous section regarding school effectiveness. According to our informants, achievement must be measured by “the equal development of academic and social skills”, and “enhanced access to knowledge as well as to employment and social participation”. Yet, as they pointed out, education officials seem to

“... prioritise the role of special education as a shelter from the disappointments of a success-driven educational system and the dangers of a discriminating society”.

Such an analysis on the part of educators, and the discourse adopted, brings to mind once again the aforementioned myths surrounding Greek special education. The officially-sanctioned perspective that foregrounds the ‘safety’ of special schooling as the most salient pedagogic objective is firmly established on the comprehensive myth that advocates the special education framework as a ‘necessary evil’ and justifies educational and social segregation as a means for ‘protecting the weakest members of our society’, as the argument goes. Teachers remind us, however, that by lowering the standards for student achievement to the bare minimum and by positioning the disabled student population outside the target range of formal education, the state does not remove barriers to learning and social participation. On the contrary, it accentuates difference, impairment and individual deficit. Thus, education defaults on “the promise of inclusion”, in the words of a teacher, and legitimises its systemic deficiencies. Hence, as the same respondent concluded,

“The government fails to recognise that schooling is not an end in itself, but rather a means for children to be able to stand on their own feet [...] It’s not enough for children to be in school. We need to challenge ourselves and the pupils; we need to question our teaching methods and investigate the learning outcomes; we need to protest against an established culture of indifference and start setting concrete goals both for academic skills and social values, if we want children to benefit from the schooling process”.

8.4 Teachers in search of a critical concept of inclusion and the continuing appeal of ‘reasonable inclusion’

The foregoing discussion centred on the interviewing research findings, attempting to highlight the discerning voice of Greek educators on both the conceptual frame and the current functional implementation of inclusion within the structures of the Greek education system and by extension within Greek society. This interviewing project, by maintaining the same referential frame as in our investigation of the discourse of Greek disability activists, aimed to retain focus on certain contested concepts that constitute an integral part of the politics of inclusion in contemporary Greece.

By design, each of the four sets of questions targeting four inclusion-related concepts was matched to one of the four myths that surround Greek special education, as these were identified in the previous chapter. In doing so, the aim was not simply to allow the discussion to draw the parallel lines between the inclusion discourses of educators and disability activists, but mainly to enrich our critical examination of the existing tensions in the inclusion agenda of policy makers and education officials with the perspective of teachers in the vantage point of insiders-practitioners within the present-day field of Greek education. As the interviewing project has corroborated, there is significant merit in my original research hypothesis that the official language of inclusion in Greece is neither unproblematic nor uncontested.

It is noteworthy that, as Kalyva (2011) points out, extended attitudinal research within the Greek national context reveals that “the inclusion movement has received a positive response from different groups” within the education system: typically developing children (Kalyva and Agalotis 2009), their parents (Kalyva, Georgiadi and Tsakiris, 2007; Tafa and Manolitsis 2003) and teachers (Avramidis and Kalyva 2007; Karakoidas and Dimas 1998; Padelidou and Lampropoulou 1997; Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou 2006) [references from Kalyva 2011]. According to our research findings, however, for Greek educators this broad acceptance of the ideal of inclusion does not also entail an unmitigated compliance with the hegemonic language and politics of inclusion put forth by government and policy makers.

Their answers in the first section of the questionnaire on educational inclusion suggest that teachers remain hesitant about the official version of 'inclusive' education that they are currently called on to implement at the school level. To some extent, one might argue, this hesitancy can be associated with professional influence. Walker (1982; quoted in Borsay 2006:162) has noted that, as specialists, professionals tend "to diagnose a problem in relation to what they themselves can offer" and so their pattern of occupational skills is a formulating factor in the design of special education and broader welfare services. Consequently, as regards inclusive education, Borsay (2006:162-163) maintains that the vested interests of teachers can sometimes hamper transfer of disabled children from special education to mainstream classrooms. Competing professional ideologies, Borsay (ibid.) continues, can stifle the reform of educational and social services according to disabled people's requirements. From this view, the reluctance of teachers in Greek special education to embrace novel inclusive initiatives might be somewhat linked to their own professional fears regarding their part in this new teaching environment.

As an educator in a Greek special school, I must admit to experiencing similar apprehensions myself. Yet, also from personal experience, I can attest to a more pertinent foundation for teachers' hesitance in implementing the current strand of officially sanctioned educational 'inclusion'. During the past four years that I have been teaching in a Greek special school, I have felt on several occasions the need to apologise as a teacher to parents for the structural and functional deficiencies of educational services provided to their children. I can therefore relate, on both a professional and a personal level, with the expressed fears of Greek educationalists towards the governmental definition of educational inclusion as simply the dismantling of special education structures and services.

Resonating similar concerns of the Greek disability movement, the answers of our research participants criticise the tangential and often self-conflicting 'inclusive' rhetoric of education officials, which seems to favour a brand of 'inclusion on the cheap', as we phrased it in the previous chapter. In contrast, the discourse of Greek teachers draws our attention back to the material social, economic and political preconditions of inclusion. As one respondent stated,

“Today, educational inclusion is just a politically correct way for the government to bring disability into its social policy agenda. For me, the end-goal of inclusion is all the children *feeling the same things* in the same classroom; but for the government the driving force for placing students in the same classroom is reducing the cost of special education, regardless of what students need.”

Furthermore, the argument for the significance of professional vested interests in the development of inclusive education seems to downgrade the intrinsic difficulty in a clear-cut separation of the professional from the personal aspects of a person’s attributes. In other words, while scientific clarity and the practicalities of research may dictate the construction of clearly defined, distinct and self-contained research subject categories, i.e. parents – teachers – activists (cf. the relevant discussion in Ch. 3 on the structuring of subjects and objects in disability research), we need to be aware as researchers that real-life persons are not easily confined within a single of these perceived groups.

The teacher who offered the above comment, for instance, is also a disabled citizen and an active member of the disability movement. Several of the interviewed teachers are actively involved in their trade union, while many of them are also parents of children attending general or inclusive classrooms and one of them is the mother of a disabled student in a Greek special school. They may have assumed the role of the ‘teacher-informant’ in this research process, but it is difficult to argue that their other identities, as activists and/or parents, are not factored into their answers, as it would be equally difficult to support the view that the inclusion discourse of disability activists is not, to some extent, conditioned by their accompanying roles as educationalists and/or parents. Also in this regard, it is not incidental that, as we discussed in the previous section, the disabled ‘teacher-informant’ was the only respondent that referred extensively to the moral argument for inclusive education.

On this topic, it is interesting to note that our research participants made limited use of the human rights vocabulary that forms an essential part of the social model of disability. Only one teacher voiced a critique against today’s culturally dominant approach to disability for “being for the most part based on charity

mentality”, while a few more added sporadic references to “equal participation”, “equal rights in education” and the “promotion of enhanced citizenship through inclusive schooling”. Yet, beyond these scattered tokens, the majority of the interviewed teachers, either implicitly or explicitly, detracted attention from the discourse of a human rights agenda for inclusion to the functional implications that such an agenda should – according to them – entail with regard to education.

Accordingly, this deviation from the rights- and equality-oriented vocabulary of the social model approach to disability must not be construed as denoting inescapably the alienation of Greek educationalists from socio-political discourses on the immorality of segregation and discrimination, or from the struggles of disabled people and other social minorities raising their voices against the discriminatory practices of existing systems of social policy and academic provision in contemporary societies. Perhaps, as I will argue, in order to account for this divergence we must also consider that Greek teachers have typically been exposed to this human rights vocabulary not through its affiliation with the counter-hegemonic discourses of disability activists or theorists, but mostly through its exploitation in the dominant political rhetoric of education officials and policy makers. Hence, it is my understanding that for Greek teachers the human rights discourse of inclusion is not primarily associated with the emancipatory agenda of the disability movement, but rather connotes the immaterial ‘inclusive’ rhetoric of politicians who have appropriated the language of human rights, often in order to mask their own disenfranchising agendas.

We previously discussed this issue in the chapter on the Greek disability movement (Ch. 7) and we will return in our epilogue (Ch. 9) to the current appropriation of the human rights agenda by hegemonic political discourses. However, as regards Greek teachers in particular, I think that one comment, proffered during an ‘unofficial’ candid discussion after the end of the actual interview by a respondent with many years of teaching experience in Greek education, resonates this tenet in a very evocative manner:

“When the government talks about disability rights in education, what they really mean is ‘the right to the same low-quality education as anyone else’ [...] Twenty years ago it made sense to talk about rights. It

was provocative... Now, the government is happy to talk about rights. You see, everybody agrees on equal rights. And the government wants consent [...] But inclusive education *requires* disagreeing and fighting and struggling...”

As Barton (2008:6) has argued, the formal recognition of equal rights “does not necessarily lead to quality of respect, opportunities and resources. Too often there is a gulf between laudable rhetoric and practice”. Echoing this concern, most of our interviewees relegate to a secondary role in their answers the – seemingly unchallenged – notional commitment to rights in education, in search of a more critical concept of inclusion. Accordingly, they prioritise “the pursuit of tangible change”, as one teacher phrased it, “aiming to reshape all of our teaching practices and the entire structure of special education, instead of simply re-labeling it as inclusive”.

Hence, as our research findings – presented here and in the previous section – suggest, the critical discourse of educationalists challenges many facets of the currently dominant conceptual and functional framework of inclusion as well as some of the myths that support it. It is indicative that in the third question of each section (asking if they can recognise a difference between their own and the government’s conceptualisation/definition of the four contested concepts) essentially all of the participants – without exceptions – acknowledged that there is significant divergence between the officially-sanctioned and their personal approach to all four of the targeted concepts.

Still, our findings also reveal certain functional limitations to the inclusion discourse of Greek teachers. As it was reflected in the interviewees’ answers, especially in the last two sections of the questionnaire investigating the concepts of school effectiveness and student achievement, Greek educationalists often feel abandoned by education officials in a demanding and unaccommodating classroom, whether inside the special school or in inclusive settings. A common theme in their comments on effective schooling was “the total lack of assistive mechanisms” that would enable them to secure for their students essential propositions of a human

rights approach to educations, such as issues of fair access to learning and to the outcomes of education (see Unterhalter 2006).

This frustration can sometimes be translated into a deterministic stance towards the challenges of teaching, fostering a pessimistic outlook on both their own and the school's potential to effect meaningful change in the educational and social lives of disabled children. The disenchantment of practitioners within the current status of education is reflected in many of the interview quotes included in the previous section, and is remarkably visible in their answers on the last section of the questionnaire referring to the "educational culture of under-achievement" as regards disabled students and their "limited to non-existent opportunities", as many teachers opined, for academic excellence, vocational rehabilitation and equal citizenship (cf. sections 8.3.3 & 8.3.4).

Yet, the core of inclusive education lies in its transforming potential for educational institutions as well as for cultural norms and social ethos. Teacher expectations and decisions, as educational sociologists have argued consistently, "can be enabling and positive as well as disabling and disenfranchising" (Barton 2008:12). Thus, they constitute a decisive and crucial variable in the successful implementation of inclusion in education and, by extension, in society.

Although during the interviewing process many of the respondents highlighted both the academic and the social benefits of educational inclusion for disabled students, for some the "safety of the special education services" remains a salient feature of the children's lives. Interestingly, it was mostly the teachers working in inclusive classes that raised the issue of the 'perils of inclusive education'. It is also noteworthy that, while the majority of our research participants conveyed an overtly critical attitude (cf. section 8.3.2) towards dominant administrative discourses that prioritise the role of segregated schooling as a shelter from the hazards of a competitive educational system and an intolerant society (which we have previously described as the myth of special education as a safe harbour), they appeared at the same time to be apprehensive of what they presented as "the practical limitations of full inclusion". As one respondent mentioned characteristically,

“Inclusion has suddenly become very popular. Still, as teachers we need to question what this means for the children’s day-to-day school life [...] Of course co-education is important. But first of all we need to identify the individual needs of each student and make sure that inclusive schools can cater to these needs.”

In other words, while teachers acknowledge the educational and socio-political imperatives for inclusion, they also seem unable to overcome a deeply rooted – particularly within a Greek educational context (see Vlachou 2006) – pedagogic discourse of need, which foregrounds impairment. Thus, instead of prioritising the ‘need’ for the inclusion movement to challenge established institutionalised assumptions about the limited change that teachers and teaching can achieve, it ultimately relegates inclusion to an add-on practice on a per-student basis, outside and separate from the pedagogic and moral underpinnings of the education system. Yet, as Zoniou-Sideri et al. (2006:287) contend, this fragmentary conceptualisation of inclusive education that downplays its reforming potential, limits the meaning of inclusion to the extension of special educational services for disabled students into an essentially unaltered – therefore, still divisive and disablist – mainstream education.

From this view, the discourse of Greek educationalists appears captive of the notion of ‘reasonable’ inclusion, in a manner that reminds us of the prominence of this concept in the inclusion discourse of the Greek disability movement. What is more, it appears that in the case of the teachers the appeal of ‘reasonable’ inclusion is perhaps reinforced by their position as insiders-practitioners having to face on a daily basis an unwilling, inflexible and under-resourced system in order to support educational processes and outcomes that meet the diverse needs of their students (see Vlachou 2006:41). Hence, the inclusion discourse of Greek teachers is not only weakened, as it concedes to an educational viewpoint that defends some instances of exclusion as a ‘necessary evil’. It is also divorced from the institutional, societal and cultural foundations of the production of disability, as it accepts an individualistic view of educational and social organisation in which impairment holds the main role in determining educational and societal responses to disability (cf. Oliver 1996:33).

Arguably, as Barton (2008:12) reminds us, teachers cannot meet the challenges of inclusion alone. Rather, “in order for education to contribute to the development of more inclusive relations and conditions, it requires a creative, supportive partnership between governments, schools, parents and the community” (op.cit.). Yet, teachers maintain a crucial position in translating the ideal of inclusion into palpable and effective educational strategies tackling exclusion and discrimination. As our research suggests, the inclusion discourse of Greek educationalists, in parallel with the discourse of the Greek disability movement discussed in the previous chapter, is not without limitations. Though it challenges both the dominant political rhetoric on disability issues and the existing deficient status of Greek special needs education, it remains confined by the administrative myth that frames full inclusion as idealistic and legitimises the impairment-centred framework of special education as the only pragmatic recourse for some students.

Still, our research also indicates that Greek teachers not only carry a positive attitude towards educational and social inclusion in general, but they are also keen to implement it in the daily practice of Greek education. What is more, they are willing to invest a great deal of their personal and professional resources in this commitment, often despite the lack of practical assistance, financial support and moral backing from education officials and policy makers. Their skepticism is primarily directed, as many of their answers during the interviewing project made evident, towards the hegemonic discourse of inclusion and the accompanying inclusive education agenda of the political administrators of Greek education. Accordingly, they express their fears and concerns as regards the official brand of inclusion promoted by the government, and share with Greek disability activists and theorists the desire to pursue a more critical concept of inclusion.

It is not always easy, as I have argued, to discern when this critical stance is a response to the ineffectual political rhetoric that appropriates a human rights vocabulary to validate policies of discrimination, and when it is also the product of teachers’ personal or professional fears towards the educational and social restructuring that true inclusion necessitates. It is important to reiterate, however, that our research findings point once again to a critical prism for the consideration of the seemingly uncontested, as promulgated by governmental discourses, ideal of

inclusion through the discerning voices of activists, theorists and educationalists. The interplay of these counter-discourses and their juxtaposition with the hegemonic discourse of policy makers will inform my concluding remarks on the discourse and politics of inclusion in Greece. But for this, we must turn to the next – the final – chapter of the thesis.

CHAPTER 9

EPILOGUE:

TRANSLATING THE IDEAL OF INCLUSION INTO A POLITICS OF INCLUSION

9.1 The ideal and politics of inclusion: Manufacturing consent (or How I learned to stop worrying and love ‘inclusion’)

“Inclusive education is part of the effort to counter the often pointless global struggles for economic dominance, and the encouragement of seemingly endless competition between institutions, teachers, parents and young people. Whatever the cultural, political, social or economic differences between countries, every society that aspires to create a decent, humane and effective system of education should think in terms of inclusion. Inclusion is an issue of equity and ethics, human rights and social justice, and also economic improvement.”

(Tomlinson 2010:544)

It is important to note from the outset that the structuring of this final chapter might flout reader’s expectations. In the concluding section of a thesis, the reader typically anticipates a narrative structured upon a self-reflexive analysis of the major aspects of the research process and their impact on the researcher’s own thinking and personal practice. This epilogue, however, will follow a slightly different path. The structural design of the ensuing discussion will maintain focus on the socio-political concepts that have provided the overall thrust of my analysis up to this point. Yet, this does not entail a lack of interest in a self-reflexive analytical orientation. Rather, it aims to emphasise that ‘the personal *is* political’, to quote a widely used motto of the Women’s movement from the late 1960s, and vice versa. This interactive relationship between the personal and the socio-political plane will come to the fore in the final segment of this chapter (Section 9.3), which will draw on the dialectic of personal and political change.

With this in mind, I opened this chapter with the words of Sally Tomlinson (from an article in honour of Len Barton's work in the field of sociology of education), which resonate a fundamental premise of this thesis: our society's commitment to educational and social inclusion must be categorical and unquestionable. For, if it is indeed true that 'education mirrors society', then inclusive education is more than a pedagogic practice: it is an ideal. An ideal that not only determines systemic responses to student diversity within education, but also reflects what kind of society we want to have: an inclusive society in which people learn together and live together, in an equitable and empowering socio-cultural environment, respecting each other and supporting each other.

What is more, as we are also reminded by the above excerpt, beyond the moral underpinnings of educational and social inclusion, it is equally imperative to make clear what political judgements lie behind policies and practices that define the way in which societies respond to diversity in general and disability in particular. To this effect, throughout the pages of this thesis we have turned repeatedly to the writings of Len Barton, Mike Oliver, Derrick Armstrong, Roger Slee, Felicity Armstrong and other key theorists who have not only accentuated the intrinsic value of the inclusion ideal for our struggles to create a better educational and social system, but have concomitantly developed a social model of disability that underscores the pragmatic – social, cultural, political and economic – barriers to the full participation of disabled people in the mainstream of social life. From this perspective, a perspective that lies at the core of this thesis and has been highlighted repeatedly throughout its chapters, inclusion is a multifaceted process that necessitates a comprehensive *politics of change*.

Approached as a political activity, inclusion cannot be limited to an educational reform carried out in a social vacuum. Rather, it engenders a transformation of our entire social organisation through radical change: change in our personal attitudes towards mental or physical impairment, and in our cognitive, affective and behavioural stance towards people with impairments; change in our collective cultural perceptions of norms and normality, and the resulting categorisations of 'normal' vs. 'abnormal', 'able' vs. 'disabled', 'regular' vs. 'special'; change in the divisive language we use to conceptualise, define and

describe impairment, disability and disabled people; change in the unaccommodating physical structure and spatial arrangement of our environment that limits accessibility to and availability of locales and resources; change in the inconsistent and often ineffective national or international legislation on discrimination; change in the sketchy implementation of public policies promoting human rights and civil liberties; change in the patchy design and operation of social support services and welfare agencies; change in the charity mentality of individuals and organisations that undermines the disability rights movement; change in the processes of exclusion in education and all public institutions; change in the discriminatory practices in the labour market; change in the differential distribution of social resources and opportunities; and, finally, change towards an equitable dissemination of wealth and power among all members of our society.

Yet, despite the efforts of disability theorists and the continuing struggles of the disability movement against negative attitudes and systemic barriers to inclusion, international social research indicates that disablism – in various forms and degrees – endures today in all modern societies, our own ‘advanced’ Western European societies not excluded. Recent audits within EU member states, for instance, conclude consistently that “the disablism society in which we live deprives disabled people of their ability to act spontaneously, have self-determination of their lives and mobilise their freedoms of choice and control” (from the UK-based Scope Disablism Audit, Scope 2008:33). Similarly, EU disability rights reports point out that, although “there is some evidence of EU influence in the shift of [national] strategies towards non-discrimination and accessibility principles and the adoption of social model principles”, there is however “less evidence that these core concepts are yet well integrated in practical implementation” (Academic Network of European Disability experts, ANED 2008:27). In contemporary Greece, as our own research has argued (see chapters 5-8), despite the – EU influenced – ostensible modernisation of social policies (cf. ANED 2009:33-34) the socio-political ramifications of the prolonged economic crisis not only compound the difficulties in implementing new anti-disablism policies, but also raise more barriers to the social participation of disabled citizens.

Lately in the Greek and international media there has been an abundance of similar scientific or journalist reports describing how the fabric of our society is becoming more frayed, with virtually no social group unscathed by the crisis. It would be redundant, however, to recite further examples. For, after all, these reports simply put into writing a social reality that most of us citizens of the ‘advanced’ world experience in our daily lives: in this climate of crisis – a crisis which may have surfaced for the moment more forcefully in Greece, but has international origins and permeates the global market economy – it is the most vulnerable members of our society that are affected first and foremost. The ‘extenuating circumstances’ of the financial crisis – that is how the current situation is typically presented in dominant political discourses in order to remove from policy makers the obligation of taking into account the duties and responsibilities expected from them in ‘ordinary’ times – reduce further in governmental agendas the visibility of issues associated with the rights of social minorities. Consequently, the uniform austerity measures that are applied to our heavily stratified societies become detrimental to the rights and living standards of these social minorities, such as disabled people, which are already underprivileged and marginalised.

Yet, this socio-political inequality that jeopardises the well-being of the most vulnerable social groups is not simply the inadvertent outcome of uncontrollable forces and unforeseen predicaments of the economy. Rather, it is produced by concrete political choices taken by the policy-making mechanisms of our society; it is the result of wealth and power differentials that are inherent within our current social organisation. Hence, especially in the present context of crisis, the political activism that stems from the ideal of inclusion and centres on issues of equity, solidarity and social justice is today more pertinent than ever.

These issues, however, remain sidelined in the policy agendas of national or international administrators, as the political issues raised and campaigned on by the proponents of the inclusion movement are typically dismissed by policy-makers as utopian. As discussed in the second chapter of the thesis, in the context of Western liberal democracies the concept of inclusive education managed in the recent past to challenge the established paradigm of special education, while the concept of inclusion built momentum and gained visibility in discourses of governance, fuelled

by the popularisation of the social model of disability and the continuing struggles of the disability movement. Yet, as we argued, inclusive education never really managed to secure the centre ground, as it has been confronted by a far more powerful set of opposing discourses relating to competition and the market, attainment and 'standards'. Similarly, social inclusion never really managed to eradicate the socio-cultural constructions that produce and sustain discrimination and exclusion, while – particularly in the present climate of crisis – it seems unable to withstand the pressures of political discourses and social policy practices that reinforce the marginalisation of social minorities.

But why did inclusion fail to overpower these hegemonic discourses? How did these discourses manage to countermand the 'threat' of inclusion and sustain their dominance both in the field of education and in the broader socio-political arena? Why was the movement for inclusion unable to effectuate a concrete and comprehensive politics that could transform education and society?

To answer this, we must turn again to a concept discussed earlier in the thesis, the concept of hegemony. Through this process of hegemony, inclusion has been colonised at official levels and in the media, thus becoming part of governance rather than an idea which opposes official dominant ideals and policies. Hegemonic administrative discourses have hijacked the language of inclusion and assimilated the concept into their own rhetoric after divorcing the vocabulary of inclusion from its conceptual, moral and political frame of reference.

This colonisation of the inclusion discourse can be perhaps attributed – at least to some extent – to the limitations of the social model of disability that has been at the core of the inclusion movement for the past four decades. In a pertinent critique of the British social model, Tom Shakespeare and Nicholas Watson (2002) argue that the paradigm shift in disability issues carried out by the social model has been “an excellent basis for a political movement, but it is now an inadequate grounding for social theory”, as “the world, and social theory, has passed it by” (Shakespeare and Watson 2002:29). From this view, they call for “another paradigm shift, towards a model which will account for disabled people’s experience more effectively” (op.cit.:23-24). For, as they point out,

“... the very success of the social model is now its main weakness. Because it is such a powerful tool, and because it was so central to the disability movement, it became a sacred cow, an ideology which could not easily be challenged. Part of its effectiveness arose from its simplicity. It could be reduced to a slogan: ‘disabled by society not by our bodies’. [...] The social model could be used to view the world in black and white, even if this was not the intention of those who originally framed it.”

(Shakespeare and Watson 2002:4-5)

I would further argue that this ‘simplicity’ of the social model, which made it easily reducible to a slogan, concomitantly rendered the concept of inclusion vulnerable to discursive appropriation. The discourse of the social model by foregrounding the moral underpinnings of inclusion as a human right, as an ideal which is inherently ‘morally right’ versus exclusion which is inherently ‘morally wrong’, left a door open for opposing discourses of governance to move the issue of inclusion to the plane of idealism instead of the political arena of social life. It was then possible, through the false dichotomy between idealism and pragmatism, to separate the ideal of inclusion from the actual politics of inclusion. In other words, it became possible for hegemonic forces within society to adhere discursively to the moral principle of inclusion, while at the same time rejecting as impractical and unrealistic the political endeavour to implement inclusion in all aspects of social organisation. In this way, inclusion can be reduced to a buzzword, a vague and immaterial moral concept which we can dream of, rather than a distinct political activity aiming to transform our everyday lives.

Yet, this critique of the social model does not adequately explain the limited success of the contemporary inclusion movement against opposing hegemonic forces. After all, as Shakespeare and Watson (2002:10) acknowledge themselves, it would be wrong to equate the two, since it is mostly in Britain that this model has held such a prominent role, while in other countries the disability movement has fought its battles for social progress in the absence of a ‘strong’ social model of disability. At a global context, therefore, it might be more suitable for our discussion

to turn in brief to the writings of Noam Chomsky on the process of manufacturing consent.

In his analysis of the relationship between American democracy and mass media, Chomsky expands on the Gramscian concept of hegemony in order to investigate the ways in which today's ruling classes attempt to dominate at the level of ideas and undermine any consciousness of change (see Chomsky 1989; Herman and Chomsky 1988). As Chomsky argues, the power elites utilise the propaganda mechanisms of mass media to obtain the social consent that is required for maintaining socio-political control within a modern liberal democracy. Through the operation of these mechanisms the elite groups impose their own agenda on social policy and discourage alternative strategies of political action that could modify the social hierarchy. To achieve consent, media content, political debates and discourses of governance are regulated in a way that emphasises the interests of those in power. In this context, dissenting voices are either marginalised by concision (i.e. the practice of manipulating and limiting the information and perspectives the public is exposed to, since the veil of 'democratic pluralism' would not allow for the total omission of dissenting voices) or diverted by their indoctrination into the status quo. As Chomsky and his co-author Edward Herman note in their book *Manufacturing Consent* (1988), in an authoritarian regime, where a state bureaucracy has monopolistic control over the media, it is easy to discern that the media system serves the ends of the dominant elite. However,

“It is much more difficult to see a propaganda system at work where the media are private and formal censorship is absent. This is especially true where the media actively compete, periodically attack and expose corporate and governmental malfeasance, and aggressively portray themselves as spokesmen for free speech and the general community interest. What is not evident (and remains undiscussed in the media) is *the limited nature of such critiques*.

(Herman and Chomsky 1988:1-2; my emphasis)

Chomsky's theorising is crucial for our discussion as it enables us to focus on the use of these patterns of power so as to account for the failure of social movements within a modern representative democracy to promote change. If we

broaden the referential frame of this analysis from the media system itself to the entire spectrum of public discourses and political activities that this system attempts to manipulate, we can discern that the processes of discursive appropriation and assimilation are not limited to inclusion and disability issues; rather, they form part of a broader process of social control utilised to sustain wealth and power differentials within our modern 'democratic' societies.

In this regard, the inclusion movement is curtailed by the same control mechanisms employed to normalise other social protest movements that challenge the economic, political, social and cultural establishment, like the feminist, peace and ecology movements for instance. When any such movement reaches a point in its historical progression where it is able to overcome the marginalisation imposed by the establishment and its agenda gains visibility in the public domain, despite the exclusion/concision strategies used to shunt it to the side-lines of political life, then social control is enforced through the processes of discursive appropriation and political assimilation into the norms of the dominant social groups.

During the last few years, we are witnessing at a national and international level the effects of this process of *normalisation* – to borrow a popular Foucauldian term (see Foucault 1977) – being utilised to control the socio-political impact of inclusion. Throughout the preceding chapters of this thesis we surveyed the analyses of several disability scholars trying to encapsulate the properties and outcomes of this process, each one of them using a different terminology but all describing in essence the same phenomenon: Derrick Armstrong et al. (2011:37) referred to the “pragmatic watering-down of the underlying idealism of inclusion” which restricts the transformative potential of inclusion both in education and society; Len Barton (2012:3-4) commented on the “backlash against inclusive thinking and practices” that weakens inclusion to what is discursively constructed as ‘reasonable inclusion’, in contrast to the ‘unattainable’ goal of full inclusion; Barton and Felicity Armstrong have also noted how this narrow conception of ‘reasonableness’ is at odds with the disability movement’s attempts to promote social equity (Armstrong and Barton 2008:7); finally, Roger Slee (2011) discussed the absorption of the inclusion discourse into the mainstream of contemporary educational theory and practice, taking up the notion of a ‘travelling theory’ from Edward Said to describe how

inclusive education has lost its “original insurrectionary force” and has become “tamed and domesticated” (Slee op.cit:153).

Whether characterised as a ‘travelling theory’, as ‘watered-down’ or as ‘reasonable’, inclusion has fallen prey to the same normalising devices that were utilised to mitigate the socio-political effect and cultural influence of other radical ideas in the past: Dominant discourses, regulated by the power elites, have robbed the social protest movements of their vocabulary leaving them bereft of revolutionary content and purpose. As a result, their originally counter-hegemonic discourse succumbs to homogenising dominant discourses, their innovative conceptual framework is diluted into existing norms and their activist agenda either conforms to dominant schemes of governance or is pigeonholed as ‘extremist’ and/or ‘quixotic’.

It is this dissipated version of ‘inclusion’, which has been laid on the procrustean bed of governance, that the media and hegemonic discourses are indoctrinating us with. Like the atomic bomb in Stanley Kubrick’s *Dr Strangelove* (a political satire of doomsday and the Cold War), inclusion is discursively deconstructed and reinvented: From a potential source of collective anxiety, a contentious concept and a demanding social endeavour associated with political struggles and antagonism among diverse actors, it is reduced to a feel-good catchword, embedded in an empty rhetoric which frames it as an abstract moral principle that no one could be opposed to.

In this context, it becomes evident that the inclusion movement needs to find an alternative strategy for promoting its socio-political agenda. Either within or beyond the social model of disability, it is clear that the rights-oriented discourse that highlights inclusion as a moral imperative has outlived its usefulness. To overpower the processes that manufacture social consent and tame the potential ‘threat’ of inclusion to the established social hierarchy, we must re-politicise the discourse of the inclusion movement. We need to refocus on inclusion as a pragmatic political activity. As such, it is not unequivocal; not everyone will support it or ‘learn to love it’. Some will try to qualify or moderate it; others will contradict it. But it is only this confrontational mode of inclusion that can alleviate the existing social patterns of

inequality and discrimination, and generate a comprehensive transformation of our social reality from exclusionary to inclusionary.

In order to emphasise its commitment to implement this politics of change, the inclusion movement must move away from the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy on the idealistic plane. The pertinent question is not anymore 'inclusion or exclusion'. Rather, as several disability theorists and activists have already argued, a critical analysis that is based on inclusive thinking must raise today other important questions of political (and hence contentious) nature, as for instance:

“In a system based on inequality, who gets what, how, when and with what consequences? Who is in and who is out? Inclusion for what? Finally, inclusion into what?”

(Barton 2012:13)

From this view, the future success or failure of the inclusion movement is not primarily dependant upon a reform of its own conceptual framework or analytical model (i.e. 'social' or other). It will be decided upon its ability to challenge effectively the conventional structuring of our entire social organisation. Interestingly, as the ensuing section will discuss, the inclusion movement in Greece might come across this opportunity in the present context of socio-economic crisis.

9.2 Hope through crisis: The future of inclusion in Greece

Anyone who is even remotely familiar with the current predicaments of the Greek economy and society can realise that issues of inclusion, in the broader meaning of the term, are a common theme in the contemporary political agendas of both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic social agents. To be more precise, these issues are typically underscored by a series of urgent inclusion/exclusion dilemmas in which inclusion is not axiomatically the 'correct' answer: Inclusion in or exclusion from the Euro zone? Inclusion in or exclusion from the European Union? Inclusion in or exclusion from the bailout by international lenders? Inclusion in or exclusion from the austerity measures, as regards distinct social groups (e.g. the unemployed,

senior citizens, disabled people, etc.) whose rights and living standards are damaged exponentially more by the crisis?

In what might sound like a paradox, the social agents that more pressingly promote the 'inclusive' answer to the aforementioned dilemmas are those positioned within the established wealth and power elites, while the alternative option is contemplated only in the discourse of counter-hegemonic social groups. To account for this incongruity, we must again rephrase the question, by moving away from the immaterial 'inclusion or exclusion?' query in favour of the critical interrogation of 'inclusion for what and into what?' that will reveal the concrete political underpinnings of any 'inclusive' or 'exclusive' perspective.

As we have previously argued, although political developments at a national or international level – fiscal measures, social policies, educational reforms, etc. – might be discursively represented as inclusive, contemporary systems of governance are increasingly stepping back from inclusion both in education and in the broader social plane. As regards Greece in particular, although at the turn of the millennium modernising educational and social policy discourses briefly popularised issues of inclusive education and social inclusion, this never really translated into tangible inclusive policy implementation. On the contrary, ensuing socio-political developments reaffirmed the authority of exclusionary and discriminatory processes in education and society.

More specifically, in the field of education the systemic exclusion of disabled students has intensified within the context of crisis. Contemporary governmental discourses typically defend the sustained dominance of Greek special education as the 'safest harbour' for the protection of disabled students' rights during this time of economic turmoil. However, the daily school reality of disabled students in Greece, with the progressive deterioration of 'special' services afforded to disabled students during the past few school years, lies in stark opposition to the political rhetoric on the professed benefits of the special education paradigm. Still, concerns pertaining to academic performance, market orientation and cost-effectiveness are perhaps the most impregnable barrier to inclusive policy implementation today.

Arguably, this situation is not limited to within the Greek social setting. As we have argued, for instance, within a UK policy context the current competitive school system, built on a prevailing discourse which centres on standards, achievement and efficiency has rescinded from the inclusive ideals and intensifies the marginalisation and exclusion of students on the basis of narrowly defined performance criteria, driven by the ultimate goal of “responding to the market imperative of consumer choice and competition” (Fielding and Moss 2011:134).

It is this cross-national vocabulary, focused on market forces, performance and financial gains, that is also employed in dominant political and media discourses about inclusive education in Greece. What is perhaps highlighted within the Greek setting is the discursive exploitation of the crisis as a means to control the socio-political impact of inclusion by increasing the fear factor in political discourses. Through this emotive and fearful political semiology, the advancement of inclusive schooling is deferred for another ‘opportune time’ in the distant future. Yet, while political rhetoric and mainstream media discourses typically attempt to legitimise this deferment under the banner of ‘reasonable’ financing in a time of recession, budget constraints not only curtail the implementation of ‘costly’ inclusive education policies, but also undermine the quantity and quality of special education services being afforded to disabled students.

This brings to the fore the notion that the form and function of education, and any other social institution, are ultimately not the result of strictly financial imperatives but the product of concrete political views, choices and actions. From this perspective, Greek disability theorists, activists and educationalists have pointed out that the financial crisis has served mainly as a pretext for the current dismantling and impending privatisation of free public education and healthcare at the hands of government officials and administrators that lack the political will to actualise social policies that could combat inequity, discrimination and exclusion, and promote disability rights and processes of inclusion. It is perhaps too soon to estimate in today’s fluid political situation how and with what results this administrative agenda will play out. However, in this context, we can acknowledge that as long as the ideological foundations of educational and broader social governance remain

unaltered, issues of inclusion will also remain a matter of minor importance for educational and social policy planning in Greece.

Yet, this setting of a crisis that has devastated the Greek economy and society is at the same time offering a glimpse of hope for inclusion and other contemporary movements for social change. Alongside financial terrorism, mass impoverishment and social wreckage, the crisis has also brought about the deconstruction of the hegemonic forces that have dominated the national political scene for the past four decades. It stripped the mainstream media propaganda from its populist façade, it highlighted the external dependency and internal clientist structure of the modern Greek ‘democracy’, and it exposed the amoral and corrupt national system of governance, thus stirring social upheaval targeted against the established wealth and power elites. From this view, the crisis has provided the opportunity for alternative socio-political forces to emerge challenging the conventional agencies of hegemony and promoting an agenda that centres on emancipation (both personal and national), social justice and equity.

The two major parties, PASOK and New Democracy, that have alternated since 1974 in office – and uneasily coexisted in the interim coalition government of the past six months – are imploding. In the 2009 national elections, PASOK won approximately 44%, while New Democracy won nearly 34%, an accumulative total of 77,4%. This was at the time an historic low for the powerful bi-party political system which perennially dominated national politics. In the last elections of May 6, 2012, the traditional powerhouses of the bi-party system garnered together only 32,20% of the votes (18,85% for New Democracy and 13,18% for PASOK). In mainstream media, this unexpected result was typically framed as a ‘punishment’ of the governing parties over austerity, as PASOK and New Democracy had endorsed the draconian bailout terms of international loan agreements (known as *Memorandum 1 & 2*).

Yet, this is not simply a case of ‘taking the brunt’ of memorandum policies. Arguably, the social dissatisfaction for the strict austerity programme implemented by the bi-party system to overcome the national debt crisis was decisive for the results of the May 6th elections. More importantly, however, these results were also a

clear indication of the generalised discontent with the modes of governance of the past; they were a message of resistance and struggle against the economic ideas and political choices which put the Greek society in this terrible position.

Regardless of how one frames this defeat of the old political order, the results of the recent elections have generated hope for positive change in the face of economic stagnation and social unrest. The parties that had supported memorandum policies were not able to scrape together a parliamentary majority, as a large segment of the electorate was attracted by several smaller, non-mainstream parties – which are routinely labelled in media discourses with the pejorative term ‘fringe parties’, to demarcate their departure from what hegemonic forces delineate as ‘reasonable politics’. The most impressive and unexpected electoral gains were recorded by the left-wing party *SYRIZA*, i.e. the *Coalition of the Radical Left*, which rose from 4,6% in 2009 to being the second party with 16,8% in the May 6th elections.

In discussing the meteoric rise of SYRIZA, foreign press correspondents and local mainstream media typically attempt to accentuate the ‘radicalism’ and ‘extremism’ of its strong anti-austerity and anti-memorandum agenda. Yet, its ideological marginality can only be founded against the dogmatic norms of the neo-liberal discourses that control the mainstream of political life in contemporary Greece and other modern western democracies. In the backdrop of economic globalisation, cultural assimilation and social antagonism, the privatisation of public services and the marketisation of educational and social policies, the inequality of opportunity, and the systemic propagation of discrimination and exclusion that characterise our society, a political agenda that prioritises social protection, acknowledges diversity and foregrounds the values of solidarity, equity and social justice might indeed be construed as marginal or ‘beyond the pale’. Yet, the results of the May 6th elections have reinstated these issues into the mainstream of Greek politics.

The political programme of SYRIZA brings to the fore arguments for “the creation of a shield to protect society against the crisis” through “income redistribution and the taxation of wealth”; it recognises a “democratic deficit in the country” and calls for the “deepening of democracy” by promoting enhanced

“political and social rights for all”; it emphasises that free public health and education form part of those “social rights” and underlines that the disintegration of social care through the uniform austerity measures of the memorandum “has turned Greece into a country where social injustice reigns” (source: ‘Main points of SYRIZA proposals’, www.left.gr). To overturn this situation, Greek society must move past apolitical discourses on the moral responsibility of socially dominant groups to protect the vulnerable social strata and embrace pragmatic political actions that can transform the hierarchical structures of our social order. We must endorse, as SYRIZA argues, “a new model for the production and distribution of wealth, *one that will include society in its totality*” (op.cit.; my emphasis).

It is tempting to make assumptions about the apparently common ground shared between this political focus and the agenda of the inclusion movement. Yet, we must not be quick to translate the recent electoral gains of SYRIZA, and other ‘fringe’ parties with a social justice agenda, as an unconditional success for the politics of inclusion in Greece. After all, as the folk saying reminds us, “if elections could change things, they’d be illegal”. As we discussed earlier in this chapter, even when a radical idea manages to challenge effectively the structures of hegemony and claim its spot in the limelight of socio-political life, processes of discursive appropriation and political assimilation can be used to control and adjust it into the established dominant norms. From this perspective, even if this political platform that was until recently marginalised as partisan and extremist ascends to a position of administrative power, it should not surprise us if it becomes tamed and domesticated. Hence, in this scenario, a few years from now a thesis similar to this one might be criticising the educational and social policies implemented by future SYRIZA governments for sustaining discrimination and exclusion, echoing our own arguments regarding PASOK and New Democracy’s governmental policies of the recent past.

In this regard, it must be noted that voting, while the most basic act of political activism, is not the only – or perhaps the most significant – mode of participation in the democratic processes. As the movement of the *Indignados* has exemplified (first in Spain, more recently in the streets of Athens outside the Greek parliament, and in various other places around the globe), there are other – possibly more constructive

and effective – means of protest and expressing dissent within a modern democracy. What is more, the electoral emancipation of the Greek voters from the conventional bi-party system cannot be straightforwardly interpreted as a social transformation guided towards positive change. For instance, the neo-Nazi ‘Golden Dawn’ party secured almost 7% in the last elections and gained representation in the parliament – for the first time in the nation’s political history – with an agenda centred on nationalist ideals, ethnic/religious/sexual minority phobia and anti-immigrant violence. It is, therefore, evident that in the present-day socio-political arena, alongside discourses of civil rights, social inclusion and political equity, opposing discourses of intolerance, inequity and exclusion are equally battling for dominance.

So, what does the future hold for the fate of the inclusion movement in Greece? There is, arguably, no safe answer to this question, especially as long as the country’s political situation remains fluid and fraught with uncertainty. At the time of writing this last chapter of my thesis, Greece is heading for new elections as no party or coalition managed to secure parliamentary majority in May. Still, regardless of the exact results of the upcoming elections, I will argue that Greek society is witnessing today an unprecedented clash between competing forces of fear, conservatism and illiberalism, on the one hand, and hope, democratic progress and radical change, on the other. The old bi-party system that governed the nation for the past decades is in the process of becoming obsolete. Its demise plants the seed of hope that dominant processes of exclusion and systemic patterns of cultural, social, political and economic inequality will fade away with it. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that processes promoting a truly equitable and inclusive social reality will automatically replace them. As this thesis has repeatedly argued, this requires a persistent struggle on the micro- and macro- political plane of our daily lives.

In the end, the future of educational and social inclusion is strictly conditional upon the resolution of questions pertaining to the form and function of our entire social organisation. It is impossible to disentangle the ‘inclusion or exclusion’ dilemma, either in an educational or a broader social context, without first determining the social ethos we envision and the practical responsibilities, personal and collective, stemming from this ethos.

9.3 The dialectic of personal and political change

In discussing the contradictory discourses on inclusion the thesis sought to bring to light the underlying and multidirectional links between the discursive and the socio-political worlds. Its aim was not only to examine this relation in theoretical terms and from the viewpoint of discourse analysis, but also to explore its perception and articulation by those involved in the education of disabled children. This approach presupposed the dialectical interaction of personal and broader discursive and political changes, evidenced – first and foremost – in my own encounter with inclusion through my teaching experience, but also through the writing of this thesis.

When I was conducting my research I found that the understanding of these plural and complex relations was discussed productively by disability activists, but was less frequently the focus of the teachers' commentaries on their approaches to inclusion, including my own understanding of the concept. Indeed, my commitment to inclusion from the viewpoint of my teaching practice often obscured my own ability to critically challenge several articulations of the concept and reflect on the non-inclusive implications of their discursive use. So, my encounter with a scholarly approach to inclusion involved a personal repositioning and the development of a self-critical apprehension of inclusion and inclusive politics.

This personal shift of attitudes can also be approached as the result of broader political transformations, which further influenced the academic and educational communities in Greece. More specifically, in the process of conducting the interviews and afterwards I noted a gradual shift towards a more conscious understanding of the politics of inclusion. This shift can be explained as the direct outcome of the wider political changes described above and the questions raised about the established concepts and practices in (inclusive) education. In a sense, one may argue that a gradual politicisation of inclusion by educationalists arose as the direct counterpart of the financial crisis and the broader questioning of established political values and practices this entailed.

This shift is still in the making and the present thesis only begins to approach it. Had I started this research over again during the last year or so, I would have

sought to highlight – through the kinds of questions I raised with the teachers – this move towards a reflexive political analysis of inclusion and the hopes for institutional and wider social change generated by it. Moreover, in the light of this change, I would like to continue this investigation by exploring the critical reappraisal of inclusion both in teachers and in other groups, especially parents. The voice of parents – particularly parents of non-disabled children – has not been given prominence within the relevant Greek literature and constitutes a future research factor that needs to be seriously engaged with. Indeed, the study of critiques of established educational practices and the emergence of a more radical category of inclusion by parents may offer a key frame for understanding the parameters and implications of this reflexive discourse on education and inclusion.

However, it needs to be emphasised that this new critical discourse is still in the process of being formulated. As such its strengths lie more in the critical appraisal of established educational and wider politics, than in the discursive shaping of concrete institutional alternatives and future prospects. Even if one may argue that, as the result of the elections, the old political order has not been restored, this does not straightforwardly entail a linear path in a progressive direction supported by the ideal of inclusion. In the present context, the Greek people face a historic opportunity to move beyond the disavowal of the politics of the past and shape both the moral principles and the political content of future policies. However, the extent to which this conjuncture would lead to radical changes in personal and broader political directions is a question, rather than a given.

What would then be the envisioned goals for such changes? This is not formulated as a merely academic, but also as a political question that has preoccupied me as a teacher and citizen throughout and beyond my research. So, while it is beyond the scope of the thesis to offer a comprehensive proposition with regard to the concrete steps needed for advancing inclusion, it is significant to at least begin to formulate such a problematic about (radical) educational change. The critical appraisal of current educational practices in Greece attempted in this thesis in the light of the social model of disability indicates the need for a twofold change that should take place in the frame of education and in the wider frame of social organisation and interaction. Hence, it is significant to summarise at this point the

key impediments to inclusion discussed in the thesis in order to envision practical and political alternatives, and highlight certain concrete steps needed for advancing the framework of inclusive education in Greece.

On the level of educational practice these impediments were on the one hand the infrastructural problems, such as lack of school-buildings, adequate classrooms, special provisions for disabled children, and on the other the lack of trained staff to teach in inclusive schools. My own experience of such problems as a teacher in a Greek special school was, indeed, one of the key reasons that alerted me as to the discrepancies and contradictions in evocations of inclusion, and stood at the basis of my research. The current financial crisis in Greece has implied the deterioration of the conditions experienced by everyone involved in the education of disabled students, including, of course, the students themselves. Reduced funding for education over the last two years has accentuated problems in the functioning of schools: a significant number of both special and inclusive school units have closed and the teaching personnel employed in special, 'inclusive' and mainstream education has been drastically downsized.

The need to confront the astonishing lack of teaching, administrative and medical staff, and to offer safe and productive material conditions for disabled children in Greek education, is today as urgent as it has perhaps ever been over the last decade. Furthering financial provisions to educational institutions in Greece cannot be discussed today in juxtaposition with other financial decisions that the government needs to make in different sections; for, given the current situation in 'inclusive' and special education, these provisions are not requested with the intention of perfecting educational environments, but under the imminent threat of not having teachers or viable conditions for disabled students at all. This necessity, though political in nature, cannot be left to political administrators. Political power, as one of the leaders of the American movement to end slavery, Frederick Douglass, once said, concedes nothing without a demand. So the political necessity for change is (also) a matter of personal responsibility and commitment which can only materialise if it implicates simultaneously academics, educationalists and citizens. The financial crisis in Greece posits the question of how to confront the deteriorating conditions of (inclusive) educational practice as the key field for both future

research, educational practice and a politics of resistance. What are the ethical and political implications of the idea of ‘cuts’ in education? In what sense is the so-called ‘financial’ crisis also a crisis of morals, solidarity and social values?

At the same time, the same results in my research made me feel that despite such adverse conditions I need to continue to strive in my school for the practical advancement of inclusion. The contemporary policy framework of Greek education – despite its documented shortcomings – is not entirely void of inclusive components that can be operationalised in the active pursuit of the inclusion agenda. As Greek educationalists emphasised in our interview study, the practice of the inclusive classroom – introduced by Law 2817 in 2000 and modified by the currently active Law 3699/2008 – can become instrumental in the development of inclusive schooling, if not implemented sporadically and with minimum material support. I feel that the gaps of a system in which we all operate as teachers need to be exploited and expanded in order to advance inclusion while, simultaneously, fighting against the same system and the ways it undermines inclusive educational and social practices.

In our interviews, Greek teachers also accentuated the significance of an effective formal system of disability identification and early intervention that could consistently support the pedagogic goals of inclusion. The continuous reshuffling of the formal diagnostic framework instituted by policy makers since the introduction of the KDAY network with Law 2817/2000 is indicative of the perennial inadequacies of the centralised organisation of the Greek education system. The minor amendments to ineffective strategies, the modernisation of the vocabulary pertaining to disability evaluation and categorisation and the constant renaming of the support centres (from the KDAY of Law 2817 to the KEDDY of Law 3699, to the EDEAY of the most recent educational bill) did little to advance the educational and broader social inclusion of disabled people in Greece. Such an endeavour necessitates a novel scheme of support services that can challenge effectively the conventional principles of ordering and classifying as well as the functional outcomes of disability labels and categorisations.

Such provisions are equally significant on the wider level of social organisation. As we saw in chapter 7, disability activists in Greece stress how in periods of crisis disabled people tend to be further marginalised due to the intensification of antagonistic relations and practices. Under the current conditions of crisis and the memoranda signed by the Greek government(s), the public sector can no longer offer employment positions and in the discriminatory job market of the faltering private sector the escalating unemployment rates practically negate the opportunity for vocational rehabilitation for Greek disabled citizens. Yet, the quest for self-determination and the efforts of disabled people to take control of their own lives, as the discourse of Greek activists emphasised, links inextricably the advancement of inclusive education with the strengthening of disability rights in all social institutions, with first – and perhaps foremost – the workplace.

Discussing issues of voice in the context of a dialectics of the personal and the political, it is crucial to note that there has recently been a striking reduction of (the already limited) intellectual and cultural frameworks sustained by the state and intended to offer fora for self-expression for disabled people. Over the last few months such fora have become organised privately by newspapers or cultural organisations responding to a wider call for solidarity in the face of crisis. The use of the internet by groups of disability activists has offered another medium for self-expression and critique. The furthering of such initiatives is significant not only for the disability movement itself, but also for the state of our democracy, for our personal commitment to democracy and for the conditions created for oppressed groups to be heard and represented both socially and politically.

When I began my research, one of my main preconceptions was to forward a critique of governance underlining the responsibilities and accumulated errors of past and present policy makers or administrators of Greek education as regards the advancement, or lack thereof, of inclusion. Yet, over the course of my research the importance of an alternative, bottom-up rather than top-down, approach to the pursuit of equity and inclusion became progressively more evident, and the role of social activism and the disability movement was correspondingly highlighted in my writings. At the basis of this approach lies a critical politics of hope: a politics which, while acknowledging the dominant social processes that produce inequality and

discrimination, is firmly grounded on the belief that these can be overturned. As Len Barton (2012:15) points out, “it is an informed, historical, complex rather than simple hope which allows people to recognise that a different future is possible”. Especially today, in the socio-political aftermath of the lingering financial crisis, our collective ability to nourish such a politics of hope against reigning discourses of despair about impoverishment and exclusion is crucial for the effectiveness of social movements and their capacity to generate positive change.

The struggles of the disability movement – and any other social actors – for empowerment against socio-political oppression do not end in the immediate outcomes and repercussions of political processes such as the election of government officials. As activists and scholars have consistently emphasised, the development of a politics of hope and the maintenance of inclusive conditions, relations and values within education and the entire social realm is a perpetual fight requiring resilience and determination (see Barton 2012:15-16). For inclusion is more than an immaterial moral concept or an end-state model of social utopia; it is *a constant process of transformation*. In a similar approach, the discourse of Greek disability activists, theorists and educationalists presented in the pages of this thesis has highlighted the transformative potential of inclusive education. If and how this potential is realised within the Greek society or elsewhere, will not be conclusively decided here and now. But this thesis will conclude with an unconditional expression of belief that the struggle – personal and political – to translate the ideal of inclusion into a politics of inclusion, both in education and in society, always begins ‘here and now’.

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APPENDIX A

Chronological account of research activities

1. October 2003 – August 2005	Literature review focusing on the thesis' theoretical framework, investigation of the current state of research in disability studies in Greece, configuration of the thesis' research topic.
2. October 2005 – January 2005	Configuration and carrying out of pilot study. This involved interviewing three teachers in mainstream/special schools. For this process it was necessary to make special appointments and arrange visits from the UK to Greece.
3. February 2005 – Feb. 2006	<p>Writing up and preparation for the upgrade to PhD.</p> <p>My upgrade portfolio included an abstract, a thesis outline giving a detailed description of each chapter, and three chapters of my study. The first, entitled "Educational Responses to Difference: An Historical Overview" consisted of a critical examination of the concepts of disability and inclusion, and the transition from 'medical' to 'social' models for understanding disability and approaching inclusion. The second, entitled "Approaching Inclusion as a Contested Concept: Contradictions in the Contemporary Design of Inclusive Education" examined a variety of current discourses on inclusion to argue for the fundamental contestability of the concept. The</p>

	<p>third chapter was a pilot study for my intended interviews with Greek educationalists.</p>
<p>4. March 2006</p>	<p>Successful completion of the upgrade.</p>
<p>5a. May 2007 – March 2008</p>	<p>a) Interview with two categories of educationalists: i. teachers in mainstream and special schools; ii. school-administrators (school directors and administrators of educational policy). In order to conduct these interviews I had to arrange a number of visits to five schools in both Athens and Patras as well as the Pedagogical Institute of Greece. This part of my research involved the arrangement of several trips from the UK to Greece. Specific appointments had to be made for the interviews with the school-administrators involving long delays in my research.</p> <p>b) Investigation of databases including current framework of legislation, institutional regulations for special and inclusive schools, official justifications of current policies in Greek education.</p> <p>c) Investigation of the discourse of Greek activists including online research into pamphlets and reports.</p> <p>d) Investigation of academic discourses in Greece focusing on inclusion. This part of my research was conducted towards the end of</p>

	<p>this period in order to be able to make a more comprehensive comparison between the discourse of academics and that of teachers and other practitioners.</p>
<p>5b. October 2007</p>	<p>Arrangement of special interview with a high-ranked administrator of Greek educational policy: Vasileios Kourbetis, Senior Advisor on Special Education at the Pedagogical Institute of Greece. The arrangement of this interview involved a long administrative procedure and two special trips to Greece.</p>
<p>6. April 2008 – September 2009</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Decoding of interviews. b) Study of interviews, including configuration of themes of discussion, shared assumptions, fields of disagreement. c) Writing up draft chapters of my research.
<p>7. October 2009 – May 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) New literature review in Greek intended to take into account new Greek legislation. Extensive review of the new Law 3699/2008. b) Comparison between the current and previous legislation. c) Investigation of official justifications of new legislation constituting the ‘government’s discourse’. d) Investigation of critical responses to new legislation including collection of newspaper articles, pamphlets, periodicals.

<p>8a. June 2010 – December 2010</p>	<p>a) Additional interviews with teachers and research activists intended to take into account both the impact of new legislation and the emerging context of financial crisis.</p> <p>b) Investigation of newly established policies involving the radical reduction of funding in special and inclusive schools.</p> <p>c) Continuation of investigation of official justifications of new legislation and critical responses to it.</p>
<p>8b. October 2011</p>	<p>Arrangement of special interview with Greek activist Kostas Gargalis, president of the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf.</p>
<p>9. October 2011 – April 2012</p>	<p>Writing up of a complete draft of the thesis (Chapters 1 – 8). Final discussion of revisions with my supervisor.</p>
<p>10. April 2012 – June 2012</p>	<p>Writing up of final version of the thesis (including Ch. 9 as an epilogue).</p>

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire (Greek)

Οι ακόλουθες ερωτήσεις αφορούν 4 αρκετά γνωστές έννοιες στο χώρο της (ειδικής) παιδαγωγικής: την 'εκπαιδευτική ένταξη', την 'κοινωνική ένταξη', την έννοια του 'αποδοτικού/επιτυχημένου σχολείου' και την έννοια της 'εκπαιδευτικής επιτυχίας' (όλες με σημείο αναφοράς την εκπαίδευση των ατόμων με αναπηρία). Επισημαίνεται ότι οι ερωτήσεις δεν είναι του τύπου 'σωστό-λάθος' και ότι σε κάθε περίπτωση ζητείται η προσωπική σας άποψη και θέση, και όχι το 'τι θεωρείται σωστό' ή η πιο δημοφιλής/καθιερωμένη απάντηση επί του θέματος. Τέλος, όπως είναι ευνόητο, κατά τη δημοσίευση των αποτελεσμάτων της έρευνας τα προσωπικά σας στοιχεία θα παραμείνουν εμπιστευτικά και θα διατηρηθεί η ανωνυμία σας.

Σας ευχαριστώ θερμά για τη συμμετοχή σας,

Ιωάννα Λιανέρη.

Γενικές Πληροφορίες:

Όνομα (εμπιστευτικό):

Φύλλο:

Χρόνια διδακτικής εμπειρίας:

Χρόνια διδακτικής εμπειρίας σε τάξης ένταξης/ειδικό σχολείο:

Έχετε κάποια εξειδίκευση στην ειδική αγωγή; Αν ναι, τι συγκεκριμένα;

A. Εκπαιδευτική ένταξη

1. α) Πώς καταλαβαίνετε την έννοια 'εκπαιδευτική ένταξη' των μαθητών με αναπηρία;
β) Ποιο θεωρείτε πως είναι το περιεχόμενο και ποιοι οι στόχοι της ένταξης των μαθητών με αναπηρία στο Γενικό Σχολείο σήμερα;
2. α) Πιστεύετε ότι η υπάρχουσα επίσημη εκπαιδευτική πολιτική ορίζει και χρησιμοποιεί την έννοια της εκπαιδευτικής ένταξης των μαθητών με αναπηρία με τον ίδιο τρόπο με εσάς;
β) Αν όχι, ποιες διαφορές εντοπίζετε ανάμεσα στη δική σας προσέγγιση και στο πώς οριοθετεί η κυβέρνηση το περιεχόμενο και τους στόχους της έννοιας;
3. α) Πιστεύετε ότι το υπάρχον εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα προσφέρει όλες τις απαραίτητες προϋποθέσεις για την εκπαιδευτική ένταξη των μαθητών με αναπηρία;
β) Αν όχι, πού υστερεί κατά τη γνώμη σας και τι αλλαγές είναι απαραίτητες;

B. Κοινωνική ένταξη

1. α) Πώς καταλαβαίνετε την έννοια 'κοινωνική ένταξη' των ατόμων με αναπηρία;
β) Ποιο θεωρείτε πως είναι το περιεχόμενο και ποιοι οι στόχοι της ένταξης/ενσωμάτωσης των ατόμων με αναπηρία στη σύγχρονη ελληνική κοινωνία;

2. α) Πιστεύετε ότι η υπάρχουσα επίσημη εκπαιδευτική πολιτική ορίζει και χρησιμοποιεί την έννοια της κοινωνικής ένταξης των ατόμων με αναπηρία με τον ίδιο τρόπο με εσάς;
β) Αν όχι, ποιες διαφορές εντοπίζετε ανάμεσα στη δική σας προσέγγιση και στο πώς οριοθετεί η κυβέρνηση το περιεχόμενο και τους στόχους της έννοιας;
3. α) Πιστεύετε ότι το υπάρχον εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα προσφέρει όλες τις απαραίτητες προϋποθέσεις ώστε να στηριχθεί και να ενισχυθεί η κοινωνική ένταξη των ατόμων με αναπηρία;
β) Αν όχι, πού υστερεί κατά τη γνώμη σας και τι αλλαγές είναι απαραίτητες;

Γ. Αποδοτικότητα του σχολείου

1. Πώς καταλαβαίνετε την έννοια 'αποδοτικότητα του σχολείου' όσον αφορά τους μαθητές με αναπηρία; (Πότε, δηλαδή, ένα σχολείο είναι 'επιτυχημένο' όσον αφορά την εκπαίδευση των ατόμων με αναπηρία;)
2. α) Πιστεύετε ότι η υπάρχουσα επίσημη εκπαιδευτική πολιτική ορίζει και χρησιμοποιεί την έννοια της αποδοτικότητας/επιτυχίας του σχολείου (πάντα σε σχέση με τους μαθητές με αναπηρία) με τον ίδιο τρόπο με εσάς;
β) Αν όχι, ποιες διαφορές εντοπίζετε ανάμεσα στη δική σας προσέγγιση και στο πώς οριοθετεί η κυβέρνηση το περιεχόμενο και τους στόχους της έννοιας;
3. α) Πιστεύετε ότι το υπάρχον εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα προσφέρει όλες τις απαραίτητες προϋποθέσεις, ώστε να εξασφαλιστεί η αποδοτικότητα/επιτυχία του σχολείου (όπως την ορίσατε εσείς) όσον αφορά την εκπαίδευση των ατόμων με αναπηρία;
β) Αν όχι, πού υστερεί κατά τη γνώμη σας και τι αλλαγές είναι απαραίτητες;

Δ. Εκπαιδευτική επιτυχία

1. Πώς καταλαβαίνετε την έννοια 'εκπαιδευτική επιτυχία' (σε ατομικό επίπεδο) για το μαθητή με αναπηρία; (Πότε, δηλαδή, είναι 'επιτυχημένη' η παρουσία του μαθητή με αναπηρία στο σχολείο;)
2. α) Πιστεύετε ότι η υπάρχουσα επίσημη εκπαιδευτική πολιτική ορίζει και χρησιμοποιεί την έννοια της εκπαιδευτικής επιτυχίας (σε ατομικό επίπεδο) των μαθητών με αναπηρία με τον ίδιο τρόπο με εσάς;
β) Αν όχι, ποιες διαφορές εντοπίζετε ανάμεσα στη δική σας προσέγγιση και στο πώς οριοθετεί η κυβέρνηση το περιεχόμενο και τους στόχους της έννοιας;
3. α) Πιστεύετε ότι το υπάρχον εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα προσφέρει όλες τις απαραίτητες προϋποθέσεις ώστε να εξασφαλιστεί η εκπαιδευτική επιτυχία (όπως την ορίσατε εσείς) των μαθητών με αναπηρία;
β) Αν όχι, πού υστερεί κατά τη γνώμη σας και τι αλλαγές είναι απαραίτητες;

Θα θέλατε να προσθέσετε κάτι ακόμα;

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire (English)

The following questions are centred on four well known concepts in the field of (special) education: 'educational inclusion', social inclusion', the concept of 'effective/successful school, and the concept of 'educational achievement'. All of these concepts are discussed with reference to the education of disabled children. It needs to be stressed that the questions are not of the type of 'right or wrong'. What I would like to discuss is your own *personal opinion and position*, not what is considered 'right' or the most popular or established answer on the subject. Finally, I am assuring you that your personal data will remain confidential during publication and your anonymity will be preserved.

I am very grateful for your contribution,

Ioanna Lianeri.

General Information

Name (confidential):

Gender:

Years of teaching experience:

Years of teaching experience in inclusive classroom /special school:

Do you have any training or educational background in special education? If yes, please specify:

A. Educational Inclusion

1. a) How do you understand the concept of 'educational inclusion' with regard to disabled students?
b) What do you consider to be the content and goals of inclusion with regard to disabled students in the mainstream school today?

2. a) Do you believe that the concept of inclusion is defined and used in the context of official educational policy in the same terms/way that you define and use it?
b) If not, what do you consider to be the differences between your approach to the concept and the ways the government defines the content and goals of inclusion?

3. a) Do you believe that the current educational system offers the necessary conditions for the educational inclusion of disabled students?
b) If not, what are – in your view – its deficiencies, and what changes are necessary?

B. Social Inclusion

1. a) How do you understand the concept of 'social inclusion' with regard to disabled people?

- b) What do you consider to be the content and goals of inclusion of disabled people in contemporary Greek society?
2. a) Do you believe that the concept of social inclusion with regard to disabled people is defined and used in the context of state/official educational policy in the same terms that you define and use it?
b) If not, what do you consider to be the differences between your approach to the concept and the ways the government defines the content and goals of social inclusion?
3. a) Do you believe that the current educational system offers all the necessary conditions in order to sustain and advance the social inclusion of disabled people?
b) If not, what are – in your view – its deficiencies, and what changes are necessary?

C. School Effectiveness

1. What does the concept of ‘school effectiveness’ with regard to disabled students mean to you in terms of its content and aims? (In other words, when is a school ‘effective’ as regards the education of disabled people?)
2. a) Do you think that the concept of school effectiveness is defined and deployed in the context of official educational policy today in the same way as you define and deploy it?
b) If not, what differences do you recognise between your definition and the way the government delimits the meaning and aims of school effectiveness?
3. a) Do you believe that the current educational system offers the necessary in order to ensure school effectiveness (in the terms that you defined it) with regard to the education of disabled people?
b) If not, what are – in your view – its deficiencies, and what changes are necessary?

D. Educational achievement

1. How do you understand the concept of 'educational achievement' (on a personal level) for disabled students? (In other words, when is the presence of the disabled student in school 'successful'?)

2. a) Do you think that the concept of educational achievement is defined and deployed in the context of official educational policy today in the same way that you define and deploy it?
b) If not what differences do you recognize between your approach and the ways in which the government delimits the content and goals of educational success?

3. a) Do you think that the current educational system offers the necessary conditions ensuring the educational achievement of disabled children (in the terms that you defined the concept)?
b) If not, what are – in your view – its deficiencies, and what changes are necessary?

Would you like to add anything else?