



The Social Participation of Children Identified as
Having Moderate Learning Difficulties/Slow
Learning and the Different Ways of Assessing
Such Children in Kuwait and England (a
comparative study)

**Submitted by Bader Alqallaf to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
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I certify that all material in this dissertation **which is not my own work** has been identified with appropriate acknowledgement and referencing and I also certify that no material is included for which a degree has previously been conferred upon me.

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Abstract

This study addressed two main areas in the field of special education needs. First, it considered the concepts of MLD\Slow learning and the different ways to understand and recognise such terms in England and Kuwait. Second, it considered the stability of the social participation of children identified as having MLD\Slow learning in mainstream primary schools in both countries. The study utilized a cross-cultural design, which relies heavily on longitudinal and ethnographic approaches. In each country, two mainstream primary schools agreed to participate (i.e., four schools in total), comprising 22 children with MLD in England and 31 with slow learning in Kuwait. The results indicated that the concept of MLD was unclear to the participants, and that there was no procedurally objective way that could be followed to assess or recognise children with MLD in England. On one hand, this could lead to different assessment results for one child; on the other hand, it could also provide a flexible system through which MLD can be assessed in multiple ways. In contrast, slow learning in Kuwait is assessed objectively based solely on the IQ test as a main method, which could question the validity of the assessment. The results indicated that children with MLD in England were not found to be a homogenous group in terms of their social participation. Nonetheless, most of them displayed positive social participation with their typically developing children, as they were accepted to some extent by their peers and showed a good extent of friendship with their peers. Their social interactions were no different compared to that of their non-SEN peers. In contrast, the children with slow learning displayed no social interaction or friendship with their non-SEN peers who showed little acceptance of slow learning children. The results also indicated that the dimensions of friendship and peers' acceptance levels were inter-related to some extent and could predict each other, albeit weakly with the dimension of social-self-concept.

Keywords: inclusive education; social participation; children with MLD

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

This study focuses on two main areas. The first area is the concept of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) in England and the concept of Slow Learning in Kuwait, looking at the different analyses which have been carried out to understand the concepts, and the different ways of identifying, diagnosing and assessing such terms. The study showed how the concept of MLD was not clear to the participants in England and that it was not a useful term to use or for determining the needs of children. The Slow Learning concept, on the other hand, was over-simplified as a means of identification. The second area of focus is the social participation of children identified as having MLD in mainstream primary schools in England compared with the social participation of children identified as having Slow Learning in mainstream primary schools in Kuwait. Within this area of focus different analyses are carried out regarding children's friendships, social interaction, peer acceptance and social self-concept. The next section will provide information about the background of this study in its two focused parts, the reasons for adopting these two main areas of focus, and it will outline the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Inclusion

1.1.1 The Ideology of Inclusion

After the Salamanca Statement of 1994 (UNESCO, 1994), UNESCO called for inclusive education. The simple idea of inclusive education is that all children learn together despite their different needs. However, there seemed to be different understandings of inclusion, as Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2002, p.158) stated: '*Inclusion is a bewildering concept which can have a variety of interpretations and applications*'. This has been stated by different authors, for instance Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2010) believed that inclusive education was an illusion in many ways due to the different understandings of what inclusion means. The U.S. Department of Education (2002) revealed that, globally, there were five and a half million students identified as having special educational needs (SEN), and just below

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half of these students were placed in mainstream schools alongside their typically developing peers for more than 79% of their school day. Therefore it is important to clarify the concept of inclusion and its origin from being mainly a political concept to becoming one of the main concepts in education, as I will explain in the coming sections.

It is commonly believed that the inclusion movement is associated with children identified as having SEN, but this is not necessarily true, especially when looking at the early historical roots of inclusion. The movement towards inclusive education was not mainly targeting children with SEN, but it was more a reaction against the inequality, ideology and discrimination of the 1960s and 1970s based on gender, race and sexuality (Armstrong, 2007). The global social need for people to accept and acknowledge difference, together with political developments, all led to the appearance of the term 'social inclusion' as the opposite of 'social exclusion' (Norwich, 2013). Social exclusion means to prevent individuals from practising their rights within a community (Power and Wilson, 2000). Special schools were seen as part of social exclusion where the right for children with disability to join mainstream school was blocked.

The original roots of segregated education go back to the nineteenth century, but it was mainly influenced by the development of the eugenic and psychometric fields which gave a 'scientific' justification for segregation (Thomas, 2013). Thirty-five years ago, segregated settings were seen as a solution to the social injustice of education (Florian, 2008). Simply, segregation was seen from the viewpoint that general education would not benefit a large group of children with special educational needs (SEN) (Armstrong, 2007). This view faced significant resistance from the global campaign towards human rights. After the Second World War, in 1945, the acceptability of eugenics decreased and the Civil Rights movement led collective thought to the injustice of segregated education and opened the door for other groups who were discriminated against (Minow, 2010). There was also organisations such as Young and Powerful and the Integration Alliance which started to campaign for the rights of children with disabilities

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and gradually children with SEN started to gain their rights to be educated in mainstream schools (Armstrong, 2007).

However, the movement toward accommodating children with SEN in mainstream schools was not promoted under the name of 'inclusion', but rather under the name of 'integration'. In the UK for example, the interest of accommodating all children in ordinary school was under the name of 'integration' and not 'inclusion', as elucidated in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978). Then why did the term 'inclusion' replace the term 'integration'? Norwich (2013) answered this question by clarifying two main reasons. First, both terms are closely related to each other. The term 'integration' refers to various aspects including locational integration, curricular integration and social integration, as elucidated in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978). However, there had been a focus on the locational integration aspect while the social and the functional aspects of integration, which are highly related to the term 'inclusion', had tended to be overlooked (Norwich, 2013). Cummins and Lau indicated that the majority of researchers had referred to integration as 'being physically present in locations that are frequented by the general public' (Cummins and Lau, 2003, p.146). Such a limited understanding of the concept of integration to emphasise merely locational integration may result in the misleading conclusion that integration means to place children under one roof without making any changes in the organisation (Norwich, 2013). However, the term 'inclusion' involves organisational change. This understanding may also lead the supporters of the social model who believe in social change to adopt the term 'inclusion' instead of 'integration', as integration is seen to be close to the medical model which focuses on changing the individual (Norwich, 2013).

The second reason Norwich gave to clarify the terminology shift was the 1970s political movement towards social inclusion as being the opposite of social exclusion. This movement was related to children with SEN in different ways. For example, Norwich chose the case of the social recognition of immigrants, who formed a minority living among a native majority, where the minority was expected to assimilate to the majority way of living. In this view, the majority do not acknowledge the minority way of living

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or their distinctive social customs. This situation is expressed by the term ‘assimilation’ (minority fitting in) (ibid). In contrast to this concept, ‘social inclusion’ refers to the process where the dominant or majority group accommodates the minority under the term ‘accommodation’ (majority adapting). These views of accommodation and assimilation may also be seen to be applied in education with children identified as having SEN, where the term ‘inclusion’ is used as referring to accommodation (adapting different aspects of school to fit children’s needs) and the term ‘integration’ (in its location aspects) refers to assimilation (where children with SEN need to adapt to fit into the mainstream without change). Nevertheless, not all researchers have used ‘integration’ in its incomplete meaning of ‘locational integration’; Booth & Potts (1983), for instance, saw ‘integration’ as the term for accommodation.

In the 1990s, the idea of providing the most appropriate support for children with SEN moved from integration to inclusion (i.e., taking into account the need to satisfy the social and the academic needs of children with SEN and not just physically placing them in mainstream schools) (Norwich, 2008). However, the movement towards inclusion faces concerns regarding the concept of inclusion, as the term has been used in different ways in the literature; even recent writers in the field of SEN have used the term ‘inclusion’ without defining it, leaving the reader to understand the term from the context by themselves (Helmstetter, Curry, Brennan & Sampson-Saul, 1998; Knowlton, 1998). While inclusion is a complex term, like a chimera, it can have different meanings in different contexts.

It has been argued that the main aim of inclusion is to prevent social discrimination and to enhance social justice among children with and without SEN. This has been stated by many authors in different words; Carrington and Elkins (2005) for example believed that ‘*above all, inclusion is about a philosophy of acceptance where all pupils are valued and treated with respect*’ (Carrington and Elkins, 2005, p.86). The United Nations Convention itself, in its Article 24 on the Rights of People with Disabilities, emphasised the right to social participation and inclusion (United Nations, 2006). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also explained

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inclusion as the ‘*process which maximises the interaction between disabled and non-disabled students*’ (OECD, 1995, p.15). Therefore it is important for academic research to investigate the social participation of children identified as having SEN. It is important to be aware of the social life of including children in mainstream schools, whether children are included within their school community, or whether they face social difficulties at school which can be recognised in order to help minimise them. This study investigates the social life of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in mainstream primary schools in England and Kuwait. It does not aim to solve the social difficulties of children, but it aims to assess the quality and quantity of social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning. The significance of this study lies in contributing knowledge to improve both practice and theory in the field of the social participation of children with MLD.

1.2 Social Participation (SP)

Maximising the interaction among students, and the socialization of all students in general, are frequently central aims of inclusive education. Parents, for example, send their children with SEN to mainstream schools in order to increase the number of social opportunities and their social participation (Scheepstra, Nakken & Pijl, 1999). According to Koster, parents believe that it is essential for their children to grow in a ‘normal’ environment and they assume that social interaction with their peers will positively influence their children (Koster *et al.*, 2007). The view has continued to predominate among many supporters of inclusion (e.g., Pijl, 2007) that inclusive education is ‘better’ for children with SEN as it provides equality among children and eases social acceptance. Furthermore, some researchers have investigated the social outcomes of inclusion, revealing that inclusive classrooms enhance reciprocal friendships between children (e.g., Vaughn, Elbaum & Boardman, 2001) and, not only that, but other studies have found that children designated as having SEN who have reciprocal friendships report a lower level of loneliness and a more positive self-concept in inclusive mainstream schools compared to those children without friends (e.g, Erath, Flanagan & Bierman, 2008; Rubin,

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Fredstrom & Bowker, 2008). There is also evidence that children identified as having learning disabilities (LD; a term explained by authors as referring to average intellectual difficulties with deficits in one or more areas) can maintain some positive SP in inclusive settings, in spite of their generally low social participation (Pavri & Monda-Amaya, 2001). At the same time, a study on students' perceptions in special schools showed that a number of children believed that their friendship opportunities were reduced because of attending special schools (Norwich & Kelly, 2005). Nevertheless, it has been argued that inclusive settings also lead to negative social aspects, as research has demonstrated that children with SEN have problems interacting with non-SEN children in mainstream schools and they are more likely to face social problems compared to their typically developing peers within mainstream settings (e.g., Koster *et al.*, 2010). Further research carried out by Pijl, Frostad and Flem found that 25% of children with SEN did not participate socially in inclusive classrooms, while only 8% of their non-SEN peers experienced social difficulties (Pijl, Frostad and Flem, 2008). Thus, examining the social participation of children with SEN in mainstream schools is a key area of focus for further study. This was confirmed by OFSTED (2002), as it recommended focusing attention on the social relationships and participation among students. Social participation has also been considered a key issue of inclusion by various authors (e.g., Bossaert, Colpin, Pijl & Petry, 2011). This is especially important since low school performance and maladaptation later in life can be consequences of a negative social life at school (Ollendiick, Weist, Borden & Greene, 1992).

However, the investigation into the social participation of children with SEN is limited. According to the rationale given by Kavale and Forness, the concept of learning difficulties (LD could refer to specific or general learning difficulties) originally just contained the idea of cognitive problems, therefore research gave little attention to the social level of students with LD in schools (Kavale and Forness, 1996). This was also confirmed in a literature review carried out by Pijl, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) where they stated that studies about the social participation of children with MLD were few. The limitations in the field of SP go beyond the small amount of research in the area, but there are also some major gaps in this field that the present study addresses and discusses. The

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following are the gaps in the field of SP which will be discussed in greater detail in the literature review and discussion chapters.

- One main gap in the field of social participation is the need to clarify the concept of social participation itself. Research has often used the term ‘social participation’ without clarifying it.
- Most research has investigated the social participation of children with SEN as a homogeneous group; however, there is evidence that children with SEN could be a heterogeneous group in terms of their social participation.
- There is a need to investigate the stability of children’s social participation to gain a fuller understanding.
- Research has often investigated the social participation of children using quantitative methods while qualitative investigations remain limited.
- Little is known about the social participation of children with SEN in different educational settings (e.g., mainstream school, special classes in mainstream schools, and special schools).
- Finally, there have not been many cross-cultural comparisons of social participation of children with SEN in mainstream schools.

All the above gaps in the field of social participation will be clarified in much greater detail in the literature review chapter. Covering such gaps will help to improve educational practice, as investigating the social participation of children in mainstream schools may provide some evidence for the Kuwaiti government, as well as my sponsorship college, regarding the social outcomes of inclusion. This is especially so when the evidence of the present study is based on cross-cultural comparison between Kuwait and England. Taking into account that children identified as having MLD in England have been involved in mainstream schools over time, such a length of experience of inclusion could contain a lesson to be learned, not only about the social aspects of inclusion but also about the way the English system assesses MLD, which may help the Kuwaiti educational system to develop and improve their own. In return, the present study will clarify how the English system could learn from the Kuwaiti experience of assessing

and integrating children with SEN in mainstream schools, and how the assessment and labelling of children could affect their social participation. The present study will also demonstrate how understanding the social participation of children may impact on the development of educational practice and how different stakeholders (i.e., children, parents, teachers, schools and governments) may benefit. In the literature review chapter I will provide more detail about the concept of social participation, and the sub-categories that this concept may involve, as well as elaborating on the concepts of MLD and Slow Learning.

1.3 Moderate learning difficulties

1.3.1 Replacing Terminology

The process of identifying and labelling children with MLD is a complex procedure due to the complicated nature of this category. In order to understand the complexity of the term, I need first to explore some historical and chronological sequences in its development. Back to the period before and until the 19th century, the term ‘dementia’ was the dominant label to describe children with continuous intellectual difficulties in the UK. This term vanished after 1900 and was replaced for a long time by ‘mental deficiency’, which was also used in some legislation in the UK, such as the Mental Deficiency Act 1913 (Mackay, 2009). These terms (i.e., dementia and mental deficiency) over time came to be seen as highly inappropriate, not because they are intrinsically uncomplimentary, but because they were gradually used as insults rather than to describe serious conditions (ibid). Words such as ‘idiots’, ‘imbeciles’ and ‘mentally retarded’ were used during the period from the 17th to the 20th century (Montgomery, 1990) and appeared to be offensive for the labelled person and their family. Subsequently, such labels started to change and were replaced by others. For example, in the UK the term ‘educationally subnormal to a moderate degree’ was used in 1945 to replace terms such as ‘mentally defective’, ‘mentally retarded’ and ‘feebleminded’ (Norwich, 2004). This was also concluded from a survey by Norwich

and Kelly (2005) when they found that the majority of local authorities (LEAs) in England and Wales used the term ‘moderate learning difficulties’, while a few used terms such as ‘complex learning difficulty’ or ‘cognition and learning difficulty’.

1.3.2 The Uncertainty in Terminology

The uncertainty in the terminology could be noticed across different professional groups. In the UK, especially, NHS health personnel often prefer to use the term ‘learning disability’, while the term ‘mental retardation’ could be used for diagnosis and categorization and is closely related to the two main universal psychiatric classification systems (i.e., ICD10 (World Health Organisation, 1992, 1993) as well as the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, 2000)) (Mackay, 2009). In contrast, in the educational field educators often use the ‘learning difficulties’ terminology and this has been used officially in governmental papers and reports as it focuses on the learning challenge in the area of education rather than the medical diagnosis of disability (ibid). It is also worth saying that the different usage of terms between health and education personnel lies not only in the difference between labels, but also in the degree to which the term is applied. For example, what clinical psychologists call ‘moderate mental retardation’ or ‘moderate learning disability’ is equal to what the educational psychologists call ‘severe learning difficulties’ (ibid). Such uncertainty in terminology causes confusion to readers when coming across papers from different fields.

The terminology referring to children with MLD is not only used differently across different professionals but also across different nations. A good example is the variety of terms used between the UK and the USA. In the United States the term ‘mental retardation’ started to be replaced by the term ‘intellectual disability’, while in the United Kingdom, the term ‘mental handicap’ changed to ‘learning disability’ in the social services and ‘learning difficulties’ in the educational field (Mackay, 2009). By comparing the terminologies, it can be concluded that the term ‘learning difficulties’ in the UK is equivalent to ‘intellectual disability’ or ‘mental retardation’ in the US, which could cause confusion for readers. The British term ‘learning disability’ (LD) is also

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used officially in the US to describe children with diverse specific learning difficulties (SpLD in UK terms) such as dyslexia and dyscalculia (ibid). This was also pointed out by Higgins et al. (2002, p:10), who stated that different labels were applied to children with learning disabilities such as ‘auditory sequencing deficit’, ‘obsessive/compulsive disorder’, ‘remedial reader’, ‘underachiever’ ‘slow’, ‘mentally retarded’, ‘attention-deficit disorder’ and ‘conduct disorder’. Meanwhile the policy makers in Australia, who established the Australian House of Representatives Select Committee on Children and Adults with Learning Difficulties, were not persuaded that the main challenge of such children was that they had a ‘disability’ rather than ‘difficulties’, so that they decided to label them as children with learning difficulties rather than children with a learning disability (Elkins, 2007). The term MLD in England can also be seen as equivalent to the terms ‘mental retardation’ and ‘Slow Learning’, as I will explain further in this research.

One of the bases of any rational discussion of any term is to clarify the meaning of the term; this is known as the ‘law of identity’, which asserts that the discussed term should have just one certain meaning as ‘the relation everything has to itself and nothing else’ (Noonan, Curtis & Ben, 2014). Identifying the used term and recognising the synonyms of that term are essential to discussing the term. This was also emphasised in Aristotle’s ‘law of non-contradiction’: it is not possible for the same thing to exist and not to exist at the same time (Gottlieb & Paula, 2013). For example, it is impossible for a child to have MLD and not to have MLD at the same time unless the term ‘MLD’ is interpreted in two different ways, which prevents any rational discussion; consequently, an investigation of the concept of ‘MLD’ as a term is required. This is especially the case when MLD is the largest among categories of SEN (Fletcher-Campbell, 2004). A further reason for investigating the concept of MLD in this research is that this area has been found to attract less interest by researchers in education and social sciences compared with other categories such as specific learning difficulties (SpLD), autism and emotional and behavioral difficulties (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). Therefore, investigating the concept of MLD is one main phase in this research. Further clarification of the concepts of MLD and Slow Learning will be given in the literature review chapter. The literature

review chapter will discuss how the official definition of MLD in England (DfES, 2005) is ambiguous and how the concept of Slow Learning in Kuwait is over-simplified when it comes to identifying and assessing children. A more detailed discussion of these terms is given in the discussion chapter where clarification is made of the advantages and disadvantages of having a simplified system (i.e., the Kuwaiti system) or a flexible system (i.e., the English system), together with a suggestion for alternative nomenclature.

1.4 Why focus on the social participation of children with MLD/Slow Learning?

There are several reasons for choosing to focus on the social participation of children identified as MLD/Slow Learning in the proposed study. First, I will explain the rationale for choosing MLD/Slow Learning as a category among the other types of SEN. Then I will discuss the issues which have encouraged me to investigate social participation as a topic to be studied.

The primary reason to investigate children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning is based on the sponsor of the proposed study. This research is sponsored by the Public Authorities of Training and Education in Kuwait, which includes several colleges, one of which is the College of Basic Education. It important to note that this is the only college in Kuwait that prepares teachers to teach children with SEN. However, its SEN department has only recently been established and the need for teaching staff is acute. Therefore, it is vital for some students to gain experience of research, as part of Master's and PhD degrees, to obtain the requisite experience to become teachers at the College. However, the school's SEN department requires only certain majors regarding children with SEN, one of which is children identified as having 'mental retardation' as they had been called in Kuwait terminology. I have been sponsored to specialize in such children, so this was due to the sponsor's influence.

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The reasons I chose to focus on MLD within the field of SEN were, firstly, that as Ruijs and Peetsma (2009) indicated, despite the fact that children with MLD constitute the largest category among all the categories of SEN, little research has been conducted on the effects of inclusion on such children worldwide. In addition, the number of such children in mainstream schools is increasing in the UK (Mackay, 2009). Ruijs and Peetsma (2009) confirmed these assumptions when they indicated that less had been written regarding the effects of inclusion on children with SEN, although this was the largest SEN category. These reasons lend importance to research into children identified as MLD and led me to decide to focus on this area.

On a personal level, I have applied for a scholarship that will allow me to further specialize in children with MLD because children with SEN were the focus of my bachelor's degree. Furthermore, I have been a teacher of children designated as having 'mental retardation' in a special school in Kuwait for four years. The theoretical knowledge I gained as part of my undergraduate education, as well as the practical knowledge that I earned while teaching children identified as having 'mental retardation' in a special school in Kuwait, have encouraged me to seek more experience and further education by pursuing a PhD specializing in such children. A further reason is that there has been more research into children with SpLD, such as dyslexia and autism, but very little into the area of MLD, a neglected area according to Desforges (2006).

In relation to the topic of social participation, quite a number of studies have revealed that children identified as having SEN are more often victimised than typically developing children (e.g. Carter and Spencer, 2006; Luciano and Savage, 2007). There are several factors which may lead to victimisation of children with SEN, including some characteristics of some children, for example speech and language difficulties and dyslexia which could be used as a reason for being bullied (Sweeting and West, 2001). A further factor is their lack of social participation and friendship which leads to absence of the protection from being bullied that the social network gives (Hodges et al., 1999). This emphasises that children with SEN could be victimised due to their SEN and that their lack of social participation could enhance this victimisation. There is also evidence that

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aggressive behaviour is negatively correlated with peer social status (e.g. Wiener et al., 1990). A longitudinal study by Kuhne and Wiener (2000) regarding the social position of children with learning difficulties found that 50% of rejected children had displayed aggressive behaviour and 87.5% of the rejected children had learning difficulties (terminology not identified in the article). Concerns about the absence of social participation are not limited to aggressive behaviour and lack of protection from bullying, but there is also evidence that peer rejection reduces the sense of belonging at school, deters participation in social life, hinders access to social networks and lowers motivation and academic performance (Asher and Coie, 1990). All these studies indicate the importance of investigating the social participation of children in school. This investigation will lead to a better understanding of the social life of children in schools as a first step to improving it, which leads to the significance of the current study.

Research in the area of social participation is limited, as I will explain in the literature review chapter. The limited extent of previous research gave me further encouragement to adopt this topic. Another reason was that this was my area of focus in my Master's degree, as I had the chance to work with Dr.Elias Avramidis who was a specialist in the social participation of children with SEN. Therefore, I had the chance to investigate this area and to learn appropriate methodological techniques. He introduced me to the field of social participation and the gaps in this field which needed to be covered, so I started to build up an interest, to read more about it and to think about pursuing it to PhD level. A further reason was that positive social participation is considered one of the main aims of the Ministry of Education in Kuwait. According to the Orientation and Practical Reference Regarding the Program of the Ministry of Education to Develop the Educational System in Kuwait, the main aim of the Ministry of Education is:

'to provide appropriate chances to help learners to develop extensively and completely in relation to their spiritual, intellectual, social, physical and psychological development as much as their abilities allow in order to keep the balance between achieving their individual aims and serving the society in a modern manner which meets the requirements of the economic and the

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social needs of the society at the current time with taking into account the privacy of the Kuwaiti culture and society. (Ministry of Education, 2013)

Taking into consideration the social aspects of the aim above, I would argue that such a wide aim cannot be achieved fully in schools if children lack social participation. In order to help learners to be good citizens, schools need to develop the social aspects of children. Also, children learn from interacting with each other, as Pijl, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) noted; children use social interaction and close contact with their peers to develop their physical, academic, social and general self-concepts. The social theories of learning (i.e., Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998) also reveal that social interaction is related to knowledge acquisition, as individuals can gain knowledge through participating actively in a community of practice. Further research from Yang, Tsai, Kim, Cho and Laffey (2006) found a positive relationship between social interaction and students' academic performance. All this evidence indicates the importance of social participation. The need for understanding the social participation of children should be as important as research which investigates academic outcomes, especially when the Kuwait Government is aiming to push towards integration by having some special classes in mainstream schools. Therefore, I have focused on the social outcomes of children in special classes in Kuwait and compared the results with the social participation of children with MLD in England so that I can offer insights to the Kuwaiti Government towards a better understanding of the social outcomes of the special classes in Kuwait.

1.5 Thesis structure

The second chapter in this research is the Literature Review in which I will discuss research studies which have investigated the concepts of inclusion, MLD and Slow Learning. This will be through highlighting the different usage of these concepts which are relevant to my research. I will then discuss the literature on the concept of social participation and what dimensions this concept could have. This will involve critical reviewing of the literature in the area of social participation and its main limitations, highlighting the gaps in the field which this study will use to build up its research questions. The third chapter is the Methodology chapter. In this part I will discuss the philosophical assumptions of the research, followed by a clarification of the mixed methodological approach adopted in this research, and an explanation of the selection of the participants, the research methods, data analyses, limitations of the methodology, the validity and reliability of the research, and its ethical considerations. I will then move to the fourth part of this study where I will present the findings. The findings will begin with the data on the different ways of identifying and assessing children with MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait and England, followed by a presentation of the quantitative results on the social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in each country. Finally, I will try to enhance the understanding of the concepts of MLD/Slow Learning and of the social participation of these categories in each country. A discussion of the meaning of the results, their implications and how they could be implemented will be found in the Discussion and Conclusion chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a review of various studies will be presented in respect to three main areas, namely, inclusion, social participation and the concepts of MLD/Slow Learning. Firstly, studies on the concept of inclusion in each country (Kuwait and U.K.) will be reviewed; this will help the reader to understand the complexity of the concept and to identify the main ideas behind it and upon which this research will focus. This will be followed by an explanation of the concept of social participation and the main areas that this concept encompasses, leading to identification of the gaps in research on social participation. This will be achieved by examining the limitations of the studies which have focused on the social participation of children identified as having SEN. Finally, the literature on the concept of MLD in England and Slow Learning in Kuwait will be discussed, and consideration will be given to the complexity of these concepts and the conflicts associated with assessing them in each country.

2.2 The Concept of Inclusion

Inclusion, as a term, has been widely used but in different ways and has different meanings which are not necessarily similar to each other. Authors, for instance, use the word 'inclusion' (especially for children with Moderate Learning Difficulties, MLD) to cover various concepts, such as: attending mainstream school (e.g., McDonnell, 1998), providing additional support in the general classroom for children with SEN (e.g., Logan and Malone, 1998), or participation in a natural community (e.g., Kliewer, 1998). Such a variety of meanings of inclusion led Ainscow et al. (2006) to distinguish between two different kinds of inclusion (i.e., narrow and broad definitions). The narrow definition refers to including a particular group, such as children with SEN, whereas the broad definition indicates the way that schools respond to the different needs and diversity of all children. The conflict of the concept does not stop here, but it extends to using the term 'inclusion' differently among different schools. For example, in some schools teachers refer to the services provided to children with SEN who are in a general class alongside their typically developing peers as 'inclusive', as a contrast to the services

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provided to those children in self-contained classes, while in other schools teachers refer to the special classes which contain heterogeneous groupings of students with SEN (e.g. children identified as having MLD with children identified as having autism) as inclusive classes, as opposed to the special classes which contain only a single disability category (Ryndak, Jackson & Billingsley, 2000). The uncertainty of inclusion is also found in its implementation in different countries. While some countries are known for their less segregated and more inclusive educational system, such as Norway, other countries apply a multi-track system with a range of different placements for children between full segregation and full inclusion, such as the UK and France. Some other countries choose the two-track system where children are placed either in special school or mainstream school with nothing in the middle (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2003). Because of all this conflict about what inclusion means, Frederickson et al. (2007) assert that inclusion should be defined before starting research in order to clarify which conceptualization of inclusion is being adopted in the research.

As there is no agreement about the concept of inclusion (Pearson, 2005), in this research I will adopt the idea that inclusion is more about belonging and the feeling of acceptance within the community (in this case the school community). Before expounding on the academic literature as evidence of adopting this understanding of inclusion, I will first explain the logic of doing this. Simply, if we compare mainstream schools with special schools in terms of the nature of schools and the 'special' provision or support provided for children with SEN, we will find that there are not many differences, except in the social life of the two types of school. My view is in line with that of Davis and Florian (2004), who investigated the teaching strategies for children with SEN, found that often the same pedagogy was used in mainstream as in special schools, regardless of what category of needs the child had. Cook and Schirmer (2003), in the U.S., also revealed that only small differences were found in relation to the effective practices which made a special school 'special'. The result of Lewis and Norwich's work in the U.K. also agreed with the idea that there was no special pedagogy for many areas of SEN, but that teaching approaches were arranged from high to low intensity, so it is a matter of degree rather than having special pedagogy for children with SEN (Lewis & Norwich, 2005). The only noticeable difference to be found in special schools was that the social communication among children was limited to the interaction among children with SEN, while in mainstream schools the presence of typically developing children could lead to a different

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social life for children with SEN. Therefore, it can be concluded that the social life at school is the key difference between special schools and mainstream schools, as children in special schools are segregated from their typically developing peers, in contrast to mainstream schools where all children learn together in the same class.

Much of the literature supports the idea that the ideology of inclusion is more about feeling part of a community and social acceptance. For example, Cummins and Lau (2003) asserted that it is the social inclusion that has a positive influence on children's well-being and not the physical integration. They supported this idea by saying that it is a necessary condition, if any environment is to be beneficial to the people in it, to provide a 'sense of community' and acceptance within the community's boundary (ibid). Bunch and Valeo's (2004) studies indicated also that the vital role of inclusion is to enhance the social outcome of acceptance and belonging. A similar view came from Frederickson *et al.* (2007) who indicated that inclusive practice promotes the feeling of belonging and acceptance among all pupils (see also Osterman, 2000; Flem & Keller, 2000; Billingsley, Gallucci, Peck, Schwartz, & Staub, 1996; Forest & Lusthaus, 1989). Warnock, in the U.K., stated that 'the concept of inclusion must embrace the feeling of belonging, since such a feeling appears to be necessary both for successful learning and for more general wellbeing' (Warnock, 2005, p. 15). Table 1 combines different definitions of inclusion from different authors; all support the idea that the ideology of inclusion is mainly about social acceptance within a community

Table 1: Definitions of the concept of inclusion

- Increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from a mainstream social setting (Potts, 1996, cited in Florian, Rose and Tilstone, 1998, p.16).
- ‘Taking a full and active part in school-life, being a valued member of the school community and being seen as an integral member’ (Farrell, 2000, p. 154).
- ‘Being a full member of an age-appropriate class in your local school, doing the same lessons as the other pupils and it mattering if you are not there. Plus you have friends who spend time with you outside of school.’ (Hall, 1996 cited in Florian, Rose and Tilstone, 1998, p.16).
- ‘Inclusion is about engendering a sense of community and belonging and encouraging mainstream and special schools and others to come together to support each other and pupils with special educational needs.’ (DfES, 2001, p. 3).

However, defining inclusion as being solely about social belonging raises some complications in application, as the feeling of belonging and acceptance within a school community can also be found in special schools. Some authors believe that inclusion can also occur in special schools. Children who receive their education in special schools that offer them the feeling of belonging can experience a happy and healthy environment for learning, therefore they may not be considered to be excluded, but rather included within the special school (e.g., Spurgeon, 2007). This view was also found in research carried out by Rix (2011) who investigated the discourse used by specialists working in special schools in terms of the way they saw themselves compared to working in other kinds of school. He found that many of them believed that their special school was inclusive due to the welcoming feeling that the school provided to all children (ibid). Correspondingly, exclusion can occur in ordinary schools. Mainstream schools which do not give the feeling of belonging to all children could be seen as part of segregation. According to Cigman (2007), exclusion can occur ‘from mainstream schools’ or ‘within mainstream schools’. Some research, for example, shows negative outcomes in terms of social participation of children identified as having SEN in mainstream schools (e.g., Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2004). This raises an important question of what make inclusive education inclusive? Is it the social belonging or the physical location in an ordinary school?

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Norwich (2013) maintained that inclusion is not only one simple dimension, rather it contains multidimensionality. Inclusion, in Norwich's analysis, contains four dimensions, namely being present, academic participation, belonging (social participation) and achievement. He clarified the conflicts that could occur among the four dimensions at different levels starting from the class level, and going up to the school level, local level and national level. Starting at class level, it is possible for children with SEN to be placed in a mainstream class (i.e. being present), but they may not be participating academically or socially. Second, at school level, children with SEN might attend mainstream school (placement inclusion), but they may not feel they belong to the school. Otherwise, children with SEN may be placed in mainstream school, but in a special class or unit (academic exclusion). At the local level, children with SEN may be placed in a special school but the special school be identified by the local authority system as an inclusive school. Therefore Norwich suggested that specifying the dimension and level when using the term 'inclusion' could avoid some of the confusion. Following his advice, in this research I will focus on the belonging (social participation) dimension of inclusion at the class level.

Despite this weight of evidence to support the importance of social inclusion, in recent years little attention has been given to investigating social inclusion and the factors related to it, such as the extent to which children like school, their participation within school, or their social relationships, friendships and peer acceptance (see Shah and Priestley, 2009; Frostad and Pijl, 2007; Rose and Shevlin, 2010; Koster *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, in one of the main parts of this study I will seek to cover this limitation by investigating the social participation of children with MLD/Slow Learning regarding the four aspects: friendship, social interaction, peer acceptance and social self-concept, in mainstream schools in Kuwait and the U.K.

2.3 Inclusion in Kuwait and the UK

- UK

- Introduction

‘Inclusive education’ has become the mantra of numerous educational systems across the world and it has been taken up in the political agendas of diverse countries. In the U.K., for example, several policies have been issued to support the idea that children with special educational needs (SEN) should be educated in the nearest mainstream school (e.g., DfES, 2001; DfES, 2004). Such policies, as well as the legislation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2002), the Disability Equality Duty (2006), and the Equality Act, protect the rights of children with SEN and prevent discrimination against them. Therefore, a growing number of students with SEN have started to be included in mainstream schools (Meijer, 2003). This movement towards the inclusive education of children with SEN in the U.K. has developed chronologically. In the following discussion, the focus is on including children with MLD (what the Americans call ‘mental retardation’ or ‘mild intellectual disability’), as such children will be the core of this research.

- Legislative Background

In the UK, inclusive education started in the 1970s when the Education (Handicapped Children) Act transferred responsibility for those labelled ‘mentally handicapped’ to the educational authorities and away from the health authorities (Montgomery, 1990). This legal transfer led to moving most of these children gradually from hospital to family or foster homes, apart from those with series medical conditions, while for those with severe learning difficulties (SLD) the educational authorities took responsibility to provide new special schools (Porter and Lacey, 2005). The next significant movement was the Warnock Report (1978) which called for the avoidance of stigmatising labels and to make integrated education a central aim of government. Such a call was answered by amending some terms such as ‘severely or moderately sub-normal’ to the terms MLD or SLD (Aldaihani, 2011). Three years after the Warnock Report, the Education Act enabled local authorities to provide places for children with SEN in mainstream schools, as long as

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their parents agreed and the schools had the facilities to provide the necessary services (Montgomery, 1990).

In the 1990s, the Education Act of 1993 led to the introduction of the Code of Practice (DoE, 1994), a guide for the assessment and identification of children with SEN in general education schools. It aimed to explain the Educational Acts in practice and to show what the Government wanted schools to do. The Code of Practice also called on mainstream schools to appoint a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) to be responsible for children identified as SEN in mainstream schools and also to make sure that general education schools followed the guidelines of the Code (Ellis *et al.*, 2008). The Code of Practice also offered system in which parents could appeal against the decisions of local authorities (LEAs) if they felt that the type of school recommended by the LEA was not the most appropriate placement for their child. This right for parents was confirmed by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act in 2001 which gave parents the right to choose what kind of school they preferred for their child (Aldaihani, 2011). This is an important aspect of the U.K. system compared to the Kuwaiti one where parents have only limited rights to choose what kind of placement is more suitable for their child, as I will explain later in this chapter.

In 2001, the Government released the second Code of Practice (DfES, 2001b), which emphasised certain key aspects of the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools, such as the child's participation in school and for schools to develop a partnership with other agencies involved in providing support for children with SEN (Ellis *et al.*, 2008). This legislation was part of the new governmental programme under the name of Removing Barriers to Achievement (DfES, 2004b), which aimed to promote inclusion by emphasising early intervention programmes for children with SEN and improving the required skills for teachers to meet the needs of these children (*ibid*). It also aimed to remove the barriers between different governmental agencies such as health, social services and education. However, there were some limitations to this legislation. According to Warnock, the Act did not impose any clear statutory duty on schools by which they could develop a partnership with other agencies to support children with SEN (Warnock, 2005). Furthermore, Armstrong *et al.* (2010) indicated that the policies in England regarding inclusion were limited in practice as the statistics showed

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that the number of children with SEN in mainstream schools did not increase after 1997, but declined from 71% to 69% in 2007. Therefore it can be concluded that the English system is moving towards promoting inclusion whilst keeping the right for parents to choose the kind of placement for their children. This would not satisfy the advocates of 'full inclusion' but, in my opinion, it offers a flexible system which promotes the idea of 'inclusion by choice and not by force'.

• Kuwait

Kuwait is a small country in the north of the Arabian Gulf with an area of 17,818 square kilometres and a population of just over three million, but among this number there are only around one million with Kuwaiti nationality, according to the Central Statistical Office in Kuwait (Kuwait Government Online, 2012). The official language in Kuwait is Arabic and the state religion is Islam (State University, 2015). As in any civilian country, the government rules the country through different ministries (in Kuwait there are 18 ministries), each administrating a part of the country's affairs. Among these ministries, the Ministry of Education is responsible for mainstream and special education. Although there are some 'private' schools in Kuwait (i.e., special schools run by non-governmental organisations), in this study I will explain only the role of the government schools which are under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education.

Regarding the government education system in Kuwait, there are four levels, starting from kindergarten (i.e, age four to six years) to elementary level (i.e., grade one to five) and then the intermediate level (i.e, grade six to nine) and finally the high school (i.e. grade ten to twelve) (Al-Shammari, 2005). In 2013, there were 362,000 students in government mainstream schools in Kuwait, divided into 43,000 in kindergarten, 143,000 at primary level, 107,000 at intermediate level and around 59,000 in high school (Ministry of Education, 2013). The education system in Kuwait is based on gender segregation at all levels apart from kindergarten.

The support provided by the Ministry of Education for children identified as having SEN is based on the Kuwaiti Constitution, article 40, and the Mandatory Education Law number 1965/11, article 4, which provide the right to equal treatment among people despite their handicaps. The Ministry of Education is the government organisation which is responsible for providing special schools for children with motor disabilities, sensory

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disabilities and mental retardation under the ‘Compulsory Education’ Law 1965 (the terminology reflects Kuwaiti usage) (Aldaihani, 2011, p:136). Therefore, in 1965 the Department of SEN in the Ministry of Education provided up to 15 special schools after the Assistant Undersecretary for Special and Quality Education was charged to do so (ibid). Each of the special schools offers provision and support for no more than one category of disability. A point to note is that the special schools in Kuwait are, like the mainstream schools, separated by gender. The SEN segregated is the dominant setting for children with SEN; nonetheless, the Kuwait educational system has started to take a few steps toward inclusion.

Kuwait was the first among the Arabic Gulf countries to discuss the idea of inclusion within its educational system (Barr, 1983). This interest in inclusive education led the Government of Kuwait to sign several international and regional agreements regarding inclusive education; firstly, Kuwait joined the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1960, followed by signing the Salamanca Statement in 1994, then the Cairo Declaration in 1999, the Dakar Declaration in 2000 and, finally, Beirut conference in 2001 (Aldaihani, 2011). All these agreements emphasized the importance of inclusive education as a movement towards fighting discrimination against children with SEN, especially since the number of children identified as having SEN had increased to 27,000 (United Nations Development Programme in the Arab States, 2008). Therefore Kuwait, while many countries were adopting the ideology of inclusion, began to implement inclusion in its educational system.

The first small beginning, but not the real start, occurred in 1981 when the Minister of Education attempted to include children identified as having Down syndrome in special classes in mainstream schools, due to the fact that the Minister himself had a child with Down syndrome, which could account for his interest in the idea of inclusion. However, the implementation of inclusion faced several difficulties and the initiative was discontinued in 1984 (Aldaihani, 2011). The real start took place in 1989 when the Ministry of Education placed 15 children with mild hearing impairment into mainstream schools, followed by 86 children with different categories of SEN, such as Down's syndrome, or visual or motor impairments (ibid). In 1996, the Government decided to open special classes for 41 children identified as having Slow Learning in three

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mainstream schools. This project was then extended to include 200 children in five schools in Kuwait (Ministry of Education, 2003). A point to note is that this programme of integrating children with Slow Learning into public education was called an 'inclusive programme' due to the fact that the special classes were part of mainstream schools; it was named 'inclusive' as opposed to the segregated programme where children with SEN had been placed in separate special schools. Although this effort was made to include some children with SEN in a mainstream setting, the Kuwaiti system still faced limitations in relation to implementing inclusion.

The Kuwaiti government found inclusion very challenging. For instance, Alseed (2003) indicated that the integration programme (i.e. provision of special classes for children with Slow Learning in mainstream schools) faced a lack of human resources, limited collaboration between school staff and programme coordinators and parents, lack of teacher motivation to teach in special classes, and limited number of supervisors who could assess the teaching process in special classes. Limitations were also found in the Law 1996/49 which authorized the Higher Council for Disabilities to provide private tuition fees for those children who were placed in special schools. According to Aldaihani, this allowance obliged children with SEN in Kuwait to be placed in special schools without giving their parents any option over their placement (Aldaihani, 2011). A further limitation was that the Law seemed to be based more on a charity ethos than on human and civil rights, as it was associated with issues such as compassion, custodial care and cleanliness (Brown, 2005).

The Law of 1996/49 was not the only problematic point in the Kuwaiti system for implementing inclusion, but one more serious problem was that the Government itself faced limitations in implementing and delivering the recommendations of the Kuwaiti Parliament and Higher Council for the Disabled regarding the importance of expanding financial support and provision of equality for children with disability (Aldaihani, 2011). This challenge appeared due to the limited governmental policies and legislation regarding inclusion which slowed the implementation of the inclusion. This accords with the findings of Al-muhareb which revealed that, despite the financial resources of the Government, the services provided for children with SEN were inefficient (Al-muhareb, 2007). It is worth noting that the Gulf Disability Society also raised a serious criticism of

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the Kuwaiti Government for not signing the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (Al-wasat Newspaper, 2009, p.28, cited in Aldaihani, 2011).

Regarding research into inclusive education in Kuwait, the majority of studies have revealed that the Kuwaiti system has been moving towards segregation rather than inclusion. According to the Educational Indicators and Assessment Report (CKEIAP), 86% of children identified as having SEN were placed in special schools, made up of 53% in special government schools and 33% in special private schools (i.e, special schools for children with SEN run by nongovernmental organisations) (CKEIAP, 2007, cited in Aldaihani, 2011). This means that only 14% of children with SEN were placed in special classes in mainstream schools under the rubric of 'inclusive classes'. Moreover, a survey by Al-abdulghafoor (1999), which explored the views of 447 public education teachers and administrators regarding the 'inclusive programme' in Kuwait, found that participants were least receptive to the idea of integrating children identified as having mental impairment, although they were more receptive to the inclusion of children with physical or visual impairment. Thus, from the discussion above, it is clear that the 'inclusive programme' in Kuwait faces serious limitations in relation to the lack of an appropriate legal framework to support inclusive education, with the result that, as the statistics show, segregated education is the dominant experience for children with SEN in Kuwait.

- **Summary**

To sum up, the idea of providing the most appropriate support for children with SEN gradually moved from that of segregation to that of integration due to the national movement towards human rights and equality in education worldwide. Although this movement was manifested in several governmental policies, it was found that physical integration was not sufficient but, instead, children with SEN should feel part of, and belong to, the school community and be an accepted member within the school's social life; this is the implication of the term 'inclusion'. Although this term has been used differently by different writers, a significant portion of the literature indicates that inclusion is about the feeling of belonging and being accepted in a community. This idea has led this research to focus on social participation (SP) as a key factor in inclusion.

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In the UK, the movement toward implementing inclusion developed gradually, starting from transferring the services provided for children with SEN from medical authorities to educational authorities. This was followed by introducing policy legislation regarding inclusion which provided flexible options for parents and schools. However, this flexibility led to some problems of collaboration among agencies and schools to support children with SEN. In general, the educational system in the UK is moving towards inclusion rather than segregation.

In Kuwait, inclusive educational policy is limited, although the country has joined several international organisations which emphasise the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools. The Kuwaiti government as yet shows only limited support for implementing inclusion, as the only movement has been to integrate a few children with mild learning difficulties into special classes in mainstream schools while the largest number of children with SEN are placed in special schools. Therefore it can be concluded that the UK system is more advanced in its policy than the Kuwaiti system in terms of including children with SEN in mainstream public education.

2.4 MLD Concept in the UK

The term ‘moderate learning difficulties’ was recommended in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) to replace the term ‘educationally sub-normal’. Warnock also recommended the use of the term ‘mild learning difficulties’ to replace ‘Slow Learning’. However, the term ‘mild learning difficulties’ has not come into common usage (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). At the same time, the term ‘moderate learning difficulties’ seems to be used widely to replace ‘educational sub-normal’ and ‘Slow Learning’.

Although children with MLD comprise 21% of all SEN pupils in the UK (DCSF, 2009), identifying such children is difficult because of the vague definitions in policy documents and practice. In the UK, the process of identifying children with MLD has faced several challenges due to the overlap with other terms in the field. Yet the governmental guidelines for identifying MLD have not drawn clear distinctions between this term and other similar terms due to the non-specificity in the governmental definitions. For instance, the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) identified four areas of need, namely:

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- a) communication and interaction
- b) cognition and learning
- c) behaviour, emotional and social development
- d) sensory and/or physical

These dimensions still fail to cover the problem that some children have more than one need. Complex needs can overlap among these four dimensions. Lack of clarity can also be found within dimensions, for instance the Code clarified the category of 'cognition and learning' as referring to all levels (i.e., 'children who demonstrate features of moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties or specific learning disabilities'). However the Code does not distinguish between the 'level of needs', and it did not define the boundaries between different kinds of needs (e.g., the difference between MLD and SLD or between MLD and SpLD). Therefore, the four classification dimensions of the Code of Practice failed to place the category of MLD uniquely (Norwich, 2004). This failure could be due to the complexity of the category, as children designated as having MLD often have other kinds of needs as well. According to Norwich and Kelly (2004), only 16% of children identified as having MLD have no other needs, while more children have, for example, language and communication difficulties beside MLD. Male (1996) examined 54 children with MLD and she concluded that their needs were often associated with language and behavioural or emotional difficulties. Such complexity in the term MLD makes the process of identification complicated. This is not because the idea of categorising is not useful; natural science contains several clear classifications and labels used to identify meanings of terms in appropriate ways, such as 'force' and 'density' which are clearly identified. However, in the educational field, terms often seem to be tacit and able to have more than one interpretation, which leads to their being used in unusual ways (Wilson, 2000).

The English system of identification used to be similar to the current Kuwaiti system and the labels used were just as negative as the labels used in Kuwait now, because in the past the medical model of disability was dominant in England. In 1904 psychology started to adopt scientific empiricism to investigate psychological phenomena, including the measurement of intelligence (Rapley, 2004). This school of psychology relied heavily on IQ testing to classify disabilities and they gave little attention to the subjective experiences of individuals in their assessments (Szivos and Griffiths, 1990). In May 1913, London County Council employed the educational psychologist, Cyril Burt, to

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assess ‘feeble minded’ children in an official way under the Mental Deficiency Act using standardised cognitive testing (Sewell and Ducksbury, 2013). The use of psychometric testing has not disappeared, as Mackay and Vassie (1998) revealed that the level of testing used by educational psychologists remains the same as 16 years ago. However, due to the criticism of the traditional medical model, which ascribes the low cognitive performance of children to medical reasons, and due to the criticisms of relying on IQ tests as the sole path to assess children’s cognitive abilities, the use of such tests is no longer the only method of assessing children in England. A point to note is that the modern medical views might see some genetic disposition to low intellectual functioning interacting with environmental factors to lead to low intellectual functioning, as the modern medical model does not ignore the social factors, but considers them to be an interactional part of the disability (Grenier, 2007). Therefore, in this research, I will use the term ‘traditional medical model’ to refer to the view which sees impairment as the main feature of disability while ignoring social factors. On the other hand, I will use the term ‘modern medical model’ to refer to the view which relies on a medical explanation for disability but does not leave out social factors.

The current official definition of MLD in England was defined by the Department for Education and Skills. It defined MLD as;

‘Pupils should only be recorded as MLD if it is the pupil’s primary or secondary SEN and they are at School Action Plus or have a statement. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties will have attainments well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions. Their needs will not be able to be met by normal differentiation and the flexibilities of the National Curriculum. Pupils with MLD have much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts. They may also have associated speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and under-developed social skills.’ (DfES, 2005)

According to the above definition, it appears that the DfES definition of MLD (2005) contains seven areas which should help professionals to identify children as having MLD: they are below the expected level in all or most areas of the curriculum; have much

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greater difficulty in understanding concepts; their needs cannot be met by normal differentiation; they have speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low level of concentration, and delay in social skills. However, there are five main criticisms of such areas of identification in this definition. First, it is not clear from the definition whether a child with MLD should experience problems in all the seven areas mentioned or whether having problems only in one area would be sufficient to classify a child with MLD. The second ambiguity can be found in the first area, namely: *'have attainments well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum'*. Does this include just basic literacy and numeracy skills or other areas, such as science, as well? Thirdly, the definition introduces new unspecified dimensions by saying that the needs of such pupils cannot be met by 'normal' differentiation. By such a statement the definition obviously draws a line between normal and non-normal differentiation, which needs to be clarified (Norwich, 2004).

A fourth criticism is that these seven problematic descriptors of MLD contain sub-groups. Taking, for example, the area of social skills delay, this could include friendships, peer acceptance, social self-concept, and others. Therefore, the DfES definition seems to be vague in specifying the terms provided in the definition. The fifth point is that the definition identifies 'pupils' with MLD. The use of the word 'pupils' in the governmental definition could limit the application to those of school age (i.e. primary to secondary school age). Such a limitation in age could lead to the query of whether MLD could be found in early childhood and continue into adult life or whether it is only in the specified age group of 'pupils', as the definition claims.

This uncertainty of how to identify children with MLD will be the most challenging issue in this research, as the DfES itself admitted that MLD is one of the hardest areas to define (Norwich, 2004). The uncertainty of understanding MLD is also found in practice. In the UK, the use of the term MLD varies between local areas. Some LEAs use MLD to refer to those children who have low academic attainment, while other LEAs use it for children who have low cognitive abilities in addition to low academic attainment (ibid). In the coming chapters of the current research, an investigation into the usefulness of the DfES definition of MLD will be incorporated by enquiring into the English participants' understanding of the use of the DfES definition in assessing MLD. This forms part of a

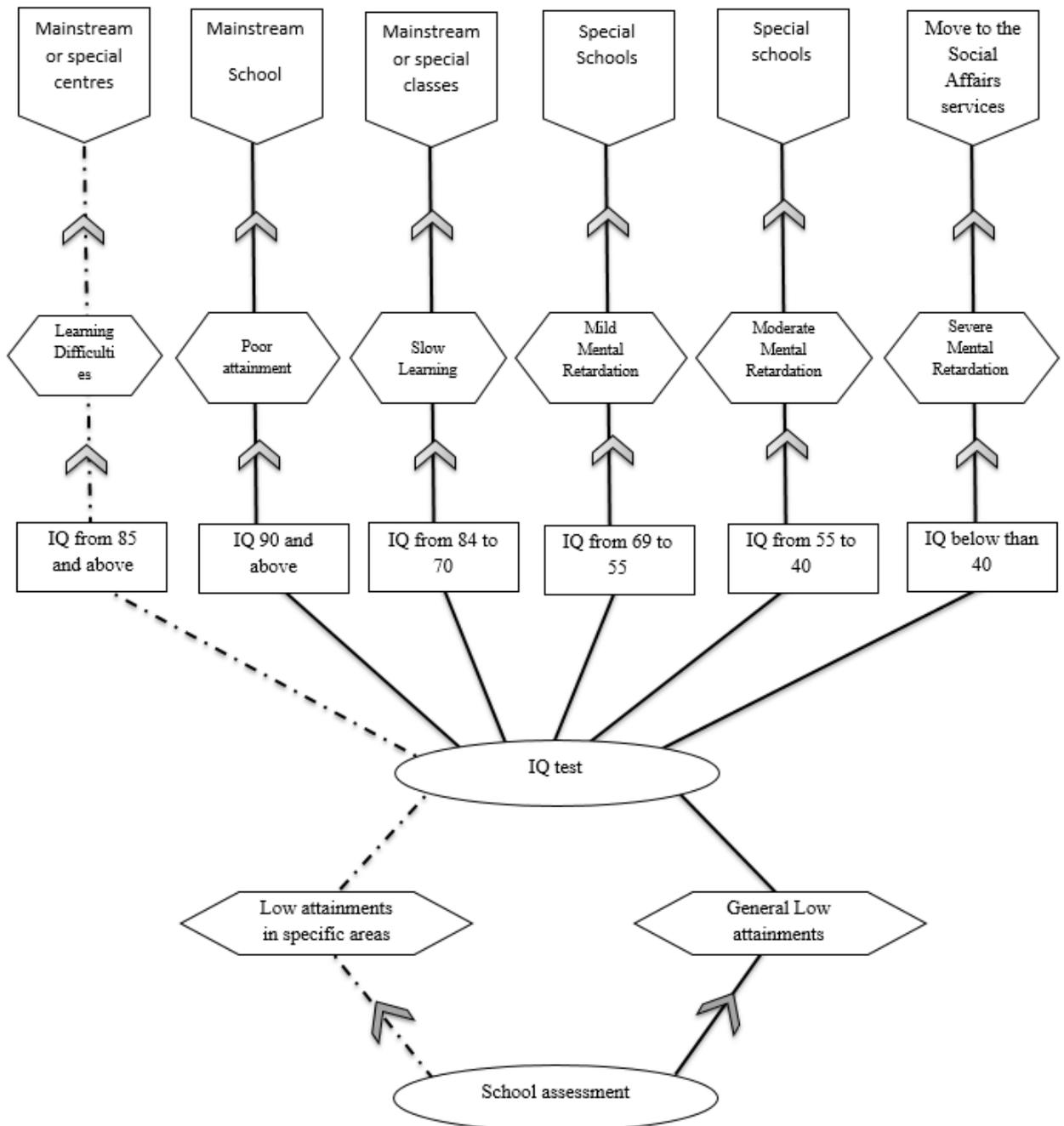
wider enquiry into their understanding of the concept of MLD and of the differences between MLD and other categories of SEN such as SLD, SpLD and low attainment. Furthermore, details will be found in the Findings and Discussion chapters regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the English system in terms of assessing MLD and how this is related to the social participation of children identified as having MLD.

2.5 Slow Learning in Kuwait

Regarding the identification and placement of children with general learning difficulties, in Kuwait these children are placed in different educational settings: some are in special schools and others are in special classes in mainstream schools. However, before further explanation about the placement of such children, I need first to describe in brief the way children with MLD (the terminology in Britain) or 'slow learners' and 'mental retardation' (as in the terminology in Kuwait) are identified. In Kuwait, the Psycho-Educational Diagnostic Centre, which is part of the Ministry of Education, is responsible for assessing children with SEN and providing categorised labels and, as is called in Kuwait, the 'Disability Certificate'. The process of identification starts when a parent, teacher, school social specialist, school psychologist or doctor refers the child because they have noticed he/she has some kind of difficulty or disability. Next, the child will be asked to visit the Assessment Centre to be assessed using tests such as the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities and the Wechsler Intelligence Scales (Bazna, 2003). All the tests used in the Centre have been modified to be suitable for Arabic speakers and adopted to be suitable for the Kuwaiti culture. After the process of assessment, the child will be transferred to a special school if he/she is identified as having 'mental retardation' or to a special class in a mainstream school (i.e., inclusive classes as they are called in Kuwait) if the child is designated as having 'Slow Learning. To clarify, the assessment in Kuwait is heavily reliant on IQ scores, so the scores deriving from IQ tests are what distinguish one category from another. As for children identified as having Slow Learning, the Ministry of Education provides a very simple definition: *'The slow learner is a child who has an IQ score of between 70 and 84 on an IQ test adapted to Kuwaiti culture'* (Ministry of Education, 1996). The figure below explains the differences between Slow Learning and some other categories of SEN based on the Ministry's classification.

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Figure 1: The classification of the Ministry of Education in Kuwait regarding children with general and specific learning difficulties (Ministry of Education, 1996).



According to Figure 1, it is clear that the Ministry of Education relies on IQ scores to categorise different levels of needs. The assessment is started at school where children's attainments in different areas are assessed by teachers. Those who show general low attainment, or low attainments in specific areas, proceed to do an IQ test upon which their categorisation is based. However this method has some limitations and uncertainty within it because there are some cases that do not fit into this model of assessment. For instance,

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a child may have low attainment in a specific area but an IQ score of less than 85. Another limitation is that the model lacks flexibility as one point difference in IQ score would move a child from category to another.

It also worth saying that the Kuwaiti laws regarding children with SEN are quite similar to the guidelines of the American Individual with Disabilities Education Act (Barr, 1983), meaning that the use of IQ tests is one of the main criteria on which the Ministry of Education relies in placing and distinguishing between children with Slow Learning as well as severe, mild and moderate 'mental retardation'. As those children with IQ 70-84 are placed in special classes in mainstream schools under the name of 'slow learners', it worth noting that such classes are called 'inclusive classes' as defined in Kuwait (Aldaihani, 2011). On the other hand, children with IQ 69-55 are placed in special schools under the label of 'mild mental retardation' as in North America. The special schools for children with 'mental retardation' in Kuwait are provided a special curriculum modified from the national curriculum which is offered in mainstream primary schools. After this stage, students will move to vocational rehabilitation school to practise some handicraft skills, such as bamboo and leather making, tailoring and dressmaking (female students only), and bookbinding and embroidery (ibid). Finally, the Education Law in Kuwait has provided for such children the right to be employed after completing the rehabilitation and training programme offered in their special school (Barr, 1983). Those children with the lowest scores, of IQ 40 and below (i.e., severe mental retardation as Fig. 1 shows), are placed in residential units sponsored by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in Kuwait which also offers day care at their own homes for such children with the cooperation of the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (Al-Muhareb, 2007).

2.6 Brief international comparison of MLD

In this section I will compare the ways different countries look at the term 'MLD' and at the alternative names used in place of 'MLD'. Starting with the UK, the multi-criteria definition and the wide-ranging use of the term MLD (as shown in Section 2.4) lead to some ambiguity due to the lack of clear criteria by which MLD can be assessed. In contrast, some other countries have clear cut-off points between what is MLD and what is not. A study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2000) elucidated the use of the term 'MLD' in different countries. In New Zealand, the

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term 'MLD' was found to indicate a student with IQ scores between 50-35. In Italy, the term 'moderate mental handicap' was found to refer to IQ scores from 35/40 to 70 (ibid). In Korea, the term 'mental retardation' was found to refer to children with an IQ of less than 70. This is similar to the Kuwait system where the term 'mental retardation' starts to be used when the IQ is less than 70, with different degrees of mental retardation being based on different IQ scores, while those children with IQ scores between 70 and 84 were identified as slow learners as Figure 1 shows. This contrasts with England where the term 'MLD' is used to cover a range of learning difficulties from those with cognitive ability scores 70 but mostly above 70. This is because intellectual functioning tends not to be used to identify MLD (Norwich and Kelly, 2005) as the DfES definition of MLD (2005) does not indicate any specific IQ score. In the current research, a comparison is made of the different ways of identifying and assessing MLD in Kuwait and England. The comparison seeks to find out the usefulness, as well as the impacts on each educational system, of the method of assessing MLD. Further details of the comparison and the use of IQ tests will be found in the Findings, Discussion and Conclusion chapters.

- **Summary**

To sum up, in England the terminology for children with MLD has changed over time from offensive terms to more positive ones. However, the examples show that the use of such terminology (i.e., MLD) differs in its meaning, not only among different countries, but also among different professional groups, who also differ in the degree of LD to which the label 'moderate' refers. The uncertainty of MLD does not stop until here, but the British definition fails to provide a specific explanation by which children with MLD can be recognised. This differs from the situation in Kuwait where the Ministry of Education has adopted the American model of identifying children with 'mental retardation' and 'Slow Learning' (who are referred to in Britain as children with moderate learning difficulties). This, however, also has limitations due to its reliance on the traditional medical model and IQ tests in identification. It is also apparent that the terminology used in Kuwait is not compatible with that used in England. That is because the terms used in Kuwait are defined by certain IQ scores, while the term 'MLD' in England is defined by a wide range of different criteria. Therefore, one main aim of this research is to investigate the concept of MLD through a cross-cultural comparison to illustrate the similarities and differences between the use of the terms 'MLD' in England

and ‘Slow Learning’ in Kuwait. The assessment methods used in each country will also be investigated. Understanding the concepts of MLD/Slow Learning will be the starting point of my investigation into the social participation of these children, which constitutes the other half of this research.

2.7 What is Social Participation (SP)?

There has been uncertainty about the concept of social participation. Storey and Smith (1995) revealed that many researchers used terms such as social integration, social inclusion and social status without explaining the meaning of the terms, while such terms could be interpreted in different ways. For instance, a number of studies considered peer acceptance as the key to social inclusion (e.g., Davis et al., 2002; Doll et al., 2003; Kemp and Carter, 2002; Manetti et al., 2001). Conversely, some studies examined the social outcomes of inclusive settings, focusing on friendship and social self-concept as key issues of social participation (e.g., Vaughn et al., 1998). However, a growing body of research has suggested that social participation is not only one dimension, but it contains several dimensions (e.g., Cillessen & Rose, 2005; Estell, Farmer, Pearl, Van Acker, & Rodkin, 2003).

Besides the differing interpretations of social participation, the areas of social inclusion/integration/participation have been poorly defined in many studies. One analysis of the literature showed that most of the terms used in the reviewed studies to describe the social dimensions of inclusion were not defined clearly, but in an implicit way by describing the measuring instrument only (Koster, Nakken, Pijl & Houten, 2009). Therefore there was a need to investigate these concepts and clarify the dimensions that they include. This is indispensable as it will not be possible to reach a clear understanding of a concept which has no defined elements (i.e. elements which are investigable, testable and measurable). The absence of clear elements will lead to different understandings by different people, and thereby misunderstandings will occur. As clarified in the Introduction chapter, one of the bases of any rational discussion is to clarify the meaning of the discussed concept. Identifying the term and recognising its synonyms are essential to discussing the term. It is important that each term has a specific and non-contradictory meaning. For example, it is impossible for a child to socially participate and not to socially participate at the same time and place unless the term ‘social participation’ is

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interpreted in two different ways, which prevents any rational discussion; consequently, an investigation of 'social participation' as a term is required. Therefore, it is important to investigate the dimensions of social inclusion to identify clear themes. It should be borne in mind that the evidence which delineates the dimensions of social participation is limited (Cobigo & Stuart, 2010; Cobigo, Lysaght, & Hamilton, 2010) despite all the efforts which have been made to define the concept of social participation (Cummins & Lau, 2003).

In 2009, Koster et al. attempted to analyse the way that the concepts of Social Integration, Social Inclusion, and Social Participation had been used in the literature and what aspects such concepts could involve. The analysed literature was drawn from the last six volumes of three vital journals in the area of SEN, namely, the International Journal of Inclusive Education, European Journal of Special Needs Education and Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, from 2000-2005, as well as a search of two electronic databases. The result indicated that expressions such as social integration, social inclusion, and social participation were used interchangeably, as in daily research practice such concepts were used as synonyms. Therefore the authors used the concept of 'social participation' to represent them all. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that there were four prominent dimensions of social participation, namely: friendships/relationships, contacts/interactions, social self-concept of the pupil and acceptance by classmates. The authors concluded that social participation can be defined as follows:

'Social participation of students in regular primary education is the presence of positive social contact/interaction between them and their classmates; acceptance of them by their classmates; social relationships/friendships between them and their classmates; and the students' perception that they are accepted by their classmates.' (Koster et al., 2009, p. 135)

However, such a concept of four dimensions leads to over-complexity in the process of investigating and drawing conclusions about social participation. For instance, if a child indicates a positive result in two dimensions of social participation, but negative indicators in the other two dimensions, does this mean the child is considered a social participant or is he/she socially excluded? A further complex point regarding the four dimensional concept of social participation lies in the question of whether one dimension is more important than another or whether all four dimensions are equally important. For

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example, suppose a child has no friends, is not accepted by peers and has no indication of any social contact, but his/her social self-concept is high. In this case, the child will feel socially included in school because the child believes that he/she is accepted socially, although the child is not. Such complexity in the concept leads to certain difficulties with regard to drawing conclusions. Therefore, qualitative investigation in the four dimensions of social participation is essential, so that further explanation can be provided regarding complex results. Thus, the present study used mixed methods to examine these four dimensions, as they are the central elements to investigate in the social participation of children with MLD. Taking into account that the four dimensions in the previous definition are the main elements by which the concept of social participation can be understood, it is nevertheless the case that the understanding of the four dimensions themselves in this research will be derived from their measuring instruments, which will be explained in the methodology chapter in more detail.

2.8 Friendship

There have been several studies investigating friendship as a term in the area of SEN; many of them focused on the friendship of children having SEN in mainstream classes. Nonetheless, this research rarely provided a definition of the concept of friendship, rather the term was defined by the way the researchers measured it, namely by a sociometric scale which is a method where the researcher asks every child to nominate his or her best friends. In this way the researcher allows each child to define friendships in the way that he/she see it. Several studies have used this method to investigate the friendship of children identified as having SEN. For instance, one study which examined the friendship of children designated as having SEN in a mainstream setting by using a sociometric scale found that 25% of such children had no friends in regular classrooms (Pijl, Frostad & Flem, 2008). Pijl and Frostad (2007) also examined social relationships among children in Norwegian inclusive classrooms and found that children with SEN had fewer friends compared to children without SEN, and they were also less likely to be members of sub-groups (i.e., a small group which belongs to a larger group). Comparable results in the United States appeared in a study by Meyer (2001), who investigated friendships among 6- to 9-year-old children in mainstream schools. The results reported that children designated as having severe disabilities reported a mean score of 1.75 nominations on the

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open nominating scale (0–unlimited) while typically developing children received 2.1 nominations as a best friend in the same open scale (Meyer, 2001). Another U.S. meta-analysis study explored 17 sociometric studies comparing friendship among children with and without SEN from 1978 to 1991 and found that there were significant differences between the two groups in favour of the typically developing children in all 17 studies (Ochoa and Olivarez, 1995). Finally, a study by Kemp and Carter (2002) in Australia investigated 22 children having LD for 18 months within a 5-year period and found that such children lacked skills to build a friendship with peers having no LD. The result of a sociogram and observation of social interaction found that children with LD also had fewer friends than their typically developing peers and were significantly less accepted.

In contrast to the above results, a study by Avramidis (2010) measured friendship and social clusters among 566 children drawn from seven primary schools in England using the social cognitive map method by asking the participants “Are there any children you know in your class who hang around together a lot?” The analyses showed that children identified as having SEN were equally part of friendship clusters within classrooms as the typically achieving children, and they indicated the same level of "network centrality" (i.e. active members of social clusters in classroom networks) (Avramidis, 2010). Similarly, research revealed that children having learning difficulties recorded having the same average number of friendships as typically developing children. For example, Wiener and Schneider (2002) compared friendship of children with and without Learning Disabilities LD in Canada (the term refer to children scored IQ ‘*below 80 and whose academic achievement in reading, writing, and spelling on standardized achievement tests were above the 25th percentile*’ (p. 130). The result showed that there was no significant difference between the two groups regarding the number of friendships in years 7 and 8, although children designated as having LD were found to have more friends with learning problems (Wiener and Schneider, 2002). A similar result was found by Estell et al. in America when they investigated 1,361 children, of whom 55 were designated as having Learning Disabilities. The outcome of the study showed that children designated as LD were members of groups and were equally central in them (Estell et al., 2008).

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The amount of research investigating the social participation of children identified as having SEN in general is limited (Pijl, Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2010). Concerning children designated as having moderate learning difficulties (MLD) very little research has focussed on their social participation. For example, a study in the Netherlands investigated the social participation of 74 children with general learning difficulties 'GLD' in mainstream schools and 213 in special schools. The result showed that children with GLD in mainstream schools were often rejected and had a poor self-image. This result was more salient among girls with GLD than boys (Bakker et al., 2007). In addition, an Australian study investigated the social belonging and friendship of 123 students in mainstream schools, half of them with mild or moderate intellectual disability. The result showed that friendship of students with intellectual disability was correlated with their social belonging and life satisfaction. The study also concluded that friendship for students with mild or moderate intellectual disability was the key to integration within the community, both inside and outside school (Bramston, Bruggerman, & Pretty, 2002).

In terms of the quality of friendship, only a few pieces of research have examined this issue with children identified as having SEN (e.g., Martinez, 2006; Whitehouse et al., 2009). Some research found a difference between the stability of friendship among different children. For instance, a study compared the stability of friendships for 117 children identified as having LD and 115 children without LD in Canada, and it was found that children identified as having LD in grades 4, 5 and 6 had unstable friendships over a 5-month period, while the friendships of children having LD in grades 7 and 8 were as stable as those of children without LD (Wiener & Schneider, 2002). Other studies have confirmed this finding, revealing that children having SEN face significant difficulties in shaping relationships and friendships with their peers, and their social relationships seem to be more vulnerable (e.g., Monchy, Pijl, & Zandberg, 2004; Soresi & Nota, 2000; Humphrey & Symes, 2010). Therefore, in my research I seek to examine the quality of friendships of children having MLD/Slow Learning as well as the stability of their friendships in mainstream schools.

To sum up, although some studies have indicated that there are no obvious differences between children with or without SEN in terms of friendship (e.g., Avramidis, 2010), a significant amount of research investigating friendship of children identified as having SEN has suggested that such children have fewer friendships compared to their typically

developing peers (e.g, Ridsdale & Thompson, 2002; Frostad & Pijl, 2007; Pijl et al., 2008). The literature also shows that there has not been much research investigating the quality or the stability of friendships of children with SEN in mainstream schools. It is also important to note that the literature reviewed above has focused mainly on children with learning disability which often refers to children identified as SpLD in England, while the research about the friendship of children identified as MLD is very limited. Thus the current study will focus on these children and investigate their social participation in mainstream schools.

2.9 Peer Acceptance

Peer acceptance (i.e., acceptance of a child by his/her classmates) is considered a fundamental issue in inclusive education (Flem & Keller, 2000) as the relationships among children in schools play an important role in developing children's social lives (Ladd, 2005). According to Wentzel (2003), a positive relationship among children is the key factor to successful school adaptation. This emphasizes that one important dimension of social participation is peer acceptance, which has been examined in several studies. A study by Freeman and Alkin (2000) compared children with SEN and non-SEN children on peer acceptance in mainstream schools and found that the students designated as SEN were less accepted than their typically developing peers. Similar results have been found in a recent study which compared the peer acceptance of children identified as having SEN and their typically developing peers in three different countries (i.e., Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands). The study was based on the nominations method to assess children's peer acceptance. The result was found that children with SEN were less accepted by their peers in the three comparative countries (Bossaert et al., 2015). Meanwhile, other research has indicated that children with SEN are not only less accepted but also often rejected by their non-SEN children in mainstream settings (e.g., Davis, Howell, & Cooke, 2002; Tur-Kaspa, 2002; Humphrey, 2010). Such low levels of peer acceptance of children having SEN are not limited to elementary school. Similarly, at the secondary school level, children identified as having SEN are frequently excluded from social activities and face difficulties in building positive relationships with their non-SEN peers (Kennedy & Horn, 2004).

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A significant number of studies have indicated that children with LD (without specifying the term) are rejected by their peers. For example, a meta-analysis study by Kavale and Forness (1996) revealed that 80% of children having LD were rejected by their non-SEN peers. No clear definition of LD was found in this article. However 'LD' often refers to children with specific learning difficulties i.e., SpLD in the U.K. As clarified earlier, there is an overlap with using the term 'LD' in the USA because it is also used to describe children with MLD. Moreover, their self-reports indicated low social competence as well. Al-Yagon and Mikulincer (2004) confirmed this result when they indicated that children identified as having LD had low peer acceptance, as measured by self-reports (term refers to children with IQ 85 to 115 and having difficulties in reading, writing and calculating). Further, an Italian study explored the peer acceptance of children with 'mental retardation', the sociometric results of which indicated that five out of six children with mental retardation were rejected in regular classes (Manetti, Schneider & Siperstein, 2001). Furthermore, a review of 36 studies by Freeman (2000) regarding the social attainments of children having 'mental retardation' (as they were described in the review) in inclusive settings concluded that such children do not attain peer acceptance as readily as their typically developing peers (Freeman, 2000). A significant result worth mentioning is that peer acceptance does not differ across degrees of learning difficulties, as several studies demonstrated that students with both mild and severe general learning difficulties were less accepted by their non-SEN peers (Yu, Zhang, & Yan, 2005) and that children with specific learning difficulties were not seen as more positive by their peers than children with general learning difficulties (e.g. Bakker et al., 2007). In addition to the level of difficulties as a variable, some studies found that the peer acceptance of children designated as having MLD did not show significant changes across different school activities. For instance a study in the UK by Frederickson and Furnham (2004) indicated that children without SEN disproportionately rejected MLD children in both school/academic activities and play. The teachers' rating of children identified as having LD in Wiener's study in 2002 in Canada also indicated that such children were not accepted socially by their peers as a result of their poor social skills. Finally, a literature review analysis carried out by Pijl, Skaalvik, and Skaalvik (2010) regarding the social participation of children with SEN gave a summary of research which had focused on mild learning disability (defined by authors as children with IQ scores 80 and above, with a significant difference between their IQ score and their educational attainment) without

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specifying whether it was a general or specific learning disability. The following table is the summary quoted from the study (p: 60)

The social relations of students with mild learning disabilities.

Author(s)	Sample	Method	Instruments	Outcomes*
Bramston, Bruggeman, and Pretty 2002	66 LD, aged 12–18	Control group	Neighbourhood Youth Inventory (NYI)	No effects
Conderman 1995	74 LD, grades 6 & 7	Control group	Sociogram	LD less popular and more rejected
Kuhne and Wiener 2000	38 LD, grades 4–6	Control group	Sociogram	LD sign. lower social preference and less liked
McNamara et al. 2005	230 LD, aged 13–18	Control group	Loneliness Scale for Children and Adolescents	No differences
Margalit and Ben-Dov 1995	122 LD, no grade info.	Control group	Sociogram, Loneliness scale (LSDQ)	LD sign. more feelings of loneliness
Lackaye and Margalit 2006	124 LD	Control group	Loneliness scale (LSDQ)	LD sign. more feelings of loneliness
Le Mare and De la Ronde 2000	42 LD, grades 2–4 and 6, 7	Control group	Sociometric Rating Scale	LD lower social status
Power 2000	108 LD, grades 4–8	Control group	Sociogram, LSDQ & Self Perception Profile	LD less accepted, more loneliness and lower social acceptance
Smoot 2003	61 LD, wide age range	Control group	Sociogram	LD sign. less nominations
Stavonich, Jordan, and Perot 1998	234 LD, grades 2–8	Control group	Sociometric Rating Scale (PSCS)	LD sign. lower social integration
Stier Smith and Nagle 1995	59 LD, grades 3–4	Control group	Self Perception Profile (SPP)	LD sign. lower self-perceived social acceptance
Tur-Kaspa, Weisel and Segev 1998	36 LD, aged 13–14	Control group	Loneliness scale (LSDQ)	LD sign. more feelings of loneliness
Valås 1999	82 LD, aged 10–16	Control group	Sociogram, Loneliness scale (LSDQ)	LD sign. less accepted and more lonely
Vaughn, Elbaum, and Schumm 1996	16 LD, grades 2–4	Control group	Sociometric Rating Scale, Loneliness scale (LSDQ)	LD less liked, no differences in loneliness
Yu, Zhang, and Yan 2005	34 LD, grades 4–6	Control group	Sociogram, Loneliness scale (LSDQ)	LD sign. less accepted and more lonely

Note: *Sign. is used as abbreviation for significantly.

The authors concluded that students with mild learning disabilities were less accepted, had fewer friends and felt lonelier than typically developing children (Pijl, Skaalvik, and Skaalvik, 2010). The study also summarised other studies which had focused on the

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social participation of children with moderate learning disabilities (without identifying what they meant by moderate), as in the table below (p. 61).

The social relations of students with moderate to severe learning disabilities.

Author(s)	Sample	Method	Instruments	Outcomes*
Kemp and Carter 2002	20 MLD, aged 8–13	Control group	Sociogram, observations of social interactions	MLD sign. less time interacting with peers, sign. less accepted and fewer friends
Mu, Siegel, and Allinder 2000	6 M/SLD, aged 15–18	Control group	Sociogram, observations of social interactions	M/SLD fewer interactions, no differences in sociometric status
Žic and Ingrić 2001	20 M/SLD, aged 7–20	Control group	Sociogram	M/SLD sign. less accepted and more rejected

Note: *Sign. is used as abbreviation for significantly.

The authors concluded that children with moderate learning difficulties were less accepted and scored fewer social interactions comparing to typically developing children. Although a significant amount of research has revealed that children identified as having specific and general LD are rejected or not accepted by their typically achieving peers, other research has found that some children with SEN record positive peer acceptance. For example, Sloper and Tyler (1992) examined the social relationships of five children having ‘mental disorders’ by interviewing teachers, questioning parents, and using logbooks while cooperating with the teachers, and they found that children having mental disorders were directly accepted by typically developing peers and included socially (Sloper and Tyler, 1992, as cited in Nakken & Pijl, 2002). A similar result from an old study by Prillaman (1981) measured peer acceptance of 362 primary school children (8% of the children having LD – term was not specified in the study). The participants were asked to nominate anyone who liked sitting next to him/her. The result indicated that not all children designated as having LD were rejected; in fact, they were as accepted as other children without LD.

One main limitation in the area of peer acceptance regarding children having MLD involves qualitative work in that area. The reasons for rejection or acceptance of MLD children by non-SEN children seem to be vague. For example, Frederickson et al. (2004) indicated different reasons for the rejection of children designated as having MLD and typically developing children. Typically achieving children were rejected due to their

aggressive or disruptive behaviour, whereas children having MLD are rejected due to their shyness and unhappiness (Frederickson and Furnham, 2004). Therefore, there is a need for more qualitative investigation into the area of peer acceptance, to delve into the reasons behind the acceptance or rejection of children with MLD. I will address this need by including qualitative as well as quantitative methods in my research.

2.10 *Self-Concept*

It has been argued, based on the idea of inclusion, that physical integration in and of itself does not ensure children's progress or development unless children are socially included as well (Schmidt & Čagran, 2008). Therefore, it is important to investigate social integration to examine the effect of inclusion on children. According to Koster et al. (2009), one dimension of social inclusion is social self-concept. Subsequently, several studies have examined the social self-concept of children having SEN in mainstream schools; however, before such studies are examined, the term 'self-concept' needs to be clarified. 'Self-concept' has been defined as 'the perception of ourselves involving our attitudes, feelings, and knowledge about our skills, abilities, appearance, and social acceptability' (Byrne, 1984). A point to note is that the self-concept of a child seems to be influenced by the image that other significant people, such as peers, teachers or parents, have about the child (Cugmas, 1992). A child's self-concept is also affected by the social comparison between the child and others in the same settings (Rogers, Smith, & Coleman, 1978). Therefore, our feelings of rejection by the significant people around us can lead to the development of low social self-perception (Schmidt & Čagran, 2008). Mather and Ofiesh (2005) confirmed this when they stated that facing social difficulties in school will lead to low self-perception of children with disabilities. Thus, self-concept is one of the main dimensions of social participation.

Although several researchers have examined the self-concept of children designated as having SEN in mainstream school, the results are contradictory. In Spain for example, Cambra and Silvestre compared the self-perception of children having hearing impairments, physical disabilities or learning disabilities to the self-perception of their typically developing and achieving peers. The result showed that, although the self-perception of children identified as having SEN was significantly lower, their mean score was positive (Cambra and Silvestre, 2003). A number of studies have indicated that

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children designated as having SEN have a lower self-concept than their typically developing peers (e.g. Nunez et al., 2005; Gans, Kenny, & Ghany, 2003; Lindsay et al., 2002; Lackaye and Margalit, 2006; Polychroni, Koukoura, & Anagnostou, 2006; Tabassam & Grainger, 2002; Zeleke, 2004). In contrast, a recent study by Koster et al. (2010) compared the social self-concept of 96 children having SEN with 148 typically achieving children in mainstream primary schools in the Netherlands. The study found that there were no significant differences in the mean score of the self-concept of children identified as having SEN and their typically developing peers, with total mean scores of 17.3 and 17.5, respectively. Furthermore, in the Czech Republic, Mrug and Wallender (2002) compared the self-concept of children having physical disabilities with their non-SEN peers in inclusive settings and also found no significant differences between the two groups. Such result is an interesting findings and it raises the important question of the reason that children with SEN showed no difference in their social self-concept when much research, as I explained before, shows that children identified as having SEN were not accepted by their peers and had few friends (e.g., Humphrey, 2010; Pijl, Frostad & Flem, 2008). This appears clearly in Koster's study where the four dimensions of social participation had been investigated and it was found that children identified as having SEN showed a significant difference compared to their non-SEN peers in all dimensions of social participation except the dimension of social self-concept (Koster et al. 2010). The study clarified such incompatibility between the results of the social self-concept and the other dimensions of social participation by arguing that children with cognitive age below eight years are not capable of reaching an accurate evaluation of themselves and they tend to have a positive bias. This argument has also been found in other studies which have demonstrated that the capability of children having SEN, and particularly those with MLD, to recognize their social position and the quality of their friendships was lower than that of their typically achieving peers (Cunningham & Glenn, 2004; Garrison-Harrell & Kamps, 1997; Scheepstra, 1998). As a result, they did not develop negative feelings, such as feelings of isolation or neglect. This occurred, according to Glenn and Cunningham (2001), for children with a mental age of less than eight or nine years. Understanding and reading of social situations becomes clearer for children with an average mental age, unlike those with MLD or SLD; however, other factors could contribute to such results. For example, measuring the self-concept by using quantitative methods only may not reflect the 'real' social self-image of the children themselves.

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Therefore, the proposed study will investigate the social self-concept of children designated as having MLD by using both quantitative and qualitative techniques to obtain a better picture of such children's social self-concept.

A wide range of research has investigated the social self-concept of children with SEN, as I explained above. According to Huck, Kemp and Carter (2010), many studies have focused on the social self-concept of children with learning disability (LD) (i.e., SpLD in UK), while not much is known about the social self-concept of children identified as having MLD. In this section I will present those studies which focused on the social self-concept of children with LD first, then I will move on to discuss the limited research which focused on MLD.

Regarding the social self-concept of children identified as LD (i.e., SpLD in UK), Lackaye et al. (2006) carried out a comparative study in Israel among 123 adolescent students identified as having LD (IQ scores from 85 to 115) and 123 students without LD concerning their social self-concept. They found that students designated as having LD reported lower social self-perception than non-LD students. This result is in accordance with the results from another Israeli study by Al-Yagonand and Mikulincer in 2004. However, such results are not typical of studies on the social self-perception of children having LD. In a review of studies that compared the social self-perception of children with and without LD from 1987 until 2003, Zeleke (2004) found that only 20% of the studies indicated that there were significant differences between the two groups in favour of children without LD (e.g., Montgomery, 1994; Crabtree & Rutland, 2001), whereas the majority of the research (70%) showed no significant differences between the two groups in terms of social self-perception (e.g., Tabassam & Grainger, 2002; Hagborg, 1999). Only two studies (7%) found that children identified as having LD had a higher mean score than their typically developing peers (e.g., Coleman & Minnett, 1992). Nowicki's analysis also agrees with the results of Zeleke's study, as she reviewed 28 articles regarding the social self-concept and the social preferences of children designated as having LD. Different studies were analysed (e.g., Silver, Elder, & Debolt, 1999; Santich & Kavanagh, 1997; Taylor et al., 2000). The result of her meta-analysis was that children identified as having LD and average to high achieving children were similar in terms of social self-perception (Nowicki, 2003). Such a result was in agreement with a

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recent study by Avramidis (2013) who compared the self-concept of pupils identified as having SEN with their non-SEN peers in mainstream primary schools in England, using a total sample of 566 children without SEN and 101 children with SEN. He found no significant difference in social self-concept between the two groups.

A meta-analysis comparison regarding the self-concept of children having LD in four different educational settings (i.e., regular class, resource rooms, self-contained classrooms in regular school, and special schools) was carried out by Elbaum (2002), whose review of 36 research articles demonstrated that there was no association between the self-concept of children designated as having LD and their educational setting. The only difference found in the comparison was between children identified as having LD in special schools and children having LD in self-contained classes in mainstream schools, with a higher score for self-concept for those in the self-contained classes (Elbaum, 2002). A further study investigated the social self-concept of children having LD in sport activity settings and the results revealed that only 28% of participants identified as having LD felt socially accepted and less than 11% felt able to make friends (Dev et al., 2005). A similar study investigating the self-concept of children with LD revealed that such children were under the risk of social isolation by their peers as well as developing a negative self-concept (Pijl, Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2010). This was also supported by Asher and Coie when they concluded that peer rejection could take away the sense of belonging at school (Asher and Coie, 1990) and it was a strong predictor of negative self-perception and low feeling of well-being (Heiman, 2001; Homnes, 2005; Osterman, 2000). Therefore, in this thesis I will not only investigate the social participation of children but also the interrelation between the social self-concept and the other dimensions of social participation, in order to reach a better understanding of the social self-concept.

In terms of the limited research which has focused on the social self-concept of children identified as having MLD, Huck, Kemp and Carter (2010) noted the difficulty in distinguishing children identified as having intellectual disability (i.e., MLD in the UK) among the samples of the research which investigated self-concept, as research has often not focussed on children with intellectual disability but, nevertheless, they may have been included within the sample (ibid). For example, a study by Avramidis (2013) investigated the social self-concept of 101 children identified as SEN in mainstream

schools in England. In this study it is hard to distinguish the results for the children with MLD, although they may have been included among the research participants.

Only a few research studies have been found to focus directly on the self-concept of children with MLD. For instance, a study by Taylor, Asher and Williams (1987), investigated the social self-concept of children identified as having mild intellectual disabilities (IQ range 70 and below) and found that their self-concepts in terms of loneliness and playing games with their peers were lower than their typically developing peers. In a further study of 17 primary age children identified as having intellectual disability in mainstream schools in Australia, eight of the children were found to have general learning delay while nine of them were grouped under the label of Down syndrome in the study. The results show that all the 17 children had a positive social self-concept in terms of being accepted by other peers (Huck, Kemp, & Carter, 2010). In the current research, an investigation of the social self-concept of children identified as having MLD is carried out. As is clear from the research presented above, there has not been much focus on MLD. While some research has investigated the self-concept of adults with intellectual disabilities (e.g., Varsamis & Agaliotis, 2011), the absence of research focusing on the social self-concept of primary age children with MLD still remains, which will be addressed in this thesis.

2.11 *Social Interaction*

Social interaction is one element that has a significant effect on children's school life, as an array of social benefits for children having additional support could be associated with their social contact with their typically achieving and developing peers (Carter et al., 2005). Furthermore, research has shown that social contact among children in school has a significant link with children's intellectual development (e.g., Ryan, 2000). Therefore, it is essential to investigate social interaction in inclusive settings, especially when mainstream schools are the setting where an increasing number of children identified as having SEN are educated (Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren, 2005). Claims have been made that the regular classroom in mainstream schools is the setting that enhances peer interaction among children (ibid); however, this is not what the literature review in this field indicates.

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Many studies have shown that children designated as having SEN, compared to their typical peers, record fewer social contacts or interactions in inclusive educational settings. A mixed-methods study by Kemp and Carter investigated 22 students designated as having mild to moderate intellectual disability in inclusive schools in Australia using interviews, observations and nominations. The results showed that there was no difference in social interaction between students with and without intellectual disability; in addition, the findings showed that students with intellectual disability spent more than 50% of their school time on the playground interacting with their non-SEN peers (Kemp & Carter, 2002). Other studies examined the social interaction of children identified as having MLD and children having severe learning difficulties (SLD) in particular. For example, Carter et al. (2005) investigated 16 secondary school children, eight having Moderate and eight having Severe intellectual disability (the terms used in America), using a mixed-methods approach. The results showed that the mean score for social contact was 3 on a 5-point scale, which was defined as moderate; however, the study also revealed that social interaction was less likely between children having intellectual disabilities and their typically developing peers unless active steps were taken. Another study compared children having cognitive disabilities with other categories of SEN regarding their social contacts and found that children having cognitive disabilities recorded 3.42 on a 7 point scale (Mand, 2007, p. 8), indicating that the children with cognitive disabilities had limited social interaction with the others. Kammana, on the other hand, tried to explain the reason for this limited social interaction among children having additional support and their typically developing peers in Germany, and reported a lack of interest in engaging in interaction with SEN peers on the side of typically achieving children (Kamman, 2001, as cited in Mand, 2007). However, a limited understanding of peer interaction between students with and without SEN is one limitation in the area of social contacts (Kalymon et al., 2010). Therefore, there is a need to conduct additional qualitative work to investigate the characteristics of interaction among children and the reasons for social interaction between children designated as SEN in general and their typically developing peers.

A further limitation in the area of social contact is that most studies have examined social contact of children having additional support in primary schools (e.g., Gifford-Smith & Brownwell, 2003; Vaughn, Elbaum, & Boardman, 2001) but only a few have investigated

social interaction in secondary schools (e.g., Butler & Hodge, 2004). Kalymon pointed out that studies in social interactions of children identified as having SEN have relied heavily on data collected from teachers and on sociometric measurements of social interaction among peers (Kalymon et al., 2010), overlooking the fact that teachers' knowledge of social interaction of children identified as having SEN in the classroom is limited because they have only limited opportunities to observe such children during play (Frederickson & Furnham, 2004). Furthermore, the sociometric scale does not explain the reasons for initiating or receiving social contact among children. At the same time, few studies have interviewed the children themselves to understand their perspectives on their social interaction with their peers (Kalymon et al., 2010). Therefore, the lack of qualitative studies on children having SEN seems to be one limitation in this area. Nevertheless, some studies have attempted to find techniques to improve social contact among children with and without SEN (e.g., Fenty, Miller & Lampi, 2008) but, without understanding the phenomenon, it is difficult to develop intervention programmes, especially when qualitative work in the field is limited. Therefore, one phase in the proposed study will investigate the social contact (as one aspect of SP) of children designated as having MLD in an inclusive mainstream setting using qualitative methods.

2.12 *Homogeneity of Children having SEN*

Research on the social participation of children having SEN has been ongoing since the idea of inclusion started as a global educational movement after the Salamanca Conference of 1994 and even before that period (Ben-Yehuda, Leyser, & Last, 2010); however, one evident limitation concerns the lack of differentiation of different categories of children designated as having SEN in terms of social participation. Besides, researchers who have tried to focus on the social relationships of children in certain SEN categories have rarely investigated those with moderate learning difficulties. This was clear in Pijl, Skaalvik, & Skaalvik's study (2010) when they conducted a review of research investigating the social participation of children with SEN within the 15 years to 2010. They found several studies that had investigated the social relationships of children identified as having learning disabilities (i.e., SpLD in the UK) in different countries such as Canada (e.g., Kuhne and Wiener, 2000; McNamara, Scissons & Dahlen, 2005) and Israel (e.g., Lackaye & Margalit, 2006). The review also found

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research focusing on the social participation of children identified as having behavioural difficulties (e.g., Mand, 2007; Kent, 2003) or autism (e.g., Bauminger, Shulman & Agam, 2004), while few studies had examined the social participation of children identified as having MLD. It is noteworthy that the large majority of the reviewed studies revealed that children with different kinds of SEN were less accepted by their typically developing peers and were less social participative (Pijl, Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2010).

A further limitation in the field of social participation is that little research has compared the social relationships of different categories of SEN with each other. One multiple-analysis study on the effects of inclusion of SEN students concluded that numerous studies had compared the social position of children having SEN with that of their typically developing peers, while only a limited number had compared social participation among different categories of children having SEN (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009). For example, several studies have suggested that SEN children have a lower social position and face more social difficulties in inclusive settings compared to non-SEN children (e.g., Frostad & Pijl, 2007; Koster et al., 2010; Nowicki, 2003); however, those studies investigated the social participation of children designated as having SEN as if they were a homogeneous group. Instead, it is worth noting that each SEN category contained a very heterogeneous group of children (Vangoidsenhoven et al., 2001). It is also the case that certain studies have compared the SP of specific categories of children having SEN with the SP of non-SEN children, however few studies have compared the categories of SEN with each other and not only with non-SEN children. For example, some research has compared the social participation of children having cognitive disabilities with their non-SEN peers only (e.g., Friend & Bursuck, 2006), and similarly with learning disabilities (e.g., Kuhne & Wiener, 2000) and emotional disabilities (e.g., Sale & Carey, 1995).

Other research has shown differences among different categories of children designated as having SEN regarding their social participation in inclusive schools. Pijl et al. (2008) conducted a study which found that children having severe behavioural problems, as well as children having communication problems, were not well liked by their other peers, followed by children designated as having moderate or severe intellectual difficulties. Another study revealed that children identified as having autistic spectrum disorders and students having behavioural disorders had more problems building relationships with

their typically developing peers than did other children designated as having SEN (Chamberlain, Kasari & Rotheram- Fuller, 2007). Similar findings resulted from a study by Humphrey and Symes (2010), who found that children having severe behavioural and communication problems faced more social problems than children with other kinds of disabilities. This was confirmed by other studies which revealed that children having motor impairments, as well as children designated as having intellectual impairments, had fewer difficulties participating with their typically developing peers compared to children with autism or behavioural difficulties (e.g., Mand, 2007; De Monchy, Pijl & Zandberg, 2004). All of these studies suggested that children identified as having SEN are not a homogeneous group in terms of their social participation, as some children with certain categories of SEN showed a lower SP status than others. At the same time, only a few studies have investigated the social participation of children with MLD as a category (Pijl, Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2010). Therefore, this study aims to clarify differences in social participation by comparing children designated as having MLD with children having other sorts of SEN.

2.13 *Stability of Social Participation*

In terms of the stability over time of the social participation of children designated as having SEN, only a few studies have been longitudinal (Estell et al., 2008). According to Chan and Poulin (2007), the dynamic side of children's social relationships, particularly over short time intervals, has seldom been investigated. Therefore, the time effect on the social status of children having SEN is one area of social participation not yet covered. Subsequently, the conclusion about the effect of inclusion on the social outcomes of children designated as having SEN has not been clearly established. Salen and Duhaney (1999) pointed out that some studies show only temporary social improvement, while the long-term social benefits have not yet been determined in inclusive settings.

One study has indicated that 'usually' more than 50%, and sometimes up to 70%, of children's friendships aged six to ten years appear to form or change within one school year (Berndt and Hoyle, 1985); however, as seen in the results of the previous literature reviewed in this paper (e.g., Frostad & Pijl, 2007; Koster et al., 2010), the social skills of children having SEN and their social statuses differ from those of their typically

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achieving peers. So, studies are needed that focus more on the longitudinal effects of inclusive settings on the social participation of children having SEN as being one gap in the social participation literature.

Regarding the stability of the social status of children designated as having specific LD, results have ranged from totally unstable to partially and fully stable. To start with the unstable findings, a study in 1999 found that children designated as having a ‘learning disorder’ (term was clarified in the article to mean specific learning difficulties, SpLD in UK terminology) in years 2 to 6 in inclusive mainstream schools lost their reciprocal friendships and showed high levels of peer rejection after one school year of examining them (Tur-Kaspa, Margalit & Most, 1999). Comparable results were found by Estell et al. (2008), who examined the social position of 1,361 children, 55 of whom had LD (terms equal to SpLD in the UK) from grade three to the end of grade six. The results revealed that children designated as having LD showed low levels of social participation, were less often nominated as someone’s ‘best friend’ and were less popular compared to their classmates in inclusive settings; further, it was found that such results were stable over time.

Some studies have shown partial stability in terms of the social participation of children with SEN, such as the study by Vaughn, Elbaum & Schumm (1996), which measured the progress of the two main dimensions of social participation (i.e., friendship and peer acceptance) regarding children with LD; that could include specific LD and general LD who show low scores in the SAT sub-test in years 2 to 4 in inclusive classrooms (term was not specified in the article). The study indicated that children identified as having ‘LD’ were rejected and were generally less liked by their typically achieving peers; however, over time, the level of peer acceptance towards children designated as having ‘LD’ started to increase and their friendships also started to include more reciprocal friendships (Vaughn et al., 1996). Similar findings were found in Toronto after examining the social participation of 38 children identified as having mild learning difficulties from age nine to twelve twice in one year using both negative and positive nomination methods. The results showed that, during one school year, the social preference for such children had decreased and there was a corresponding increase in their rating of being “liked least” (Kuhne and Wiener, 2000). Another study investigated the stability of social relationships among children designated as having SEN in an inclusive school in Norway.

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The researchers found that children identified as having SEN reported fewer friendships, and that only a small percentage of them were stable members of closed social groups (Frostad, Mjaavatn & Pijl, 2011).

In addition, some studies showed not only contradictory results in terms of stability, but also dissimilarities among sub-groups of children designated as having SEN of different ages. For example, research has shown that rejection and popularity of children having intellectual disabilities in elementary school are more stable over time compared to rejection and popularity among other categories of children having SEN (Frederickson & Furnham, 2001). This was assessed in terms of the differences among SEN subgroups. Differences by age were expressed by Wiener and Schneider again when they carried out a longitudinal study to find out the differences in social participation three times within one school period (i.e., every 5 months) for children having learning disabilities in Canada (i.e, SpLD in the UK). The study found that participant children in grades 4 to 6 who had learning disabilities were less stable in their friendships than their typically developing peers, while those in grades 7 and 8 were as stable as their non-SEN peers (Wiener and Schneider, 2002).

Thus, future studies need to investigate the stability of children designated as having SEN in terms of their social outcomes in inclusive educational settings to increase our understanding of the social effects of inclusion in order to inform future political decisions. Consequently, in this study I will conduct a longitudinal investigation, not only of friendships, but also of the four dimensions of social participation of children designated as having MLD in inclusive schools. This will be accomplished by collecting qualitative and quantitative data over the course of one school year to gain a deeper understanding of the stability of social participation. As Cook and Semmel (1999) asserted, it is necessary to go beyond sociometric work to assess relationships between non-SEN children and children designated as having LD by carrying out interviews and direct observations to provide qualitative data to increase our understanding of the behavioural manifestations of friendships and relationships. The lack of qualitative research in the area of social participation is another limitation that future studies need to address (Avramidis & Wilde, 2009).

2.14 *Social Participation in Various Educational Settings and levels*

One main limitation in the area of social participation of children identified as having SEN concerns the lack of research carried out at the secondary school level. Although the current research focuses on investigating the social participation of children in primary rather than secondary mainstream schools, because of the difficulties of conducting this kind of research in secondary schools and because of the limited time available during the Ph.D. programme, it is worth setting out in some detail the areas which need more investigation regarding the social participation of secondary school age children, so that scholars could investigate them in future research.

The majority of the studies on the social participation of children designated as having SEN (including my study) have been conducted in elementary schools with primary age children (see also Guralnick et al., 2006; Nakken & Pijl, 2002), and few studies have been conducted in secondary schools (e.g., Carter et al., 2008; Kalymon et al., 2010). Such limited investigation in secondary schools seems to stem from the problems of relying on sociometric methods (Mayeux & Marion, 2007). Such methods have been applied in elementary schools because elementary school children are generally contained in one classroom, whereas children in secondary school are generally no longer in self-contained classrooms, thus sociometric techniques can no longer be applied. The problem of changing classes in secondary schools seems to limit the use of quantitative methods to investigate the social participation between children designated as having SEN and their peers; alternatively, a qualitative method could be applied.

Several areas regarding the social participation of secondary school age children that should be investigated in future studies are worth mentioning. A previous study has pointed out that not much is known about the acceptance of children identified as having SEN in secondary school (Kalymon, Gettinger, & Maxwell, 2010). Moreover, Tur-Kaspa (2002) indicated that the social self-concept of secondary school children remains ambiguous. Friendship in secondary school, as one important dimension of social participation, seems to shift during secondary school. A study showed that adolescent students kept less than half of their friendships over the course of one year, losing more

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friends than they gained each year (Bowker, 2004). At the same time, in early adolescence (secondary school age), peers become a source of the emotional and social support (Mayeux & Cillessen, 2008). This could be because the transition from primary to secondary school contains significant environmental changes that can affect the SP of children designated as having LD (Timothy, Lackaye, & Margalit, 2006). This seems natural because the ecological environment in secondary school is larger than that in elementary school. Furthermore, it is characterized by different types of relationships between teachers and students and by changes in the personal, interpersonal, and academic functions of the students (Barber & Olsen, 2004). During the transition to secondary school, children also move from familiar peers in elementary school to a new demanding milieu where students have to form and build new social contacts (Timothy, Lackaye, & Margalit, 2006).

Variations in social participation exist not only with children's age level but also with the settings where children receive their education. According to Vignes et al. (2009), there is a correlation between constraints on social participation and environmental factors. Consequently, educational setting or placement is one environmental factor that needs to be investigated in terms of its effect on social participation, particularly for those children having MLD. A Canadian study by Wiener and Tardif examined the social participation of children designated as having MLD in different educational settings and found that typically developing children were less likely to accept children who received their lessons in a special class within a mainstream school. Furthermore, the self-concept of children having MLD in a special class was low compared to their MLD friends in more inclusive settings (Wiener & Tardif, 2004). Similar results were found by Freeman when he carried out a meta-analysis showing that children designated as having LD (term referring to mental retardation as stated in the article) revealed more social competence in inclusive mainstream schools than those children having LD in special classes in mainstream schools (Freeman & Alkin, 2000). Another interesting finding came from Coben and Zigmond (1986) when they compared the social participation of 137 children designated as having LD who received their education in a regular classroom in an inclusive school with 43 similar children in a self-contained class in a regular school (term was not specified in the study). The results revealed an interesting finding; that is, children in self-contained classes were less accepted, but also less rejected by their peers

than those who were in regular classrooms in inclusive schools. Another study in the Netherlands investigated the social participation of low-achieving students in special and regular schools. The results indicated that low achievers who were placed in special schools scored more positively on the sociometric questionnaire than low-achieving children in mainstream schools (Bakker & Bosman, 2003).

2.15 Social Participation Across Cultures

One main gap which needs to be investigated in the area of social participation is the cultural differences among different nations and countries. Several studies have suggested that culture plays an important role in the development of social interaction as well as in the socio-emotional growth of children (e.g., Chen et al., 2004; Benjamin, Schneider, Greenman, & Hum, 2001). Some studies of social participation have been carried out in European countries on children as individuals but have not compared the social participation of children in one country with those in other countries. For instance, researchers have investigated the social participation of children in mainstream schools in the Netherlands (e.g. Koster et al., 2010), Norway (e.g., Frostad and Pijl, 2007), England (e.g., Avramidis, 2010), America (e.g., Orsmond, Krauss & Seltzer, 2004), Canada (e.g., Wiener and Schneider, 2002), Israel (Al-Yagon and Mikulincer, 2004), and Asia such as China (e.g., Chen et al., 2004) as well as Taiwan (e.g., Benjamin, Schneider, Greenman, & Hum, 2001). However no such research has been carried out in the Arabic countries. A further limitation is that all the studies mentioned focused on one country only and did not compare the results across cultures, while even less research was found which compared two different countries in relation to the social participation of children in mainstream school.

One of these few cross-cultural studies was carried out by Bossaert et al. (2015). The study investigated the peer acceptance of children identified as having SEN in mainstream schools using a nomination method in three different countries (i.e., Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway). There were different educational systems in the three chosen countries. As for Norway, the educational system was based on including children with SEN mostly in mainstream schools, while only 0.8% of children with SEN were placed in special schools. In contrast, the Belgian and Netherlands educational systems

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were based on a two-track system, where children with SEN were found to be in both mainstream and special schools, with 2.7% of them in special schools in the Netherlands and 5.5% in Belgium (Bossaert et al, 2015). The result found that students with SEN were less accepted by their peers in mainstream schools in all of the three comparative countries. It also found that the difference between SEN and non-SEN groups was more pronounced in Norway (where children with SEN were mainly in mainstream schools) than in Belgium or the Netherlands. However, this research was based on investigating only one dimension of social participation by a single quantitative method. Relying only on one method could raise some considerations about the validity and reliability of the research.

Further comparative research, by Schneider et al. (1997), investigated the stability of friendship of children in third and fourth grades in a cross-cultural study in Italy and Canada. The result showed that children in Italy (especially female children) showed less conflict in their friendships than children in Canada over a school year and that the communication among friends in the Italian sample was greater than the communication among friends in Canada (Schneider et al., 1997). Thus, there is need to find out more about the influence of different cultures and it is also important to find out whether different cultures may lead to different amounts of social participation. It is possible that different social rules in different societies could affect children's social participation at school, especially when some societies may see disability in a negative way, as McDermott and Varenne (1995) stated:

'It is one kind of problem to have a behavioural range different from social expectations; it is another kind of problem to be in a culture in which that difference is used by others for degradation. The second problem is by far the worse.' (p. 330)

Especially for those children with learning difficulties, their society may not accept them due to the fact that learning difficulties (whether general or specific) lack physical signs or symptoms which make learning difficulties invisible (Ong-Dean, 2005) which could lead the society to give them a negative label (Osterholm, Nash and Kritsonis, 2011). Therefore it is important to find out how children with MLD/Slow Learning are defined and the social view taken of such children in mainstream schools. It is important also to

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compare their social participation between different countries as well as to compare different educational systems, especially when different educational systems use different ways of identifying children with SEN and use different labels in different contents. Such differences in identifying children may also lead to different social outcomes for children. It is therefore important to investigate how different educational systems use labels in relation to children with MLD and what the social impacts might be of using such labels among children in mainstream school, taking into account the general social views of such labels across cultures.

- *Summary of the literature review*

To sum up, the literature review has revealed that the concept of MLD is not clear and that there is a need to understand this concept in terms of the way it used in different settings. Regarding the social participation of children with SEN in mainstream schools, most research has found that the social participation of these children is lower than that of their typically achieving peers. This includes having fewer friends and more non-friends, fewer interactions with peers, lower peer acceptance, and lower social self-concept. Nevertheless, some other research showed no clear difference in their social participation in mainstream schools compared to their non-SEN peers. Furthermore, the literature review shows some vital gaps and limitations in the area of social participation. First, a number of research studies on the social participation of children having additional support in mainstream settings have considered children identified as having SEN as a homogeneous group, while they are a heterogeneous group with different characteristics and needs. Second, a significant number of studies have investigated social participation using solely quantitative methods rather than a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Third, few investigations have focused on the quality and stability of social participation. An additional limitation in the literature is that the social participation of children designated as having SEN has been investigated only in mainstream settings but little research has compared social participation in different settings. Finally, hardly any research has compared the social participation of children with SEN across cultures. Therefore, in this study I will seek to address the above-mentioned limitations to gain a better understanding of the social participation of children having MLD.

2.16 *Aims and Research Questions*

The aims of this study are as follows:

- ❖ To investigate the concepts of MLD/Slow Learning and compare the assessment methods used in each country
- ❖ To investigate the four dimensions of social participation of children identified as MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait and England
- ❖ To investigate the interrelation of the four dimensions of social participation
- ❖ To compare the social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning with their peers in Kuwait and England
- ❖ To investigate the stability of social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait and England
- ❖ To investigate the quality of social participation of some case study children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait and England

The research questions are as follows:

- 1- To what extent do the different groups of children (i.e., MLD/Slow Learning, non-SEN and other categories of SEN) differ in their social participation in Kuwait and in England?
- 2- To what extent are the four dimensions of social participation inter-related?
 - a- Is there any correlation between the four dimensions of social participation from one term to another in Kuwait and England?

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- b- To what extent can the four dimensions of social participations in the second school term be predicted by the same dimensions of social participation in the first school term in Kuwait and England?
- 3- To what extent does the level of social participation of different groups of children (i.e., MLD/Slow Learning, non-SEN and other categories of SEN) remain stable over time?
 - a- Does any difference in social participation exist among children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning, non-SEN and other categories of SEN from one term to another?
- 4- What is the nature and quality of the social participation of the case study children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait compared with England?
 - a- What kind of relationships do the case study children have with their peers in mainstream schools?
 - b- To what extent are the case study children aware of their social relationships at school?
 - c- To what extent do the case study children feel part of their school community?
- 5- To what extent is the quality of social participation of the case study children stable over time?
- 6- How is the concept of MLD/Slow Learning understood in Kuwait compared to England, and what is the significance of any differences in concepts when making sense of the social participation of children with MLD?
 - a- What policy documents and guidelines are used to identify children with MLD in Kuwait compared with England?
 - b- Is there any relationship between identifying the concepts of MLD and the social participation of children with MLD?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, details of the research methodology will be illuminated. Seven main sections will be found in this chapter. The first section explains the philosophical assumptions of the research. In this section, a review of the two traditional paradigms (i.e., positivist and interpretive) and their philosophical background will be explained as an introduction to lead into the pragmatic approach which will be adopted in this research as its philosophical assumption. The second section explains the methodological approaches used in this research. Five main methodological approaches were used in this research (i.e., large scale study, ethnography, multiple case-study, longitudinal design and cross-cultural design). An explanation of each of the different methodological approaches will be clarified in this section. This will be followed by a section on the participants where details of the number of schools and the way the participants were selected is given. The method section will be next, where an explanation of the different quantitative and qualitative methods will be found in detail; this will include a discussion of the rationale for choosing the methods, followed by the way I used them in practice.

The methods of data analysis will constitute one main section in this chapter, where clarification of different approaches to data analysis and the different software packages used to analyse the data will be found. The subsequent section addresses the validity and reliability of the data. This section will explain the extent to which the methods of the study are reliable and to what extent the results could be valid; it elucidates the nature of validity (i.e., external or internal validity) and how validity is linked with the philosophical assumptions of the study. After this, the limitations of the research design will be discussed in terms of the methods used, implications, and the gaps that the current research could not meet. The last section in this chapter will discuss the ethical considerations in the study. This will involve an explanation of how I obtained the

participants' consent, how some ethical issues arising from the use of the methods were addressed, and also their implications.

3.2 The philosophical assumptions

3.2.1 Ontology and Epistemology

In order to clarify the philosophical assumptions of my research, first I need to define some terms related to philosophy, such as ontology and epistemology. Starting with the term 'ontology', a simple explanation of ontology comes from Anderson and Buddle, who defined ontology as an answer to the question of what there is that can be known (Anderson and Buddle, 1991). Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln clarified that ontology is an assumption about reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Burrell and Morgan discussed what is called in philosophy the 'nominalist-realist' debate. They questioned whether social reality is 'external to individuals' or whether people create it consciously. The researchers raised a question of whether reality was discovered or created to inquire about the possibility of the reality existing 'out there' in the world or being constructed within individuals' minds (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Pring, 2000). All these questions raised by different researchers led to different beliefs in different 'paradigms'.

The term 'epistemology', as Hamlyn explained, is about 'the nature of knowledge' (Hamlyn, 1995, as cited in Crotty, 1998) and the kind of knowledge we possess as well as about the way we acquire it. Therefore, it is the way of knowing what we know (ibid). In 1994, Maynard provided an additional explanation of epistemology, as he believed that 'epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate' (Maynard, 1994, p:10). Therefore, Burrell and Morgan again attempted to define epistemology by positing two main meanings. They first considered the possibility of explaining the nature of knowledge as difficult and transformed into a tangible form (knowledge is objective form). The second is that the nature of knowledge is subjective, abstract, and 'soft' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Those who believe in the

objectivity of knowledge, according to Cohen et al. (2000), need to use natural science methods because only through scientific methods can a researcher ‘measure’ a phenomenon objectively. On the other hand, researchers who believe that knowledge is subjective reject natural science methods (Cohen et al., 2000). Although I disagree with this great division between objectivity and subjectivity in terms of conducting research, I will discuss purely objective and purely subjective philosophical assumptions as well as the way in which these two contradictory ‘paradigms’ limit researchers.

3.2.2 Paradigm Wars

A gradual development of diverse elements within people’s lives characterizes human history and one of these elements is thought paradigms. The original paradigm used in the social sciences was the positivist paradigm, which borrowed the philosophy and methods of the physical sciences (Robson, 1993). According to Pring, positivists believe that “reality” is “out there” and it can be discovered; consequently, the aim of research is to investigate the world’s objects scientifically and reach the ‘true nature of reality’ (see Appendix 1) (Pring, 2000).

Although the positivist paradigm helped to build up the modern world by explaining natural laws, particularly in natural science, there has been a movement away from the positivist paradigm by those who favour the interpretive paradigm. This includes variations called qualitative, ethnographic, symbolic interactionist, hermeneutic, phenomenological or naturalistic paradigms (Mertens, 1998). There is disagreement over the ontological and epistemological beliefs of the two paradigms. Appendix 2 presents a short summary provided by Pring to explain interpretive beliefs. Pring explained that the interpretive paradigm opposes the positivist realist ontology and the objective epistemology. As an alternative, the interpretive paradigm believes in social constructivist ontology and inter-subjectivist epistemology. To clarify further, those who adopt the interpretive paradigm believe that reality is constructed within people’s minds and that there is no absolute truth “out there”, as positivists claim, but instead there are multiple realities (Crotty, 1998).

This argument between positivist and interpretive paradigms is described as the ‘great debate’ or the ‘paradigm war’. Students frequently believe that they have to follow one and deny the other (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Purists have appeared in both traditional paradigms (Popper, 1959; Maxwell & Delaney, 2004) and they believe in the incompatibility of theories (i.e., paradigms, including their methodology and techniques cannot be mixed). Nonetheless in this study I will use mixed methods research approach, as I will not follow any of the purist traditional paradigms, but I will adopt a pragmatist way of thinking.

3.2.3 *Pragmatism*

In this research I will adopt the philosophical assumptions of pragmatism to answer my research questions. Simply, pragmatism is based on a philosophical assumption that rejects the conflict between the paradigms and focuses on the benefit of research rather than on the limitations of one research design (Klingner and Boardman, 2011). Pragmatism rejects the ontological debate (i.e., the theoretical debate about truth), rather pragmatists believe that what is 'truth' is what works in practice. This philosophy originated in America in the late part of the 19th century from Charles Saunders Peirce and was developed by others such as William James and John Dewey (Ormerod, 2006). For Peirce, truth is an issue of long term convergence of opinion: 'The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed upon by all who investigate, is what we mean by truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real' (Peirce, 1878, cited in Ormerod, 2006, p:898).

The original idea of Peirce’s pragmatism was developed by James in his famous paper: Pragmatism: A New Name for some Old Ways of Thinking (James, 1907). James believed that pragmatism was about turning away from abstractions and towards fruits and consequences (Ormerod, 2006; James, 1907). For James, 'truth' consisted with its usefulness in practice (i.e., in the practical world); this means that the value of any idea is associated with the extent that such idea is useful in practice. James also pointed out that pragmatism is only a method, not a 'paradigm' (i.e., is not a basic set of assumptions

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or principles that guide thought); it 'has no dogmas, and no doctrines save its method', it is an 'attitude of orientation' in which a person looks to the usefulness of ideas in practice, rather than focusing on verbal solutions and problematic constructs (James, 1907, p: 29).

However, the question that arises here is: how can we distinguish between beneficial and unbeneficial results? (i.e., how we define 'benefit'). In another words, how can we know or test whether our ideas have a good influence in practice? Pragmatism answers this question by arguing that the benefit of a mode of action comes from the same definition as the utilitarian idea of rightness (i.e., the capacity to provide the greatest good for the greatest number of people) (Ormerod, 2006). While utilitarianism is an ethical philosophy, it has some overlap with pragmatism in relation to the definition of benefit.

Because 'beliefs are guides to action' (Ormerod, 2006, p.892), in pragmatism knowledge is fallible. As practice in the real world changes the use of ideas in practice also changes. Therefore, it can be concluded that pragmatism does not assume that there are fixed universal rules, but there is more than one reality; as long as practice is changing, subsequent beliefs will change.

I found the ideology of pragmatism to be useful for my research. My personal reason for adopting pragmatism in this research is that it is closely related to practice and I believe that research should try to develop practice. Before I adopted a pragmatist way of thinking in this research I asked myself the following two questions:

- 1- What is/are the purpose(s) of any research in general?
- 2- What is the benefit of investigating any phenomenon or belief which has no effect in practice?

I found that the main aim of any research is to develop practice (even by providing better understanding of phenomena or ideas or by exploring rules), then what I need to focus on as a researcher is to think about research questions which can help to improve practice. This means that the significance of any research is based on the extent to which

it is beneficial and that is exactly what pragmatism calls for. In the pragmatic view: 'what works' is 'what's real', therefore pragmatic researchers usually combine qualitative and quantitative data and data analyses in their investigations based on the needs of practice.

The story of the six blind men and the elephant (see Appendix 3) is an analogy to the pragmatic assumption of using mixed method research. In the story, each of the blind men was explaining the elephant according to his experience and from his point of view. By joining all the six experiences together (i.e., inter-subjective knowledge), they could reach a better image of what the elephant looked like. This could support the interpretive point of view that reality is constructed in people's minds and it can be reached through inter-subjectivity. However, that does not eliminate the fact that elephant they were touching has only one general physical shape which could be measured objectively. This, on the other hand, supports the positivist point of view that there is only 'one reality and it is objective'. In this example both traditional philosophical assumptions are possible. Subsequently, researchers can elucidate their epistemological ideology via combining objectivity with subjectivity to develop approaches to help them answer research questions (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007). The pragmatist approach also suggests that knowledge is both constructed within people's minds and externally (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson and Collin, 2009). Therefore pragmatic research uses mixed method approaches. In the following section I will present the limitations of the two pure approaches (i.e., either qualitative or quantitative) and show the strength of a mixed approach.

3.2.4 Why not Positivist?

Although the positivist paradigm dominates natural science, it has some limitations especially when applied in the social sciences (e.g., education). Within the positivist paradigm, governments rely heavily on randomized control trials (i.e., realist research) to find out what works (Eisenhart, 2006). The National Research Council (NRC, 2000) also recommended randomised controlled experiments. This makes positivist research

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more influential with policymakers. Nonetheless, positivist philosophical assumptions have limitations. Purist positivists claim that knowledge is objective. Therefore, their studies are based heavily on quantitative data (Brannen, 2005). Thus, in this sense, they treat social science as physical science (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). For example, research in the field of special educational needs (SEN) is closely associated with psychology (Vulliamy and Webb, 1993). Nevertheless, the field of SEN contains several variables that simply cannot be studied objectively (Klingner and Boardman, 2011).

The field of SEN contains heterogeneous groups and individuals; each has special characteristics that differ from others (Avramidis and Smith, 1999). For example, two children with learning difficulties can differ in their level of learning difficulties (e.g., from mild to severe), the reasons behind their learning difficulties (e.g., environmental and cognitive), and their types of needs. Thus, intervention programmes need to be individualised. Subsequently, probabilistic methods (i.e. methods based on random selection) cannot work (ibid). Furthermore, Klingner and Boardman (2011) alleged that positivist researchers do not focus on cultural and linguistic diversity among participants. They pointed out that ‘culture’ is not a solo concept; instead, it is a complex concept comprising different variables. Therefore, Arzubiaga et al. (2008) suggested that positivist SEN researchers consider the cultural differences among children and investigate such diversities in their natural positions. A huge range of individual differences and variables in the field of SEN could prevent purist quantitative researchers from generalizing their data and expressing it as a ‘fact’.

The second limitation of the positivist paradigm emerged from the claim that purist quantitative educational researchers have evolved from ‘science’; consequently, ‘science’ requires researchers to investigate objectively. However, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) found that being completely objective is a myth, since they demonstrated that researchers’ subjective decisions are also involved in scientific research in various forms. For instance, researchers develop research methods and instruments according to their own beliefs of what is important to measure and what

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they believe these instruments will measure. Since selecting instrument items, choosing the types of tests to be applied, analyzing scores, and choosing the statistical level for interpretations (e.g., .05) are decisions made by humans, thus positivist research is not free of subjectivity (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Third, qualitative research needs to, and on some occasions relies on, quantitative research, especially in human science. Several examples clarify this. In the 1980s, special education needs researchers recognized that quantitative studies, experiments, and large samples provided little knowledge; therefore, they started to carry out qualitative research (Avramidis and Smith, 1999). During the same period, some sociologists called for avoiding the use of predefined psychological categories to classify individuals, as psychologists in the field of SEN tended to do; instead, they suggested focusing more on environmental effects (ibid). Therefore researchers started to carry out qualitative investigations to gain better explanations of quantitative data.

One good example of the quantitative investigation needed in qualitative research is when Wampold et al. (1995) tried to investigate social interaction among undergraduate students. After the implementation of the quantitative instruments, the researchers conducted unstructured observation (i.e., qualitative method) to understand social interaction. The authors stated that using qualitative investigation increased their understanding of the social interaction in its natural context (see Creswell and Clark, 2007). This seems reasonable, as the sole reliance on quantitative methods usually leads to studying a phenomenon out of its context by assuming there are controlled variables around this phenomenon. This could be clearer in experimental settings, where scholars try to determine the variables which need to be examined and control all other variables that could affect the outcome. This process would be more accurate if they tried to carry out qualitative methods with research participants to reach deeper and better understandings of social phenomena (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). All these limitations suggest that pure quantitative research is insufficient for reaching deep understandings of phenomena; instead, qualitative data could provide greater insights into and offer better interpretations of, statistical data in support of quantitative research.

3.2.5 *Why not Purely Interpretive?*

In the field of SEN, qualitative research can provide deep investigations and specific explanations. Considering that in the field of SEN each child follows an individualised plan, as is the case in the UK with respect to the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a), interpretive approaches based on qualitative data seem more appropriate for studying unique children with SEN (Avramidis and Smith, 1999). Nonetheless, pure qualitative studies have limitation and gaps that can be addressed by quantitative measurements, as the following sections will illustrate.

One main practical limitation of interpretive research is that its results are not generalisable. Interpretivist researchers do not believe that what works in one study with one sample will necessarily work with others. Rather, interpretivists believe that the results can be transformed to similar contexts only and cannot be expressed as globally generalisable facts. Consequently, qualitative research cannot be extended to wider populations because the sample is not tested for statistical significance (Atieno, 2009). At the same time, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie suggest that governments and policymakers tend not to rely exclusively on qualitative work to make decisions, due to the belief that such research is sometimes only “one researcher’s highly idiosyncratic opinions written into a report” (2004, p:16). This means that governments and policymakers may underestimate the value of interpretive research by considering interpretivism to be ‘one researcher’s opinion’ (i.e., subjective perspectives of the individual researcher which could be dismissed as idiosyncratic and unreliable). This is especially the case when the researchers’ personal ideas, opinions, experiences and backgrounds are considered part of interpretive research. Yet interpretive research is much more than one person’s opinion; interpretivism is more about inter-subjectively negotiated meanings. However, policymakers may not see it this way. Furthermore, governments often seek the kind of research which could tell them the most effective way to achieve something, whereas interpretivism is not based on the most effective way, but rather multiple realities (Pring, 2000).

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The second weakness of qualitative investigation is the lack of clear criteria by which to judge it (Hammersley, 2007). At the same time, the use of quantitative research criteria to evaluate qualitative research seems to be quite problematic. This is mainly because positivist research measures validity and reliability objectively by statistical methods. In contrast, interpretive research goes against the idea of having procedurally objective and measured criteria, as such criteria go against the philosophical assumptions of the interpretive paradigm (Smith and Demeer, 2000). Alternatively, there are general guidelines to judge qualitative work, such as the one provided by Klein and Myers in 1999. However, such general guidelines may be more useful to researchers than to lay people (e.g., policy makers) who lack the experience to judge it, so evidence-based practice is less likely to consider qualitative research (Hammersley, 2007).

A third limitation of pure qualitative research is that qualitative research alone cannot reach a clear understanding of a phenomenon without also using quantitative techniques. For example, in the field of SEN, the interpretive researcher uses the quantitative data provided by schools to identify the study's sample. Another example is my proposed study, where I use a rating scale (i.e., quantitative method) to measure peer acceptance in the classroom, as using a qualitative method (e.g., interview or observation) would be impractical due to the large number of children in one class. A final example occurs where the interpretive researcher needs to compare two groups. According to Westerman, it is very difficult to assess differences between two groups without using systematic methods (Westerman, 2006). This does not mean that quantitative measures are more appropriate than qualitative investigation or vice versa. Instead, I am trying to substantiate what Johnson and Onwuegbuzie believed, which is that both qualitative and quantitative studies have their benefits; therefore, depending on the research questions, one may be more suitable than the other. However, if we mix them, then we can reach a better understanding (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

3.2.6 Why Mixed Methods Research?

In order to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind adopting mixed methods research, I first need to clarify the meaning of 'mixed methods'. According to Plano, Clark and Creswell (2008, p. 21), '*Mixed method studies are those that combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research methodology of a single study or multi-phased study*'. The uncertainty of the term 'mixed methods' comes from the fact that some researchers use the term without clarifying the way it should be used, as methods can be mixed in more than one way (Symonds and Gorard, 2010). Niglas (2000) clarified that there are different kinds and levels of mixed methods. For instance, mixed methods could be used in research design (i.e, using more than one design in one study, for example experimental design and multiple case studies). Mixed methods could also be used in research methods (i.e., observation and questionnaires) (Niglas (2000). In this study I used both mixed methods and mixed methodological approaches at the same time.

The mixed method research, as a third wave of research movement (after the positivist and the interpretivist movements), allows researchers to use multiple approaches to answer research questions rather than restricting their research investigation. This is because, when using mixed methods, the researcher can use words to give meaning to numbers and use numbers to give meaning to words (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Qualitative methods can be used to develop a deeper understanding of the social phenomenon (Mertens, 2010), whereas quantitative methods can specify why things occur and how (Bryman, 2004). Therefore, pure quantitative or qualitative approaches constrain scholars from gaining a clear image of the social phenomena under investigation.

According to Gorard (2007), 'mixing methods is wrong, not because methods should be kept separate but because they should not have been divided at the outset' (p.1). That seems to be true even for the two contradictory traditional paradigms. As Pring revealed, there are many ways of conducting positivist as well as interpretive research and that

the divide between the two is useful only theoretically, but in reality the methods overlap (Pring, 2000). Atieno's point resembles that of Pring's, as he indicated that at the heart of the positivist versus interpretive debate is a philosophical rather than a methodological issue (Atieno, 2009). This signifies the efficacy of mixed methods research, as researchers who adopt mixed methods can reach a better understanding of a phenomenon by considering methodological issues depending on the research questions and conditions of the study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore, this research will adopt a pragmatist approach, which indicates that the researcher should find workable solutions to research questions by using a mixed method approach. This research is considered mixed method on different levels. On the methodological level this study uses a plurality of qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches. On the method level, the present study combines the use of different qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, and combines different qualitative and quantitative data analyses, as will be explained in the following sections.

3.3 Research Design

Although this research adopts four methodological approaches, giving the impression that its design will be complicated and unrealistic, in this section I try to change this impression by presenting the research design in a simple way through summarising the main ideas through diagrams. The following section explains the design of the two phases of this research.

This research contains two different phases, both taking place in the same year (2012-2013). The main aim of the first phase was to uncover the different ways of understanding MLD/Slow Learning as concepts in Kuwait and England as well as the different ways of assessing such concepts in each of the comparative countries. In England, I had access to two mainstream primary schools. I interviewed two SENCOs from the two schools. I also visited two public authorities in the south west of England and interviewed educational psychologists and SEN advisers to investigate the concept of MLD (see Table 2) (further details about the participants will be provided in the Research Participants section).

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In Kuwait, I also obtained access to two mainstream primary schools and these contained special classes for children identified as slow learners. The educational practice in Kuwait is different from that in England, as in Kuwait there are no SENCOs working in schools, instead there are school psychologists who are responsible for assessing children's psychological needs and carrying out psychometric tests to assess the cognitive abilities of those with low academic attainment. Therefore in Kuwait I interviewed special classes' psychologists working in the two schools. In addition, I visited the Ministry of Education and the Department of Psychological Services to interview technical supervisors for the psychological services as well as one senior manager for SEN (see Table 2).

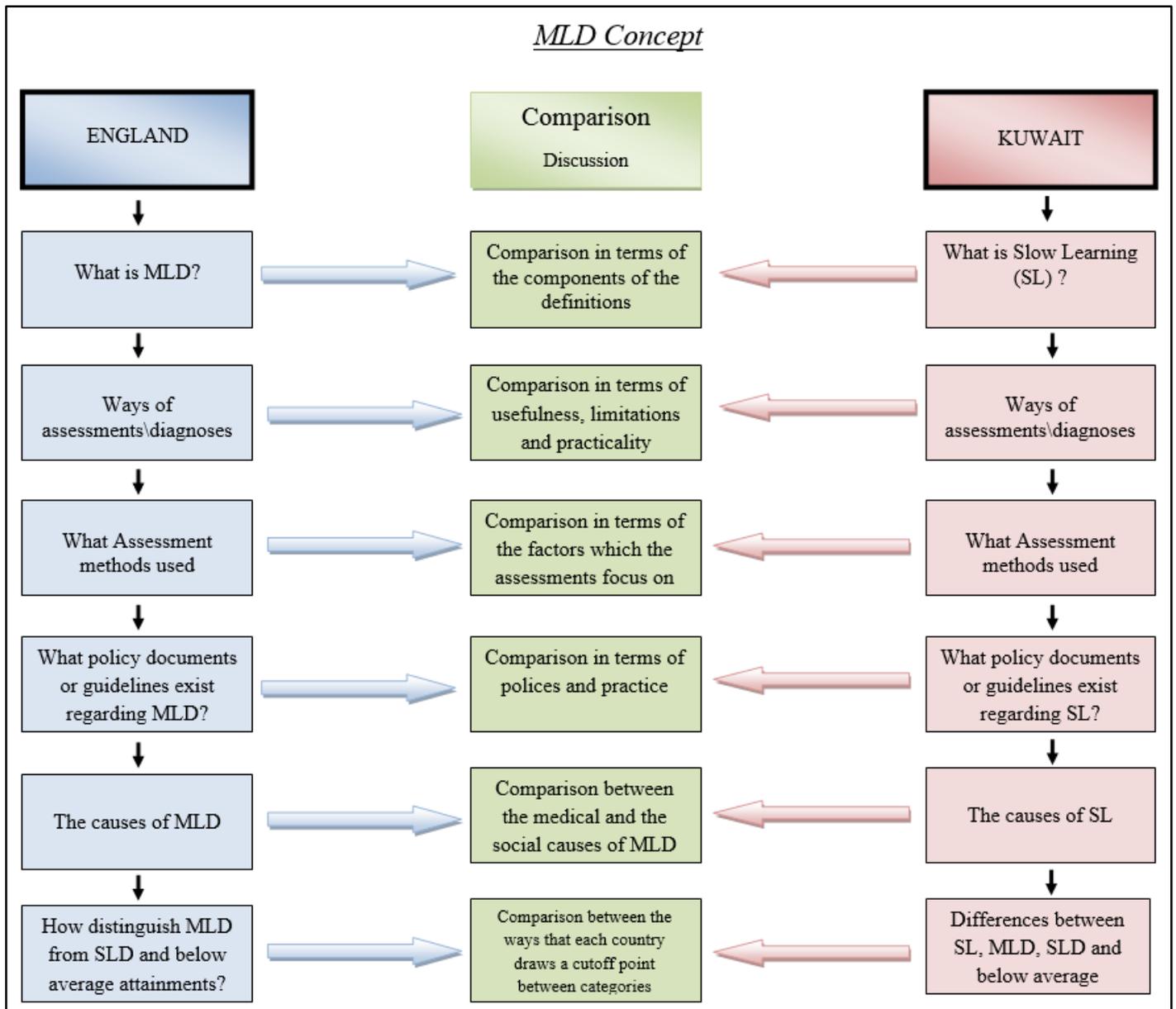
Table 2: Summary of phase one

Phase 1:MLD/Slow Learning identification and assessment		
Research questions	Procedures	
	<i>Method used</i>	<i>Participants</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was the concept of MLD/Slow Learning understood in Kuwait compared to England? • What policy documents and guidelines were used to identify children with MLD in Kuwait compared with England? 	<p>Quantitative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLD concept questionnaire 	<p><i>In Kuwait</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 school psychologists • 3 technical supervisors for the psychological services • 1 SEN manager for one province out of 5 in Kuwait <p><i>In England</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 SENCOs • 1 Educational psychologist • 1 Local Authority Officer
	<p>Qualitative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interview (30-45 mins) 	

As is clear from table 2, the research questions focus on a comparison between Kuwait and England. The following figure was designed to show the different aspects of the comparison between the two countries in phase one in terms of identifying and assessing MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait and England.

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Figure 2: Cross cultural comparison between Kuwait and England in phase one



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Regarding the second phase, its aims were twofold; first to examine the social participation (SP) of children with MLD/Slow Learning in depth and, second, to compare the SP of children identified as having Slow Learning in Kuwait with those with MLD in England. Starting with England, I had access to two mainstream primary schools in the south west of England. In these two schools I started collecting the data quantitatively using a large scale sample. This approach provided some statistical findings which helped me to explore the social participation of children identified as having MLD compared with their peers, as well as helping me identify the case study children (i.e., MLD children whom I chose to shadow). After collecting the quantitative data and identifying the case study children, I started to investigate children's social participation through adopting an ethnographic research approach (more details about ethnographic approach will be found in the Methodological Approaches section). This was through shadowing the case study children, observing them and interviewing their teachers, teacher assistants (TAs) and SENCOs. In the next school term, I repeated exactly the same procedures in a longitudinal approach (an explanation of the longitudinal approach will be found in the Methodological Approaches section) to track changes in social participation through time (see Table 3 for a summary of phase 2)

Table 3: Summary of phase two

Phase 2: Social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning		
Research questions	Procedures	
	<i>Method used</i>	<i>Participants</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent do the different groups of children (i.e., MLD/Slow Learning, non-SEN and other categories of SEN) differ in their social participation in Kuwait and in England? 	<p>Quantitative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nomination questionnaires Rating scale SDQ questionnaires Structured observation <p>Qualitative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi-structured interview Semi-structured observation 	<p><i>In Kuwait</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 175 children from two mainstream primary schools 4 special class teachers <p><i>In England</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 193 children from two mainstream primary schools 1 mainstream teacher 3 teacher assistants (TAs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the level of social participation of different groups of children (i.e., MLD/Slow Learning, non-SEN and other categories of SEN) remain stable over time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The same methods as above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The same participants as above

In Kuwait, the procedures of the second phase were similar, as is clear from the table above. However, a slight change had been made in the design which consisted in abandoning the structured observation method to measure children's social interactions (see Table 3). The reason for this was that the Kuwaiti children were in special classes so

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I could not carry out the social interaction method, as I would need typically achieving children alongside children with Slow Learning in one class to be able to compare their social interaction in the same variable. Thus, I had to eliminate the social interaction method from the Kuwaiti design, while the other quantitative measures and qualitative investigation were the same as the design in England.

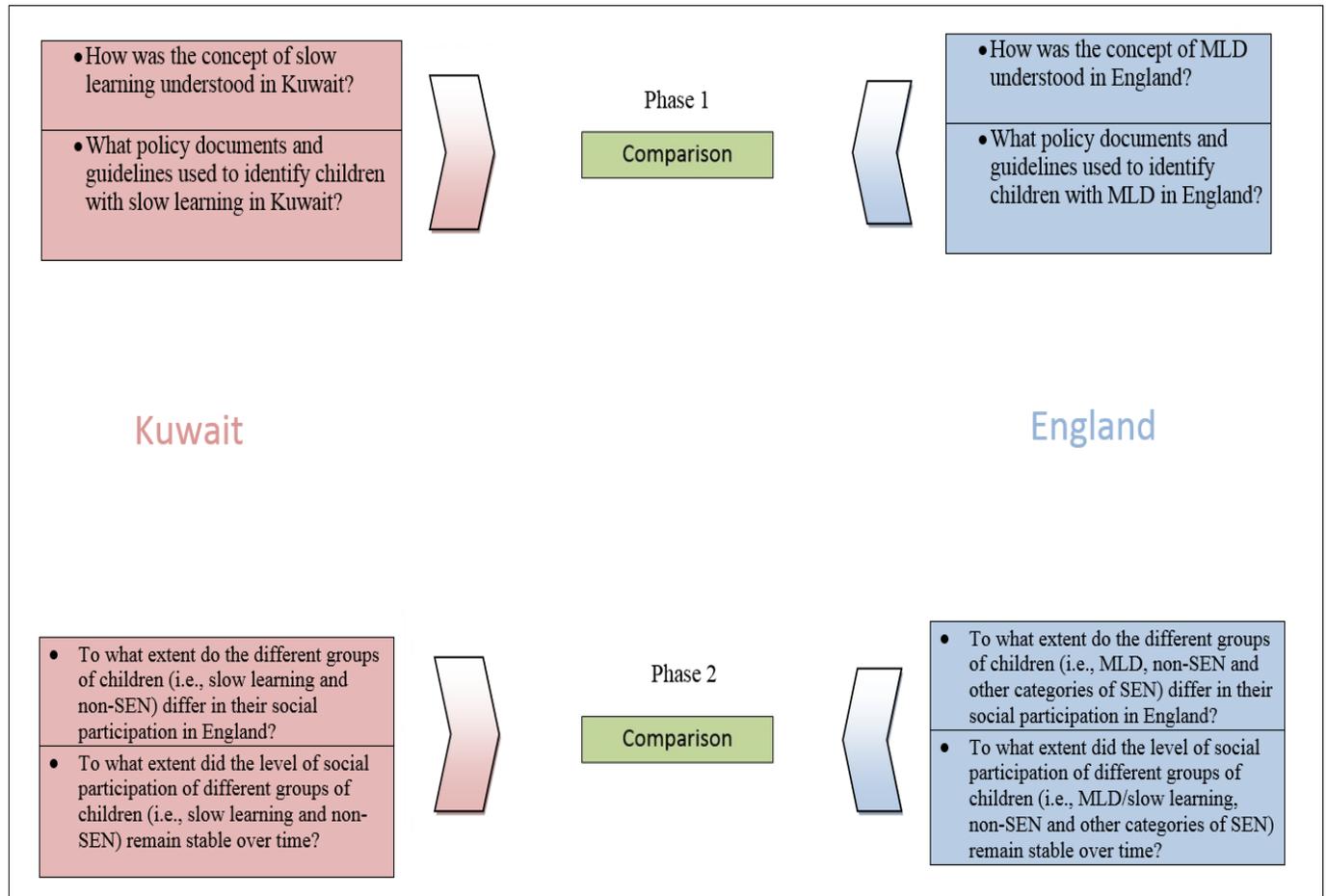
As is clear from Table 3, the second phase sought to investigate the social participation of children through a cross cultural comparison between Kuwait and England. Appendix 4 gives a diagram which summarises the comparison between Kuwait and England regarding the social participation of children in phase two. More details about cross cultural comparison will be provided in the Methodological Approaches section below.

- *Summary*

This research was based on two main phases, the first phase aimed to investigate the concept of MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait and England. The investigation was based on interviews as the main method to answer the research questions in phase one. Finally, the findings of the two countries were compared to each other in a cross cultural approach the find out the extent of similarity or difference between Kuwait and England regarding the concepts of MLD/Slow Learning, as Figure 3 shows below. In the second phase of this research an investigation of the social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning took place in both countries. The investigation started with a large scale study of children using nomination methods and questionnaires followed by shadowing certain case study children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in both countries. The same procedures were repeated one more time on the same children to investigate the stability of social participation and, finally, a comparison between the results of the two countries was made, as Figure 3 shows.

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Figure 3: Summary of research design over both school terms



3.4 Methodological Approaches

Wellington asserts that it is impossible to evaluate any research without being aware of its methodology (Wellington, 2000). Therefore, in this part I will explain the methodological approaches, which will explain the use of methods and their association with the anticipated results (Crotty, 1998). As I discussed earlier, used a mixed methodological design in this research. Therefore, and due to the fact that I adopted the pragmatic philosophical assumption that allows the researcher to apply more than one methodological approach when needed (Creswell and Clark, 2007), I used four different methodological approaches in one single study. This seems to be complicated; however, in the coming sections I will clarify the way that I used the four different methodological

approaches and the reasons for the choices. I need first to explain the approaches themselves.

3.4.1 Large Scale Study

In order to investigate the social participation of children in this research, I involved not only children with SEN but also typically developing children. The reason for involving typically developing children and children with SEN in this research, while the main focus is on children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning, was to be able to compare the social participation of children with MLD/Slow Learning and their typically developing and achieving peers, as well as their peers who have different categories of SEN in Kuwait and England. This means that involving all children in the chosen classes was needed so that comparisons among different groups of children could be possible. Involving such large numbers of participants in this research is considered to make it a large scale study.

The large scale study is a design that requires a big sample in order to reach a representative sample of the population. According to Robson, the large scale study is relatively simple and straightforward for investigating phenomena (Robson, 1993). Furthermore, a large scale design, according to Wellington (2000), provides a wider picture of the area under investigation. It is worth pointing out that the large-scale study can also be used as a way to obtain generalisable results as long as the sample is representative. As Robson indicated, some researchers have the idea that large-scale design is the central ‘real world’ strategy (Robson, 1993), meaning that large scale design is the best way to reach ‘reality’ and obtain results that can be generalized. I will, however, use this design only to compare the social participation of the sample children with MLD with their peers and not to generalize the findings.

3.4.2 Longitudinal Approach

The longitudinal approach was also used in the research design. I sought to find whether time as a variable affected the social participation of children with MLD/Slow Learning in mainstream schools; this took place in the UK and Kuwait. According to Fox and Bayat (2007), the longitudinal study is appropriate for investigating phenomena of interest over two or more time points. This type of study uses repeated measures to examine the changes in certain variables for a particular group over time (Robson, 1993). In this study I will use the same qualitative and quantitative measures repeatedly over a period of time to find out whether there will be a change in the results. It is worth noting here that longitudinal studies regarding the stability of social relationships among pupils have often been used to assess relationships twice in one year (i.e., every 6 months) (Bowker, 2004; Wojslawowicz et al., 2006), whereas there are indications that friendships among pupils change over shorter (e.g., three weeks) time periods (for details see Cairns, Leung, Buchanan and Cairns, 1995). Thus, it is important to assess changes in social participation over a short period (Dishion and Medici Skaggs, 2000). Consequently, in this research I tracked the change in social participation (SP) of children with MLD/Slow Learning in each country twice over a period of six months (See Appendix 5 for more time arrangement details).

The main reason for adopting a longitudinal approach was that the number of studies which have examined the longitudinal effect of SP in inclusive settings is relatively small, especially with children identified as MLD (Estell, 2008), as are studies in general which investigate the dynamic aspects of SP (Chan and Poulin, 2007). This paucity of longitudinal studies seems to be a result of the difficulties of carrying out longitudinal research. I am aware that this approach can be difficult to apply, especially when attrition is high and when inappropriate measures are used (Robson, 1993). Nonetheless, this approach has allowed me to find out the time effect on the SP of children with MLD by conducting the same quantitative measures and qualitative investigations into the four dimensions of SP mentioned previously over two school terms.

3.4.3 Multiple Case Study Approach

The multiple case study approach was utilized to carry out qualitative work aiming to reach a deeper investigation into the SP of children with MLD and Slow Learning. The case study is simply defined as ‘the study of an instance in action’ (the single instance could be a community, school, clique or child) (Adelman et al., 1980, cited in Cohen et al., 2000). The reason for choosing this methodological approach is that a case study enables the researcher to understand the issue under investigation more vividly than by using only theories and principles (Cohen et al., 2000). This can enhance the thought of the pragmatic researcher by focusing on practical issues rather than abstract knowledge. Furthermore, case studies may lead to follow-up quantitative research, as they may indicate issues that should be investigated in greater depth by quantitative methods (Wellington, 2000). Therefore, in this research I utilized a methodological approach comprised of multiple case studies using a variety of methods; the possibility of involving different kinds of methods in a case study was underscored by Wellington (2000).

3.4.4 Ethnography

The ethnographic approach was used as one qualitative approach to investigate the quality of SP among children. For some authors, ethnography is just another synonym for all forms of qualitative methods (Walford, 2009); however, such a way of looking at ethnography deprives it of any independent meaning (ibid). Ethnography is the art of describing a group of people or their culture through getting involved in fieldwork (Fetterman, 1998). Ethnographic research is not just a simple procedure where the researcher joins a group for a period of time, watching them, taking notes and writing it up (Bryman, 2004); it is more about being aware of the environment and culture in which the context under study is placed. It involves being in the right place at the right time to observe the right thing or participate in the right situation (overtly or covertly) and ask the right questions. To do so, the ethnographer needs to develop appropriate skills and knowledge. The ethnographer needs to define the degree to which the

researcher needs to be involved in the fieldwork. By this I mean that the ethnographer needs to determine whether to be active in the fieldwork, where he/she is a participant observer, getting involved with the participants, or to be passive where he/she is only an observer and does not interact directly with the participants (ibid).

In this research, I decided to adopt an ethnographic approach insofar as I observed four case study children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in each country (i.e., four children in Kuwait and four in England) for two months (one month in term 1 and one month in term 2). I chose to be a passive ethnographer as I did not get actively involved with the participants but only observed their actual social participation and the quality of their social life in school. There was no need to be a participant observer as the main aim was to understand their social participation without being part of that interaction. It also worth saying that in some situations, participation took place, especially in the first week of observation when the children were not used to seeing a researcher in their class, so they attempted to start a conversation with me. However, after the first week they started to ignore my attendance and acted as though I was not there. Further details will be provided in the section on Research Procedures.

3.4.5 Cross-Cultural Design

This research is considered a 'cross cultural study', as it compares, first, the ways of understanding and assessing MLD/Slow Learning and, second, the SP of children with MLD/Slow Learning in mainstream schools across two countries (see Figure 3). Cross-cultural research gives us a chance to investigate the cultural variables existing in human communities in a shared construction where a set of individuals interact in a certain social and physical space (Olatundun, 2009). This approach allows us to compare cultures in order to explain some complex problems across cultures (ibid). The main concern with this kind of design is that cross-cultural research often compares societies to understand their culture; however, it is not possible to control all variables in the comparative societies in order to find the effect of the phenomena under the investigation (Winthrop, 1991). This is because it would not be possible to provide the same environment and variables in each of the comparative cultures. Nonetheless,

comparisons may take place in cross cultural research in different ways even if researchers cannot control all variables. For instance, in this research, the qualitative and quantitative results of each country were analysed separately and not together. To clarify more, I accounted for intra-culture differences when analysing the data in each country and then a qualitative comparison took place as cross-cultural comparisons between the two countries. In this way, the validity of the results were not affected by the differences of the cultural variables in each comparative group.

3.5 Participants

- In England

In England, I am perceived as an outsider; thus, it was not easy to convince schools and professionals to take part in the research. To address this challenge, some school visits were arranged alongside my supervisor to present the details of the research in order to convince the schools to provide access. I also utilised personal social connections to reach some participants and invite them to take part. Although being an outsider made gaining access more of a challenge, the main difficulty stemmed from getting the schools' consent to initiate the research as well as maintaining that consent throughout the data collection process. It is always a possibility that schools may withdraw from participating in the research before the end of the data collection, so the researcher needs to be very careful when dealing with the schools and avoid any potential complications. Decreasing this risk can be difficult for outside researchers, who might experience difficulties communicating with schools or may not be fully aware of the social rules and the most appropriate behaviour for a researcher during time spent at the schools. For example, I unintentionally created confusion with one of the school staff regarding the way I prepared the envelopes containing a leaflet sheet about my research. In Kuwait, mail service is limited, and people often do not use it; consequently, I was not aware of the most appropriate way of preparing envelopes to send in England. I assume that such problems are less likely to occur with an insider researcher, who would probably be more aware of such rules and conventions.

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Regarding the participants of phase one (i.e., investigating the concept of MLD), I interviewed two SENCOs working in two mainstream schools, one educational psychologist and one Local Authority Officer about the concept of MLD and the different ways of assessing children with MLD.

Regarding the participants in England in phase two (i.e. investigation in the SP of children with MLD), four primary schools were invited to take a part in this study, but only two agreed to participate. In these two schools, I invited only those classes that contained children identified as having MLD from Years 3 to 6 (i.e., eight classes in total). The reason for choosing this age range was that the social relationships of children become closer and more stable at this age (Koster et al., 2010). All children in the eight classes participated in the study (i.e., 193 children in total). It is also worth saying that the sample in this research may be considered an opportunity sample. According to Dornyei and Taguchi (2002), an opportunity sample is one which is convenient for the researcher or is easily accessible. Table 4 summarises the participants in the research in the two phases in England

Table 4: Summary of all participants in England in both phases

	Participants
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 SENCOs• 1 educational psychologist• 1 Local Authority Officer
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 193 children from two mainstream primary schools• 1 mainstream teacher• 3 teacher assistants

Table 5 shows the details of the students in England who participated in the second phase. More details about the level of difficulties be given later.

Table 5: Details of the participating children in England in phase 2

Description of the students according to their needs in England	N
Non-SEN	148
Physical disability	3
Behavioural, emotional or social difficulty	4
Specific learning difficulty	6
MLD	22
Speech, language or communication need	5
Hearing impairment	1
Autistic spectrum disorder	4
Total	193

The identification of children with MLD in this research was carried out through the school SEN registration system. I was not allowed access to the official assessment report of each child as schools were very strict about providing personal information. Therefore, I used the information in the schools SEN registration system to identify children's needs. In the school SEN registrations, children were classified into three main categories based on the level of their difficulties, namely: School Action, School Action Plus and Statement of SEN. Those pupils on School Action had their special needs met within the normal activities and resources of schools without the need for special resources, whereas those on School Action Plus often needed additional assistance from an external specialist, such as an educational psychologist. Those children who were statemented legally secured a special level of resources and funding from public authorities (DfES, 2001b; Symes and Humphrey, 2010). I chose only those with School Action Plus or Statement due to the fact these children had been officially formally assessed. Children in the schools' SEN registrations were given SEN labels based on the official report; therefore I involved all those children who had the label of MLD in the school registration. It also worth clarifying that no reassessment had been taken of children identified as having MLD in the SEN school register. This because the MLD group in the school registration makes up the official category that the government considers,

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therefore investigating this group was closer to the real situation as it is in practice than it would be if the researcher himself had identified the group.

Among the 193 participating children in England, 22 children were identified as having MLD. I invited as many children as I could from both schools (i.e., all the classes which has at least one child identified as having MLD in School Action Plus or Statement level) so that I would have enough to minimise any possible effect of pupil drop-out over the year.

From the 22 participating children identified as having MLD, four cases were selected to be shadowed and with whom to carry out further qualitative investigations. The selection of the four cases was based on certain criteria. Firstly, the children needed to be in the same classes to facilitate one researcher shadowing them. Secondly the children needed to be designated as having MLD at School Action Plus or Statement level only.

In addition to the participating children, one main teacher was interviewed and three teacher assistants (TA). In this way, the social participation of children with MLD could be investigated from different kinds of participants, which, according to Wellington (2000), leads to richer results.

- *In Kuwait*

In Kuwait, access to the participants was much easier than in England because of my personal social connections. Also, with the Ministry of Education's permission to carry out my research, schools had no legal right to refuse my access.

Regarding the participants in Kuwait in the first phase of this research (i.e., to understand the concept of Slow Learning), I interviewed two special class psychologists working in two different mainstream schools with special classes for children identified as having Slow Learning, two technical supervisors for the psychological services in the Ministry of Education and one SEN senior manager in one education province out of the five in the country. The selection of the participants was based on participants' experiences with children identified as having Slow Learning. All participants were involved in the official

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assessment of Slow Learning whether in schools or in the Ministry of Education. The sample was an opportunity sample as I could only interview those professionals whom I could reach.

The participants in phase two (i.e. investigating the SP of children with Slow Learning) were drawn from two mainstream primary schools. In Kuwait there are only four mainstream primary schools which have special classes for children identified as having MLD, and two of these are in areas where I had no social contacts with any of the managers who would be able to provide me easy access, meaning that obtaining the paper work to gain access to these schools would take a long time. Therefore I started with the other two schools where I had easy legal access. At these two schools, 175 children were invited to take part on this research, divided into 144 non-SEN children (i.e., 82.3% of the total participants) and 31 children identified as slow learners (i.e., 17.7%). Fortunately, all the children in special classes in the two schools were aged between 8 and 12 years old; this meant that the ages of the participating children in Kuwait were similar to those in England, enhancing the validity of the comparison.

Four children identified as having Slow Learning were chosen as case studies for in-depth investigate of their social life at school. As in the English part of the study, the selection of the case study children was based on certain criteria. First, I chose children who were in the same special class due to the fact that I would not be able to shadow children in different classes for practical reasons. Second, in Kuwait there is a gender separation even with teachers, so teachers in one school are either females or males. The chosen two schools in this research had only female teachers and no male teachers. Some of the female teachers were uncomfortable with a male researcher observing children in their class. This problem seemed to change my position as a researcher from an insider investigating a phenomenon in his own country and context to an outsider in the eyes of the female teachers who were not comfortable communicating with a male researcher. Therefore I chose a class where the teacher felt comfortable with my presence. Thirdly, some children did not attend regularly, therefore I had to ensure that the case study children were regular attenders. I asked the special class's psychologist for help (because

this was the person responsible for children’s progress) to recommend those children who had clear assessment of Slow Learning as there were some cases of children in special classes being referred back to do more IQ tests that because teachers doubted the accuracy of their first assessment. Thus it was very useful for me to ask the school psychologist to show me which of the children had clear identification of Slow Learning based on the official children's psychological reports. In addition to the children, four teachers participated in interviews regarding the SP of the case study children. Table 6 summarises the numbers of participants in the two phases in Kuwait.

Table 6: Details of the participating children in Kuwait in both phases

	Participants
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 school psychologist• 2 technical supervisors for the psychological services• 1 SEN senior manager in one educational province
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 175 children from two mainstream primary schools• 4 special class teachers

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

This research employed mixed methods to find answers to the research questions. The instruments were devised in order to collect data regarding the two main aims of the research: first to investigate the concept of MLD/Slow Learning, second to explore the SP of children identified as MLD/Slow Learning in each country. Regarding the investigation of the second phase, seven different methods were used to investigate the same phenomenon under study (i.e., social participation) to reach a high degree of triangulation. Some of the instruments measured quantitative data while others were used for qualitative investigation. Therefore the following section is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the quantitative instruments used in this research; this involves explaining and presenting the methods themselves as well as discussing the reliability of

each instrument. The second part discusses the qualitative methods used in this research, but with a different structure, as the second part is divided into two main sections. First I will explain the methods used, then I will turn to clarify the validity and reliability of each method in a separate section.

• Quantitative Data Collection Instruments

3.6.1 *Social Self-Concept*

The social self-concept is one dimensions of social participation. In this section I will explain the instrument I used to collect the data from children regarding their social self-concept. A number of instruments measure different dimensions of self-perception (e.g., social skills, general academic performance, and general self-concept). The present research focused on instruments measuring social self-perception only. According to Berndt and Burgy (1996), the instruments of the Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPP-C), the Self-Description Questionnaire I (SDQ-I), and the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance for Young Children (PSPCSA) all have similar content, length and reliability (Koster et al., 2010). This study utilized the Self-Description Questionnaire I (Marsh, 1990) to examine the social self-concept because of its appropriateness for primary school children (Pijl et al., 2010). The reliability of the particular instrument ranges from 0.80 to 0.89 (Skaalvik & Rankin, 1990, cited in Pijl et al., 2010). The instrument includes statements such as, 'I have more friends than most other kids', 'Most kids have more friends than I do,' and 'I get along with kids easily'. The total number of questions was nine. Each question was measured on a five-point scale: 'false', 'mostly false', 'sometimes false sometimes true', 'mostly true' and 'true' (see Appendix 6). The Self-Description Questionnaire I (SDQ-I) was administered to all the children in all the participating classes (i.e., 193 children in England and 175 children in Kuwait). The reason for collecting this data was to compare the social self-concept among different groups of children (i.e., MLD/Slow Learning, non-SEN and other categories of SEN) in both countries. These comparisons helped to understand the social participation of children identified as having MLD especially

when data were collected in two different school terms to permit investigation of the stability of the social self-concept of children.

3.6.2 Acceptance by Classmates

Because peers are the real judges of social status in schools, it is vital to use them as a source of information (Pijl, Foster and Flem, 2008). Therefore, a rating scale was utilised to measure the pupils' acceptance in the classroom. According to Mayeux and Marion, 'the dynamics of children's peer groups rely heavily on sociometric methods' (Mayeux et al., 2007, p. 53). Furthermore, sociometric techniques are often used to assess peer acceptance and friendship through rating scales or nomination processes (Berndt and Burgy, 1996). Some authors suggest that sociometric methods display a depressed image of social position (Chambers and Kay, 1992, cited in Pijl et al., 2008), whereas others state that such techniques are a reliable method (Mercer, 1987, cited in Pijl et al., 2008). A rating scale seems to be the most appropriate method of measuring children's acceptance, while the nomination method seems to be the most appropriate method for assessing friendship (Parker and Asher, 1993). Therefore, a rating scale was applied to assess the dimension of peer acceptance.

The rating scale in this research was arrived at by asking each child in the class to rate each of their peers in terms of the extent to which they desired to play with them. The reason for choosing the action of 'playing with' rather than 'working with' was that children identified as MLD have poor academic skills based on the definition of DfES in 2005; therefore, they may have a better chance of being chosen by their non-SEN peers by saying 'playing with', rather than 'working with' (Gottlieb, 1971). This means that the action 'playing with' could investigate peers' social acceptance more than the action 'working with' which could be understood by children to refer to academic work.

Each participating child was given a list of his/her class peers' names in order to rate each of them in terms of how much he/she would like to play with each one in the class. Participants had the option to choose from three answer categories, namely, 'yes I would very much like to', 'yes I would like to', and 'I do not mind' (Appendix 7). I would

like also to clarify that the rating scale given in Appendix 7 is limited to 11 pseudonyms to serve as an example of the instrument only, while it is not the actual number of participants on whom the instrument was assessed, which included the names of all the children in the class (25-30).

Unlike the other methods, the rating scale was applied differently in the two comparative countries. The difference was not in the content of the instrument, but in its structure. To explain, in England, due to the fact that all children with and without SEN were in the same inclusive class, it was easier for me to ask all children in each class to rate their peers in the same class only. As I dealt with each class as independent and not related to the other classes, so the rating consisted of only the children in the class (see Appendix 8). By contrast, in Kuwait the educational setting was different, as the mainstream classes were not inclusive and children designated as having Slow Learning were located in special classes. Therefore there was a slight change in the structure of the method. The change was to ask every child in the mainstream classes to rate his peers in his class as well as those in special classes in the same year group. This meant that I added the names of children in the special classes under the list of names for each mainstream class in the same year group. By this I ensured that I gave each group (i.e., children in special classes and children in mainstream classes) a chance to rate each other in order to compare them. Appendix 8 explains how I arranged applying the rating scales in Kuwait and England.

3.6.3 Friendships – Sociometric Nomination Method

In terms of assessing friendship, the nomination method involved all children, both with and without SEN. Although this method does have some disadvantages (e.g., choosing a large sample makes the drawing and interpretation of the sociogram difficult), many researchers have determined that the sociometric scale is an appropriate way to assess friendship (Larrivee and Horne, 1991; Laursen et al., 2007; Parker and Asher, 1993, cited in Koster et al., 2010). Moreover, the research sample comprised primary school aged children; according to Bukowski and Hoza (1989), the nomination method is appropriate for children and adolescents as well (cited in Koster et al., 2010).

There are different kinds of nomination questions; some researchers use negative nominations, such as ‘who are the five children you dislike or you do not like to be their friend?’ (Mayeux and Marion, 2007), whereas others use positive nominations as I did in this research by asking children about their five best friends in the class. The reason for choosing positive nominations is to avoid the possibility of ethical issues; especially when children start to talk with others about whom they nominated. More details about the ethical considerations regarding the nomination method will be provided in the section of Ethical Considerations.

In England, all children in the chosen classroom were asked to nominate up to five best friends in their class (see Appendix 9 for the instrument), while in Kuwait, children in mainstream classes were asked to nominate up to five best friends in their classes as well as their same school year peers in special classes. I also asked the children in the special classes to nominate up to five best friends in their class as well as in each mainstream class in the same school year. Appendix 8 explains the organisation of the nomination method in Kuwait and England

3.6.4 Children’s Contact or Interaction Method

Children’s contact was assessed through structured observation. Researchers often use observation to assess contact among children (Koster et al., 2010). Bryman (2004) indicated that structured observation in social research allows behaviours to be observed directly. In this research, Gresham’s (1982) observation categories were used; Koster et al. (2010) pointed out that such observation categories, due to their great clarity, provide a general image of the nature of positive and negative contacts. Furthermore, inter-observer agreement (i.e., compatibility in the results from different observers using the same instrument to observe the same target) is high in such instruments (0.93-1.00) as indicated in a study by Montague and Rinaldi (2001).

The social interaction method was used only in England and not in Kuwait. The reason behind this limitation is that children identified as slow learners in Kuwait were placed

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in special classes and not in mainstream classes alongside their non-SEN peers. This meant that I was not be able to observe the two target groups using the same variables in Kuwait. In England I used the structured observation method in each participating class. However, it was not possible to observe all the children in all the participating classes as this would require a team of researchers. Therefore, as a lone researcher, I chose four to five children to observe. The chosen children were: one child with MLD in each class, two to three children with different categories of SEN, that is, one child from each of the five main categories in the SEN Code of Practice (2001) mentioned in the Literature Review. My options were limited by the lack of variety of SEN categories in each class. I also included one child without SEN who recorded an average score on the rating scale and the nomination methods. In this way I was able to compare the social interaction of children identified as having MLD with their peers who had another type of SEN as well as their typically achieving peers.

The observation was conducted for a total of 40 minutes for each target child over four days. The original Gresham's observation schedule involves observation every 10 seconds whenever interaction is occurring (e.g., negative/positive, initiated/received interaction with classmate/teacher). Gresham's 10-minute observation was divided into 60 intervals. However, I doubled the observation schedule to take observations every 5 seconds to gain 120 intervals in 10 minutes (see Appendix 10 for the instrument). This was because minimising the time between one observation and the next would ensure that all the target children were observed in the same setting with the same environmental variables; the less the time interval in shifting from one child to another, the less change there would be in the environmental variables. In Gresham's observation categories, researchers should be able to distinguish between different types of interaction (i.e. negative interaction and positive interaction) as shown in the subcategories of the observation schedule (see Appendix 10). The reliability of the researcher's distinction between different kinds of interactions may underlie the reliability of these methods; the fact that the inter-observer agreement in this method was high, gave me confidence that there was no confusion in using the sub-categories of the instrument. Besides that, I asked one of the researchers in the Graduate School of

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Education who had experience of using structured observation to help me pilot the observation schedule by observing two children during a lesson at the same time as myself, using the same instrument. On comparing our results, 73% agreement was obtained, which indicates the high reliability of the method.

According to Hamilton (2005), if the researcher seeks to observe social behaviours, then it is essential to carry out the observation in different settings. Therefore, I observed the target children in the classes, as one setting, and during their break times as another setting. In the class I observed the target children together, shifting among them every 5 seconds for 10 minutes for each target child (over two days). One practical way I used to help me organise the time to shift between one target child and another was that I recorded my voice to give an indication to shift every 5 seconds for a period of 20 minutes. In this way I could listen to myself using my small ipod device to start taking observations and shift every time I heard the audio indicator. It also worth pointing out that I took observations only when the children were free to communicate with each other and not when the teacher had asked the children to remain silent, to work individually, to pay attention to her lesson or in any setting where interaction was prevented.

In the playground, it was not possible to observe them simultaneously by shifting among the target children every 5 seconds due to the fact that they moved separately in the playground. Therefore I had to shadow each target child for 5 minutes over four days to have an overall observation of 20 minutes for each target child in the playground. I observed the four target children as child A, child B, child C, child D each for 5 minutes in this order on the first day, then on the second day I observed them as B, C, D, A, on the following day as C, D, B, A and on the fourth (and last) day of observation, as D, B, A, C. The main purpose of changing the time of observation for each target child during the break was to overcome the limitation of having different interactions at different periods, to make the result more reliable.

Qualitative Data Collection Instruments

3.6.5 Comparison between Interview and Observation

As mentioned in the previous chapter; there is a paucity of qualitative research on social participation. Nevertheless, it is vital to study the dimensions of SP in depth via qualitative methods. Therefore I decided to carry out both methods of interview and observation to find out answers to my research question, as each method would compensate for the other's limitations.

According to Bryman, the interview method can explain reasons for actions from the person directly. In another words, the researcher can understand a phenomenon through interviewing one element involved in this particular phenomenon to clarify some issue which needs to be understood. This also means that, through the interview, information will be taken directly from the source of knowledge (i.e. interviewee) who is involved in the phenomenon under study. Thus, researchers will not see the phenomenon based on their senses, but based on the information gained directly from participants. Nonetheless, there are two main limitations of the interview as a method; firstly, the interviewer cannot witness the information gained by participants, but just hear what interviewees say and take it into consideration. Therefore it is important for the interviewer to ask the 'right' questions to the 'right' participants to make sure that the result will be valid. A further limitation is that interviews rely on verbal behaviour and its quality is based on the relationship and the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee (Bryman, 2004). This means that the researcher should develop some social relationship to break the ice between interviewer and interviewee before starting the interview. The better interview skills the researcher has, the better quality result the researcher will get, so the quality of the result will rely to some extent on the researcher her/himself.

Observation as a method works in the opposite way. Observation allows the researcher to identify action and witness it (e.g, social interaction of a child in a classroom or how peers interact with the target child) and by this the researcher can use more than one

sense to understand phenomena. This is because being involved in a situation as a participant or passive observer will allow a researcher to gain more details about what is going on in the situation under study and to notice behaviour in action directly with no effect from personal issues or from the relationship between the observer and the observed (Bryman, 2004). However, the main problem of using observation is that when observing a behaviour, the observation will be based on what the observer thinks about the observed behaviour, and what the researcher thinks does not necessarily reflect what the observed situation meant. For instance, observing two children playing with each other does not always mean that they are friends, unless you go and interview the children to confirm the result of your own interpretation. Thus the information gained by observing them can be supplemented with the data gained from the children themselves by asking them directly. Therefore using both methods, interview and observation, is better than relying on just one of them to understand the phenomena under study.

3.6.6 Interview schedule

In this research, two different semi-structured interview schedules were used. The reason for using semi-structured interviews was that I had certain 'themes' I wanted to investigate. Therefore the interview schedules were semi-structured based on the chosen themes of this research. A further reason was for consistency of comparison across the four case study children I intended to interview in each of the comparative countries. Cohen suggested that researchers use some structure in interviews, especially when they investigate multiple case studies, to ensure cross-case comparability (Cohen et al., 2000). All the interviews were recorded by audio recorder after obtaining permission from the interviewees.

The first interview schedule aimed to reveal the different ways of understanding MLD/Slow Learning as a concept and the differences in the assessment methods used to identify these concepts in each of the comparative countries. The interview schedule contained 11 questions (see Appendix 11). The interview was divided into three main types of questions. The first consisted of 'ice breaking' questions which aimed to relieve the interviewees from the tension which could occur at the beginning of an interview. For

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example, many female participants, especially in Kuwait, felt a little anxious about the audio recorder device and they asked me to hide it from their sight so that they could talk without concern. Therefore it was important not to start the main questions of the interview immediately, but to have general questions to minimize nervousness. The second group of questions concerned the concept of MLD and how it could be distinguished from other difficulties such as SpLD, mild LD or severe LD. The third type of questions addressed the different ways of assessing children with MLD and whether there were any policy documents regarding MLD.

The second interview schedule was designed to investigate the SP of four case study children in each country. As explained earlier, in England I chose four children with MLD (all in one class) as case studies (based on the criteria mentioned in the participant section) to interview their classroom teachers, the teaching assistants and the SENCOs. Similarly, in Kuwait I also had four case study children identified as having Slow Learning who were in a special class in a mainstream school. I interviewed four of their teachers and one special class's psychologist at their school. The second interview schedule focused on investigating the social participation of the four case studies in each country. There were 14 questions in the schedule addressing the four dimensions of SP and the social outcomes in general (see Appendix 12). For example, some questions asked about the social outcomes for the four target children in general (i.e. questions 5, 6 and 14), friendship (i.e. questions number 6 and 7), peer acceptance (i.e. question 8), social self-concept (10, 11 and 12), social interaction (i.e. question 9) and finally the quality and the stability of SP (i.e. questions 7 and 13).

In Kuwait the mother language is Arabic; therefore I translated the interview schedule into Arabic to be suitable for the Kuwaiti participants (see Appendices 13 and 14 for the translated interview schedules). I tried to translate the terminology used in England into the terminology used in Kuwait; thus I did not use direct translation, but based it on the use and meaning of terms in Kuwait. In this way, I attempted to ensure that the participants in Kuwait understood the same meanings to the questions that had been asked of the English participants, although they were not the same terms used in both

interviews. In order to make sure of the sense of my translation, I asked for the help of an official English-Arabic translation service in the educational centre of the British Embassy at Kuwait to double check my interview schedule.

Regarding the place where the first kind of interview took place, in England I visited two public authorities in the south west of England to interview an educational psychologist and a local authority officer. The interviews took place in the participants' offices. The second kind of interview was with two SENCOs, one main teacher and three TAs, individually in their offices at their schools. Similar arrangements were made in Kuwait; the teachers and school psychologists were interviewed in their offices at their schools; the technical supervisors for the psychological services were interviewed in their offices in the Ministry of Education and the SEN senior manager was interviewed in her office in one educational province in Kuwait. I also visited the psychological services department. More details about the way that interviews had been conducted will be found in the Procedures section.

3.6.7 Semi-Structured Observation

In order to obtain richer data, observation of the case study children was utilised. I conducted semi-structured observation of each of the case study children to observe their social participation and the way they communicated and socialised in the mainstream school in both countries. Although observation allows the researcher to observe behaviour directly in action (Bryman, 2004), due to people's awareness of being observed, they may act less naturally. However, the longer the researchers are present, the more accustomed people may become to them (Bryman, 2004). This seemed to be true, as I explained previously, children started to ignore my attendance in their class after a week of observing and then they started to behave 'normally' as if I was not there, especially when they noticed that I did not initiate any interaction with them.

The Observation was semi-structured due to the fact that the observation focused on the social participation of the case study children. Therefore the observation schedule was divided based on the four dimensions of social participation (i.e., friendship, peer

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acceptance, social interaction and social self-concept). I was not expected to observe many behaviours regarding the dimension of social self-concept due to the fact that this dimension is about what children feel socially about themselves, however I was expected to observe some behaviour which may indicate the feeling of belonging to certain groups.

Regarding the time arrangement for the process of observation, I focused on observing the four case study children for four weeks every day regularly for a period of three to five hours daily (ethnographic approach). In addition to that, the observation was applied twice in one school year in each country; that is (as I explained before) one month in term 1 and another month in term 2 in each comparative country (longitudinal approach), in order to reach a better understanding of the quality of the social life of the four target children in each country.

The observation took place in the two comparative countries (i.e. England & Kuwait). In each country I chose four children identified as having MLD to be shadowed and observed. On some days I observed the case study children in the morning, while on other days I shadowed them from late morning to the afternoon so that I covered the possibility of recording different social statuses in different periods of the school day. Furthermore, I tried to shadow the case study children in different settings in the school. For example, I made observations while the target children were in the classroom, playground, school restaurant, computer room, sports hall, garden (i.e. in England only) and laboratories. This variety of taking observation in diverse settings was important to gain a fuller image of the children's behaviour and the way they acted or reacted within such different settings (Hamilton, 2005). There were times when I observed one child more than others, depending on the situation, as at some times the focus child showed some interesting observable actions with other children which required me to spend more time to observe the situation.

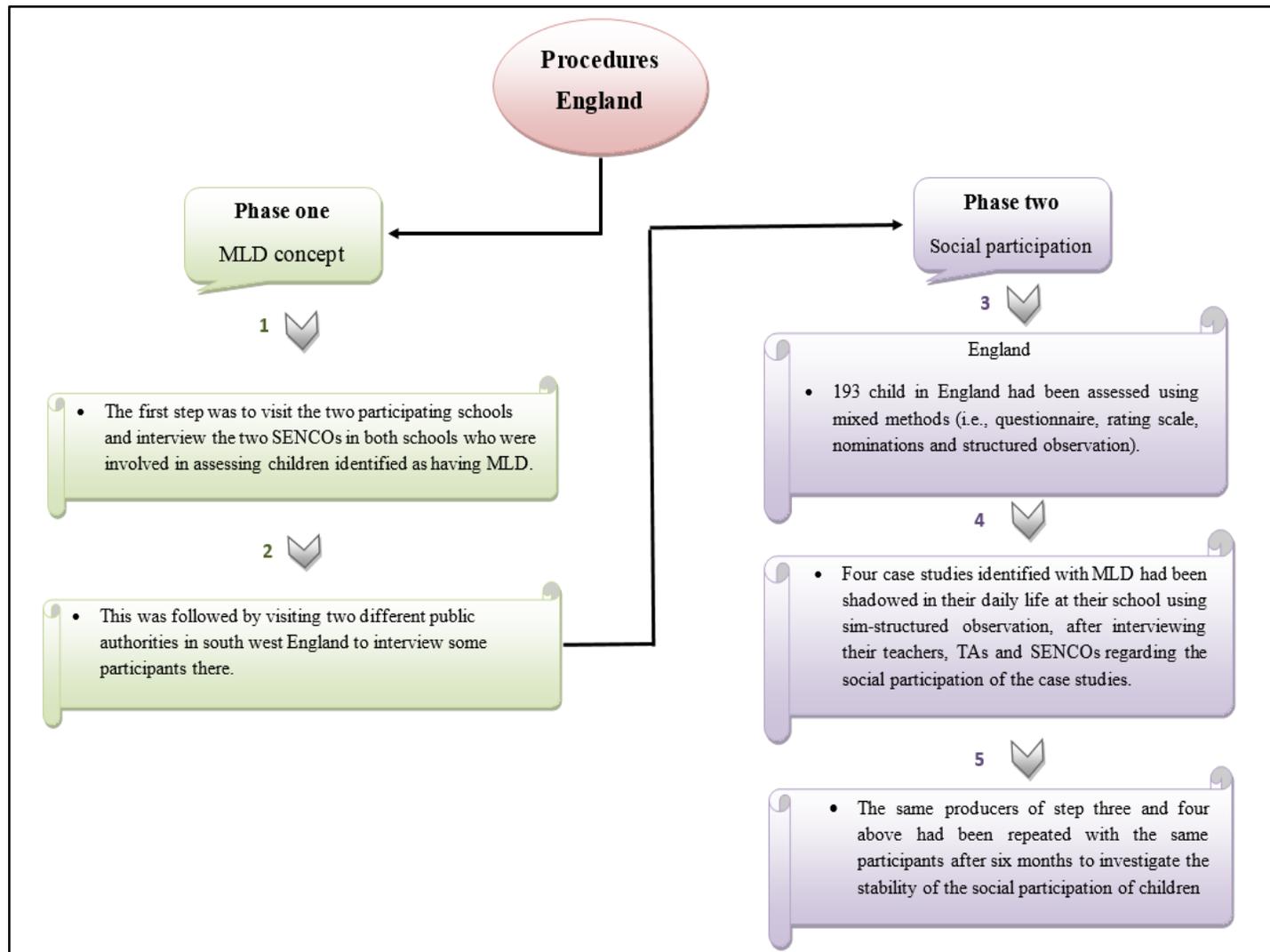
3.7 Procedures

In this section the practical procedures of the data collection in this research will be clarified by explaining step by step the main procedures. Some diagrams were designed to help follow the procedures of the research in both of the comparative countries.

I began by investigating the concept of MLD and the different ways of assessing these terms in England by interviewing professionals in schools and public authorities (see steps one and two in Figure 4). After collecting the data regarding the concept of MLD in England, I started the investigation of social participation. The quantitative measures had been applied first. As I said previously, the quantitative measures were taken from four instruments, three of them were applied simultaneously (i.e., nomination to measure friendship, rating scale to measure peers' acceptance and social self-concept questionnaire), while the structured observation was applied on different days. To explain more, the data were collected by myself with the support of the classroom teachers and the teacher assistants (TAs) who helped those children who needed additional support, especially those who had difficulties in reading and writing, to complete the questionnaires. The process started by accessing each class individually and explaining to the children what the questionnaires were about and reading the instructions of each questionnaire. Then, it was important to arrange the class in a way that prevented children from seeing each others' answers. In some classes the teachers recommended separating some groups of children who had close relations with each other to prevent them being influenced by each others' answers. The questionnaires were given separately, starting with the SDQ followed by the rating scale then the nomination method. The process of collecting the data using the three questionnaires took around 30 to 45 minutes in each participating class. The fourth instrument (i.e., structured observation to measure social interaction) was implemented on separate days, since this instrument needed to be implemented over two days in each class (see step three in Figure 4).

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Figure 4: Data collection procedures in England



After collecting the quantitative data, I started the process of collecting the qualitative data using the ethnographic approach to investigate the quality of social participation (see step four in Figure 4). This process began by interviewing the teachers of the chosen case study children about their SP in school. The interviews were carried out individually for each teacher and took place in quiet places at the school. I also used the interview days to observe the target children without taking notes, for reasons I explained before. Following the interviews, I shadowed the four case study children in their daily school life, as they were all in the same class in one school. The shadowing process involved

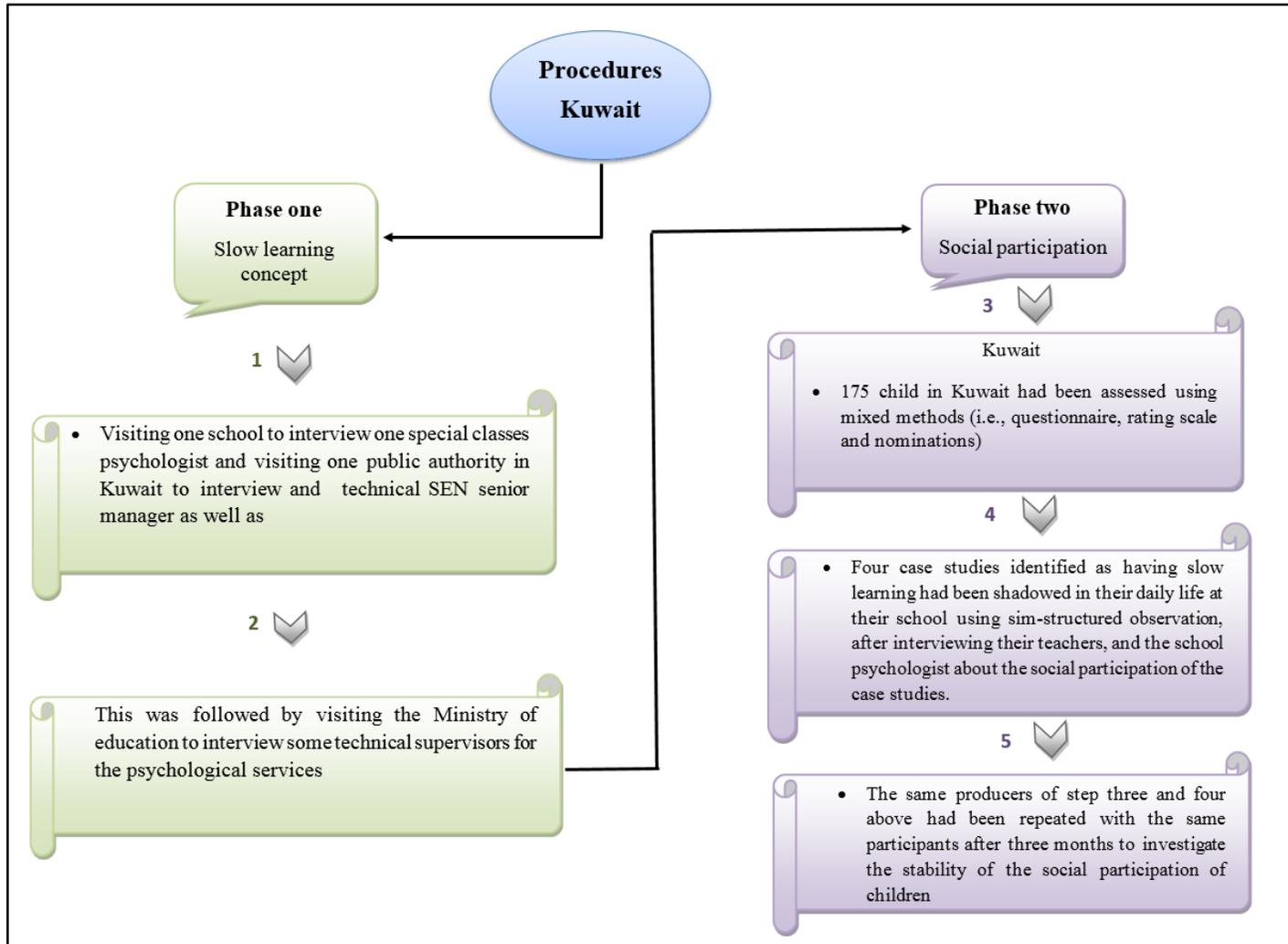
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observing them during and between lessons, break time and in their all school activities for a period of four weeks. Obviously it would be better if I could take observation during the whole school day, but the school did not allow me to attend more than five hours a day so I had to respect their rules and deal with the limitation by making observations at different times each day for three to five hours.

After collecting the data in England, the procedures in Kuwait were almost similar to the producers in England. I started by investigating the concept of Slow Learning in Kuwait by interviewing the special class psychologist. This was followed by visiting the Ministry of Education (the Department of Psychological Services) to interview some technical supervisors for the psychological services in their working offices after arranging suitable times for them and having their consent. Finally, the last visit was to one educational province in order to interview one technical SEN senior manager in her office (see step one and two in Figure 5). After collecting the data regarding the investigation of the concept of Slow Learning, I moved on to investigate the social participation of children identified as having Slow Learning. I started by carrying out the quantitative method; however, due to the fact that in Kuwait children identified as slow learners are placed in special classes, it was not possible to apply the quantitative social interaction method. Thus I used only three quantitative methods (i.e., rating scale to measure peer acceptance, nomination method to measure friendship, and social self-concept questionnaires). All three methods were applied exactly in the same way as in England (see step three in Figure 5).

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Figure 5: Data collection procedures in Kuwait

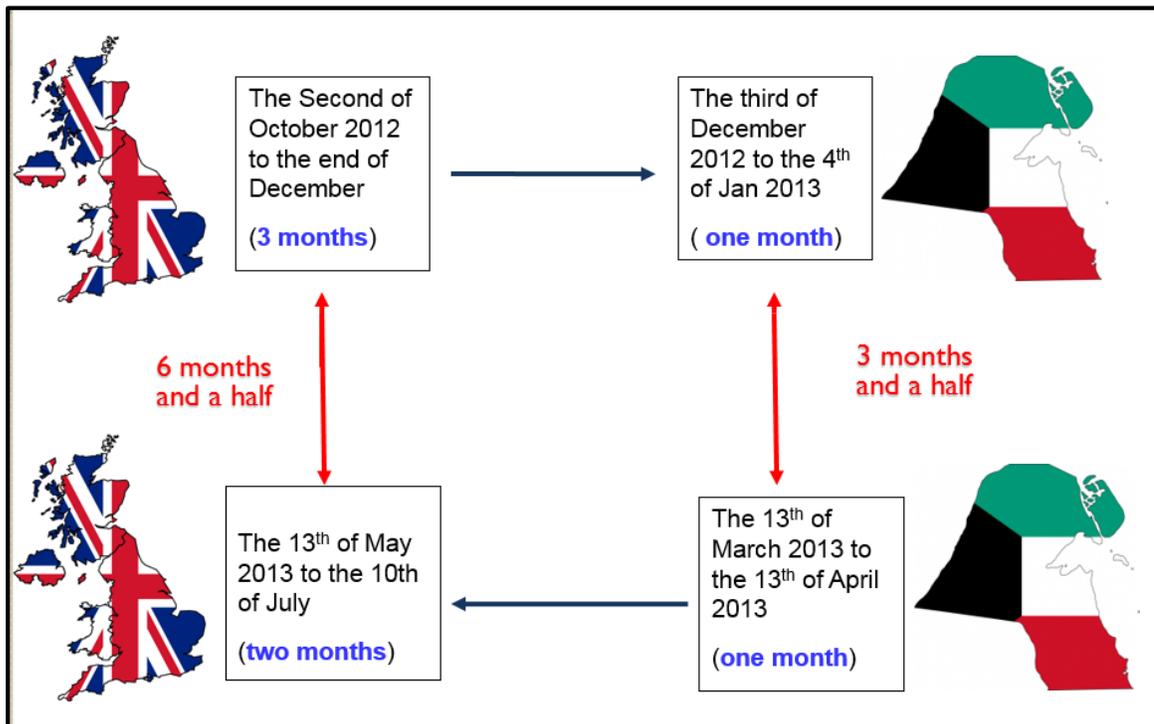


Regarding the qualitative data collection, I began by interviewing the teachers of the four target children as well as the special school psychologist regarding the children's social participation. The same procedures as for the interviews in England were applied regarding the most appropriate time and place for interviews. After carrying out all the interviews, I started shadowing the target children in their daily life at school for 45 days. In Kuwait I was able to make the observations for the whole school day (i.e., six hours) (see step four in Figure 5). The only difficulty was in the relations to cultural gender issues. To explain more, due to the fact that this research focused on primary school children where all teachers were female, it was hard for some of the female teachers to

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work with me as a male researcher (especially those teachers who were not comfortable working or communicating with a male researcher as some of them were totally covered and veiled so that men could not see them). Some of the those teachers refused to accept me in their lessons while others were very sensitive about the idea that I was shadowing children wherever they went in the school and during the whole school day. Therefore some teachers felt uncomfortable and stayed in the staff room almost all the time and did not to go out while I was there. Such difficulties prevented me from moving around the school easily, as I did not want to cause any offence by facing some teachers while they are not wearing their veils which did happen three times unfortunately, but in general I could make enough observations to understand the actual social participation of the case study children. After collecting the data in Kuwait, I repeated the data collection the following term in exactly the same way so that I could assess the effect of time as a variable on social participation (see Figure 6 for time arrangement). This was followed by my return to England to repeat the data collection as before, to detect any changes over time.

Figure 6: Time arrangement for the data collection



- *Summary of all the above sections*

This above sections explained the pragmatic philosophical assumption which had been adopted in this research and discussed the details of the research design. Generally, this research divided into two main phases, the first phase aimed to investigate the different ways of identifying and assessing MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait and England. This was heavily based on interviewing some professionals in both countries. The second aim was to investigate the social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait and England. The second phase was investigated by different methodological approaches, starting with the large scale where 193 children in England and 175 children in Kuwait were assessed using mixed methods such as questionnaire, sociometric scales (i.e., rating and nominations) and structured observation. This was followed by an ethnographic approach where four case studies were shadowed in their daily life at their schools in Kuwait and England using semi-structured observation, after interviewing their teachers, TAs and SENCOs regarding their social participation. Finally, the same procedures from the second phase were repeated one more time in the same way with the same children after one school term as a longitudinal approach to investigate the stability of social participation of children over a period of time. The coming section will discuss the different ways used for data analysis in this research.

3.8 Data Analysis

3.8.1 Social Self-Perception

After gathering the data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to calculate the overall social self-perception score for each student. There were nine items in the questionnaire, of which all except item three were worded to indicate positive social self-perception, while item three was worded to indicate negative social self-perception. Therefore the scores on item three were reversed to be compatible with the

other items. The SDQ-I is a 1-5 scale such that the higher a child's mean score, the more positive is that child's social self-perception.

After calculating the mean score for each child, the data on all the participating children of different classes was collected into one mega file (See Appendix 15 for some of the raw data). After preparing the mega files of each comparative country alone, I used different tests to analyse the data of social self-concept in the two different countries. Due to the fact that in Kuwait there were only two comparative groups (i.e. children with MLD and non-SEN children), I used the t-test to compare the two groups. The t-test is used for comparing two groups with each other (Pallant, 2007). The English data were slightly different, as there were three comparative groups, therefore a One-Way ANOVA test was used to compare the social self-perception of children identified as having MLD with other categories of SEN as well as with the non-SEN children. However the ANOVA test does not specify where the difference occurs among the comparative groups, it only shows whether there is a statistically significant difference in general. Therefore I also used a Post Hoc test to specify where the differences, if any, were located. It is also important to elucidate that the data of each country was analyzed separately (i.e. each country had its final analysis independently) and the comparison between the two countries took place after the individual analyses by interpreting the differences among the comparative countries qualitatively (more details will be provided in the coming sections).

3.8.2 *Children's Contact or Interaction*

The observation data analysis started by highlighting the interactions of each target student. The students in the observation schedule were symbolized as letters (i.e. A, B, C, D and sometimes E). I highlighted each letter in a different colour (see Appendix 16) so that I could calculate the number of interactions for each child separately by easily distinguishing between children. The total number of interactions was 240 divided into four categories, namely: Initiate Positive Interaction, Initiate Negative Interaction, Receive Positive Interaction and Receive Negative Interaction. I calculated the total

number for each target child for each category; however I excluded the negative interactions from the analysis (i.e. the interactions which were recorded in the two categories of Initiate Negative and Receive Negative Interactions). The reason for this exclusion was that the negative interactions were not part of the adopted SP definition (i.e. Koster et al., 2009, p. 135), as in the definition only positive interactions are considered as a dimension of SP. This seems to be logical as the negative interactions indicate that children are not socially participating.

After calculating the total numbers of interactions I used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software to present the total number of interactions in each category in one table (see Appendix 17). I used the t-test (Kuwait) and the ANOVA (England) to identify any significant differences between groups, as previously explained.

3.8.3 Friendship

The analysis of nomination was complicated. The reason for the complexity was that a child's friendships were not independent; they depended on other children's friendships as a network. In another words, friendship is not a phenomenon which can be understood individually, as the friendships of a child are not based only on direct friends, but also on friends' friends; thus friendship is a non-independent variable. This was also confirmed by Croft, Madden, Franks and James (2011) when they stated that: '*Networks represent relational data and metrics that describe the structure of these relationships are non-independent. Therefore statistical methods that assume data independence are not appropriate*' (p. 502). For this reason I used the software UCINET version six (Borgatti, Everett and Freeman, 2002) which is a special software for social network analysis. This software considers the nomination data as being non-independent and takes the other relationships of the children in the class into consideration when calculating the total friendship of each child. The second reason is that the UCINET-6 software provides a friendship network 'Matrix' in which the directions of nomination for children in one class can be visually displayed all together on one page.

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Four main steps were followed to analyse the data using UCINET software:

- 1- The first step was that Microsoft Excel 2007 was used to calculate the total points by adding one point for each time a child received a nomination from any of his/her peers (see Appendix 18 for raw data). The reason for using Microsoft Excel was that it would be easy to upload the results from Excel to the UCINET-6 software, as UCINET-6 is able to open Excel files and analyse their data.
- 2- The second step was to upload the data from Microsoft Excel files to the UCINET software; one file had been dedicated for each class so that each class could be analysed separately (see Appendix 19 for raw data).
- 3- The third step was to use the visualising network option which showed the directions of the nominations, as I asked the UCINET software to transform the numeric nominations to Matrix where the trends of initiating and receiving nominations for each child in the class could be seen (see Appendix 20 for raw data).
- 4- The fourth step was to carry out a t-test on the data drawn from the Kuwaiti participants and one-way-ANOVA on the data drawn from England. However one limitation of the UCINET software is that it cannot carry out the Post-Hoc test. This meant that I was not able to locate any differences among the three comparative groups in England. I therefore uploaded the data on to SPSS software to carry out the Post-Hoc test.

Regarding the use of the Post-Hoc, same Excel files were uploaded into the SPSS software. The mean score was calculated by dividing the total number of nominations that each child gained by the total number of nominated children in the class. This way of analysis had been used by different researchers to analyse nominations or sociometric results (e.g., Frederickson and Furnham, 2004; Bakker et al., 2007; Waldrip et al., 2008). After calculating the mean score for each child, I joined all the data drawn from the English participants into one mega SPSS file to start the Post-Hoc test. In Kuwait I used the t-test analysis to compare the friendships of children identified as Slow Learning

and non-SEN children, so there was no need to do the Post-Hoc test due to the fact that I could specify the difference by looking at the total mean scores of each group.

3.8.4 Acceptance by Classmates

The analysis of the peer acceptance data was very similar to the analysis of the friendship data, due to the fact that both methods used to investigate friendship and peer acceptance were sociometric methods and both needed social network analysis as both were non-independent variables. Therefore, UCINET-6 was used to analyse peer acceptance exactly in the same way as I analysed the friendship. In the initial stage, each student received scores ranging from one to three from all of his/her peers in the class as follows: one point for 'I do not mind', two points for 'yes I would like to', and three points for 'yes I would much like to'. After putting in the data I carried out a t-test to find out the difference between the two comparative groups in Kuwait and the one-way-ANOVA test to measure the difference of the three comparative groups in England, using SPSS for the Post Hoc test. The analysis using SPSS was based on each class separately. I started by calculating the mean score for each child through assembling the total rate for each child, and then dividing it into the total number of children who were rated in the class (See Appendix 21). Thus I made sure that the different numbers of children in different classes would not be an issue. After preparing the total mean scores for the children in each class, I created an SPSS mega file to include all the children in all the classes in one file so that I could start the analysis (see Appendix 22 for raw data). The Post-Hoc test was used to locate any statistically significant differences among the three comparative groups (i.e. children with MLD, children without SEN and children with other categories of SEN).

3.8.5 Qualitative data analysis

In this section I will explain the general steps by which I analysed all the qualitative data drawn from interviews and observations, then I will explain the differences in analysis between data drawn from the interviews compared with those data from the observations. Starting with the general method of analysis, after collecting the

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qualitative data (from interviews and observations), all records and transcripts were transcribed into written text. The data drawn from Kuwait was transcribed in Arabic to avoid losing any meaning of the data in translation into English. The translation was used only with those quotes I used to show evidence from the Kuwaiti participants' answers in this thesis. I carried out the translation myself first, then I checked it with the official English-Arabic translator service in the educational centre of the British embassy in Kuwait to double check my transition. The transcribed data were analyzed in five main steps according to Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003). I adopted their method because it provided a direct and obvious explanation so that researchers could know exactly what the necessary procedures were and what action was taken. Taylor-Powell and Renner provided practical steps and not just broad advice about dealing with qualitative data. Appendix 23 contains a summary of the five main steps summarised from Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) which I will explain in the following section.

The first step in the analysis was to understand the data by reading the transcripts over and over and writing down any impressions about the data. Such notes are important in gauging the nature of the raw data by having an overall impression about the quality of the data. Understanding the raw data and being aware of its limitations is a key issue of good analysis (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003). The second step was to organise the data. To clarify, I started to organise the data regarding the eight case studies (four cases in each country) to have the data of each case in different files so that I could analyse the data for each child alone. This helped to lead my mind and eyes easily to reach the data for each child. The third step was the main procedure in the analysis, the categorising step.

The categorising process, according to Taylor-Powell and Renner, could be carried out in two ways: Preset categories or Emergent categories. In the first one (i.e., Preset categories) themes are listed in advance before coding the data and then the raw data is read and coding started i.e., 'tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 56), then codes are matched with categories. The second way is to start coding

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the raw data first and then themes emerge due to the coding process in which coded data is placed in the themes which match them. In this research I used both ways. First I used the Preset categories, as I had already designed the interview schedule and the observations according to certain themes as I explained earlier in the quantitative method section (see interview schedules in Appendices 11 and 12). Therefore I used the same themes and listed them in advance, then read and coded the raw data. During reading, new themes emerged from the raw data so that I added them and thereby combined the Preset with the Emergent categories approach.

It is also worth explaining the way that data was coded in this research. According to Miles and Huberman, there are different methods of coding. In this study I followed Bryman's advice on coding methods by summarising them into three procedures. The first step involves an open coding process, which includes breaking down the raw data into big chunks by having an overall feel for the data. This is followed by the process of carefully reading the chunks, becoming more aware of the text, and developing detailed coding names or labels, either through coding the raw data line by line or as chunks based on what meaning the data could have (I will provide examples in the coming sections). The third coding step involves moving slightly away from what the respondent 'says' and focusing on what the respondent 'means', which is followed by coding the meaning of what the respondents say (Bryman, 2004).

The fourth step is to find any connections between the codes. This can be done in three ways, according to Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003). The first way is to summarise the information and the key ideas of each category by analysing the similarities and differences in participants' responses. The second is to find out which code appears most often by counting codes. The frequent appearance of particular code(s) within participants' responses will lead the researcher to give more focus to the reason behind such repetition and therefore to think more deeply about it (as an example see Table 33 in the findings chapter). The third way is to find out whether there are relationships between codes; that is whether certain codes occur together consistently. This could help to discover whether there is a cause and effect relationship. A point to note is that

these three forms of analysis may not be used simultaneously, but different data may need different forms of analysis. The final step of the whole analysis is to interpret the data. That means to give meaning to the findings. This requires the researcher to list the findings that have been reached during the fourth step and to stand back and think what they say, what new things the findings reveal, and what lessons can be learned (Taylor-Powell and Renner, 2003).

It is also important to explain that all the transcribed copies were analysed using MAX Qualitative Data Analyses (MAXQDA) software. This software was designed to analyse recorded or written transcript data. The software also provides a range of different benefits: it provides an easy system of coding, offering visual tools such as bar charts and portraits as well as different methods of analysis, such as the ability to look at the interactions between codes, number of codes and the sequentiality of codes. The software also supports the Arabic language unlike NVIVO software which does not. All these benefits of MAXQDA encouraged me to use it in this research.

- *Semi-structured observation*

Semi-structured observation was a method used in this research to investigate the social participation of the eight case study children. The observations were recorded using iPad-5. After taking all observations I followed up the five analytical steps of Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003), as I started to read the raw data first (Appendix 24 shows an example of the raw data of the observation). I then started to organise the data by separating the data for each case study separately. The next step was to start coding the data using emerging themes as well as some pre-determined themes as I explained before (Appendix 25 is an example of a coded document). The main pre-determined themes that I used were based on the four dimensions of social participation (i.e., Friendship, Peer Acceptance, Social Interaction and Social Self-concept). However such complex dimensions were not easy to analyse as there were many overlaps in the data (i.e., data could be coded in different codes). Therefore, I used different sub-codes to be as specific as possible (Appendix 26 is a summary of the sub-codes I used in the

data to observe children's social interaction in general). I also started to give short definitions of each sub-code I used regarding the way I used that sub-code (Appendix 27 shows the clarification of the sub-codes). This helped me to remember how I distinguished among different codes. Regarding the emerging codes, some data did not fit into any of the pre-determined themes, so new codes were created (i.e., emerging themes). For instance some data were about the factors which affect social participation. This theme was not my area of focus but at the same time it may have added something to my research so I created a new code under the name of 'factors affecting social participation'. Appendix 28 shows copies of all codes used to analyse data drawn from observations

- *Interviews*

Two different interview schedules were used in this research, the first one concerned the social participation of the eight case studies and the second one investigated the concept of MLD/Slow Learning in each country (see Appendix 29 for raw interview data). Regarding the first interview schedule, I analysed the data exactly as the observation data were analysed with the same codes as well (see Appendix 30 for the summary of the analyses). It is also worth saying that some codes emerged only from the interviews and not from the observation, such as the code of 'general social benefits' (see Appendix 28 in its three parts to review the code list). Regarding data from the second type of interview, I started by reading the transcripts following the five steps of Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) (see Appendix 31 for raw interview data). The data were already organised due to the fact that the interviews were not about individual cases. The interviews discussed specific themes so I used the same themes in the interview schedule to code the data (Appendix 32 shows a copy of the themes I used to code data regarding the second type of interview). Some new themes did emerge from data, such as the code of 'issues around using the MLD label' and the code of 'IQ test implementation'. Finally, I started to summarise the data based on each theme to reach a better understanding of each theme.

3.9 *Validity and Reliability*

3.9.1 *Reliability of the Quantitative Methods*

Before explaining the reliability of any particular method, I first need to explain what reliability means in a research context. Robson provides a definition of reliability as: ‘The extent to which a measuring device, or a whole research project, would produce the same results if used on different occasions with the same object of study’ (Robson, 2002, p.551). According to Yin (2003), reliability aims to reduce the errors and biases in a study; these problems could occur during implementation of methods or through the design of the instrument.

Due to the fact that all the quantitative data collection methods in this research had been previously developed by other researchers, who had already examined their reliability through conducting a reliability test (scores of each method's reliability were mentioned in the methods section), there was no need to examine the reliability one more time. Nevertheless, after gaining access to the two schools in the south west of England, I spent the first PhD year as a pilot year. The main aim of that year was to improve the reliability of the quantitative data by making sure that I could use the instruments correctly.

I made several adjustments to the instruments themselves and to their implementation in light of the pilot experience. One good example of modification of an instrument was the SDQ questionnaire I used. As in any quantitative method, personal information is requested at the beginning of the questionnaire. One of those questions was to define the sex of the participants (i.e., Male/Female). However one teacher told me to change the 'sex' word to 'gender', as children in the primary age could understand the word 'sex' in different way. Another change was in the rating scale method, as there was a question at the beginning of the original instrument which asked participants which grade they were in. Teachers asked me to change ‘grade’ to ‘year group’ this would be clearer to

the children. No changes were made to the main items in any of the qualitative methods I used.

An example of a change to the implementation of the instruments (i.e., SDQ, rating scale and nomination method) was that a long time was required to apply the instruments as they took longer than I had expected, especially when there were children with severe SEN in the class who needed adults to explain the questions and write for them. Another change was in the way I applied the sociometric method, as the children started to look at each other's answers which could affect the reliability of the method and the validity of the result. The children may have felt shy or afraid to rate or nominate their friends while somebody was watching them. This could also lead to some ethical issues especially when children talked together after the test. Therefore I had to ask the teachers to explain that answers should be confidential and that they should not see or talk with each other about their answers after the test. I asked classroom teachers because I thought they would have more influence over the children than I would. Furthermore, I supervised the children carefully during the implementation of the sociometric scales to prevent any talking during the test.

One more benefit of the pilot year was to train myself to use some of the methods. An example was the structured observation to measure the social interaction of children. This method requires the researcher to make observations of specific children every five seconds, as I explained before. In that five seconds I had to observe the child and categorise the observation by choosing from the four main categories and two sub-categories. Therefore I had to train myself and practise until I had sufficient skill in categorising the observations.

3.9.2 Reliability of the Qualitative Methods

Although the reliability of qualitative methods cannot be tested statistically, it is possible to evaluate it through a set of principles explained by Klein and Myers (1999) (see Appendix 33). There are seven principles, two of which refer to the reliability of the data collection process (e.g., principle 1, principle 3) while the rest refer to the

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validity of the qualitative data. In the coming paragraphs I will try to show how I followed the principles in my qualitative investigation.

In this research I used two different qualitative data collection methods (i.e., semi-structured interview and semi-structured observation) and both were piloted in the first year of the PhD. Regarding the interview, I asked four of my friends who were studying with me in the same college to act as volunteer interviewees so that I could develop the interview schedule and clarify some of the questions. For example, some of the volunteer participants found that the question (Could you tell me who the children with MLD are?) was confusing as they did not know if I wanted their own definition of MLD or if I wanted to hear the official definition of MLD. Therefore I had to change this question to: (From your knowledge, could you explain who children with MLD are?).

The piloting of the observation took place in one school and I shadowed three children chosen at random and started taking observations based on the structured schedule. By this experience I learned how to shadow a child without making the child feel that he/she was being watched; I learned not to rush in describing any observation until I was sure about it; I learned how to describe observation in writing; and I learned how to organise my written data during the observation time (Principle number 3). All these skills helped to enhance the reliability of this research

I followed some practical steps after the pilot to improve the reliability of my methods. As I clarified before, using qualitative methods requires the researcher to be part of the reliability of the methods. To explain, the background and skills of the researcher are part of carrying out qualitative methods; therefore I did not start to carry out interviews or observations until I had completed my reading about the social participation of children with MLD/Slow Learning and how to assess such children. This reading helped me to ask the appropriate questions and to observe children in a deeper way. I also waited until I had developed a relationship with the interviewees before starting the formal interviews; my long stay in the schools facilitated this. This friendly relationship encouraged participants to say what they really believed regarding the interview questions and not what they thought I wanted to hear (Principle number 7). This was

also followed in the observation, as I spent some time observing children without taking any notes, as I wanted to recognise the four target children and I wanted them to get used to my presence so that they would behave as though I was not there. This would reduce the possibility of affected behaviour and increase the reliability of observations.

3.9.3 Validity of the research

Validity and reliability as terms are linked with each another to a large extent; logically, when the research methods are reliable (i.e., ability of giving consistent results), then the result of the research can be valid (i.e., reflect some extent of 'truth'). Nonetheless, there are some factors by which we can understand specifically what validity means in research. According to Cohen et al., (2000):

'In qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher. In quantitative data, validity might be improved through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments of the data.' Cohen et al., 2000, p. 105)

Following the above criteria in my research, I used seven different methods to investigate the same phenomenon under study (i.e., social participation) to reach a high degree of triangulation. Each method had its limitations, thus using different methods helped to reach a better result as each method covered the limitations of another (see, for example, the comparison between interview and observation in the above sections).

Regarding the research sample, all the participants were relevant to the research topic. For example, I chose only those classes which included at least one child with MLD, and interviewed only those teachers or TAs who worked with children identified with MLD. In terms of the analysis, I tried to follow the principles of Klein and Myers (1999) as I did not exclude the background of the case study children from the analysis (e.g., I looked at the academic history of participants and asked about their social life history

in and out of school). I also took all participants' answers into consideration and did not select only a few which would lead the result into one direction or another. All these procedures enhanced the validity of my data. There is no absolute validity that any research can reach, but researchers can only try to improve the validity as far as possible.

The validity of the statistical tests depended on the normality of distribution of the test scores. The majority of the test scores were normally distributed, while some of them (e.g., the result of the structured observation method) were not normally distributed. However, some statisticians believe that confirmation of normality is necessary but not sufficient to confirm the validity of the t-test and ANOVA test (Lumley, Diehr, Emerson and Chen, 2002). This seems reasonable in social research since research where the researcher cannot control all the variables may mean that the distribution of the data is not 'bell shaped'. Nonetheless, normality is important for those who seek to generalize the data. In this research, though, the validity is internal; that means the results of this study are valid within the context of this research only and I am not aiming to generalise the data globally. This is because this research followed the philosophical assumptions of pragmatism which does not seek to discover universal rules, rather it seeks to find out what works (see the philosophical assumptions section).

3.10 Limitations of the Research

As in any study, there were limitations in this research. One main limitation was that the number of children designated as having MLD was small. In England, each of the two schools contained around ten children assessed officially as having MLD and this number was too small for statistical analysis. Although I tried to gain access to a number of schools, only two schools participated in England and another two in Kuwait. Despite the fact that it would be more convincing to reach more schools to find more children identified as having MLD, this would require too many researchers. Furthermore, the current research included all the children in all the participating classes and not only those with MLD. In other words, to investigate the SP of one MLD child in one classroom, I would need to involve all the children in the same class. As this study adopted a

longitudinal approach where the data collection were repeated, the total number of questionnaires I had to analyse was 2208. Therefore, including more schools would clearly have been unfeasible.

A second limitation was that it was not possible to use structured observation in Kuwait where the children with Slow Learning were in a separate class from those without, making a comparison impossible. However that did not prevent me from investigating social interaction through qualitative approaches using semi-structured observation. This qualitative method helped me to investigate the quality of children's social interactions and overcome the limitation of not being able to use the structured observation in Kuwait.

A third limitation was that this study only investigated the social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning within their own classes and not in the wider school, as it was not possible to ask children to nominate or to rate all the children in the school. A further limitation of the method, identified by Avramidis (2010), was that the peer-nomination method cannot recognise actual social clusters, because it is possible for a child to be rejected from a group although he or she has one or two friends. In addition, the nomination and the rating scale do not show the strength of relationships among children (ibid). In order to cover such limitations qualitative methods were used so that I could investigate the level of social participation of children as well as their social interactions outside their classes.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues should be considered, especially in educational research, in which researchers are studying people (Wellington, 2000). Therefore, several steps were taken to ensure that this research was ethically sound. This section is divided into three areas: participants' awareness and permission, procedures during the research, and use of the sociometric method.

3.11.1 Participants' Awareness and Permission

As the proposed study would be authenticated by the University of Exeter, I signed the University's ethical form, in which I committed to upholding their ethical standards (see Appendix 34). The form explicitly mentioned all of the procedures that I applied to avoid ethical problems in my research. After gaining the permission of Exeter University, I used this form to gain access to schools so that the principals or SENCOs were aware that the study was ethically sound.

According to the British Educational Research Association (BERA), researchers are required to obtain permission from the target sample to carry out research and to provide them with information about the research (BERA, 2004). Therefore, in England, I provided a consent form and leaflet sheet for parents (Appendix 35) so that they would be informed about the aims of the research as well as the questions the research was seeking to answer. The parent's signature was required at the end of the consent form (see Appendix 35) and they were informed that unless my-self or the school heard from them, we would assume that they agreed to their child taking part in the study. Nonetheless, the two schools made sure to contact those parents who did not reply to make sure that they were aware of the research and to obtain their verbal consent. Furthermore, I provided a leaflet for the children and asked them to discuss with their parents about participating in the research (Appendix 36). The children's permission was also requested at the end of the leaflet for parents. Regarding the four case studies, I could not inform them directly that I was going to focus my observation on their direct social behaviour at school because that could lead to changes in their behaviour and they may show unnatural behaviour, leading to invalid results. Instead, I told them that there would be some general observation in their class so that a report could be written about the social participation of pupils in Year 4 in their school. Teachers also took part in the study, so I provided them with a leaflet (Appendix 37) as well as a consent form (Appendix 38) to obtain their permission. The consent forms for children were sent through the children themselves to their parents in both countries. In England it took a

bit longer to gain the participants' consent, as I had to wait for replies from all parents. Some parents did not reply, so I asked the SENCOs of the two schools to contact them directly by phone and to use their social relationship to explain the aims of the research, and in the end they gave permission for their children to participate.

In Kuwait the process of gaining access was faster and easier, as schools are required to follow the instructions of the Ministry of Education. Therefore, the first step was to convince the Ministry to give me access to the schools. I did this through an official request showing the aims of the study, the methods to be used and the requirements the researcher would need from the Ministry. Fortunately, I obtained this approval to gain access to schools located in Hawalli province and the city centre Province (see Appendix 39 for all the legal approvals). After gaining access to the schools, the Schools Offices for Social Services in each school contacted the parents of the participating children and informed them about the research aims and gave a short explanation of the methods used as a main requirement of the Ministry of Education. Besides that, a short oral explanation of the research aims was explained briefly to the children in each participating class before applying the instruments myself. It also worth saying that there were some concerns from those in charge in the Ministry about using the semi-structured observation (i.e., shadowing the four case study children) as this would take two months of daily observation in schools, but finally I got the approval (see Appendix 40 for the Minister's stamp of approval for all the methods I used).

3.11.2 Considerations during Data Collection

Several issues were taken into consideration during the procedures of the research to ensure its ethical nature. First, all the quantitative instruments were estimated to require no more than 20 minutes each, so that not much time was demanded of the participants. Furthermore, in terms of children with reading difficulties or children requiring special help to complete the questionnaires, instruments were used in individual settings so that the questions could be read to them with the help of their teacher or teacher assistant.

Regarding the interviews, I made sure that no interview was interrupted by the teachers' work or children's lessons. According to Cohen et al. (2000), there is an ethical consideration when researchers spend a long time interviewing, or pulling participants out of a lesson, which leads to missed lessons (Cohen et al., 2000). Therefore, I carried out the teachers' interviews after school. Additionally, I made sure that the interview schedule did not include any leading questions or biases toward specific answers, and tried my best to hide my body language and facial expressions which could indicate agreement or disagreement with interviewees' answers, which would also be considered an ethical issue (Wellington, 2000).

To further ensure an ethical process, the data collected, such as the transcribed interviews, the personal records of the pupils and their results, were all stored privately. No real names were utilised as they were all replaced with pseudonyms. Employing the real names of the participants could go against the principle of confidentiality; according to BERA, researchers should be aware of the fact that participants are entitled to privacy of their data and researchers have no right to publish the data unless they have the participant's agreement (BERA, 2004). Cohen et al. (2000) also stated that anonymity is one way to avoid ethical issues in educational research.

3.11.3 Sociometric Methods and Ethical Considerations

The investigation of the social participation of children requires the use of sociometric methods (i.e., nomination and rating scale) as in this research. The use of these methods could be associated with some ethical issues. For example, children who are nominated usually as 'liked least' could be treated negatively by their peers after the instrument was applied, as they could be conspicuous to their classmates; and this is an ethical issue (Mayeux and Marion, 2007). Furthermore, parents may have concerns that such a method may lead peers to treat one another in negative way; therefore, the use of this method could be unethical (Mayeux and Marion, 2007).

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A significant number of researchers have examined the risks of the sociometric method on children. Iverson and Iverson (1996) investigated children's perspectives toward sociometric tests and found that almost all of the participants enjoyed the test and had no negative emotional reactions towards it. In addition, in one survey, less than 5% of 145 researchers who used sociometric methods indicated any harmful impact on children (Bell-Dolan and Wessler, 1994). Consequently, it seems that the level of danger in using the sociometric method is low.

Nonetheless, in this study, several steps were followed to avoid ethical issues. According to Underwood et al. (2006), to prevent any risk that could occur from the use of the sociometric method on children, researchers should explain confidentiality to the children before conducting the test, implement the sociometric method before an organized activity for children to limit rumination and conversations between children after applying the instrument, and using positive nomination, such as 'who you like the most,' instead of negative nomination, such as 'who you like the least'. Therefore, in this research, questions such as 'name three of your classmates who you like least' or— from the rating scale—'I do not like to play with...' were avoided as these kinds of questions are considered by some as unethical (Merrell, 2003). Alternatively, some terms in the research instruments were adapted to be made more suitable for the intended users. For example, in the rating scale, I changed the last option from 'I do not like' to 'I do not care,' so that no negative nomination could occur. Furthermore, I made sure that, during the process of applying the nomination test and rating scale, no child had the chance to see his/her peers' answers. I ensured that by explaining the importance of confidentiality to the children before applying the instrument, and by relying on the supervision of the class teachers, teacher assistants, and myself while students were answering the tests. I am aware that using direct negative rating or nomination may show clear evidence for rejection, so using negative nomination is important and aids understanding of children's social participation. However, as negative nomination may entail some ethical problems (explained above), I decided not to use it and, as an alternative, I used semi-structured observation and semi-structured interviews. These

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allowed me to investigate the social participation of children, including social rejection, without involving any ethical considerations.

In this chapter, the philosophical assumption and the research design have been clarified in detail. The following chapter will be the Findings chapter where the results of both phases of this research will be presented.

Chapter 4: Findings

4. Findings

In this chapter I will present the findings of the study, starting with the results of the investigation of the concepts of MLD\Slow Learning. In this way the reader will be able to recognize how these concepts are understood by professionals in both countries before exploring the social participation of children identified as having MLD\Slow Learning. I will then present the quantitative results of the social participation of such children in Kuwait and England. Next, profiles of the four case studies in each country will be shown in a more qualitative way and finally cross-case analyses will be presented in order to show the similarities and differences between the case studies in Kuwait and those in England.

4.1 *The concept of MLD and its assessment and understanding*

4.1.1 *What is MLD?*

- *Kuwait*

My qualitative investigations in Kuwait revealed that the Kuwaiti educational system used a very simple definition of MLD (i.e. Slow Learning in Kuwaiti terminology): *'The slow learner is a child who has an IQ score of between 70 and 84 on an IQ test adapted to Kuwaiti culture'* (Ministry of Education, 1996). As is clear from the definition, the Ministry of Education mainly used the IQ score to define Slow Learning children; such a definition was officially used by all the educational psychologists who worked for the Ministry. Therefore all of my interviewees gave almost the same answer (i.e., the Ministry's definition) when I asked them to define 'Slow Learning'. For example, one of the technical supervisors for the psychological services said: *'The slow learner is a child who has difficulties as shown in his schooling outcome and has an IQ score between 70 -84.* This could show that the educational system in Kuwait used procedurally objective criteria due to the clarity of cut off standards (i.e. scores from 84 to 70 in IQ tests) to define Slow Learning as is clear from the official document released by the Ministry of Education (See Appendix 41). In contrast, in England the criteria are not procedurally objective, as I will explain in the coming section.

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- England

As explained in the literature review, the concept of MLD in England set out in general terms that are not well defined as it appears in the Code of Practice (see the Literature Review section). Such ambiguity in the definition of MLD seems to be reflected in the opinions of my interviewees. When I asked those who were involved in MLD assessment to explain who the children with MLD were, they were not sure, as this answer shows:

'I think that's quite a tricky question because I think it varies a lot from school to school. I think it's quite contextual, so I think it depends on the population of your school and how you define it. I don't think there is a very clear definition of what it is.' (Interview with Education Psychologist)

'Well we find it difficult, I'll say that. I think the children with a moderate learning difficulty sometimes end up being the ones where you can't categorise them in another way. So if they've got a specific learning difficulty like dyslexia, for instance, that's quite easy to identify and categorise. Moderate learning difficulty is when - for us it's when they're struggling with all aspects of their learning.' (Interview with SENCO)

'There's no sort of cut-off point assessment. It's just a general judgement really. So in terms of making judgements, when it comes to reporting on the census, that's obviously reporting students and pupils on the Special Needs Code of Practice. If they don't fit into any of the other areas of needs it can be that pupils are recorded as MLD.' (Interview with Local Authority Officer)

On the other hand, some tried to give a definition of children with MLD by indicating certain characteristics and their answers were very similar to the DfES definition; for example, one SENCO said:

SENCO: For me I would put a child on the SEN register as having moderate learning difficulties if I felt that they were struggling with learning really. So they didn't have severe complex needs but they generally found learning difficult. They learnt at a slower rate and that is despite interventions, despite any work

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we do with them. That they have needs that are longer term that means that they learn slower and find it more difficult to learn and so will be below age related expectations.

Me: When you said (they found learning difficult), what area of learning do you mean?

SENCO: Well, we particularly would look at literacy and numeracy.

Table 7 below is a summary of all the criteria used to explain the concepts of MLD\Slow Learning by the interviewees and by the official documents in the two comparative countries

Table 7: Key criteria of MLD in the two comparative countries

Who are children with MLD\Slow Learning?	
Kuwait	England
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IQ between 84 to 70 - Has general learning difficulties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>have attainments well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum (DfES, 2005)</i> - <i>needs cannot be addressed by normal differentiation (ibid)</i> - <i>much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts (ibid)</i> - <i>speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and under-developed social skills (ibid)</i> - <i>without severe complex needs but generally finding learning difficult (interview with psychologist)</i> - <i>not fitting into any of the other areas of needs (interview with Local Authority Officer)</i>

4.1.2 *How can Mild, Moderate and Severe LD be distinguished?*

- *Kuwait*

It seems that there is agreement among all of my participants in Kuwait on the main criteria by which the difference between the above three categories can be distinguished. All of the participants indicated that IQ score is the key. Based on that the Kuwaiti educational system categorised children based on their IQ scores under different names and different labels than those used in the English educational system. For instance, when I asked one of the technical supervisors for psychological services about the difference between Slow Learning, moderate, mild and severe ‘mental retardation’, she said:

‘We can differentiate among them based on the IQ scores. For example, if we see the IQ score for Slow Learning children we will find it between 84 to 70, and Slow Learning children are placed in special classes in normal schools, while those children who have an IQ score between 69 and 55 were diagnosed as having Mild Mental Retardation and they were placed in a special school in the Hawally area. After they graduate they will have a diploma which allows them to work. Children who score from 55 to 40, we call them Moderate Mental Retardation and children who score from 40 and below we call Severe Mental Retardation and those children are usually transferred to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour to practise some handicraft skills or to the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs to vocational rehabilitation school, but they do not offer them a diploma afterwards.’ (My interview with technical supervisor for the psychological services)

It is clear from the answer above that using IQ cut-off points is a method whereby categories can be distinguished. It is also worth saying that the classification appearing in the technical supervisor’s answers was the same as the classification in the Diagnostic and Statistical, Manual DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). This is because the Kuwaiti system follows the American Individual with Disabilities Education Act, with some modifications (Barr, 1983).

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- England

In order to clarify the differences among mild, moderate and severe LD, I designed this table in which the differences among those three categories will be clarified by quoting the answers from some of the participants in England.

Table 8: Distinction between Mild, Moderate and Severe LD: participants' answers in England

Mild LD	Moderate LD	Severe LD
<i>'A mild learning difficulty might be something that perhaps an intervention might help. Something that you might be able to do to fill the gap for a child, maybe something they'd missed but it's not a category that I use particularly.'</i> (Interview with a SENCO 1)	<i>'I think with a moderate learning difficulty you're having to think much more carefully about the type of learning the child does and the way they can access that learning. So you're putting in more support mechanisms.'</i> (Interview with a SENCO 1)	<i>'Severe learning difficulties, I suppose for us they're the children who are perhaps at P levels, who really have significant learning difficulties across the board. They often have, I mean it's a degree of severity... It's a continuum really.'</i> (Interview with a SENCO 2)
<i>'Mild learning difficulty - the child would still be achieving and making progress without you having to put too much support in.'</i> (Interview with educational psychologist)	<i>'I think a moderate learning difficulty - you're thinking the child is having perhaps global delay in their development.'</i> (Interview with a SENCO 2)	<i>'Those are children... ongoing needs with their personal care. They may still need help with - they're very likely to need help with toileting, with feeding. They would be learning at a very slow rate. There would be significant speech and language and communication needs.'</i> (Interview with educational psychologist)

It is clear from the participants' answers that differentiating among mild, moderate and severe LD is not clear cut, as their answers were very broad and general. For example, one of them said that moderate LD meant putting in more support mechanisms, but she did not clarify the number or type of mechanisms. Another example was when SENCO number 2

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said severe LD applied to those who had really significant learning difficulties across the board. She, however, did not clarify what she considered ‘really significant’. In general, all the participants found the idea of differentiation hard and there was no cut-off point between the categories: *No, I don't distinguish between those three [mild, moderate and severe LD]; again I think it's very difficult; I wouldn't know what the specific differences between those three were.* (Interview with SENCO 1)

The uncertainty also appeared in participants’ answers. For example, one of the participants was not sure whether a difference existed between mild and moderate; she answered: *‘Not that I know of. Unless you can tell me otherwise! Have any other people said that there are? [Laughs] You'll have to tell me later’* (interview with Local Authority Officer). Another participant was not sure about the difference between moderate and severe LD, as she said: *‘Severe learning difficulties, I'm not sure that is easy to distinguish from moderate learning difficulties. I'm not sure where it tips over’* (interview with SENCO 1). The participants also believed that the idea of distinguishing among the categories was based on a subjective judgment:

ME: Ok is there any criterion that you use particularly to distinguish among those three categories?

SENCO: No. No fixed criteria as far as I'm aware.

ME: I see, so do you think it's kind of subjective?

SENCO: Yes, I think it probably is, yeah.

ME: So is it possible for example for a child to be assessed with MLD in London and maybe the same child assessed as below attainment in another place?

SENCO: Yes, that could be possible. I think that is possible that a child assessed in one area as one thing may not be when they move areas. (Interview with SENCO 2)

Finally, some of the participants did not agree that they should place children in such categories, as it was not practical; such as the educational psychologist when she stated:

'It's not a distinction that I need to use - that I've ever had to use. My understanding is that the British Psychological Society wouldn't necessarily encourage me to use such labels, because in my experience, I would look at a learning difficulty as something that is caused... something that's almost an interaction model between a child's cognitive functioning, their social skills and social functioning, environmental issues, and physiological medical needs (My interview with educational psychologist)

4.1.3 *How can we distinguish among MLD/Slow Learning, specific learning difficulties (SpLD) and below average attainment?*

- *Kuwait*

A clear answer came from my interview with one of the SEN senior managers in one educational province in Kuwait, who said that she had already answered this question in one of her written instructions to the educational psychologist in the educational province in which she was in charge. She gave me a copy of her written table and we went through what she wrote (See Appendix 42 for a copy of her original written answer.) Table 9 is a translation of the main elements of her answer:

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Table 9: The written answer of the SEN senior manager regarding the differences between Slow Learning, SpLD and below average attainments in Kuwait

	Slow Learning	SpLD	Below average attainment
Cognitive abilities (IQ)	Below average: from 70 to 84	Average score or more: from 85 and above	Average score or more: from 90 and above
Academic outcomes	Low in all school aspects, with limited understanding	Low in one or more of the learning skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, memory, attention, understanding, concentration or calculation	Low in one or more school aspects because of external factors such as being absent, sick or other factors.
Reasons for low academic outcome	Because the IQ score is low	Problems in the central nervous system (deficiency in the brain area responsible for learning language)	Social, environmental, health or psychological problems
Behavioural characteristics	Relative difficulties because of environment or heritable problems in their adaptive behavioural	Habitual behaviour problems include being hyperactive, having problems with attention and some social problems	Some misbehaving as such children may feel depressed because of unsuccessful experiences

It is also worth saying that the SEN senior manager emphasised that IQ score was the main criterion the Kuwaiti system took into account to distinguish among different categories, whereas the other criteria in the table existed as secondary factors to support the IQ score. This was also indicated by all other participants: that the IQ score is the main method which distinguishes among Slow Learning, SpLD and below average attainment.

As is clear from Table 9, the IQ test results determine the categories of children. Importantly, below-average IQ scores were interpreted as signs that medical cognitive difficulties had caused learning difficulties, whereas children who received average to high IQ scores with low academic attainment were explained as having some environmental problems. Accordingly, the result of the IQ test is a key factor that the Kuwaiti system uses to categorise children and assess the cause of their difficulties, as will be explained in subsequent sections.

- *England*

It seems that the participants in the interviews could identify the difference between moderate LD and specific LD much more clearly in their following answers than the way they explained the difference between moderate LD and below average attainment when I asked them to do so. First I will present some of the participants' answers regarding the difference between moderate and specific LD. Some participants believed that the main difference was that children with MLD were below average in attainment across the board, whereas SpLD occurred in just one area:

'For us a child with moderate learning difficulties would have it across the board. I think he also would have difficulties - it's around the understanding of it as well. It's the general cognition across the board. Whereas specific learning difficulties is very much around one area.' (Interview with SENCO 2)

Other participants distinguished between the two categories by looking at the child's school profile:

Well, Specific Learning Difficulties is very easy. It's your umbrella term for your dyslexia, your dyscalculia and all those sorts of things. Particularly with Specific Learning Difficulties you're looking at the learning profile, and you've got your spikes. You've got your good points and you've got your weaknesses. So it's a sort of spiky learning profile. (Interview with Leadership associate)

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Yet other participants emphasised the type of intervention as a way of distinguishing between moderate and specific LD. For example, SENCOs number one said:

Specific learning difficulty, I think we're looking at the profile of their learning then and the type of intervention that we've put in place and whether or not that's been successful. So if a child is struggling across the curriculum and we put in a literacy intervention and a numeracy intervention and the numeracy intervention works really well for them and they take off with that but they're still having issues with literacy we then might think... about getting them assessed for dyslexia. (Interview with SENCO 1)

Regarding the difference between MLD and below average attainment, the participants found the distinction was not clear. Some participants believed that below average attainment was a symptom and not a cause:

'Below average attainment could be for any reason at all. It could be a child who has been off school for a year. It could be a child who has got low attendance. It could be a child who is going through a bereavement. It just means it's only a description of where they are at the moment. It's a symptom rather than a cause.' (Interview with SENCO 2)

Similar to specific LD, some participants looked at progress after the intervention as a way of differentiating between what is below average and what not:

If I take the below average attainment first, what we care for when we're looking at children to identify with special needs in general is that we do look at their attainment but we also look at their progress. So if a child is below average attainment but they're making good progress then we wouldn't necessarily categorise them as having any special educational need because they're making progress. (Interview with SENCO 1)

The participants could also recognise below average attainment by looking at the cause of the low attainment. If a child had below average attainment but was progressing through

intervention, this could indicate that the cause of low attainment for that child was environmental and not because of any LD:

I think if you were thinking they haven't got a special need it will be because they came in at a low benchmark, so their starting profile was low in foundation. So you would look to see that they are making good progression, but actually they started so low. I guess that's down to environmental factors in the home.

(Interview with SENCO 2)

4.1.4 What causes MLD\Slow Learning?

- Kuwait

Apparently, all of the participants in Kuwait believed that the main cause of Slow Learning was related to medical issues that children had before or after birth. For instance:

Many factors could cause Slow Learning, for example the health problem that pregnant women had during her pregnancy could affect the baby's brain, taking wrong medicines during pregnancy and hereditary factors also when a family has mental retardation history. (Interview with technical supervisors for the psychological services)

The SEN senior manager provided a more detailed answer: she said that the causes of Slow Learning were as yet not clear; however she said that due to the fact that Slow Learning is one of the disabilities related to mental delay, then the causes of Slow Learning will be the same as the causes of any mental delay. Then she related these to medical reasons, saying:

There are three main factors (i.e. before birth, during birth and after birth). The before birth factors are during pregnancy (e.g., taking some medicine which affects pregnancy or drinking alcohol, taking drugs or having X-rays which affect the baby). During birth factors (e.g., when the embryo lacks oxygen and when the umbilical cord chokes the baby). Finally, after birth factors (e.g., high body temperature or any other sickness which affects the brain). (Interview with SEN senior manager)

When I asked the participants whether they thought that environmental factors could be a cause of Slow Learning, the majority of them said no, while only one participant mentioned that environmental factors could lead to the symptoms of Slow Learning (i.e. below average attainment) but could not cause Slow Learning:

Environmental factors like family factors could lead to decrease the student's academic outcome, when the parents of the child had been divorced or when the parents do not take care of their child, do not teach him at home or when the parents encourage their child to be absent and not to attend school every day, this will affect the child's attainments at school. However this will not affect his IQ score, because when we do the IQ test we make sure that there are no environmental factors involved. (Interview with special classes' school psychologist)

It is also worth indicating my observation of the differences in the way the Kuwaiti and English participants responded to being asked about the causes of Slow Learning. Most Kuwaiti participants seemed to have a ready answer, as they answered the question directly, referring to medical reasons, while the English participants found the question very difficult to answer, expressing their difficulties by some expressions in their answer such as:

- *You're asking me a million dollar question there, aren't you?*
- *In my experience, the cause of a moderate or mild learning difficulty is not as easy to determine as just looking at someone's cognitive functioning.*

In the following section I will explain the English participants' views about the causes of MLD.

- *England*

The participants' answers in England in relation to the causes of MLD appear to support the idea that MLD could be a result of both environmental and biological factors. To further clarify the answers, Table 10 summarises the participants' opinions:

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Table 10: Summary of participant’s answers regarding the causes of MLD in England

	Environmental factors	Biological factors
What cause MLD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>because of a family break up or a trauma in the family... issues with domestic violence in the family (My interview with Educational psychologist)</i> • <i>Family are struggling with unemployment, poverty, substance misuse, overcrowding, then I think that cluster effect has come together and has made the learning difficulty more pronounced. (interview with SENCO 1)</i> • <i>I think the environmental side of experiences before coming to school or even at school has a huge impact... language deprivation in family... they [schools] haven't had good quality first teaching (ibid)</i> • <i>Children that live in very chaotic households... taken away from their parents and moved back. Parents that find parenting very difficult and don't have appropriate parenting strategies. (interview with SENCO 2)</i> 	<p><i>Biological responses, for example children with foetal alcohol syndrome ... another biological one would be ADHD or ADD. (interview with SENCO 1)</i></p>

As we can see from the table, the participants identified more environmental than biological factors, although they believed that both factors could cause MLD. There was only one participant who was not sure whether the environmental factors were causes or they were just elements which affected the extent of LD:

Yes, I think they make it worse [i.e., environmental factors]. I don't know if they are the cause.... No, they're not a cause, no definitely not because we see children with all of those environmental factors who don't have problems learning in school. So you couldn't have one without the other..., but other

*children with that same set of environmental factors find it much more difficult.
So I think it's a combination of the two. (Interview with SENCO 2)*

In the following sections I will explain the different ways of looking at the stability of MLD/Slow Learning in the two comparative countries.

4.1.5 Are MLD and Slow Learning permanent conditions or temporary which may diminish over time?

- Kuwait

The participants in Kuwait seemed to lean more toward the idea that Slow Learning is a permanent disability due to the fact its causes are medical; however they also agreed that the symptoms of such difficulties, such as below average attainment at school, could be temporary as they could improve through time. This was clear from the participants' answers:

*If the reasons for Slow Learning are medical, before or after or during birth, then the difficulties could be permanent, although I think that the damage in the brain is not severe because their IQ score is between 84 to 70 which is just below normal children. However there are some children who did improve their school achievement and had been moved to mainstream classes with their normal peers.
(Interview with technical supervisors for the psychological services)*

One of the participants disagreed about describing Slow Learning as a disability due to the fact that the medical cause of Slow Learning was not clear and not large enough to be labelled as a disability, rather she said: *I think Slow Learning children are normal children, but they only have learning difficulties because their IQ score is low and cannot be changed through time more than 4 points* (Interview with school psychologist). Such an answer shows that the participant believed that the cognitive ability of Slow Learning children was permanent or, in more detail, could change in a narrow range, while their school achievements could be improved through time.

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- England

The participants in England seemed to agree with the participants in Kuwait, as many of them agreed that the cognitive ability of children identified as having MLD was hard to change:

Cognition doesn't change an awful lot. So in terms of psychometric assessment, the schools - you wouldn't do a test every year, and hope that it's changed. But my hope would be that the outcomes in terms of a child's learning could be - not temporary - I don't believe children would catch up... But I think the cognitive - their cognition will probably stay the same, and it's pretty permanent. That's my understanding... So if, for example, they struggle with auditory processing, if the teaching style changed, they might still struggle with auditory processing.
(Interview with educational psychologist)

However the participants also believed that if children got the 'right' input and intervention, their learning difficulty could be better, even though it was a long term difficulty:

Moderate learning difficulties I would think would be longer term. That's not to say that the children can't make progress. They might catch up in some areas.
(Interview with SENCO 2)

A bit of both. I would like to hope that for some children it is only temporary and if the education system could put the right supports in place that they might get through that and carry on achieving. (Interview with SENCO 1)

Finally, two of the participants emphasized the causes of MLD; they believed that if the causes were biological then the difficulties could be permanent, while if the causes were environmental, then the LD could be temporary, for example:

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Maybe that depends on the cause as well... I guess some of those biological factors that we talked about, like the ADHD and the foetal alcohol syndrome; I think that those children are always going to have issues... On the other hand I think some of them can be temporary as well. I suppose again it depends what you're including in that moderate learning difficulty. (Interview with SENCO 1)

- Summary

After carrying out all the interviews, I gave all the interviewees a small questionnaire regarding the concept of MLD/Slow Learning. The following table is the result of the participants' answers in both countries.

Findings

Table 11: Summary of the model results of the MLD/Slow Learning questionnaires completed by the participants in Kuwait and England

MLD Questionnaire Items	The mean result of the 5 point scale in both countries starting from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"	
	KUWAIT	ENGLAND
MLD/Slow Learning is very low attainment across the curriculum subjects	Agree	Agree
MLD/Slow Learning is very low attainment across the curriculum subjects AND very low intellectual abilities	Sometimes agree sometimes disagree	Sometimes agree sometimes disagree
MLD/Slow Learning involves learning difficulties that are NOT specific learning difficulties NOR severe intellectual disabilities	Agree	Sometimes agree sometimes disagree
The difficulties identified as MLD/Slow Learning are not easily differentiated from low attainment	Disagree	Strongly agree
The difficulties identified as MLD/Slow Learning arise mainly from social and familial disadvantage	Disagree	Agree
The difficulties identified as MLD/Slow Learning should not be regarded as an intellectual disability	Disagree	Agree
The concept of MLD/Slow Learning is problematic and is better not be used	Disagree	Agree

According to this pattern of results, the major differences in opinion between the participants in Kuwait and the participants in England occurred in the last four items. It is clear that the participants in Kuwait found the term MLD (i.e. Slow Learning) easy to distinguish, use and define. They also thought it was an intellectual disability which could not be caused by social or familial disadvantage. The participants' interviews in Kuwait also revealed that the participants referred directly, without any hesitation, to medical reasons to explain the cause

of Slow Learning. This indicates clearly that the traditional medical model was the lens through which the Kuwaiti participants were looking at Slow Learning. In contrast, the participants in England found the concept of MLD to be ambiguous, not easy to use or define (see Table 11). The qualitative results also showed that the participants in England were not sure about the cause of MLD and they found such questions difficult to answer or define; they gave different reasons for MLD, including social, medical and family reasons, even school issues such as bad teaching. The following section will explain the operating methods used to assess MLD/Slow Learning.

4.1.6 *What methods are used to assess MLD/Slow Learning?*

- *Kuwait*

Direct answers came from the Kuwaiti participants in relation to the assessment methods used in Kuwait to assess Slow Learning. All the participants agreed that amended IQ tests were the main assessment methods in the Kuwaiti culture:

The IQ test is the instrument we use to measure long-term memory, short-term memory, calculation ability, the ability to know details and general cognitive abilities, especially the Wechsler IQ test which can identify the child's areas of weakness and the strength in cognitive abilities; the Stanford-Binet IQ test as well. (Interview with technical supervisors for the psychological services)

The amended Arabic answer sheet of Wechsler IQ test shows some areas that the test emphasizes. According to the official answer sheet, the test is divided into two parts (verbal and performance) just as the Western version of Wechsler IQ test. The verbal part focuses on areas such as examining some basic information, the ability to recognise similarity, do calculations, recognise concepts and show understanding. The performance part asks the child to complete incomplete pictures, put pictures in order, collect different parts of an item, look for particular shapes and, finally, do some puzzles (See Appendix 43 in its two parts for the original answer sheet and for some examples of the sheet).

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The Stanford-Binet test is quite similar to the Wechsler IQ test, as the answer sheet summarises aspects of the Binet test; there are four main areas in the test. The first area is the Verbal Inference, for example, showing the child a group of pictures and asking the child to recognise the ridiculous picture (e.g., a boy brushing his hair with a spoon) and explain why. The second part is the Visual Inference, for instance asking the child to copy simple pictures. The third part is the Quantitative Deductive Inference which includes calculating numbers or building equations. The last part is the Short-term Memory, an example of which is to show some pictures (i.e. pictures of animals or numbers or items) and then ask the child to remember what he/she saw in order (See Appendix 44 for the original answer sheet). This summarises the areas of focus in the Stanford-Binet and Wechsler IQ tests.

It is also worth saying that the participants in Kuwait also believed that the IQ test was a valid method to assess children with Slow Learning and they believed that the incorrect assessments of some children were due to some problems on the IQ test's administration and implications only and not because of a deficiency in the IQ test as a method. This was clear in the SEN senior manager's answer when she said: *'The IQ tests in Kuwait are effective and reliable and they all had been adapted to the Kuwaiti culture'*. When I asked her to explain some cases in which students' IQ tests scores had changed through time, she said:

Their scores did not change... the IQ test unfortunately could be affected by the surrounding factors and environmental factors, the implementation of the test affects the scores... You cannot bring a child in one day and give him the test in a room he is not familiar with and ask him to sit with an examiner he has never met before... such bad implementation of the test will lead to wrong indications and scores... The cognitive ability of the children did not change but the implementation of the test changed... If the teachers or the school psychologist noticed that the IQ test of a child doesn't match his abilities, in this case we do repeat the IQ test after six months of the first implementation, if the new score is higher, then we always base on the higher score. (Interview with SEN Senior Manager)

As is clear from the answer above, the change in the IQ score was explained by the erroneous implementation of the test and not because of any cognitive improvement. This was also

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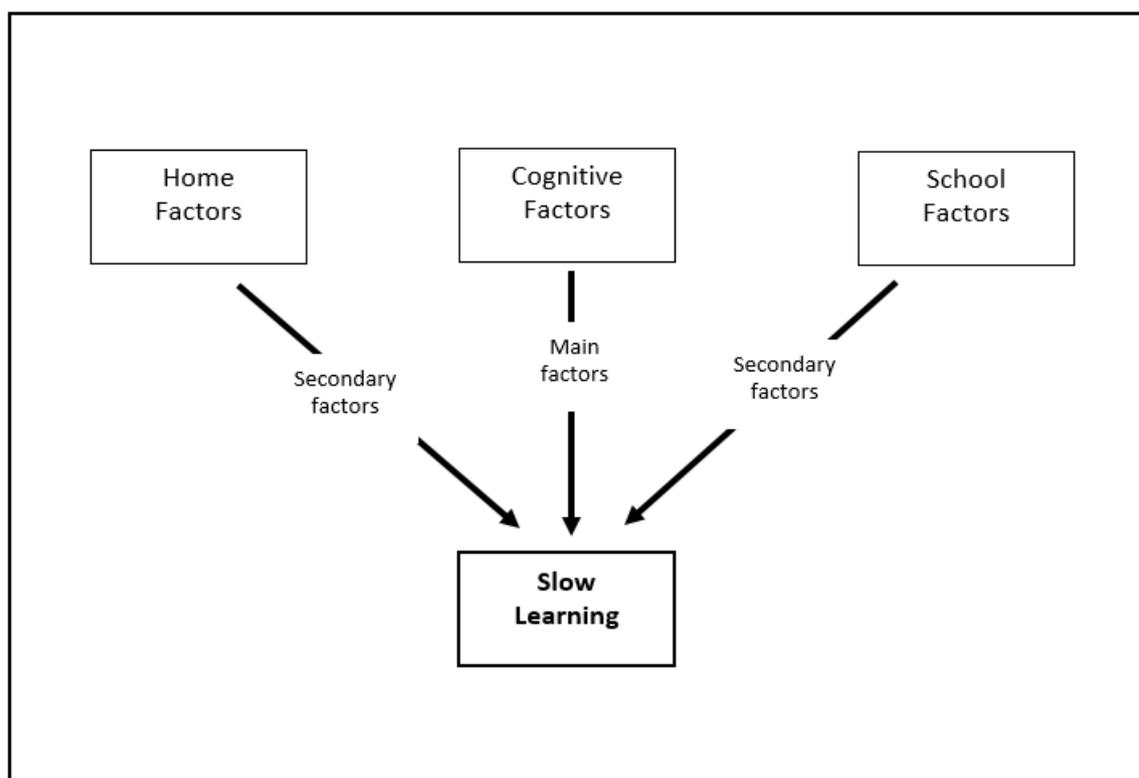
indicated by other participants. Therefore, some of the participants emphasised the way the IQ test should be implemented, as they indicated that there were some rules the examiner (i.e. the school psychologist or the psychologist in the Department of Psychological Services) needed to take into account. The following points are a summary of the rules drawn by different participants:

- To ensure that there are no environmental factors affecting the child's abilities such as family problems
- To ensure that the child is stable psychologically and emotionally (i.e., not afraid or very anxious or upset) before doing the test and feels comfortable with the physical environment of the test
- To check if the child has any impairments which could affect his test attainments (i.e. visual or audio difficulties)
- To make sure that the child is not sick and has had breakfast
- To carry out the test at the most appropriate time for the child (i.e., at the time the child prefers to do the test)
- To build up a relationship between the examiner and the child through arranging different meetings so the child is familiar and feels comfortable with the examiner.

Despite the fact that the Kuwaiti system relies on IQ tests, the participants indicated different ways which helped to assess Slow Learning as secondary methods. For example, one of the technical supervisors of psychological services said: *'In addition to the IQ tests, we use psychological tests, personality tests, school reports and Portues maze which is 11 mazes starting from easy to hard maze gradually'*. (Appendix 45 present examples of different mazes in Portues measurement.)

To sum up, the Kuwaiti system used IQ tests which investigated cognitive aspects of the child as the main criterion to assess Slow Learning, whereas the parents' information and the school assessments (i.e. school reports, teachers' observations or psychometric tests) were considered as secondary resources, as Figure 7 shows:

Figure 7: Summary of the assessment factors used in the Kuwaiti system to assess Slow



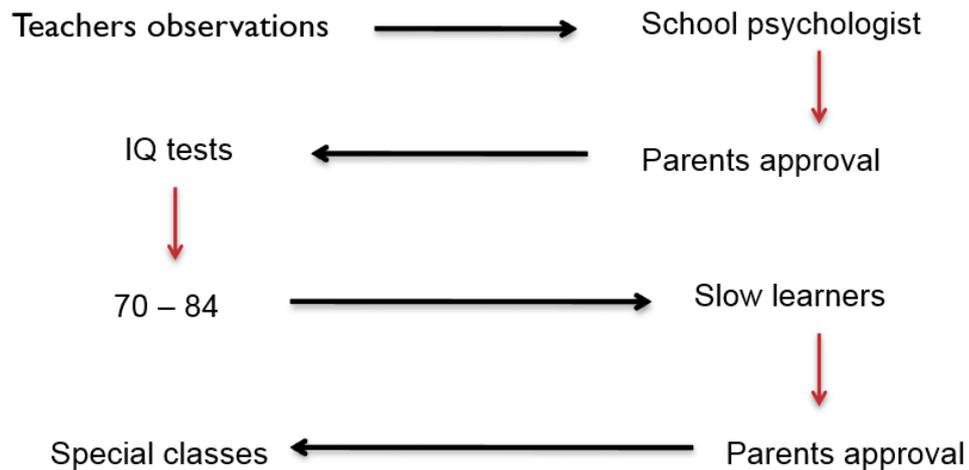
Learning

In relation to the practical procedures for assessing Slow Learning, according to the interviewed participants in Kuwait, the first step comes from parents at home or teachers at school when they notice that the child has general learning difficulties and informs the school psychologist. The school psychologist then carries out some observations of the child at the school, asks other teachers about the child's attainment (due to the fact that in Kuwait there are more than one teacher to teach the same class) and writes a report about the child to the Department of Psychological Services. In the Department, an appointment will be arranged to do an IQ test and then there will be a multi-agency meeting to discuss the child's profile. The multi-agency meeting will include an educational psychologist, social worker, speech and language therapist, teacher of the child and a doctor; all will review the child's profile. As the IQ test is the main criterion, the agencies will explain the score and discuss other aspects of the child to reach an official assessment. The parents of the child will be informed about the final decision of the meeting and if the parent (i.e. the father of the child) gives consent, the child will have the label of 'slow learner' and will be placed in a special class. However, if the father does not give permission, the child will continue his or her

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education in the mainstream class. A summary of the practical assessment steps is given in Figure 8:

Figure 8: Summary of the practical procedures followed to assess Slow Learning



- *England*

According to the participants in England, there is no one main assessment method used to assess MLD, rather there are different assessments all used to shape a general image of the child's needs. Due to the depth of the data, I summarise the different assessment methods indicated by the participants in England and give some explanation of each method in table 12

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Table 12: Summary drawn from participants' answers regarding the assessment methods used to assess MLD in England

Operational assessment methods	Clarification of the method
Psychometric tests: WISC-IV	The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children–Fourth Edition: an intelligence test used to assess children with LD. The test is reported as the most frequently used intelligence test among schools and clinical psychologists (Kaufman & Lichtenberger, 2000, cited in: Canivez, 2014)
Psychometric tests: BAS-III	The British Ability Scales form one of the standardised cognitive batteries in the UK used by educational and clinical psychologists to assess children with learning and behavioural difficulties (The Psychometrics Centre, 2005, online access on the eighth of July 2014)
Psychometric tests: CAT	The Cognitive Ability Test is ' <i>an individual's ability to manipulate and reason with three different types of symbols: words, quantities and spatial patterns... A section, called a test battery, of the complete CAT test is devoted to each of these ways of reasoning, and each battery is further divided into three sorts of test item that test different aspects of that style of reasoning</i> ' (GL-Assessment, (n.d.) online access on the eighth of July 2014).
Other cognitive assessment	<i>The cognitive assessment would focus on verbal skills, spatial awareness, non-verbal skills, speed of processing information, visual, auditory processing information. It would give me that information about their word reading, the spelling, the numeracy</i> (Interview with Educational Psychologist)
SATs: Teachers assessments and test results	Standard Assessment Tests: ' <i>For teachers' assessments usually teachers look to the academic progress over time... progress on national curriculum levels: literacy, numeracy maths, science with some tests in reading and writing; this includes handwriting, spelling, science and maths tests.</i> ' (Interview with SENCO 1)
Interviews with:	<i>I would talk to the family, and I would look at issues around who's at home, the changes that have happened at home, who the main carer is...</i>

Findings

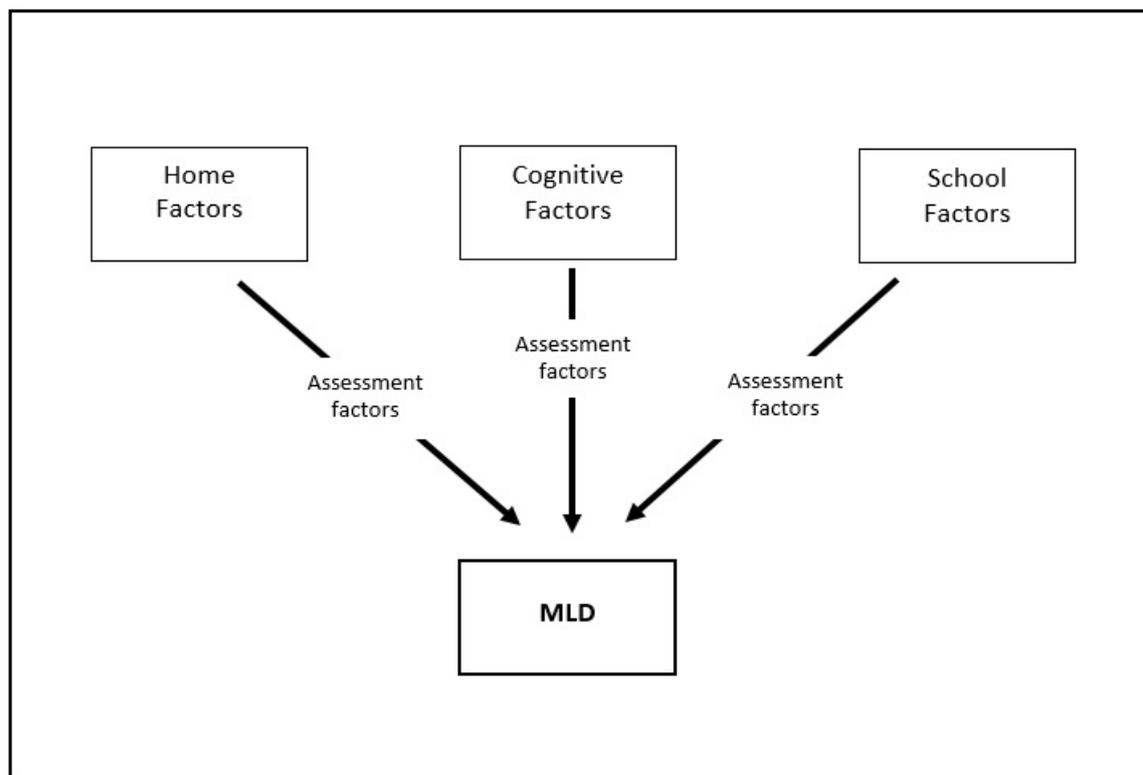
Parents SENCOS Teachers	<i>the emphasis very much on the system around the child and an interactionist model of the interaction between environments, learning and social skills.</i> (Interview with Educational Psychologist)
Personal construct psychology (PCP)	A psychological model in which psychologist implements four principles through a set of propositions (i.e. approaching events or context with the assumption that no one has direct access to the truth), then to view the behaviour of the child (e.g.. impulsive, moody or aggressive, carry their own unique meanings and attempts to work things out) (Truneckova & Viney, 2012)
Assess maturity and problem solving skills	<i>I would show them pictures of a school situation and ask them: What's happening in this picture? I would ask them in detail about strategies that could be used to help people in the picture.</i> (Interview with Educational Psychologist)
Observations	
Blob test	<i>A psychological method in which psychologists try to find out the characteristics of personality and emotional functions of the child... So you have a picture of a tree and it has got lots of little people all over the tree doing all different things - so some are sitting by themselves curled up. Some are swinging on trees, some are in groups talking and she asks the children which person on that tree is how they feel in school, how they feel at home? So it gives a bit of an insight into their social and emotional aspect of their lives.</i> (Interview with SENCO 2)
Boxall assessments	This is a profile that helps to find out children's patterns and their functioning in order to define which area they need, in order to guide plans and methods of intervention. The profile is based on a theory which indicates that the adaptation to the school is based on the interaction between caregivers and children in the early years. (Broadhead, Chilton and Stephens, 2011)
Thrive programme	<i>This is a training programme to look at children's social and emotional development.</i> (Interview with SENCO 2)

Findings

Multi-agency planning meetings	<i>'A multi-agency planning meeting with the educational psychologist, with the behaviour support services, with the speech and language therapist... a review every term with every member of staff where we look through all of their children, but particularly the ones that we know are struggling. From those reviews... we know she's finding learning difficult, what exactly it is. (Interview with SENCO 1)</i>
The British Picture Vocabulary Scale	<i>This is a one-to-one test that assesses a child's receptive vocabulary; for each question, the teacher says a word and the pupil responds by selecting a picture from four options that best illustrates the word's meaning. (GL-Assessment, (n.d.) online access on the eighth of July 2014).</i>
WRIT	Wide Range Intelligence Test: it is an intellectual test that measures the different dimensions of intelligence. The test contains measurements of verbal analogies, vocabularies and visual IQ. The WRIT can be applied in less than 30 minutes and had been designed to cover ages between 4 and 85 (Canivez, Konold, Collins & Wilson, 2009)
Phonics assessments and speech therapist assessments	These assessments are to find out the child's ability to recognise the alphabetic principle; a skill in the connection between written letters and spoken sounds.

As is clear from Table 12 above, there is no one main assessment method used to assess MLD but, rather, there are more holistic assessments covering different aspects of the child (i.e. cognitive abilities, personality, emotional development, academic abilities and familial factors) as Figure 9 indicates.

Figure 9: Summary of the assessment factors used in the English system to assess MLD



This is in contrast to the Kuwait model where the cognitive IQ test is the sole criteria of assessment. Such assessment methods in England seem to be used to identify children's needs rather than being used to give a label for children. This was clear from participants' answers, as in different places in the interviews they said that the label of 'MLD' did not help the teacher to know what to do (e.g. *'For us a moderate learning difficulty is more or less just a label on the SEN register... it doesn't help us with teaching at all'* (Interview with SENCO 2). However identifying the child's needs did help the teacher provide support for the child (e.g. *'What helps us is to know that this child needs information cut down into small chunks. Or this child needs help to get going.'* (Interview with SENCO 2). The educational psychologist also revealed that the main aim of the assessment was to identify the children's needs rather than giving them labels:

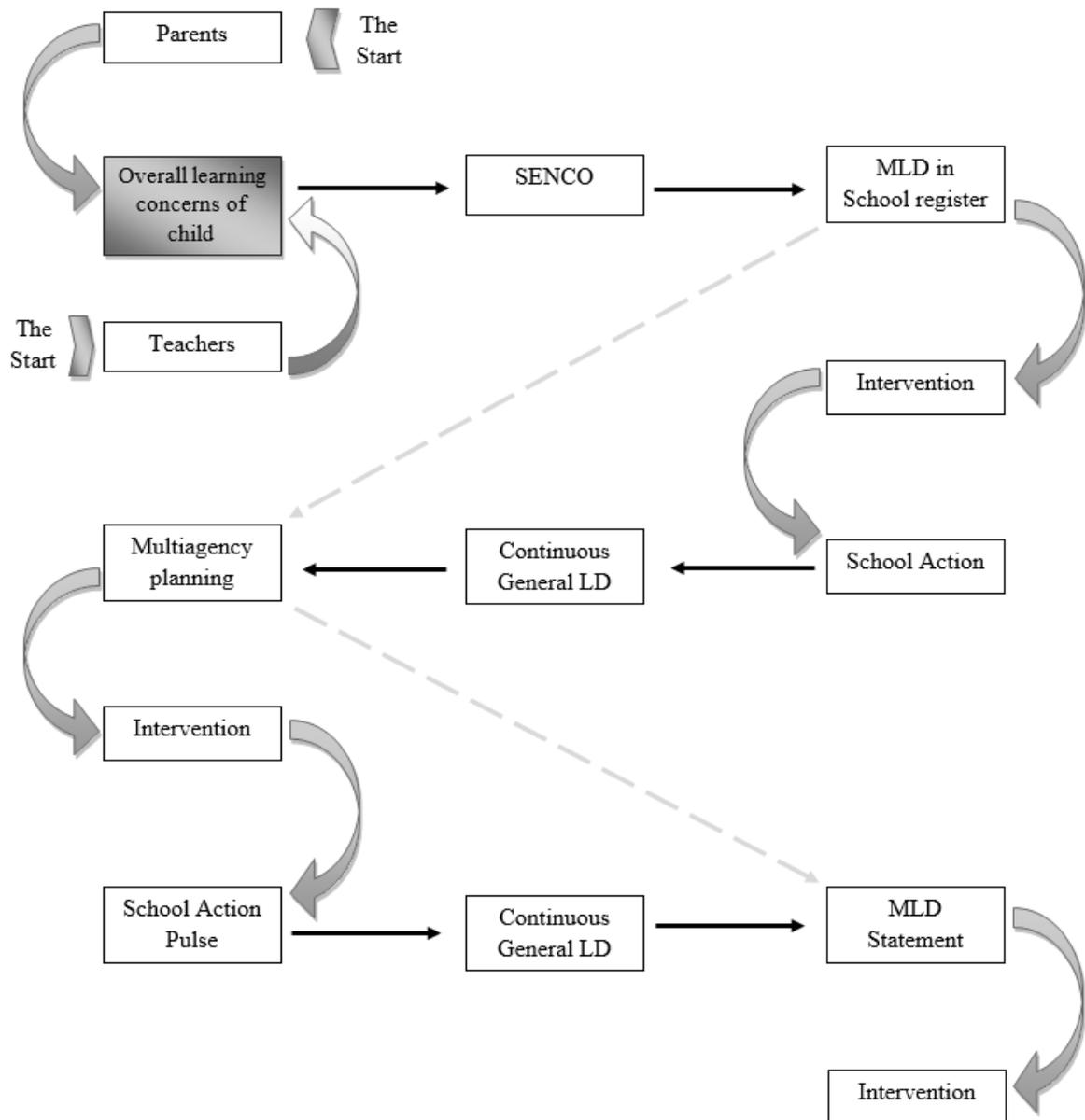
Findings

I do a cognitive assessment, but I would only ever triangulate the information of that cognitive assessment with information from parents and from teachers, to try and work out what's happening for that child. So it isn't just about whether they've got a moderate or mild learning difficulty, or severe learning difficulty. It's more about how we can support that child to then learn and make progress.
(Interview with educational psychologist)

In order to clarify more about the practical steps to assess MLD, I designed Figure 10 which summarises the different paths of the assessment procedures used in England. According to the participants' interviews, the assessment procedure starts with parents when they recognise that their child has general learning difficulties or when the class teacher notices that the child has difficulties across the board and refers him/her to the SENCO. The next step clarified in Figure 10 is that the SENCO puts the child in school action under the label of 'MLD' in the school register. This means that the needs of the child will be met within the normal activities and resources of the school without the need for special resources. If the difficulties continue, the SENCO discusses the child's profile through a multi-agency meeting. This includes the educational psychologist, speech and language therapist, SENCO, behaviour support services and sometimes the school nurse, in order to discuss the child's difficulties and needs and try to set up an appropriate intervention under the name of School Action Plus. However, if the intervention and the support offered in School Action Plus did not provide enough help, the school or parents can apply for a statement and this means that the child officially receives special support from the school and the public local authority.

Findings

Figure 10: Summary of the different paths of the assessment procedures used in England



Such a model of assessment has some flexibility as it is possible for the child to go directly to official assessment without being placed in School Action if the needs of the child are clearly complex, as the above model shows. A final point is that the government in England does not unify MLD assessment in a single way but they leave it to those who are involved in assessing MLD, as the SENCO indicated:

They [government] leave it to us to decide [MLD assessment]. I suspect also there isn't any uniform approach between different counties. I've worked in Surrey before working in Devon and London before that and everyone does things a little bit differently. (Interview with SENCO 1)

4.1.7 Policy documents and guidelines regarding MLD/Slow Learning?

- Kuwait

In Kuwait I asked all the participants if they followed any policy documents or guidelines to identify or assess Slow Learning children. It seems that there was an agreement among all the participants in Kuwait that they followed the rules of the Ministry of Education. When I asked them to be more specific, the school psychologist, the SEN senior managers and the two technical supervisors for the psychological services all referred to the Code of Practice in regards the special classes for Slow Learning, for example:

'I will provide you with a copy of the Code of Practice for children with Slow Learning where you can find the characteristics of Slow Learning children and the rules for joining Slow Learning program all written in clear statement by the Ministry of Education. (Interview with technical supervisors for the psychological services)'

Due to the emphasis on the Code of Practice in the participants' answers, I give further details of this Code, as follows.

The Ministry of Education has a set of rules in which Slow Learning is clarified. The Code of Practice number 4/96 for Establishing Special Classes for Slow Learning Children has four main articles. The first article provides the definition of Slow Learning quoted at the beginning of this chapter, but it also includes a clarification of the assessment by saying that the assessment should not be based on the IQ scores alone but that there is an essential need to involve academic outcomes and the psychological, social and personal aspects. The special classes and the adaptation of the curriculum are also explained in the article by saying that the national curriculum should be amended to be more suitable for these children. (Ministry of Education statement number 242\2000 in relation to the Code of

Findings

Practice number 4, 1996). More details about the curriculum will be discussed in the fourth article.

The second article elucidates the rules that should be taken into account when establishing special classes in primary and middle school. These rules include:

- A- Special classes should not be isolated from mainstream classes and should have no distinguishing name.
- B- Special classes should include special resources to help achieve the maximum learning for children.
- C- Each special class should have no more than 10 children.

The second article also indicates the practical assessment steps, which are the same as those explained in the section on assessment methods, to assess Slow Learning. It also gives permission to teachers in case they find improvements in the children in the special class such that they no longer have LD, then it is possible to write a report to the Department of Psychological Services to move the improved children back to mainstream classes (ibid). This means that the law believes that Slow Learning is not a permanent condition.

The third article explains the way that the national curriculum should be adapted to children identified as Slow Learners in special classes. It indicates that the technical supervisors in the SEN department should amend the curriculum to suit the children's needs while keeping to the main aims of the national curriculum. The adapted curriculum should also be based on sensible and physical activities. Finally, each school module should have two teachers in each class who have a bachelor's degree in special education or any equivalent degree in education. The third article also clarifies the maximum number of lessons for special class teachers.

The fourth article is about the assessment of children in special classes. The article states that the assessment should be based on both qualitative (i.e. teachers', social worker's and school psychologist's observation of the child) and quantitative (i.e. exams) evaluation; a report should be sent to parents giving the school level of the child and the extent to which the child is achieving the aims of the curriculum (ibid). Finally, it is possible for the child

Findings

to attend higher level classes if the academic outcome of the child is good enough (ibid). This summarises the rules in Kuwait in relation to children identified as Slow Learning.

- England

When I asked the participants in England whether there were any guidelines or policy documents which helped to identify MLD, most referred to the Code of Practice, while some believed that there was no unified guideline or definite criteria to specify MLD. For example: *'I don't know of any documents that have got guidelines. I can't think of anything that we would use particularly* (interview with SENCO). Other participants referred to some training programmes and codes of ethics as guidelines that helped them to look at MLD. For instance:

The Inclusion Development Programme - the IDP - training modules ... it's online training materials that teachers can access ...the DfE materials available online. There's the module here around MLD, which has got a bit of information there about identification and things. (Interview with leadership associate)

For me, there isn't a specific guideline that I use to look up. I comply with the British Psychological Society's code of ethics and code of practice... they allow psychologists quite a lot of rope in terms of not being a medical profession. So I don't think we're particularly encouraged to diagnose and say, this child has moderate, mild or severe learning difficulties. (Educational Psychologist)

However, when I went through the IDP website (i.e., www.idponline.org.uk) I found that it was part of the government's strategy programme to train teachers regarding categories such as Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD), Autism, Speech and Language Communication Needs (SLCN) and Dyslexia, but not MLD. The DfE online materials regarding MLD identification did provide official instructions regarding identifying pupils with MLD (Department for Education, 2012). In the instructions, the definition of MLD from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2003) was reviewed (which was very similar to the definition of the same Department in 2005). In the instructions, there was a statement that the concept of MLD was a broad area which included different ranges of

difficulties; it had no particular cause but different pupils may have MLD due to different causes; and the area between SLD and below average attainment was inexact (Department for Education, 2012).

There were also some practical strategies aimed at helping teachers identify children with MLD. These strategies were based on doing pre-teaching assessment and post-teaching assessment to find out the difference and then to try to identify the child's needs in the areas of the MLD definition (ibid). However, it seems that the definition itself is not practical to use, as was noted by the interviewed participants: '*No, not that useful [DfES MLD definition]. It's still very difficult.... a lot of the children have a mix of things.*' (Interview with SENCO 1).

4.2 Quantitative Results

This section will explain the quantitative result of phase two which investigate the social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in England and in Kuwait. The result of each research question will be clarified separately starting with the result found in England and moving to the result found in Kuwait. In this section the presentation of results will be mostly descriptive while in the discussion chapter they will be discussed and justified further.

- England

4.2.1 *Do any differences exist among the three groups (i.e., children identified as having MLD, non-SEN and SEN children) regarding their acceptance by their peers in term 1 and term 2?*

A 3-point rating scale was the instrument used to examine peer acceptance. A one-way ANOVA analysis of variance using UCINET software was conducted to explore whether there were any differences in the rating scale between the three groups in terms one and two. The two tables below show the ANOVA result of each class individually. As clarified earlier, the UCINET software takes into account that a child's friendship in a class is not an independent variable as it could be affected by other children's friendships in the same class.

Findings

Therefore the UCINET software carries out the social network analysis in each class individually. After carrying out an ANOVA test in each class individually to find the differences in data among the three comparative groups (i.e., MLD, non-SEN and SEN), a total P-value of all the classes was calculated by changing the P-value score of each class to the natural logarithms (LN) followed by calculating the total LN for all classes multiple -2 and finally using the right-tailed probability of the chi-square distribution (CHIDIST) to calculate the total P-value of all the classes.

The total P-value of all the classes was calculated to find out whether there was a general difference among the three groups in all the classes. According to the analysis shown in Table 13, there was a significant difference at $p < .05$ level between the three groups in general. A few classes showed no significant differences, such as class 5 in both terms. One possible reason for that is children identified as having MLD may not be a homogenous group in their social participation with their peers. Further details will explained in the discussion chapter.

Table 13: Peer acceptance of non-SEN, SEN and MLD children in terms 1 and 2

<i>Peer acceptance term 1</i>			<i>Peer acceptance term 2</i>		
Term 1	F-Statistic	ANOVA Significance	Term 2	F-Statistic	ANOVA Significance
Class 1	7.1275	0.0056	Class 1	1.1328	0.3603
Class 2	7.0764	0.0062	Class 2	1.2577	0.3019
Class 3	5.2703	0.0174	Class 3	4.3534	0.0252
Class 4	2.1136	0.1270	Class 4	5.0183	0.0120
Class 5	1.2395	0.3027	Class 5	0.2298	0.7870
Class 6	2.4055	0.1256	Class 6	2.1491	0.1250
Class 7	1.0761	0.3841	Class 7	1.6400	0.2326
Class 8	3.5793	0.0486	Class 8	4.2983	0.0222
Total P-value		4.95018E-08 sig at $p < .05$	Total P-value		7.85715E-06 sig at $p < .05$

One main limitation of the UCINET software is that it cannot specify where the significant difference among different groups lie as it does not offer a post-hoc Tukey HSD test. Therefore I had to use SPSS software to do the post-hoc test as well as to present some bar charts of the data.

Findings

Table 14 elucidates the variation in the total mean rating score for peer acceptance between three groups (i.e., children identified as having MLD, non-SEN and SEN children). The higher mean scores indicate more positive peer acceptance and *vice versa*.

Table 14: Peer acceptance of non-SEN, SEN and MLD children in terms 1 and 2

Comparable dimensions	Non-SEN Mean (SD) n= 147	MLD Mean (SD) n= 22	Other SEN Mean (SD) n=23	ANOVA (F, df, P)	Post Hoc
Peer acceptance Term 1	1.86 (0.25)	1.60 (0.22)	1.74 (0.36)	F = 10.678 df = 2/191 sig, p < .05	MLD < Non-SEN Difference in Means = .26422* sig at p < .05
Peer acceptance Term 2	1.87 (0.25)	1.57 (0.19)	1.73 (0.30)	F = 14.479 df = 2/191 sig, p < .05	MLD < Non-SEN Difference in Means = .29594* Other SEN < Non-SEN Difference in Means = .14436* sig at p < .05
Difference between terms	Not sig	Not sig	Not sig		

According to Table 14, the ANOVA test showed that there was a significant difference at $p < .05$ level, $F(10.678)$. This indicated that the mean score for the non-SEN group ($\bar{x} = 1.86$, $SD = .25$) was significantly different from that of the MLD group ($\bar{x} = 1.60$, $SD = .22$) with a difference between the means = .26, while there were no significant differences among the other groups. In term two, the ANOVA test showed a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level, $F(14.479)$, $df = 2/191$. The post-hoc comparisons found two main significant differences. The mean score for the non-SEN group ($\bar{x} = 1.87$, $SD = .25$) was significantly different from that of the MLD group ($\bar{x} = 1.57$, $SD = .19$) with a difference in means = .29. A further significant difference was found between non-SEN ($\bar{x} = 1.87$, $SD = .25$) and other categories of SEN ($\bar{x} = 1.73$, $SD = .30$) with a difference in means of .14, while there was no significant difference between MLD as one group and other SEN categories as another group. Regarding the difference in time between term one and term two, the t-test shows that there was no statistically significant difference among any of the three comparative groups.

Findings

Figure 11: Peer acceptance mean scores and confidence level (95%) for non-SEN, MLD and other SEN in term one

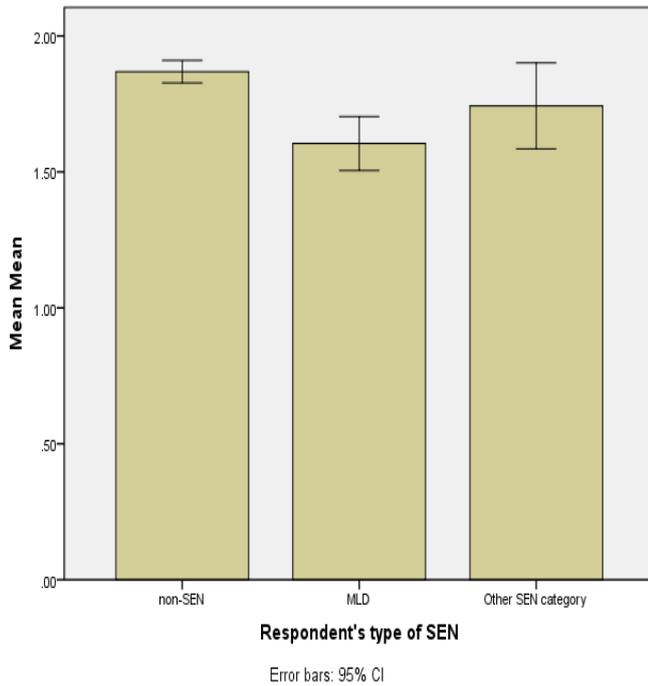
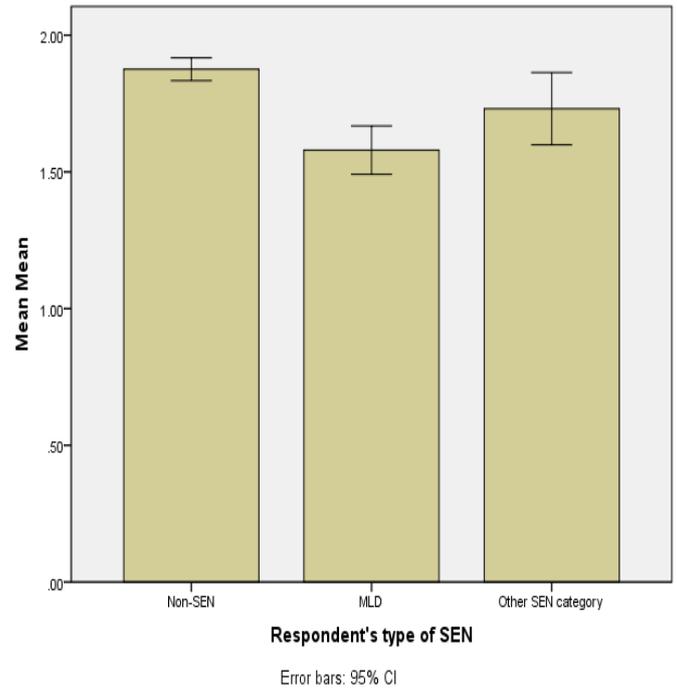


Figure 12: Peer acceptance mean scores and confidence level (95%) for non-SEN, MLD and other SEN in term two



As the Figures above illustrate, the non-SEN groups showed the largest mean scores, followed by the other categories of SEN and, finally, by children identified as having MLD.

Findings

4.2.2 Do any differences exist among the three groups (i.e., children identified as having MLD, non-SEN and SEN children) regarding their Social Self-Concept in term 1 and term 2?

The SDQ-I instrument was used to measure the social self-concept of the three groups. This specific instrument has a 1-5 scale, in which higher mean scores indicate more positive perceptions. Table 15 displays the mean scores of the three groups, the standard deviations, the ANOVA results and the post-hoc comparisons in term 1 and term 2.

Table 15: Social self-concept of non-SEN, SEN and MLD children in terms 1 and 2

Comparable dimensions	Non-SEN Mean (SD) n= 147	MLD Mean (SD) n= 22	Other SEN Mean (SD) n=23	ANOVA (F, df, P)	Post Hoc
Social Self-concept Term 1	3.55 (0.89)	2.90 (0.83)	3.24 (1.00)	F = 5.513 df = 2/191 sig, p ≤ .05	MLD < Non-SEN Difference in Means = .64269* sig at p < .05
Social Self-concept Term 2	3.55 (0.82)	3.28 (1.01)	3.10 (1.12)	F = 3.218 df = 2/191 sig, p < .05	The ANOVA shows significant difference among the three groups (p= .042 sig at p < .05), while the Post Hoc analyses shows no pair-wise sig differences
Difference between term 1 and term 2	Not sig	Not sig	Not sig		

To explore the differences among the three groups in terms of their social self-concept, a one-way between-groups ANOVA analysis was conducted to find whether there were any significant differences in the mean scores of the three groups. Starting with term 1, the test indicated that there was a significant difference at $p < .05$ among the groups ($F = 5.513$, $df = 2/191$). The post-hoc Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the non-SEN group ($\bar{x} = 3.55$, $SD = .89$) was significantly higher than that of the MLD group ($\bar{x} = 2.90$, $SD = .83$) with a difference in means = .64, while there were no significant differences among any other groups. In term 2, the ANOVA test also demonstrated a statistically significant difference at $p < .05$ ($F = 3.21$, $df = 2/191$), whereas the post-hoc analysis showed no significant differences. Regarding the difference between the result of each group in term

Findings

one and then in term two (i.e. the stability of social self-concept), the t-test showed no statistically significant differences between any of the comparative groups, including the MLD group.

Figure 13: Social self-concept mean scores and confidence level (95%) for non-SEN, MLD and other SEN in term one

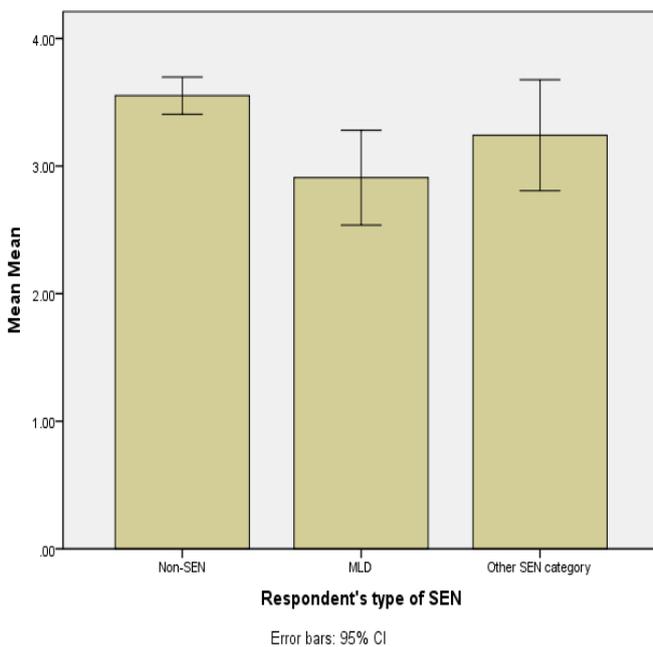
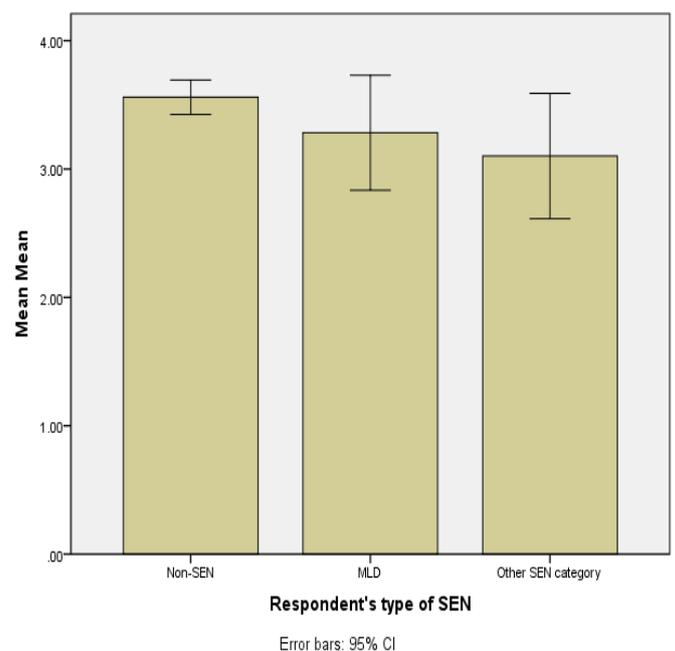


Figure 14: Social self-concept mean scores and confidence level (95%) for non-SEN, MLD and other SEN in term two



As the bar Figures above show, the non-SEN groups showed the highest mean scores in both terms, followed by the other categories of SEN in term 1 and by children identified as having MLD in term 2.

Findings

4.2.3 Do any differences exist among the three groups (i.e., children identified as having MLD, non-SEN and SEN children) regarding their Friendship in term 1 and term 2?

In the calculation of the total result for friendship among the three groups, which was measured using the nomination method where each child was asked to nominate his/her five best friends, the analysis compared the groups (i.e. children having MLD, non-SEN and other SEN categories) in terms 1 and 2 using UCINET software to apply a one-way ANOVA among groups, and then a t-test analysis to find the difference between the result of each group in term 1 with the result of the same group in the term 2.

Table 16: ANOVA result of each class individually in terms one and two

Friendship term 1			Friendship term 2		
Term 1	F-Statistic	ANOVA Significance	Term 2	F-Statistic	ANOVA Significance
Class 1	0.1182	0.9716	Class 1	0.0604	0.9520
Class 2	0.3813	0.7129	Class 2	0.9866	0.3967
Class 3	1.0229	0.4297	Class 3	0.7252	0.6535
Class 4	2.0619	0.1564	Class 4	0.3119	0.7960
Class 5	1.5943	0.2304	Class 5	0.6712	0.5235
Class 6	1.1485	0.3485	Class 6	0.5862	0.5965
Class 7	0.3430	0.7135	Class 7	0.6905	0.5503
Class 8	0.2047	0.8624	Class 8	1.700	0.2206
Total P-value		0.095739 p > .05 Not sig	Total P-value		0.714796 p > .05 Not sig

According to Table 16, there was no significant difference at $p < .05$ among the three comparative groups (i.e., MLD, SEN and Non-SEN) in relation to the number of their friendships in their classes, either taken as individual classes or when data for the eight classes were combined (total $p = 0.095$ in term 1 and $p = 0.7147$ in term 2). In order to find out whether there were any differences in the stability of friendships between the three groups, the total mean score was calculated for each group in both terms and a t-test was then conducted to find out the significance of any differences over the time interval.

Findings

Table 17: Comparison of friendships between terms 1 and 2

Comparable dimensions	Non-SEN (Mean (SD) n= 147	MLD Mean (SD) n= 22	Other SEN Mean (SD) n=23
Friendship Term 1	0.19 (0.09)	0.14 (0.08)	0.17 (0.14)
Friendship Term 2	0.19 (0.11)	0.12 (0.09)	0.16 (0.13)
Difference between term 1 and term 2 (result of t-test)	Not sig	Not sig	Not sig

According to Table 17, the average number of nominated friends for the non-SEN group both terms was similar, with scores of .19, while there was a slight decrease in the total mean score of children identified as MLD between term one ($\bar{x} = .14$) and term 2 ($\bar{x} = .12$). Children with other categories of SEN showed a mean of .17 in the first term and .16 in the second term. The independent-samples t-test analysis revealed no statistically significant difference between the two terms at $p < .05$ level, in any of the three comparative groups. The following bar charts illustrate the differences between the three groups in term 1 compared with term 2.

Findings

Figure 15: Friendship mean scores and confidence level (95%) for non-SEN, MLD and other SEN in term one

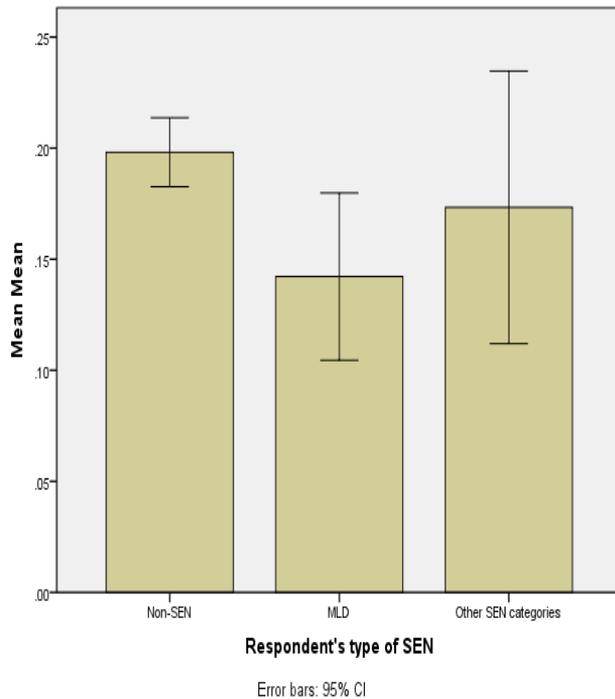
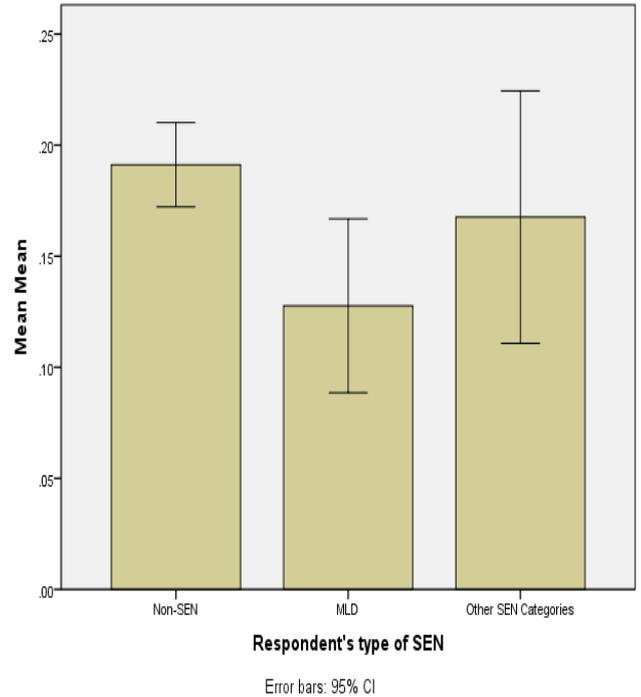


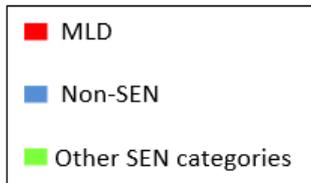
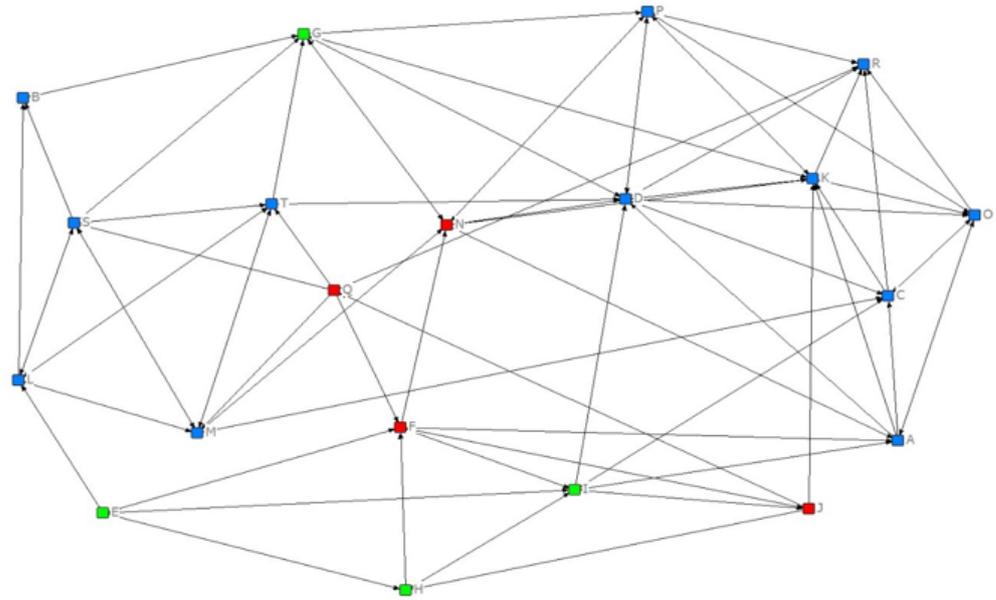
Figure 16: Friendship mean scores and confidence level (95%) between non-SEN, MLD and other SEN in term two



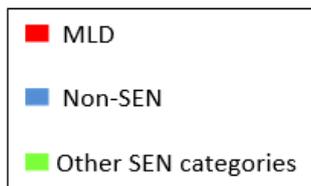
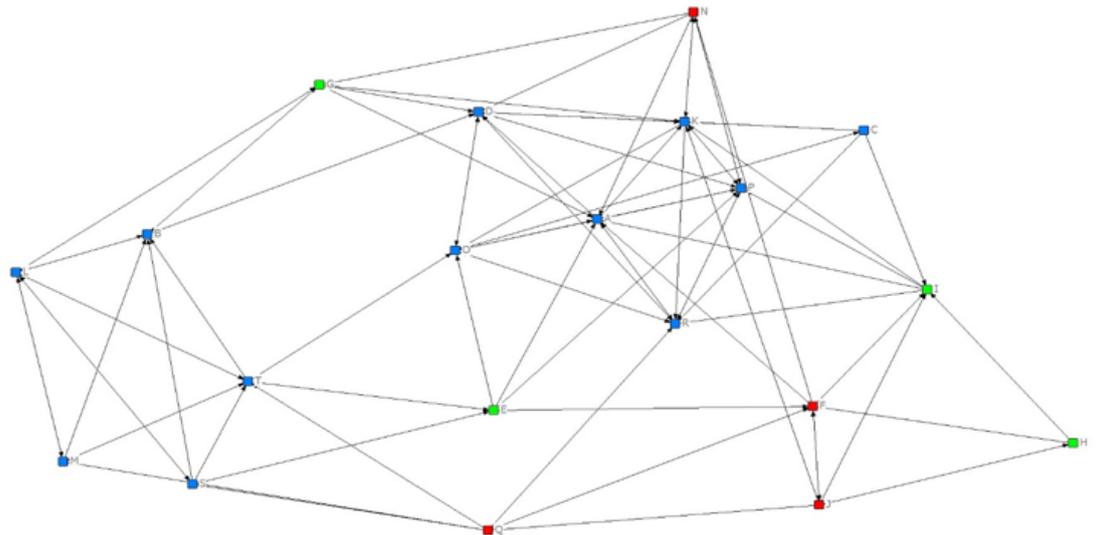
As the bar charts in Figures 15 and 16 show, the non-SEN groups had the highest mean scores, followed by the other categories of SEN and, finally, by children identified as having MLD, who showed the lowest mean scores.

One main advantage of the UCINET software is the option of visualising the social network analysis, which shows the overall nominations in the class. The four matrices shown in the following diagrams are examples of the friendships patterns among children of the three comparative groups.

Findings

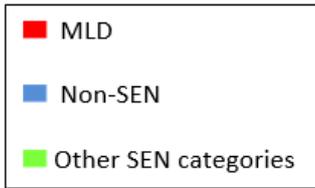
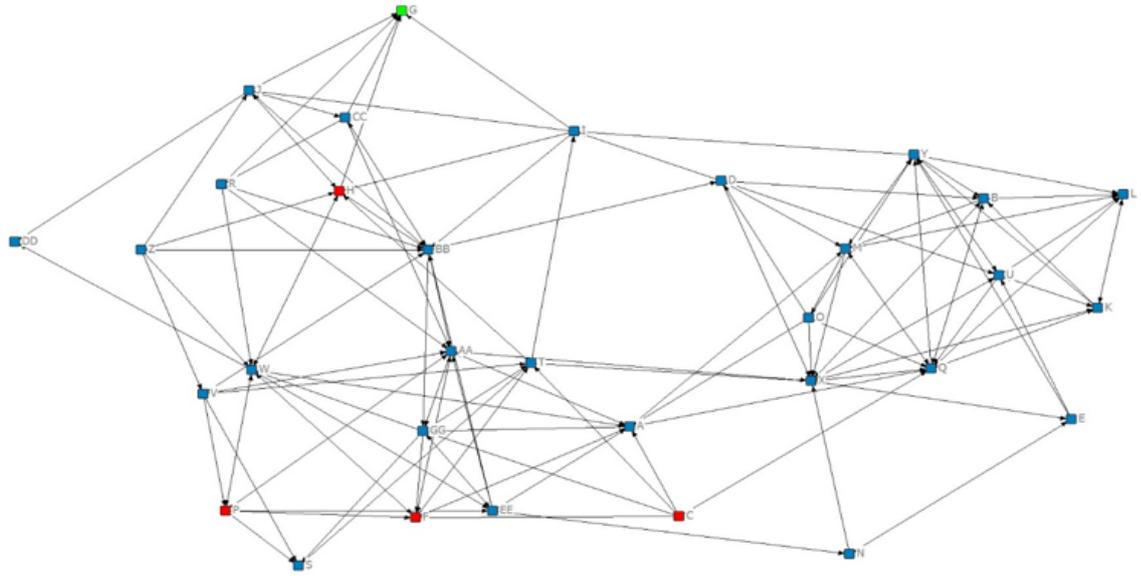


Matrix 1: Friendships of Year 5 children in one mainstream class in England in term 1 (class number 1)

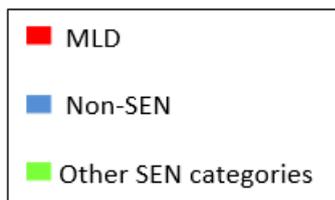
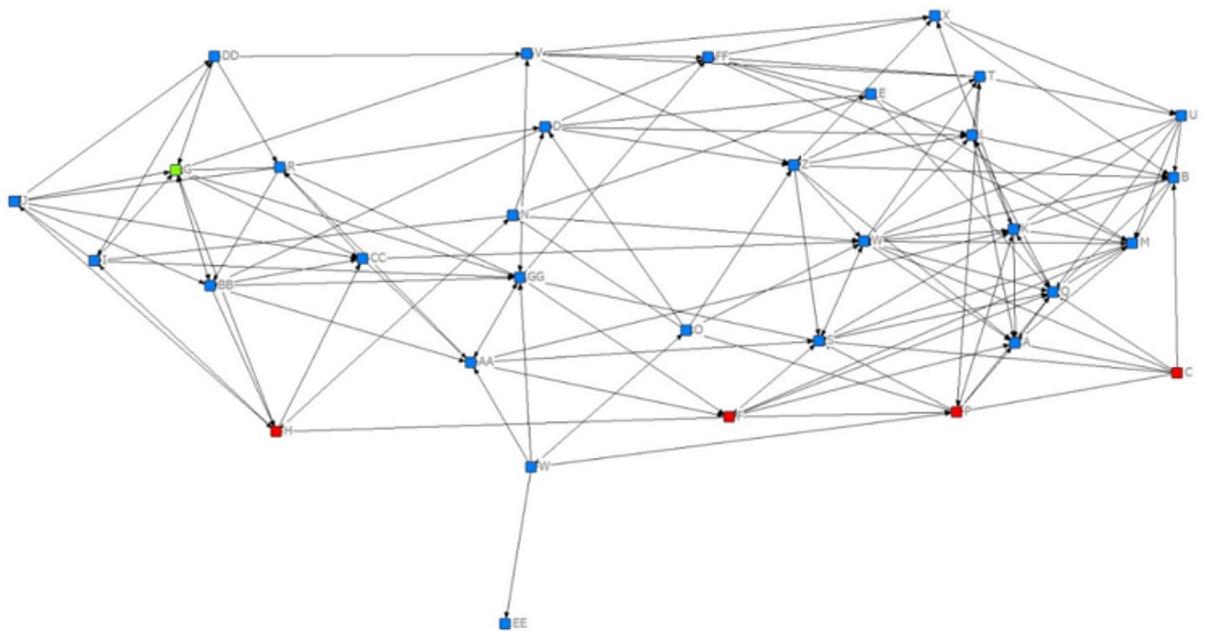


Matrix 2: Friendships of Year 5 children in one mainstream class in England in term 2 (class number 1)

Findings



Matrix 4: Friendships of Year 4 children in one mainstream class in England in term 2 (class number 2)



Matrix 3: Friendships of Year 4 children in one mainstream class in England in term 1 (class number 2)

Each of the matrices above shows the nominations of all children in one class. It is clear that children identified as having MLD (in red) received some nominations from the typically developing children (in blue) and also from their peers with other categories of SEN (in green). The matrices also show examples of some stability among children. Take, for example, child F in matrix 1, who was nominated by children Q, E and H in the first term, and similarly in the second term (i.e. matrix 2). In contrast, some children had changes in their nominations (e.g., follow the nomination trends of child H in matrix 3 for term one and matrix 4 for term two).

4.2.4 Do any differences exist among the three groups (i.e., children identified as having MLD, non-SEN and SEN children) regarding their Social Interaction in term 1 and term 2?

Social interaction was investigated using structured observation in two different settings (i.e. lesson time and break time) to compare the three groups (i.e., MLD, non-SEN and SEN). The total mean score was calculated for each group in which higher mean scores indicate more positive social interactions. Table 18, below, displays the results of the variation of different mean scores among different groups, the standard deviations, the ANOVA results and the post-hoc comparisons in term 1 and term 2.

Findings

Table18: Social interaction of non-SEN, SEN and MLD children during lesson and break times in terms 1 and 2

Social interaction					
Comparable dimensions social interaction	Non-SEN Mean (SD) n= 9	MLD Mean (SD) n= 9	Other SEN Mean (SD) n=14	ANOVA (F, df, P)	Post Hoc
During lesson time term 1	0.084 (0.028)	0.05 (0.020)	0.05 (0.029)	F = 4.481 df = 2/13 sig, p ≤ .05	Non-SEN > SEN Difference in Means = .033532* sig at p < .05
During lesson time term 2	0.09 (0.029)	0.06 (.017)	0.06 (0.026)	F = 4.457 df = 2/31 sig, p < .05	Non-SEN > SEN Difference in Means = 029927* sig at p < .05
Difference between term 1 and term 2	Sig	Not sig	Not sig		
During break time term 1	0.12 (0.03)	0.08 (0.02)	0.07 (0.03)	F = 5.513 df = 2/13 sig, p ≤ .05	Non-SEN > SEN Difference in Means = .056349* Non-SEN > MLD Difference in Means = .039352* sig at p < .05
During break time term 2	0.12 (0.02)	0.09 (0.02)	0.08 (0.02)	F = 4.780 df = 2/31 sig, p < .05	Non-SEN > SEN Difference in Means = .034358* sig at p < .05
Difference between term 1 and term 2	Not sig	Not sig	Not sig		

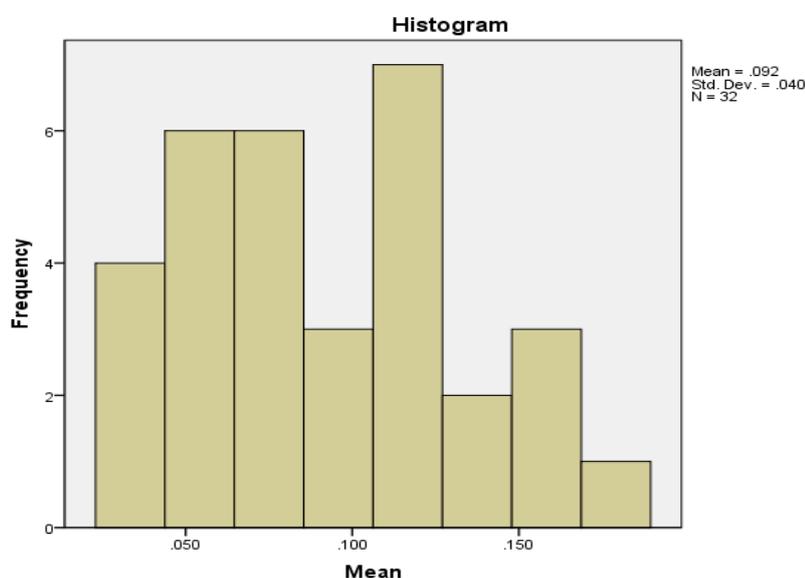
The one-way ANOVA analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in term 1 at $p < .05$ level, during both lesson time ($F = 4.481$) and break time ($F = 5.513$) among the three comparative groups. The post-hoc comparisons showed that during lesson time the average number of social interactions for the non-SEN group ($\bar{x} = .08$, $SD = .02$) was significantly higher than for the SEN group ($\bar{x} = .05$, $SD = .02$) with a mean difference = .03; there were no other significant differences among the groups. However, the post-hoc comparison revealed two statistically significant differences in mean social interaction during break time. The first one was between the non-SEN group ($\bar{x} = .12$, $SD = .03$) and SEN group ($\bar{x} = .07$, $SD = .03$) with a higher mean score for the non-SEN group of .06. The second significant difference was between the non-SEN group ($\bar{x} = .12$, $SD = .03$) and the MLD group ($\bar{x} = .08$, $SD = .02$).

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In term 2 the ANOVA test indicated that there was also a significant difference among the three comparative groups at $p < .05$ level during lesson time ($F = 4.4$, $df = 2/31$) and during break time ($F = 4.7$, $df = 2/31$). The post-hoc Tukey HSD revealed that, during lesson time, the mean score of the non-SEN group ($\bar{x} = .09$, $SD = .02$) was significantly higher than for the SEN group ($\bar{x} = .06$, $SD = .02$) at $p < .05$, with the difference in means = .03; there were no other significant differences among the groups during lesson time. In the break time there was also a statistically significant difference between the non-SEN group ($\bar{x} = .12$, $SD = .02$) and the SEN group ($\bar{x} = .08$, $SD = .02$) at $p < .05$ with different in means = .034 in favour of the non-SEN group, while there were no significant differences among other groups.

Regarding the stability of social interaction, the t-test was applied to measure the differences between means in both terms for each group and the result was that there were no significant differences between the terms for all groups, but the difference in social interaction for the Non-SEN group during break time in both terms was significant. Considering that the social interaction method could not be applied to all the 191 participating children in the UK sample for the reasons previously explained, and only 32 participants had been observed, it was important to examine the normality of the distribution. The histogram, together with the significant result of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (i.e. test to check the normality), show that the social interaction data were not normally distributed (see the histogram below).

Figure 17: Histogram of the social participation scores



The importance of normality is drawn from the Central Limit Theorem which says that the averages of large independent random variables are usually normally distributed (Lumley, Diehr, Emerson & Chen, 2002). Nonetheless, there are some statisticians who believe that the normality assessment is sufficient but not necessary to ensure the validity of the t-test, ANOVA test and squares regressions (Lumley, Diehr, Emerson & Chen, 2002).

4.2.5 Is there any correlation between the three dimensions of social participation (i.e., Friendship, Peer acceptance and Social Self-concept) in term 1 and term 2?

A correlation analysis was used to describe the strength and direction of the relationship between the three variables in terms one and two. Table 19 is a summary of all the correlations among the variables. The red colour indicates a high correlation (i.e., $r = .50$ to $.79$), the orange indicates medium correlation (i.e., $r = .30$ to $.49$), while the green colour shows low correlation (i.e., $r = .10$ to $.29$). This interpretation of the correlation size is adopted from Cohen (1988, p. 79-81). No very high correlations ($.80$ to $.99$) were found in this research.

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Table 19: Pearson correlation coefficients between three dimensions of social participation (i.e. Friendship, Peer Acceptance and Social Self-concept) in term 1 and term 2

Correlation	Friendship Term 1	Friendship Term 2	Peer acceptance 1	Peer acceptance 2	Social Self - Concept 1	Social Self -Concept 2
Friendship Term 1	r = 1	r= .588** sig	r= .540** sig	r= .515** sig	r= .292** sig	r= .248** sig
Friendship Term 2		r= 1	r= .450** sig	r= .587** sig	r= .189** sig	r= .129 Not sig
Peer acceptance 1			r= 1	r= .705** sig	r= .385** sig	r= .377** sig
Peer acceptance 2				r= 1	r= .284** sig	r= .151* sig
Social Self-Concept 1					r=1	r= .549** sig
Social Self-Concept 2						r= 1

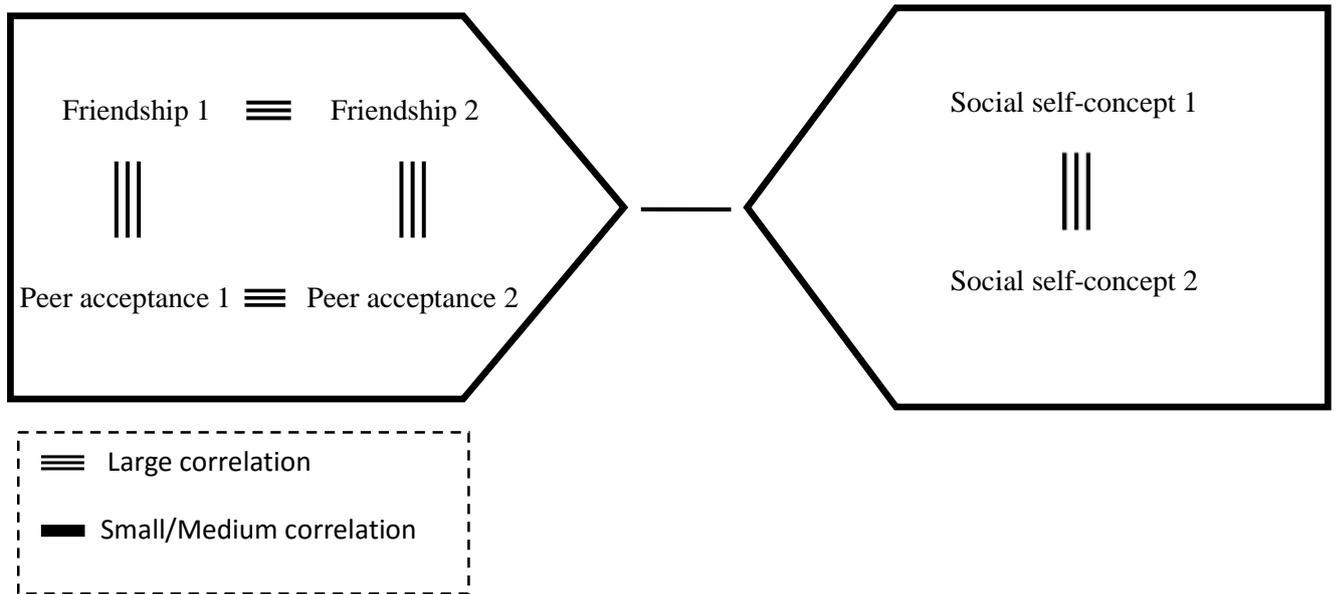
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

	High correlation
	Medium correlation
	Small correlation

Table 19, above, reveals the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between three dimensions of social participation (Friendship, Peer acceptance, Social self-concept) in terms 1 and 2. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality and linearity. The most interesting points in the table are that there are large correlations between the nomination methods variables (i.e friendship and peer acceptance), as well as between the social self-concept variables. On the other hand, the correlation between the nomination variables and the social self-concept variables are only medium (r = .30 to .49) or small (r = .10 to .29). The following diagram gives a simple summary of the correlations among all variables.

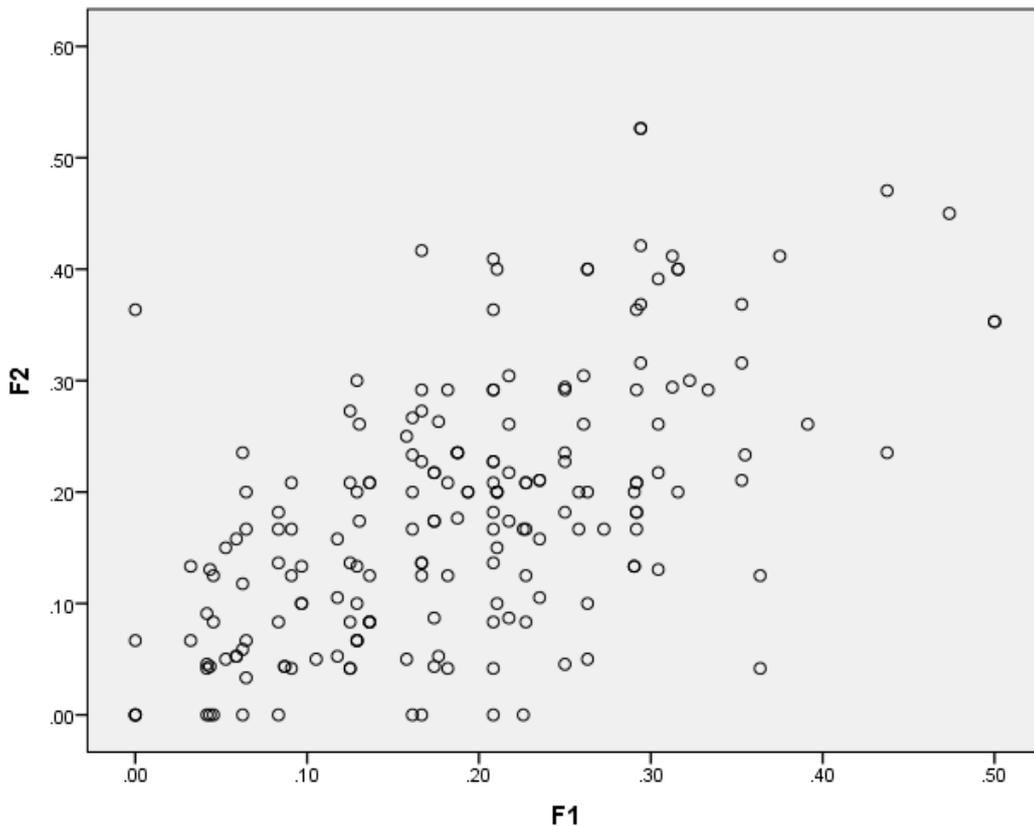
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Figure 18: The strength of correlations between Friendship, Peer acceptance and Social self-concept in term 1 and term 2



It is also useful to show a visual display of the correlation between term 1 and term 2 scores on each dimension of social participation using scatterplot diagrams, as shown below.

Figure 19: Scatterplot of friendship scores in term two (F2) against friendship scores in term one



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According to Figure 19, it is clear that the more friendships the participants had in the first term the more they were likely to have in the second term, as the points follow a trend upwards to the right. It is also clear that some data points lie away from the central line of the trend. This means that some children's scores differed from one term to the next.

Figure 20: Scatterplot of peer acceptance scores in term two (R2) against term one (R1)

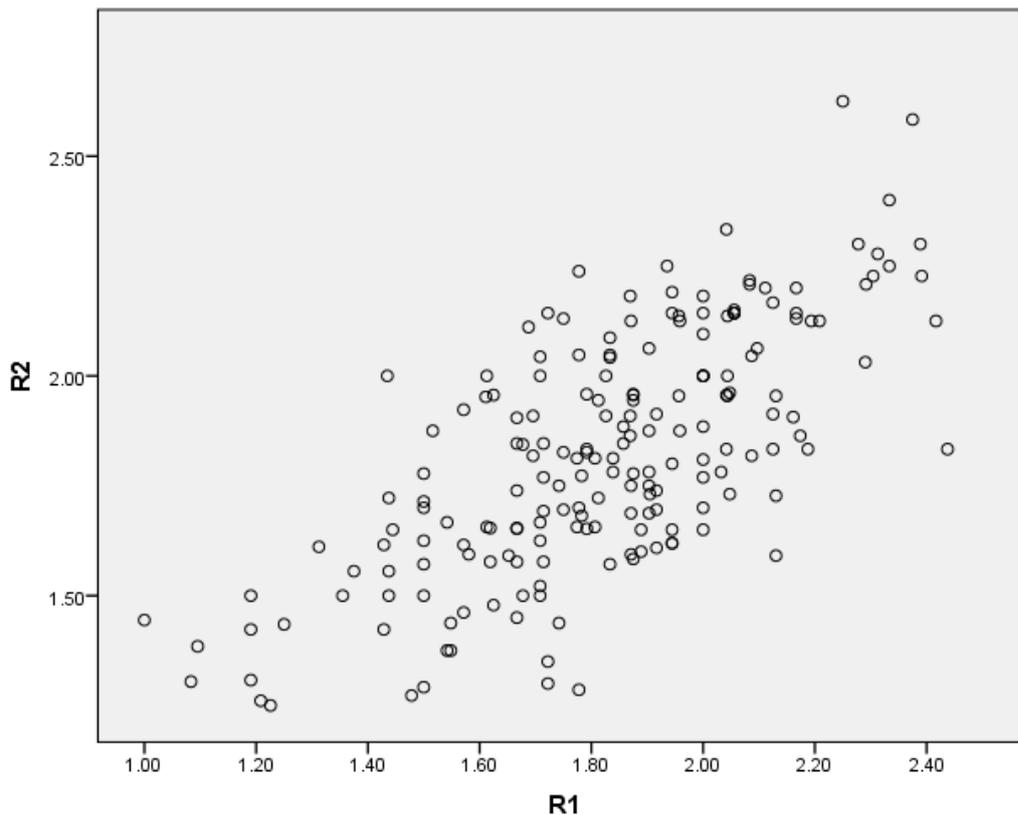


Figure 20 shows the distribution of peer acceptance in the first and the second terms. It shows that the higher a child's peer acceptance score in the first term, the higher his/her peer acceptance score was likely to be in the second term, and vice versa, as the trend was upwards to the right. Nevertheless, some dots were located away from the central line which means that some cases showed a change in peer acceptance between the terms.

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Figure 21: Scatterplot of social self-concept scores in term two (SDQ2) against term one (SDQ1)

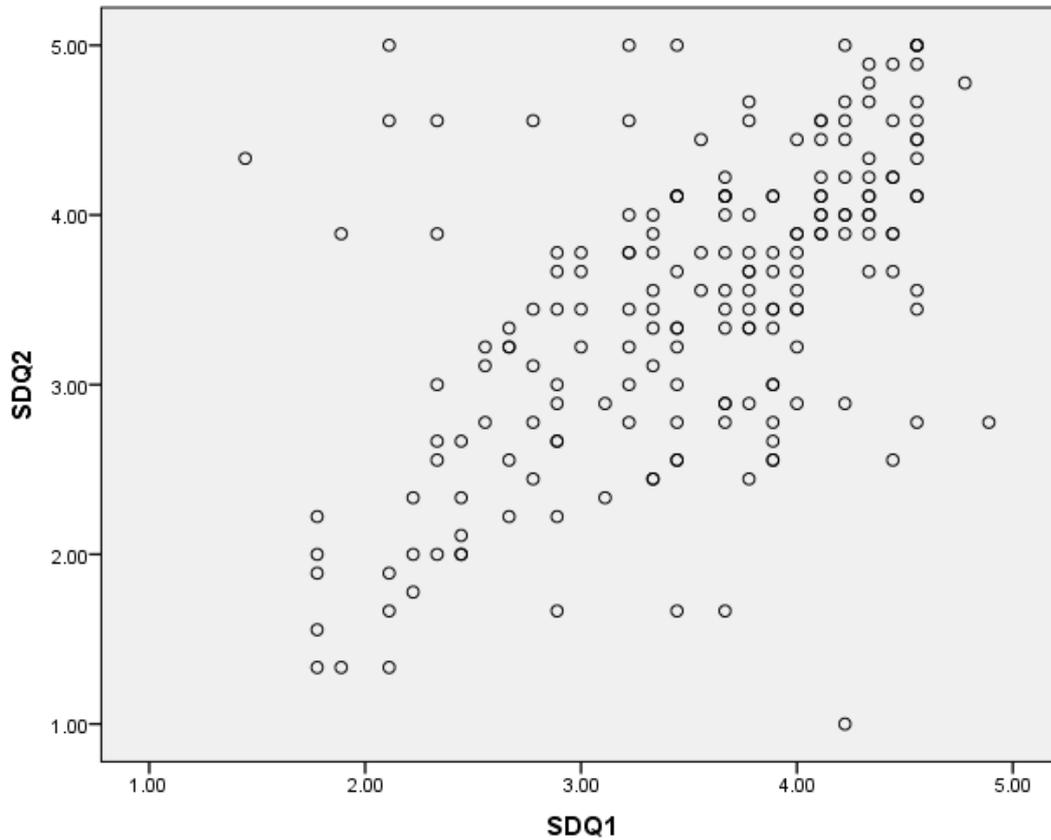


Figure 21 shows the distribution of the social self-concept scores in the first and second terms. The data in the scatterplot show that the majority of points lie in a shape sloping upwards to the right, while some dots lie away from the main trend. This means that some children showed a change in their social self-concept between the terms while, for most, a high score in the first term was associated with a high score in the second term, and vice versa.

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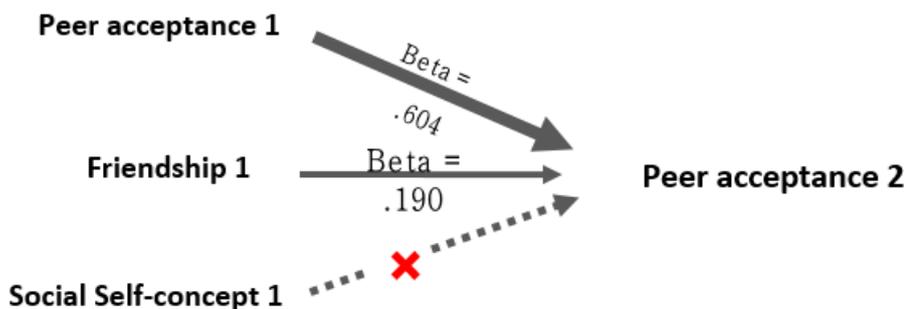
4.2.6 Can Peer acceptance in term 2 be predicted by the three variables in term 1 (i.e., Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1)?

Table 20: The prediction of the dependent variable Peer acceptance term 2 by three main independent variables (i.e. Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables (predictors)	Beta	sig	ANOVA (F, df, P)
Peer acceptance Term 2	Friendship term 1	.190	sig	df = 3/191 F = 68.525 sig, p < .01
	Peer acceptance term 1	.604	sig	
	Social Self-concept term 1	-.005	Not sig	

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of three independent measures (i.e., Friendship term 1, Peer acceptance term 1 and Social Self-concept term 1) to predict the outcome of Peer acceptance 2. As is clear from Table 20, two independent variables (i.e. Friendship term 1 and Peer acceptance term 1) predict significantly the dependent variable (i.e. Peer acceptance 2) with the highest regression coefficient recorded for Peer acceptance 1 as an independent variable (beta = .604). This indicates that two measures predicted the Peer acceptance 2, the variable of Peer acceptance 1 and the variable of friendship 1, though stronger for the variable Peer acceptance 1. The variable of Social self-concept 1 had no independent predictive relationship with the dependent variable Peer acceptance 2. The following shape summarises the strength of the predictive variables based on the thickness of the arrows.

Figure 22: prediction of the dependent variable Peer acceptance in term 2



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4.2.7 Can Social self-concept in term 2 be predicted by the three variables in term 1 (i.e., Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1)?

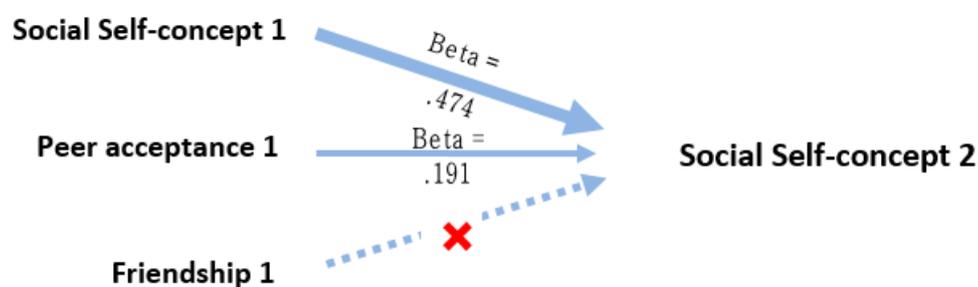
Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of three independent measures (i.e. Friendship term 1, Peer acceptance term 1 and Social Self-concept term 1) to predict the outcome of Social self-concept 2. As is clear from Table 21, two of the independent variables (i.e. Peer acceptance term 1, and Social Self-concept term 1) predict significantly the dependent variable (i.e. Social self-concept 2) with a higher regression coefficient recorded for Social self-concept 1 (beta = .474).

Table 21: Prediction of the dependent variable Social Self-concept term 2 by three main independent variables (Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables (predictors)	Beta	sig	ANOVA (F, df, P)
Social Self-concept Term 2	Friendship term 1	.007	Not sig	df = 3/191 F = 31.370 sig, p < .01
	Peer acceptance term 1	.191	Sig	
	Social Self-concept term 1	.474	sig	

The regression test also shows that the independent variable Friendship 1 did not predict significantly Social self-concept 2. The following shape summarises the strength of the predicted variables based on the thickness of the arrows.

Figure 23: Prediction of the dependent variable Social Self-concept in term 2



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4.2.8 Can Friendship in term 2 be predicted by the three variables in term 1 (i.e., Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1)?

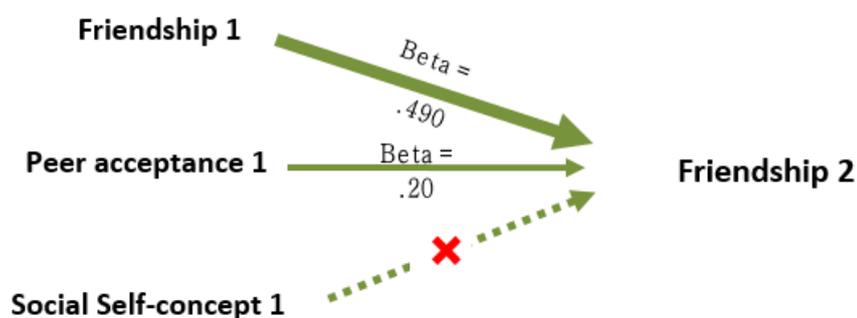
Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of three independent measures (i.e. Friendship term 1, Peer acceptance term 1 and Social Self-concept term 1) to predict the outcome of Friendship term 2.

Table 22: Prediction of the dependent variable Friendship term 2 by three main independent variables (i.e., Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables (predictors)	Beta	sig	ANOVA (F, df, P)
Friendship Term 2	Friendship term 1	.490	sig	df = 3/191 F = 37.0 sig, p < .01
	Peer acceptance term 1	.20	sig	
	Social Self-concept term 1	-.03	Not sig	

As is clear from Table 22, above, the independent variables (i.e., Friendship term 1 and Peer acceptance term 1) predict significantly the dependent variable (i.e. Friendship 2) with the higher regression coefficient recorded for Friendship 1 (beta = .604). This indicates that the variable of Friendship 1 makes the strongest unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable, when the variance explained by all other variables in the equation is controlled for. Finally, the independent variable Social self-concept 1 did not predict significantly Friendship 2. The following shape summarises the strength of the predicted variables based on the thickness of the arrows.

Figure 24: Prediction of the dependent variable Friendship in term 2



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4.2.9 Do any differences exist between non-SEN children and children identified as having Slow Learning in relation to their Social self-concept in term 1 and term 2?

The Social Description Questionnaire One was used as the instrument to measure Social self-concept. The instrument was designed based on 1-5 scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The mean scores of participants were calculated in which a high score indicates a positive perception. Table 23 displays the results of the variation of mean scores between children having Slow Learning as one group and their typically developing peers as another group regarding their social self-concept in terms one and two.

Table 23: Social self-concept of children identified as having Slow Learning and Non-SEN children in terms 1 and 2

Social self-concept						
First term N=175				Second term N=175		
	Mean	Std	Sig	Mean	Std	Sig
Slow Learning N=31	2.87	1.00	Significant difference (t= 6.072, df= 173 p < .05)	2.84	.80	Significant difference (t= 5.431, df= 173, p < .05)
Non-SEN N=144	3.77	0.68		3.66	.74	
There were no significant differences between the first and second terms for each group						

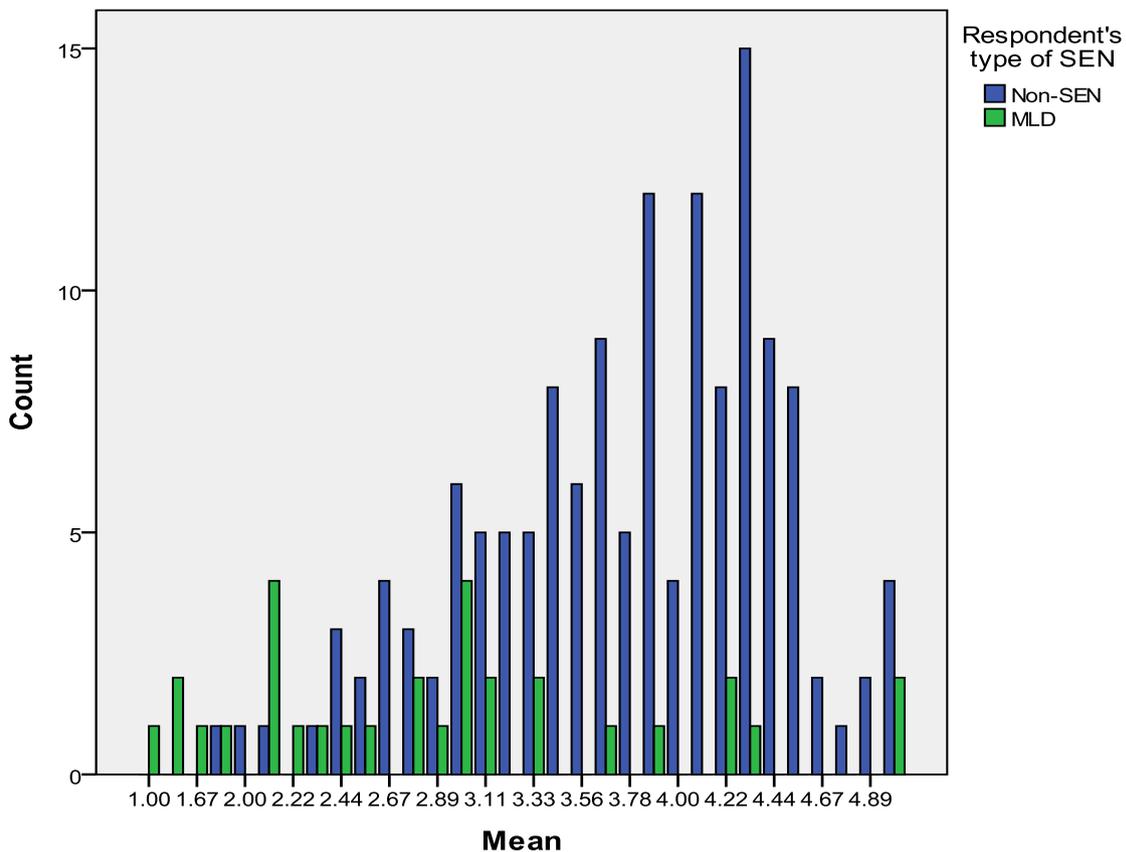
In order to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups (Slow Learning and Non-SEN), an independent samples t-test was conducted. This revealed a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($t = 6.0$, $df = 173$, $p < .05$). As anticipated, pupils having Slow Learning had a lower social self-concept compared to their typically achieving peers in term 1. An analogous result was encountered in term two as the independent samples t-test revealed that the mean score for the non-SEN group ($\bar{x} = 3.6$, $SD = .74$) was significantly higher than the mean score for children designated as having Slow Learning ($\bar{x} = 2.8$, $SD = .80$) when $t = 5.4$, $df = 173$, $p < .05$. Although the mean score for the Slow Learning group was lower than that of the non-SEN

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group, it was still positive as it exceeded the mid-point of the scale (2.5). Regarding the difference between the two terms, the t-test shows that no significant difference existed between the first and the second terms for either of the comparative groups.

The two bar charts below elucidate the distributions of the two groups' means for terms 1 and 2. Figure 25 shows the difference in distributions of social self- concept scores between the Slow Learners group (i.e., the green bars) and non-SEN group in term 1. The vertical axis shows the number of children and the horizontal axis shows their mean scores on social self-concept.

Figure 25: The distribution of social self-concept mean scores for non-SEN and Slow Learning children in term 1



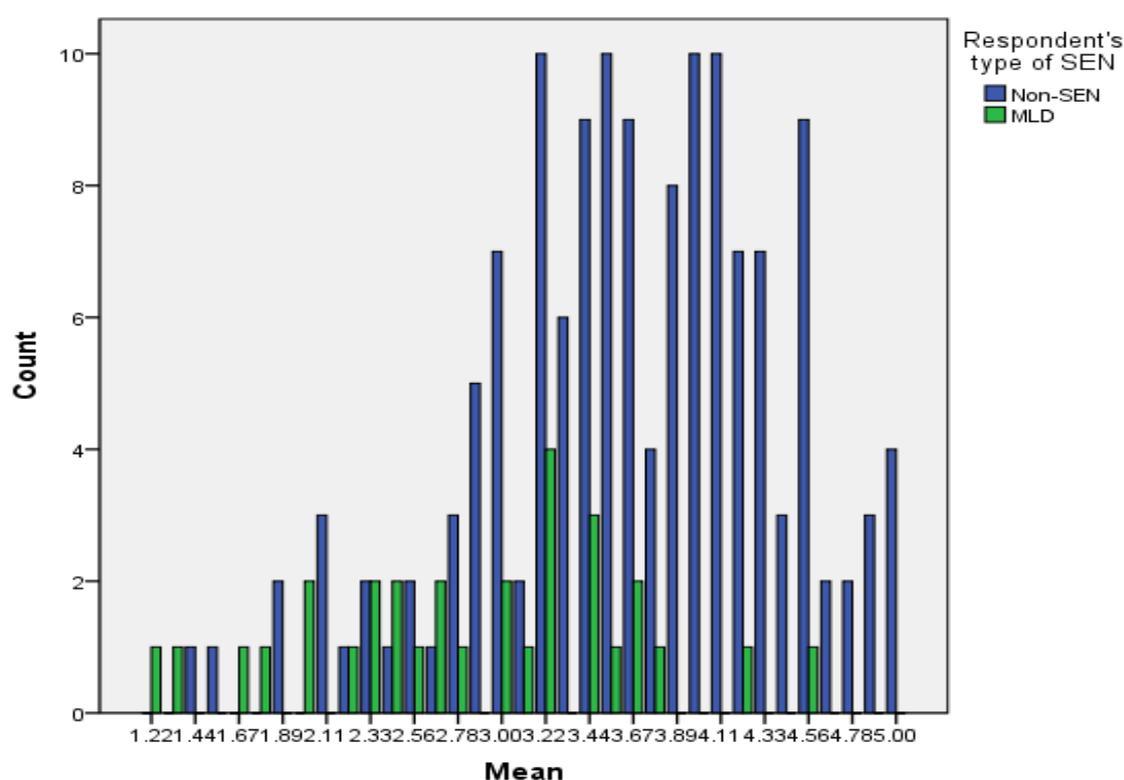
The green bars accumulate on the left side of the bar chart where the low to medium means are. This indicates that the majority of children designated as having Slow Learning recorded means from 1.0 to 3.3, while very few showed high social self-concept means, with only about six children recording more than 4.2. The blue bars (i.e. non-SEN group)

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accumulate towards the right side where the medium to high scores are located. This means that the majority of non-SEN children scored from 3.0 to 4.5 with the highest number of children in this group scoring a mean of approximately 4.3.

Figure 26, below, refers to term two, showing the difference in distributions between the Slow Learning group (green bars) and the non-SEN group (the blue bars).

Figure 26: The distribution of Social self-concept mean scores for non-SEN children and children identified as having Slow Learning in term 2



It is clear from the chart that the green bars (i.e. Slow Learning group) appear to be in the middle and towards the left side of the Figure. This means that most of the Slow Learning group means lie between approximately 2.3 to 3.7, while very few recorded higher mean scores, as the bar chart indicates that only one child recorded 4.3 and one other child scored 4.5. Regarding the non-SEN group, it is clear that the larger proportion of the blue bars accumulate in the right side of the bar chart, most non-SEN children scoring means between 3.2 to 5 out of 5 points, while very few of them recorded less than 1.8 as a mean score. Thus, on the whole, the non-SEN children demonstrated a higher social self-concept than did the Slow Learning children in term one and also in term two.

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4.2.10 Does any difference exist between non-SEN children and children identified as having Slow Learning in relation to their Peer acceptance in term 1 and term 2?

The same rating scale was used in both the UK and in Kuwait to examine peer acceptance, The UCINET software was used to find any differences in peer acceptance between the two comparative categories (i.e. non-SEN group and Slow Learning group). An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the data of the groups in each class individually. The table below shows the average total score of each of the two comparative groups in each class individually in terms one and two as well as the overall average total for all classes. The significance levels (p) of the differences between the means of the non-SEN and Slow Learning groups is given in the right hand column. The bottom row gives the combined mean scores over all 7 classes.

Table 24: Peer acceptance of children identified as Slow Learning and non-SEN children in term 1

Peer acceptance term 1			
Term 1	NON-SEN Average total	Slow Learning Average total	t-test Significance
Class 1	48.68	45.94	0.1522
Class 2	44.95	41.81	0.0563
Class 3	42.00	42.50	0.7775
Class 4	48.15	50.25	0.3654
Class 5	64.66	66.05	0.4305
Class 6	59.52	64.63	0.0189
Class 7	59.34	64.89	0.0004
Total	52.47	53.700	1.53E-06 sig at p < .05

As Table 24 illustrates for term 1, the non-SEN children scored a mean of 52.47 on the rating scale, slightly below the children designated as having Slow Learning with 53.70. While some classes (e.g., class number 5) showed no significant difference between the two groups, overall there was a statistically significant difference between the means for the two groups. This indicates that Slow Learning children were more accepted than their typically developing peers. The qualitative findings regarding the four case study children identified as having Slow Learning will explain the reason why some classes showed no differences between groups in the Case Studies section.

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A similar result was obtained for term 2 (see Table 25); the independent-samples t-test illustrated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups with $p < .05$. In order to specify the difference, overall average total scores were calculated and these revealed the average total peer acceptance score of the Slow Learning group ($\bar{x} = 51.50$) and the average total score of the typically developing children ($\bar{x} = 50.5897$), which indicates that children with Slow Learning were more accepted by their peers than their non-SEN group. Regarding the difference between the two terms, the t-test showed no significant differences between any of the comparative groups. Some classes (e.g., class number 4) showed no significant difference between the two groups; the reason for that will be explained further in the qualitative findings section regarding the four case studies identified as having Slow Learning, below.

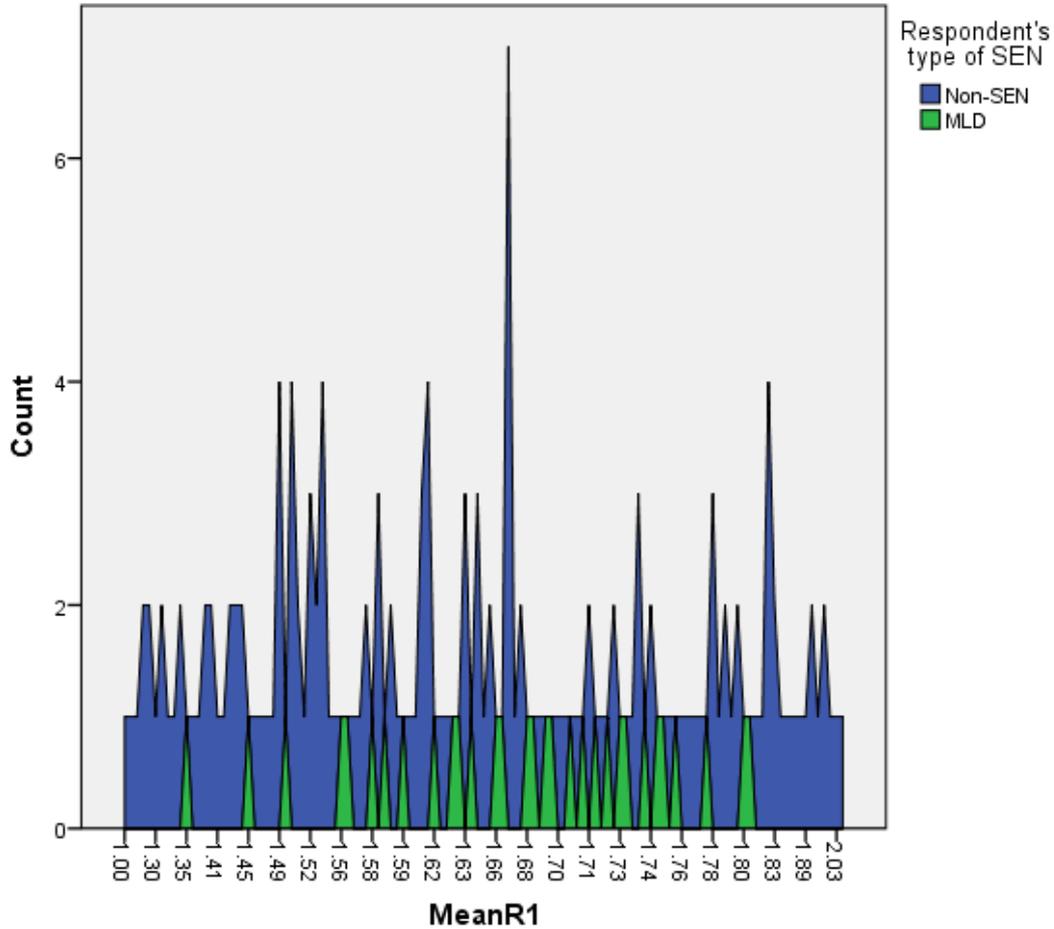
Table 25: Peer acceptance of children identified as Slow Learning and non-SEN children in terms 2

Peer acceptance term 2			
Term 1	NON-SEN Average total	Slow Learning Average total	t-test Significance
Class 1	47.15	40.667	0.0001
Class 2	50.00	41.917	0.0004
Class 3	42.31	44.333	0.2690
Class 4	50.05	46.667	0.1534
Class 5	53.23	60.316	0.0003
Class 6	55.66	62.526	0.0001
Class 7	58.21	64.105	0.0002
Total	50.94	51.50	1.0972E-17 sig at $p < .05$

The bar chart below shows the distribution of mean scores of the two groups. It is clear from Figure 27 in term one that there is a high density of blue bars on the left rising gradually from small to medium mean scores, that is, from just below 1.20 to around 1.67.

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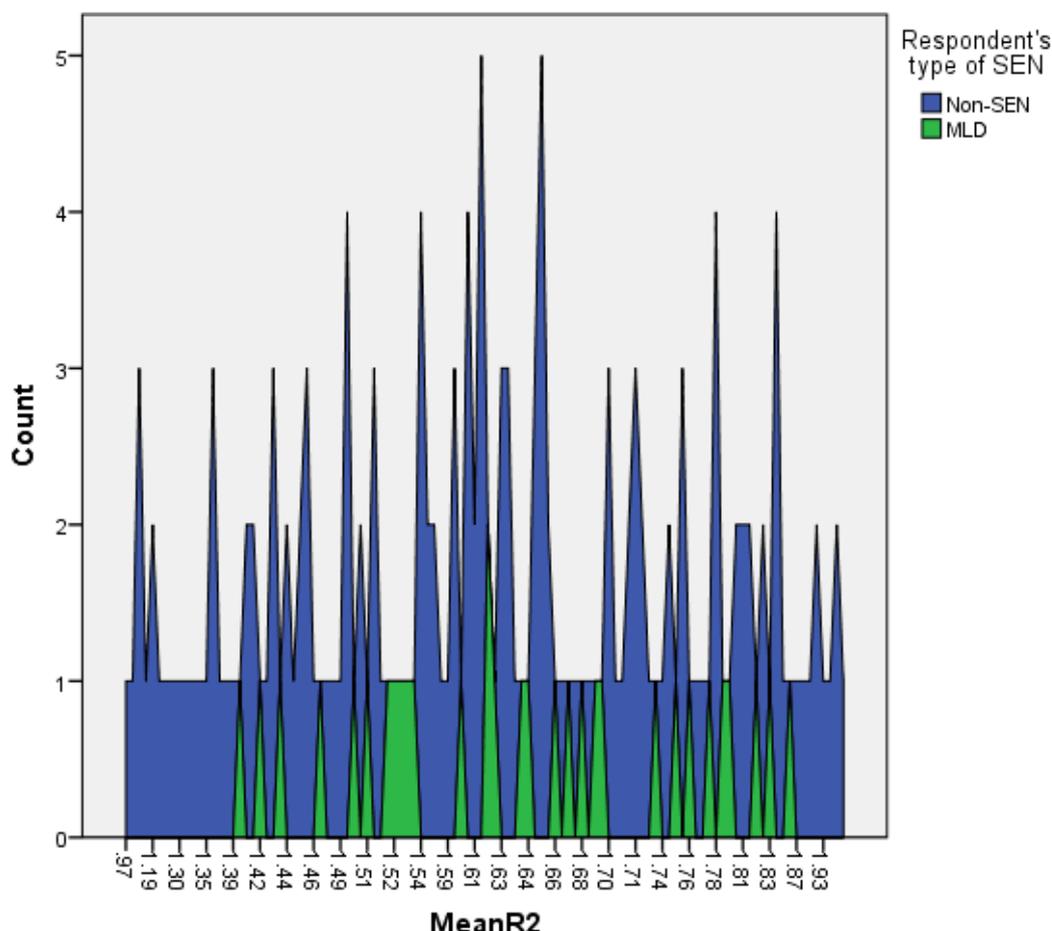
Figure 27: Histogram showing the distribution of peer acceptance mean scores for non-SEN children and children designated as having Slow Learning in term 1



There are also indications in the chart that some of non-SEN children enjoyed high peer acceptance, with four children recording around 1.82 out of 3 points, while the Slow Learning bars seem to occur more in the middle of the figure. The next bar chart shows the distribution of mean scores on Peer acceptance for term two.

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Figure 28: Histogram showing the distribution of peer acceptance mean scores for non-SEN children and children designated as having Slow Learning in term 2



It is clear from Figure 28 that there is a fluctuation in the blue bars' counts with a higher number of non-SEN counts in the middle, while the counts of children who recorded low (i.e. on the left) and high (i.e. on the right) seem to be fairly equal. It is also noticeable that more green bars accumulate in the middle of the chart and towards the right hand side, whereas only a few are on the left hand side. This means that the majority of children identified as having Slow Learning recorded average to high mean scores and only a few recorded very low mean scores.

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4.2.11 Do any differences exist between non-SEN children and children identified as having Slow Learning regarding their Friendship in term 1 and term 2?

Friendship was assessed using the nomination method in which each child was asked to nominate up to five of his best friends. The analysis using UCINET software compared the two groups (i.e., children having Slow Learning and non-SEN) in relation to their nominations in terms 1 and 2, using the independent-samples t-test to compare means. Table 26 gives a summary of the comparisons between the two groups in each term.

Table 26: Friendship of children identified as having Slow Learning and their typically developing peers in term 1

Friendship term 1			
Term 1	NON-SEN MEAN	Slow Learning MEAN	t-test Significance
Class 1	3.89	4.58	0.383
Class 2	4.57	4.58	0.999
Class 3	3.15	4.58	0.125
Class 4	3.70	4.58	0.537
Class 5	4.19	3.73	0.580
Class 6	4.61	3.73	0.324
Class 7	3.65	4.05	0.658
Totals	Total mean 3.96	Total mean 4.26	Total p-value 0.895 Not Sig

Table 26 shows the total mean scores for each group, as well as the total p-value of the independent-samples t-test. It appears from the table that non-SEN group scored a total mean of ($\bar{x} = 27.7$) while, on the other hand, children designated as having Slow Learning showed a total mean score of ($\bar{x} = 29.8$). The independent-samples t-test showed that there was no significant difference at $p < .05$ in the first term between the two comparative groups.

Similarly in term two; Table 27 shows that the total mean score of non-SEN group ($\bar{x} = 28.53$) was not significantly different from the mean score of Slow Learning group ($\bar{x} = 27.45$) as the independent-samples t-test revealed. There was also no statistically significant change in friendship scores between the two terms for either group.

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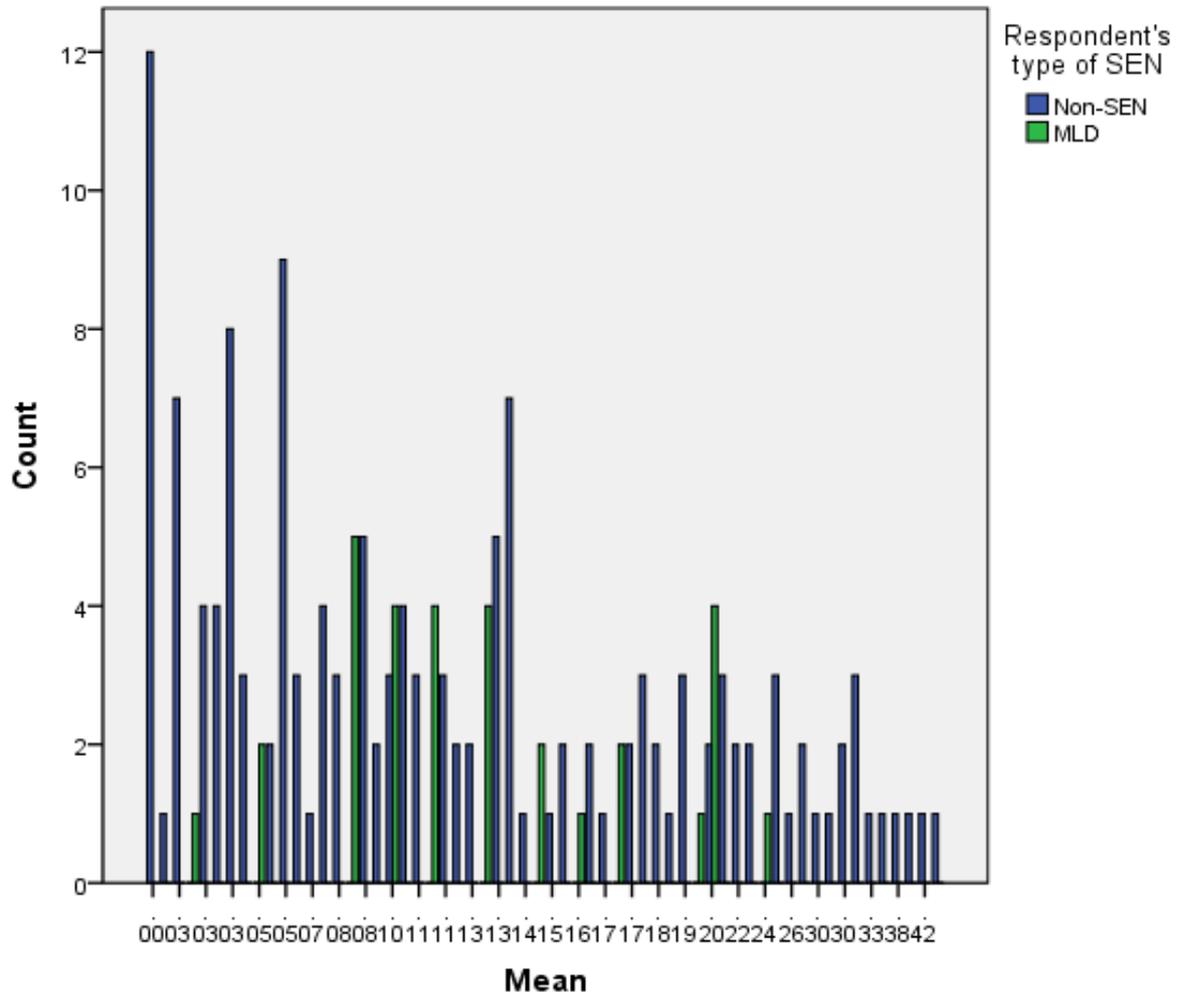
Table27: Friendship of children identified as having Slow Learning and their typically developing peers in terms 2

Friendship term 2			
Term 1	NON-SEN MEAN	Slow Learning MEAN	t-test Significance
Class 1	3.63	4.16	0.493
Class 2	4.68	4.16	0.614
Class 3	4.80	4.16	0.514
Class 4	3.57	3.68	0.856
Class 5	3.42	3.52	0.926
Class 6	3.72	3.57	0.800
Class 7	4.69	4.16	0.520
Total	Total mean 3.96	Total mean 4.26	Total p-value 0.4312 Not Sig

The following Figures illustrate the distribution of mean friendship scores of the two groups in each term.

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Figure 29: The distribution of friendship scores of non-SEN group and Slow Learning group in term 1

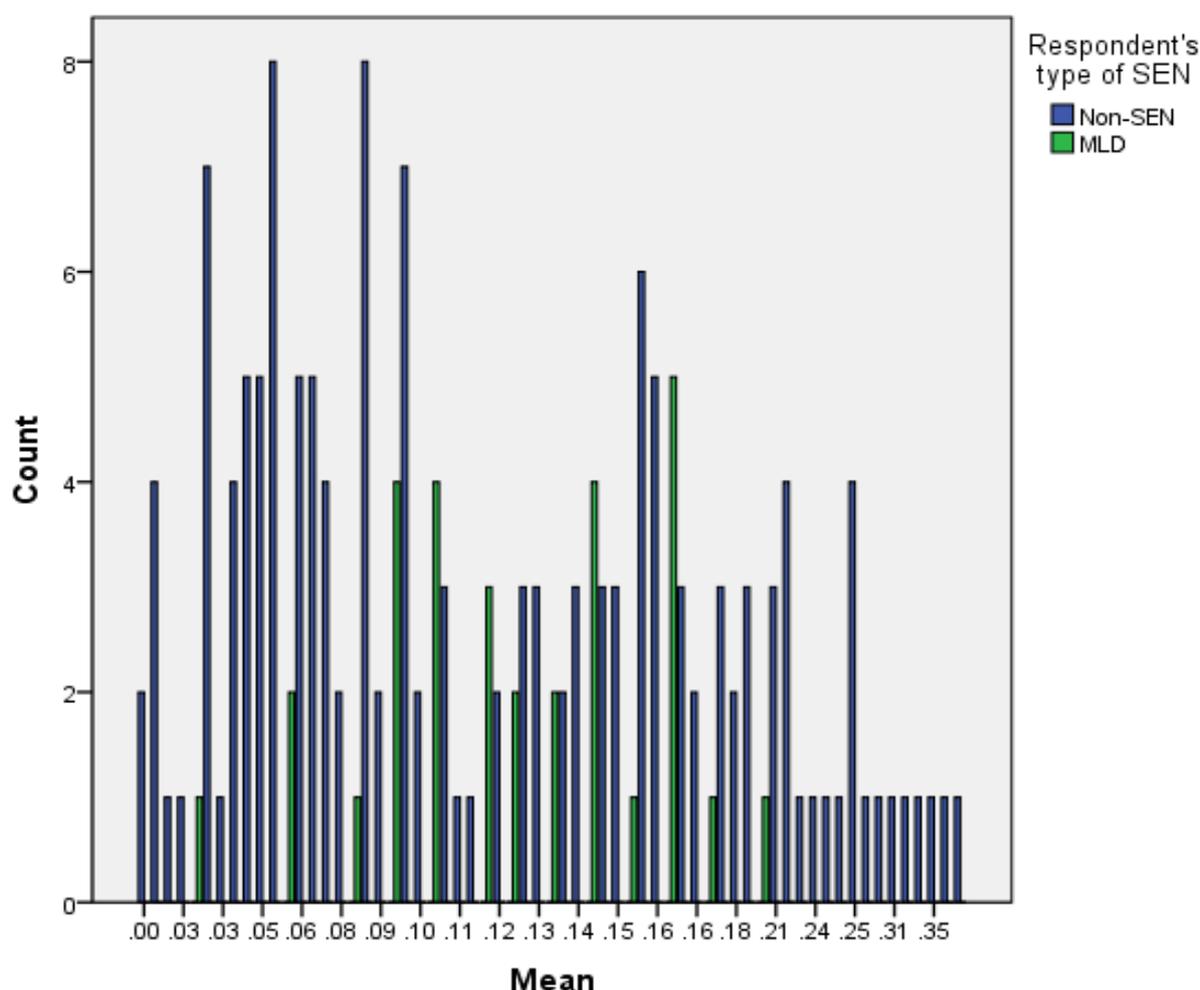


In term one, Figure 29 shows that the majority of non-SEN children scored from low to medium means (i.e. nearly from 0 to 0.13) with the highest number of such children recorded 0 as mean (i.e. no friends at all) followed by 0.05 and 0.03 respectively, while none of the Slow Learning group had no friends, as their lowest mean was 0.03. It also worth saying that the distribution of Slow Learning group means was irregular and accumulated in the middle of the Figure between 0.08 and 0.20.

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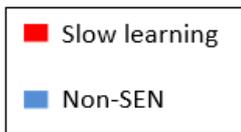
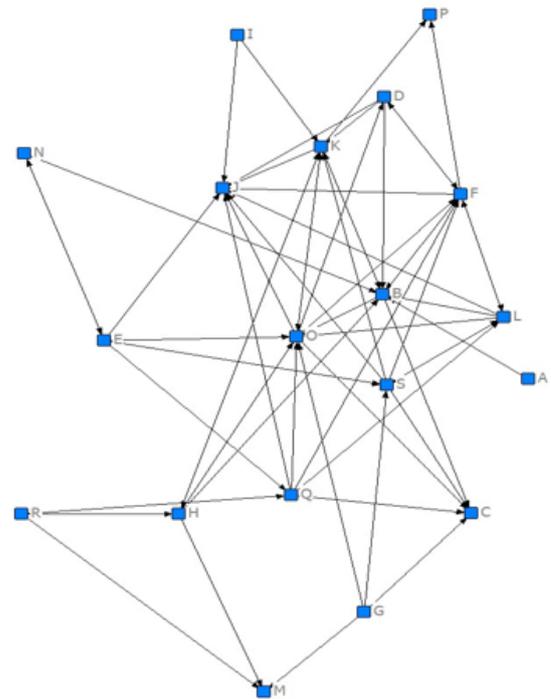
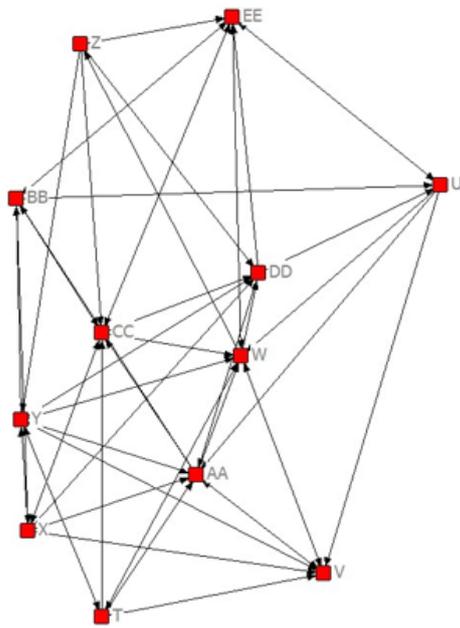
For term two, shown in Figure 30 below, the non-SEN children bunched in the middle and left sides, while few were on the right hand side. Thus most of the non-SEN group recorded low means (i.e. from nearly 0 to 0.10), followed by medium means (i.e. from 0.11 to 0.18), while few recorded higher than 0.18. The green bars tend to the middle of the Figure (0.08 to 0.16), whereas none of them recorded less than 0.03 or more than 0.21 as means.

Figure 30: The distribution of friendship scores of non-SEN group and Slow Learning group in term 2

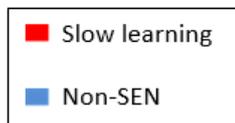
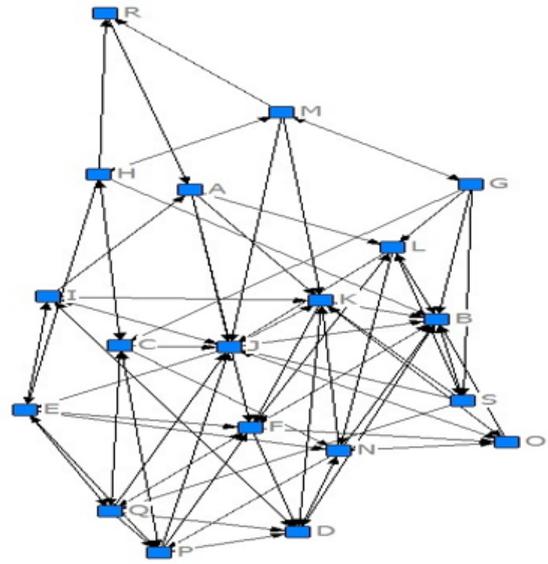
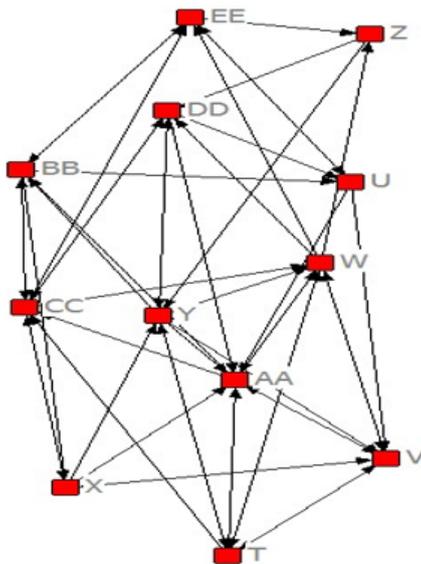


Social network analysis was also used to draw network matrices in which it is possible to visualise the friendship between children identified as having Slow Learning and their typically achieving peers.

Findings

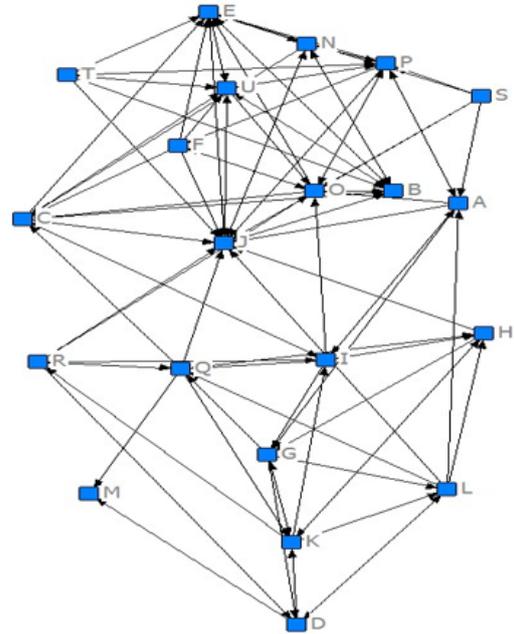
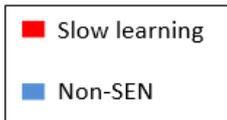
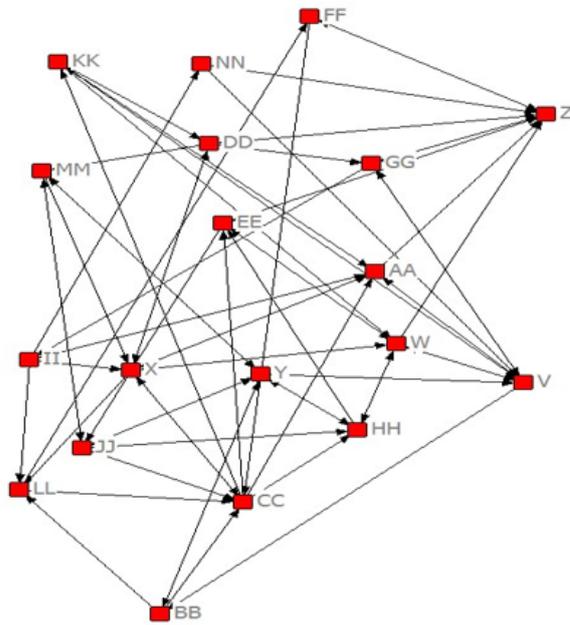


Matrix 5: Friendships of Year 4 children in Kuwait in term 1 (class number 1)

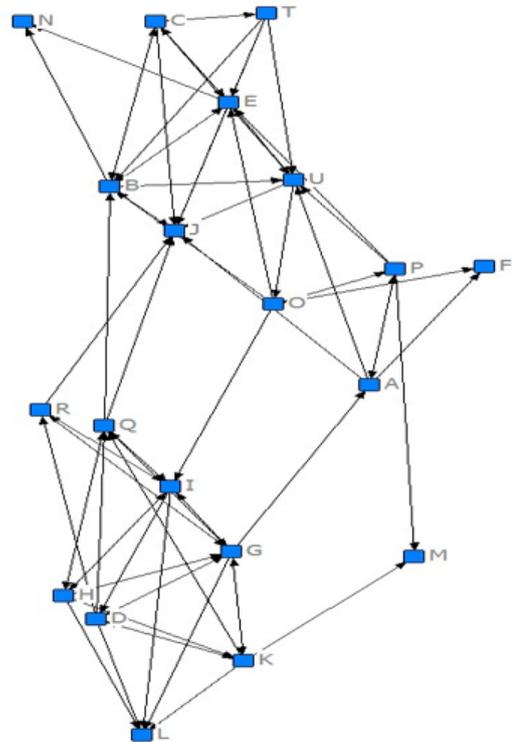
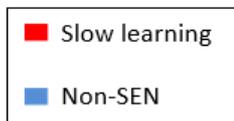
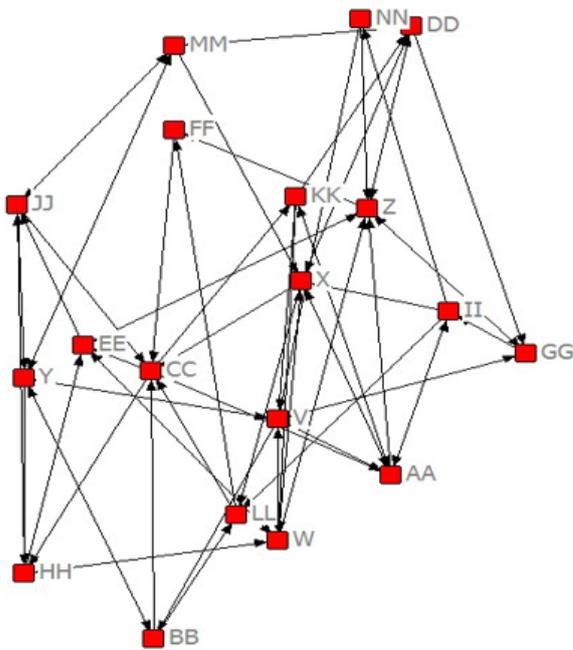


Matrix 6: Friendships of Year 4 children in Kuwait in term 1 (class number 1)

Findings



Matrix 7: Friendships of Year 4 children in Kuwait in term 1 (class number 1)



Matrix 8: Friendships of Year 4 children in Kuwait in term 1 (class number 1)

According to the matrices above, there were no nominations to or from children identified as having Slow Learning (in red) to or from their typically developing peers (in blue) in years four and five. It is also clear that some cases showed some differences from term 1 to term 2 (see child A in Matrix 5 for term one and in Matrix 6 for the second term). In contrast, some cases from both groups showed stable nomination networks (see child L and MM in Matrix 7 for the first term and Matrix 8 for the second term).

4.2.12 *Is there any correlation between the three dimensions of social participation (i.e., Friendship, Peer acceptance and Social Self-concept) in term 1 and term 2?*

The correlation analysis was used to describe the strength and direction of the relationship between the three variables in terms one and two. Table 28 illustrates all the correlations among all the variables. The red colour indicates high correlations (i.e., $r = .50$ to 1.0), the orange shows medium correlations (i.e., $r = .30$ to $.49$), while green points to small correlations (i.e., $r = .10$ to $.29$). This classification is based on Cohen (1988, p: 79-81).

Findings

Table 28: Correlations between three dimensions of social participation (i.e. Friendship, Peer Acceptance and Social Self-concept) in term 1 and 2

Correlation	Friendship Term 1	Friendship Term 2	Peer acceptance 1	Peer acceptance 2	Social Self - Concept 1	Social Self - Concept 2
Friendship Term 1	r = 1 sig	r= .651** sig	r= .543** sig	r= .463** sig	r= .045 Not sig	r= .133 Not sig
Friendship Term 2		r = 1 sig	r= .369** sig	r= .421** sig	r= .074 Not sig	r= .165* sig
Peer acceptance 1			r = 1 sig	r= .631** sig	r= .099 Not sig	r= .064 Not sig
Peer acceptance 2				r = 1 sig	r= .125 Not sig	r= .129 Not sig
Social Self-Concept 1					r = 1 sig	r= .478** sig
Social Self-Concept 2						r = 1 sig

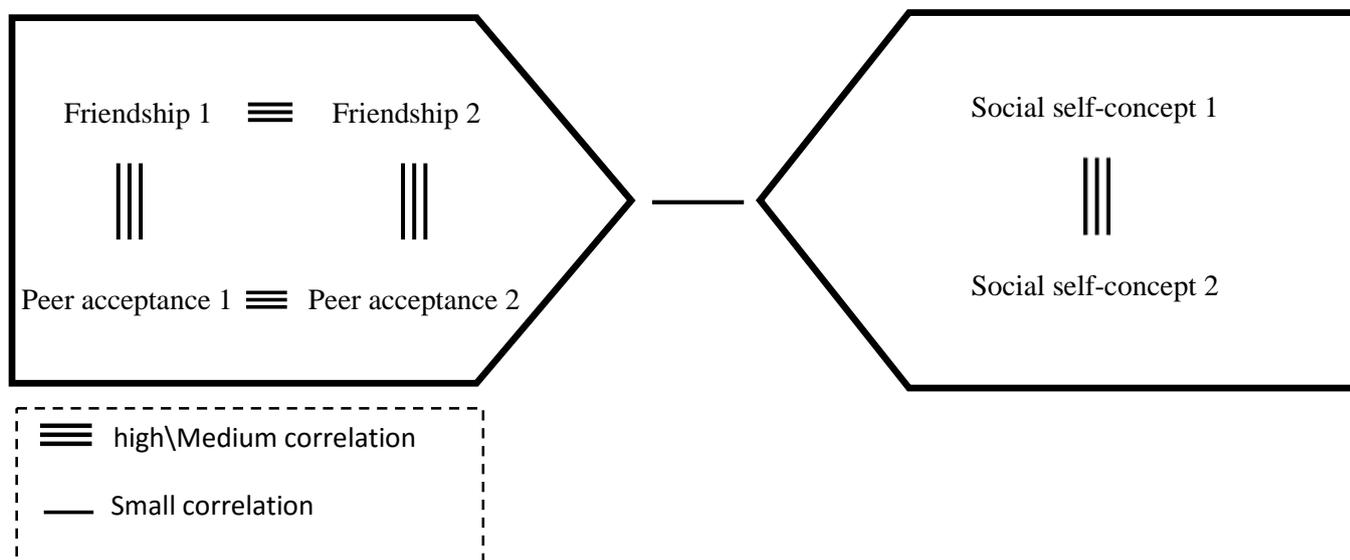
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

 high correlation
 Medium correlation
 Small correlation

Table 28 reveals the correlations between three dimensions of social participation (Friendship, Peer acceptance, Social self-concept) in terms one and two. The relationship between variables was investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality and linearity. The most interesting point in the table is that there are large to medium correlations between the nomination methods variables (i.e. friendship and peer acceptance). There is also a medium correlation between social self-concept variables ($r = .478$). In contrast, the correlation between the nomination methods variables and the social self-concept variables are small (between .10 and .29). The following diagram is a simple self-explanatory Figure which summarises all the correlations among all variables.

Findings

Figure 31: The strength of correlations between Friendship, Peer acceptance and Social self-concept in term 1 and term 2



4.2.13 *Can Peer acceptance in term 2 be predicted by the three variables in term 1 (i.e., Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1)?*

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of three independent variables (i.e., Friendship term 1, Peer acceptance term 1 and Social Self-concept term 1) to predict the outcome of Peer acceptance 2.

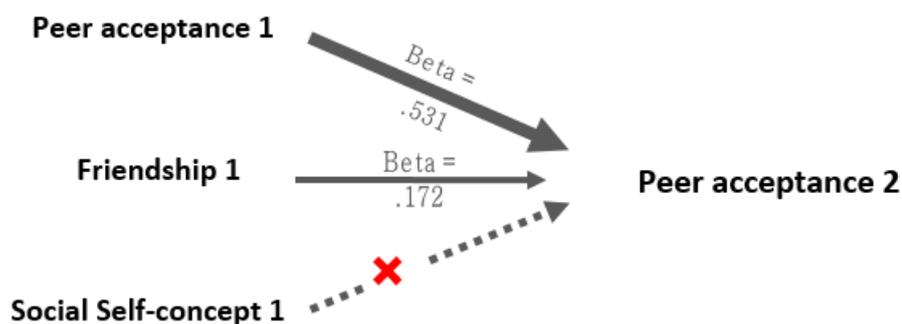
Table 29: Prediction of the dependent variable Peer acceptance term 2 by three main independent variables (i.e., Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables (predictors)	Beta	sig	ANOVA (F, df, P)
Peer acceptance Term 2	Friendship term 1	.172	sig	df = 3\174 F = 41.813 sig, p < .01
	Peer acceptance term 1	.531	sig	
	Social Self-concept term 1	.065	Not sig	

Findings

As is clear from Table 29, two independent variables (i.e., Friendship term 1 and Peer acceptance term 1) predict significantly the dependent variable (i.e., Peer acceptance 2) with a higher regression coefficient recorded for Peer acceptance 1 as an independent variable (beta = .531). This indicates that the variable Peer acceptance1 makes the strongest unique contribution to explaining the dependent variable, when the variance explained by all other variables in the equation is controlled for. However, the regression analysis also shows that the independent variable Social self-concept1 does not predict significantly Peer acceptance 2. The following diagram summarises the strength of the contributions of the predictor variables based on the thickness of the arrows.

Figure 32: Prediction of the dependent variable Peer acceptance in term 2



4.2.14 *Can Social self-concept in term 2 be predicted by the three variables in term 1 (i.e., Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1)?*

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of three independent variables (i.e., Friendship term 1, Peer acceptance term 1 and Social Self-concept term 1) to predict the outcome of Social self-concept 2.

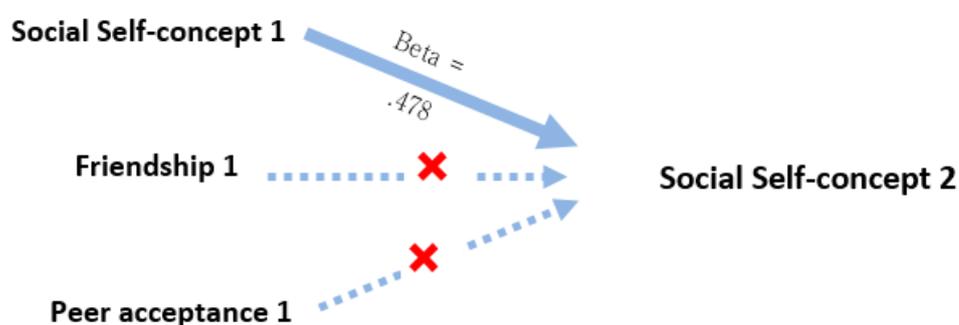
Findings

Table 30: The prediction of the dependent variable Social Self-concept term 2 by three main independent variables (i.e., Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables (predictors)	Beta	Sig	ANOVA (F, df, P)
Social Self-concept Term 2	Friendship term 1	.146	Not sig	df = 18.377 F = 3\174 sig, P < .01
	Peer acceptance term 1	-.063	Not sig	
	Social Self-concept term 1	.478	sig	

Table 30 shows that Social Self-concept 1 was the only independent variable which predicted significantly the dependent variable (i.e., Social self-concept 2) with beta = .478. On the other hand, the other independent variables (i.e. Friendship 1 and Peer acceptance 1) could not predict the dependent variable Social Self-concept 2. The following diagram summarises the strength of the predictor variables based on the thickness of the arrows.

Figure 33: Prediction of the dependent variable Social Self-concept in term 2



4.2.15 Can Friendship in term 2 be predicted by the three variables in term 1 (i.e., Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1)?

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of three independent variables (i.e., Friendship term 1, Peer acceptance term 1 and Social Self-concept term 1) to predict the outcome of Friendship term 2.

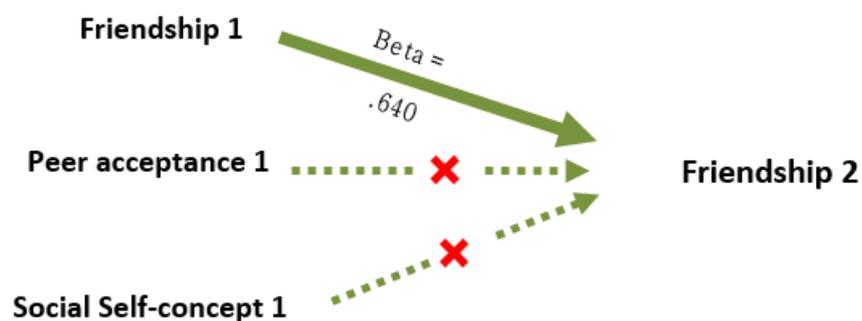
Findings

Table 31: The prediction of the dependent variable Friendship term 2 by three main independent variables (i.e., Friendship 1, Peer acceptance 1 and Social self-concept 1)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables (predictors)	Beta	sig	ANOVA (F, df, P)
Friendship Term 2	Friendship term 1	.640	sig	df = 3\174 F = 42.366 sig, p < .01
	Peer acceptance term 1	.017	Not sig	
	Social Self-concept term 1	.044	Not sig	

Table 31 reveals that the independent variable Friendship 1 was the only variable which could predict significantly the dependent variable (i.e., Friendship 2) with beta = .640, whereas the other independent variables (i.e. Peer acceptance 1 and Social Self-concept 1) could not predict the dependent variable Friendship 2. The following diagram summarises the strength of the predictor variables based on the thickness of the arrows.

Figure 34: Prediction of the dependent variable Friendship in term 2



4.3 Qualitative Results

In this section I present the qualitative data as findings only. To investigate the case studies in depth, I took a triangulation approach to be able to combine the data from different sources (i.e., interviews with the classroom teacher, teacher assistants, SENCOs and day to day observation) so that I could reach a better picture of the social participation of each focus child in their daily life at the school. I start with the English findings, then I move on to the Kuwaiti results. In each country I present the findings of four case studies individually (i.e., within-case analysis) to show detailed information about the daily life of children identified as having ML/Slow Learning in mainstream schools. I then present the across-cases analysis where I compare the results of the four cases studied in one country with the four cases in the second country. This helped me to identify the commonalities and variations among cases and across countries.

Findings

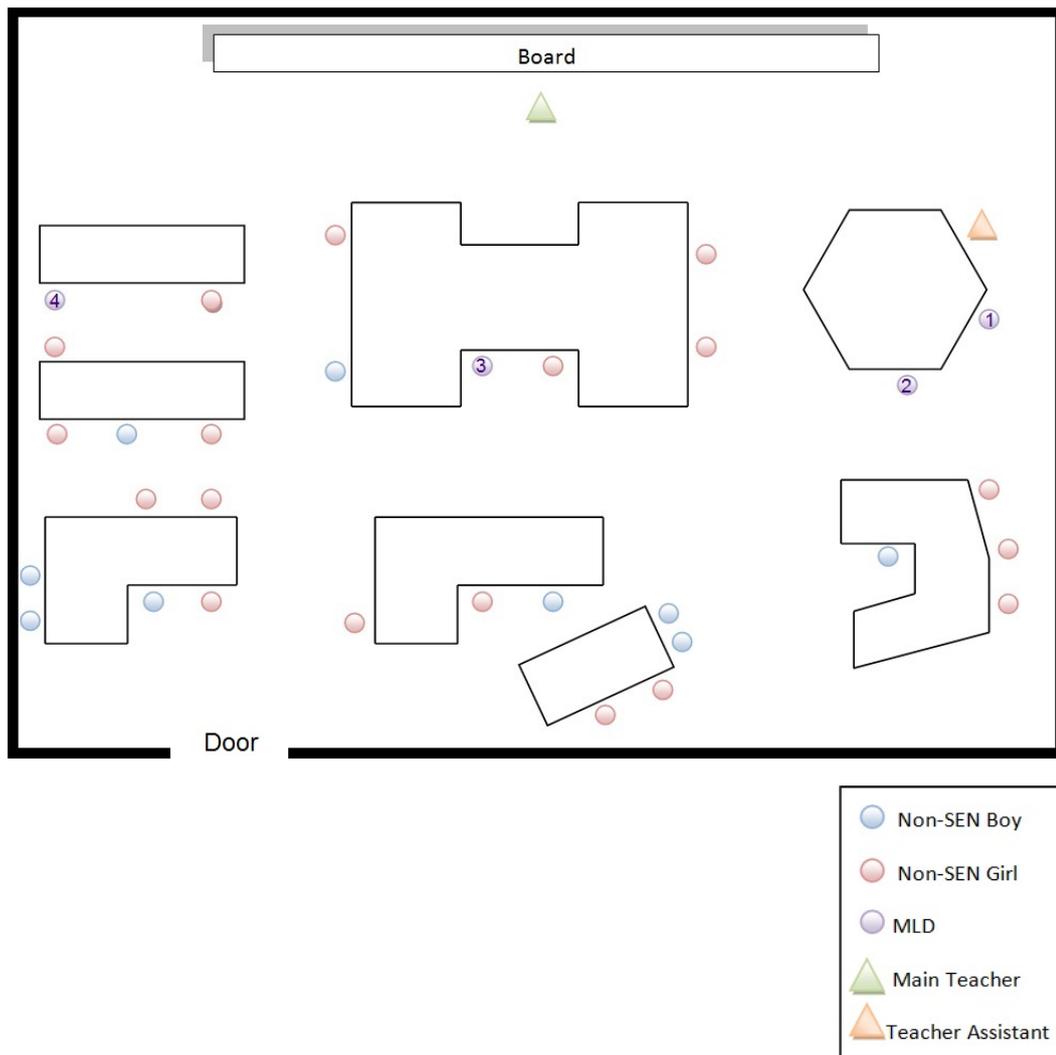
- *Within the case*
 - *England*

Case study 1: Sara

4.3.1 *The background of the case*

Sara is a girl in year 4 who had been identified with MLD. She is in school with her siblings, although they did not attend the same class. Sara sat at a table with a boy identified with MLD in order that the TA could work with both children together. (Figure 35 shows Sara's place in her class (child number 1).

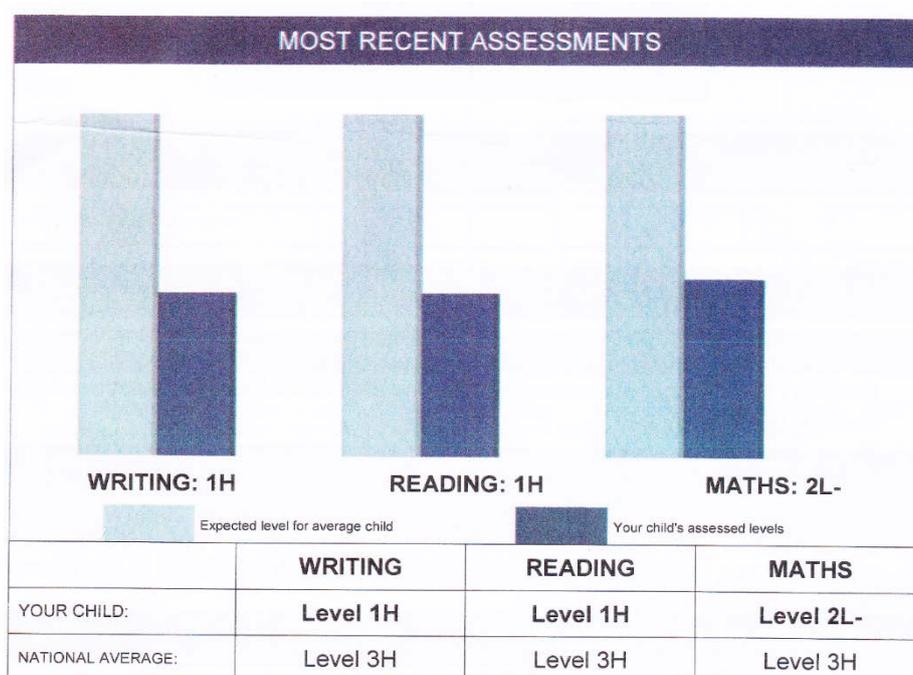
Figure 35: Structure of the classroom



Findings

The TA seemed to be important to Sara for both academic and social reasons. According to the main teacher, Sara tended to argue with her peers during break and lunch. Therefore, it had been arranged for Sara to have her meal 15 minutes before her peers (sharing lunch time with the younger children) to prevent conflicts, especially as she seemed to communicate better with, and relate better to, the younger children. Regarding Sara’s support, Sara had joined the Language Link programme, which was twice per week, to support her speech and language. She also received daily 1:1 TA support in maths, literacy and reading to improve her learning across the curriculum. Figure 36 shows her academic attainment levels (from her school report) in different areas.

Figure 36: Parent report regarding Sara’s assessment in Writing, Reading and Maths



It shows that Sara’s literacy skills are high level 1 and numeracy skills low level 2, well below the average for her age of high level 3. It is clear from Table 32 below that Sara’s non-core subject assessments are also below national average. The school report revealed the following about Sara:

Findings

'[Sara's] attitude towards her learning is improving and is usually very positive. She responds well to routine. In the morning she comes into class and practises her spelling words independently ... Recently, [Sara] has had some difficulties and she has become very upset at school. We are encouraging her to talk to a trusted adult about her worries so that she can be supported. [Sara] loves P.E lessons and she belongs to the football and fencing clubs. [Sara] is enjoying our Accelerated Reading programme and she has achieved a silver certificate this term. [Sara] loves to help in school and takes her purple-badge responsibilities very seriously'

Table 32: Sara's non-core subject assessments

NON CORE SUBJECT ASSESSMENTS				
How is my child doing?	Above national	In-line with national	Slightly below national	Below national
Art				✓
History/Geography/RE				✓
ICT				✓
French				✓
Music				✓
Science				✓
Overall attitude towards learning			✓	
Behaviour			✓	

In the following section, I will try to clarify Sara's social participation in school.

4.3.2 *Social interaction and social awareness*

I conducted daily semi-structured observation at the school to assess Sara's social interaction. As clarified under Quantitative Social Interaction Analysis in the Methodology chapter (see section number 3.6.7), social interaction was divided into two parts: interaction for social purposes and interaction for learning purposes. Table 33 summarises the frequency of Sara interaction in each section in term 1 and term 2. It is also important to clarify that the following findings in the table below was drawn from semi-structured and not fully structured observation; therefore, I want to emphasize that by referring to the numbers in the following table, I do not mean to explain the interaction through measuring the difference in numbers; instead, I want to use the differences among numbers only to point out the differences which could be explained qualitatively

Findings

Table 33: Description of Sara’s interaction based on qualitative semi-structured observation during terms 1 and 2

Social Interaction								
/	Social interaction (Any interaction for social purpose)				Learning interaction (Any interaction for learning purpose)			
	With SEN children		With non-SEN children		With SEN children		With non-SEN children	
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2
Initiation interaction								
- Physical	0	5	20	8	16	6	9	4
- Verbal	0	3	6	4	16	7	7	3
- Non-Verbal	0	0	1	2	2	1	0	2
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Receive interaction								
- Physical	0	3	16	7	15	6	11	4
- Verbal	0	3	6	3	16	7	7	4
- Non-Verbal	0	1	3	1	2	0	1	2
- Ignore	0	0	3	1	0	0	2	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
- Request	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Joint\Collaboration								
- Continuing interacting - for continuous period	0	2	1	0	2	0	0	0
- Continuing interacting - with prior child	0	4	3	4	6	2	1	0
- Momentary interaction for brief time	0	0	13	9	4	0	12	3
Full Interaction	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Negative Interaction	0	2	5	1	0	0	3	0
Positive Interaction	0	1	6	1	2	2	3	3
Limited Interaction	0	0	5	3	4	1	0	1

It is clear from Table 33 that during term 1, Sara did not interact with her SEN peers for social purposes; however, she interacted with one person for learning reasons (i.e., Tom who sat at the same table). The opposite interaction pattern was observed with non-SEN peers (i.e., more frequent interaction for social purposes than for learning reasons). During term 2, Sara's interaction for both learning and social reasons was balanced between her SEN and non-SEN peers. The main change in term 2 was that Sara became a friend with a new boy identified with autism who took Tom's seating place in the class. This is why Table 33 indicates Sara's greater social interaction with SEN peers in term 2, though her interaction was with just this one boy.

Regarding the type of interaction, Sara seemed to initiate and receive more physical and verbal interactions compared to non-verbal or request interactions during both terms, as Appendix 46 shows more green and beige colours than other colours in both terms, (each diagram in Appendix 46 refers to one month of day-to-day observation and each colour represents a type of interaction). It is also worth saying that most of Sara's interactions were limited during both terms, as she did not often fully engage with her peers but moved between different groups with limited engagement, quitting negative interactions especially with her non-SEN peers.

4.3.3 *Between friendship and companionship*

Sara was an active girl who was open to talk with anyone. This was evident in one episode. The first time I came to the class to start my observation, I stayed at the back, preparing to start the observation and, among all the children in the class, Sara took a step towards me and started asking me many questions. She was not shy to initiate interaction with others, even with outsiders like myself. Nonetheless, Sara had no friends in her class. In the nomination questionnaire she indicated six of her classmates as her best friends, even though she had been asked to write up to five names only, yet none of these friends mentioned Sara as their friend. Moreover, none of the children in the class mentioned Sara as a friend; thus, Sara was the only child who was not nominated as a friend in her class.

Findings

One name in Sara's friends list was Tom (i.e., Child number 2 in Figure 35 above). Sara interacted with Tom, however they did not interact by choice but because the teacher asked them to do so and placed them together. This became obvious when observing children's interaction during break time, when they were all free to interact with whoever they wanted. My observation showed that Sara and Tom never interacted during break time.

'The teachers asked children to work with their partner... [Tom] and [Sara] communicated normally, sharing the work, and talk to each other during the lesson activity because they are partners. However I never noticed them playing or communicating during the break time or being together in the playground or eating together at the school dining room.' (Observation note in term 1)

The second group with which Sara interacted often was a group of girls in her class. Although Sara wrote five names of these girls as her friends, none of them nominated her as a friend, although they accepted her and treated her in the same way as a mother treats her child, being affectionate and caring.

'During break time ... group of girls were noticed to communicate with [Sara] often; one of the girls on that group saw [Sara] and she opened her arms to [Sara] to hug her like she was her mother... She was indulging her and holding her hands in very friendly and warm way ... And this was interesting because during the last three weeks I noticed that a lot.' (Observation note in term 1)

At first, it appeared that this observation revealed a good friendship, but this was not necessarily the case. Although the girls were very friendly, the interaction was only momentary, as Sara moved around different groups quickly and did not interact with them for a continuous amount of time.

'In the break time ... [Sara] was running behind different children ... she saw two of her classmates whom she often interacted with, she joined them and then she changed the group quickly by running behind different girls in a random way.' (Observation note in term 2)

During the second term, some changes within the class had an effect on Sara's friendship. The main change involved moving Tom (i.e. Sara's partner) to another group and replacing him with a new boy (i.e. Cory) who had just joined the class. After that change, Sara no longer communicated with Tom. This indicates that their interaction in the first term was determined by the class activities and learning purposes only, rather than by their desire to interact.

The nomination method in term 2 showed that Sara included Cory in her friendship list along with the same group of girls she communicated with in the first term. In return, Cory was the only one who nominated Sara. Nonetheless, the other girls kept communicating with Sara in a very kind manner, as they did before. This could indicate that, although such girls did not consider Sara one of their five best friends, they were still happy to accept Sara within their social circle.

4.3.4 Peer acceptance and rejection

In addition to the above indications of Sara's peer acceptance for term 1, the rating scale showed that Sara scored 1.23 out of 3 points, which was the lowest score in her class. Most children (i.e. 24 out of 30) answered, "I do not mind 😊" when asked if they would like to play with Sara, while four answered, "Yes I would like to 😊" and only two answered, "Yes I would very much like to 😊😊". This result was also confirmed by the SENCO, when I asked her about Sara's relationship with her peers, she said:

'I think probably they don't accept her [Sara's peers]. I think she probably does stand out a little bit, because her difficulties are more extreme ... So I think within her peer group perhaps they do avoid her.' (Interview with SENCO 1)

One possible reason behind such difficulties was that Sara was in year 2 last year, but because of the Accelerated programme, she jumped to year 4 this year - as her main teacher said - to find herself with children older than she was used to. Such placement did not help Sara to develop a relationship with other children in her class and did not help her peers establish a friendship with her. It is also worth saying that Sara's low rating (i.e. below the average score of 1.8 for her class) is consistent with Sara's way of interacting with her peers, as my observation showed that Sara was not fully engaged with the other children. Instead,

Findings

she moved around the playground, interacting apparently randomly with whoever she encountered.

'In the break time ... [Sara] was in the playground playing with the new boy ... Then a group of boys from another class were playing football and they kicked the ball toward [Sara], so she just ran after the ball and joined their game without asking them. They just took the ball and ignored her so she left them.'

(Observation in term 2)

Sara's acceptance remained unchanged in the second term, as the rating scale in term 2 revealed that Sara scored 1.25 out of 3 points, which was still the lowest in her class (average 1.76). Sara did not communicate with her peers often in the class because she worked with her TA and her SEN peer at one table; such separation from other children did not increase her acceptance. Peer acceptance was not the only problem; peer rejection was also an issue, as my observations shows:

'The classroom teacher asked all children to raise a hand if they knew their partner to work with ... [Sara] raised her hand as she knew her partner... She moved toward one of her non-SEN peers who WAS NOT raising his hand. The TA got involved in that situation and she asked the boy whether he wanted to play with [Sara]. The boy did not answer yes or no but he showed by body language that he didn't like to play with her. The TA told him that [Sara] would like to share so she asked both of them to join the queue, however the non-SEN child refused to join the queue with [Sara] and he said I don't want her as my partner...' (Observation in term 2)

Although this situation was clear evidence of peer rejection, my observation also showed that her female peers accepted Sara well, treating her in very caring way. Three of these girls rated Sara as, "Yes I would very much like to", on the rating scale. They were also very patient with Sara's reactions, such as when she got angry or when she played with them in a tough way.

4.3.5 Sara's social participation in the teachers' view

It seems that some teachers' opinions regarding Sara's social participation were inconsistent with the above evidence. Simply, some teachers believed that Sara interacted well with other children, although the observation as well as the sociometric data showed the opposite. The positive teachers' opinions toward Sara's interaction appeared to be true to some extent, as Sara interacted with different children and groups. This was stated by her main teacher: *'I think certainly [Sara] probably plays with a wider range of people'*. It is also true that some children (especially her female group) treated her quite well, as I indicated before. However, when I asked the teachers about the quality and strength of Sara's social participation, their answers closely matched the quantitative data and my observations. Although Sara interacted and played with the children around her, the quality of such interactions seemed to be very modest; the teachers thought that Sara had only a few friends and that her peers did not accept her. They also believed that other children were afraid to communicate with her, and that she struggled in her social life in general. See the following quotes for examples:

'They'll play with her [her peers], but they're not good friends with a lot of them. She would be happier playing with one or two people.' (Interview with the TA 3)

'I think [Sara] ...they don't accept her. I think she probably does stand out a little bit, because her difficulties are more extreme.' (Interview with SENCO 1)

'I think the other children are a little bit wary. They are a little bit worried that they will end up in a problem with her so they want to be quite careful how they deal with her.' (Interview with the Main Teacher)

The interviews also revealed that her awareness of her social interaction was poorly developed. This means that Sara did not seem to be aware of the social life around her; she had difficulties reading the social rules applicable in the school environment. One interview participant concluded:

Findings

'Yeah, I think she is not aware. I think [Sara] is not aware of a social group ... She quite often has problems with other children so I think she is not aware if they accept her.' (Interview with the SENCO 1)

This was also consistent with the observation that Sara was moving randomly to different social group clusters, even if she did not know their members. This was because Sara saw everyone as a friend, as mentioned by her TA.

'We said to her she had to invite people to a birthday party and we asked her to write a list of friends that she wanted to invite. She wrote nearly everyone in the class. I said, well, are these your special friends, do you play with them? She said, yeah, yeah, I play with everyone. But really her concept of that is different because these are not her special friends. A special friend is someone who you really get along with but she saw everyone as that kind of friend.' (Interview with TA 2)

Such unawareness of the social rules concerning Sara in school seemed to be a supportive factor that helped her develop a positive social self-concept. Although her actual social participation was very limited, her social self-concept was positive, as shown in her SDQ questionnaire, where she got 3.8 out of 5 points. The interviews also showed that Sara felt part of the school community:

'Yeah, I think so [she feels part of the classroom community] ... Because [Sara], in the first term, used to say sometimes that she missed her old class ... I miss that friend or I miss this friend. However, she doesn't say that much anymore. I think she does feel part of this class... She certainly feels comfortable in different areas but I don't know whether she's aware of it herself.' (Interview with the main teacher)

Finally, there was an agreement among all the interviewees that the best placement for Sara was a special school because her learning development was so slow and the teachers believed she would find more friends in the special school, for instance:

Findings

'I can't see any other way than her having to go to a special school. She's so desperately low and she's really going to need help... She would seem very able in a special needs school. Socially, she would seem bright and sparky and other children would want to play with her. So, socially, I think she probably would.'
(Interview with the Main Teacher)

Summary of Case 1: Sara's social participation

Sara is a nine-year-old child designated with MLD attending a mainstream class in Year 4. In the primary school, she struggled and experienced difficulties in most areas of the curriculum. My investigation of Sara indicated that her social interaction with her peers was physical and verbal; however, her engagement with the others was rather limited and momentary. During the class, she often worked with her TA and Tom, her peer identified with MLD, in one group, which limited her interaction with her non-SEN peers. During the break times, she usually joined younger children who did not attend her class. The investigation of Sara's peer acceptance showed that her classmates do not accept her, although they interact with her in a good way. She did not have any friends during term 1 and during term 2, she had only 1 friend, a boy identified with autism. Sara's teachers believed that she interacted with her peers rather well, although her interaction with them was not deep enough to establish a close friendship or a quality relationship. They believed that she should join a special school.

Findings

Case study 2: David

4.3.6 The background of the case

David was a boy in year 4 identified as having MLD in the school register. In the class, David sat alongside one of his non-SEN female peers at the front of the class. Figure 35 above shows David's place in the class (child number 4).

David was a quiet boy in the class, usually paying attention to the lesson. His academic level was in line with the national average in all non-core subject assessments except science, as Table 34 shows. David also experienced some academic difficulties in literacy and numeracy, which appeared to be slightly lower than the national average, as shown in Figure 37.

Figure 37: Parent report regarding David's assessment in Writing, Reading and Maths

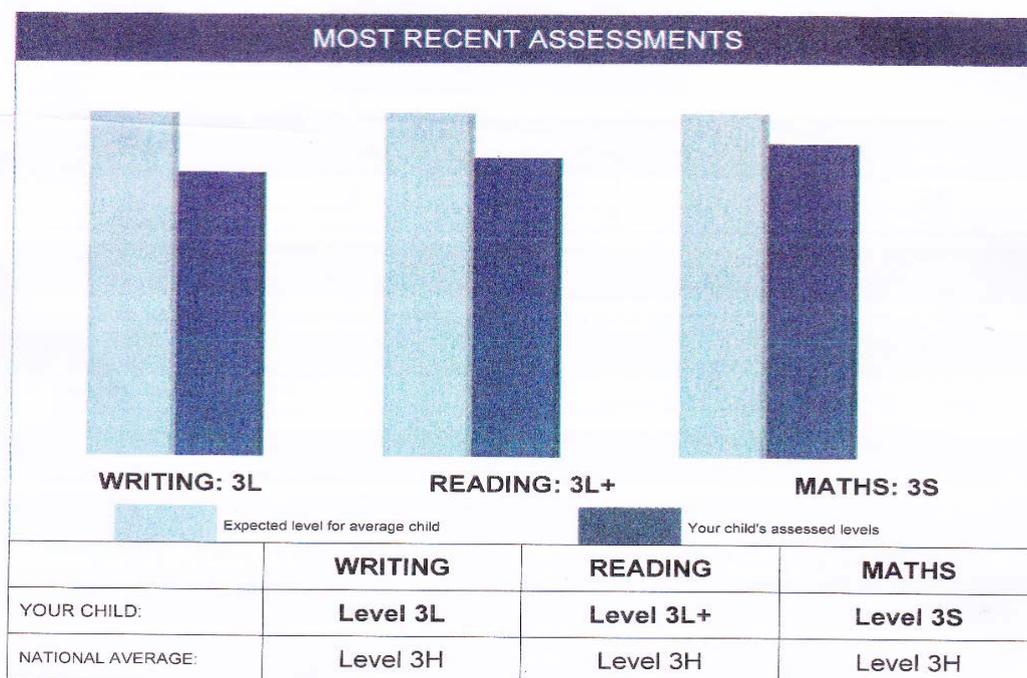


Table 34: David's non-core subject assessments

NON CORE SUBJECT ASSESSMENTS				
How is my child doing?	Above national	In-line with national	Slightly below national	Below national
Art		✓		
History/Geography/RE		✓		
ICT		✓		
French		✓		
Music		✓		
Science			✓	
Overall attitude towards learning		✓		
Behaviour		✓		

4.3.7 David's social interaction

I assessed David's interaction with his peers in the same way as for Sara (i.e. day-to-day observation). It is clear from table 35 that David interacted more physically and verbally compared to other kinds of interactions, during both terms. During term 1, David's interaction was limited, especially during class activities. In the classroom David was seated alongside Kara, his female partner; however, they did not interact much.

In the playground, David looked for children to play with. Thus, he initiated physical and verbal interaction and, in return, he received the same kind of interaction, although sometimes his peers ignored and rejected his interactions, as Table 35 shows. My observation also revealed that David interacted with some of his SEN peers. In general, David's interaction in term 1 could be described as physical, momentary and fluctuating.

During term 2, David's social interaction improved considerably. Based on my observation, David interacted with the same group of children for social and learning purposes during term 2, and this interaction was long and continuous, unlike in term 1 when his interaction was momentary and not stable (i.e. he interacted with different children and had no stable group or friend). Such an improvement in David's interaction during term 2 can be attributed

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to the football group with which David fully interacted, which positively influenced his interaction with his peers in the class. In conclusion, David's interaction during term 2 was more physical and stable. He was fully and consistently engaged with the same children.

Table 35: David's interaction based on qualitative semi-structured observation during terms 1 and 2

Social Interaction								
	Social interaction (Any interaction for social purpose)				Learning interaction (Any interaction for learning purpose)			
	With SEN children		With non-SEN children		With SEN children		With non-SEN children	
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2
Initiation interaction								
- Physical	2	0	13	17	3	0	7	5
- Verbal	1	0	4	6	6	1	9	9
- Non-Verbal	0	0	4	1	0	0	3	1
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Receive interaction								
- Physical	5	2	15	18	3	0	5	5
- Verbal	1	0	3	6	7	1	10	8
- Non-Verbal	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
- Ignore	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	1
- Reject	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0
- Request	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Joint\Collaboration								
- Continuing interacting - for continuous period	0	0	2	7	0	0	0	4
- Continuing interacting - with prior child	2	0	2	11	1	0	1	8
- Momentary interaction for brief time	1	0	4	1	1	1	2	0
Full Interaction	0	0	2	8	1	0	1	4
Negative Interaction	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Positive Interaction	0	0	3	1	3	0	2	3
Limited Interaction	1	0	5	3	4	0	16	3

4.3.8 *Between friendship and isolation*

From my investigation of David's friendships in term 1, it appears that although the nomination methods showed that he had 4 friends (one of them was a reciprocal friendship), his interaction with them fluctuated. He often played alone in the playground and during the lunch period in the school dining room as well. In the class, David had been seated next to Kara who did not really interacted with him, as I mentioned before. This placement did not seem to help David establish friendships in the class.

During break, David usually walked alone in the playground looking for children to play with. He moved from group to group until he found someone who would like to play with him:

'[David] was alone in the playground looking for some children with whom he could play. He walked alone; then he found one girl to play with for a while until she moved away to play with other children. He was then alone again and found the girl who sat near him in the class [Kara]; she was in the playground but they never played together... [David] walked to the centre of the playground, he didn't find anyone to play with so he started to walk near the sides of the playground, walking alone and looking at the ground.' (Observation of David in term 1)

David had no specific group of friends to play with during term 1, and he sometimes spent lengthy periods alone. Appendix 47 shows the extent to which David was alone during term 1 (see the dark purple colour in the first diagram). He was also alone in the dining room during lunchtime, as my observation revealed:

'In the school dining room... [David] was sitting alone at one table, talking with no one ... Some of his classmates sat near him, but did not interact with him... [David] finished his meal and left the dining room without talking to anyone.' (Observation of David in term 1).

Nonetheless, in the playground, David tried hard every day to find someone to play with. When he could not find anyone else, he joined the baseball group, which is a large group of children playing under the supervision of the TA. David also liked to play football, so he joined seven boys from his class to play football at the end of term 1. Some of them

nominated David as their friend. The football game seemed to improve the quality of his friendships during the following term.

During the second term, David's friendships improved positively. The friends nomination showed that David had six friends, four of whom were reciprocal and, most importantly, all of these six friends were members of the football group. The TA who played baseball with the children in the playground also noticed this change: *'He doesn't normally mix with any different children but, through football, I suppose he does, in a certain way'*. This appeared to be true, as David started to play football every day during break with the same group. Thus, he was not alone any more.

The second factor which seems to have had a marked influence on David's friendship was the change of the class seating arrangement, whereby Kara was replaced by a boy from the football group. This changed David's activity in the class, as he became more active and fully engaged with his new partner. They nominated each other as friends. David's friendships did not improve only in the class and in the playground, but also in the school dining room, as my observation shows:

'In the school dining room... [David] took his meal and joined a group of boys who always played football with him, they were eating together. [David] was not talking to them a lot, but they accepted him in their group.... They finished their meal and moved to the playground together.' (Observation of David during term 2).

4.3.9 Peer acceptance and social skills

Before detailing David's relationships with his peers, I need first to clarify some general characteristics of David, which appeared to influence his acceptance by his peers. Through my observation, I noticed that David's social ability and skill to start manage, develop or start a social interaction was limited. I did not assess his social skills extensively; however, I observed some instances when David attempted or wanted to interact and did not, for instance:

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'In the school dining room, [David] sat alone eating his lunch; he saw a group of his female peers at the other table so he moved his tray to join them... he was eating quietly and he did not talk to them at all (I think he would like to talk to them, otherwise he wouldn't move his place and join them) ... he finished eating and left without any interaction.' (Observation of David in term 1)

This was not the only limitation concerning David's interaction. According to my investigation, David tended to start a social interaction 'inappropriately', as he simply started to play with different groups without asking them. As a result, he was ignored and sometimes rejected during term 1. David also did not seem to respond to social initiatives, as my observation indicated:

'In the school dining room... [David] sat alone eating his meal... one of his male classmates came and joined his table ... the boy was very friendly; he talked to [David] but [David] did not pay him attention and did not try to develop the communication; he even left the boy who joined him alone as soon as he finished his meal... [David] did this frequently with other children... [Jake] for example.' (Observation note in term 1)

In the classroom, David did not initiate many interactions even when he joined different groups; a good example is when *'the teacher asked [David] to join a group of four to discuss the video they had just watched... all the children in the group were talking to each other but [David] was very quiet, talking to no one'* (observation of David during term 1). Through these examples, I do not mean to judge David's social ability. I only want to indicate that such limited interaction seemed to influence his relationship with others and subsequently their acceptance of him.

Regarding the quantitative result of David's acceptance, the rating scale during term one shows that David scored 1.69 on a 3-point scale, just below the average for his class during term 1 (i.e., 1.8). This is unsurprising as his interactions during term 1 were limited, as explained above. During the second term, David achieved a mean of 1.87, which is just above the average score for his class (i.e., 1.76). As you can see from the scores during both terms, David's peer acceptance was quantitatively only slightly different; conversely, clear qualitative alterations emerged. David was generally accepted by his peers during term one;

however, during term two, he was accepted more by certain people, which was noticed by his TA: *'He's improved quite a bit actually from last term...he seems to be able to cope better playing with children'*. This appeared to be true, as David developed his friendship with the football group. He associated with them in the class, school dining room and playground. Consequently, I can conclude that the quality of peer acceptance during term 2 was better compared to term 1, although the quantitative result did not show a big difference.

4.3.10 *Staff views of David's social participation*

The staff's opinions regarding David's social interaction was, in general, compatible with my observations. They thought that David's social interaction was acceptable during term 1, although they noticed it improved during term 2. For example, when I asked his TA during the first term whether David had as many friends as other kids in his class, the answer was, *'Yes he seems to get on quite well with other children. He's always in different groups. I don't think anything different about him than the other children really because he gets on well'*. However, when I asked the TA to name the children with whom David usually played, he said, *'I'm trying to think who [David's] main friends are because he plays with a lot of different people really. Because obviously, we're not out in the playground it's hard to see who they actually go with'*. This appears to be correct, as my observation showed that David liked to look for different children with whom he could play at that time (i.e. term 1), and he had no stable group or children with whom he would play. During term two, I asked the teachers whether they could think of any improvements in David's friendships. The classroom teacher said: *I think he has developed his social relationships, and I think maybe being in class together last year and then coming up together has quite helped secure those friendships.'* (Interview with the Main Teacher term 2)

When asked to identify David's friends, the teacher continued: *'[David] plays football a lot, so I think probably the same kind of group that he plays with'*. This indicates that David had closer and more stable friends during term 2.

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All interviewed participants also believed that David was accepted by his peers quite well during both terms. For example, I asked David's TA whether he thought that other children were willing to accept David socially. He said; *'I think they do accept him in the social groups... he seems to fit in quite well with his friends... he can get on with what everyone else is doing, so yeah he is accepted'*. The primary teacher also believed that David was accepted in the class; however, she had some concerns about David's over quietness in the class, as she said he was *'quite a quiet boy... he's not loud, so I don't know whether a smaller group would let him be heard more, have a bit more of a voice'*. This opinion seems to agree with the result of the observation regarding David's limited interaction with children around him, as he did not participate in a good way, as confirmed by the SENCO.

I asked the SENCO about David's social awareness, whether he could read the social situations around him and recognise, for example, children who would like to play with him and those who would not. She said, *'I think [David] is probably unaware. I think he's probably happy to join any social group... he sometimes gets involved in a situation that he shouldn't.'* The TA agreed and added: *'I think he just needs to continue to get on with other children and make sure he is involved in the right things really, not in problems'*. Finally, there was substantial agreement about the most appropriate educational placement for him, as they all believed that the mainstream school was the most effective placement. As SENCO 1 said: *I really truly do believe that [David] would be able to survive within a mainstream school... he seems to chat to everyone when he's outside waiting so I'd say that he's happy in it'*.

Summary of Case 2: David's Social Participation

David is a nine-year-old child identified with MLD in the fourth year in mainstream class. His school academic achievements appear to be in line with national averages in most areas of the curriculum. During the first term, David tried to engage with different groups, looking for children with whom he could play. He sometimes ended up alone in the playground and in the dining room. The observation also showed that David did not interact sufficiently with his peers, as he was very quiet and had limited interaction skills. Nonetheless, the sociometric scales showed that David had four friends, and that he was accepted by his peers. During the second term, differences in David's social participation were qualitative more than quantitative, as David started to play football with a group of boys with whom he became good friends. This was reflected in his interaction with his peers in the class and in the restaurant, as he no longer sat alone. David's teachers thought that David participated socially during term 1, although his participation improved during term 2, as confirmed by observation. They also indicated that David was involved negatively in some situations because of his lack of social awareness. Finally all the interviewees believed that the mainstream school is the most appropriate placement for David.

Case study 3: Tom

4.3.11 *The background of the case*

Tom is a boy who has a statement for MLD in a mainstream class (child number 2 in Figure 35). He was placed alongside Sara at one table so that the teaching assistant could work with both of them as they had greater learning difficulties than the others in the class. Unfortunately, Tom's school report could not be obtained; however his main teacher indicated that he was well below expected levels in different areas

'Academically he's a long way behind... his learning difficulty is something mental...he can't read, he doesn't recognise numbers very well...he doesn't really understand why he can't. So, he'll say, why can't I do what they're doing?... most of children are Level 3 now and he's Level 1.'

(Interview with the main teacher)

'We spent a lot, a lot of time in all aspects of his work. As regards numeracy, literacy, he's had interventions all the way through his schooling here. But we still are at a stage where he cannot even recognise the first ten numbers. Whether there's some kind of mental block, I do not know. He could not tell you what numbers one to ten are.' (Teaching assistant 1)

Regarding Tom's difficulties, it was frequently repeated by staff that Tom quickly became angry from different issues which he could not handle by himself. For example, his teacher assistant said:

'When things go wrong out in the playground - like football turns - if something happens in football, it goes wrong and then he doesn't totally understand why and then that gets him angry so then he'll take himself off. So I think he's still got that barrier.' (Teaching assistant 2)

4.3.12 *Tom's social interaction*

Tom's social interaction was assessed using semi-structured observation during both terms. The data found a clear difference between the numbers of interactions in the first compared with the second term. For the first term, Tom showed some intensive continuous interaction for social purposes with the same person (i.e. Alex). At the same time, he continuously interacted with Sara (child number 1 in Figure 35) for learning purposes as he was placed alongside her at the table. Tom was also a sociable boy in the first term as all of his observed interactions with children were positive in the first term, with no negative interaction observed (see Appendix 48). In the second term there was a decrease in Tom's interaction in general (see Table 36). As Tom faced an increase in his level of difficulties in the second term, it was decided that he should attend just the first half of the school day (i.e. until 12:30 and stay at home for the rest). This change reduced Tom's interaction for social purposes as he was no longer with the other children at break time in the second term. A further change for Tom was that the main teacher decided to change his place to another table alongside one non-SEN girl; therefore the number of interactions with non-SEN children for learning purposes was greater than with his SEN peers in the class (see Table 36).

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Table 36: Description of Tom's interaction based on qualitative semi-structured observation during terms 1 and 2

Social Interaction								
	Social interaction (Any interaction for social purpose)				Learning interaction (Any interaction for learning purpose)			
	With SEN children		With non-SEN children		With SEN children		With non-SEN children	
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2
Initiation interaction								
- Physical	1	1	27	9	12	5	7	9
- Verbal	2	0	13	8	12	8	10	11
- Non-Verbal	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Receive interaction								
- Physical	2	2	26	12	13	7	0	3
- Verbal	2	1	10	8	12	9	12	10
- Non-Verbal	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	1
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0
Joint\Collaboration								
- Continuing interacting - for continuous period	0	1	5	4	12	4	2	1
- Continuing interacting - with prior child	1	1	20	7	17	0	0	6
- Momentary interaction for brief time	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Full Interaction	0	2	7	2	0	0	0	6
Negative Interaction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Positive Interaction	0	1	9	2	3	0	2	4
Limited Interaction	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	6

4.3.13 Tom's friendships

In the first term, Tom showed a good social interaction with the children around him; he seemed to be friendly and sociable with children in his class in general. The nomination methods showed that four children nominated him as one of their best friends, while Tom nominated only one of them back as a reciprocal friend (i.e. Alex). It was also clear from the observation that Tom and Alex were very close friends, as they were rarely seen apart:

'In the class [Alex] volunteers by himself to work with [Tom], although [Tom] was placed in another group to work with just [Sara] at one table... After the class [Tom] and [Sara] were allowed to have their lunch earlier. [Alex] was also allowed by the SENCO to have his meal with [Tom] as he was his best friend... After that they went together to join the other children in the playground... They were playing football with [name of boys in their class] ... in a good way for almost all of break time.' (Observation note in term 1)

In the second term, there was a big change in Tom's social interaction, as noted in table 36 above, due to the change in his difficulties which led to his having a reduced timetable at school. This seemed to affect his interaction with his best friend Alex, as Tom no longer played in the playground. The observation also showed that Alex and Tom were rarely seen together as before; Alex was found to interact with a new friend (i.e. Jake: another of the case study children in this research). He also interacted with his new friend during lesson time instead of with Tom:

'During lesson time, the teacher ... asked children to raise one hand if they preferred to work as partners... [Tom] was calling [Alex] to join him, but [Alex] joined [Jake]... So [Tom] went with [David], and a few others were left without partners so the teacher asked them to work together.' (Observation note in second term)

The nomination method revealed that Tom also had four friends in the second term: two of them were the same reciprocal friends as in the first term and the other two were new friends. It seems that Tom developed some new relationships with boys from his class, as the observation showed that new boys were joining Tom's table in the school lunch hall. To summarize Tom's friendship, Tom had four friends in term one with one of them a very

close friend (Alex), who shadowed Tom all the time, while in the second term Tom's friendship changed to be less with Alex and more with two new boys. In general he had a low level of interaction in the second term due to the reduction in his timetable.

4.3.14 *Tom's peer acceptance*

Tom's acceptance by his peers seemed to be very good, especially in the first term, as the observation showed that Tom interacted with different children (both male and female) and he was observed playing with different groups of children. In the beginning, I thought that Tom's good social position was due to the effect of Alex's social relationships. To clarify, Alex was a popular boy who had been nominated by nine children as their best friend; this could help Tom develop his social relationships by interacting with Alex's friends. However, the day-to-day observation showed that Tom was also a sociable boy and that different children seemed to accept him socially, for example: '[Tom] *is communicating with different children from his class; he was talking and laughing with different boys and girls... It seems that everyone likes to play with [Tom] and [Tom] likes to play with everyone*' (Observation note in term 1).

The rating method revealed that Tom scored 1.77 out of 3.0 scale points; such a score is just below the average for his class (i.e. 1.8). However, this does not mean that Tom was not accepted, as a score of 1.77 is above the half-way mark of the 3 point scale. In the second term, Tom's score increased to 1.80 out of 3.0. This score is just above the average for the second term (i.e. 1.76). However, in the second term Tom did not interact a lot with the other children; nevertheless the observation showed that Tom interacted with some of the boys from his class at lunch time before leaving for home. This shows that reducing Tom's timetable seems not to have affected his acceptance by his peers.

4.3.15 *Staff perspectives on Tom's social participation*

Semi-structured interviews were carried out to investigate the staffs' opinions about Tom's social participation. The result was a close match with the observation and provided more details regarding Tom's special educational needs and its effect on his relationship with his peers in the class. Firstly, the interviews showed agreement among the interviewees that Alex was Tom's best friend:

'Although some of the children are a bit wary, he's quite popular. [Alex] is his best friend and he would be allowed to play with any children.' (Interview with the main teacher)

The teachers also noticed that Tom was liked by others and that his classmate cared about him. Tom's teaching assistant clarified that sometimes Tom got very angry as soon as something went wrong so he would run away and refuse to come back to the class. The teaching assistant continued: *'Some of the boys have tended to - during that difficult period - to have followed him... We even had one day where a couple of the girls did'* (Interview with teacher assistant 3). While the main teacher noticed that such behaviour from Tom could make his peers a bit scared, they nevertheless accepted him:

'Lots of the girls and boys like him, but I think they're a bit scared about what he could do, because they know that he can get a bit violent sometimes.' (Interview with the main teacher)

The teachers also noticed that Tom's friendship changed in the second term because of his general difficulties, as he was refusing to co-operate with the teachers and the school rules in general:

'He was really struggling to socialise with anyone and he was refusing to come in at the end of play, refusing also to come in at the end of dinner-time. Even up to an hour after dinner time he would still be out running around. Not cross, but refusing to come in, refusing to listen to anyone. We had to get mum in on several occasions. It was deteriorating, not quite sure why, and we had to put him back on to a part-time timetable.' (Interview with the SENCO 1)

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One of the teaching assistants also told me that Tom had some family problems, which could be the reason why his difficulties started to appear more in the second term. Regarding Tom's placement, many of the interviewees found it difficult to decide what educational placement would be more appropriate for Tom; however, different interviewees indicated that the special school would be better for his academic needs but that the mainstream school was better for his social needs:

'Special school would be totally different and may be more suited to his needs. However, socially, I think sometimes it's quite nice for him to play with some of the boys that are actually his age appropriate rather than some with special needs... You get a group of children who are in a special school together - which is brilliant because they get on and they're in the same situation. However, sometimes, when they leave that kind of school then, when they're facing the world, then that's a bit daunting in some respects because then you're not in that bubble anymore.' (Main teacher)

Summary of Case 3: Tom's social participation

Tom is a nine-year-old boy identified as having MLD in mainstream class. In his class he had four friends in term one and he was accepted in general by his peers; his best friend was Alex with whom he spent the majority of school time. In the second term, Tom's difficulties started to increase and his attendance changed to part-time. This affected his social relationships with his peers, as he was not playing with Alex as he was in the first term. Two of his friends changed, although the total number of his friends in the second term remained the same as in the first term. The teachers also noticed that Tom was accepted and popular, although he had some difficulties when he got angry and was unable to manage his reaction. The teachers also noticed a change in Tom's social participation in the second term and they believed that special school would be better for Tom's academic needs while mainstream school was better for his social needs.

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Case study 4: Jake

4.3.16 The background of the case

Jake was a boy identified as having MLD. His school report indicated that Jake had some difficulties in concentration and that he sometimes became distracted or disengaged and lacked focus, regardless of the class activity. Nonetheless, the school report indicated that Jake had made sound progress in the physical education class as he was noticed to be a good swimmer. In the class Jake sat in the middle (i.e. child number 3 in Figure 35) with a group of non-SEN children.

Regarding Jake's academic performance, the non-core subject assessment showed that his academic level was slightly below the national average in most non-core subjects, as Table 37 shows. Jake also experienced some academic difficulties in literacy and numeracy, with attainment slightly below the national average, as the bars in Figure 38 shows.

Figure 38: Parents' report on Jake's Writing, Reading and Maths

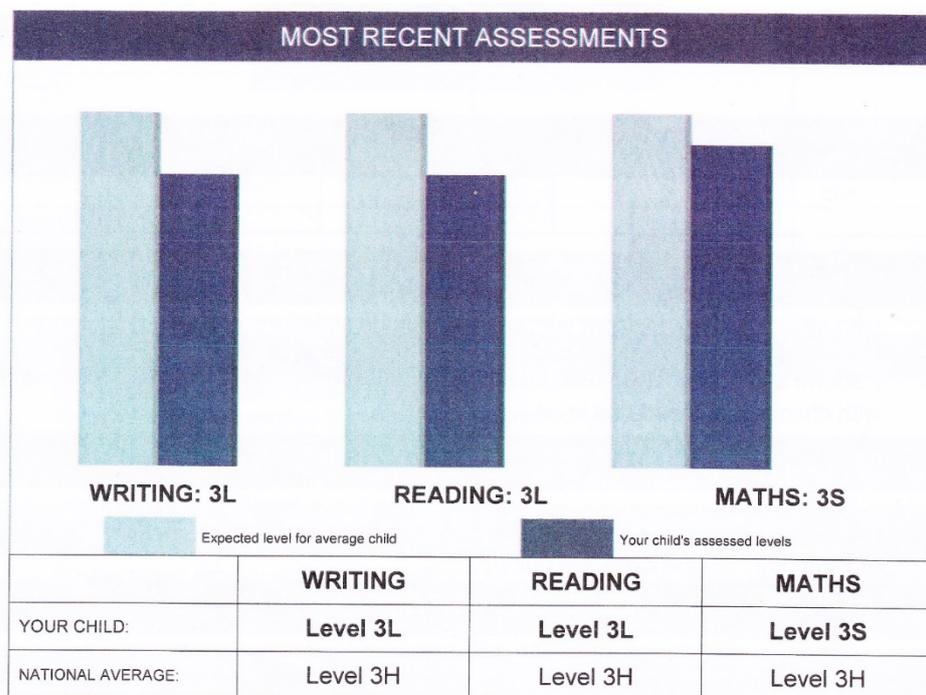


Table 37: Jake’s non-core subject assessments

NON CORE SUBJECT ASSESSMENTS				
How is my child doing?	Above national	In-line with national	Slightly below national	Below national
Art			✓	
History/Geography/RE			✓	
ICT			✓	
French			✓	
Music			✓	
Science		✓		
Overall attitude towards learning			✓	
Behaviour			✓	

4.3.17 *The extent of Jake’s social interaction at school*

According to the observation, Jake interacted for social purposes with the same children for a long period of time. He interacted with them mainly in physical and verbal ways in both terms (see Table 38). The observation also found that Jake interacted with his non-SEN peers for learning purposes, as he sat alongside one non-SEN girl who was noticed to help him often with the class tasks. However, in the second term there was a change in the children’s placings; Jake’s place remained the same but his female partner moved to another group. This seemed to reduce Jake’s interaction for learning purposes in the second term. In general it can be said that Jake’s interaction was good, as he interacted with his social network cluster for social purposes, he initiated interaction almost as much as receiving interaction, and his interacted in mainly physical and verbal ways (see appendix 49 for more details of Jake’s social interaction).

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Table 38: Description of Jake's interaction based on qualitative semi-structured observation during terms 1 and 2

Social Interaction								
	Social interaction (Any interaction for social purpose)				Learning interaction (Any interaction for learning purpose)			
	With SEN children		With non-SEN children		With SEN children		With non-SEN children	
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2
Initiation interaction								
- Physical	3	5	27	16	1	0	14	10
- Verbal	0	2	10	5	1	0	14	8
- Non-Verbal	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
- Ignore	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Receive interaction								
- Physical	3	8	23	21	1	0	15	9
- Verbal	0	2	10	5	1	0	15	11
- Non-Verbal	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Joint\Collaboration								
- Continuing interacting - for continuous period	0	11	13	5	0	0	2	1
- Continuing interacting - with prior child	0	15	21	8	0	0	10	5
- Momentary interaction for brief time	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Full Interaction	0	3	5	5	0	0	3	0
Negative Interaction	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Positive Interaction	0	3	2	3	1	0	3	1
Limited Interaction	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	5

4.3.18 *Who were Jake's friends at school?*

Jake was a sociable boy; he belonged to a certain social network which was noticed to be together often. The nomination method showed that Jake had six friends, five of them were reciprocal friends. The observation showed that Jake spent his break time with his friends as a group:

'At break time, [Jake] played with the friends he always played with. They stood in a circle and [Jake] divided them into two groups, and they played like they were fighting each other in a positive way.' (Observation note in term 1)

The observation also revealed that Jake was close to his group and that he was one of its main members, as he sometimes led his friends in play and they joined him when he came to the playground. In the second term there was a change in Jake's friendships, although the nomination method revealed that Jake scored six children in the second term. To explain further, Jake was noticed to interact with some other children beside his group of friends from term one. One of Jake's reciprocal friends was Alex (i.e. Tom's best friend). However, due to the change in Tom's timetable for the reasons mentioned above (see case number 3), Alex was no longer able to play with Tom. Instead he was seen to play with Jake in a close way. For example:

'When the teacher finished the lesson, [Jake] walked to [Alex] and they went together to the playground. They walked side by side in the playground... One of [Jake]'s friends had brought a ball with him so he called [Jake] to join them. [Jake] and [Alex] joined them in play.' (Observation note in term 2)

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4.3.19 *To what extent was Jake accepted by his peers?*

Regarding his peer acceptance in the first term, the rating scale showed that Jake scored 1.77 on a 3 point scale which is just below the average score of his class (i.e. 1.8). The observation also showed that Jake was accepted by his peers, as he was noticed to interact with different children at playtime and they let him join them. They responded to him in a friendly way. In the class Jake was often not paying attention to the lesson, so he disturbed his peers as he seemed to be bored in some lessons. Nonetheless, he was accepted by his peers as they helped him to do the tasks. For instance:

'During the class, [Jake] was looking at the floor for long time, keeping his head down and not looking at the teacher ... The teacher asked the children to do a task... [Jake] was not doing the task - he was talking with his group, so that one girl came to him and helped him to do the task. They were talking and sharing the task in a good way.' (Observation note in term 1)

In the second term, Jake's peer acceptance rate decreased a bit to 1.66 out of 3 points, just below the average score for the class (i.e. 1.76). However, Jake's score in the second term was also above the half way mark of the three point scale which should be taken into consideration as such a score does not indicate low peer acceptance. The observation also showed that there was some change in the children's places in the class; one of the changes was with Jake's female partner who had been noticed to help him often. Nonetheless, the observation in the second term showed that the other children in Jake's class talked with him and gave him access to their social network, allowing him to play and share the class work with them, as in the first term:

'In the restaurant... [Jake] took his meal and he sat with a group of children from his class who were sitting together at a large table. He was quiet for a while then he started talking to the girl sitting alongside him. They ate together and shared conversation; other children talked to him as well and listened to whatever he was saying'. (Observation note term 2)

4.3.20 What did the staff believe about Jake's social participation?

It seems that the results drawn from interviewing Jake's teachers and school staff differed to some extent from what the observation findings. In terms of Jake's abilities, the interviews showed that Jake's ability to pay attention was limited:

'He doesn't pay the greatest of attention and everything seems to be very difficult for him because his attention span is very limited and more often you have to obviously explain things him to him several times.' (Interview with main teacher)

Such a limited attention span may have led to a feeling of boredom; therefore Jake disturbed the others. As the main teacher said: *'- We probably need to move [Jake] to another table. He's probably messing about with a couple of girls'*. This was confirmed by the observation. However, the main teacher was not quite sure about Jake's social interaction, as she said that: *'I don't see much of him out in the playground'*, whereas the observation showed that Jake often played in the playground with his group. The teacher assistant also noticed that Jake played in the playground with his group: *'I do see him playing with different children, playing football and doing various things, whether they're friends or not, but he joins in much more readily with big groups and he's not afraid of them'*. The reason that the main teacher did not see Jake in the playground was that she did not go to observe the children in the playground as frequently as the teacher assistant, who was often there keeping an eye on the statemented children.

Regarding Jake's friendships, the interviewees agreed that Jake was not popular in his class but that he had his own group and was popular within that group:

'[Jake] is not one of the popular children. There is a group of children in this class who are very cool and are the popular ones. I think [Jake] would not be accepted by that group. But he is popular with the children he does play with.' (Interview with teacher assistant 2)

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The interviewees also noticed that Jake's social participation was better in the second term than it was in the first term due to the fact that Jake socialised more with new friends:

'[Jake] does actually now join in with other people like [Alex]...and other people. So he has got a bit more aware of other people rather than his close friends. So [one of Jake's friends' name] last year was one of his friends and they used to be inseparable but now he's gone off him.' (Interview with teacher assistant 1)

Regarding Jake's placement, there was an agreement that Jake seemed to fit in better in mainstream school than he would in a special school:

'I think [Jake] and [David] are fine in mainstream school. Their needs are not quite as severe because [Jake] came from a school where he was in a nurture group and he was quite difficult in that group. He was very unsettled, quite naughty, whereas as he's not really now. He's fine, so he's happy here.' (Interview with SENCO 1)

Summary of Case 4: Jake's social participation

Jake was a boy in Year 4 in mainstream school identified as having MLD. His school report showed that Jake was slightly below average in most of the school curriculum. Regarding his social interaction, the observation showed that Jake interacted for social and learning purposes in a good way, despite some negative interaction. The nomination method showed that Jake belonged to a social network; he had six friends in both terms. In the second term there were some changes in his friendships as he developed some new friends. Jake was also accepted by his peers in both terms; he was welcomed by his peers to play or to talk to them. The teachers noticed that Jake lacked attention in lessons which drove him to disturb the children around him, but the teachers agreed that he was accepted, that he had his familiar friends and that he belonged to a social network, although he was not popular in his class. Finally, all the teachers agreed that mainstream school was the most appropriate placement for Jake.

- Kuwait

Case study 5: Ali

4.3.21 The background of the case

Ali was a nine-year-old boy who received his education in a special class in a primary mainstream school in Kuwait. According to the special class psychologist, ‘Ali had been diagnosed as a slow learner since he was a repeater in his previous mainstream school; he repeated his academic year three times before they moved him to join the special classes’. In his special class Ali seemed to know everyone due to the fact that his class contained only six children sitting in two lines behind each other, as shown in Figure 39.

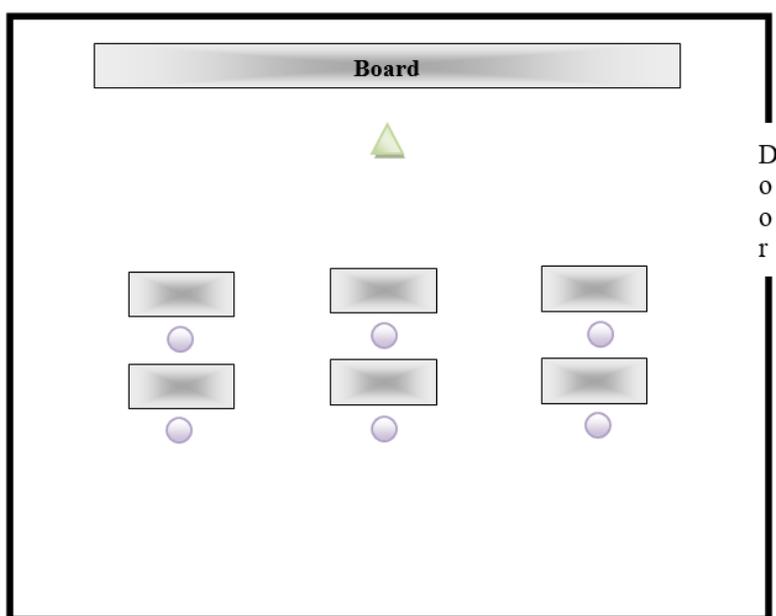
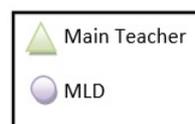


Figure 39: The structure of the classroom



In such a small class, the idea that ‘everyone knows everyone’ is possible. It is also important to indicate that teachers sometimes mixed Ali’s class with the other special class

Findings

in Year 4 due to the fact that both classes contained six children only. When teachers mixed the two classes, children often sat in a U shape facing the main teacher, as figure 40 shows.

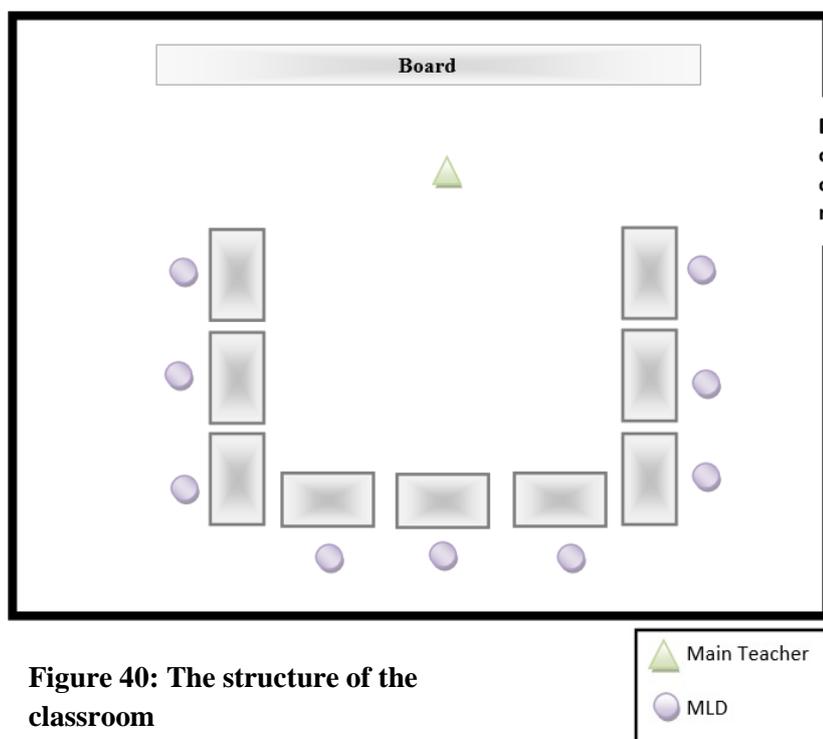


Figure 40: The structure of the classroom

In terms of Ali's academic attainments in his special class, his school report indicated that he was doing quite well in the majority of subjects, the only poor attainment was in physical education. Such an improvement in Ali's academic attainment in the special class, compared with his performance in his earlier mainstream class, was because attainment in special classes is measured in relation to a simplified national curriculum which had been amended to be more 'suitable' for the children's academic needs, as the teachers reported. Table 39 gives a translated school report from Ali's parents regarding his school performance in all of the school modules. The Appendix 50 contains a copy of the original report.

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Table 39: Ali's school report

Module	Maximum mark of the module	Minimum mark of the module	The student's mark	General grade
The Holy Quran	50	25	48	
Islamic Education	50	25	48	
Arabic Language	50	25	35	
English Language	50	25	37	
Mathematics	50	25	37	
Science	50	25	40	
Community\history	50	25	48	
Civil Education	50	25	50	
Total			343.5	
Percentage			85.9%	Very good
Life skills	50	0		Excellent
Computer	50	0		Excellent
Art	50	0		Excellent
Physical Education	50	0		Poor
Music	50	0		Very good

4.3.22 Ali's social interaction

To simplify Ali's social interactions in his school, I calculated the number of his interactions based on the kinds of interactions as shown in Table 40. The assessment was based on daily observations. It is clear from Table 40, below, that Ali had zero interaction with his non-SEN peers in both terms, while all his interaction was with children identified as having MLD. It was very obvious from my observations that none of the children in the special classes had any interaction with the mainstream classes, although they had the chance to mix with them during break time and in some school activities. It is also clear from table 40 that Ali interacted with his special class peers more for social purposes than for learning purposes during both terms. That was because there was very limited group work during the class as all the teachers taught by the lecture method (i.e. where the teacher does all the talking and explanation while the children remain as listeners). Such an approach limited

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the children's interactions with each other during lesson time, where the majority of their interactions were with the main teacher.

Table 40: Ali's social interactions

Social interaction								
	Social interaction (Any interaction for social purpose)				Learning interaction (Any interaction for learning purpose)			
	With SEN children		With non-SEN children		With SEN children		With non-SEN children	
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2
Initiates interaction								
- Physical	19	18	0	0	3	0	0	0
- Verbal	17	18	0	0	0	3	0	0
- Non-Verbal	14	5	0	0	5	8	0	0
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Receives interaction								
- Physical	22	19	0	0	2	0	0	0
- Verbal	18	20	0	0	6	5	0	0
- Non-Verbal	13	7	0	0	8	7	0	0
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joint\Collaboration								
- Continuing interacting - for continuous period	14	17	0	0	3	0	0	0
- Continuing interacting - with prior child	19	17	0	0	3	3	0	0
- Momentary interaction for brief time	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
Full Interaction	15	18	0	0	2	1	0	0
Negative Interaction	8	6	0	0	5	0	0	0
Positive Interaction	14	11	0	0	6	3	0	0
Limited Interaction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Ali was a sociable boy, and during break times he was fully engaged with the same children (i.e., his classmates) every day, as table 40 revealed, in both terms. The majority of his interactions during break were physical and verbal, while in the class his interactions were more non-verbal (e.g. eye contact) with his peers as verbal and physical interactions with the peers during lessons were considered as misbehaving. It is also important to point out that Ali interacted negatively with some of his peers; he mocked them during break times by name-calling. In general, Ali's social interaction can be summarized as fully engaged with others in the special classes without any interaction with non-SEN peers, and this interaction continued with the same children over both terms.

4.3.23 *Ali's friendships*

In order to explain Ali's friendships, I shall first clarify some of the characteristics of his personality. Ali was a very sociable boy who took the role of leader in his class. This was stated by the special class psychologist: '*[Ali] has the characteristics of the leader, and he has got social skills more than other normal children*'. This was likewise very obvious in my observations, as Ali was leading his classmates during break times and he was the one who arranged games, gave roles to other children to play and spoke as a representative of his class when he talked to teachers. Such characteristics helped him to have many friends in his year.

The nomination method indicated that Ali had six friends in Year 4 as a whole. I measured children's friendships based on the school year level and not based on each class alone, as explained in the Methodology section. All of Ali's friendships were reciprocal friendships in special classes, while none of the typically developing children nominated Ali as a friend, and vice versa. The social interaction table (Table 40) also indicated that Ali had no interaction with his non-SEN peers, neither for social nor learning purposes, in either term. This indicates that Ali restricted his interaction to children in special classes only, developing friendships with them and not with his non-SEN peers.

Regarding the quality of Ali's friendships, my observation showed that he played with his friends in a continuing way for a continuous time:

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'During the break time, all children were playing in the corridor where all special classes were located ... [Ali] was playing with his classmates (the five of them), they were racing and playing in a good way ... [Ahmad] brought a football so the six of them were playing football in the corridor all the time.'

(Observation of Ali in term 1)

Although Ali was sociable boy, there was some negative interaction with his classmates, which could be called 'bullying', as my observation revealed:

'[Ali] was teasing [Omar]; he was calling him bad names and making fun of his dark skin, so that [Omar] got angry and ran after him. This was not the first time that [Ali] did that... other children were also copying what [Ali] was doing.'

(Observation of Ali in term 1)

'In the class... the teacher asked [Jassem] to answer; [Jassem] did answer but in a soft voice as he was a shy boy. [Ali] started to make fun of [Jassem] by trying to mimic his voice.' (Observation of Ali in term 1)

In the second term a few differences were noticed in Ali's friendships. The nomination method revealed that six children in the special classes nominated Ali as a friend (i.e. the same six friends as in term 1). Ali was also noticed to play with some children in the second special class due to the fact that his teachers often combined the two classes. This integration of the two classes seemed to lend itself to the expansion of the children's social relationships and the building of new social bridges. This was confirmed in my observation:

'The children told me that tomorrow ... they will do a party.... They said they asked all the children in the other special class. It was [Ali's] idea ...'

(Observation of Ali in term 2)

Relationships between the children in the two integrated classes had existed in term 1, but in term 2 they became more compatible with each other and they started to do more joint activities; the party was a good example of such activities. Ali also played with children identified as 'Slow Learners' in year 5 (i.e. one school year above) as they all played in the same corridor.

4.3.24 *Peer acceptance*

The findings regarding Ali's peer acceptance can be divided into two main parts: acceptance by his special class peers and acceptance by his non-SEN peers. Starting with the results of his quantitative ratings, in term 1 he scored 1.56 when the average score was 1.64 out of 3; similarly, in term 2, he scored 1.53 when the average was 1.60. This was therefore below average in both terms, which appears to indicate a slightly negative peer acceptance. However, when I investigated the answers in more depth I found that the majority of his non-SEN peers (i.e. 69 out of 93 in Year 4) gave Ali the lowest rating, while the majority of the special class children in Year 4 (i.e. 9 out of 12) gave him a medium to high rating in term 1, with a very similar result in term 2. This shows that Ali in general was accepted by his special class peers but not by his typically achieving peers.

My observation correspondingly showed that Ali played with his special class peers during break times in the corridor but he never played with his non-SEN peers and I did not even notice him playing in the area where the typically developing children played:

'During the break time... all children of the special classes were playing in one corridor in the second floor where all the special classes are.... Some children came towards me [Ali was among them], I used the chance to ask them why they do not play in the main playground where all the other children play; they said it is too crowded and children there do not like us and they swear at us.'
(Observation of Ali in term 2)

The teachers also seemed to agree that the relationship between Ali and the children in mainstream classes was very poor during both terms, as one of the special class teachers stated:

'[Ali] does not associate much with the students of the public schools but he plays much with his friends of the special classes - he does not interfere with the others. I noticed that he plays a lot with the students of the fifth grade; I noticed one of these students bought a meal on his account.' (Interview with the special class teacher 3)

The mainstream students do not initiate any interaction with the students in the special classes, because the special classes children have already isolated themselves in their corridor and they do not go downstairs where mainstream students are. It is very very rare to see any of them go down - sometimes they do go down only to buy food from the school cafeteria and when they do so they go back directly to their corridor to eat the food. There are no mainstream students who play with them. (Interview with the special class teacher 2)

It is also worth noting that the non-SEN children were aware of the area where the special class children played, so they did not often come across or try to initiate interactions with them. Personally, I think this was expected, because the location of the special classes and the staff room for the special classes appeared to be independent from the school, although they were not. Just as there were not many shared activities between the mainstream classes and the special classes, neither was there interaction between the special teachers and the mainstream teachers, which was also limited. Such limited interaction seemed to affect the social participation of the students, as I will elucidate in the discussion chapter.

4.3.25 *What teachers think of Ali's social participation*

The teachers' opinions of Ali's social participation were in accord with the findings from the observation. For example, all the teachers saw Ali as a sociable person, with good social skills; he was the leader of the class and had good awareness of the social world around him. This was stated by the special class psychologist:

'[Ali] is aware of his social situation; he has the characteristics of a leader. I think he has strong social skills. He is also aware of the reason behind moving him to the special class; his teacher noticed these things; he is aware of social matters outside school and he talks about them with his teachers. He talks about his family at home. I mean his style and his way of speaking indicate that he is a social, reliable person.' (Interview with the special class psychologist)

However, when I asked about the quality of Ali's friendships the teachers pointed out some issues:

Findings

'[Ali] sometimes argues with one boy in special class in Year 5. Some other times when I join the two classes with each other, [Ali] argues with [Khaled] from the other class, but in general they are friends.' (Interview with a special class teacher 1)

The teachers also confirmed that Ali kept his social interaction to children in the special classes and that he had no friendship with his non-SEN peers in the mainstream classes:

'I think that the students of the public classes are jealous of the students of the special classes. They always tell me that such special class students are lucky where their syllabus is simpler and less complicated and they are treated better by their teachers.' (Interview with the special class psychologist)

'What I see is that there is no child in a mainstream class that initiates any interaction or wants to be friends with any of the children in special classes; the mainstream boys, they just make jokes or bully children with Slow Learning but don't make friends, no... I see that children in mainstream classes are arrogant to children in special classes...they think that children in special classes are less than them... they make jokes on them, or call them bad names, such as you are crazy or special class boy, and when they call them such names, big fights will happen, especially from older children... This is what comes from children in mainstream classes, nothing good.' (Interview with a special class teacher 2)

Although such complicated relationships existed between children in special classes and children in mainstream classes, the teachers believed that children in special classes were happy with each other, that they did feel part of the school community, and that Ali was one of these:

'Yeah, I think [Ali] feels that he belongs to this school as he knows that he is a member of this school and he follows the instructions of all school staff and not only the instructions from the special class department in the school...So, yeah, [Ali] and all special class children, I think they feel they are part of the school.' (Interview with a special class teacher 3)

Findings

Finally, all the teachers agreed that the special class setting was the most applicable placement for Ali so that he could avoid the stigma of the special schools:

'For [Ali] I think he is ok in his current position [Special class] his academic attainment is developing and he has got many friends around him... in the beginning his mother did not want anyone in her family to know that her son is in special class so that he does not feel deficient in their eyes as she said, but I think she does not want anyone to know so that she does not feel embarrassed from people. I do not blame her as this is how other people think in our society, so can you imagine what will happened if we move [Ali] to a special school? I do not think the result will be good.' (Interview with a special class teacher 1)

Summary of Case 3: Ali's Social Participation

Ali was a child who had been identified as a slow learner and was in a special class in a mainstream school. His school report showed that Ali's academic outcome improved after joining the special class. In his class, Ali was a sociable boy and he took the role of class leader. He communicated with his classmates and children from the second special class in Year 4 because teachers usually mixed the two classes together during both terms. During the break time, Ali and his classmate played continually with other children from special classes in one corridor where the department of special classes was located; they never played with non-SEN children or even tried to join them and vice versa. Ali's teachers believed that Ali was a social child with good social skills; he participated socially with children in special classes only, although with some negative interaction (e.g. arguing or mocking someone). The teachers also believed that the non-SEN children interacted negatively with children in the special classes and did not treat them well, as they gave them bad names and make jokes about them, so that children in special classes isolated themselves in the area near the special class department. Nonetheless, the teachers also believed that the children in the special classes felt happy, felt that they did belong to the school and that they felt part of it. Finally all teachers agree that the most applicable educational settings for Ali is the special class for social reasons.

Case study 6: Ahmad

4.3.26 *The background of the case*

Ahmad was a nine-year-old boy in a special class in a mainstream school. He was in Year 4 studying alongside Ali and four of his peers who had all been assessed as Slow Learners. Ahmad seemed to have an unusual personality; one of his teachers described him as *‘a strange character, he is apparently very calm and small, but in fact, he is very naughty and factious’*. This was also agreed by the special class psychologist:

‘As a character, he is calm but he is variable and actively aggressive. He starts his aggression verbally with his colleagues & ends with the physically aggressive behaviour. Apparently he has a childish, calm face, but through his teacher’s reports... he always pretends to be ‘humble lamb’ [idiom means innocent] but he is not. He blames others for his misbehaving. His mother emphasized this trait when she said that [Ahmad] behaves this way with his cousin at home and I personally believe it to be a reaction from him to attract attention, not aggression.’ (Interview with the special class psychologist)

This was confirmed by my observation which showed that Ahmad misbehaved in class by teasing his classmates. Such a way of interacting seems to affect his social participation, as I will clarify in the next sections.

Regarding Ahmad’s academic performance, the school report (see Appendix 51) shows that Ahmad’s grades were excellent in all aspects of the curriculum, except for English language and science where he attained ‘very good’. Appendix 51 shows Ahmad’s original school report and Table 41 is a translation. Such advanced grades arose because of the Ministry’s simplification of the national curriculum and final exams to meet children’s academic needs in special classes. The Code of Practice explains the need for *‘adjustments of learning experiences, skills and difficult topics in the national curriculum in order to make them more suitable to the intellectual and the personal characteristics of Slow Learners and their learning needs’* (Ministry of Education statement number 242\2000 in relation to the Code of Practice number 4, 1996). This could explain Ahmad’s good grades in the special class which he could not reach in the mainstream class.

Findings

Table 41: Ahmad's translated school report

Module	Maximum mark	Minimum mark	Student's mark	General grade
The Holly Quran	50	25	50	
Islamic Education	50	25	49	
Arabic Language	50	25	48	
English Language	50	25	44	
Mathematics	50	25	50	
Science	50	25	45	
Community\history	50	25	46	
Civil Education	50	25	48	
Total	400	200	380	
Percentage			95%	Excellent
Life skills	50	0		Excellent
Computer	50	0		Excellent
Art	50	0		Excellent
Physical Education	50	0		Excellent
Music	50	0		Excellent

4.3.27 Ahmad's social interaction

My observation showed that Ahmad had no social interaction with his non-SEN peers, neither for social nor learning purposes in either term (see Table 42). Ahmad kept his social relationships with his classmates and did not go to the area where the non-SEN children played. The observation also revealed that Ahmad interacted verbally and non-verbally more than physically. There was no ignoring or rejecting behaviour from Ahmad to his peers, or vice versa, in the observations in either term.

Findings

Table 42: Ahmad's social interactions

Social interaction								
	Social interaction (Any interaction for social purpose)				Learning interaction (Any interaction for learning purpose)			
	With SEN children		With non-SEN children		With SEN children		With non-SEN children	
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2
Initiation interaction								
- Physical	8	6	0	0	2	5	0	0
- Verbal	9	11	0	0	10	12	0	0
- Non-Verbal	12	6	0	0	1	7	0	0
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Receive interaction								
- Physical	4	6	0	0	3	5	0	0
- Verbal	12	14	0	0	8	10	0	0
- Non-Verbal	9	10	0	0	11	6	0	0
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joint/Collaboration								
- Continuing interacting - for continuous period	13	16	0	0	9	7	0	0
- Continuing interacting - with prior child	18	22	0	0	12	15	0	0
- Momentary interaction for brief time	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Full Interaction	11	13	0	0	1	3	0	0
Negative Interaction	4	3	0	0	5	7	0	0
Positive Interaction	11	16	0	0	2	6	0	0
Limited Interaction	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0

It is also clear from the observations that Ahmad interacted more for social purposes (i.e. often in the break time) than for learning purposes (i.e. in the class) due to the teaching style, as explained earlier. Ahmad also interacted with the same friends in the class and in the

playground; he seemed to belong to a group with whom he interacted every day in my observation (See Table 42). Ahmad, however, initiated some negative interactions in the playground and in the class, as he teased his friends in such a way that he disturbed the lessons and created a social distance between himself and some of his classmates, as will be explained in the coming sections.

4.3.28 *Ahmad's friendships*

In relation to Ahmad's friendships, the nomination method in the first term revealed that three children nominated Ahmad as one of their five best friends in Year 4. Two of them were children in his own special class and one was from the other special class. The observations showed that Ahmad associated with his classmate group, he was part of the group, wherever they went he went. However he was quiet and did not initiate much physical interaction with them; he seemed more comfortable to interact with one person in a more isolated way. This was Ahmad's way, he chose a child who felt comfortable to play with him in a more private way. In other words, although Ahmad was a part of his classmates' group, he isolated himself within that group, as illustrated by the following observation.

' [Ahmad] was talking to [Ali] and [Mohammad] from the other class; ... after they heard the school bell, they went to the small corridor to play hide-and-seek... [Ahmad] was with them, however he left the game to stay in his class talking with [Mohammad] and eating together in the class. They even did not go to the main corridor where all special class children play.' (Observation in the class)

My observation also revealed that Ahmad initiated negative verbal interaction with his classmates, especially in term 2 when a new child arrived. In the beginning the new child was crying:

'All other children during the 5 minutes break time were gathering around the new child to make him feel better [Ahmad was among them]. They were very welcoming;... They also invited him to play with them.' (Observation in the class)

Although Ahmad welcomed the new child in the beginning, he started to tease him regularly and accuse him falsely. Ahmad did this with different children in his class:

'[Ahmad] was misbehaving in the class... He was teasing [Omar]... The teacher moved his place to another place; however he teased another child sitting near him... [Ahmad] claimed that the other child was swearing at him while the other child in fact was very quiet and did not do anything... [Ahmad] was lying and he did that often.' (Observation in the class)

Obviously such a way of treating other children is not the kind of behaviour to help Ahmad establish good social relationships with others. Although the result of the nomination method for Ahmad in the second term remained the same as in term one (i.e. three nominated friends), his negative behaviour towards the other children around him in the class seemed to affect the quality of his friendships and explained the reason of his limited interaction with his peers at break time.

4.3.29 *Peer acceptance*

Regarding the extent to which his peers accepted Ahmad, the rating scale indicated that Ahmad scored 1.67 in term one (when the average score was 1.64), or just above average. In the second term, his score decreased to 1.52 when the average was 1.60, or just below average.

However, when I further investigated the scores, I found that in term 1 around two thirds of his non-SEN peers rated Ahmad at the lowest level (i.e., 65th out of 94). I also remember that the children in the mainstream class told me that they did not know children in the special classes and that many of them said that they never communicated with the children in the special classes. This could explain why the majority of the non-SEN children gave Ahmad a low score. In contrast, more than the half of children in the special classes gave him a high rate of acceptance (i.e. 7 out of 12 children), while five children nominated Ahmad from medium to low. There was not much difference in the distribution of the ratings in term 2.

My observation also revealed that Ahmad had no interaction with his non-SEN peers; he never went to the area where all the non-SEN children played though sometimes (almost once a week) he went to the school cafeteria located in the non-SEN area. I shadowed him and I found the following:

'[Ahmad] and [Jassem: his classmate in the special class] are waiting in a short queue alongside their non-SEN peers. There was no interaction between them and their non-SEN peers, no eye contact or any verbal interaction... they bought their food and they left to the special class area directly.' (Observation of Ahmad)

A case in point is that the managers of the school allowed children in the special classes to have their free school meals in their own corridor. The cooking staff had been asked to send the meals directly to the big corridor where the special class department was located, *'so that children in special classes avoided the disturbing behaviour from their non-SEN peers'* (as one of the teachers told me in an unofficial way). One big table from the school dining room had been moved to be placed in the corridor as an arrangement for the special class children's meals.

One more important observation occurred when I was watching Ahmad in the corridor when I noticed one of the teachers standing near the stairs. I thought that she was preventing children going down to play with the non-SEN children or vice versa, so I walked towards her to ask the reason. She said:

'I am not preventing anyone; all children are free to play wherever they want to play, but children here [special class children], do not want to go to play down [where non-SEN children are]. Then she wanted to prove her view; she asked a child at random from the special classes to go downstairs to play. He shook his head, indicating 'No', and he moved away ... She also said that sometimes children in the special classes stayed in their classroom during break time, so I had to ask them to play in the corridor and not to keep themselves in the classroom. (Informal interview with a teacher 3)

4.3.30 *The teachers' perspective*

Regarding Ahmad's personality, there was agreement with my observation across all the interviewed teachers that Ahmad was kind, though antisocial, and he teased the children around him a lot. For example, one of the teachers said:

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'[Ahmad] has an introverted and reserved personality. His behaviour with his peers is provoking; I noticed such behaviour from [Ahmad] very early as it was very clear. His mother also asserted that when we met her; she said that when she went out she took all her children with her except [Ahmad]. She kept him at home due to the reason that he always irritated her, so she excluded him because he enjoyed teasing his brothers.' (Interview with a teacher 1)

The teachers also agreed that Ahmad did not open up to social relationships with others, as the special class psychologist revealed: *'Ahmad is cautious and has very limited friends in the class. If he is put among the normal children he will be unable to make friendships'*. However, it had also been indicated that Ahmad belonged to a friendship group: *'Although he is an asocial child, he belongs to his classmates' group; when they stay in the class during break time, he stays with them. ...He keeps himself within that group and does not initiate establishing new friends outside that group'* (interview with psychologist). This view is compatible with the teachers' opinions and my observations.

When I asked the teachers about the relationship between Ahmad and his non-SEN peers a very interesting point emerged, as one of the teachers said that there was no relationship between Ahmad and his non-SEN peers, especially because Ahmad had previously been in the mainstream class in the same school, which made it difficult for him to go back and communicate with his non-SEN peers. When I asked her what difference it would make whether he had moved from a mainstream class in the same school or came from another school, she said:

'Those who had been moved from mainstream to special classes in the same school [generally speaking] had been bullied by their typically developing peers who were studying with them in the mainstream class...while those who came from different schools to join the special class in this school did not know the non-SEN children, therefore they were more comfortable.' (Interview with teacher 2)

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Another teacher made a similar point when she revealed that:

‘The Slow Learning children do avoid the non-SEN children... [Ahmad] does not interact with his non-SEN peers; he goes downstairs occasionally to get his food and comes back to stay with his classmates.’ (Interview with teacher 1)

Although Ahmad isolated himself within the small group and did not interact with his non-SEN peers, the interviewees believed that Ahmad felt part of the school community:

‘When [Ahmad] is misbehaving I do sometimes tell him that if he continues misbehaving I will ask the head teacher to move you to your old mainstream school as a punishment. He will say “no, I do not want to go back to my old school” because he feels safe in this school. So, yes, he does feel part of this school and he does belong to it.’ (Interview with teacher 2)

Regarding his placement, there was agreement among participants that Ahmad was happy in the special class and felt he belonged:

‘At the beginning of the year [first year of Ahmad in special class] Ahmad was afraid ...but now he belongs to a group of his peers and he feels very safe in the school and part of it. I think he is much better than where he was [mainstream class].’ (Special class psychologist)

‘There is no need for [Ahmad] to move to special school, his work at class is good, he’s got some friends around him. I admit he is not easy to control especially during lesson time, he misbehaves a lot but that is not a reason to go to special school.’ (Interview with a teacher 1)

Summary of Case 3: Ahmad's Social Participation

Ahmad was a boy in a Year 4 special class in a mainstream school. He had been a student in a mainstream class in the same school before being assessed as a slow learner and moved to a special class. Regarding his social interaction, it was more for social purposes than for learning purposes, and his type of interaction was more verbal than physical. He interacted with the same set of children though his interaction was often negative as he was noticed to tease some of his classmates and blame them for things they had not done. He also restricted his friendships to others within his class and in the second special class in Year 4. He was part of his classmates' group, although his interaction with them was selective and limited. The nomination method revealed that Ahmad had three friends in the special classes and no friends from the mainstream classes. The rating scale also revealed that Ahmad was accepted among children in the special classes but not among children in the mainstream classes. The interviews with the teachers closely matched the observation, as the teachers also noticed Ahmad's misbehaving with his classmates, that he was asocial, although he was part of his classmates' group and he had no interaction or any friends in the mainstream classes. They also believed the special class setting was more suitable for Ahmad than mainstream class or special school.

Case study 7: Jassem

4.3.31 *The Background of the Case*

Jassem is a boy identified as having Slow Learning in special class in mainstream school in Kuwait. Jassem sat in the front row alongside his Slow Learning peers as figure 39 shows. Unfortunately, I could not obtain Jassem's attainment report. The teachers indicated that Jassem was a very shy child, as the special class psychologist said:

'[Jassem] is always very shy. At the beginning he was introverted and isolated as noticed by the teachers & the parents at home ... but now he has changed. Still he is shameful, with childish movements, but is still developing and will improve.'

The English teacher also clarified that Jassem faced clear difficulties in reading and writing which led him to fail in one term exam:

'I noticed that [Jassem] is dyslexic, I took him for one to one intervention in my office as a personal effort from me... [Jassem] acts as a 4-year-old baby. I think he has improved since he moved to the special class. At the beginning of the term Jassem was talking in very soft voice and his peers were laughing at him ... His parents work until late so they have no time to sit with him and see to his school work requirements until he failed. They have started to pay attention to him and he is improving now.'

4.3.32 *Jassem's social interaction*

The semi-structured observation showed that Jassem had no interaction with his non-SEN peers, either for learning or social purposes (see Table 43). In the class, Jassem interacted with his peers mainly verbally and non-verbally, as there was not much physical interaction during the lessons (see Table 43). At break time Jassem was noticed to interact physically with his classmates for a continuing time. There was also some negative interaction with Jassem by his peers as they mocked his shyness and quiet voice. My observation in term 1 showed that: *'during the 5 minute gap between one lesson and another... [Ali] was talking with [Jassem] in very soft voice as he was mimicking [Jassem]'s voice to make fun of him'*. In general Jassem's social interaction was limited to children from special classes only and he had no interaction with his non-SEN peers. He initiated and received interaction from his classmates for social and learning purposes with a mixture of negative and positive interactions.

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Table 43 Jassem's social interactions

Social interaction								
	Social interaction (Any interaction for social purpose)				Learning interaction (Any interaction for learning purpose)			
	With SEN children		With non-SEN children		With SEN children		With non-SEN children	
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2
Initiation interaction								
- Physical	12	12	0	0	4	0	0	0
- Verbal	11	13	0	0	8	6	0	0
- Non-Verbal	8	9	0	0	9	5	0	0
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Receive interaction								
- Physical	9	13	0	0	5	0	0	0
- Verbal	8	8	0	0	7	6	0	0
- Non-Verbal	10	11	0	0	9	6	0	0
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joint/Collaboration								
- Continuing interacting - for continuous period	7	18	0	0	0	2	0	0
- Continuing interacting - with prior child	9	19	0	0	5	6	0	0
- Momentary interaction for brief time	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Full Interaction	8	12	0	0	2	1	0	0
Negative Interaction	2	6	0	0	2	0	0	0
Positive Interaction	7	11	0	0	3	2	0	0
Limited Interaction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

4.3.33 *Jassem's friendships*

As Jassem was a shy boy he did not have as many friends as his classmates. Nonetheless the nomination method showed that he was nominated by three children as one of their best friends; one of the children was in his class and the other two were from the second special class in year 4. The observation showed that Jassem spent time with his friend Omar (one of the case study children):

'During the break, [Jassem] went to pick up his meal from the corridor... [Omar] was following him side by side... After eating, they went to play with their classmates who were playing with their friends from the second special class, running after each other in a friendly and positive way.' (Observation note in term 1)

In the second term, the nomination method revealed that Jassem scored three children as friends (the same friends as in the first term). It was also noticed that there was not much difference in the quality of his friendships. At break time, Jassem still spent time with Omar as they often had their meal together. The observation also showed that Jassem and Omar went downstairs to where the mainstream class was located to buy sweets from the cafeteria, without interacting with any of their non-SEN peers. I used this situation to ask Jassem whether he had any friends among the children in the downstairs classes: *'[Jassem] told me he has no friends there - he goes every day but never eats there. He goes only to buy the food and go back to play with his classmate upstairs'* (Observation note). In general, his friendships were limited to children in the special classes with three nominated friends in both terms and not much difference in the quality of his friendships between the first and second terms.

4.3.34 *Jassem's peer acceptance*

Jassem scored 1.63 in term one (when the average score was 1.64), meaning that he was accepted to an average extent by his peers. However, around two thirds of his non-SEN peers rated Jassem at the lowest level (i.e. 68th out of 94), so he was not accepted by his non-SEN peers, while all the medium and high scores came from his peers in the special classes. In the second term, his peer acceptance decreased to 1.42, which was below average

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(1.60). This time, 72 of the participants out of 94 gave him the lowest score while the medium to high scores came mainly from the special class children.

In general, Jassem was accepted by his peers as he belonged to a social network of his classmates. He shadowed them; if they stayed in the class during break time, Jassem stayed with them and if they went to the corridor he went with them, and this seemed to affect their acceptance of him:

'Children in one group were playing cards. [Jassem] wanted to play with them so he moved from his group to join the other group... they gave him a place in the game ... He was playing with [Ali], [Ahmad] and children from the second special class.' (Observation note, term 2)

Nevertheless, the observation showed that Jassem was to some extent rejected by his peers in the second term. As the teachers explained before, Jassem behaved in a childish way. Sometimes he interact in with his peers in a way that is not acceptable for them such as when they are playing in the break time, so the other children did not give him social access to play with them:

'[Jassem] ...tried to join children in a random way while they were playing football. They did not pay him any attention and [Ali] was not happy as [Jassem] was not playing on a particular team, so [Ali] asked him to leave the game....' (Observation note, term 2)

4.3.35 *The teachers' perspective*

The teachers' interviews about Jassem's social participation correspond to a large extent with the results drawn from the observation method, as all the interviewees agreed that Jassem was a shy boy and that shyness effected his social interaction: *'[Jassem] case is very similar to [Ahmad] case as he does not initiate to make friendships, that's because of his shy personality, but he is with his classmates, he moves with them as a group'*. The teachers also agreed that there was no interaction between Jassem and his non-SEN peers.

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Regarding Jassem's peer acceptance, the participants believed that Jassem was accepted by his classmates, despite some negative interaction between Jassem and the others:

'Sometimes children mock him as he behaves like a baby; this is why I always tell him that "you are a man and you need to behave like a man!" to encourage him.' (Interview with special class psychologist)

In relation to Jassem's placement, there were two main opinions, one in favour of special school and the other in favour of special class in mainstream school. Those in favour of special school did so for academic reasons:

'I feel he is lost academically... so special school will be better for him.'
(Interview with teacher 3)

The other interviewee, who advocated special class, did so for social purposes:

'No I do not think that special schools are better for Jassem because it will be a stigma which will follow him if he goes there. Our society does take those things into consideration, so as soon as you say to anyone that this child is in special school they will say "Ooooh - poor child!"'. The same teacher, when refused permission to teach in a special class, was told by the school administrator: 'It is better to teach 30 children who are able to achieve [she means children in mainstream class], than teaching a class containing five children who are not able to achieve [she means children in special classes]. This is how society sees Slow Learners.' (Interview with teacher 1)

Summary of Case 7: Jassem's Social Participation

Jassem is a boy identified as having Slow Learning in a special class in a mainstream school. Teachers indicated that Jassem faced serious difficulties in reading and writing. He also failed one of the term tests, but the teachers said he was improving. In relation to Jassem's relationships with his peers, the observation showed him to be a very shy boy, which affected his relationship with his peers, as they mimicked him and make fun of him. Nonetheless, he was part of their social group and he interacted positively with children from the second special class. The nomination method showed that Jassem had 3 friends in both terms and he was accepted by his peers, although his peer acceptance rating was just below average in the second term. The interviews with the teachers matched the results from the observations, as the teachers also noticed that Jassem was shy and his social interaction was limited. He moved with his classmates as a group and was accepted by them. The teachers also believed that special schools may be better for Jassem to improve his academic abilities, while the special class in mainstream school was better socially and to avoid stigmatisation.

Case study 8: Omar

4.3.36 *The background of the case*

Omar is the last case in this research and he is identified as having Slow Learning in a special class in a mainstream school in Kuwait. In his class, Omar sat in the second row as figure 39 shows. Regarding Omar's academic level, his teachers indicated that Omar was struggling with his reading, writing and mathematics:

'I think [Omar] IQ test is below the percentage of Slow Learning as his reading and writing are so bad he cannot even copy the words from the board... The maths teacher also told me that he is weak in her class as well; he cannot answer the exercises in her class.' (Interview with teacher)

It is also worth saying that Omar was a new student who had recently joined the special class. As the special class psychologist said: *'[Omar] is a new fresh student who just joined the special classes from his old mainstream school. He is also often absent: he does not*

attend school every day'. Such limited attendance at school, and due to the fact that he was new, seemed to affect his social participation with others in the class, as I will explain in the coming sections.

4.3.37 *Omar's social interaction*

The semi-structured observation showed that Omar's social interaction in the second term was better than in the first term. To illustrate, in the first term Omar was observed to have some negative interaction with his classmates (see Table 44) and little positive interaction, whereas in the second term there was less negative interaction and more positive. It is also clear from the diagrams in the Appendix 52 that the purple colour (which represents positive interaction) was more extensive in the second term than in the first term. Table 44 also shows that Omar's physical interaction was greater than his verbal and non-verbal interaction during break times for social purposes, whereas his non-verbal and verbal interactions were much greater than his physical interactions during lesson time and for learning purposes in general. Finally, Omar interacted with the same children continuously and not with different children at different times, due to the fact that he was moving with his class peers as a group all the time, as I will explain in the coming sections.

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Table 44: Omar's social interactions based on number of day to day observations

Social interaction								
/	Social interaction (Any interaction for social purpose)				Learning interaction (Any interaction for learning purpose)			
	With SEN children		With non-SEN children		With SEN children		With non-SEN children	
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2
Initiation interaction								
- Physical	3	6	0	0	1	1	0	0
- Verbal	4	2	0	0	3	8	0	0
- Non-Verbal	1	0	0	0	6	6	0	0
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Receive interaction								
- Physical	4	9	0	0	2	1	0	0
- Verbal	4	0	0	0	5	9	0	0
- Non-Verbal	0	7	0	0	8	8	0	0
- Ignore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Reject	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
- Request	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joint\Collaboration								
- Continuing interacting - for continuous period	2	9	0	0	4	4	0	0
- Continuing interacting - with prior child	3	7	0	0	4	5	0	0
- Momentary interaction for brief time	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Full Interaction	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
Negative Interaction	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Positive Interaction	1	7	0	0	1	4	0	0
Limited Interaction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

4.3.38 *Omar's friendships*

As in all the case studies in Kuwait, Omar's friendships were only with children in special classes; however, what differentiated Omar as a case study is that Omar was a new student who had been moved from his previous mainstream school to join the special class. He had been in the special class for no more than two months before I started the observation. Such a transition seems not to have supported Omar in developing friendships with his peers, as the other children were together in one social cluster, moving together and playing together as a close group; therefore it would be normal for any new child in the class to need some time to get engaged in such a social group. The nomination method showed that Omar scored three children as best friends. All three were reciprocal friends from special classes: two of them were children in his class who were noticed to be very quiet children, such as Jassem, the shy child. The observation also revealed that Omar had his meals with Jassem and played with him:

'[Omar] and [Jassem] went to the corridor together as a pair walking side by side close to where their classmates were playing.' (Observation note in term 1)

In the second term Omar's nominated friendships increased slightly to four children: two from his class and two from the second special class. His relationship with his classmates seemed to improve as he was observed to be with his classmates and he had more access to their group. They started to play together in a more positive way (e.g. hide-and-seek) as I explained before in the sixth case study (i.e. Ahmad) and he participated in the party that children in his class organised with the children from the other special class, as I explained in the fifth case study (i.e., Ali). All these indications showed that Omar was moving towards more positive social interaction with his classmates, which seemed to improve his friendship with them, despite the existence of some clear negative interaction between Ali and Omar in the first term, as I will explain in the coming section.

4.3.39 *Omar's peer acceptance*

It was not easy to investigate Omar's peer acceptance as he was frequently absent from school, nonetheless the observation showed some indications about Omar's peer acceptance. The rating scale method showed that Omar scored 1.47 on the 3 point scale, which was below average for his class (i.e., 1.64), while in the second term there was an

increase in Omar's peer acceptance when he scored 1.65, which was above average (i.e., 1.60) in the second term. The observation also showed that in the first term Omar only interacted with a few children in his class and a few from the second class. The observation also showed that there was some negative interaction between Omar and his peers, as they teased him with name-calling:

'[Ali] and [Ahmad] were hanging out together and when they saw [Omar] they started teasing him and calling him some bully names such as 'monkey' and 'black' due to the fact that he had a dark skin. So he got angry and he ran after them, while they seemed to be enjoying that he was running after them.'
(Observation in term 1)

Although such negative interaction existed, Omar was part of his classmates' group and he was accepted by them as he moved with them and shared their group activities. In the second term, Omar's relationship with his peers improved as there was less negative interaction between himself and his classmates (see Table 44).

4.3.40 *The teachers' perceptions*

Findings from the teachers' interviews concurred with the observations. They also noticed that Omar was struggling when he first moved to the special class; however, they noticed that he adapted through time to develop better social relationships:

'[Omar], he was afraid of school & his mother had told us that he did not want to attend school, but a week later he changed... He gained friends and started to participate and shared sports interests which were not discovered before he was referred to us, and his partnership with his teacher in the class increased and he started to love school. His difficulties disappeared gradually over time.' (Special class psychologist)

One of the teachers also noticed that Omar had started to belong to his classmates' social group, despite some negative interaction with Ali:

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'[Omar] ... doesn't participate much in class, until I ask him to do so; he is very quiet, but I see him following the other children. I think he is happy with them - he is one of them now - he likes [Jassem] - they are good with each other... [Ali] tries to make fun of him [i.e. Omar] sometimes because Ali takes the role of the class boss - he's got a stronger personality than [Omar].' (Interview with teacher 2)

As with all the other case studies in Kuwait, the teachers agreed that there was no interaction between Omar and his peers from the mainstream school.

One teacher gave her opinion regarding the placement of children with Slow Learning. She said in general talk:

'When they [Slow Learners] were in mainstream class they had the feeling that they were normal. However because their academic outcome was poor they were transferred to the special class which made them 'crash' psychologically - they cried for days and refused to join the special classes... After a while they gave up and accepted reality.' This same teacher thought that Omar, as a child coming from a different school, was in a better position to accept being in a special class:

'Those who came from another mainstream school to this school's special classes, like [Omar], they cope quickly as a result of the special care that they get while they are in special classes which is not provided in mainstream classes. In special classes there is no one showing off that he is better than them academically, where they are snubbed, teachers giving them more attention, curriculum is easy, all that helped them to feel better.' (Interview with teacher 3)

Some other teachers believed that the special school may be better for Omar academically, while the special class placement could be better for him socially:

'His performance [Omar] is poor in class so I think if he joined a special school it would be better for him, as in special schools they do not focus a lot on the academic outcome... I think he is enjoying his time with the children in his class. The good point in the special classes is that all children are friends with each other and they do not have the label of special school, at least they exist now in mainstream school.' (Interview with teacher 2)

Summary of Case 8: Omar's Social Participation

Omar was a boy identified as having Slow Learning who joined the special class recently. His teachers indicated that Omar's academic performance was poor, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. The day-to-day observation showed that Omar's social interaction in the second term was better than in the first term, as there was less negative interaction in the second term with more engagement with his peers. Regarding Omar's friendship, in the first term Omar had three children as friends while in the second term Omar had four friends. The observation also showed that Omar belonged to his classmate's social cluster and he was a friend with Jassem. In terms of his acceptance by his peers, Omar was accepted by children in special classes but not by children in mainstream classes. His rating in the first term in general was just below average, while his rating in the second term was just above average. The interviews with the teachers revealed that Omar was struggling when he first joined the special classes, but adapted quickly; they also believed that Omar belonged to his classmates' social network, although with some negative interaction with Ali. Regarding Omar's placement, some teachers believed that the special class was the right placement for Omar while others agreed that the special classes would be better for him only for social purposes but the special school would be better for his academic level.

- Cross Cases

Having presented the four cases for each country, in this section I will compare all the cases together. The main aim of this comparison is to go beyond the personal profiles of each case and to reach a more holistic picture of social participation through highlighting the differences and commonalities of the social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learners in both countries. The comparison is arranged in a thematic way to reach a better understanding of the different dimensions of social participation in relation to the eight case studies, as follows:

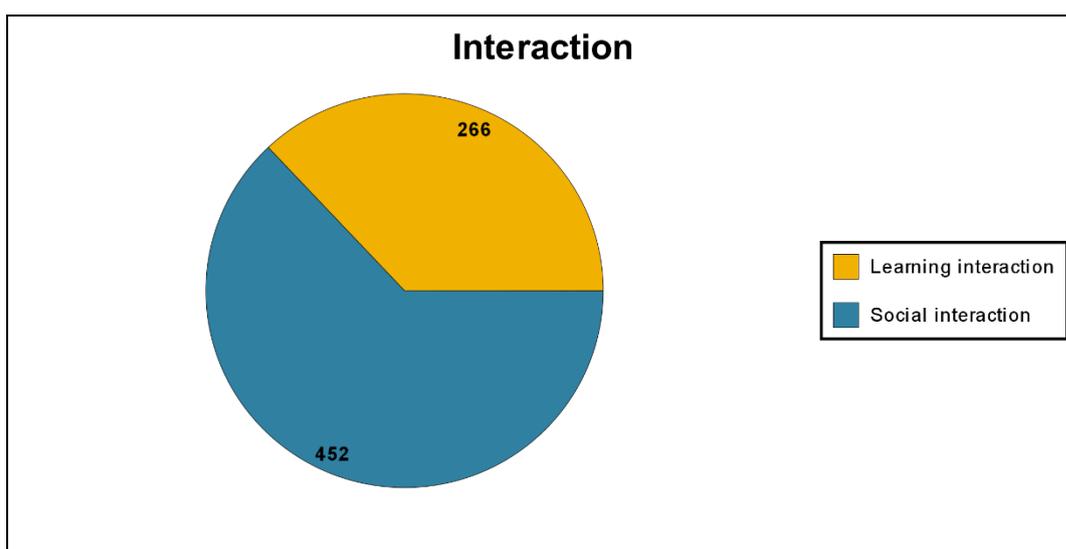
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- Comparing the extent in which the eight cases socially interacted as well as the stability of their social interaction
- Comparing the friendships of the eight cases in terms of number, quality and stability
- Comparing the peer acceptance results: the extent of collaboration, engagement and stability
- Comparing the teachers' opinions about the placement of the eight case study children.

4.3.41 *Comparing the social interaction of children identified as having MLD in England with those in Kuwait*

In terms of social interaction, there were some commonalities between the case study children in England and those in Kuwait, as all children showed all types of interaction (i.e. verbal, non-verbal and physical), all cases in both countries showed very few receiving or initiating ignoring or rejection behaviour. Even though such similarities exist, the observation showed that children designated as Slow Learners in Kuwait interacted at break time much more than during lesson time, as Figure 41 shows.

Figure 41: Pie chart comparing the interaction for social purposes and for learning purposes in the four case studies in Kuwait

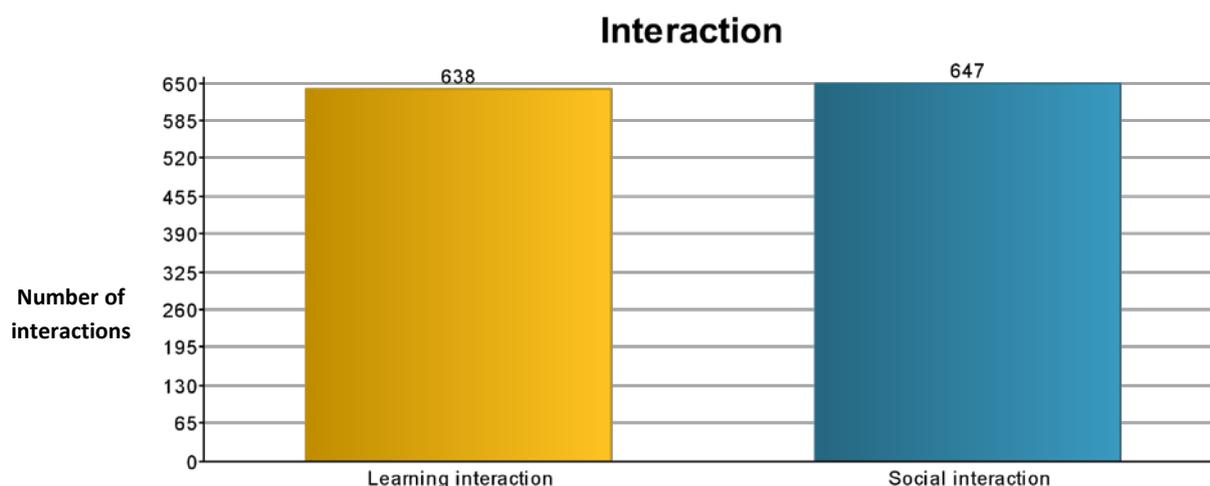


In contrast, in England, the total number of social interactions for learning purposes was quite similar to the total number of interactions for social purposes (see Figure 42). This could be due to the nature of teaching in the two countries, as in Kuwait teachers do not

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allow children to communicate during lessons and no group activities were observed during lessons, while in England the observation showed that teachers often arranged group activities which encouraged children to socially interact with each other during lesson time and not only during break time, as the bar Figure shows.

Figure 42: Comparing the social interaction for social purposes and learning purposes regarding the case studies in England based on qualitative investigation



Regarding the quality of interaction, both groups showed some positive and some negative interaction; however, there were some differences in the details. For example, the negative interaction observed in the cases in Kuwait was more bullying, teasing and mocking, while the negative interaction noticed with the cases in England was more related to not following social customs, such as jumping in randomly to join a group or getting involving in a game without asking people, but no bullying behaviour was noticed. It also worth saying that all cases in both countries showed some degree of positive and deep interaction where they were fully engaged and interacted for a continuous period.

In terms of the stability of interaction, the observation showed different results in different cases in both countries. To illustrate further, some cases showed stable interaction such as Sara, better interaction over time such as Omar in Kuwait and David in England, or reduced interaction over time such as Tom in England and Ahmad in Kuwait. Such variation in both countries leads to the conclusion that children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning are not a homogeneous group in terms of the stability of their social interaction.

4.3.42 *How are the friendships of children identified as having MLD in England different/similar to the friendships of children designated as having Slow Learning in Kuwait?*

It is clear from the presented profiles of the case studies in Kuwait that there were commonalities regarding their friendships at school. In order to clarify, the following table has been designed to summarise all the four cases in Kuwait in simple words to help draw a general image of the friendship of the case children.

According to Table 45, it appears that all the cases in Kuwait had from three to six friends in special classes in Year 4 but they had no friends in mainstream classes. All the cases also belonged to a social group as they were in the same class moving together as a group and interacting with each other for a continuous period, with some different details for each child.

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Table 45: Summary of the friendships of all four case studies in Kuwait

Kuwait							
Case studies	Number of friends		Belong to a social group		Continuing interaction- with prior child/for continuous period		Change in friendship in the second term
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	
Ali	6 SEN	6 SEN	Yes	Yes	With his classmates for continuous period	With his classmates and some same year children from other special classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing with special classes children in year 5
Ahmad	3 SEN	3 SEN	Yes	Yes	With his classmates for continuous period	With his classmates for continuous period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No new friends and more negative interaction with his classmates in the second term
Jassem	3 SEN	3 SEN	Yes	Yes	Especially with Omar and with his classmates for continuous period	Especially with Omar and with his classmates for continuous period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear change
Omar	3 SEN	4 SEN	Yes	Yes	Especially with Jassem and with his classmates for continuous period	Especially with Jassem and with his classmates for continuous period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More number of friends in term 2 • moving toward more positive social interaction with his classmates

Nonetheless, there were some differences in the personality of each child which seemed to affect the quality of friendship. For example, Ali was a leader so he had many friends, Jassem was shy and quiet so he got limited interaction with his group although he moved with them, and Ahmad was teasing his peers which made them uncomfortable with him

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while, at the same time, they considered him one of their group members. It is also worth saying that the small number of children in the special classes seemed to help them to form one small social group, in contrast to the children identified as having MLD in England who were placed in mainstream classes which contained about 25 children in one class.

Regarding the four case studies in England, the within cases analyses showed variation in the quality and quantity of friendships. According to Table 46, different cases had different numbers of friends, varying from no friends to six friends. It is also worth saying that not all their friends were children identified as having SEN, but they also had friendships with their non-SEN peers. This is in contrast to the result of the Kuwaiti case studies who had no friendships with their typically developing peers. The observation also showed that some of the case studies in England belonged to a certain social group while others did not, in contrast to the cases in Kuwait who all belonged to one social group. The data also showed differences among the case studies in England as some of them interacted with the same children all the time for a continuous period, such as Tom and Jake, while other cases had no particular child to interact with, such as Sara. This contrasts with the cases in Kuwait who interacted all the time with the same group. Finally, there were clear changes among the case studies in England, as some developed new friendships with new children in the second term, such as Jake and David. The observation also revealed some qualitative changes, such as what happened between Tom and his best friend Alex. On the other hand, the cases in Kuwait did not develop new friendships in the second term, apart from Omar with one new friend only, but there were some qualitative changes within their own social group.

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Table 46: Summary of the friendships of all four case studies in England

England							
Case studies	Number of friends		Belong to a social group		Continuing interaction- with prior child/for continuous period		Change in friendship in the second term
	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	Term 1	Term 2	
Sara	Non	1 SEN	No	No	Often momentary interaction with different children	Interacting with SAM often and with other children in momentary way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One more friend in the second term
David	1 SEN 3 Non-SEN	1 SEN 5 Non-SEN	No	Yes	No specific child he often interacted with	He interacted with 6 children frequently for a continuous period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More friends in term 2 • He belonged to a social group in term 2
Tom	1 SEN 3 Non-SEN	1 SEN 3 Non-SEN	No	No	Interacted with Alex to a large extent for a continuous period	Few interactions with Alex and other children in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few interactions with his friends in general and clear separation from Alex (his best friend)
Jake	1 SEN 5 Non-SEN	1 SEN 5 Non-SEN	Yes	Yes	Often interacted with his group members in a continuous way	Often interacted with his group members in a continuous way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New friendship in term 2 with more interactions with the new friend Alex

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4.3.43 Comparison of peer acceptance between children identified as having MLD in England and those case studies in Kuwait

As explained above, the case studies in Kuwait had no interaction with their typically developing peers and they were not accepted by them; this was explained in the case study profiles. However all the case studies in Kuwait were accepted within the community of special classes, although they differed in terms of their personalities and social skills. They engaged with each other during break time, they moved as one group and the other children in the other special classes collaborated with them, and shared in their social activities, such as the food party they all arranged together. Regarding the stability of peer acceptance, it seems that different cases had different results. For example, Ahmad moved from more accepted in term one to less accepted as his negative behaviour toward his peers increased in the second term. Ali was accepted by his peers in both terms in a more stable way, while some cases such as Omar became more accepted in the second term compared with term one (see Table 47)

Table 47: Summary of the peer acceptance of all four case studies in Kuwait based on quantitative measurement

Case studies	Result of the Rating Scale based on the average scores for their year group	
	Term 1	Term 2
ALI	Just below average	Just below average
Ahmad	Just above average	Just below average
Jassem	Just below average	Below average
Omar	Just below average	Just above average

In England, the case studies showed different results from those in Kuwait. One of the main differences was that children in England showed some degree of acceptance by their non-SEN peers, in contrast to children in Kuwait who were accepted within the area of special classes only. Another point is that the case children in England were accepted by different groups in their class. For example, Jake had his group, which was different from David's group, while in Kuwait all the case children were accepted by the same group. The rating

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scale in England showed that all the case children were below or just below the average score for their class (see Table 48). There were also different kinds of acceptance with different cases in England. For example, Sara was accepted in a more caring way than being accepted in a social way. In other words, children accepted Sara more to take care of her than to be friends with her, while Jake belonged to a social group and he was accepted by them as a main member of the group. This contrasts with the result in Kuwait where there were no clear varieties of acceptance among the case children, as they accepted each other due to the fact that they all belonged to the same special class community which contained fewer children. Finally, in England some cases were alone to some extent, such as David, while in Kuwait all the case children were together almost all the time, as a group, with no child left alone or with no one to play with.

Table 48: Summary of the peer acceptance of all four case studies in England based on quantitative measurement

Case studies	Result of the Rating Scale based on the average scores of children at Year 4	
	Term 1	Term 2
Sara	Below average	Below average
David	Just below average	Just above average
Tom	Just below average	Just above average
Jake	Just below average	Just below average

4.3.44 *Comparing the teachers' opinions about placement of the four case study children in each country*

The interviews with the teachers in England regarding the placement of the four case studies showed that the level of the child's difficulties was the main criterion that teachers used to determine their view about the most appropriate placement. To explain, all the teachers believed that Sara should be moved to a special school for academic and social reasons, as they believed that her academic difficulties could not be met in mainstream school and that she would experience better social participation at a special school. At the same time, all the

teachers agreed that the most appropriate educational setting for David was the mainstream school due the fact that David's learning difficulties were not severe and he was coping well in the mainstream, he had friends and was accepted by his classmates. A point to note is that many teachers changed their opinion in the second term regarding the placement of Tom, for example, as in the first term three teachers hoped that Tom would adapt to his mainstream class, notwithstanding his complex learning difficulties. The teachers noticed that Tom was sociable and he was accepted by his classmate in the first term. However, in the second term when Tom's difficulties started to show more and his behaviour started to change, the same three teachers changed their minds to suggest special school as the most suitable placement. Therefore it can be concluded that the level of difficulties (i.e., social and academic) was the main criterion that the teachers in England used in forming their opinion about the placement of the four case studies.

In Kuwait the teachers also shared the same criterion with the teachers in England in terms of the level of difficulties. However, the teachers in Kuwait focused more on academic difficulties. Taking for example Jassem and Omar, the teachers believed that the two of them would get better academic support in special schools, and the teachers also believed that the assessment of these two children, by which the Ministry placed them in special classes, was not accurate. The other main criterion for teachers in Kuwait was social stigma. To demonstrate, all teachers believed that moving children to special schools would lead to stigmatizing them with the label of 'special school'. Such a stigma would be considered a defect in the eyes of society, so they suggested the targeted children to stay in special classes in mainstream school.

- *Summary of the comparison*

There were some commonalities and some differences among the four case studies between both countries in regard to their social participation. Table 49 summarises the comparison of the two countries based on the data of the case studies. As it appears from the table, there was a clear difference in that those children who were placed in special classes in Kuwait participated socially only within the area of the special classes, which meant that their interaction with their non-SEN peers was very limited and hostile (i.e., from the side of their non-SEN peers). Those children identified as having MLD in mainstream classes in England

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were found to interact and socialise with their non-SEN peers; in the majority of cases they developed deep relationships with some of the non-SEN children and shared their social cluster networks.

Table 49: Comparing the differences and the commonalities of social participation among the case studies in Kuwait and England

Comparison	Kuwait	England
	Social interaction	
Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More interaction for social purpose than learning purpose • Negative interaction shows as teasing and mocking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More interaction for learning purpose than social purpose • Negative interaction shows as ignoring and rejection
Similarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All cases showed all kind of interaction (i.e. physical, verbal, non-verbal) • All cases showed some positive interaction • The cases in both countries shows heterogeneous result in terms of the stability of their social interaction 	
	Friendship	
Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All their friendships with children in special 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They had friends from both groups (i.e. non-SEN and SEN) • Some belong to a social cluster group and some do not • Clear quantitative change of their friendship in term 2
Similarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear similarity in their friendships 	
	Peer acceptance	
Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepted only by their special classes peers • One significant reason for peer acceptance (i.e., sharing the same special classes placement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepted by their SEN and non-SEN peers • Different reasons for peer acceptance (e.g., playing together and working with each other)
Similarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cases in both countries shows heterogeneous result in terms of their peer acceptance stability 	

Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this section, I discuss the findings of the study. The discussion will be organized according to the research questions. First, I will provide a short summary of the findings pertaining to each of the research questions. Subsequently, I will interpret the findings by reviewing and linking them to existing literature. This will be followed by the conclusion section where I will clarify the study's contribution to knowledge, followed by a review of the implications of the results and, finally, the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

5.2 To what extent are the four dimensions of social participation inter-related?

The key result of the current study in relation to the concept of social participation is that the dimension of social self-concept was not found to be connected with the dimensions of friendship or peer acceptance, in either country or in either academic term. In the current study, the dimension of social self-concept was weakly correlated with other dimensions of social participation, and it did not predict them at a statistically significant level. Although the data were collected at two different times (term one and term two), in two different countries (Kuwait and England), and in two different educational settings (special classes and mainstream classes), the results were the same (i.e., social self-concept correlated poorly with friendship and peer acceptance and could not predict them significantly). Finding the same results across different times, places and settings, as in this research, supports the idea that the dimension of social self-concept has no relation with a child's friendship or peer acceptance. This means that a child who has many friends and is accepted by peers does not necessarily have a positive social self-concept, and vice versa. One reason for this finding could be the method of assessment of self-concept, as this dimension was measured by self-report (i.e., what the child thought about him/herself), whereas friendship and peer acceptance measures were based on other children's reports (i.e., what other children thought about the case child socially).

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This is an important finding. However, in order to explain its significance I first need to discuss what other research has found regarding the relationship between the four dimensions of social participation. Very few studies have examined the relationship between different dimensions of social participation. This was expected, as the definition of social participation examined in this study is a new one. In the following section, I discuss the emergence of the definition of social participation, which includes four dimensions. Subsequently, I will clarify some of the literature on the interrelation of social self-concept with the other dimensions of social participation.

Through an analysis of relevant literature, Koster, Nakken, Pijl and Houten (2009) critically discussed the term ‘social participation’. They reviewed 62 articles, which all investigated the social outcomes of children with SEN in mainstream primary schools and found that concepts such as social inclusion, social integration and social participation were used synonymously. The study also succeeded in clarifying four dimensions of social participation, namely friendship, social interaction, peer acceptance and social self-concept. However, these four dimensions were simply drawn from their analysis of the literature, which did not mean that they were empirically related to one another.

As seen above, these dimensions of social participation were only defined in 2009 and, as yet, research has not examined the interrelation among these dimensions. However, some studies have examined the relationship between self-perception and peer relationships. For example, a Turkish study examined the hypothesis that children who have problems in their social relationships with their peers will believe they are unsuccessful and ineffectual and, in return, they will develop a negative self-perception. This hypothesis was tested with non-SEN primary age children, and it was found that social interaction with peers and the social status of children predicted social self-perception (Gülay, 2011). This result was replicated in many studies, suggesting that the prevalence of negative self-concept was higher in children who were disliked, excluded, or expressed problems in their interaction with their peers (Chen, Chang, He, & Liu, 2005; Estell et al., 2008; Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, & Noumark-Sztainer, 2007; Harter, 1983). This finding is inconsistent with the results of the current study, which found that the social self-concept was not related to relationship with peers. This could be because the current study involved SEN children, unlike the other previously mentioned studies.

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Involving children with SEN could affect the interrelationship between the dimensions of social participation, as many studies have found that the social self-concept of children with SEN is unrelated to their actual peer relations. For example, a recent study by Avramidis (2013) revealed that children with SEN in northern England had a positive self-concept and they felt socially accepted, although they were less popular and had fewer friends compared to their non-SEN peers. Similarly, Zic and Igric's (2001) study conducted in the Republic of Croatia yielded a contradictory result regarding the social self-concept and peer relations of those with intellectual disability (IQ 70 and below) and their non-SEN peers. This study found that social self-concept of children with intellectual disability was similar to that of their typically developing peers, although they were rejected by their peers. Such inconsistencies between the social self-concept of children identified as having SEN and their practical social life in schools led Nowicki (2003) to conclude that children with 'learning disabilities' (i.e., a term used in Nowicki's study to describe a variety of learning difficulties) have an inaccurate perception of their social life. It is also possible that the inconsistency of the social self-concept of children with SEN and their peer relationships is due to the fact that children with SEN commonly receive exaggerated compliments from the people around them for small achievements; this could make them think that they are accepted socially (Huck, Kemp, & Carter, 2010). Furthermore, it has also been argued by Bear, Juvonen and McInerney (1993) that such positively inflated self-concepts of children identified as having 'learning disability' (the term was not defined in the article) could be due to their ability to focus on the positive side of their relationships with their typically developing peers rather than on the negative aspects. In simple terms, a child identified as having SEN could feel satisfied with being accepted by one person rather than feeling dissatisfied that the rest of the children did not accept him/her. All these explanations could account for the inconsistency between the social self-concept of those with SEN and their peer relationships that was found in this research.

The inconsistency of social self-concept with the other dimensions found in this research has some significance in the field of social participation. The main idea for clarifying the concept of social participation is that it will facilitate the comparison of results, enable the drawing of clear conclusions, and provide a clear guide to the dimensions of social participation so that future researchers could use the concept to investigate the social aspects of inclusion (Bossaert et al., 2011). However, including a dimension that has a weak interrelation with other dimensions could lead to a misleading result when drawing an overall conclusion. For

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example, it is possible that a child could score highly on social self-concept while the friendship and peer acceptance of the child are low. In this case, it would be difficult to draw a conclusion about the social participation of the child, as the child feels from inside that he/she is very sociable and accepted, although this is not observable from the social life of the child. Therefore, in this case, priority should be given to one dimension over the others when drawing a conclusion. However, giving priority to one dimension over the others will, first, underestimate the effect and the validity of the results pertaining to other dimensions and, second, it will not lead to an overall image of the concept of social participation.

The inconsistency between the dimension of social self-concept and the other dimensions of social participation found in this study could also mean that the social participation construct provided by Koster, Nakken, Pijl and Houten (2009), which suggested use of a general social participation construct, would appear questionable, and that social participation is better understood in terms of the separate elements making up the overall dimension – on one hand the social self-concept and on the other the peer acceptance and friendship. More research is needed to investigate the interrelations among the dimensions of social participation in children identified as having SEN. Although the current study found inconsistency between social self-concept and peer relations, it could not test the interrelation of the dimension of social interaction with the other dimensions of social participation due to the reasons clarified in the Methodology chapter. Therefore more research is needed in that area to reach a better understanding of the correlation among the four dimensions of social participation.

5.3 To what extent do the different groups of children (i.e., MLD/Slow Learning, non-SEN and other categories of SEN) differ in their social participation in Kuwait and in England?

One of the main aims of this research was to investigate the social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in both countries through comparing the results for different categories of children. The key result in this study in regard to the comparisons among categories revealed that social participation of children with MLD in England was similar to that of their typically developing peers in two of the dimensions (i.e., friendship and social interaction) in each term over a three month period, while it was dissimilar in the other two dimensions (i.e., peer acceptance and social self-concept) in each term. It is also worth mentioning that children identified as having MLD did not obtain negative scores, although their scores were lower compared to their typically developing peers on the dimensions of peer acceptance and social self-concept. The result also yielded no differences between children identified as having MLD and those having other types of SEN in the four dimensions of social participation during each school term in England.

In Kuwait, the placement of children differed from that in England, as children with Slow Learning were placed in special classes in mainstream schools. Such placement seemed to have an effect on the social participation of the children. In this research, children identified as having Slow Learning in special classes showed no difference compared to their peers in mainstream classes in terms of friendship, although differences in the dimensions of peer acceptance and social self-concept emerged. This result was the same in each term over a short period of time. It is also important to emphasise that children socialised only with their peers in the special classes but not with their typically developing peers in mainstream classes, and by whom they were not accepted in either term.

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The result found in England was similar to a number of studies that have compared the social participation of children identified as having SEN with their non-SEN peers in mainstream classes. These studies found that children with SEN maintain some good social relationships in mainstream classes and feel part of the school social community, although they occupy a low social position (e.g., Meyer, 2001; Pavri & Monda-Amaya, 2001). This result is very similar to that found for the English participants in the current study, as children identified as having MLD in the current study were also accepted by their peers to a certain extent. They interacted socially with other children, most of them had at least one friend, and they felt good about their social relationships in school during both terms, although their social participation was lower than that of their peers without SEN. This supports the argument of Avramidis (2010) who emphasised that children identified as having SEN manage to maintain some good social participation in mainstream schools and are able to be part of a social network group. Such evidence from literature could encourage the view that the mainstream setting does not prevent children from socialising, as the difference in social participation between children with MLD/Slow Learning and their non-SEN peers in mainstream classes is one of extent and not its presence. This finding is important, as the social participation of any group should not be assessed solely in comparison with other groups, but also by looking into the degree to which each group participates.

Regarding the difference in social participation of Slow Learning children in special classes and those without SEN in mainstream classes in Kuwait, many studies that compared these two groups of children found that non-SEN peers in ordinary classes were less likely to accept children with SEN in special classes. For instance, a Canadian study by Wiener and Tardif (2004) examined the social participation of children designated as having Learning Disabilities in different educational settings and found that their typically developing peers were less likely to accept those children who received their lessons in a special class within a mainstream school. Furthermore, the self-concept of children with learning disabilities in a special class was low compared to their friends identified as having learning disabilities in more inclusive settings (Wiener & Tardif, 2004). Another interesting finding came from Coben and Zigmond (1986) who compared the social participation of 137 children designated as having Learning Disabilities (LD) receiving their education in a regular classroom in an inclusive school with social participation of 43 similar children in a self-contained class in a regular school. The results revealed an interesting finding, that children in self-contained

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classes were less accepted but also less rejected by their peers compared to those who were in regular classrooms in inclusive schools. This finding supports, to some extent, the result found for those identified as Slow Learners in special classes in Kuwait, as they were also not accepted by their peers, had fewer friendships with children in mainstream classes, and lower social self-concepts.

Regarding social self-concept, children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning were found to have a lower social self-concept compared to their typically developing peers in both countries. This finding was similar to those of other studies, which indicated that the social participation of children identified as having SEN was lower compared to their non-SEN peers (e.g., Gans, Kenny, & Ghany, 2003; Lackaye & Margalit, 2006; Nunez et al., 2005). However, in the current research, children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning did not hold a negative social self-concept in either country, although their self-concepts were lower compared to those of their non-SEN peers. Yet again, this is an important finding to consider when making a judgment about social self-concept, as lower scores are not necessarily negative. Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) and the theoretical development of the 'Big-Fish-Little-Pond-Effect' (Marsh, 2007), which assumes that those children who compare themselves to other children of the same ability level (e.g., in special schools) will form a positive self-concept while those children who compare themselves with children of higher ability levels (e.g., in mainstream schools) will form a less positive self-concept, could explain the lower scores.

It is clear from the current study that the results for social participation of children identified as MLD/Slow Learning and their non-SEN peers differed between the two countries. This was expected, as the context and the variables were different in each country. To clarify, in England, MLD children were placed in mainstream classes alongside their non-SEN peers, whereas in Kuwait Slow Learning children were placed in special classes. This difference in settings was associated with different results in each country in two ways. In England, although children with MLD participated socially to a lesser degree than their typically developing peers, their social participation was positive (i.e., they were accepted by their peers and had friendships with them). Alternatively, in Kuwait, while Slow Learners in special classes showed some positive scores in relation to acceptance by their peers and the number of their friendships, the social network matrices showed that their interaction with

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their non-SEN peers was negative (i.e., they were less accepted by their non-SEN peers and had no friendships with them). Different placement settings (i.e., special classes in Kuwait and mainstream classes in England) are likely to explain such differences between the groups in the two countries. Specifically, the special class setting could prevent children with Slow Learning from interacting with their peers for learning purposes, which is the major portion of time spent by any child at school (i.e., lesson time). This could create a social distance between children in special classes and those in mainstream classes due to the limited social interaction between the two groups. In contrast, children in mainstream classes in England spend most of the school day together, and mainstream teachers often ask children to work together as part of class activities, which increases the amount of interaction between SEN and non-SEN children in mainstream classes.

Similarly, concerning the dimension of social self-concept, different educational settings could have an effect. For example, in England, children identified as having MLD were placed in a mainstream school; such a setting enabled children with MLD to compare themselves with their higher ability peers in the same class. In Kuwait, the social self-concept of children identified as having Slow Learning was no different from the result in England, although children identified as having Slow Learning were placed in special classes with their same ability peers. However, because children with Slow Learning in Kuwait were placed in mainstream schools where they could see and interact with their higher-ability peers and because of the negative interaction between Slow Learning and typically developing children, children with Slow Learning may have compared themselves with their typically developing peers instead of comparing themselves with each other. This in turn may have led to less positive social self-concepts, according to the theory of social comparison (Festinger, 1954).

The second significant part of the findings regarding the comparison between groups is that the social participation scores of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in this research were widely spread in both countries and during both terms. There were, for example, children with MLD/Slow Learning who had few friends, an average number of friends, or many friends. This spread of participation leads one to question the usefulness of generalising social participation in terms of the MLD category. This wide variation indicates that children identified as having MLD are not a homogenous group in terms of their social participation. The MLD category therefore does not seem to be useful for drawing a

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conclusion about a child's overall social participation, as the main idea of using categories is to define a set of conditions for use in scientific studies (Keogh, 1987). Putting children into different categories or giving them labels should, as alleged, help practitioners identify the most appropriate intervention programme for each category (Kuther, 1994). However, such benefits of categorising children do not seem to be achieved with the MLD category in terms of social participation. This could be due to the different ways of assessing MLD, to be discussed later in this chapter. This is not to deny the existence of MLD identification criteria, but to say that the social participation of children with MLD seems to be heterogeneous and that the unified description of the social participation of children with MLD seems inaccurate.

To sum up, it was important to compare the results of different groups to investigate the social participation of children designated as having MLD/Slow Learning. This follows the assertion of Sartori that researchers need to compare different groups in order to understand the variables or recognise the variation that makes up the theoretical relationship in the phenomenon under the investigation (Sartori, 1991). Comparing different groups helps highlight the characteristics of the groups and thereby reduce the complexity of the social phenomena. The comparisons among different groups in this study were not only useful in showing the extent of children's social participation in general, but also the usefulness of the MLD category in investigating social participation and in highlighting the differences between the two comparative countries which have effects on the social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning.

5.4 To what extent did the level of social participation of different groups of children (i.e. MLD/Slow Learning, non-SEN and other categories of MLD) remain stable over time?

One purpose of the current study was to find out whether the social participation of different groups of children remained stable over time. The result in this study revealed that the social participation of all the comparative groups in each country did not change significantly over time. To explain in detail, in England, the result in this study found that there were no significant differences between the first and the second term in the four dimensions of social participation of children identified as MLD, children with SEN and children with other categories of SEN. This means that the social participation of children identified as having MLD continued to be lower than their typically developing peers in the second term. It is also worth noting that the only significant difference in the stability found in the group of non-SEN children was in the social interaction dimension during lesson times. However the comparison of social interaction - as clarified before - did not meet the statistical requirement for measuring differences, as the number of participants was small. The result in Kuwait was a close match with the result in England, as the three dimensions of social participation of children identified as having Slow Learning were found not to change significantly over time. In another words, there were no statistically significant differences between the first and the second terms (i.e., after a three months interval) for children identified as having Slow Learning in regard to their friendships, peer acceptance and social self-concepts, nor for those without SEN in relation to the same dimensions.

The stability of social participation could also be discussed through looking at the correlation between the two terms for each dimension of social participation. In England, the correlation between friendship in the first term and friendship in the second term was of medium size (almost 0.6). This means that only 36% of the variation (i.e., based on squaring the correlation) could be predicted in the second term. The distribution of the scores also showed that some children scored a high number of friendships in the first term, but a lower number in the second term, and vice versa, although the scores of the majority of children were

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comparable and corresponded in each term. Peer acceptance in the first term also showed a medium correlation (0.7) with peer acceptance in the second term; this means that only 49% of the variation could be predicted in the second term. Similarly, a medium correlation was found between social self-concept in the first and second terms (0.5). The distribution of the data showed that some children showed changes in their social self-concept, although these are not the majority. Similar results were found in Kuwait, as the correlations of the three dimensions of social participation in term one were found to be at a medium level with the same dimensions in term two. The distribution of the data for the participants in Kuwait also showed some changes in the three dimensions of social participation, as only 42% of the variance regarding friendship was predicted in the second term, a similar result as for peer acceptance, and 22% of the social self-concept. To sum up, although there were no significant differences in social participation in either country in any group between the first and second terms, the medium-sized correlations of the three dimensions between the two terms showed that there was some quantitative change over time.

The results indicated a measure of stability for both countries and for all groups. The stable quantitative result in Kuwait seems to have some relation with the special class setting for children identified as Slow Learning. To illustrate further, the result in Kuwait in relation to the interaction between groups showed that there was no social interaction between those children in special classes and their peers in mainstream classes in either term, whereas each of the two groups interacted with others in their placement surroundings (i.e. children with Slow Learning interacted with children in special classes only and mainstream children interacted with children in mainstream classes only). The lack of interaction between those two groups did not help children develop new social relationships, especially those in special classes, as the number of children in the special classes was limited (maximum 10 children in one class). Therefore stability was evident. In England, some degree of stability was found for all groups (i.e. MLD, non-SEN and other categories of SEN). According to Strully and Strully (1996), friendship and social participation between children with SEN and their typically developing peers do not happen spontaneously, but they have to be facilitated. This could be the reason that the social participation of many children did not change significantly as, in this study, there was no programme aiming to facilitate their social interaction, either in the English or Kuwaiti schools. This may also explain the finding that children with non-SEN did not interact socially with children with SEN even over a period of time in the current

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study. Nevertheless, the social participation of children was not totally stable, as the distribution of the data showed some changes in the social participation of all groups and in both countries.

Previous studies which investigated the stability of social participation of children identified as having SEN have given results which are different and contradictory. For instance, an American study indicated that the social participation of children identified as having Learning Disabilities was not stable but moved towards more positive social participation. To clarify, the number of friendships and the level of peer acceptance started to increase over time, although the correlation between peer acceptance during both terms was significant (0.7). In other words: although 49% of the variance was predictable in the second term, the result showed no significant change in the stability of peer acceptance (Vaughn, Elbaum & Schumm, 1996). Another study found, by contrast, that the social participation of children aged nine with 'learning disorder' (this term was explained in the article to be equal to specific LD in UK terminology) was not stable but became more negative as they started to lose their friendships and experience a higher level of peer rejection over a school year (Tur-Kaspa, Margalit, & Most, 1999). Finally, a Canadian study found that social participation was likely to be stable over three months for children who were identified as having Learning Disabilities (i.e. IQ below 80 and above the 25th percentile in the standard achievement test)) in grades 4 to 6 (Wiener and Schneider, 2002). It is clear that, whilst all the above studies investigated the stability of social participation of primary age children, the results were not compatible. This could indicate that children with general learning difficulties may not be a homogenous group in terms of stability of social participation, this being the reason that different studies found different results. Another reason could be that the current study investigated stability over a period of six month in England and three months in Kuwait, while much of the previous literature examined the stability of social participation over a whole school year. This duration difference may underlie the different findings across studies.

Few studies have investigated the stability of social participation of children identified as having SEN, and this is considered one of the main gaps in the field of social participation (Estell, Jones, Pearl, Van Acker, Farmer, & Rodkin, 2008). It is also clear that the results do not occur in a single direction; this is to be expected as the phenomenon of social participation is a complex one which is affected by different factors such as context, setting and people.

The literature on the stability of social participation does not indicate a strong stability where the dimensions of social participation do not change over time; rather, it indicates the extent to which social participation does not change, as is the case in the current study. The results on stability also show no significant differences over time, meaning there is no notable increase or decrease in social participation over time, but this does not mean that there is no change in the social network or in the frame of friendships. It is possible that a child has five friends in the first term, and that three of them are replaced with another three friends in the second term. Such a change would not appear statistically, as the number of friendships in the first term would appear to be the same as in the second term. Similarly with peer acceptance, it is possible that a child could be rated as highly accepted by different children, but by the same number in both terms. It has been argued that students may experience changes in their social-cognitive abilities throughout their school careers (Yeates & Selman, 1989) and that 50% to 70% of children's friendship change between ages six and ten years (Berndt & Hoyle, 1985). However, changes may occur in the quality rather than the quantity of their social participation, as all the children in this research showed stability in the quantity of their social participation. Therefore the following section will discuss the quality of social participation through discussing four case study children in each of the comparative countries.

5.5 What is the nature and quality of social participation of the case study children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait as compared with England?

Taking into account that a quantitative analysis of children's social participation would have some limitations, as clarified in the methodology chapter, the current study was designed to meet such limitations by carrying out a qualitative investigation in addition to the quantitative one, through the investigation of four case study children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning in England and in Kuwait. Starting with the data from England, the qualitative investigation showed that the case studies in England were not a homogeneous group in terms of their social participation. For example, some cases manifested deep social relationships

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with peers, such as Jake, while others only showed a shallow relationship with other children in the class, such as Sara. This variation was likewise found in the case children in Kuwait where some children were found to participate socially more than others. This means that the quality of social participation found in this research was uneven, differing between cases. In order to clarify the variation among cases in the two comparative countries, the above research question was broken down into five sub-questions for the case studies in Kuwait and those in England.

5.5.1 *What kinds of relationships do the case study children have with their peers in mainstream schools?*

The findings in England found that there were variations in the results among the four case studies in regards to their relationships with their peers. Some cases had deep individual relationships with their best friends, such as Cameron, while others had a kind of social cluster group relationship, such as Jake. Some cases' relationships were based on sharing activities, such as football for David, while Sara's relationship with the others was based on the idea that her peers wanted to take care of her rather than developing a social relationship of equality with her. Although beyond the scope of this study, this could also indicate that there are gender differences in terms of the nature of relationships between girls and between boys, as David's friendships were based on playing football with other boys, which is a physical activity, while Sara's relationships with girls were based on care and love, which is an emotional relationship. The variation in relationships was also found with the four case studies in Kuwait, as different cases showed different relationships with peers. For example, Ali was the leader of his group, so his relationship with his peers was a leader-follower relationship. Some cases found difficulties with social relationships with their peers, as with Ahmad due to his bullying behaviour and Jassem due to his shy behaviour. At the same time, there were clear differences between the case studies in Kuwait and in England regarding their relationships with their peers. To clarify, all the cases in England interacted with their non-SEN peers and in return their peers interacted back to varying degrees. This is in contrast to the situation in Kuwait where there was no kind of interaction between the four case studies and their typically developing peers. This could be due to the fact that the four case children in Kuwait were placed in special classes; instead there was only

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interaction among children in the special classes. The findings showed that, although there were many differences among the case studies, and some quarrels occurred, they moved as a group and played with each other all the time as friends. This could mean that the placement of children has some effect on the relationships between children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning and their typically developing peers.

Several studies have investigated the relationship between children with SEN and their typically developing peers. For example, a German study investigated the social and emotional situation of children with classroom learning difficulties (CLD) in mainstream primary schools, based on school assessment and not on standardised diagnosis; this terminology included children with specific and general learning difficulties, as they clarified. They found that such children experienced a high level of social rejection by their typically developing peers, and they felt less acceptance from their teachers (Krull, Wilbert, & Hennemann, 2014). Further research found that children designated as having SEN were under risk of social exclusion by their peers in mainstream schools (e.g., Bakker & Bosman, 2003; Frederickson & Furnham, 2001; Estell et al., 2008). However all these studies investigated social participation through using sociometric techniques; such methods have certain limitations and do not provide a deep understanding of the quality of the social relationships. As Avramidis (2013) argued, the nomination method does not provide any understanding of the quality or strength of social relationships. Taking the case of Sara for example; she received a negative quantitative nomination result on the one hand, but on the other hand she showed some positive qualitative social relationships with her peers inside and outside the class, as revealed in the day-to-day observation, which the nomination method could not examine. Few studies have examined the quality of social participation of children with SEN in general. One of those studies was that of Kemp and Carter (2002), who investigated 22 children identified mostly as having moderate or mild intellectual disabilities, in different school years in Australia (from year one to year five) in mainstream school. Mixed methods were applied, including interviews and class structured observation. They found that children with intellectual disabilities engaged with their typically developing peers for at least half of their break time in the playground. The result also emphasised the fact that such children showed some degree of isolation, though this did not mean that they were rejected. The authors also adopted Asher and Hymel's (1981) argument that the reliance on naturalistic observation (i.e. structured observation) to understand the

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social interaction between students has its limitations, notwithstanding the high validity of the method, as there is a weak relationship between the frequency of children's interaction in a structured observation and the extent to which that child is liked. This seems true in this research, as in some case studies the quantitative result did not show the child's social participation in depth. Taking the example of Jake, he scored 6 choices in both terms which indicates that his friendships remained stable, while the quality of his friendships showed some clear changes as is apparent in the semi-structured observation and interviews. This could explain why the majority of the literature based on sociometric methods has found negative results regarding the social participation of children with SEN, while those studies which have investigated the same phenomenon using qualitative investigations have showed some degree of social acceptance. To conclude, quantitative investigations of social participation using sociometric methods seem mostly to support the idea that children with SEN participate less socially and are less likely to be accepted by their peers, while the those studies which investigated the quality of social participation revealed that children identified as having SEN showed some positive degree of social engagement despite being less accepted, which is in accordance with the results of the current study.

Other qualitative investigations of social participation have found that different educational settings could lead to differences in social interaction. For instance, a study by Heiman (2000) investigated the quality of friendships for those with mild intellectual disabilities (i.e. IQ from 55 to 75) in different educational settings through using the Friendship Quality Questionnaire which contains some open-ended questions such as to describe 'a good friend'. The result showed that there were clear differences among students with mild intellectual disabilities (in self-contained classes in mainstream schools and in special schools) compared with typically developing students in mainstream schools. Students in special schools had fewer friends and felt lonelier, they only met their friends in school, in contrast to their typically developing peers who showed better engagement with their friends. Students in self-contained classes were found to take a middle position, to be better than those in special schools and lower than typically achieving students in terms of their friendship quality. This result agrees with the results of the current research, as those children in special classes in Kuwait had a different social engagement with each other and with their non-SEN peers, compared with those children identified as MLD in mainstream

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class. This supports the idea that educational settings may affect children's social participation.

5.5.2 *To what extent are the case study children aware of their social relationships at school?*

The qualitative investigation in the current study showed that there were different degrees of awareness among the four cases in England. Taking the example of Sara, while her personal profile presented in the findings showed that she engaged in some social situations, she was totally unaware of the social rules around her, she joined different groups randomly, talking with everyone whether she knew the person or not, and moving among different groups in a random way. There is also some evidence in the findings that Sara seemed not to be aware of what friendship means, as she nominated all the other children in her class when her teacher asked her to write a list of her friends to invite them to her birthday. This could indicate that Sara was unaware of her social interactions or that she was seeing friendship differently. Tom seemed to be more aware of his social surroundings than Sara, but at the same time he faced difficulties in understanding certain social situations in which he would get frustrated, leave the class and not come back. David, as his SENCO said, was not totally aware of the social rules around him; he would get involved in situations that he should not, but the teachers also believed that David's social life at mainstream school was good and that his social difficulties were less than Tom's or Sara's. In Kuwait, the social awareness result was different among different children. Ali, for example, showed great social awareness, as the interview with the school psychologist indicated that Ali showed social awareness, not only at school, but also with his family. This was in contrast to Jassem, whose teachers thought that he was not aware of some of his inappropriate behaviour. Nonetheless, it was clear that all the case studies in Kuwait showed a clear awareness of their special classes' corridor where they usually stayed and that they were not welcome to play with their typically developing peers.

Studies regarding the social awareness of children with SEN in general, and those with MLD/Slow Learning in particular, were found to be limited. Nevertheless, there has been some research which revealed that children with intellectual disability face difficulties with interaction with their peers (Guralnick, 1999) and display anti-social behaviour (Zion &

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Jenvey, 2006). Further research found that, although the social awareness of both children with autism spectrum disorder and those with intellectual disability was low, the social awareness of the first group was lower than the second group (Klubnik et al., 2014). Some research tried to explain such social unawareness and difficulties through looking at the ability of the child to understand his/her emotions and to link them with the emotions of others, which is known as the Theory of Mind (Bosacki, 2014). This theory looks into social information processing in which a child's social cognition acts to understand different social situations (Baurain & Nader-Grosbois, 2013). Some studies used the Theory of Mind to look at children with intellectual disability and found that such children had difficulties in that ability compared with their typically developing peers (e.g. Wishart et al., 2007). This could explain why some English cases in the current research seemed less aware of their social surroundings, taking into account that the case studies in England were not a homogenous group in their difficulties or abilities and therefore some had more awareness of their social participation than did others. On the other hand, in Kuwait the cases were a more homogeneous group, within an IQ range from 70 to 84, which did not include cases of more severe intellectual disability; this may explain why they showed some degree of positive social awareness. Lack of positive social awareness, such as in the case of Jassem, could be due to environmental factors, as his teachers said that Jassem was spoiled by his parents, and lacked life experiences, which could have led to his being unaware of the social rules around him. Finally, social awareness in this research was investigated through observation and teacher interviews only, while such a phenomenon could also be investigated by asking the case children themselves, as the observation method has the limitation of not explaining the intentions of actions. This constitutes a limitation of this research.

5.5.3 *To what extent do the case study children feel part of their school community?*

The interviews with the teachers revealed that the case study children in England did feel part of their school community despite the variation in their level of difficulties. The teachers believed that the four case study children liked their school, that they engaged with other students and that they felt part of their class. Sara, for example, initially told her teaching assistant that she missed her old class but then she stopped saying that, indicating

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that she had started to feel part of her new class. David was also believed by his teachers to be accepted by his peers and to feel part of his football group. In Kuwait, the teachers also believed that the four case study children felt part of the school community, by emphasising the strong relationship between students in the special classes and their teachers, as well as the additional emotional support they had in the special classes which was not offered to them in their previous mainstream classes. One teacher gave the example, when I asked her whether the four case children felt part of their school community, that if they had been told to go back to their mainstream school by their teachers as a punishment for their misbehaviour, they would not like it and they would try to behave better, which made her believe that the case children liked the school and felt part of it.

Many studies have investigated the feeling of belonging. Goodenow (1992) defined the sense of school belonging as an individual being part of a social network group at school and who values and feels valued and accepted by the members of that group. Other studies have found that those students who had a great sense of school belonging often showed positive social, academic and psychological outcomes (Ireson & Hallam, 2005; Osborne & Walker, 2006). Those students with a strong sense of school belonging were also less lonely and anxious, and they participated more in and out of class (Cemalcilar, 2010). Regarding children with SEN, Italian researchers examined school belonging for 122 children identified as having SEN in primary school and found that such children were less accepted by their peers and felt distant from their school, which convinced the authors to suggest that an inclusive setting is not sufficient for children with SEN (Nepi, Facondini, Nucci & Peru, 2013). A contradictory result was found by Frederickson et al. (2007) when they compared the social position and feeling of belonging to school among three groups: children with disabilities who had just moved from special to mainstream school, children with SEN in mainstream school and children without SEN in mainstream school; all children were 8 to 11 years old (i.e., primary age). The result was that, although children with SEN exhibited less social participation than the other three groups, they showed an equal sense of belonging to their school. However, all these studies regarding the sense of belonging for those with SEN were based on quantitative measurements only, whereas qualitative investigation is also needed to reach a deeper understanding. The current study found that some children identified as having MLD in England seemed to be unaware of their social position, as I explained earlier; this could be one reason enabling them to develop a positive sense of

belonging. Taking for instance Sara's case, she believed that all children in her class were her friends and she wanted to invite them all to her birthday whereas, in fact, none of them nominated Sara as a friend. Such unawareness may have helped Sara to have positive feelings towards her school community. Another point is that the current study found that the total mean social self-concept score of children identified as having MLD was positive (i.e., above half way in the 5 point scale). In Kuwait, the reasons the case children felt they belonged to the school, as the teachers said, were that, as I clarified before, the school climate consisted in the special care that children had from their teachers, the small number of children in one class who shared similar academic abilities, and the special classes community which provided the feeling of belonging to a certain group. It is also worth saying that the findings regarding school belonging in the current study were based on child observation and teacher interviews, while no interview with children took place, therefore for further research an interview with children could reach a better understanding of children's feeling of belonging to their schools.

5.5.4 To what extent is the quality of social participation of the case study children stable over time?

The qualitative investigation in the current research found some clear changes in the quality of social participation in the four case studies in England. Briefly, David was found to be alone to some extent in the first term as he was looking for children to play with, while in the second term he joined a group of boys in his class and they started to play football and hang out together. Jake belonged to a group of boys in the first term and he often spent his break time with them, while in the second term he found a new friend, started to 'hang out' with him away from his group and then he started to play with his old group alongside his new friend. Tom had a close friend in the first term, they were never apart from each other, but in the second term the relationship between them changed and Tom's best friend started to associate with children other than Tom. Sara had no friends at all in the first term, but in the second term a new boy identified as having autism joined the class and they started to be friends. In Kuwait, the changes were less clear than in the UK, as the only child who had a new friend in the second term was Omar; nonetheless there were some changes in the quality of the case children's social participation; for example, Ali developed a relationship with children in special class year 5 in the second term. Ahmad had some negative change

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as his bullying behaviour increased and this affected his relationship with his peers. The interview with the teacher revealed that Jassem was very shy in the first term but that he started to develop and to engage more with his peers in the second term.

Few studies have investigated the social participation of children identified as having SEN in mainstream schools and only in recent years has research started to focus on the social aspects of inclusion (Cemalcilar, 2010). Within such limitations, research investigating the stability of social participation has been rare (Chan and Poulin, 2007; Estell et al., 2008), and very few studies have investigated the qualitative changes of social participation through time. One of those studies is a longitudinal Norwegian one which investigated the social life of children identified as having learning difficulties (including general learning difficulties) from their parents' perspectives. The research was based on interviewing parents and it found that clear changes appeared in the social participation of children with learning difficulties at age eight as they started to struggle more with their social relationships, becoming teased and isolated (Ytterhus, Wendelborg & Lundeby, 2008). One of the mothers said that no one came to visit her daughter (with learning difficulties); the mother said that she tried to invite her daughter's peers and neighbours, but she felt that they came as a duty and they never kept in touch with her daughter afterwards. Another mother said that when her daughter was seven years old her peers used to call her and come to visit her but as she grew up she was no longer their first choice and they became less sociable with her (Ytterhus, Wendelborg, & Lundeby, 2008). Further very interesting longitudinal studies investigated the peer relationships among children identified as having SEN aged 3-16 from 1969 to 2008. The data was collected three times during that period using semi-structured interviews and participant observation (i.e. face-to-face observation). The result identified some informal social rules among children (see Appendix 53); such unwritten rules exist among all children, with or without SEN, and all children follow such rules. The result found that children with 'intellectual impairment' (term was not specified) struggled to understand the rules, and their social difficulties increased with age (Ytterhus, 2012). A very interesting example the author gave which was quite similar to the current study concerned a girl called Trine with learning difficulties (term not specified) who was very enthusiastic and sometimes overwhelming. Her peers were talking about horses and some had pictures of horses. While the girls were talking, Trine jumped quickly into the conversation and said she also had a lot of books. Then one of the girls pointed out that she

could not read them, to highlight her incompetence in reading (Ytterhus, 2012). Such a situation is very close to Sara in the current research, as she also could not follow the social rules and jumped into different situations over-enthusiastically without taking any permission or social cues which would allow her access. It could be that children with MLD are among those students who are unaware of the unwritten social rules around them, so that they cannot understand them without support, as the previous research found. This could also be the reason why, as such children age, they become more isolated, because they end up being regarded as being the worst behaved (Ytterhus, 2012). Such a result did not appear in the current research as it only investigated the differences in social participation over a short period of time. It would also be interesting to compare the social participation of children identified as MLD in their primary school with that of the same children when they move to secondary school, as transition to secondary school is also one of the limitations in the area of social participation research.

5.6 How was the concept of MLD/Slow Learning understood in Kuwait compared to England, and what is the significance of any differences in concepts to make sense of the social participation of children with MLD?

Part of this research highlighted the concept of MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait and England in terms of teachers' understanding and assessment. Questions about the main policy documents regarding identification of MLD/Slow Learning were asked of participants in both countries. The result was that, in Kuwait, the concept of Slow Learning was applied to those children who scored from 70 to 84 in an IQ test, while in England the concept of MLD was found to be wider and not limited to the results of certain cognitive tests. The participants in England found it hard to identify the concept of MLD, but they believed that a child with MLD was one who had general learning difficulties across the board, despite the extra support offered to the child. The participants in England found the concept of MLD easy to distinguish from SpLD, as a child with SpLD was identified as having specific learning difficulties, such

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as with literacy or numeracy, but not across the board. At the same time they found it hard to distinguish between mild LD, moderate LD and severe LD, as they said these terms referred to the extent of difficulties but there were no clear lines to distinguish among such categories. In Kuwait the participants referred each category to a certain IQ score and that was how they distinguished among different categories. They also believed that the main cause of Slow Learning was biological factors, and that environmental factors could not cause Slow Learning, but could cause below-average attainment. The participants in England believed that both biological and environmental factors could cause MLD and that below-average attainment was a symptom which could be caused by environmental factors.

Regarding the assessment methods, in Kuwait the IQ tests were the main methods used to assess Slow Learning, while the school reports and the parents' data were used as secondary evidence to support the IQ score that a child had received. In England the assessment procedures were more complicated than in Kuwait as there was no one operating method used; a set of methods and different specialists from different areas would have a multiagency meeting to reach a decision about a child. Therefore it can be said that in Kuwait the assessment of Slow Learning was procedurally objective, while in England the assessment was procedurally inter-subjective. In terms of the stability of MLD/Slow Learning, the participants in Kuwait believed that Slow Learning was a permanent condition because they believed it to be a cognitive difficulty cause by a biological issue (e.g. accident before, during or after birth which affected the brain); thus Slow Learning was a permanent set of difficulties from their point of view. The English participants, on the other hand, believed that MLD could be both a temporary and a permanent difficulty; that those who had MLD due to environmental factors could overcome their difficulties as soon as the environmental factors were treated, while for those who had MLD due to a biological problem the difficulties could be permanent.

Finally, the participants in Kuwait followed the rules of the Ministry of Education which clarified for them the Slow Learning concept, the assessment methods and the intervention programme with clear practical steps in one legal document; this legal set of rules was compulsory. The participants in England found the DfES (2003) definition of MLD to be confusing and not helpful to recognise a child with MLD. It is also worth saying that the participants in Kuwait were found to be confident and quick in their answers, especially when

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I asked them to identify children with Slow Learning, to clarify the differences between Slow Learning and other categories, the assessment methods used, the cause of Slow Learning and the policy document upon which they based their assessment. In contrast, the participants in England found such questions very hard to answer; they spent time thinking about them and they were less direct in their answers.

- *Discussion of the Kuwait findings*

It had been claimed that the assessment system in Kuwait regarding children with Slow Learning and children with SEN in general is quite similar to the guidelines of the American Individual with Disabilities Education Act (e.g., Barr, 1983). The American Psychiatric Association has adopted the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR) to identify 'mental retardation' in terms of intelligent quotient (IQ) of around 50 to 70, together with deficits in one of the eight sectors, such as self-care (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). This DSM definition seems to support the medical model of classification which sees intellectual or cognitive impairment as the central reason for learning difficulties. Generally, the medical model focuses on psychiatry and clinical psychology which are used to explain terms (Ayers & Prytys, 2002). The medical diagnosis of cognitive ability often explains what is 'wrong' with individual through biological reasons related, perhaps, to a chemical imbalance which causes the mental difficulties, and assigning this diagnostic label means that the 'problem' is in that individual (Williams & Heslop, 2005). However this is not exactly how the American system of assessing intellectual functioning works.

The modern medical view that it is dominating in America currently might see some genetic disposition to low intellectual functioning interacting with environmental factors to lead to low intellectual functioning, as the modern medical model does not ignore the social factors, but considers them to be an interactional part of disability (Grenier, 2007; Norwich, Ylonen, & Gwernan-Jones, 2014). This is true, as the American system is not based only on the IQ score, but also investigates the adaptive functioning of the assessed child outside the school (i.e., areas related to personal and social functioning at home, neighborhood and society) (Norwich, Ylonen, & Gwernan-Jones, 2014). The Kuwaiti system of identification, on the other hand, had not changed for over 40 years (Al-muhareb, 2007). Although the Kuwaiti system of assessing children with Slow Learning takes into account some emotional and

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environmental factors of the assessed child when applying the IQ test to insure its validity, it does not consider the environmental reasons as possible causes of low intellectual functioning. Therefore the Kuwaiti system is no longer similar to the newly developed identification system in America, rather it adopts the old version of the American system of assessing children which uses the medical model as an explanation by referring to genetic, biochemical, physiological, neurological and endocrinological factors (ibid).

My findings show that the participants in Kuwait ascribed the causes of Slow Learning purely to medical reasons; they used the term 'Slow Learning' in that children were 'suffering' from Slow Learning and not that they were just 'struggling' with some learning difficulties. Therefore they used the IQ test, which is a psychometric method of assessing children's cognitive ability. Diagnosing based on the medical model works with medical illnesses which can be tested, measured and assessed by objective procedures. However this is not the case with cognitive abilities; these are assessed through a person's behaviour and communication, which are affected by different variables (Williams & Heslop, 2005). The main problematic point in the Kuwaiti system is that the process of identifying Slow Learning is based only on the IQ test as a scientific medical way to assess cognitive ability. In Scotland, for example, the Advisory Council Report criticised the suggestion of using IQ scores as a guide to identify 'pupils with mental disabilities' (as they described them) as long ago as 1951. They suggested that it was not possible to identify such children on this basis alone, but that other criteria should be taken into consideration as well, such as attainment (Scottish Education Department, 1951). Yet the Kuwaiti system still uses IQ tests as the sole criterion of identification. The use of IQ tests to group children into well-defined categories was also criticised by describing the use of the IQ test as 'irrelevant' (Rispen et al., 1991) or even 'evil' (Gunderson & Siegel, 2001). Several studies have also indicated that using IQ score as a primary (such as Kuwait) or sole indicator to classify children is an invalid method (see Stanovich, 2005 for a review). The main purpose of using an IQ test should not be to get an IQ score or predict achievement (Glutting, Watkins, Konold, & McDermott, 2006) but rather to help professionals understand children's learning difficulties (Woodcock, 1990) and to help learners by developing effective intervention programmes (Fuchs et al., 2001). This is not to say that the IQ tests are ineligible for informing to additional attention or provision, but to say that the IQ tests may not determine the educational programme planning of children.

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Deckers and Flanagan (2013) provided a good example of two children who had reading problems, so they administered the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition (WISC-IV), and the two children obtained identical overall scores. However, in the sub-categories of the test their scores varied, as one child scored low on the Verbal Comprehension Index, which indicated that this child had specific language difficulties which could be causing the reading problem. The second child, in contrast, had a low score on the Working Memory Index, which may also have been leading to the reading difficulties. Thus the overall IQ score does not necessarily indicate that the same difficulties exist for those with the same scores. Furthermore, the neuroimaging literature has shown that dysfunction in the brain can be overcome through some kinds of interventions (e.g., Shaywitz et al., 2004; Simos et al., 2007) and that cognitive abilities can improve over time through the correct intervention (Holmes et al., 2009a, 2009b; Jaeggi, Buschkuhl, Jonides, & Shah, 2011; Westerberg, Hirvikoski, Forssberg, & Klingberg, 2010). Therefore the IQ test should not be used simply as a final score, rather it should be used to help gain a better understanding of the learning problem. This could be through using the sub-categories, as in the example of the two children above, to understand the difficulties, rather than for assigning children to overall categories (Woodcock, 1990).

Using IQ tests to identify such children could also lead to misleading conclusions. It could be that in one year a child scores 84 on the IQ test, which is in the 'Slow Learning' range and, one year later, the same child could score 89, which is not in the 'Slow Learning' range. Such a problem could occur because of environmental effects on children, such as family issues, poor teaching, or low attendance at school, which could improve through time and, subsequently, the IQ score could change due to the change in the child's life or to the development of their thinking skills. Also to take into consideration is the margin of error on the Wechsler IQ test, which is plus or minus 5 points (Norwich, 2004). Notwithstanding the above reservations, the Kuwaiti system does not take into account environmental factors as causes of Slow Learning.

A further point is that assessment based solely on IQ scores may lead to assigning labels to children. Labelling is often accompanied with stigmatization and stereotyping of individuals with differences, which can lead to isolation (Ormrod, 2008). This appears clearly in the Kuwaiti data where children with the label of 'Slow Learning' isolated themselves from

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interacting with their typically developing peers because their non-SEN peers mocked them using the same label (i.e. slow learner) and linked it with other labels such as ‘crazy’ or ‘retarded’. The label of ‘Slow Learning’ in Kuwait is also considered negative in the eyes of society. When an individual is given an official label, some negative impacts will be associated with the label and the individual may find themselves pressured into a deviant role as the label will impose some stigmatizing characteristics that do not fit with what society considers normal (McGrew & Evans, 2003; Kuther, 1994). Therefore society will give a new identity to the labeled person and a new role with a new set of expectations and people will respond and react to the labeled person according to these new expectations (Hebding & Glick, 1987). This is especially true in a small society like Kuwait where being social is part of the culture; people socialise often through organising regular meetings, as they have different formal and informal places called ‘Dewaniya’ where everyone can visit (Al-Rashid, 1926). In such a society, the impact of stigma becomes much stronger as many people will know about the stigma and the labelled person will become known by his/her stigma. This was clear in the data drawn from Kuwait, as some parents did not want others to know that they had a child who had been identified as Slow Learning, to avoid the social stigma

The assessment of Slow Learning in Kuwait also has a direct link with the curriculum and the pedagogy used with such children, which have been shown to affect their social participation. Children identified as Slow Learners are asked by the Ministry of Education to join the special classes, have special teachers, an amended curriculum and to be taught and treated in a way which suits their learning abilities. Such learning facilitation seems to give some advantages to children in special classes over their non-SEN peers as, with such simplifications, children in special classes can overtake their typically developing peers in their academic reports. Take, for example, Ahmad: his overall mark was 95% that was much better than many of his non-SEN peers in mainstream class (see Table 41 for Ahmad’s final academic report in the Findings chapter). Besides that, children in special classes have ‘special’ relations with their special teachers, as they have extra care and more fun activities, such as extra trips outside the school which are hardly available for non-SEN children. Such benefits for children in special classes seem to lie behind one of the barriers to good social relationships with their non-SEN peers, as the non-SEN children may feel disadvantaged and they may envy children in special classes. Such a feeling does not help to develop a good relationship between the groups, as one of the school psychologists indicated in this research.

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A further problematic point is that the IQ scores are used to place children in certain educational settings. It appears that the special setting also had a negative stigma beside the stigma that comes from labelling child as Slow Learners. As the findings showed in the current study, those children who were placed in special classes were not only stigmatized with the label of their special needs category (i.e. slow learner), but they were also stigmatized by the educational setting in which they had been placed (i.e. special class). Such a stigma was demonstrated by the non-SEN children mocking those in special classes. This may perhaps be expected, as when an individual does not fit into what the majority of people consider to be 'normal', then such an individual is considered as deviant (McGrew & Evans, 2003). When a definite negative characteristic is publicly assigned to individuals, then they will be compelled to take on the deviant role (Thomson, 2012). This includes children identified as having learning difficulties and, as Osterholm, Nash and Kritsonis (2011) state, such children could experience some physical isolation, social distance and emotional difficulties as a result of stigmatization. This was similar to the case of those who had been labelled and placed in special classes in Kuwait. It is also worth noting that the rules of the Kuwaiti system contained in the Ministry of Education statement number 242\2000 in relation to the Code of Practice number 4, 1996, forbid isolating special classes from the location of the mainstream classes as a way of protecting children from stigmatization, or giving a discriminatory name. However this was not applied in reality, as in the two schools I carried out the research in Kuwait, the special classes were placed in a separate corridor, not alongside the mainstream classes. Besides that, calling such classes 'special classes' itself is a discriminatory name, as the non-SEN children soon pick up such a name and use it against those who study in the special classes, resulting in a social gap between those who study in special classes and those who do not.

- *Discussion of the English findings*

As clarified in the literature review chapter, the DfES definition of MLD (2005) includes a wide range of criteria used to assess MLD, such as attainment well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum, difficulties in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills, understanding concepts, social skills and other difficulties. However the definition does not clarify which criteria are the more important in assessing MLD. The definition also does not clarify the way in which professionals could use these criteria to identify MLD. There is also

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the criticism that some of the criteria used in the definition contain sub-groups, such as the criterion of the delay in developing social skills (see literature review chapter). Finally, the definition does not specify the age for which the criteria apply, while the use of the word 'pupils' in the government definition could limit the application to those of early school age and not those of secondary age.

Based on the critical points discussed above, the conclusion of Crowther et al. (1998) seems to be apposite when they stated that U.K. education policy fails to set clear criteria which officially designate children as having MLD. This was also stated by Norwich and Kelly (2005): that the MLD category is not clear and is a very wide category which includes 'low attaining' learners. The government itself admitted that MLD is a broad concept: MLD can be associated with various other difficulties; it has no particular original cause; it is an uncertain category between SLD or intellectual difficulties and below-average attainment pupils who are not identified as having SEN; and the process of identifying MLD is contentious due to the uncertainty of how to understand and clarify the different areas indicated in the definition (Department for Education, 2012). There is also no specific guideline in the UK to explain the definition of MLD (i.e. DfES, 2003) or interpret its elements in a clear way (Norwich, Ylonen, & Gwernan-Jones, 2014)

Such uncertainty in the concept of MLD means that it is necessary to take more than one path to understanding the concept of MLD in England. This is true in terms of the provision provided to children with MLD from different local authorities. According to Norwich and Kelly (2005), LEAs rely on the governmental definition of MLD and the policy documents to support children with such need. However, because of the variation in the governmental stand and their position in relation to the concept of MLD and what is the best for them, LEAs started to adopt what better suited their policies and what worked for their own situations. The variation was not only in the provision, but different children could be assessed differently in one school from another and from one local area to another due to the fact that the MLD category is not fixed (Norwich, Ylonen, & Gwernan-Jones, 2014). This disparity in provision offered by LEAs in relation to children with MLD has a positive and a negative side. On one hand, the variation could make the process of uniting the education system and providing equal provision difficult to achieve. On the other hand, such dissimilarity,

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according to Meijer et al. (1994, p.119), produces a 'multi-track' educational system which has the flexibility to support children with SEN.

The significance of using the label of MLD in England was less than in Kuwait in terms of the effect of the label on the children, as the findings in England did not reveal any kind of bullying around the MLD labels or any stigmatized behaviour from non-SEN children towards the children with MLD. That was because the label of MLD was not used among teachers or school staff on a daily basis, as was the label of Slow Learning in Kuwait. The labels in the English system were used only among professionals and in the school registration system and not for calling the child by that label. Furthermore, in England the means of identification itself did not aim at finding a label for the child, rather it was more about finding the areas in which the child needed help, in order to provide suitable support and intervention, as the findings in this research have showed. Such a way of assessing children seems to reduce the effect of the label on the child and consequently allows the child to participate socially without stigma, as revealed in the current research following the child in his/her social life at school. By this I do not intend to judge one system of identification in one country over the other; as each system has its strengths and weaknesses. But what I mean is that the English way of assessing children with MLD seems to lead to less stigmatization by not using the labels on children, and that was reflected positively in the relationships between children identified as MLD and their peers in England, compared with those who had been called Slow Learners and their typically developing peers in Kuwait.

A final point is that, in England, giving the MLD label to a child does not lead to a change in the setting of the child or to separating the child from other children, as children identified as having MLD are placed in mainstream classes in England and share the same class activities as their non-SEN peers. Although there is some additional support for children designated as having MLD, such as one-to-one lessons, which could distinguish them, the additional support aims to help the learning of the children with MLD and not to create social boundaries between children with MLD and their non-SEN peers. So there is differentiation in learning between children with and without MLD but this does not discriminate between them, while in Kuwait it is different and the system seems to be to the advantage of those in special classes over those in the mainstream class. Therefore, I can say that the English system may

distinguish children but does not make distinctions among them, whereas the Kuwaiti system does distinguish and make distinctions among children.

5.7 Conclusion

- Summary

The current study focused on two main areas. The first area was the concept of MLD/Slow Learning and the different ways of assessing such categories in the two comparative countries. The second focus area was the social participation of children with SEN in general and, in particular, those identified as MLD/Slow Learning in England and Kuwait. A mixed methods approach was adopted to investigate the twofold aims, using an ethnographic approach, large scale, multiple case studies and longitudinal design. The study participants consisted of 193 children in England and 172 in Kuwait, including respectively, 22 identified as having MLD and 31 designated as having Slow Learning, drawn from two different schools in each country. Professionals involved in teaching and assessing children with MLD/Slow Learning also took part in this study, such as teachers, SENCOs, educational psychologists, technical supervisors for psychological services and SEN senior managers. The complex study design involved the use of mixed methods to collect the data from participants in both countries. The methods used consisted of sociometric methods (i.e. nomination methods and rating scales), questionnaires, structured observation, semi-structured interviews and semi-structured observation carried out for two months during which four case study children in each country were followed in their daily life at school.

The results of this study showed clear differences in the way in which the Kuwaiti education system identifies children with Slow Learning and in the way in which the English system identifies children with MLD. In Kuwait, the main critical point is that the educational system uses an IQ test to identify children with Slow Learning. Although the IQ tests used in Kuwait are standardized for a Kuwaiti population, which increases the validity of the tests, their use, as the sole method to identify children's abilities and needs, does not seem to be sufficient to determine a personal programme for a child or a placement of the child in an educational setting. Rather, the IQ tests may provide information about additional attention or provision than a child needs rather than to determine the educational programme planning, as it is

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currently used in the Kuwaiti system. Nonetheless, the Kuwaiti system shows some advantages, namely it provides a clear, measurable, testable, and objective procedures to identify children with Slow Learning. Disregarding the validity of such procedures, the idea that professionals have a clear definition of Slow Learning, which contains a procedurally objective criterion to assess children will lead to standardizing the result and will limit the confusion among those who are responsible for assessing children with Slow Learning.

On the other hand, the English system of identifying MLD has clear advantages. Specifically, by not relying on one operating method, the English system attempts to triangulate the assessment methods, taking into account different aspects, such as environmental factors, biological factors, cognitive abilities, and the opinions of teachers, parents, and other professionals. This is not to say that the English system does not use standardized methods of identification or that the standardized methods of identification are not indicative of the need of additional provision for a child, but to say that the English system do not use the standardized methods as a single way of identification. Rather, a range of methods are used from different resources to provide the best possible intervention rather than to determine the programme planning for the child's educational needs based only on an IQ score.

The identification system in England also does not base the placement of the child based on the assigned label, such as in the Kuwaiti system; rather, the English system attempts to meet children's needs within the mainstream school even if they have the MLD label. The English system also does not use the MLD label on a daily basis in schools, as the MLD label is used only among professionals, and it is not used to nominate children in daily school life. This is contrary to the situation in Kuwait, where there were clear distinctions between those in special classes and those in mainstream classes in daily life. It does not mean that the labels, such as MLD or SEN, are barely used in the UK but that teachers and professionals are not using these terms to label children in their daily life at schools.

From the comparison between the English and the Kuwaiti system of identification, the English system showed more advantages over the Kuwaiti system; however, this does not mean that the English system of identification is favourable. Although the English system is more flexible by using range of methods and more inter-subjective procedures of identification, using so much variation in identifying MLD has some disadvantages. The present study showed that the participants in England were confused about assessing MLD,

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as there is no clear operational definition of MLD. The concept of MLD has no clear definition and such ambiguity in the term leads different professionals to reach different results.

In summary, the Kuwaiti system of identification appears to have a systematic approach to assessing children with Slow Learning; however, it relies only on one single assessment method (i.e. IQ test), and the result of such test will determine the child placement, curriculum, and the intervention program. In contrast, the English system has various methods to assess children with MLD; however, the English system is not systematic and the MLD label does not help professionals understand the children's needs.

Regarding the social participation of children, the quantitative result in England showed a significant difference between children with MLD and their typically developing peers regarding their peer acceptance and social self-concept. Furthermore, no quantitative difference was found in the dimensions of friendship and social interaction between MLD and other SEN categories on any of the four dimensions. The interesting point regarding the English findings showed that children with MLD showed a positive extent of social participation although there were some significant differences in the two dimensions of social participation. In Kuwait, the quantitative results showed a significant difference among children identified as having Slow Learning in special classes and their typically achieving peers in mainstream class on the dimensions of peer acceptance and social self-concept but not friendship. The overall results also revealed no significant difference between the results for all groups in both countries over one school term (i.e. over a period of six months and a half in England and three months and a half in Kuwait). Nonetheless, the distribution of the data showed that some children had changes in their social participation over time. There were also strong to medium correlations between the results for friendship and peer acceptance in term one with the results for friendship and peer acceptance in term two; and also a strong to medium correlation between the results for social self-concept in each term. There were weak correlations between the results for friendship and peer acceptance in both terms with the result for social self-concept in both terms. The qualitative investigation showed that each of the children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning had a different quality of social participation and that they were not a homogeneous group in terms of their social engagement. The Kuwaiti children showed some common indications in their social

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participation as none of them interacted with their typically developing peers and they limited their interaction to children within special classes. The case children in England showed varied patterns of social participation; some of them were engaging socially with peers in positive ways, despite the existence of some social difficulties, while others showed poor social participation, such as the case of Sara. The following section will explain the implications of the results, followed by the limitations of the study.

- *Contribution to knowledge*

In this section, I will explain the areas in which the current study contributes to the existing knowledge. This study contributes different methodological and theoretical areas regarding the social participation of children identified as having MLD\Slow Learning and to the different ways of understanding such categories in Kuwait and England. This study contributed to different areas, as outlined below.

The literature review in this study identified the gaps in the field of MLD and in the field of social participation of children with SEN. The current research helps address seven main gaps in the existing literature as following:

- There is a lack of research on the understanding of the concept of MLD; the concept remains ambiguous, with different criteria and labels used in different countries. The present study showed how different participants in England understand the concept of MLD and assessed the usefulness of using such term in relation to clarify children's needs.
- There is a lack of research on the understanding of the concept of social participation and the interrelation among the four dimensions of social participation. The present study examined the interrelations among the dimensions of social participation to find out the extent to which they are compatible.
- Much research considers children with SEN as a homogenous group when investigating their social participation. However, there is a need to investigate the social participation of each SEN category separately. Therefore, the present study investigated the social participation of specific SEN category (i.e., MLD\Slow Learning)

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- Much research into the social participation of children with MLD has used quantitative methods, but very little qualitative research has been carried out. Thus, the present study investigated the social participation of children using mix method approach, specifically qualitative and quantitative methods, to investigate the quality of social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning.
- Much research has focused on the social participation of children with SEN at one point in time but not many studies have looked into the stability of their social participation over time. The present study investigated the social participation of children across different schools terms to find out the stability of their social participation.
- Much research has investigated the social participation of primary school-aged children with SEN while little research has investigated social participation of secondary school-aged children. Although the present study did not investigate the social participation of secondary school-aged children, it showed range of literatures to point out this gap as a suggestion area to scholars for further research.
- Not much is known about the social participation of children with SEN in different educational settings (e.g., mainstream school, special classes in mainstream schools, and special schools). The present study compared children identified as having Slow Learning in special classes in mainstream schools in Kuwait with children identified as having MLD in mainstream classes in England. The comparison identified some effects of the educational setting on children social participation.
- Not much cross-cultural research has been carried out on social participation of children with SEN; hence, the main gap that needs to be investigated concerns the cultural differences among different nations and cultures. Thus, the present study investigated the social participation of children and the different ways of understanding MLD\Slow Learning concepts in two different countries. The cross-cultural comparison increases our understanding of the social participation of children and highlights the strength and the weaknesses of the identification systems in both countries. This may assist the practitioners in developing a better identification system to assess MLD/Slow Learning.

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In addition to cover some of the gaps, this study has contributed to knowledge through its design and methods; it has assessed different approaches to investigation of social participation through applying them in practice. The study has showed the usefulness of adopting a longitudinal design to investigate the social participation of children with SEN. The investigation of social participation as an instantaneous phenomenon, at one point in time, does not offer a fuller image of children's social participation, while investigating it as a continuous process through time has provided a better understanding. The study has also shown that using a mixed methods approach, where qualitative and quantitative investigations are used together, is useful, as at various places in the study the qualitative approaches were able to address the limitations of the quantitative approaches, and vice versa. Research into social participation has often been based on large scale studies with the use of sociometric methods; such methods are useful to show the extent of a child's social participation but they have limitations in understanding the quality of such participation. The ethnographic approach, on the other hand, has proved to be effective in investigating the quality of children's social participation, though this also has its limitations for investigating the social participation of a large number of children. Therefore this study suggests a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches in investigations in this field.

The results of this study have contributed to knowledge in other ways as well. First, the results showed that the general definition of social participation provided by Koster, Nakken, Pijl, and Houten (2009), which has been used in much research, has been shown to be of limited usefulness and that social participation is better understood in terms of the separate elements, i.e., social self-concept and peer acceptance and friendship, making up the overall dimension. The divergence between the social self-concept on the one hand and the other dimensions on the other hand could be due to the different measurements used in the existing studies, particularly the Social Discretion Questionnaire, which is self-report method to assess the social self-concept, and the sociometric scales based on peers' opinion to assess friendship and acceptance. This is a very important finding, as investigating any field first requires a clear understanding of its concepts. This facilitates understanding in the field, enables the drawing of clear conclusions, helps to avoid misleading results and provides a clear guide to aspects of social participation so that future researchers can use them when investigating the social participation of children.

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The results also demonstrated that the special class setting influences the social participation of children, as those who were in special classes in Kuwait had the stigma of ‘special classes’ which created a social boundary between themselves and their peers in mainstream classes (i.e., a barrier from the side of the mainstream class children). This indicates that the special class setting itself has an impact on its pupils’ social participation.

Besides the stigma which came from the special setting, the results also showed that labelling children with their area of SEN in daily school life has an impact on their social participation, as the children without SEN in Kuwait used the ‘Slow Learning’ label in a negative way against their peers in the special classes. This contrasted with the situation in England where the non-SEN children did not use the ‘MLD’ label against their peers with SEN. This could have been due to the limited professional use of the ‘MLD’ label in England where it was not used to label the children directly. This is an important finding in the field of social participation, as understanding what influences social participation is vital for developing intervention programmes to facilitate social participation among children with and without SEN.

One main lesson to be learned from this study is that children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning are a heterogenous group in terms of their social participation. The results found that different children had different types and levels of social participation: some children had lots of friends while others had few; some were very social while others were quiet and less sociable; some had good social awareness while others were unaware. This means that the labels ‘MLD’ and ‘Slow Learning’ do not tell us much about the social participation of such children, as there is diversity within the groups. This should be taken into account in the field of social participation, especially for those researchers who are concerned with the social participation of children having MLD.

Exploring the concepts of MLD/Slow Learning and the different ways of understanding them revealed that the concept of MLD is ambiguous and not very useful for practitioners, as some of the professionals used it only for the cases that did not fit any other category, while the concept of Slow Learning was shown to be over-simplified and of questionable validity as it was based solely on IQ score. This finding is important in the field of MLD/Slow Learning as it raises questions about the validity of using such labels for children, especially from a practical point of view, as those labels were shown have limited usefulness in this research.

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It is also worth clarifying the extent to which the results of this study can be generalised. This study did not aim for generalisation due to the fact that pragmatic research focuses on what works in practice and this is often changeable through time. Nonetheless, it is possible that the results could be generalised to some extent in Kuwait as the study highlighted some significant challenges to the assessment system followed by all government schools in Kuwait. Similarly, in England, the results may be generalisable to some extent in relation to the limitations of the official DfES concept of MLD. The results drawn from Kuwait could also be used in England as a lesson to be learned (i.e., having a clear systematic way of assessing children may lead to less confusion for practitioners). And vice versa, the results drawn from England could be used as a lesson in Kuwait (i.e. assessing children from different aspects and not only in one single way may lead to more valid assessment. Furthermore, having labels for professional use only may reduce negative interaction among children).

- Implications of the results

In this section I will show the implications of the findings in regard to the two areas of focus in this research, discussing how these findings could influence practice. It is also important to clarify that the implications of this research tend to be more about understanding and recognizing ideas than to providing objective practical implications in the two areas of focus. I will start by using the stakeholder maps to explain the stakeholders for whom the findings are relevant. Then I will explain the sense in which this study could affect each of those concerned.

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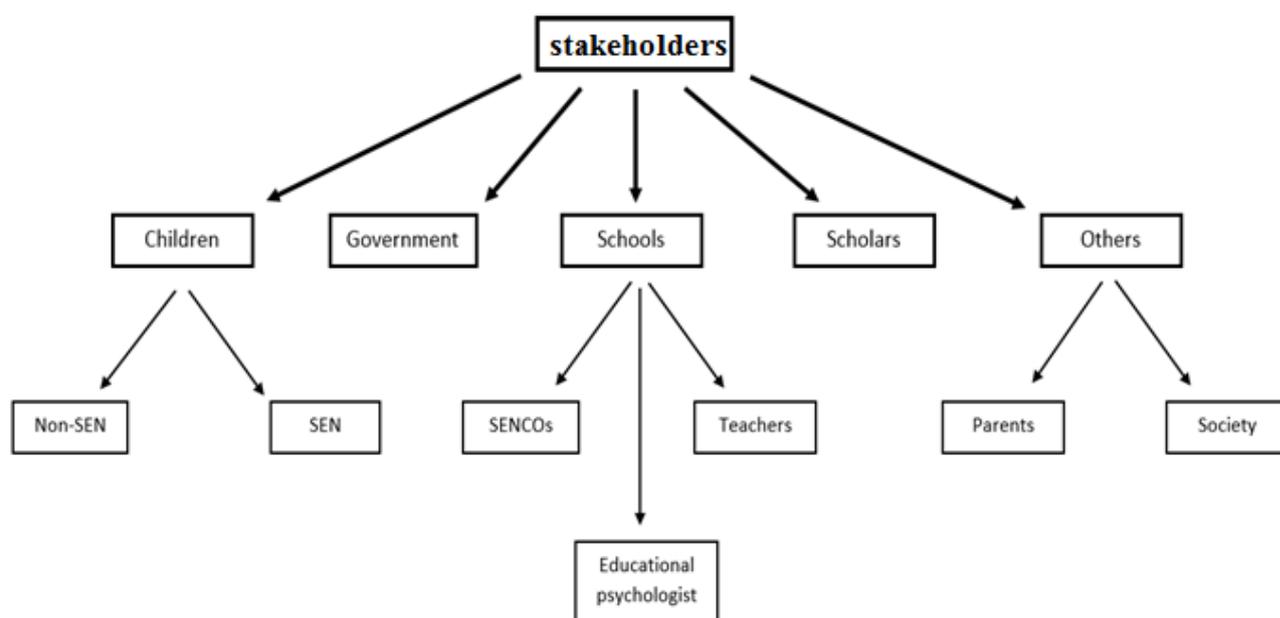


Figure 43: Stakeholders who could benefit from this research

As the above figure shows, there are a number of stakeholders who could benefit from this research, including children, professionals, policy makers, scholars and others such as parents and the wider society.

Regarding the implications of this research for governments, this research sheds light on the strengths and the weaknesses of the identification systems of children with MLD/Slow Learning in Kuwait and England. It is important for the governments and those in charge of the educational systems in both countries to know the strengths and limitations of their identification systems, as the first step in improving a system is to understand its limitations, in order to address them, and its strengths, in order to build on them. The benefits of the English system in regard to the MLD identification seemed to outweigh the Kuwaiti way of identifying children with Slow Learning, despite the English system's ambiguity. Those in charge in the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education might therefore take into account the negative impact of using the IQ test as the main method to assess children and try to develop a more flexible system to involve different assessment methods which take into account environmental aspects. As some teachers in this research recognized, environmental factors could lead to general learning difficulties. This was confirmed by an Ofsted review (2010), which showed that half of schools studied gave labels of 'low attainment' to children, when actually those children had low attainment because of environmental factors such as poor

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teaching. The American system, which seems to be adopted by the Kuwaiti system, does not use the IQ tests as a single method to identify ‘mental retardation,’ now labeled as ‘mild intellectual difficulties’. Instead, it also investigates the adoptive functioning outside the school (i.e., areas related to personality and social functioning in different contexts such as home, neighbors, and society) (Norwich, Ylonen, & Gwernan-Jones, 2014). Therefore, the assessment should not be based on medical reasons alone; instead, it should consider environmental factors. The governments in Kuwait should understand that giving a negative label, such as a ‘slow learner’, has negative effects. This was indicated by Warnock (1978) who emphasized the negative effects of stigmas that may result from using certain terminology and highlighted the importance of focusing on children’s learning needs rather than medical classification. The Kuwaiti system should consider the consequences of identifying children through negative labeling to provide a better educational environment with less stigmatization and better social engagement within mainstream schools. In general, giving an assessment label to a child will affect the rest of her/his life (Sack-Min, 2007). This may raise the question of the purpose of assigning MLD\Slow Learning labels to children. The result of the present study showed that using MLD label in England and Slow Learning in Kuwait did not help professionals recognize the personal educational needs of children or distinguish MLD from other groups. Therefore, the governments in Kuwait and England need to consider the usefulness of giving a label to a child, the purpose of the identification, and the kind of identification the government may need. Those recommendations are consistent with the recommendation of Norwich, Ylonen, and Gwernan-Jones (2014) who stated,

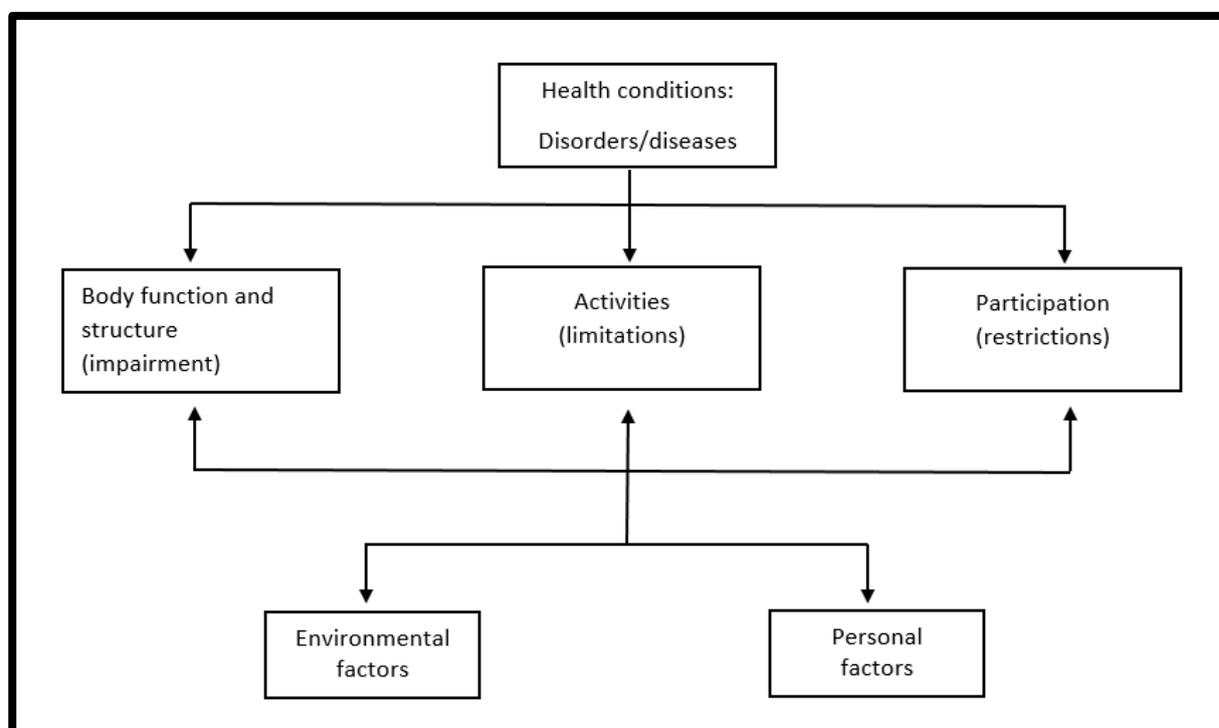
‘The rationale for using a learner category, like MLD, is usually justified in terms of whether the categories:

- (i) are reliable and valid in terms of distinguishing the group from other groups,*
- (ii) are informative in understanding those identified and*
- (iii) have positive consequences in terms of:*
 - (a) resources allocation*
 - (b) specific teaching approaches’ (p. 17).*

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This research also provides the government in England some indications of the limited usefulness of using the MLD label. The government should consider the ways in which this concept is used in practice. Yet the evidence shows that the concept of MLD has no clear meaning and does not seem to be useful in terms of assessing children. This is a big issue, as it may imply changing the use of the term MLD in the state education system. The current research has shown how different professionals understand and explain the concept of MLD. This finding also calls for major research and practical review of the current MLD category system and application of the concept/term. This is also a call for looking into an alternative way of classification of MLD through the development of multi-dimensional category system using the International Classification of Functioning (i.e., ICF: WHO, 2002), as suggested by Norwich (2007). The ICF combines the medical and the social model and takes into account the body characteristics, the personal activities, and the environmental factors of an individual to understand the individual needs (Norwich, 2013).

Figure 44: ICF model



The ICF model sees disability as interaction among three main elements. First element involves the Body Function and the health conditions of the child. The second element concerns the Activities, which are the tasks and activities that can be achieved. The activities

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could be at home, school and neighborhood for example, or it could be personal such as self-care activities (See Figure 46). The third element is the participation, which is what the child can do in certain environments. The ICF model considers problem solving, it covers daily life activities, and participation across a range of life contexts and not just looking into the health condition. This will help determine the individual needs of the child in certain areas and provide suggestions regarding the areas of difficulties. Another advantage of the ICF model is that it could be accommodated to the educational and learning contexts rather than some different life contexts that are unrelated to learning. The following Figure shows the ICF model expanded for educational use.

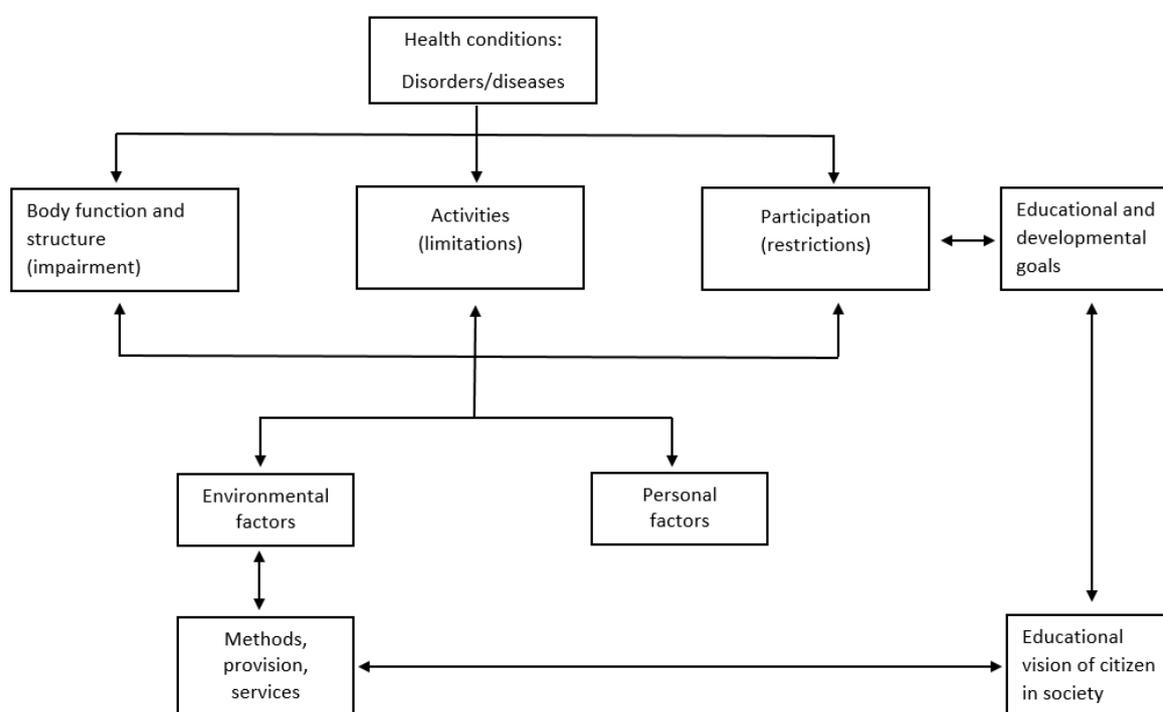


Figure 45: ICF expanded for educational use (Hollenweger, 2013)

According to Figure 45, one extra dimension, specifically educational goals, interacts with the three ICF elements. This element could be applied to different countries, as different countries could have different educational goals. Different educational goals may require different activities and participation. Therefore, each country could focus on activities related to its educational goals when following the ICF model. The ICF model could also involve different participants involved in child learning, for example, teachers, specialist, parents, and other individuals who play an important role in clarifying some areas of the child's learning.

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Some schools in Switzerland apply the ICF to assess children's needs (see Hollenweger, 2013) by asking all individuals who are concerned with child's learning to complete a form based on the ICF model. The questions on the form are measured on a rating scale with the option to provide comments or ask for clarification of the main items. Some items in the form inquire about general learning abilities, such as hearing, listening, watching, focus attention, and others. Some other items inquire about some academic skills, ability to understand and handle tasks, ability to communicate with other people, body movement and mobility, self-care, handling relationships and engaging with social life at school, home and neighbour (see Hollenweger, 2013). This will be followed by arranging meeting at school to discuss the participants' observations and possible intervention to improve the areas of difficulties. The ICF model may also involve some standardised methods following the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10), which is a clinical classification of difficulties related to body functions. In this way, the child will be assessed systematically in different context and using different methods and different resources. Therefore, the ICF model could be a good suggestion for both present Kuwaiti system, which is based on single method of assessing, and the English system, which has very loose and unsystematic criteria of identification.

Regarding the implications of this study for teachers, it provides evidence for teachers in mainstream schools in both countries about the quality of social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning. It is important for teachers to take into account that the quality of social participation could differ among different children; simple generalisations about social participation cannot be made in terms of general category labels such as MLD. This was demonstrated in the current study, in which each child showed a different level of social participation, from low to high participation. It is also important for the teachers in Kuwait to appreciate that the separation of children identified as having Slow Learning into special classes could lead to social isolation from their typically developing peers and that giving the label of 'slow learner' to a child could draw a boundary between that child and his/her peers in mainstream classes. Understanding children's social participation may help teachers to improve the social life of their pupils.

This study also has implications for the parents of children with and without MLD/Slow Learning. It is important for parents of children with MLD/Slow Learning to recognise some of the social difficulties that their children may face at school. In Kuwait, for example, it is

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important for parents to take into account that when their child joins a special class, this may create social difficulties between the child and his peers in mainstream classes. Understanding the social participation of children in special classes may help the parents to take a more informed decision about the educational setting of their child, especially when Kuwaiti law allows parents to reject the idea of special classes and to keep their child in mainstream classes if they believe that this would be better for them. In terms of the parents of typically developing children, it is also useful to recognise the possible difficulties that children with MLD/Slow Learning may have at school, as such awareness could help them to educate their children to respect children with SEN. This is especially pertinent in Kuwait where the findings of this study show that the non-SEN children used negative terms for calling children identified as having Slow Learning. This may eventually help to reduce the negative views in society and promote a more positive empathy towards those identified as slow in learning. Therefore this consider as a social awareness to recognise the possible social difficulties around giving labels such as the label of Slow Learning. This is an implication of this study for society as a whole.

Regarding the implications of this study for children, it may help children with Slow Learning in Kuwait to be aware of the nature of social participation in their setting and may help them to choose, with the agreement of their parents, whether to join a special class or a mainstream class. It would be useful for the child to understand the social difficulties that may arise from joining the special class setting. It is also important for the non-SEN children to be aware of the social participation of their peers with SEN. Providing knowledge about the social difficulties of children with SEN may help non-SEN children to accept their peers with SEN. There are some evidence suggests that providing some information and training to non-SEN children and their parents about some needs of children with SEN may help promote positive social participation of children with SEN at schools (Soresi, Nota, & Wehmeyer, 2011). Therefore, the results of the present study could help to raise the typically developing children's awareness in relation to understand the needs of their peers with SEN.

The following table summarizes all the main ideas in the present study as well as the main suggestions.

Discussion and Conclusion

Table: Summary of the main ideas of the research

Theme	Main point		Discussion	Suggestions
	<i>England</i>	<i>Kuwait</i>		
Social participation concept	Peer nominations were not inter-related to social self-concept	Peer nominations were not inter-related to social self-concept	General definition of social participation does not seem to be useful	Social participation is better understood in terms of the separate elements
Difference in social participation (SP) among different groups	Children with MLD showed a positive extent of social participation with their typically developing peers in mainstream class	Children with slow learning showed a negative extent of social participation with their non-SEN peers	- The different educational settings between children in the two countries seem to have some influences on the SP of children	Government in Kuwait should take into account that placing children in special classes may limit their SP with their peers
Stability of social participation	There were some changes in the SP of children with MLD although there was no statistical difference in their SP between term 1 and 2 over a period of six months	There were some changes in the SP of children with Slow learning, although there was no statistical difference between term 1 and 2 over a period of three months	- standardised method was not helpful to investigate stability of social participation as much as the qualitative methods - studying SP as a continuous phenomenon gives better image of children's SP	
Quality of social participation	Varies among different children with MLD	Varies among different children with Slow learning	No general description of social participation of categories, such as MLD and Slow learning, exists.	
The different ways of understanding and assessing the concepts of MLD\Slow learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loose criteria - inter-subjective assessment - no clear understanding - no clear operating methods - no clear distinguish among different categories - not useful label to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single method of assessing - over simplified definition - fixed objective procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In England: Using loose criteria may lead to confusion in assessing and giving a label of MLD to a child; thus, it does not help professionals meet the child's needs. - In Kuwait: Using single standardized method of assessing may not be enough to determine child's needs, and giving slow learning label may have negative effect on children SP - Summary: the English system showed more advantages in its flexibility and in the way of using MLD label, but more research is needed to find an alternative way of assessing 	One alternative way could be the International Classification of Functioning (i.e. ICF: WHO, 2002)

Discussion and Conclusion

- *Strengths and limitations of the study and suggestions for further research*

- *Strengths*

The strengths of the present study involve two main points. The first point is that this study has met, to some extent, the previously mentioned gaps in research knowledge of social participation, namely in investigating the quality of social participation, investigating the social participation of children in different educational settings and between two different countries, investigating the social participation of a certain type of child with SEN and not treating them as a homogeneous group and, finally, investigating the stability of social participation. Covering such a range of the gaps in one single study is a strong point in its contribution to knowledge in the field of social participation.

The second strong point is its research design. The design of this research used mixed methodological approaches; it utilised quantitative investigation in the large scale longitudinal study, and qualitative investigation with the ethnographic approach and the multiple case study approach. This range of methodological approaches led to the use of different research methods which helped to investigate the social participation of children in different ways. This is important as each method covered the limitations of the others and thereby improved the validity of the study.

- *Limitations and suggestions*

In this section, I discuss the limitations of the study. The discussion will not focus on the study's methodological limitations, as the methodological limitations were already explained in the methodology chapter. Rather, this section will focus on the limitations of the results, on the identification of areas that the present study could not investigate, and on providing suggestions for further research.

One main limitation in the area of social participation of children identified as having SEN concerns the lack of research carried out at the secondary school level. The majority of the studies on the social participation of children designated as having SEN (including my study) have been conducted in elementary schools with primary age children, and few studies have been conducted in secondary schools (e.g., Carter et al., 2008; Kalymon et al., 2010). Such

Discussion and Conclusion

limited investigation in secondary schools seems to stem from the problems of relying on sociometric methods (Mayeux & Marion, 2007). These methods have been applied in elementary schools because elementary school children are generally contained in one classroom, whereas children in secondary school are generally no longer in self-contained classrooms, thus sociometric techniques can no longer be applied. The problem of changing classes in secondary schools seems to limit the use of existing quantitative methods to investigate the social participation between children designated as having SEN and their peers; alternatively, a qualitative approach could be applied.

A further limitation of the current study is that the study focused on children identified as having MLD and Slow Learning only. Although different categories of SEN had been involved in the quantitative investigation in this research, the focus in the case studies was on children identified as having MLD and Slow Learning only. It would be interesting to find out more about the quality of social participation regarding different categories of SEN individually because each SEN category contains a very heterogeneous group of children (Vangoidsenhoven et al., 2001) and research has shown that there are differences of social participation among different categories of SEN (see Pijl et al., 2008; Chamberlain, Kasari, & Rotheram, 2007).

Although the present study involved the voice of children in terms of investigating peer acceptance, for example, it did not interview children in relation to the four dimensions of their social participation. There is some evidence in the study that some children identified as having MLD (e.g., Sara) seemed not to be aware of the meaning of friendship. It would be interesting to understand how children identified as having MLD may understand friendship. This could be one more subject for further research.

Finally, this study investigated the social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow Learning within their classes only and not in the whole school. It is possible that children have friends from outside their classes, as was shown with the case study of Sara who was found to communicate more with children outside her class. The fact that this study investigated the social participation of children within their classes is due to it being based on a sociometric approach that uses a nomination method. In such methods it is not possible to involve all children in the school as it would be hard to analyse the data as well as to administer the questionnaire to all children. A further limitation of the nomination method is

Discussion and Conclusion

that it does not explain the strength or the quality of friendships (Avramidis, 2010). Therefore, for future research, I suggest the use of the social cognitive mapping (SCM) approach developed by Cairns et al. (1997) where each child is asked whether he/she knows any children who hang around together a lot in his/her class. Although this approach is limited to children in class, it shows the social clusters in detail which reflects the quality of friendship (Avramidis, 2010). Therefore there is a methodological need in the area of social participation to develop a practical method which allows the investigation of the social participation of children in the wider school and not just in their own classes.

- *Final thoughts*

This research has focussed on a small part of the social participation of children identified with MLD/Slow Learning which I hope will inform improvements in the educational systems in Kuwait and England. I hope that, through this research, I have covered some gaps in the area of knowledge about social participation and showed other gaps which need to be covered in further research. It is also important not to see this study as discouraging the inclusion of children with MLD/Slow Learning in mainstream schools; rather this study has highlighted some negative and positive aspects of such children in mainstream schools and should act as a pointer towards further investigations.

The cross-cultural comparisons in this study helped me to understand the social participation of children in a cultural context; the fact that I carried out part of this research in England helped me to see a different, foreign system which I could compare to the Kuwaiti system regarding the social participation of children and the different ways of understanding the concept of Slow Learning. In addition to this I have lived in England for almost seven years and attained my master's degrees in England, gaining experience and knowledge which I hope I will be able to use to develop the educational system in Kuwait. Studying in England has helped me to develop my research skills and has opened the door for me to explore different philosophical assumptions, which was a big challenge for me, not only in my academic career but also in terms of my daily life. I hope that I have succeeded in showing some of my learning in England in this study and that this study will be my starting point for carrying out further research in the field of the social participation of children with special educational needs in the near future.

Appendix 1

(Positivist philosophical assumption)

- a) There is a world which exists independently of me which is made up of 'objects' interacting causally with each other.
- b) There are different sciences' of that world, partly depending on what is to count as an object (a 'behavior', a 'physical object', even a 'social event').
- c) Once, however, there is an agreement on what is to count as an 'object' (e.g. behavior), such objects can be studied, their interrelations noted, regularities discovered, causal explanations given and tested, results quantified.
- d) Other observers can check the conclusions through repeated experiments under similar conditions.
- e) Thus, from many carefully conducted observations and experiments, following critical checking from others, a scientifically based body of knowledge can be built up.
- f) That body of knowledge reflects the world as it is; the statements within it are true or false depending on their correspondence to the world as it is.

(Quoted from Pring, 2000, p:49)

Appendix 2

(Summary of the interpretive research principles)

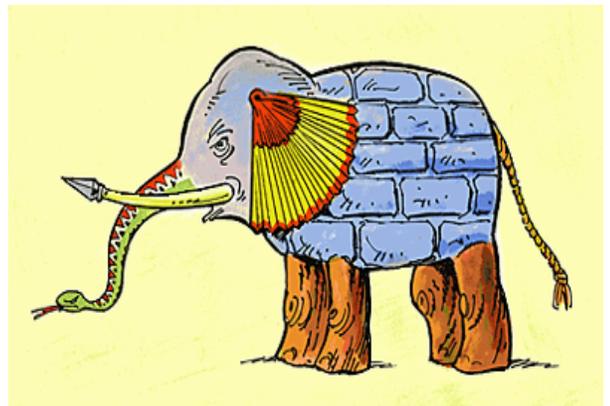
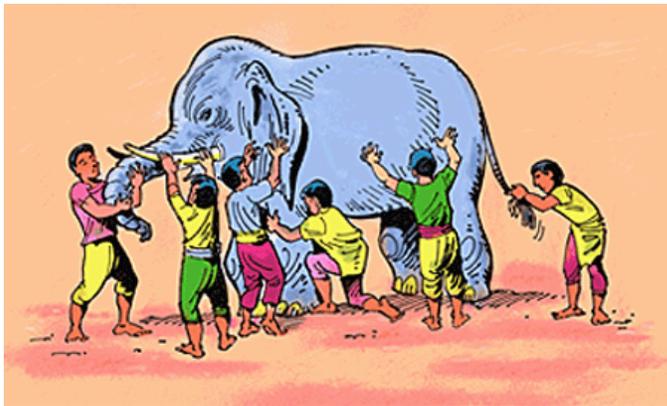
- a) Each person lives in a 'world of ideas', and it is through those ideas that the world (physical and social) is constructed. There is no way that one could step outside this world of ideas to check whether or not they accurately represent a world existing independently of the ideas themselves.
- b) Communication with other people, therefore, lies in a 'negotiation' of their respective worlds of ideas whereby, often for practical reasons (they need to live and work together), they come to share the same ideas. A consensus is reached.
- c) New situations arise and new people have to be accommodated with different ideas, so that negotiation within 'a marketplace of ideas' never ceases and new consensus have constantly to be reached.
- d) Such notions as 'truth', therefore, need to be eliminated, or redefined in terms of 'consensus', because, given (a) above, there can be no correspondence between our conceptions of reality and that reality itself.
- e) Furthermore, the distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' needs to be redefined since there can be nothing 'objective' in the sense of that which exists independently of the world of ideas which either privately or in consensus with others has been constructed.
- f) Development of our thinking (e.g. about educational problems and their solutions) lies in the constant negotiation of meanings between people who only partly share each other's ideas but who, either in order to get on practically or in order to accommodate new ideas, create new agreements- new ways of conceiving reality. Since there is no sense in talking of reality independently of our conceiving it, therefore there are as many realities as there are conceptions of it- multiple realities.

(Quoted from Pring, 2000, p:49)

Appendix 3

(Summary of the elephant story)

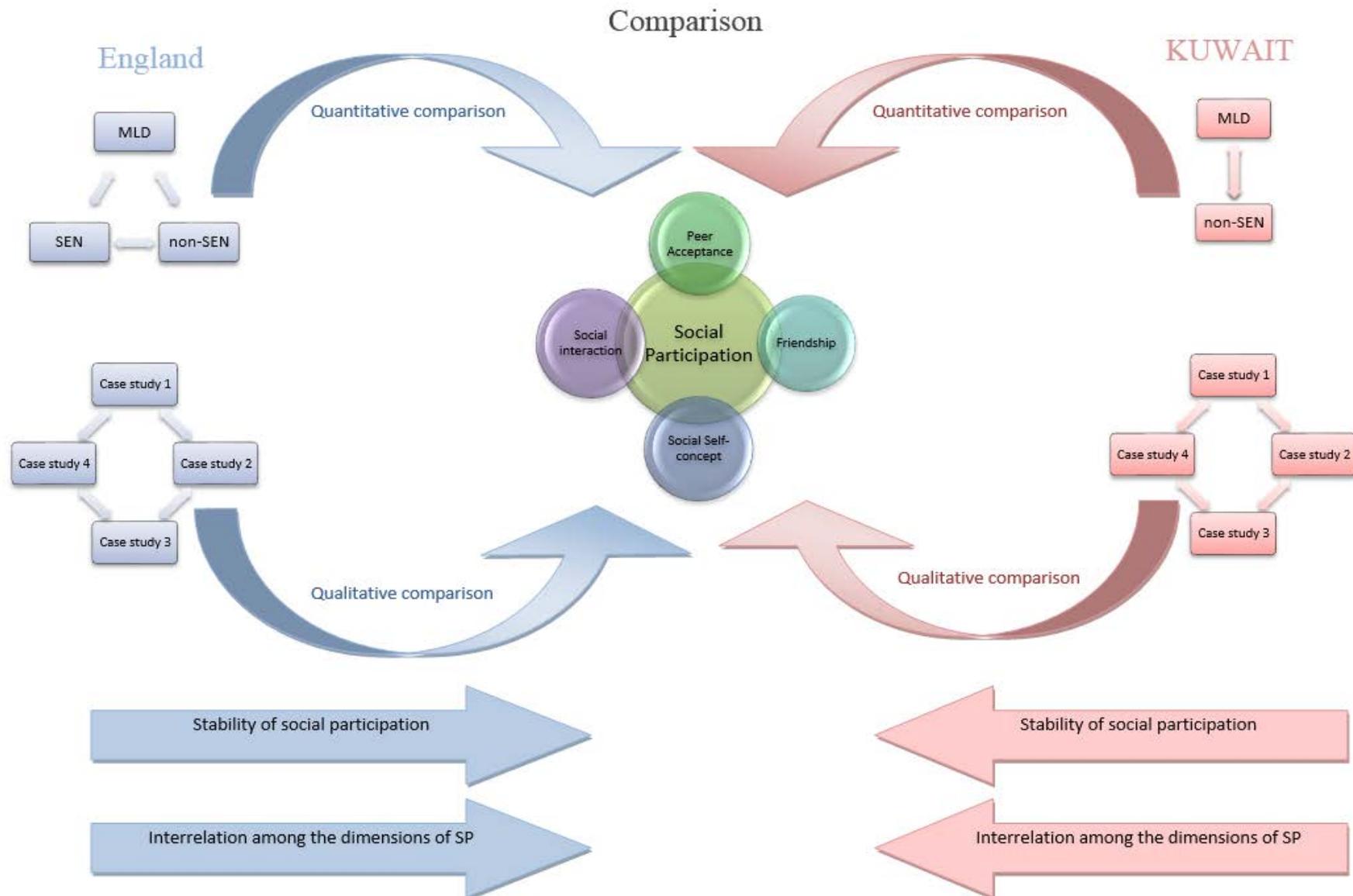
There is an Indian legend which says that six blind people were asked to describe an elephant. The first blind person touches the elephant's side and he interprets the elephant as a big wall. The second person comes across the elephant's tusk, so his description was that the elephant is like a spear that fighter can use to fight. The third person touches the elephant's trunk, so he thought that the elephant is like snake which you should not trust. The fourth person start to feel the elephant's leg, so he say that elephant is just like tree trunk which can helps everyone. The fifth blind man starts to feel the elephant's ear, he said; elephant is like a fan that helps to flame ember. The last person grabs the elephant's tail, so he thought that elephant is just like a rope that can be used to tie things. At the end, the six blind people were arguing with each other, as each was supporting his point of view according to his experiences and what he touched in the elephant.



- Adopted from Saxe, J. G. (1963). *The blind men and the elephant: John Godfrey Saxe's version of the famous Indian legend.* Pictures by Paul Galdone. New York: Whittlesey House

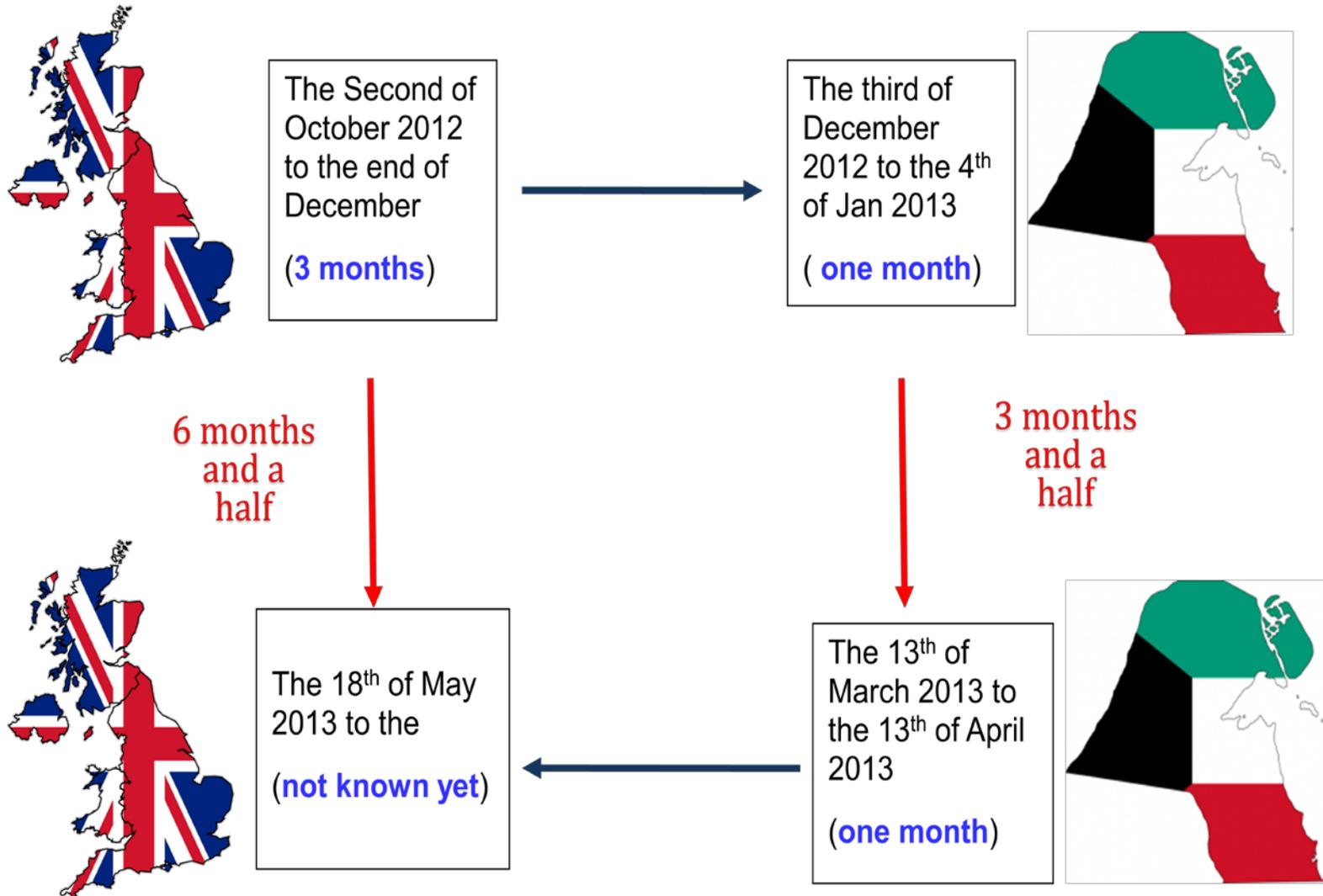
Appendix 4

Phase 2



Appendix 5

(Data collection arrangement)



Appendix 6

SDQ1

All information supplied will be kept strictly confidential

NAME:

Age:

Grade:

sex: male – female (circle one)

Please read these instructions first

This is a chance for you to look at how you think and feel about yourself. **It is no at a test.** There are no right answers and everyone will have different answers. Be sure that your answers show how you feel about yourself. **PLEASE DO NOT TALK ABOUT YOUR ANNSWERS WITH ANYONE ELSE.** We will keep your answers private and not show them to anyone.

When you are ready to begin, please read each sentence and decide your answer. (you may read quietly to yourself as I read aloud). There are five possible answers for each question—“True”, “False”, and three answers in between. There are five boxes next to each sentence, one for each of the answers. The answers are written at the top of the boxes. Choose your to each sentence and put a tick (✓) in the box under the answer you choose. **DO NOT** say your answer out loud or talk about it with anyone else.

Before you start there are three examples below. Somebody named Bob has already answered two of these sentences to show you how to do it. In the third one you must choose your own answer and put in your own tick (✓).

EXAMPLES

FALSE **MOSTLY**
FALSE **SOME**
SOME **MOSTLY**
TIMES **TRUE**
FALSE,
SOME
TIMES
TRUE

1. I like to read comic books.....

(Bob put a tick in the box under the answer “TRUE”. This means that he really likes to read comic books. If Bob did not like to read comic books very much, he would have answered “FALSE” or “MOSTLY FALSE”.)

2. In general, I am neat and tidy.....

(Bob answered “SOME TIMES FALSE, SOME TIMES TRUE” because he is not very neat, but he is not very messy either.)

3. I like to watch T.V.....

(For this sentence you have to choose the answer that is best for you. First you must decided if the sentence is “TRUE” or “FALSE” or somewhere in between. If you really like to watch T.V a lot you would answer “TRUE” by putting a tick in the last box. If you hate watching T.V you would answer “FALSE” by putting tick in the first box. If your answer is somewhere in between then you would choose one of the other three boxes.)

If you want to change an answer you have marked you should cross out the tick and put a new tick in another box on the same line. For all the sentences be sure that your tick is on the same line as the sentence you are answering. You should have one answer and only one answer for each sentence, Do not leave out any of the sentences.

If you have any questions put up your hand. Turn over the page and begin. Once you have started, PLEASE DO NOT TALK.

FALSE

**MOSTLY
FALSE**

**SOME
TIMES
FALSE,
SOME
TIMES
TRUE**

**MOSTLY
TRUE**

TRUE

1. I have lots of friends.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. I make friends easily.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. Most kids have more friends than I do.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. I get along with kids easily.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. I am easy to like.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. Other kids want me to be their friend.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7. I have more friends than most other kids	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. I am popular with kids of my own age.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9. Most other kids like me.....	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Many thanks

Appendix 7

(Rating scale)

What is your name?

Are you a boy or a girl? Boy / Girl (circle what you are)

How old are you? Years old

In which Grade are you? Grade

Use the mark (√) to answer for every classmate the following question:

Would you like to play with.....?

Name classmate	Yes, I would very much like to 	Yes, I would like to 	I do not mind 
Sara			
Lauren			
George			
Maisie			
Lydia			
Leon			
Adam			
Kayla			
Jacob			
Harvey			
Abigail			

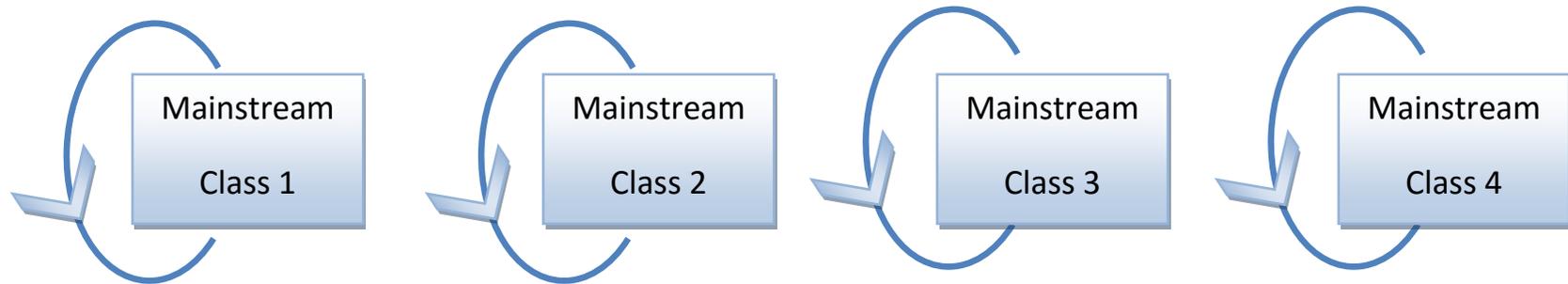
Thank you

Appendix 8

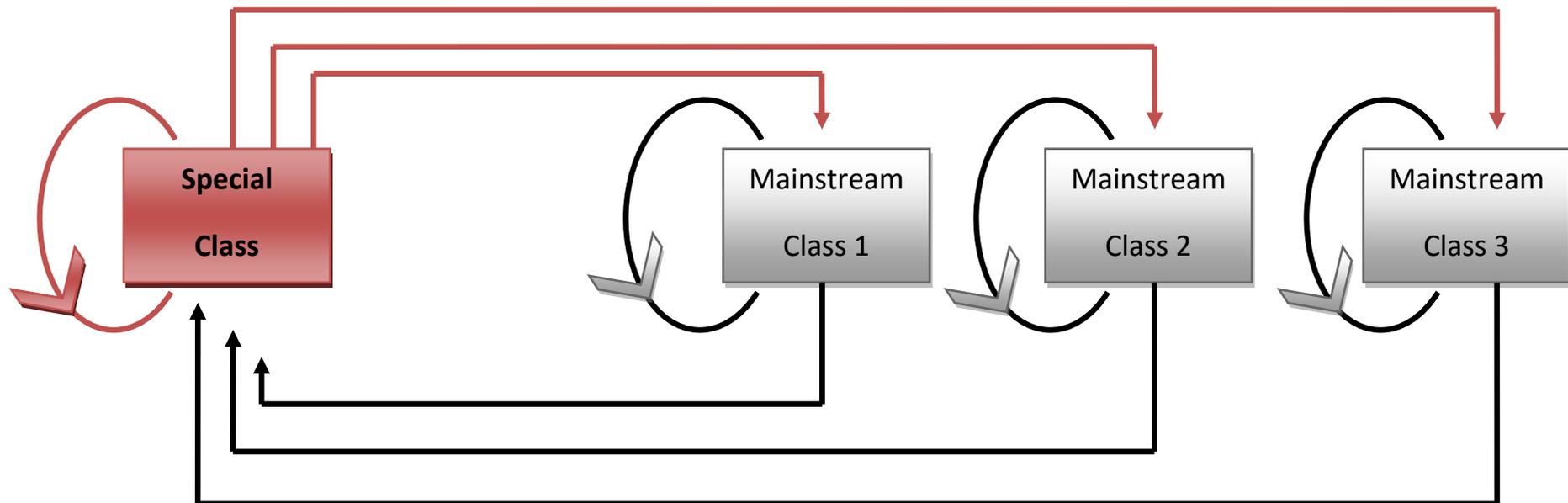
(Data collection – Rating scale and Nomination)

(Please note that the directions of the arrows indicate the direction of the rating questions\Nominations)

Rating scale + Nomination in England



Rating Scale + Nomination in Kuwait



Appendix 9
(Nomination method)

Name school:

What is your name?

Are you a boy or a girl? Boy / girl (circle what you are)

How old are you? Years old

In which Grade are you? Grade

Who are your best friends in the classroom? (you are not allowed to write down more than five names, but you may very well write down less than five names)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Circle the name of your very best friend

Thank you

APPENDIX 11

Interview schedule (MLD identification)

❖ *About yourself (ice breaker questions)*

- 1) Could you explain in brief a short description of your job?
- 2) How long have you been working in this job?

❖ *About the concept of MLD*

- 3) From your knowledge, could you explain who children with MLD are?
- 4) In your opinion, is there a difference between mild and moderate LD? And if so, how can you distinguish between them?
- 5) In your opinion what is\are the cause(s) of MLD? (e.g., biological or environmental or both)
- 6) In your opinion do you believe that MLD is a permanent difficulty or is it only a temporary one?

❖ *About MLD Identifications*

- 7) By what assessment methods are children with MLD identified?
 - What does the assessment focus on?
 - Environmental factors?
 - Child factors?
 - What specific methods are used?
- 8) How is MLD identified as different from:
 - Severe learning difficulties?
 - Specific learning difficulties?
 - Below average attainment?
- 9) What policy documents or guidelines inform the identification of children with MLD
- 10) Are there any expectations or guidelines that influence how MLD are identified?
- 11) What is the role of parents in relation to the process of identifying children with MLD

Appendix 12

Interview schedule (Social participation)

❖ *About yourself (ice breaker questions)*

- 1) How long have you been working in this particular school?
- 2) What is your role in this school?

❖ *General questions about social outcome of inclusion*

- 3) Overall, do you feel that integrated pupils with SEN benefit socially?
- 4) Do you feel that integrated pupils with SEN develop their social skills in the school?

❖ *Perceived social participation of particular integrated child with MLD*

- 5) In general, do you believe that XXX has benefited socially from his\her placement in the school?
- 6) In terms of friendship, do you believe that XXX has as many friends as other children in the class?
- 7) How strong do these friendships tend to be?
- 8) To what extent do you believe that non-SEN children are willing to be friends of XXX? If not, could you explain the barriers?
- 9) To what extent do you believe that XXX is interacting with his\her peers?
- 10) Do you believe that XXX feels accepted by his\her peers? Can you give an example?
- 11) Do you believe that XXX feels part of the classroom's community?
- 12) Do you believe that XXX is aware of his\her social position and social status (whether he/she was rejected or accepted or isolated from other peers in the classroom)?
- 13) Do you think that the social relationship of XXX is changing over the school year? If yes, then to what direction (i.e., Negative or positive). Can you give example please?
- 14) Do you believe that XXX would occupy a better social position in special school? And why or why not?

Appendix 13

(Arabic translated interview – slow learning identification)

أسئلة مقابلة بخصوص العلاقات الاجتماعية بين الطلبة

❖ أسئلة عامة

1- ما هي وظيفتك في هذه المدرسة

2- ما هي عدد سنوات خبرتك في هذه الوظيفة

❖ أسئلة تتعلق بمفهوم الدمج وعلاقته بالتحصيل الاجتماعي للطلبة

3- بشكل عام، هل تعتقد بأن طلبة "بطيئي التعلم" مستفيدين اجتماعيا من وجودهم بالمدارس الحكومية العامة؟

4- بشكل عام، هل تعتقد بأن وجود طلبة "بطيئي التعلم" في المدارس الحكومية يطور من مهاراتهم الاجتماعية؟

(أسئلة خاصة لحالات دراسية معينة)

❖ الانخراط الاجتماعي لطلبة بطيئي التعلم

5- بشكل عام، هل تعتقد بأن XXXXX مستفيدين من وجودهم في المدارس الحكومية ؟

6- فيما يتعلق بالصدقات، هل تعتقد بأن XXXXX لديهم أصدقاء بقدر ما لدى الأطفال الآخرين في نفس سنهم؟

7- ما مدى صلابة الصداقات التي يكونونها ؟

8- إلى أي مدى تعتقد بأن الأطفال الآخرون يرغبون بتكوين صداقات مع XXXXXXXX ؟ وما هي العوائق أن وجدت ؟

9- هل تعتقد بأن XXXXXXXX يشعرون بأنهم مقبولين من قبل الأطفال الآخرين؟ هل يمكنك ان تعطي مثال على ذلك؟

10- هل تعتقد بأن XXXXXXXX يشعرون بأنهم ينتمون إلى مجتمع المدرسة ككل ؟

11- هل تعتقد بأن XXXXXXXX على دراية بوضعهم الاجتماعي بين الطلبة (ما اذ كانوا مقبولين اجتماعيا او مرفوضين؟)

12- هل تعتقد بأن العلاقات الاجتماعية بين XXXXXXXX و الطلبة الآخرين سوف تتغير على مدار السنة الدراسية؟ (أن

كانت الإجابة نعم فهل التغير سيكون ايجابي او سلبي؟)

13- هل تعتقد بأن XXXXXXXX سوف يحضون بعلاقات اجتماعية أكثر ايجابية ما إذ تم وضعهم بالمدارس الخاصة ؟

Appendix 14

(Arabic translated interview – slow learning identification)

أسئلة مقابلة بخصوص آلية تشخيص الطلبة ذوي الإعاقة العقلية

❖ أسئلة عامة

- 1- هل يمكنك أن تشرح لنا وظيفتك باختصار
- 2- ما هي عدد سنوات خبرتك في هذه الوظيفة

❖ أسئلة تتعلق بمفهوم الإعاقة العقلية

- 3- من خبرتك في هذا المجال، هل يمكنك أن تعرف أو تشرح لنا من هم طلبة بطيئي التعلم؟
- 4- من خبرتك في هذا المجال، هل يمكنك أن تعرف أو تشرح لنا من هم الطلبة ذوي الإعاقة العقلية (التخلف العقلي)
- 5- من وجهة نظرك، كيف يمكنك أن تميز بين الإعاقة العقلية البسيطة و بطيئ التعلم؟
- 6- من وجهة نظرك، ما هي أسباب الإعاقة العقلية (هل هي بيولوجية طبيعية ام بيئية)؟ هل تختلف عن اسباب بطيئ التعلم؟
- 7- من وجهة نظرك هل تعتقد أن الإعاقة العقلية هي إعاقة دائمة أم من الممكن أن تكون صعوبات مؤقتة؟

❖ أسئلة بخصوص تشخيص بطيئ التعلم

- 8- ما هي الطرق المستخدمة لتشخيص طلبة بطيئي التعلم؟ وعلى ماذا تركز (عوامل بيئية مثلا او طبيعية)
- 9- ما هي التشريعات أو المراجع القانونية التي تعتمد عليها في تشخيص طلبة الإعاقة العقلية
- 10- من خبرتك، ما هي المؤشرات التي تظهر في التشخيص لتوضح أو تميز الفرق بين الإعاقة العقلية المتوسطة وكل من:

- الإعاقة العقلية الشديدة
- صعوبات التعلم
- ذوي التحصيل المنخفض
- بطيئي التعلم

- 11- ما هو دور أولياء الأمور فيما يتعلق بتشخيص طلبة الإعاقة العقلية

APPENDIX 15

(Raw data of the SDQ analyses)

File Edit View Data Transform Analyze Graphs Utilities Add-ons Window Help															
31 : Name															
	Name	Grade	Age	Gender	SENstatus	SDQ1	SDQ2	SDQ3	SDQ4	SDQ5	SDQ6	SDQ7	SDQ8	SDQ9	Mean
1	XXXXXXXX	4	8	1	0	5	4	1	4	5	5	4	5	4	4.11
2	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	0	5	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	4.22
3	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	1	3	1	1	5	5	5	3	5	5	3.67
4	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	0	5	3	1	1	5	1	5	5	1	3.00
5	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	0	5	5	1	1	1	1	5	3	3	2.78
6	XXXXXXXX	4	9	1	1	2	5	2	3	1	3	2	4	1	2.56
7	XXXXXXXX	4	9	1	2	4	5	1	5	5	4	2	5	5	4.00
8	XXXXXXXX	4	8	1	1	5	4	2	2	3	3	2	3	5	3.22
9	XXXXXXXX	4	9	1	0	5	3	4	4	1	3	4	5	2	3.44
10	XXXXXXXX	4	9	1	0	5	4	1	4	1	1	5	1	5	3.00
11	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.00
12	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	0	5	3	2	4	2	4	3	5	3	3.44
13	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00
14	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	0	2	1	1	3	1	1	5	1	1	1.78
15	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	0	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4.89
16	XXXXXXXX	4	8	1	1	5	1	1	1	5	3	5	5	3	3.22
17	XXXXXXXX	4	8	2	0	5	4	3	4	5	5	3	5	3	4.11
18	XXXXXXXX	4	9	1	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.89
19	XXXXXXXX	4	9	1	0	5	4	1	4	5	5	4	5	4	4.11
20	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	0	1	2	1	2	3	4	1	1	3	2.00
21	XXXXXXXX	4	8	2	0	5	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	3.56
22	XXXXXXXX	4	9	1	0	5	5	1	5	1	5	5	5	3	3.89
23	XXXXXXXX	4	8	1	0	1	4	2	1	1	4	1	1	4	2.11
24	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	0	4	5	4	4	3	2	2	3	5	3.56
25	XXXXXXXX	4	8	2	0	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.89
26	XXXXXXXX	4	9	2	0	5	5	2	5	4	5	4	5	4	4.33
27	XXXXXXXX	4	8	1	0	5	4	3	3	4	5	5	4	4	4.11
28	XXXXXXXX	4	9	1	0	1	5	1	1	4	1	1	4	2	2.22
29	XXXXXXXX	4	9	1	0	5	4	2	5	3	5	2	3	2	3.44

APPENDIX 17

(Raw data of the social interaction analyses)

Example of four children interaction in one class in England

- During the lesson time

	Name	Grade	Age	Gender	SENstatus	IP	IN	RP	RN	Total
1	XXXXX	4	8	1	5	7	0	3	0	10
2	XXXXX	4	8	1	4	11	1	5	0	17
3	XXXXX	4	9	2	4	13	1	6	0	20
4	XXXXX	4	8	1	0	14	0	3	0	17

- During the break time

	Name	Grade	Age	Gender	SENstatus	IP	IN	RP	RN	Total
1	XXXXXX	4	8	1	5	24	1	4	0	29
2	XXXXXX	4	8	1	4	11	2	5	0	18
3	XXXXXX	4	9	2	4	18	0	10	0	28
4	XXXXXX	4	8	1	0	26	1	10	0	37

APPENDIX 18

(Raw data of the nomination method using Excel Software)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	AI	
1	Name	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD	AE	AF	AG	AH	Total
2	Child A			1			1					1	1	1			1	1								1	1	1								9
3	Child B			1									1									1				1										5
4	Child C																																			0
5	Child D				1										1	1			1																	4
6	Child E														1																					1
7	Child F														1					1								1						1		4
8	Child G							1	1	1									1				1						1	1	1					8
9	Child H					1	1			1	1				1									1					1							6
10	Child I							1	1	1					1																1					3
11	Child J							1	1	1									1												1					5
12	Child K		1										1	1			1	1		1		1				1		1								9
13	Child L		1		1							1	1					1								1	1							1		8
14	Child M		1			1												1				1					1							1		6
15	Child N					1			1							1																				3
16	Child O																1							1												2
17	Child P			1			1														1				1											4
18	Child Q		1	1		1	1					1		1			1			1		1					1									10
19	Child R				1																							1		1	1			1		4
20	Child S			1			1					1		1			1	1									1	1	1							9
21	Child T											1															1	1								3
22	Child U																				1					1									2	
23	Child V																				1									1		1	1		4	
24	Child W															1	1																			2
25	Child X											1											1					1					1			4
26	Child Y		1	1								1		1	1			1				1					1			1						11
27	Child Z				1											1					1			1		1										5
28	Child AA																		1					1					1	1				1		5
29	Child BB				1			1			1								1											1						5
30	Child CC							1	1		1																	1								4
31	Child DD									1	1																									2
32	Child EE																								1											1
33	Child FF				1	1							1								1		1		1		1							1		7
34	Child GG							1		1										1			1	1				1	1							7

APPENDIX 19

(Raw data of the nomination method - UCINET)

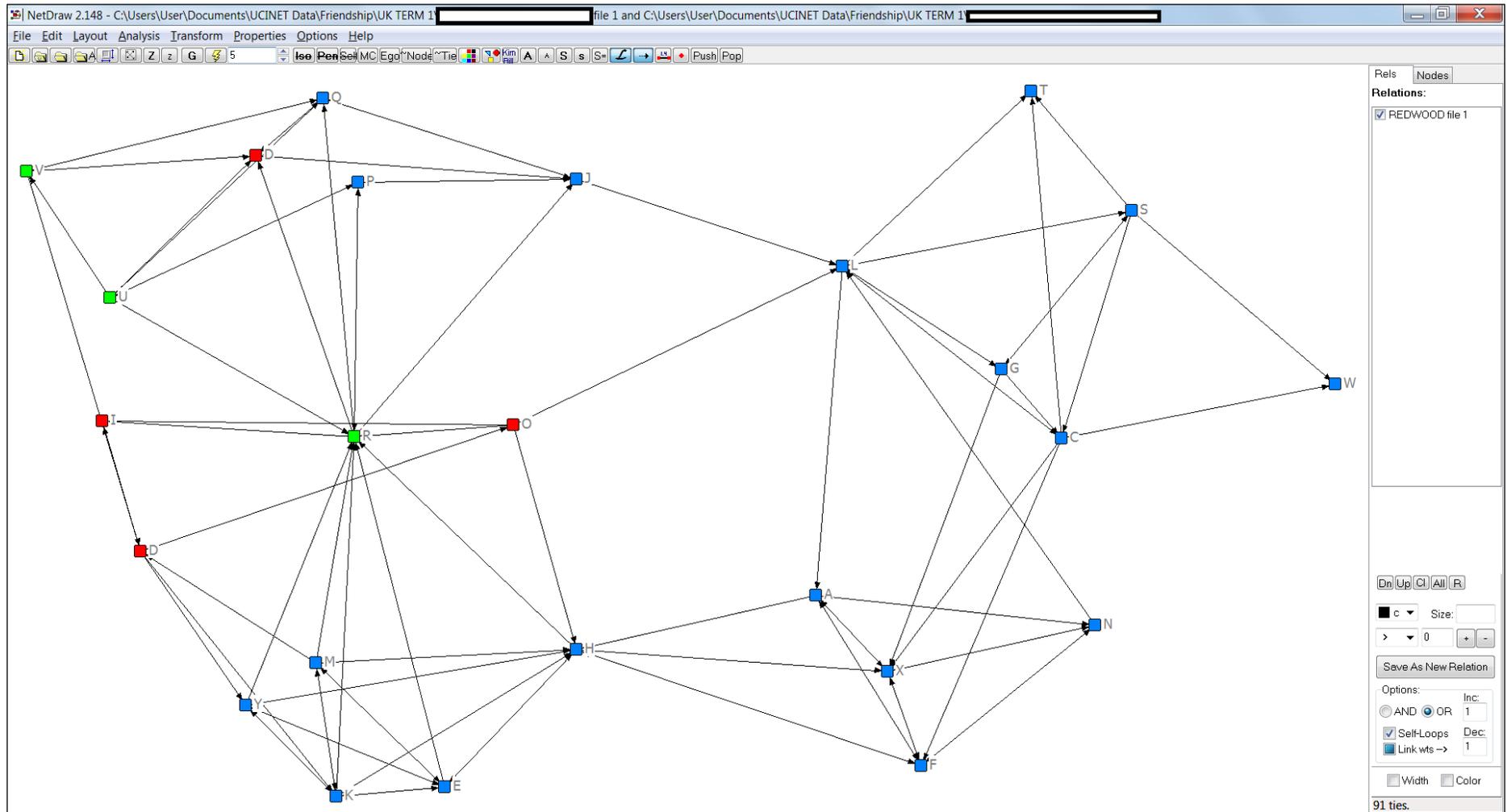
The screenshot displays the UCINET 6 for Windows software interface. The main window is titled "UCINET 6 for Windows -- Version 6.549" and contains a menu bar (File, Data, Transform, Tools, Network, Visualize, Options, Help) and a toolbar. Below the toolbar, there is a section for "How to cite UCINET:" with the following text: "Borgatti, S.P., Everett, M.G. and Freeman, L.C. 2002. Ucinet 6 for Windows: Software for Social Network Analysis. Harvard, MA: Analytic Technologies."

Overlaid on the main window is a smaller window titled "Matrix Editor - C:\Users\User\Documents\UCINET Data\...#h". This window has its own menu bar (File, Edit, Transform) and toolbar. It displays a matrix with 21 rows and 20 columns. The columns are labeled 1 through 20, and the rows are labeled A through T. The matrix contains binary data (0s and 1s) representing nominations. A checkbox labeled "Symmetrize as you type" is located in the top right corner of the matrix editor window. A tooltip on the right side of the matrix editor window reads "Use row & column 0 for labels".

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
A																				
B																				
C	1	1														1	1		1	
D																		1		
E				1																
F	1							1								1	1		1	
G								1		1										
H							1		1	1				1						
I							1	1		1										
J							1	1												
K	1																			1
L	1	1										1	1							1
M	1					1					1								1	1
N				1	1			1	1											
O				1										1						
P	1														1					1
Q	1																1			1
R				1			1			1			1							1
S						1											1			
T																1				
U		1									1		1				1			

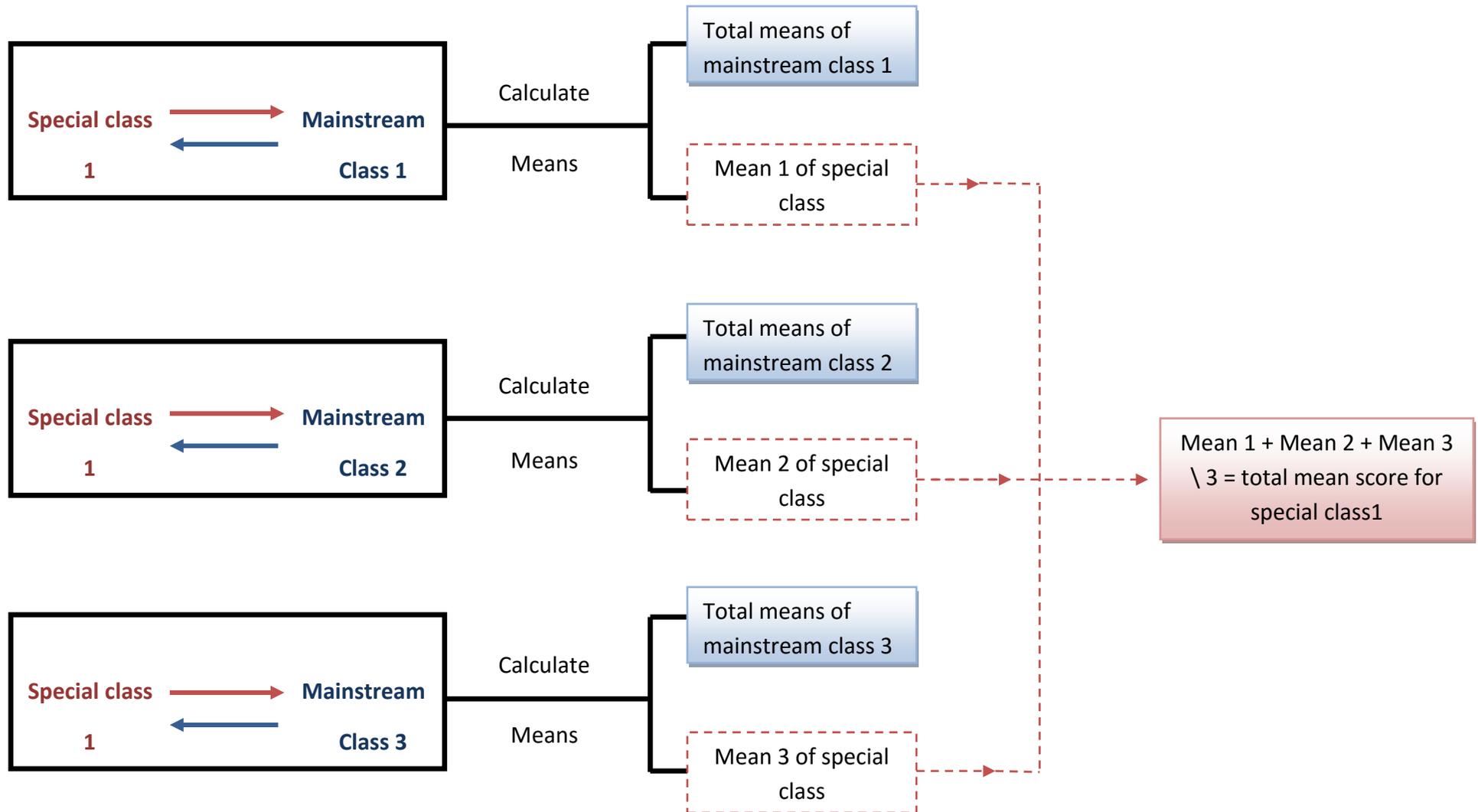
APPENDIX 20

(Raw data of the nomination method – UCINET Matrix)



Appendix 21

(Data analyses, Rating scale and Nomination method)



APPENDIX 22

(Raw data of the Rating Scale)

1

	Name	Grade	Age	Gender
1	XXXXXX	4	8	1
2	XXXXXX	4	9	2
3	XXXXXX	4	9	2
4	XXXXXX	4	9	2
5	XXXXXX	4	9	2
6	XXXXXX	4	9	1
7	XXXXXX	4	9	1
8	XXXXXX	4	8	1
9	XXXXXX	4	9	1
10	XXXXXX	4	9	1
11	XXXXXX	4	9	2
12	XXXXXX	4	9	2
13	XXXXXX	4	9	2
14	XXXXXX	4	9	2
15	XXXXXX	4	9	2
16	XXXXXX	4	8	1
17	XXXXXX	4	8	2
18	XXXXXX	4	9	1
19	XXXXXX	4	9	1
20	XXXXXX	4	9	2
21	XXXXXX	4	8	2
22	XXXXXX	4	9	1
23	XXXXXX	4	8	1
24	XXXXXX	4	9	2
25	XXXXXX	4	8	2
26	XXXXXX	4	9	2
27	XXXXXX	4	8	1
28	XXXXXX	4	9	1
29	XXXXXX	4	9	1
30	XXXXXX	4	9	1
31	XXXXXX	4	8	1
32	XXXXXX	4	9	2

2

	SENstatus	R1	R2	R3	R4
1	0	1	1	2	3
2	0	1	3	1	1
3	4	1	1	1	2
4	0	1	2	2	1
5	0	1	3	1	3
6	4	1	1	1	1
7	8	3	3	1	3
8	4	3	2	1	2
9	0	1	2	1	1
10	0	1	1	1	3
11	0	1	3	3	2
12	0	1	2	3	1
13	0	1	3	3	3
14	0	1	1	1	3
15	0	1	3	2	2
16	4	1	2	2	3
17	0	1	3	3	3
18	0	1	2	1	3
19	0	1	1	2	3
20	0	1	0	1	2
21	0	1	2	3	0
22	0	1	3	1	3
23	0	1	3	0	3
24	0	1	1	3	2
25	0	1	3	3	3
26	0	1	3	3	3
27	0	3	3	1	3
28	0	3	3	2	3
29	0	3	2	1	3
30	0	3	2	2	2
31	0	1	1	1	1
32	0	1	3	2	2

3

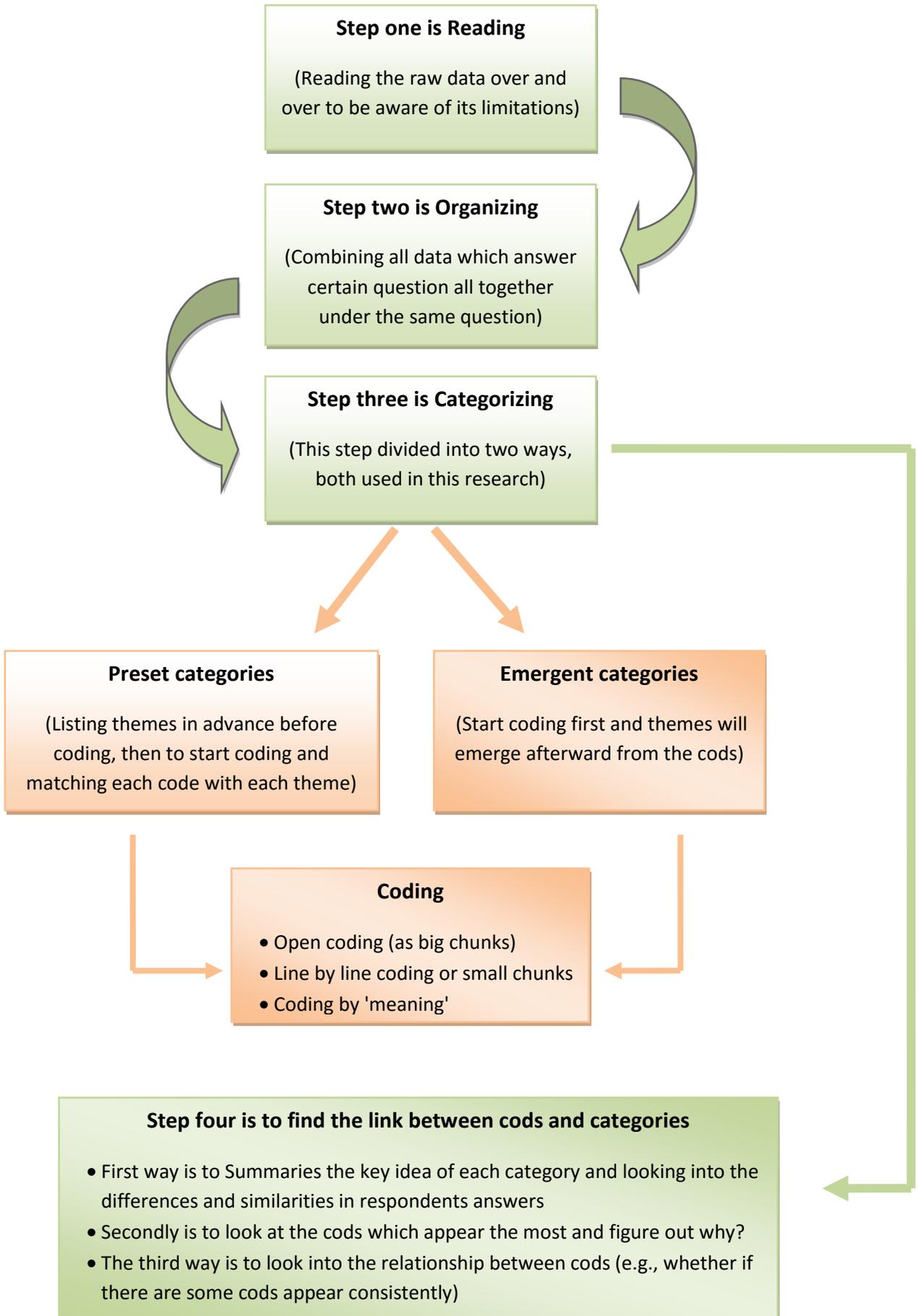
	R27	R28	R29	R30	R31
1	3	2	2	1	3
2	2	2	3	3	1
3	1	1	1	3	1
4	1	1	1	3	0
5	2	1	0	3	2
6	1	2	3	0	1
7	1	3	3	1	1
8	1	3	3	1	3
9	1	0	3	1	1
10	1	3	2	1	1
11	3	2	1	1	1
12	2	1	1	1	1
13	3	2	2	3	1
14	3	3	1	3	1
15	2	2	3	1	1
16	1	1	3	1	3
17	3	2	2	1	2
18	0	3	1	1	3
19	3	2	3	1	3
20	1	3	3	1	1
21	1	1	2	1	1
22	1	3	1	1	1
23	1	2	2	1	1
24	2	3	3	1	1
25	3	3	1	1	1
26	3	3	3	1	1
27	2	3	2	1	1
28	1	3	3	1	2
29	3	1	2	1	3
30	1	3	2	1	3
31	1	2	3	1	1
32	1	2	1	3	1

4

	R32	R33	Mean
1	0	3	1.90
2	1	3	1.90
3	1	1	1.23
4	1	1	1.55
5	1	3	1.68
6	1	2	1.87
7	2	2	1.87
8	2	1	1.77
9	1	1	1.35
10	2	1	1.61
11	1	3	2.29
12	1	3	1.74
13	1	3	1.84
14	1	1	1.55
15	1	3	1.81
16	1	2	1.77
17	1	1	1.90
18	1	1	1.74
19	1	3	1.87
20	1	0	1.58
21	1	1	1.52
22	2	1	1.81
23	1	2	1.68
24	1	2	1.94
25	1	3	2.16
26	1	3	2.19
27	3	2	2.10
28	1	2	2.03
29	2	1	1.90
30	1	1	1.87
31	1	1	1.61
32	1	1	1.84

Appendix 23

(The five steps of qualitative data analyses)



Appendix 24

(Example of some raw data of observation)

[] In the class the main teacher asked children to work in groups

- XXX he was setting with his partner XXX he is - as usual – very quiet, doing the task with his partner, with very limited interaction between them (like neither any of them initiate interaction with the other), XXX did not say a word to his partner, everyone was working alone although they were partners and then they were waiting other children to finish
- XXX is quite also during lesson, doesn't also participant a lot to answer the teachers question, but during group work he is communicating with his partner the XXXX , he doesn't participate because he is probably doesn't know the answers as the task was a bit challengeable as the teacher said , so what I noticed is that the more academic task the teacher gives, the less participating XXXX will show
- XXXX and XXXX were in one group working together in the class, they were communicating with each other in a good way, they were helping sharing each other to do the task, the teacher assistant was working with them she was setting in the middle between XXXX and XXXX (this could limit the interaction between XXX and XXX with their classmates as they are working together in one isolated group in the same class...However, without the help of the TA support children will feel bored from the lesson as they may not be able to catch up with other children, the TA is helping them to do an academic task that is suitable for their academic. Although this will limit the interaction among children, it will help improve their academic skilled)

[] 10:45 break time in the play ground

- XXX was running behind different children, she was also playing with the XXX she often notice to be with her and XXX also with them XXX... XXX she change the group quickly by running behind different girls
- XXXX and XXXX were playing football as partner, then the XXX boy and XXX joined them.....XXXX ask the others to allow XXX to kick the ball as they were not giving her the chance to do so, in general they were playing in a good way.... XXX as well joined them so they were playing in a good way together as group...some children draw from the game but XXX and XXX kept playing together.
- XXX with his best friend walking together...they arrived lately to the playground, but when they arrived, 3 girls and one boy of their classmates run toward them to join him
- XXX was alone in the playground looking for some children with whom he could play. He walked alone; then he found one girl to play with for a while until she moved away to play with other children. He was then alone again and found the girl who sat near him in the class XXX she was in the playground but they never played together

APPENDIX 25

(Example of using codes on data drawn from observation)

The screenshot shows a document browser window titled "Document Browser: [redacted] observation term 1". The main content area displays a list of observations from line 3 to 19. Each observation is preceded by a line number and a bracketed label. The text of each observation is highlighted in a color corresponding to the code used. On the left side, there is a vertical toolbar with various icons and labels for coding, such as "Limited", "non-Verbal", "physical", "Physical", "Verbal", "Being", "Request", "SEN", "Continuing", "Full", and "Verbal".

3 []

4 [] in the class at 9:30 the teacher ask children to work in pairs

5 • [] is usually very quite person, he is doing his tasks quietly without any interaction with his partner, his partner [redacted] doesn't talk to him that often may be because he is today in general very quite in the class and less social as I did not see him today trying to work with the other children in the class as the others do But not in the play ground I noticed that he is active there trying to initiate social interactions by looking for some children to play)

6 [] Back to the class the teacher ask children to work in groups to do a

7

8 • [] was working with his partner to do the task, I noticed that [redacted] and his partner communicate only when teacher ask them to do task together as group

9

10

11 [] During the break time 11:am

12 • [] again is playing football with his classmate, he was the goal keeper all the time, (I reeber when I was a child, when me and my childhood friends were planing football, we were often chose the 'underdodge' boy to be a goal keeper because we all wanted to touch the ball all the time and being a main players where we fallow the bal all the time as it was always more enjoyable than being a goal keeper waiting the ball to come to you), [redacted] is very quite child may be this is why he was chosen among his peers in the playground to be the gol keeper all the time without changing with any one to take his role in the game or even argue about that

13 [] The teacher ask children to go in the ICT room to do a computer task 11:00

14

15 • [] is sitting with group of boys who doesn't usually noticed to be with them (as in the ICT room, the children try to sit randomly, so [redacted] end with a goup who seems that he dosen't know very well)...he was doing his work a lone without communicate with the rest of his group members, the group members also do not initiate any interaction with him, at the end of the lesson and for a while he initiate interaction and he asked a question to one of the group boys, he answered him positivly in short way and that was the only interaction during the ICT lesson for [redacted]

16

6-11-2012

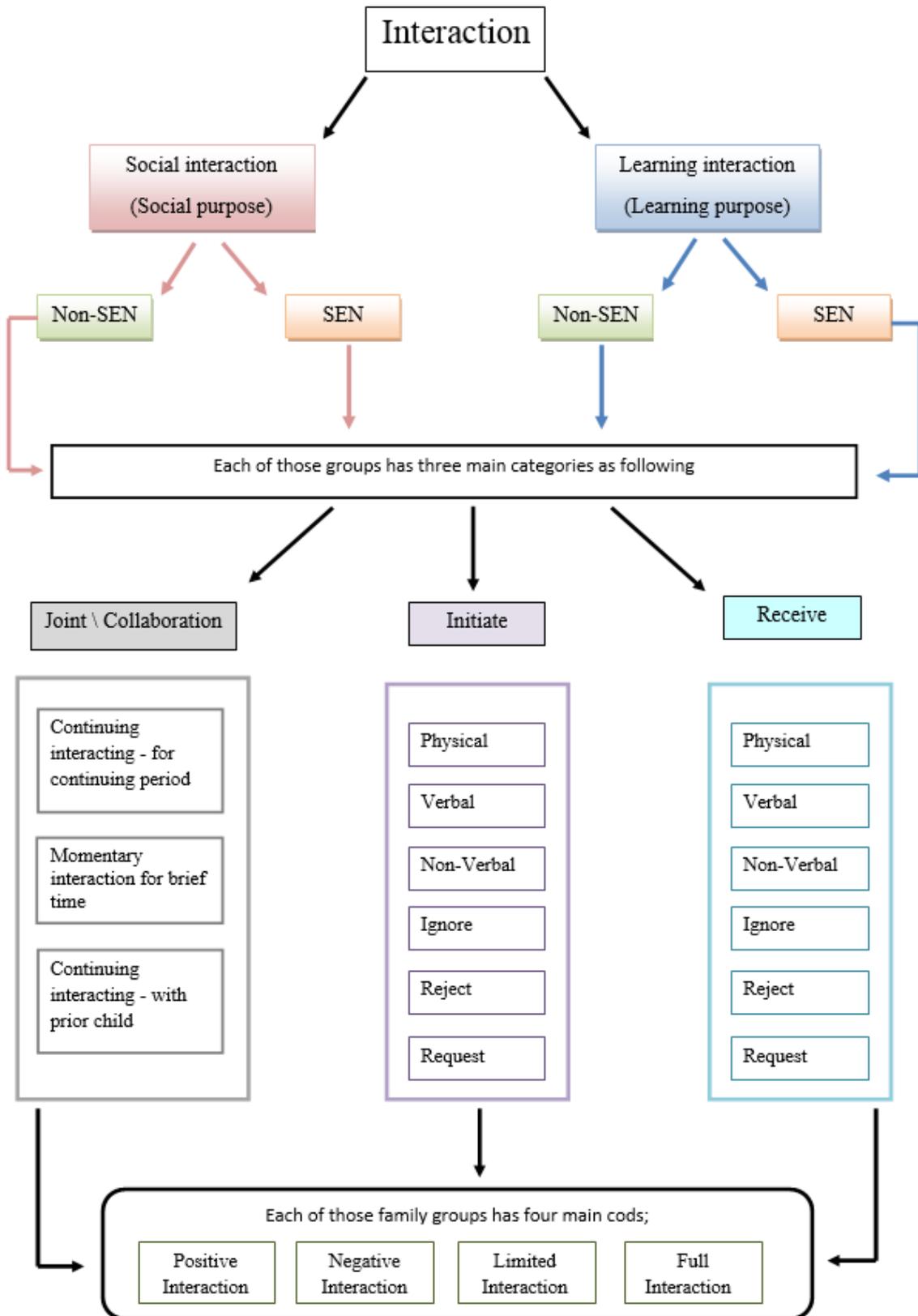
17 [] In the restaurant

18 • [redacted] and [redacted] were setting near each other in one table talking and eating normally in a good way all the time

19 • ([redacted] and [redacted] were working with the TA in one group, [redacted] was so quite and seems very bored, he was not working or communicating with [redacted] and he was not also communicate with the other children due to the fact that he is working with TA in more privet group in the class

Appendix 26

(Cods of social interaction)



Appendix 27

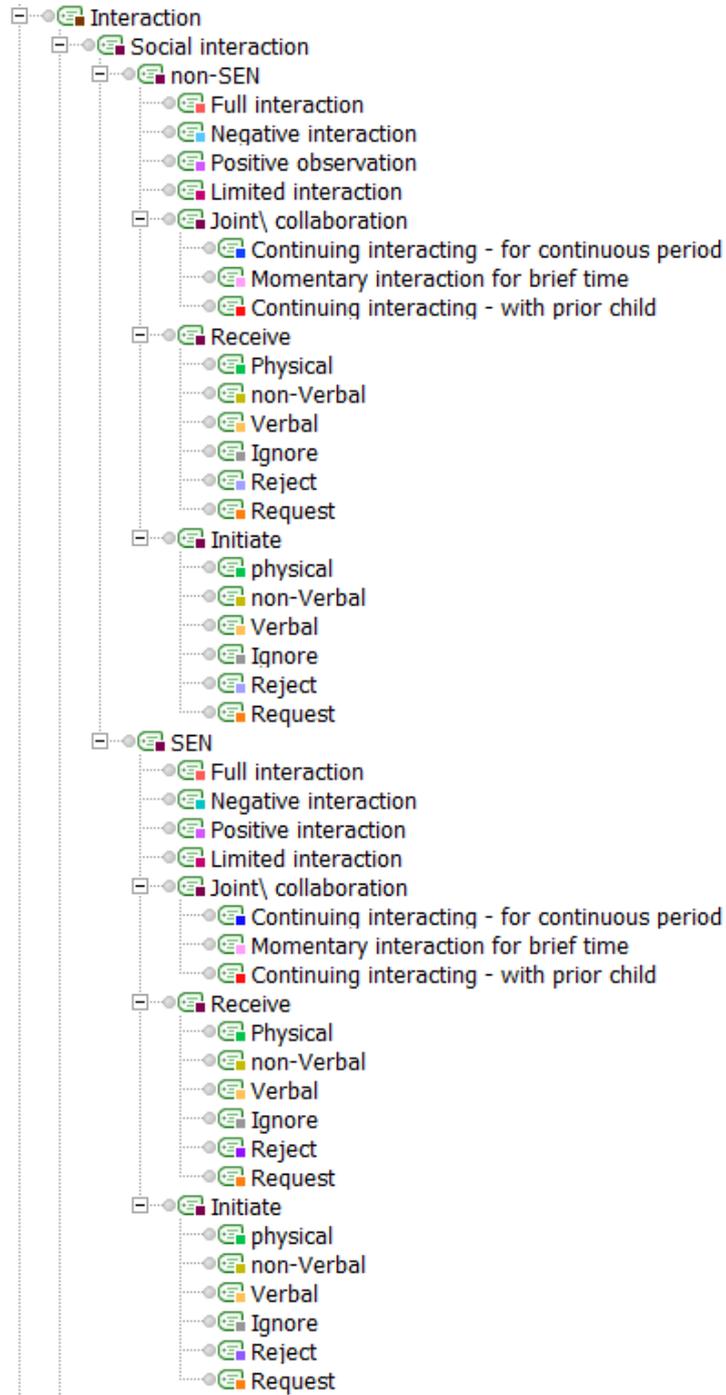
(Clarification of some codes I used regarding social interaction)

Interaction Codes	Definition
Social interaction (Family theme)	Any interaction for social purpose (when children socialize by themselves and not ask for it)
Learning interaction (Family theme)	Any interaction for learning purpose (often in the class when teacher ask children to work together)
Receive (theme)	Any interaction comes from other children to the target child (i.e., interactions had been obtained from other children)
Initiate (theme)	Any interaction commence from the target child to other children
Joint\Collaboration (theme)	Description of the child's collaboration with the other children
Verbal (code) Physical (code)	Any movement interaction like playing, holding hands, hugging, walking toward children to join them, eating with someone in one table and working with someone ... etc
Verbal (code)	Any oral interaction like talking, laughing, discussing, arguing... act
Non-Verbal (code)	Any body language interaction like eye contact, smiling, winking and any facial expression, which carries an interaction with it
Ignore (code)	When there is no response to the interaction by purpose (ignoring interaction)
Reject (code)	The interaction becomes limited, like when children did not allow the target child to play with them or when they rejected the target child to share them the work.
Request (code)	When the target child asked other children or had been asked for something.
Continuing interacting for continues period (code)	Interacting with a child or children on ongoing basis, like being together for continuous time, so this code focuses more on time.
Momentary interaction for momentary time (code)	That is when the child interacts for a brief period, like being with someone temporarily and leaving.
Continuing interacting with prior child (code)	When the child interacts with the same person repeatedly, interacting with the same child frequently.
Good interaction (code)	A description of any positive interaction, like when the children are laughing with each other or joking in a friendly way or when they work together in a homogeneous way...act
Negative interaction (code)	A description of any interaction, like when children fight or play with each other in a rough way, which causes problems among them or when a child says a bad word to another child.
Limited interaction (code)	A description of interactions with little engagement, or low level of interaction
Full interaction (code)	A description of interaction when the child is fully engaged in the interaction by being active by initiating and receiving many interactions; hence, it is more about the thickness of interactions and not the time.

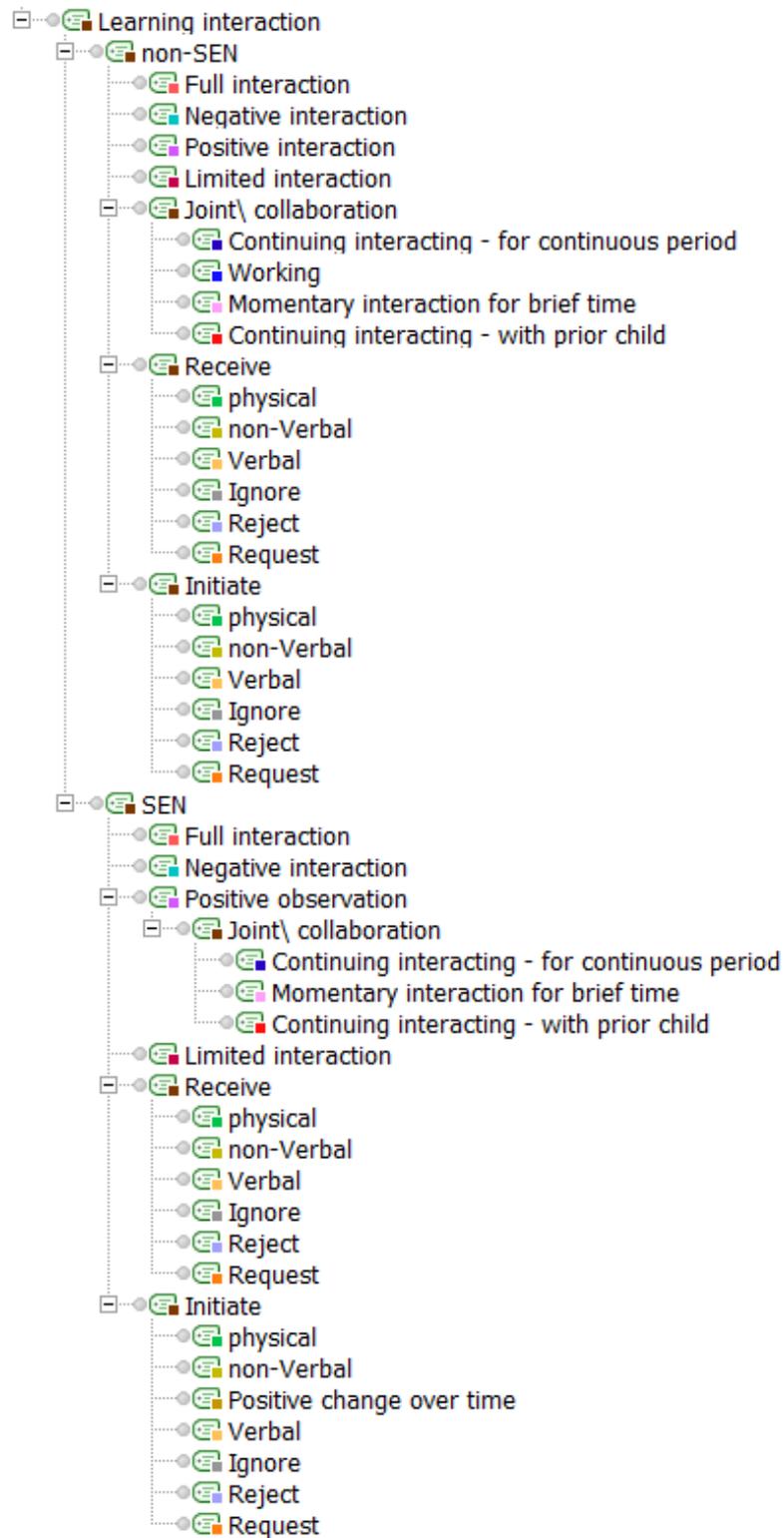
Appendix 28

(All cods used to analyze the social participation of the case studies)

(Part 1)



(Part 2)



(Part 3)

- [-] ● Friendship
 - Friendship changing
- Relationships with non-SEN Peers
- [-] ● Awareness
 - Presence of social Awareness
 - absence of social awareness
- [-] ● Social Skills
 - Negative social skills
 - Limited Social Skills
 - Positive Social Skills
- teachers' perspectives toward social inclusion
- Social Needs
- academic slow developing
- disturbance in the class
- [-] ● Stability
 - No change over time
 - Negative change over time
- Miss behaving
- Self-concept
- Self-Concept
- Most appropriate placement
- General Academic benefit
- General social benefit
- Feeling part of school community
- The structure of the environment
- Negative Reaction
- Suggestions
- General social difficulties
- Factors affect social Participation UK
- Bullying
- General information about the child
- [-] ● Being alone
 - Being alone during class activities
 - Being alone during break time

Appendix 29

(Example of an interview transcript)

- Me: This is the first interview with a teacher assistant. Firstly I would like to thank you indeed for accepting me to interview you.
- Interviewee: Okay.
- Me: So about yourself, how long have you been working here in this particular school?
- Interviewee: I've been working at XXXXX for eight-and-a-half years.
- Me: What's your role in this school?
- Interviewee: I'm a Learning Support Assistant within the class and over the years I've been in different year groups, but currently with Year 4.
- Me: Great, now general questions about the social outcome of inclusion. Overall do you feel that integrating people with the special education needs benefits socially here in the school?
- Interviewee: Yes I think so, so long as their needs aren't too great because I have a special needs child of my own. I have an autistic child of my own. Yes I think so for the children that we have within the class, yes.
- Me: Do you think that the integrated people with SEN develop their social skills here?
- Interviewee: It's very difficult for them to develop their social skills, but I feel we try to make them part of the class by joining in and in group work. I think they naturally and generally find it very difficult to do and it's a much slower process than it would be for a child that wasn't SEN.
- Me: I see yeah. Okay so particularly about the four children we mentioned. In general do you believe that these four children have benefited socially from the placement in the school? Let's start with XXXX.

Appendix 30

(Summery of the qualitative analyses)

1

The original Data

- Observation of the four case studies together in term 1 and 2
- TAs interviews about the four case studies together in term 1 and 2
- Teacher interviews about the four case studies together in term 1 and 2

Organizing the data by separate the original data in which I will accumulate all the data of one case study child in single documents just like the following

2

Each case study will have

- One document about observation in term 1
- One document about observation in term 2
- One document about TAs interviews in term 1
- One document about TAs interviews in term 2
- One document about teacher interviews in term 1
- One document about teacher interviews in term 1

4

Analyzing

- Try to shows those cods which appear the most
- Look at the relationship between cods and find out whether there is any correlations or causality among cods

3

Coding

- Preset categories before coding
- OR
- Emerging categories from coding the raw data

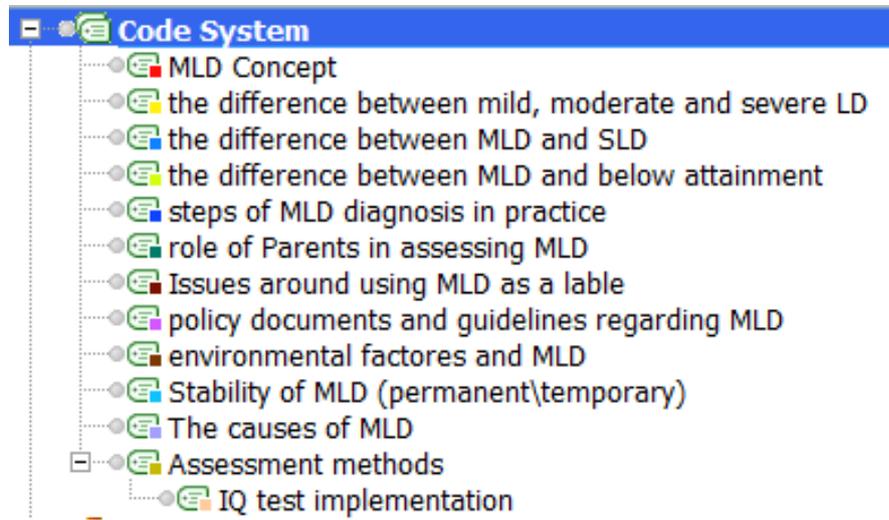
Appendix 31

(Example of the raw data of interview)

- Me: This is the second interview about MLD identification. Please could you explain in brief a short description of your job?
- Interviewee: Yeah. My title is Leadership Associate, and I'm also a Local Authority Officer. Our role is to support SENCOs in schools in terms of their jobs or anything around special needs. So we do a lot of work from the whole school improvement angle, and consultation and advice around pupils that they have concerns over. So we go into the schools, they ask for help, we provide guidance, we provide training for SENCOs, whole school training, teaching assistant training. We also - our team teaches on the national SENCO qualification. Yeah, that's it really, I suppose.
- Me: Okay. How long have you been working in that job?
- Interviewee: About ten years.
- ME: Ten years.
- Interviewee: Yeah. Too long.
- ME: you got a great experiences I think. Okay, about the concept of MLD, from your knowledge, could you explain who children with MLD are?
- Interviewee: Good question.
- ME: From your definition.
- Interviewee: My definition. Well children who aren't necessarily attaining at the level of the average children of their peers. However, in saying that, it's measuring the progress from where they've come from, their starting point, because they might have started at a lower level. So it's looking at their progress over time and judging how they're doing. If they are obviously significantly behind peers, then it's looking at that progress. Why are they significantly behind?

Appendix 32

(Cods used to analyze the second type of interviews schedule)



Appendix 33

Summary of the interpretive research principles

- **Principle number 1** 'This principle suggests that all human understanding is achieved by iterating between considering the interdependent meaning of parts and the whole that they form. This principle of human understanding is fundamental to all the other principles.'
- **Principle number 2** 'Requires critical reflection of the social and historical background of the research setting, so that the intended audience can see how the current situation under investigation emerged.'
- **Principle number 3** 'Requires critical reflection on how the research materials (or "data") were socially constructed through the interaction between the researchers and participants.'
- **Principle number 4** 'Requires relating the idiographic details revealed by the data interpretation through the application of principles one and two to theoretical, general concepts that describe the nature of human understanding and social action.'
- **Principle number 5** 'Requires sensitivity to possible contradictions between the theoretical preconceptions guiding the research design and actual findings ("the story which the data tell") with subsequent cycles of revision.'
- **Principle number 6** 'Requires sensitivity to possible differences in interpretations among the participants as are typically expressed in multiple narratives or stories of the same sequence of events under study. Similar to multiple witness accounts even if all tell it as they saw it.'
- **Principle number 7** 'Requires sensitivity to possible "biases" and systematic "distortions" in the narratives collected from the participants.'

(Quoted from Klein and Myers, 1999, P:72)

Klein, H., & Myers, M. (1999). A set of principles for conducting and evaluating interpretive field studies in information systems. *MIS Quarterly*, 23:1 67-94.

Appendix 34

(The Ethical form)

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH
DISSERTATION/THESIS



Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

DISSERTATION/THESIS

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/> and view the School's statement on the GSE student access on-line documents.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: Bader Jassem Alqallaf

Your student no: 590000347

Return address for this certificate: 35 Maritime court, Haven Rd, Exeter, Ex2 8Gp

Degree/Programme of Study: 1 + 3 phd research

Project Supervisor(s): Professor Brahm Norwich

Your email address: ba230@exeter.ac.uk . alqallaf_03@hotmail.com

Tel:

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my dissertation / thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:  date: 3/1/12

NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records

Appendix 35

The social participation of children with MLD in schools

Information leaflet for parents

Dear Parent

Social participation study

We are writing to tell you about a study organised by the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter about the social participation of children in your child's class and to ask if you are willing for your child to take part.

The aim of the study is to find out more about friendships in the classroom, how they feel about themselves and whether they feel included? The aim is also to show ways in which the school can improve things for all children. That is why we would like to involve all children.

What the project involves:

Three short questionnaires will be given to all children in the class. There will also be some observations in the classroom.

All information collected will be strictly confidential and your child will not be identified at any stage.

We hope that you agree to your child being involved in this study. If you have any questions at all about the project, please do not hesitate to contact XXX at school to discuss matters. Unless we hear from you, we will assume that you agree to your child taking part in this study.

Sincerely

XXXXXXXX

Tel:XXXXXXXXXX
XXXX@exeter.ac.uk

XXXXXXXX

Tel: XXXXXXXX
XXXX@exeter.ac.uk

Graduate School of Education
University of Exeter

✂-----

Please cross out the section that **does not** apply and sign.

I (give permission / do not give permission) for my child to participate in the study

Signed _____ (parent/guardian)
_____ (date)

Appendix 36

Information Sheet for Children

Social participation of children with MLD in schools

This leaflet tells you about the above research project and explains what will happen in your school.

Who is writing to me?

I am a phd student and my name is Bader Alqallaf. I study at the University of Exeter. This project considers as a dissertation to my degree

Who is taking part in the research?

All your friends and all the pupils in your school will be asked to take part of this study

Why am I being asked to take part?

We are looking for pupils of your age who can tell us what they think about them-self and their classmates, and also a few things about their 'social life' in the school (the pupils with they work with and the friends they play with at break time)

What are you trying to find out from me?

We would like to:

- Get to know you
- Ask you about your favourite friends
- Ask you about the children you work with in your classroom
- Ask you about the children you play with at break time
- Ask your opinion about your academic achievement
- Ask your opinion about your social statues

What will I have to do?

I will visit your classroom and tell you and your classmates a bit more about the project. If you have any doubts about taking part, you can ask me any question then or meet me individually afterwards. Next I will give questionnaires to you and all your classmate to complete.

Will my parents, my teacher or anybody else in the school be told about what I say?

No, I do not intend to discuss what you say with your parents, your teacher or anyone else without your permission. Moreover, your name will not be mentioned in the final report of this project

What will happen with the information?

I will use the information we collect to write a report about the social position of pupils in Year 3, 4, 5 and 6 in your school. This will include describing how they feel about being a member of their classroom, their favourite lessons and activities and their classmates and friends in their classroom.

Can I withdraw from the study?

I hope that all the classes in your school will take part in the study as all that you will ask to do is to answer some questionnaires. If, however, during the study you feel uncomfortable or stressed and you no longer wish to take part, that is OK.

What happens next?

Please do talk about this with your family. We are also sending them an information leaflet about the project. If you or your family have any concerns about the project please let your teacher know.

Thanks for reading this leaflet.

If you would like to talk to XXXXX about the project, please telephone XXXXXX or email XXXXX@exeter.ac.uk .

Appendix 37

Consent Form for School Staff

Social participation of children with MLD in schools

I have read the project information leaflet and I am aware of the study's aims, research activities envisaged and the degree of involvement required from me. I understand that the research is confidential and that there is no intention to identify the school or individual teachers and pupils in future research outputs. With this in mind, I confirm that I am willing to take part in the project and:

- Be interviewed by the researcher
- Allow the administration of three questionnaires to all pupils in my classroom
- Allow researcher to take carry out some observation in my classroom

Name

Signature.....

Date.....

Signature of researcher.....

Date

Appendix 38

The social participation of pupils with SEN in a mainstream primary school in the Southwest of England

Information Leaflet for school staff

Dear Teacher,

I would like to invite you to take part in my research which aims to examine the social participation of children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) in your school. Specifically, my research will investigate a) the quality of social participation of children with MLD b) the level of peer-acceptance experienced c) the social and self-concept d) and the social interaction between student held by pupils with MLD in all the classes in year 3, 4, 5 and 6. It is a mixed research study that I am undertaking as part of my Ph.D degree at Exeter University.

About the study

The aims of this study are:

- ❖ To investigate the concepts of MLD/Slow learning and compare the assessment methods used in each country.
- ❖ To investigate the four dimensions of social participation of children identified as MLD/Slow learning in Kuwait and England
- ❖ To investigate the interrelation of the four dimensions of social participation
- ❖ To compare the social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow learning with their peers in Kuwait and England
- ❖ To investigate the stability of social participation of children identified as having MLD/Slow learning in Kuwait and England
- ❖ To investigate the quality of social participation of some case study children identified as having MLD/Slow learning in Kuwait and England

The Research questions are:

- ❖ To what extent are the four dimensions of social participation inter-related?
- ❖ To what extent do the different groups of children (i.e., MLD/slow learning, non-SEN and other categories of SEN) differ in their social participation in Kuwait and in England?
- ❖ To what extent did the level of social participation of different groups of children (i.e., MLD/slow learning, non-SEN and other categories of SEN) remain stable over time?
- ❖ What is the nature and quality of social participation of the case study children identified as having MLD\Slow learning in Kuwait as compared with England?
- ❖ To what extent is the quality of social participation of the case study children stable over time?

Fieldwork in your school

The research will utilise a mixed-method design involving the administration of three questionnaires to pupils followed up with short interviews with teachers and some observation in the classes. All the instruments are designed to be confidential and will take place at a time convenient to the teachers and the school.

Your involvement in the study

As outlined earlier, I would like to conduct a short interview with you in order to gain a better understanding of your views on the social position of children with MLD in your classroom and elicit information about their friendships, social contacts, social interaction and what they think about their selves.

Given your ample experience and in-depth knowledge of your class, your contribution in this study will be greatly appreciated. I would therefore be grateful if you could dedicate some of your time for the interview process. The interview is going to last for approximately half an hour and it will take place during your break time or any time you prefer in the school.

Please, let me know if something is not clear so that I can provide the necessary explanations. Moreover, have in mind that your anonymity will be secured and the

information given will be treated under the scope of ethical codes; therefore feel free to express your opinion on the issue examined.

Title of the project:	Comparison between social participation of pupils with SEN in a mainstream and special primary school in the Southwest of England
Supervisor:	Professor Brahm Norwich , University of Exeter
Researcher:	XXXXXX, MEd in Special Educational Needs, University of Exeter

Thank you in advance for your help. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me by e-mail (XXXXXXX@exeter.ac.uk) or phone (XXXXXXXXXX) if you have any inquiries.

Yours sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXX

Appendix 39

Authorised methods in Kuwait

الاسم:	العدد:	
المرحلة:	الجنس: ذكر - أنثى (ضع دائرة)	

من هم أصدقاؤك المفضلون في الفصل ؟ (يمكنك كتابة خمس أسماء كحد أقصى أو أقل)

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

ثم أرتب دائرة حول أفضل صديق مقرب إليك من بين أسماء أصدقاؤك المذكورة أعلاه



شكراً جزيلاً



الآن أجب عن الأسئلة التالية

صحيح تماماً	صحيح غالباً	أحياناً صحيحاً وأحياناً خطأ	خطأ غالباً	خطأ تماماً	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. لذي الكثير من الأصدقاء.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. أنا أكون صداقات بسهولة.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. معظم الفتيات لديهم أصدقاء أكثر مني.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. أنا أصاحب الأطفال بسهولة.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. من السهل أن يجني الأقران الذين هم في نفس عمري.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. الأطفال الآخرون يرضونني كصديق لهم.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. أنا لذي أصدقاء أكثر من الأطفال الآخرون.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. أنا أحب معرفة بين الأطفال الذين هم في نفس عمري.....
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. معظم الأطفال الآخرون يحبونني.....

Appendix 40

(Legal approvals in Kuwait)

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
CAPITAL EDUCATIONAL AREA
Director Manager office

وزارة التربية
لإدارة الامامة لمنطقة العاصمة التعليمية
مكتب المدير العام

19 DEC 2012
الرقم: 27917

التاريخ: 2012 / 12 / 18 م

الرقم: / ط / ف ل

السيدة المحترمة / مدير مدرسة

تحية طيبة وبعد،،،

**تسهيل مهمة الطالب
بدر جاسم القلاف**

بالإشارة إلى كتاب مدير إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي رقم (812) المؤرخ في 2012 / 12 / 07 م،
بشان الموضوع أعلاه ،،،
يقوم الطالب/ بدر جاسم القلاف - المسجل على درجة الدكتوراه في تخصص تربية خاصة
تخلف عقلي بإجراء دراسة في " العلاقات الاجتماعية لطلبة بطيئي التعلم والطرق المختلفة
للكشف عنهم في المملكة المتحدة والكويت ".
لذا يرجى تسهيل مهمة المذكور أعلاه بتطبيق أداء الدراسة (استبانة) المختومة صفحاتها من
إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي على طلبة ومعلمي فصول بطيئي التعليم بالمدرسة.
وذلك خلال الفصل الدراسي الحالي 2012 / 2013 م.

شاكرون حسن تعاونكم

مدير عام
منطقة العاصمة التعليمية
الإدارة العامة لمنطقة العاصمة التعليمية

وزارة التربية
منطقة العاصمة التعليمية
المدير العام

نسخ

- مدير عام المنطقة
- مدير إدارة الشؤون التعليمية
- المكتب
- أسامة بن جبر

k



THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY
FOR APPLIED EDUCATION & TRAINING



الهيئة العامة
للتدريب التطبيقي والتدريب



الإشارة :
التاريخ : ١٦ ديسمبر ٢٠١٢

شهادة من يهيمه الأمر

تشهد الهيئة العامة للتعليم التطبيقي والتدريب بأن السيد / بدر جاسم القلاف -موفد في بعثة دراسية للحصول على درجتي الماجستير والدكتوراه في تخصص تربية خاصة - خلف عظمي من ٢٠٠٩/٧/٦ ولمدة ٦ سنوات من تاريخه. وقد أعطيت لها هذه الشهادة - بناء على طلبه وذلك لتقديمها إلي وزارة التربية لتسهيل مهمته في بحث الدكتوراه دون أدنى مسئولية على الهيئة فيما يتعلق بحقوق الغير، مع الإحاطة بأن صلاحية هذه الشهادة ثلاثة شهور فقط من تاريخه.

ع: المدير العام





وزارة التربية
الإدارة العامة لمنطقة العاصمة التعليمية
مكتب مدير إدارة الشؤون التعليمية

السيدة المحترمة / مديرة مدرسة |

السيد المحترم / مدير مدرسة |

تحية طيبة وبعد

يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة السيد / بدر جاسم أنقلاف المسجل على درجة
ماجستير والدكتوراه في تخصص التربية بخاصة (تخلف عقلي) / الهيئة العامة
للتعليم التطبيقي والتدريب والموفد في بعثة من ٢٠٠٩/٧/٢٤م ولمدة ٦ سنوات بإجراء
دراسة حول موضوع (تخلف عقلي) فالرجاء تسهيل مهمته في مدارسكم لجمع
المعلومات الخاصة بالبعثة.

مع خالص التحية

مدير

إدارة الشؤون التعليمية

نسخة الركن من :

- إدارة الشؤون التعليمية
- قسم التخطيط والإحصاءات



التاريخ / / 14
الموافق 12 / 17 / 2012 م

الرقم : وت / 813
مرفقات /

السيد المحترم/

مدير عام منطقة حولي التعليمية

تحية طيبة وبعد،،،

الموضوع / تسهيل مهمة

يقوم الباحث/ بدر جاسم الغلاف المسجل على درجة الدكتوراه في تخصص تربية خاصة تخلف عني بنبراه دراسة عن (العلاقات الاجتماعية لطلبة بطيني التعلم وطرق المختلفة لكشف عنهم في المملكة المتحدة والكويت).

فيرجى تسهيل مهمة المذكور أعلاه لعمل زيارة ميدانية من خلال تطبيق (استبانة) المختومة صفحاتها من إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي على طلبة ومعلمي فصول بطيني التعلم في مدارس المرحلة الابتدائية والمتوسطة التابعة لمنطقتكم التعليمية خلال العام الدراسي الحالي 2013/2012م.

مع خالص الشكر والتقدير

تم مدير إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي

د. سحر محمد عبد الوهاب
حسين



سلا تحلف

Aziza/2012



التاريخ / / ٢٠١٤
الموافق 11/ 11/ 2013 م

الرقم: وت / 812
مرفقات /

السيدة المحترمة/

مدير عام منطقة العاصمة التعليمية

تحية طيبة وبعد،،،

الموضوع / تسهيل مهمة

يقوم الباحث/ بدر جاسم الغلاف المسجل على درجة الدكتوراه في تخصص تربوية خاصة تخلف عقلي بإجراء دراسة عن (العلاقات الاجتماعية لطلبة بطيني التعلم وطرق المختلفة للكشف عنهم في المملكة المتحدة والكويت).

فيرجى تسهيل مهمة المتكور اعلاه لعميل زيارة ميدانية من خلال تطبيق (استبيان) المحترمة صفحاتها من إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي على طلبة ومعلمي فصول بطيني التعلم في مدارس المرحلة الابتدائية والمتوسطة التابعة لمنطقتكم التعليمية خلال العام الدراسي الحالي 2013/2012م.

مع خالص الشكر والتقدير

مدير إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي

د. محمد عبد الكريم الربيع

شكر وتقدير

إدارة البحوث

Adria/2012



التاريخ / / 14
الموافق 112 / 117 / 2012 م

الرقم : وت / 813
مرفقات /

السيد المحترم /

مدير عام منطقة حولي التعليمية

تحية طيبة وبعد،،،

الموضوع / تسهيل مهمة

يقوم الباحث/ بدر جاسم الغلاب المسجل على درجة الدكتوراه في تخصص تربية خاصة تخلف عني ببراءة دراسة عن (العلاقات الاجتماعية لطلبة بطيني التعلم وطرق المختلفة لتكثف عنهم في المملكة المتحدة والكويت).

فيرجى تسهيل مهمة المذكور أعلاه لعمل زيارة ميدانية من خلال تطبيق (استبانة) المختومة صفحاتها من إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي على صنية ومعلمي فصول بطيني التعلم في مدارس المرحلة الابتدائية والمتوسطة التابعة لمنطقتكم التعليمية خلال العام الدراسي الحالي 2013/2012م.

مع خالص الشكر والتقدير

مدير إدارة البحوث والتطوير التربوي

د. سميرة محمد عبد الوهاب
حسين



نسخة تظفر

Azize/2012

Appendix 42

(Copy of the original written answer by one SEN advisor)

الفرق بين بطيئى التعلم و صعوبات التعلم و التأخر الدراسي

التأخر الدراسي	صعوبات التعلم	بطء التعلم	مظاهر التأخر
نسبة الذكاء عادية أو مرتفعة من 90 فما فوق	نسبة الذكاء في حدود المتوسط أو المرتفعة من 85 فما فوق	نسبة الذكاء منخفضة عن المتوسط أي من 70 إلى 84	القدرة العقلية (معامل الذكاء)
منخفض في مادة دراسية أو أكثر بسبب عوامل خارجية كالمرض أو التغيب عن المدرسة و غيرها من العوامل .	منخفض في مهارة أو أكثر من مهارات التعلم : الاستماع أو الكلام أو القراءة أو الكتابة أو الذاكرة أو الانتباه أو الإدراك أو التركيز أو الحساب .	منخفض في المواد الدراسية جميعها مع وجود قدرة محدودة على الاستيعاب	التحصيل الدراسي
مشكلات اجتماعية أو بيئية أو صحية أو نفسية	قصور وظيفي في الجهاز العصبي المركزي (خلل في وظيفة الأجزاء المسئولة عن اكتساب اللغة في الدماغ) .	انخفاض نسبة الذكاء	سبب تدني التحصيل الدراسي
مرتبطة بسلوكيات غير مرغوبة أو يعاني إحباطا نتيجة تجارب فاشلة .	اعتيادية و قد يصاحبها فرط نشاط أو تشتت انتباه أو مشكلات اجتماعية .	مشكلات نسبية بسبب عوامل بيئية أو وراثية في السلوك التكيفي .	المظاهر السلوكية
الاستفادة من خدمات المرشد التربوي أو الاختصاصي النفسي أو الاجتماعي .	برامج متعددة حسب شدة الصعوبة تبدأ من المدرسة العادية بوجود اختصاصي صعوبات التعلم و بدعم جزئي للطلبة و تنتهي بالمراكز المتخصصة المستقلة بدعم كامل للطلبة من قبل فريق متخصص .	يكون في الصف العادي مع تقديم خدمات تربوية خاصة و حاجة لمنهاج معدل يتناسب مع قدراتهم ، و بحاجة لاهتمام فردي يفوق غيرهم .	الخدمات التي ممكن أن تقدم لكل شريحة
يمكنهم الحصول على وظائف عليا أو مناصب قيادية .	يمكنهم الحصول على وظائف عليا أو مناصب قيادية .	يعتبر الوصول لمناصب قيادية تحديا لهم .	المستقبل الوظيفي أو المهني

Appendix 43

(Copy of some examples on the answer sheet of the adopted Wechsler IQ test in Kuwait)

Part 1

1

مراقبة الخدمة النفسية
قسم الإعداد المهني والتدريب

الرقم

مقياس وكسلر الكويت لذكاء الأطفال
المراجعة الثالثة
كراس تسجيل الإجابات



وزارة التربية

إدارة الخدمات الاجتماعية والنفسية

قسم

الأسم :

المدرسة :

الجنس :

سبب التحويل :

الاختصاصي النفسي :

بروفيل مقياس وكسلر

يقوم الاختصاصي النفسي بتحويل الدرجات الخام إلى درجات موزونة لكل اختبار ويكتبها في الصناديق الموجودة أسفل هذا الكلام، ثم يضع دائرة صغيرة على النقطة المقابلة للدرجة الموزونة لكل اختبار، وبعد ذلك يرسم خطاً يصل بين هذه العلامات.

المقياس العملي					المقياس اللفظي							
المتاهات	البحث عن الأشكال	تجميع الأشياء	رسوم المكعبات	ترتيب الصور	الترميز	تكميل الصور	إعادة الأرقام	الفهم	المفردات	الحساب	التشابهات	المعلومات
الدرجة	الدرجة	الدرجة	الدرجة	الدرجة	الدرجة	الدرجة	الدرجة	الدرجة	الدرجة	الدرجة	الدرجة	الدرجة
الموزونة	الموزونة	الموزونة	الموزونة	الموزونة	الموزونة	الموزونة	الموزونة	الموزونة	الموزونة	الموزونة	الموزونة	الموزونة
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18	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	0	0	18
17	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	0	17
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8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	8
7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	7
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	6
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3

يوم شهر تاريخ

تاريخ الاختبار

تاريخ الميلاد

العمر

الدرجة الموزونة	الدرجة الخام	الاختبارات اللفظية
		المعلومات
		المتشابهات
		الحساب
		المفردات
		الفهم
		(إعادة الأرقام)
		مجموع الدرجات اللفظية
		الاختبارات العملية
		تكميل الصور
		الترميز
		ترتيب الصور
		رسومات المكعبات
		تجميع الأشياء
		(البحث عن الأشكال)
		(المتاهات)
		مجموع الدرجات العملية
		الدرجة اللفظية

ن-ذ

د-م

(يوقف الاختبار بعد فقرتين فشل)



(٧) رسوم المكعبات

الطفل

الدرجة	الدرجة (ضع دائرة حول الاجابة المناسبة)	الاجابة الصحيحة	زمن الانتهاء	الرسم الخاطئ	الزمن	الرسم الصح
	محاولة (١) محاولة (٢) صفر (١) (٢)	ن ر ر ن		محاولة (١) محاولة (٢)	٣٠	٧-٦ -١
	محاولة (١) محاولة (٢) صفر (١) (٢)	ن ر ر ن		محاولة (١) محاولة (٢)	٤٥	-٢
	محاولة (١) محاولة (٢) صفر (١) (٢)	ن ر ر ن		محاولة (١) محاولة (٢)	٤٥	١٦-٨ -٣
	صفر ٤٥-١٦ ١٥-١١ ١٠-٦ ٥-١ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧	ن ر			٤٥	-٤
	صفر ٤٥-٢١ ٢٠-١٦ ١٥-١١ ١٠-١ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧	ن ر			٤٥	-٥
	صفر ٧٥-٢١ ٢٠-١٦ ١٥-١١ ١٠-١ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧	ن ر			٧٥	-٦
	صفر ٧٥-٢١ ٢٠-١٦ ١٥-١١ ١٠-١ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧	ن ر			٧٥	-٧
	صفر ٧٥-٢١ ٢٠-١٦ ١٥-١١ ١٠-١ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧	ن ر			٧٥	-٨
	صفر ٧٥-٢٦ ٢٥-١٦ ١٥-١١ ١٠-١ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧	ن ر			٧٥	-٩
	صفر ١٢٠-٤١ ٤٠-٣١ ٣٠-٢٦ ٢٥-١ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧	ن ر			١٢٠	-١٠
	صفر ١٢٠-٥٦ ٥٥-٣٦ ٣٥-٣١ ٣٠-١ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧	ن ر			١٢٠	-١١
	صفر ١٢٠-٥٦ ٥٥-٣٦ ٣٥-٣١ ٣٠-١ ٤ ٥ ٦ ٧	ن ر			١٢٠	-١٢

Appendix 44

(Stanford-Binet's answer sheet)

76/10/EA0097542/05/2000

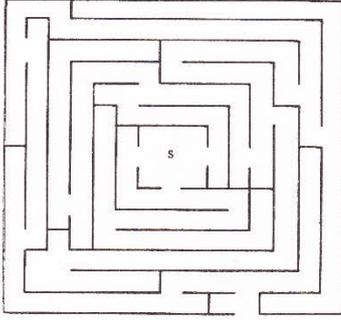
كتاب الإجابة

الدرجة الخام الدرجة المعيارية		أ- الاستدلال اللفظي:	
..	..	١- المفردات	..
..	..	٦- الفهم	..
..	..	٧- السخافات	..
..	..	١٤- العلاقات اللفظية	..
..	..	مجموع الدرجات المعيارية للاختبارات الفرعية	..
الدرجة المعيارية للاستدلال اللفظي		<input type="text"/>	
ب- الاستدلال البصري التجريدي:		مقياس بينيه الكويت للذكاء	
..	..	٥- تحليل النمط	..
..	..	٩- النسخ	..
..	..	١١- المصفوفات	..
..	..	١٣- طي وقطع الورق	..
..	..	مجموع الدرجات المعيارية للاختبارات الفرعية	..
الدرجة المعيارية للاستدلال البصري/التجريدي		<input type="text"/>	
ج- الاستدلال الكمي:		الطبعة الرابعة	
..	..	٣- الحساب	..
..	..	١٢- سلاسل الأرقام	..
..	..	١٥- بناء المعادلات	..
..	..	مجموع الدرجات المعيارية للاختبارات الفرعية	..
الدرجة المعيارية للاستدلال الكمي		<input type="text"/>	
د- الذاكرة قصيرة المدى:		روبرت ثورنديك - اليزابيث هاجن - جيروم سناثر	
..	..	٢- ذاكرة الخرز	..
..	..	٤- ذاكرة الجمل	..
..	..	٨- ذاكرة الأعداد	..
..	..	١٠- ذاكرة الأشياء	..
..	..	مجموع الدرجات المعيارية للاختبارات الفرعية	..
الدرجة المعيارية للذاكرة قصيرة المدى		<input type="text"/>	
المجموع الكلي للدرجات المعيارية للمجالات		تعريب وإعداد وتقنين	
الدرجة المركبة	<input type="text"/>	أ.د مصري عبدالحميد حنورة	
درجة الذكاء المعيارية المركبة للمقياس الكلي	<input type="text"/>	مواعمة اللهجة الكويتية	
درجة الذكاء المعيارية المركبة للمقياس المختصر	<input type="text"/>	دلال المشعان	
درجة المقياس المختصر حسب من اختبارات	..	اسم المفحوص: .. الجنس: ذكر/أنثى	
..	..	الدين: .. الجنسية: .. المحافظة: ..	
..	..	درجات الاختبارات السابقة: ..	
..	..	يوم: .. شهر: .. سنة: ..	
..	..	تاريخ التطبيق: ..	
..	..	تاريخ الميلاد: ..	
..	..	العمر الزمني: ..	
..	..	الصف الدراسي: .. المدرسة (أو الكلية والجامعة): ..	
..	..	النسبة المئوية للنجاح (أو المعدل) في آخر سنة دراسية: ()	
..	..	المؤهل: .. المهنة: ..	
..	..	جهة عمل المفحوص (إن وجدت): ..	
..	..	مهنة الأب: .. مهنة الأم: ..	
..	..	اسم الفاحص: .. الجهة التابع لها: ..	
..	..	أسباب التحويل للفحص: ..	
ملخص العوامل والظروف المؤثرة في الأداء على المقياس متوسط الدرجات *		١- الانتباه:	
١- الانتباه:		٢- الاستجابات أثناء تطبيق المقياس:	
٢- الاستجابات أثناء تطبيق المقياس:		٣- الاستقلال العاطفي:	
٣- الاستقلال العاطفي:		٤- سلوك حل المشكلات:	
٤- سلوك حل المشكلات:		٥- الاستقلال عن تدعيم الفاحص:	
٥- الاستقلال عن تدعيم الفاحص:		٦- اللغة التعبيرية:	
٦- اللغة التعبيرية:		٧- لغة التلقي:	
٧- لغة التلقي:		٨- خلاصة العلاقة:	
٨- خلاصة العلاقة:		* يُحسب متوسط الدرجات بجمع تقديرات كل عامل (ص ٢) ويُقسم	

Appendix 45

(Examples of Portues mazes)

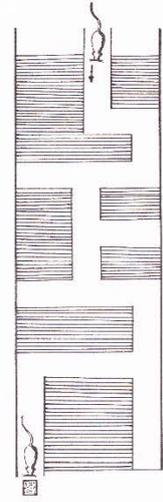
Part 1



متاهات پورتیس - مراجعة فاینلاند - ال راشد

نمودج ۱۴۵

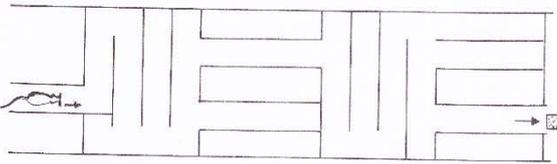
۷۶/۷۰/۰۰۷۹/۸۹/۵۰



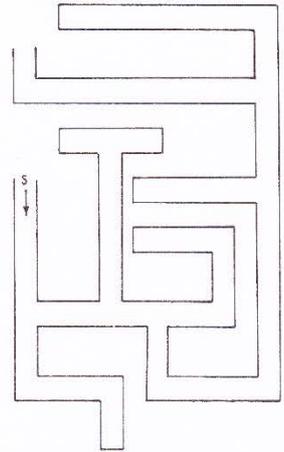
76 / 70 / EA0033972 / 07 / 50

متاهات پورتیس - مراجعة فاینلاند - ۵

76 / 70 / EA0033984 / 07 / 50



متاهات پورتیس - مراجعة فاینلاند - ۶

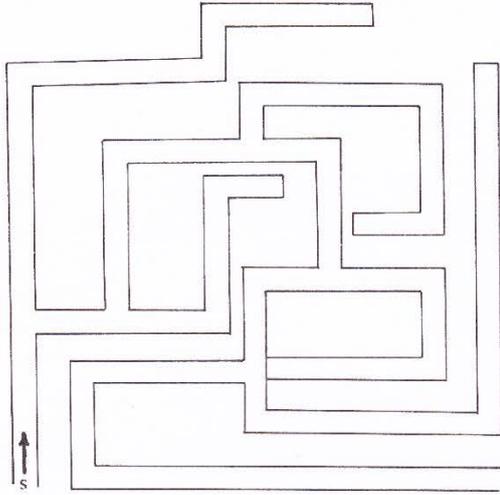


متاهات پورتیس - مراجعة فاینلاند - ۸

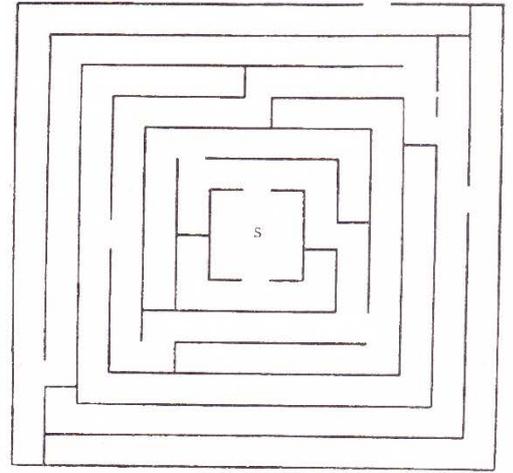
نمودج ۱۶۵

76 / 70 / EA0033974 / 07 / 50

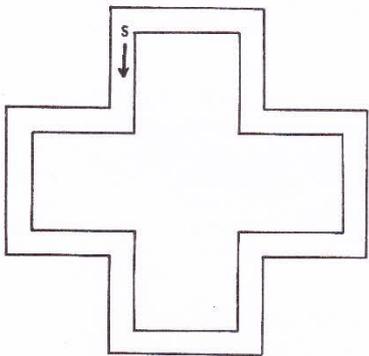
Examples of Portues mazes
Part 2



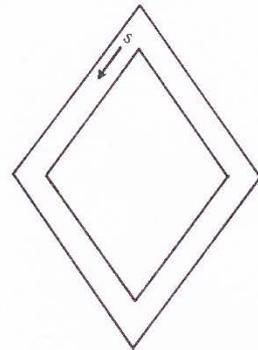
متاهات پورتیس - مراجعہ فاینلاند - ۹



متاهات پورتیس - مراجعہ فاینلاند - ۱۴



متاهات پورتیس - مراجعہ فاینلاند - ۴

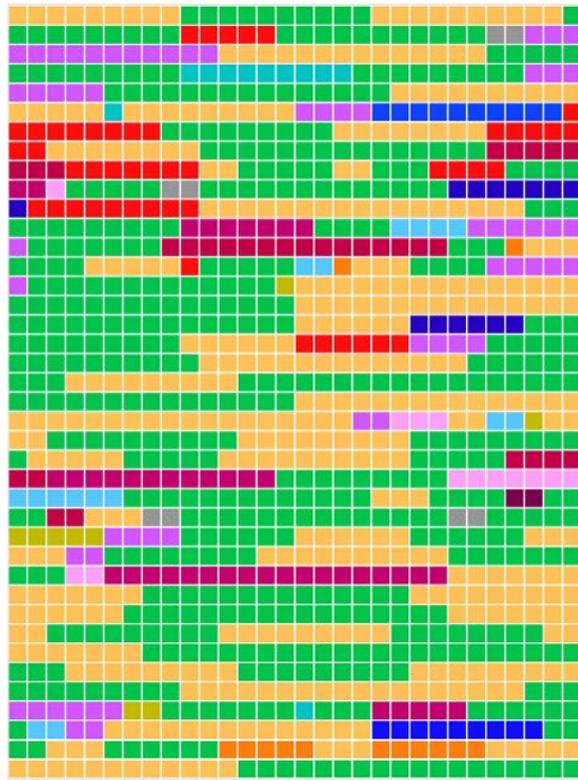


متاهات پورتیس - مراجعہ فاینلاند - ۳

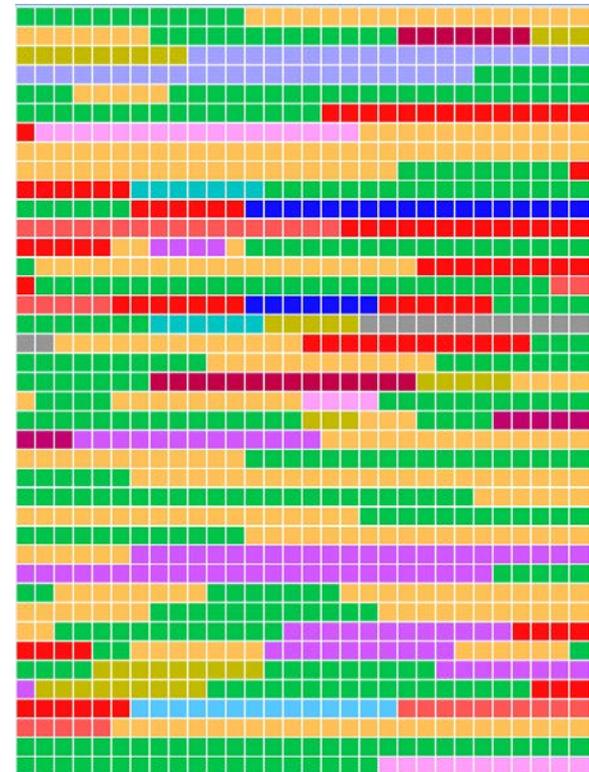
Appendix 46

The overview of coded segments based on segments' size in the coded document

Sara interaction in term 1



Sara interaction in term 2

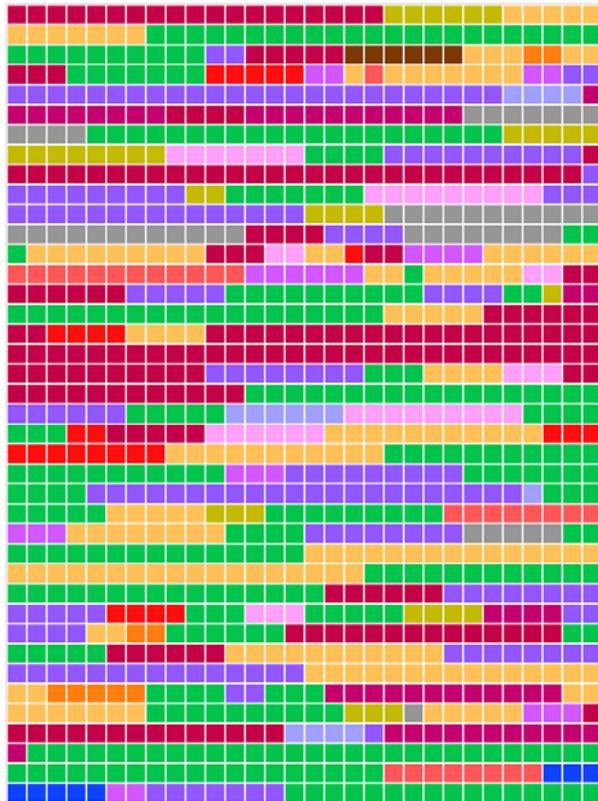


Full interaction	Positive interaction	Momentary interaction for brief time	Verbal	Request
Continuing interacting - with prior child	Limited interaction	Physical	Ignore	
Negative interaction	Continuing interacting - for continuous period	Non-Verbal	Reject	

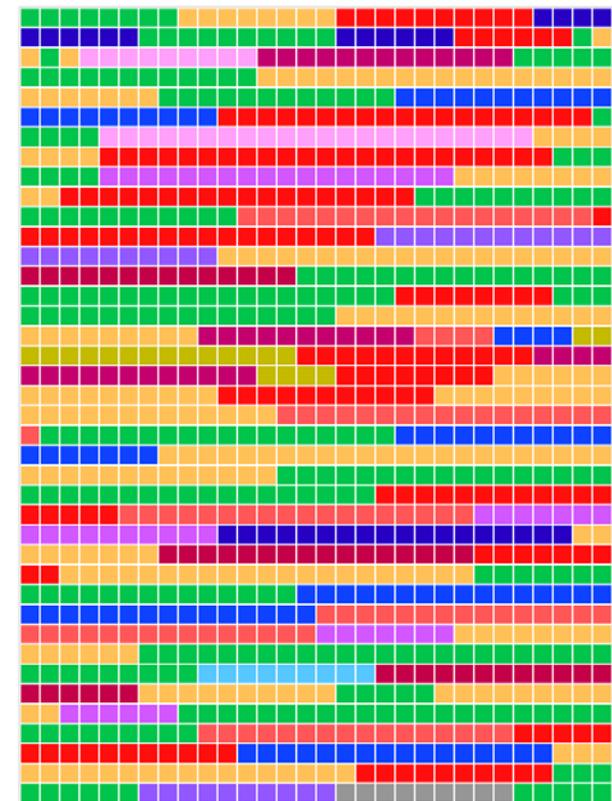
Appendix 47

The overview of coded segments based on segments' size in the coded document

David interaction in term 1



David interaction in term 2

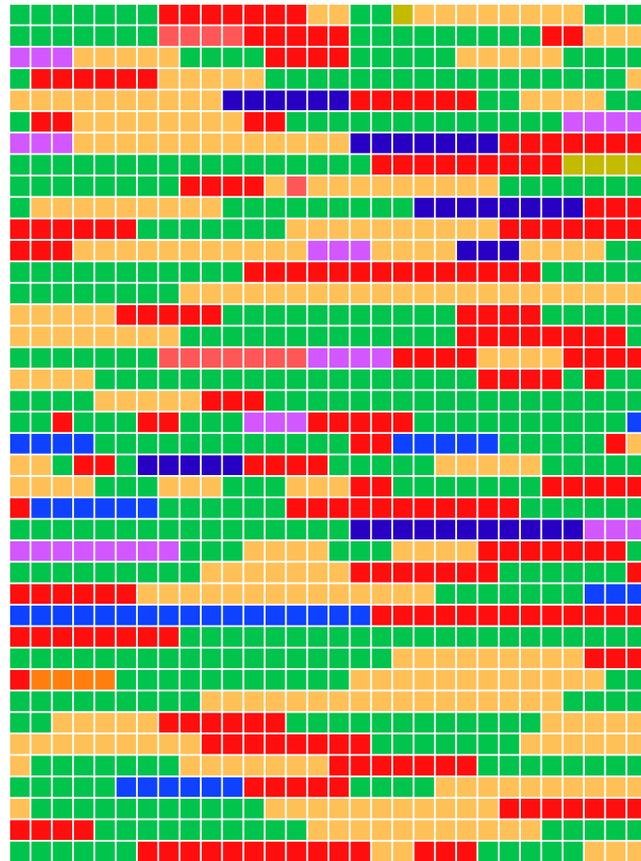


 Full interaction	 Positive interaction	 Momentary interaction for brief time	 Verbal	
 Continuing interacting - with prior child	 Limited interaction	 Physical	 Ignore	 Request
 Negative interaction	 Continuing interacting - for continuous period	 Non-Verbal	 Reject	 Being alone

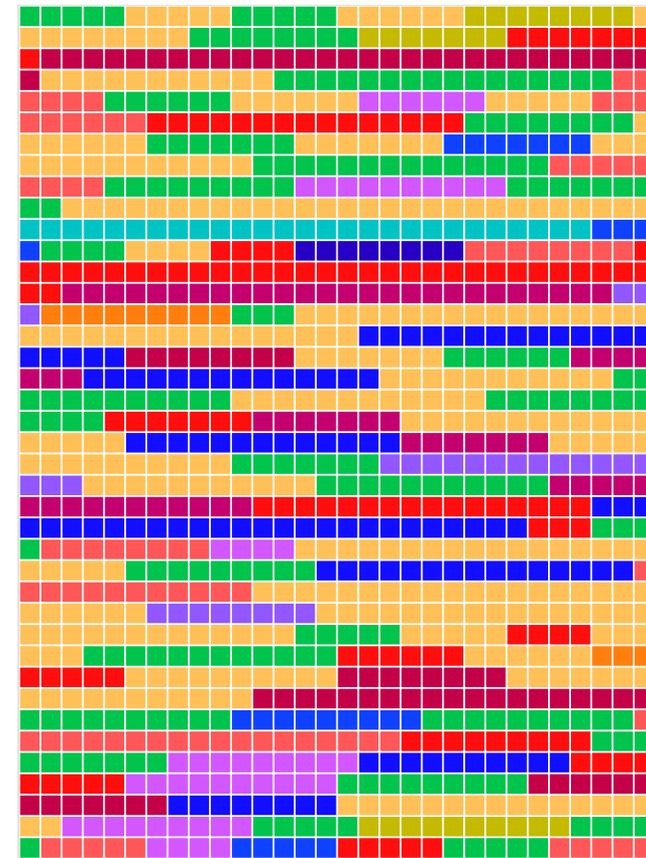
Appendix 48

The overview of coded segments based on segments' size in the coded document

Tom interaction in term 1



Tom interaction in term 2

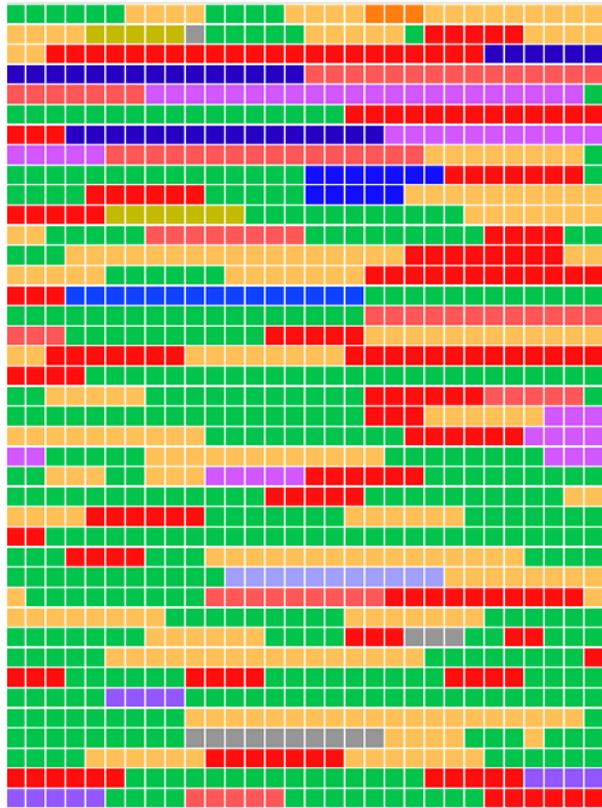


Full interaction	Positive interaction	Momentary interaction for brief time	Verbal	
Continuing interacting - with prior child	Limited interaction	Physical	Ignore	Request
Negative interaction	Continuing interacting - for continuous period	Non-Verbal	Reject	Being alone

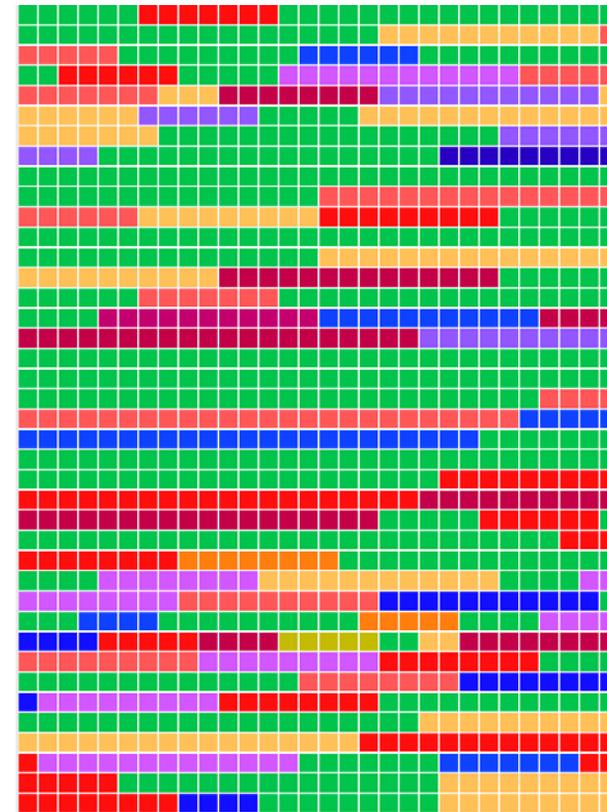
Appendix 49

The overview of coded segments based on segments' size in the coded document

Jake interaction in term 1



Jake interaction in term 2



Full interaction	Positive interaction	Momentary interaction for brief time	Verbal	
Continuing interacting - with prior child	Limited interaction	Physical	Ignore	Request
Negative interaction	Continuing interacting - for continuous period	Non-Verbal	Reject	Being alone

Appendix 50

The original school report for Ali's Parent regarding his academic attainments in all of the school module

وزارة التربية والتعليم
الإدارة العامة للتربية الخاصة - مسجون خاصة

نظام سجل الطالب
العام الدراسي: ٢٠١٣-٢٠١٤

بطاقة درجات الفترة الثالثة

اسم الطالب: [REDACTED]
الصف: [REDACTED]
التفصيل: 5

الدرجة التي تم خصمها بسبب الغياب	ملاحظات	درجة الطالب	النهاية الصفوي	النهاية المنطوق	المعدل الدراسي
0		48.0	25.0	50	قرآن الكريم
0		48.0	25.0	50	تربية اسلامية
0		35.5	25.0	50	لغة عربية
0		37.0	25.0	50	لغة الإنجليزية
0		37.0	25.0	50	رياضيات
0		40.0	25.0	50	علوم
0		48.0	25.0	50	اجتماعيات
0		50.0	25.0	50	تربية وطنية
		343.50	200.00	400.00	المجموع
		جيد جدا	التقدير العام	85.9 %	النسبة المئوية
0		امتياز	0	50	مهارات الحياتية
0		امتياز	0	50	حاسب آلي
0		امتياز	0	50	تربية قلبية
0		ضعيف	0	50	تربية بدنية
0		جيد جدا	0	50	تربية موسيقية

عدد أيام الغياب: 0 بغير
0 بدون عذر

مدير المدرسة
[REDACTED]

ختم المدرسة

Appendix 51

The original school report for Ahmad's Parent regarding his academic attainments in all of the school module

وزارة التربية
الإمارة العامة للتربية الخاصة - حصول خاصة

نظام سجل الطالب
العام الدراسي: ٢٠١٣\٢٠١٤

بطاقة درجات الفترة الثالثة

اسم الطالب: [Redacted]
الصف: [Redacted] الفصل: 6

الدرجة التي تم خصمها بسبب الغياب	ملاحظات	درجة الطالب	النهاية الصفوف	النهاية العظمى	المجال الدراسي
0		50.0	25.0	50	قرآن كريم
0		49.0	25.0	50	تربية اسلاميه
0		48.0	25.0	50	لغة عربية
0		44.0	25.0	50	لغة انجليزية
0		50.0	25.0	50	رياضيات
0		45.0	25.0	50	علوم
0		46.0	25.0	50	اجتماعيات
0		48.0	25.0	50	تربية وطنية
		380.00	200.00	400.00	المجموع
		امتحان	التقدير العام	% 95.0	النسبة المئوية
0		امتحان	0	50	مهارات الحياة
0		امتحان	0	50	حاسب آلي
0		امتحان	0	50	تربية فنية
0		امتحان	0	50	تربية بدنية
0		امتحان	0	50	تربية موسيقية

عدد أيام الغياب: 0 بحر
بدون غتر: 0

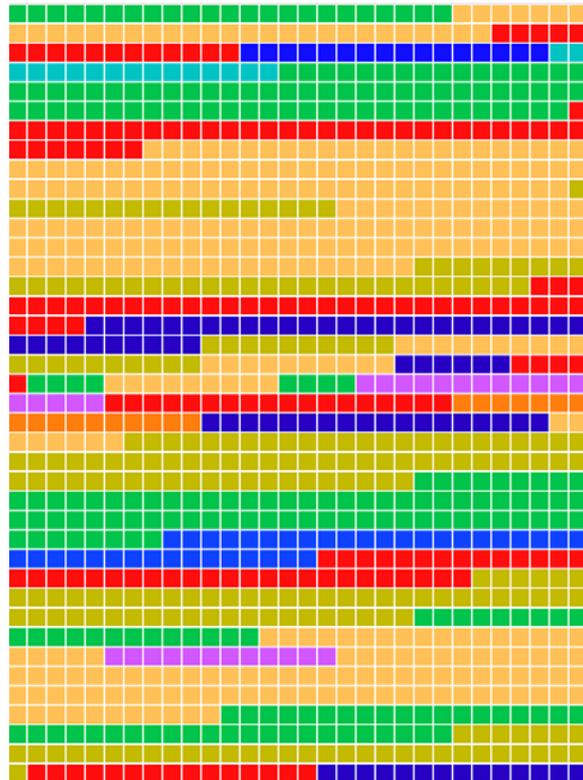
مدير المدرسة: [Redacted]
ختم المدرسة

التاريخ: 2014/6/5

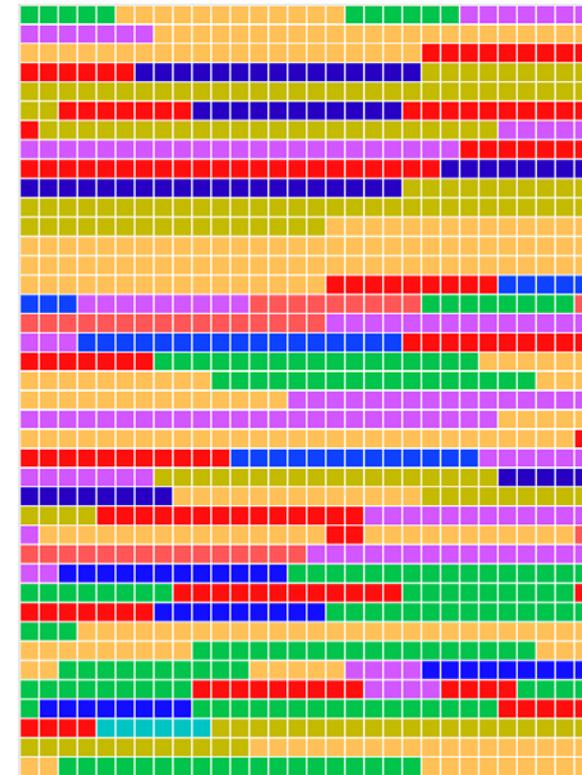
Appendix 52

The overview of coded segments based on segments' size in the coded document

Omar interaction in term 1



Omar interaction in term 2



 Full interaction	 Positive interaction	 Momentary interaction for brief time	 Verbal	
 Continuing interacting - with prior child	 Limited interaction	 Physical	 Ignore	 Request
 Negative interaction	 Continuing interacting - for continuous period	 Non-Verbal	 Reject	 Being alone

Appendix 53

(Children's interaction rules)

Table 2: Children's and young people's interaction rules according to the age group they seem to come into being

3–9 years of age

Prohibiting rules

You must not

- Physically harm your peers
- Express wrong feelings
- Lose face (from about 6 years of age)
- Disturb or destroy other children's ongoing activities
- Become dirty or sticky

Mandating rules

Mandating rules do not exist at this stage, which makes children more easily manipulated by adults or older children

10–14 years of age

Prohibiting rules

Prohibiting rules continue in a more nuanced manner, depending on various activities' status among peers

Mandating rules

You must:

- Be good enough
- Be similar enough
- Be status congruent

15–16 years of age

Prohibiting rules

Prohibiting rules continue to exist in the same manner as in the 10–14 years age span

Mandating rules

Mandating rules continue to exist in a more nuanced manner, depending on different status-markers and activities in various subgroups

(Quoted from Ytterhus, 2012, P:208)

References

References

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