Chapter 8

Research Results

8.1 Introduction

In this part of the thesis the following 3 research questions will be examined.

Research Question 1: Was the experience of taking part in the SAG perceived as positive, according to the views of all SAG students?

Research Question 2: Was the experience of taking part in the SAG perceived as positive, according to the views of the professionals involved?

Research Question 3: Was the experience of taking part in the SAG perceived as positive, according to the views of parents of all SAG students?

This whole chapter is devoted again on exploring participants' perspectives about their experience of participation in the SAG.

8.2 Students' Perspectives

Research Question: Was the experience of taking part in the SAG perceived as positive, according to the views of all SAG students?

Introductory information

Data were gathered with 2 questionnaires given to all student participants, questionnaire 3a (Appendix 46) and questionnaire 3b (Appendix 47). The first questionnaire (3a- Appendix 46) was given to students when SAG was completed in primary school and the second questionnaire (3b- Appendix 47) was given when SAG was completed in secondary school.

Data Analysis

First of all it was examined how many students gave positive or negative answers. Afterwards, students' explanations about their positive or negative answers were categorized under main themes. The frequency of appearance of main themes in

students' answers is being reported. During analysis there is also reference to 2 subgroups: students with CD and mainstream peers.

In relation to questionnaire 3b, there is a quantitative presentation of how much students 'enjoyed' their participation in the SAG, because the following scale was used:

Table 8.1 Scale used in question 6- questionnaire 3b ("Have you enjoyed your participation in the research project?")

0	No
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	Very much

Data Presentation

i) Data by Questionnaire 3a in Primary School (Appendix 46)

►Students' answers to the following question: "Did you like your participation in the Social Art Group?"

All SAG Students

All students replied that they liked their participation in the SAG.

►Students' answers to the following question: "What did you like more? Why?"

Students' answers are presented more analytically in Appendix 91.

Students with Communication Difficulties

Six (6) students (all apart from Cameron) replied that they liked more art activities, because they were having fun. Cameron answered that he liked more the

circle of friends, because he enjoyed discussion. Casey reported more specifically that CAS liked more the activity with the masks.

Mainstream Students

All mainstream students enjoyed more art activities, because they were having more fun during them.

►Students' answers to the following question: "What did you like less or you didn't like at all? Why?"

Students' answers are presented more analytically in Appendix 92.

Students with Communication Difficulties

Three (3) students replied that they liked less filling questionnaires. Bailey replied that he did not like the texture of glue.

Students with C.D. gave the following justifications for their answers:

- Not enjoying filling questionnaires→ being tiring, being boring (both mentioned once)
- Not enjoying using glue→ being sticky (mentioned once)

Mainstream Students

Three (3) students answered that what they liked less was filling in questionnaires; from these 3 students only 1 gave the explanation that this activity was tiring. Three (3) other mainstream students did not give any answer at all.

►Students' answers to the following question: "If you could change something in this programme, what would this be?"

Students' answers are presented more analytically in Appendix 93.

Students with Communication Difficulties

In this question 2 students replied fewer questionnaires and 3 did not give any answer at all. Crane and Drew gave the most characteristic answers; the first one mentioned that mathematics should be added and the second that there should be more sweets in sessions.

Mainstream Students

In relation to the elements of the programme which could be improved, 4 students did not give any answer at all. One student answered that there could have been a visit to the school and another one made the comment that teachers of the secondary school could have joined some meetings of the group.

ii) Data by Questionnaire 3b in Secondary School (Appendix 47)

►Students' answers to the following question: "Is there anything that you would like to be included in the programme?"

Students' answers are presented more analytically in Appendix 94.

Students with Communication Difficulties

Three (3) students gave the answer that there was not anything that they would have liked to be included in the programme. Crane and Wen made some specific suggestions; the first one asked mathematics or some other subjects to be added in the programme and the second reported that sweets should be provided to students. It is worthy noting that the deputy head teacher had advised edible rewards to be avoided. An unexpected answer came by Cameron, as this child's reply was "hope".

Mainstream Students

All mainstream students replied that there was not anything that they would have liked to be included in the programme.

►Students' answers to the following question: "Did you like your participation in the research project?

Students were asked to choose a number from 0 to 10; in this scale the meaning of 0 was 'no' whereas the meaning of 10 was 'very much'.

Table 8.2 Students' answers to the following question: "Did you like your participation in the research project?

	Student's Name	Emotional Level
Students with C.D.	Ashley (ASH)	7
	Bailey (BAI)	10
	Cameron (CAM)	
	Casey (CAS)	
	Crane (CRA)	
	Drew (DRE)	
	Wen (WEN)	
Mainstream Students	Alexis (ALE)	Having stopped taking part.
	Blair (BLA)	9
	Brett (BRE)	
	Coby (COB)	8
	Jamie (JAM)	7
	Jerry (JER)	10
	Teagan (TEA)	

Students with Communication Difficulties

In the question whether they enjoyed their participation in the research project, students chose the following numbers:

- 6 students chose the number 10 (Wen, Crane, Bailey, Casey, Drew, Cameron) and
- 1 student chose number 7 (Ashley) (Table 8.2)

Mainstream Students

In the same question mainstream students gave the following answer:

- 2 students replied 10 (Teagan and Jerry)
- 2 students replied 9 (Brett and Blair)
- 1 student chose number 8 (Coby)
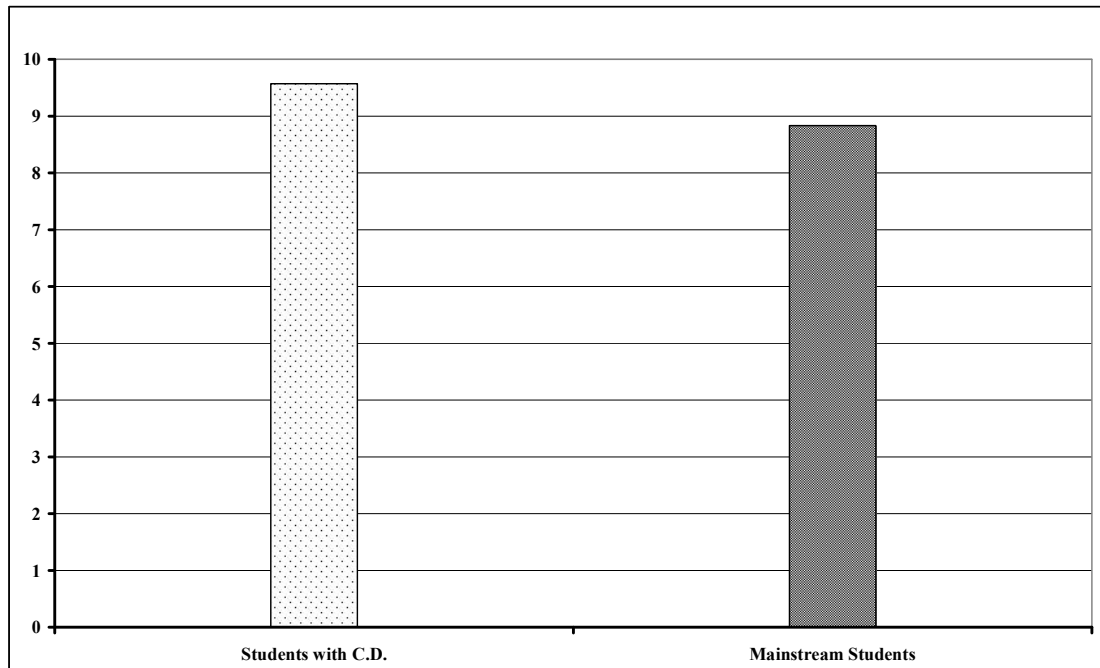- 1 student chose number 7 (Jamie) (Table 8.2)

Figure 8.1 Averages of emotional level for 2 subgroups of students.

The average of the emotional level for students with C.D. is higher than the average of the emotional level for mainstream peers (Figure 8.1). Therefore, students with C.D. as a group enjoyed more their participation in this research project than their mainstream peers. It is also noteworthy that the average for students with C.D. is higher than 9 and the average for mainstream peers is higher than 8. Consequently, according to their answers, all SAG students liked their participation in the research project.

8.3 Practitioners' Perspectives

Research Question: Was the experience of taking part in the SAG perceived as positive, according to the views of the professionals involved?

Introductory information- Data analysis

Data were gathered by the following practitioners:

- Main practitioner
- Deputy head teacher in first primary school
- Deputy head teacher in second primary school
- Principle teacher of pupil support in secondary school

- Educational psychologist in secondary school

→ *Main practitioner*

- *Introductory information:* Data were gathered by the last questionnaire given in the last session of the SAG in secondary school (Appendix 62-Questionnaire 9).
- *Data analysis*: All of the data are presented in a small text. Emphasis is given on the actual words of the main practitioner.

→ *All others practitioners*

(The deputy head-teacher in both primary schools, the principle teacher of pupil support in Secondary School, the educational psychologist)

- *Introductory information:* Data were gathered by a semi-structured interview after the completion of the research project (Appendices 58- 60, Interview Schedules 1-3). The author was writing the answers of the practitioners.
- *Data analysis:* In some cases all the answers of the practitioner are being synthesized in one text in which many extracts are being included. In other cases main themes are identified in practitioners' answers and extracts of their answers are also being presented supplementary.

Data presentation

i) Data by Main Practitioner

In the last questionnaire given to the main practitioner (Appendix 62-Questionnaire 9) there were 3 questions relevant to the above research question. These questions were the following:

1. How would you describe on the whole your participation in this research project?
2. Which part of the research do you found most challenging? Please, explain.
3. Are there any parts of the research that you find enjoyable? If yes, please explain.

In the first question, the main practitioner answered that *"it has assisted in transition."* In the second question she mentioned the *"use of questionnaires"*. More specifically she stated the opinion that *"the children found repeated use difficult to understand"*. In the third question she reported that she found enjoyable *"observing interactions during sessions"*.

ii) Data by Deputy Head Teacher in the First Primary School

The questions in this semi-structured interview (Appendix 59- Interview Schedule 1) which were related with the above research question are the following:

1. Did you find challenging the participation of the school in this research project? If yes, please explain.

2. Would you be willing to arrange something similar in the future, for example setting up a club during the preparation of children for their transition from primary to secondary school?

3. If yes, would you change anything?

Table 8.3 Answer of the deputy head teacher in the first primary school to question "Did you find challenging the participation of the school in this research project? If yes, please explain."

Practitioner's answer	
Main Themes	**Extracts**
More difficult to organize because it wasn't in her school.	
Not having knowledge of mainstream students.	*"The staff of the other school didn't have the understanding that I would for the children to put forward."*
Time-consuming coming in contact with other schools.	
Not knowing if the other school had any other programme on.	*"But because it wasn't in my school, I didn't know to inform you and M."*
Not good communication between the members of the staff in the other school.	*"...that was unfortunate, because Mrs L. left and then Mrs C. took over and there was not a transfer of information."*

Table 8.4 The answer of the deputy head teacher in the first primary school to question "Would you be willing to arrange something similar in the future, for example setting up a club during the preparation of children for their transition from primary to secondary school?"

Practitioner's answer	
Main Themes	**Extracts**
Not having the staff to widen the Friday Asperger group, in order to include students with autism and learning difficulties, such as Casey (CAS) and Drew (DRE).	*"...so I know that they are some children who wouldn't fit in the Friday school like Casey (CAS) and Drew (DRE), who wouldn't fit because of their learning difficulties. I think it would be nice to run a group for them, that would be a good idea but for the moment we don't have the resources to do it."*
Not often having many children with C.D. going to the same secondary school	*"It was rather unusual to identify so many children all going to the same secondary school. A rather unusual year. That was one of the things that were beneficial. Usually 1 or 2 children go to the same secondary school. This year I couldn't have done it. I wouldn't have this number of children going to the same secondary."*

iii) Data by Deputy Head Teacher in the Second Primary School

All queries in this semi-structured interview (Appendix 60- Interview Schedule) were associated with the above research question and they are the following:

1. Did you find challenging the participation of the school in this research project? If yes, please explain.

2. Would you be willing to arrange something similar in the future, for example setting up a club during the preparation of children for their transition from primary to secondary school?

3. If yes, would you change anything?

4. Was it difficult to select mainstream students for this group?

5. Did you have any kind of feedback by children about their participation in the SAG (initial-second group)?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

The deputy head teacher in the second primary school said that she did not find challenging the participation of the school in this research project, even though she *"would like to have been more involved, to come down each week"* to see the group; but she did not have enough time to do this. Furthermore, she said that she would be willing to arrange something similar in the future, because she thought that *"it was very beneficial to them"*. There was one thing that she would have liked to be different: *"I would have had some speakers from W., if they would be willing to do this."* She did not find difficult to select mainstream students; she reported about this:

> *"I selected them by explaining to them and then asking for volunteers. And that was more successful, wasn't it?...I think you may need to know the children. Teagan (TEA) came down, a very understanding girl. She was easy-going. Those qualities definitely helped...Blair (BLA) was kind, understanding, and really gentle. I think both Teagan (TEA) and Blair (BLA) and Coby (COB) were aware that other children had difficulties but they understood them as well. They were supporters really. Would you agree?"*

She also reported that there was not time for a lot of feedback by the students, because in the end of they year they went for a journey for one week and then they were in secondary school. However she remembered that *"they asked in the end of the year for some of their outwork"*. In the final question, she added the following:

> *"I think that they definitely benefitted by it. And for me that group and forming the group by the time they were in Secondary, they already had an established group. They could obviously build in that in Secondary school."*

iv) Data by Principle Teacher of Pupil Support (Secondary School)

The queries in this semi-structured interview (Appendix 59- Interview Schedule) which were relevant to the above research question are the following:

1. Did you find challenging the participation of the school in this research project? If yes, please explain.
2. Would you be willing to arrange something similar in the future, for example setting up a club during the preparation of children for their transition from primary to secondary school?
3. If yes, would you change anything?

Table 8.5 Answer given by principle teacher of pupil support (in secondary school) to question "Did you find challenging the participation of the school in this research project? If yes, please explain."

Practitioner's answer	
Main Themes	**Extracts**
Much time needed.	
Difficult organizing lunch time activity.	
Difficult getting permission to do various things.	
Difficult to allow children eating in class.	
Difficult distributing questionnaires.	*"giving out things and making sure that they will come back, especially the second"*

The principle teacher of pupil support was not willing to arrange something similar in the future. More specifically she gave the following answer:

"The clubs run all the time. Transition issues are done in social skills group and there are other clubs, too. ...We do extra visits for school...for a tour in the school. We do clicker. Good as a research idea, but I wouldn't include it each year, because we do many things and they settle in Secondary School."

However, she also made the following positive remark: *"It was successful this year that many children came together with C.D."*

iv) Data by Educational Psychologist (Secondary School)

The questions in this semi-structured interview (Appendix 61: Interview Schedule 3-Part A) which were related with the above research question are the following:

1. Judging by your personal experience of attending the Social Art Group in one session, is there anything you would like to modify?
2. How would you describe the climate of that session?
3. How would you select mainstream peers for such kind of programmes?

The educational psychologist answered that she would not like to modify anything. More specifically she gave the subsequent answer: *"No, I thought that the group was very successful. I felt that having the extended programme during transition helped all children to prepare very well."* She described the climate of that session as follows:

"I would say it was very relaxing and it was also focused. I think that the children were very clear about what they were doing. I think it was pupil friendly. It was pitched at the right level, the tasks were appropriate and it led pupils explore their feelings."

In relation to the criteria of selecting mainstream peers for such kind of programmes, she gave the next reply: *"Maybe children who are fairly mature and naturally friendly or showing empathy towards other children. Children who could be supportive towards other children."*

8.4 Parents' Perspectives

Research Question 3: Was the experience of taking part in the SAG perceived as positive, according to the views of parents of all SAG students?

Introductory Information

Data were gathered by the relevant questionnaire given to parents after the completion of this research project in secondary school (Appendix 63- Questionnaire 6b for parents of students with CD, Appendix 64- Questionnaire 7b for parents of mainstream peers). In this part of the thesis parents' answers which are relevant with the above research question will be examined. Therefore, in this chapter will be analysed those questions of questionnaire 6b (Appendix 63) and of questionnaire 7b (Appendix 64), which are associated with the above research question. It could be clarified that questions regarding this research question are exactly the same in both questionnaires (6b and 7b).

It was not possible any data to be collected by Cameron's parents, because they are not able to fill in questionnaires, as they have cognitive difficulties themselves, according to the deputy head teacher of the second primary school.

Data analysis

Main themes were identified in parents' answers. In some cases extracts by parents' answers are also being presented.

Data presentation

► Parents' answers to the following question: "Do you believe that your child enjoyed his/her participation in this programme?"

Parents' answers are presented more analytically in Appendix 95.

Parents of all SAG Students

All parents gave a positive answer.

► Parents' answers to the following questions: "Which part of the programme do you think that he/she liked more? Why?"

Parents' answers are presented more analytically in Appendix 96.

Parents of Students with Communication Difficulties

Parents of students with C.D. replied that their children liked more the following parts of the programme:

- Art activities (mentioned 5 times)
- Learning information about subjects the child might like
- 'Circle of friends'

Apart from the first answer, the others were given once. Especially Casey and Crane liked a lot the activity of mask making.

Parents of students with C.D. justified in the following way their answers:

- Art activities → Child enjoys drawing (answer given once), child having fun (answer given twice)
- 'Circle of friends'→ Child likes speaking

Parents of Mainstream Students

Parents of mainstream students answered that their children liked more the following parts of the programme:

- Art activities (mentioned 5 times)
- 'Circle of friends' (mentioned twice)
- Social activities (mentioned once)

Parents of mainstream students gave the following justification for their answers:

- Art activities → Child having fun (answer given 3 times)
- 'Circle of friends'→ Child enjoys discussion (answer given once)

► Parents' answers to the following questions: "Which part of the programme do you think that he/she liked less or didn't like at all? Why?"

Parents' answers are presented more analytically in Appendix 97.

Parents of Students with Communication Difficulties

Only Bailey's mother replied in this question; she said that Bailey did not like the activity of making masks, because BAI did not like the glue. All other parents did not give any answer.

Parents of Mainstream Students

Blair's mother replied that her son found pointless the video-recording of sessions. Jamie's mother mentioned that JAM didn't like the 'circle of friends' when this took place after art activities. Parents of 2 students did not give any reply and Teagan's mother answered that she did not know. Finally Jerry's mother answered that JER liked everything. More specific justification of answers was not given.