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Practices to Support Students Experiencing Social-Emotional-Behavioural Difficulties Inside Mainstream Primary Classrooms: A Systematic Review of the Literature

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Abstract

The rise of inclusion, following the Salamanca Statement (1994), marked the beginning of an era where there is a considerable effort for all students to be educated in the mainstream classroom based on a human rights approach. Students previously allocated to separate educational contexts due to some of their characteristics, such as disabilities, have started now to be included in the mainstream classroom. However, teachers struggle to cope with the growing diversity and heterogeneity of their classrooms, especially regarding the inclusion of students labelled as experiencing social-emotional-behavioural difficulties (SEBD). Although there is a substantial body of literature on the best practices to support students experiencing SEBD, the inclusion of these students inside mainstream classrooms remains a significant challenge that baffles everyone involved in education. For this reason, this study's rationale is to explore this issue and provide some implications on how the inclusion of students experiencing SEBD inside mainstream classrooms could be facilitated. The research question was, "Are the recommended in the literature practices to support students experiencing SEBD inside mainstream classrooms aligned to principles of inclusive pedagogy? A systematic literature review was conducted in four databases using strict protocols with explicit criteria to identify the most relevant to the research question articles. This review is important because it bears an informative, multidimensional character attempting to provide a more nuanced understanding of the recommended literature practices. Following the inductive thematic analysis of 11 primary empirical research papers, the results indicate that despite a high degree of ambiguity in the literature, there is a positive trend towards inclusion by focusing on practices proactively empowering all students' social-emotional development. On the other hand, practices indicating a deficit approach trying to "fix" students' behaviour, strictly focusing on controlling behaviour and imposing discipline, are still evident. Although the results should be interpreted with caution, further research is needed to build upon the inclusive orientation of practices.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Move to inclusive education

Internationally, the current trend of educational research, policy, and practice emphasize the right of every child to attend, be accepted, and actively participate in mainstream-general schools (Ainscow, 2020; Oh-Young & Filler, 2015). These words coarsely describe the concept of inclusive education, notwithstanding that there is not a universal definition since inclusion is "culturally and contextually determined" (Ainscow & Miles, 2008, p. 30). A landmark in the establishment of inclusive education was the Declaration of Salamanca (United Nations, 1994), introducing the principle of education for all. According to this principle, every human being has the right to live in a social and school environment without barriers hampering their self-expression, self-realization and social participation (Ainscow & César, 2006; Ainscow & Miles, 2008). Although in the Salamanca Statement, inclusive education was mainly concerned for students identified as having a disability, more recently, it started to encapsulate an opposition to every factor that can marginalize students, such as the marketization of education, one's sexual orientation, poverty, and war (Black-Hawkins, 2017).

The cornerstone of inclusive education is cultivating a sense of belonging of students to their school (Norwich, 2008b, p. 137; Warnock et al., 2010). This feeling concerns quality relationships and shared experiences based on affectionate interactions between students and teachers. Strong relationships can be seen as a prerequisite for successful learning and the general well-being in the school context and beyond (McCulloch, 2014). Therefore, modern inclusion policies must be oriented towards specific goals that concern the assurance of social acceptance, the cultivation of strong ties with the school, and the self-perception of all students as part of the school community. "Weak attachment to school can lead to disaffection and alienation. . . that impair the individual's capacity for social and academic engagement" (Cefai & Cooper, 2009, pp. 9-10).

Inclusion defends human rights and considers all forms of exclusion or segregation stigmatizing and thus morally unacceptable (Mayer, 2017). For this reason, this

study will be focused only on mainstream classrooms. For schools to respond to the growing diversity resulting from the more inclusive policies, it is essential to be safe, non-stigmatizing environments for every student, making them feel actual members, encouraged, and supported to reach the maximum of their capacities. These theoretical inclusive orientations need to be translated into "inclusive practices", a term which denotes the "actions and activities, the things staff in schools do that give meaning to the concept of inclusion" (Florian, 2009, p. 38). Unfortunately, despite the advances around inclusion on the theoretical level, there is significant difficulty in implementing the theory in practice. To be more specific, according to Black-Hawkins (2017), even when teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusion, they still struggle to cope with the growing diversity of their classrooms. This difficulty to include everyone in the mainstream classroom is even more evident in students experiencing social-emotional-behavioural difficulties (SEBD). In order to confront this issue, it is of paramount importance for educational research to be based on respect and mutual interaction with teachers' work in order for researchers to learn from teachers' everyday classroom experience and their findings to have practical applications (Black-Hawkins, 2017; McIntyre, 2009).

1.2 Inclusion of Students experiencing SEBD

Inclusion of students experiencing SEBD is often deemed as a process replete with challenges and barriers, supposedly due to the nature of the difficulties that disrupt the classroom routine (Squires & Caddick, 2012; Willmann & Seeliger, 2017). It is reported, for example, that challenging behaviour in schools can disrupt the classroom climate by decreasing the available teaching time and wearing out teachers (Osher et al., 2010). These observations could be associated with the general sense of unpreparedness teachers reported in responding to disruptive behaviour (Bond, 2017; Westling, 2010).

The constantly increasing rates of "disruptive" behaviour in classrooms are among the most stressful factors for teachers, as behaviour control remains one of their primary concerns (Ducharme & Shecter, 2011; Westling, 2010). Only in the United Kingdom, it is reported that 10% of students in primary schools face a mental health difficulty that may negatively influence their academic performance (UK Government

Statistical Service, as cited in McDonald & Holttum, 2020, p. 119). Teachers' stress about how to respond to students' "misbehaviour" (especially regarding externalized behavioural difficulties) is an indicator of why the inclusion of students experiencing SEBD in mainstream classrooms is characterized as challenging (Squires & Caddick, 2012).

SEBDs are associated with several detrimental consequences for students, a factor rendering this issue even more critical. Compared to their peers, students experiencing SEBD are more vulnerable to exclusion from the mainstream classroom and dropping out of school early (Achilles et al., 2007). Furthermore, poor academic attainment (Cefai & Cooper, 2009; Westling, 2010), difficulties in social functioning (Stoutjesdijk et al., 2012), "unemployment" and "self-destructive acts", such as "alcohol" or "drugs" (Gable et al., 2012, p. 500) are all associated with SEBD. Walter et al. (2006, p. 61) also underline unemployment as an adverse effect, yet adding even more potential risks, which include "sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)", "suicides", "school dropout", "family dysfunction", and "juvenile delinquency".

"Young people with social, emotional, and behavioural challenges are still poorly understood and treated in a way that is completely at odds with what is now known about how they came to be challenging in the first place" (Porter, 2014, p. 3). The lack of connection between the practices proposed by research knowledge and those that are ultimately used in educational practice (Dunlap et al., 2006; Hornby et al., 2013) demonstrates the confusion about the concept of disruptive behaviour and its management (Dunlap et al., 2006). This confusion could result in the provision of questionable quality teaching. It is reported, for instance, that students experiencing SEBD are frequently exposed (against their rights) to exclusionary disciplinary practices as a consequence of their "inappropriate" behaviour (DeJager et al., 2020; Jahangir, 2011; Shook, 2012).

All the above observations indicate the significance of this issue. In addition, the topic of the dissertation was chosen because as a special education teacher in Greece ("special education" is used because this is the common term in Greece), there were many instances of teachers asking me to "treat" students' behaviour.

They were saying, for example, "I cannot deal with this kid, s/he is uncontrollable". It could be alleged that teachers adopted a mindset of delegating the responsibility to the "specialist" for the students considered the most difficult to teach. From personal experience, both fellow teachers and parents often adopted an attitude that inclusion is an insightful concept, albeit a theoretical and perhaps utopian one, since when problems in the classroom arise, "the only solution is discipline". Overcoming this troubling attitude and generally improving the quality of education services for everyone are the main factors arousing my research interest, focused on bridging the gap between theory and practice.

1.3 Rationale and objectives of the study

This study is a systematic literature review (SLR) regarding practices to support students experiencing SEBD inside mainstream primary classrooms. SLRs are commonly used in this area (McKenna et al., 2021). However, most frequently, they are implemented as an attempt to probe the effectiveness of interventions targeted specifically at modifying behaviour (Maggin et al., 2017; Sutherland et al., 2013). Furthermore, as far as the author is concerned, also supported by Willmann and Seeliger (2017), other SLRs in the field of SEBD are not focused exclusively on mainstream classrooms. Therefore, the originality of this study lies in the fact that, in contrast to the previously delineated what works approach based on the effectiveness of interventions, it constitutes a critical review aiming for a more nuanced understanding with respect to the inclusion of students experiencing SEBD. In particular, the goal is to explore to what extent the practices proposed in the literature for these students are aligned to the fundamental principles of inclusive pedagogy, which will be introduced in the next chapter. The ultimate objectives of the study are to explore why there is such a gap between theory and practice and provide some insights on how the situation could be improved.

1.4 Overview of the dissertation structure

This dissertation consists of five more chapters: literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusion. The literature review is divided into three thematic parts: 1. Analysis of SEBD, 2. Theoretical underpinnings of inclusive

pedagogy, 3. Initial review of practices targeted at students experiencing SEBD. The introduction and the literature review help frame the study and justify the methodology, in which all the steps of conducting the review are presented transparently. Then, the findings include the results from the inductive thematic analysis of the final sample of 11 articles. Further analysis of the findings based on the research question and the initial literature review is presented in the discussion chapter. Important to note that, due to the inductive approach adopted, the discussion includes a few more narrow ideas identified during the analysis, which may not be fully presented in the initial literature review. Finally, the conclusions chapter consists of a succinct summary of the study focusing on potential implications and limitations.

2. Literature review

First and foremost, it is vital to clarify that the following initial literature review under no circumstances is a comprehensive one, given the breadth of the field of inclusion and social-emotional-behavioural difficulties (SEBD). For this reason, this literature review mainly focuses on three main parameters, namely inclusive pedagogy, students experiencing SEBD, and theoretical approaches regarding the practices to support students experiencing SEBD.

2.1 Inclusive pedagogy

2.1.1 Differences between inclusion-integration

Implementing inclusive practices for students experiencing SEBD inside mainstream primary classrooms (and generally all pupils) is associated with several challenges and dilemmas (Black-Hawkins, 2017; Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Norwich, 2008a). It is such a challenging process that it is even characterized as a "complex pedagogical endeavour" (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, p. 814). It is reported, for example, that teachers frequently use contradictory practices (Black-Hawkins, 2017; Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012). Following such contradictory practices could be attributed to the fact that there is not a unanimously accepted definition of inclusion since it is often confused with similar, yet different, concepts, such as integration (Willmann & Seeliger, 2017).

Integration concerns the mere distribution of students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom without diligent effort to ensure social interaction with peers and active participation in all learning activities (Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2018). The central aspect of integration is the idea of students' "normalization" (Oliver & Barnes, 2012), which could be explained as an attempt to "fix" students, to change the "inappropriate" behaviour in order for students to assimilate into an unchangeable classroom environment (Kiuppis, 2014). Thus, the teacher is in the centre, not students, since teachers are supposed to guide students towards the "socially acceptable" behaviour and the school standards. In this way, students appear dependent on the teachers' decisions regarding the selection of practices or materials to be used. Having such a deficit approach is associated with the view that students "choose" to misbehave. Thus, teachers are supposed to modify students' behaviour towards adopting one more socially acceptable via behaviourist interventions (Garwood et al., 2017; Mitchell et al., 2019). Such interventions will be outlined in the final part of this chapter.

"Inclusion", on the other hand, denotes the placement of students in an environment characterized by collaboration and mutual interaction of individuals with each other (Florian & Linklater, 2010; Head, 2014; Kiuppis, 2014). Hence, it is the learning environment that must change to support students and not the students to adapt to the teaching methods. In particular, schools need to be restructured to empower the skills of all pupils while any potential barriers hampering students' development should be removed. In other words, schools have to follow an emancipatory approach having as their ultimate objective to increase students' agency and independence. Furthermore, schools must adopt a series of practices and perceptions that embrace the fundamental right of all children to participate in education, regardless of individual characteristics, such as age, gender, race, class, cultural background, religion, or sexual orientation (Mayer, 2017; Oliver & Barnes, 2012).

2.1.2 Principles of inclusive pedagogy

Inclusive pedagogy is "an approach to teaching and learning that focuses on extending what is generally available to everybody so that all learners can participate

in the classroom community, as opposed to providing for all, by differentiating for some" (Black-Hawkins, 2017, p. 17). According to Black-Hawkins (2017), this process of enhancing educational opportunities for everyone instead of strictly providing extra support to the students who struggle is crucial. The rationale is to abstain from making some students feel different from their peers because not feeling part of the classroom community can lead to marginalization. Following the conceptualization of inclusive pedagogy by Black-Hawkins and taking into account what has already been mentioned about inclusion, it appears that inclusion has evolved through three stages: 1. "Us" and "them", where the "different" should be "fixed". 2. "Most" and "some", where the majority of students are considered as having similar needs, whereas there is a minority needing extra support due to their perceived "exceptional" difficulties. 3. "Everyone", where it is attempted to expand the ordinarily available for all pupils.

This study is mainly influenced by the exemplary work of Black-Hawkins (2017) and the three principles that she acknowledged as fundamental of inclusive pedagogy (pp. 21-22). In particular:

1. "Shifting the Focus Away from Differences among Learners to the Learning of All Children".

This principle represents the move from provisions for some to provisions for everyone. The goal is to enrich every pupil's educational experience instead of focusing on identifying the practices appropriate for most, which can be tailored for some who experience difficulties. A fundamental step to accomplish this principle is offering everyone the option to participate in all activities. No matter if students will participate or not, it will be their choice. Thus, the focus is on enhancing the quality of teaching material and methods for everyone (Black-Hawkins, 2017).

2. "Rejecting Deterministic Beliefs about Ability as Fixed and the Idea That Presence of Some Holds Back Progress of Others".

This principle represents the move from deficit to empowerment. To be more specific, it involves building upon students' strengths instead of focusing on the

potential difficulties they may face. The central element of this principle is the belief that all students without exception can improve their skills. This principle can be implemented via, for example, using mixed-abilities grouping and seeing assessment as a means to support learning rather than a labelling process (Black-Hawkins, 2017).

3. "Seeing Difficulties in Learning as Challenges for Teachers, (Not Deficits in Learners), Encouraging the Development of New Ways of Working".

It is crucial to consider teaching and learning as a trial and error process without a panacea. Instead, several practices can be used (from both teachers and students) to examine what works better under certain circumstances. However, what works one day maybe bring the opposite results another day. This process requires a commitment to understanding and accepting students, being flexible, being receptive to guidance from other professionals, devoting considerable time for reflection, and generally being life-long learning-oriented. In this way, the potential difficulties that students may face are perceived as problem-solving tasks instead of individual deficits (Black-Hawkins, 2017).

These three principles are founded on the tenet that the rationale behind teachers' selection of practices and how these practices are implemented are more important factors than which practices are selected. As Ainscow (2020, p. 14) emphasizes, "the promotion of inclusion and equity in education is less about the introduction of particular techniques or new organizational arrangements, and much more about processes of social learning within particular contexts". Classrooms, schools, and generally the education system have to be transformed to reflect the principles of inclusive education and become friendly and supportive learning environments for every learner (Florian & Beaton, 2018).

2.2 Students experiencing SEBD

"Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) among school pupils represent a unique problem within the educational sphere. No other educational problem is

associated with such a level of frustration, fear, anger, guilt and blame" (Cooper, 2008, p. 13).

2.2.1 Definition

Defining SEBD is a demanding task whose complexity lies in a variety of factors. One has to contemplate, though, on what is typical-normal (Landrum, 2011) since the concept of disruptive behaviour is a social construct, which is analyzed, interpreted and evaluated based on subjective, "normative" factors (Koliadis, 2017). For example, a critical parameter in identifying SEBD could be whether one's behaviour is "typical" regarding age and gender expectations. Therefore, the question arising is "how different or discrepant from the norm must their behaviour or educational performance be?" (Landrum, 2011, p. 209) to be considered disruptive, as expectations and norms differ based on a variety of factors, such as sex, gender, and ethnicity. In other words, a student's behaviour may be considered somewhat "inappropriate" for one teacher in a particular cultural context, but for another one with a different cultural background, the same behaviour may be insignificant.

Many different terms have been used (sometimes interchangeably) in the literature to outline this group of difficulties. Indicative examples are emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) (McLeod et al., 2012), social-emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) (Stanbridge & Mercer, 2019), mental health disorders (Merikangas et al., 2011), behaviour disorders and emotional disabilities (Gable et al., 2012). Although the above multiple terms have been proposed due to the versatility of the difficulties, all these terms share a common characteristic; namely, they are all deficit oriented with medical influences (disorder).

The debate regarding terminology is an issue of paramount importance because it affects the support a student receives. Assigning a label may benefit the student by associating potential school failure with an external factor, not with personal incompetence (Lawrence Diller 1998, as cited in Quinn & Lynch, 2016). Although SEBD or similar labels are ascribed to a student in the name of tailored-individualized provisions, the high risk for stigmatization involved is broadly acknowledged in the literature (Graham & Tancredi, 2019; Mowat, 2015; Norwich,

2008a; Walker-Noack et al., 2013). It is argued that identifying students "at-risk" for developing SEBD can prevent such difficulties from arising; however, this approach involves many caveats since the mere focus on identifying an individual's "difficulties" stigmatizes them and may cause negative results (Farmer, 2013). The stigma caused by the misuse of a label can deteriorate social interactions (Walker-Noack et al., 2013) and ultimately lead to exclusion. Kane et al. (2004, p. 69) use an analogy linking exclusion with poverty to highlight its detrimental consequences, involving "unemployment", "family instability", "social isolation".

Based on the argument of Quinn and Lynch (2016) for the case of Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), SEBD could also operate as a label coined to conceal teachers' unpreparedness to be effective for everyone under the guise of the "need" for individualized teaching. To illustrate the above argument more clearly, many students, in my personal experience, were referred for additional support outside of the mainstream classroom in the name of tailored support. Yet, the actual reasons for their referral were teachers' lack of training and support background. Nevertheless, a study conducted by Goodman and Burton (2010), although a small scale one, suggested that, even without systematic training, teachers can facilitate the inclusion of students experiencing SEBD. The critical elements to do this are being committed to supporting all learners and trying various methods to identify what works best for each student in order to engage them in the classroom activities. In sum, labels should be used with caution since they can be both beneficial or harmful depending on how and why they are used (Mowat, 2015).

Although the term SEBD, similarly to other terminologies, is deficit worded focusing on the difficulties students face, it is used throughout the dissertation for two reasons. Firstly, it does not use medical terms ("disorder"), and, secondly, it covers all aspects of concern, in particular, social, emotional, and behavioural (Bilton & Cooper, 2012). Capturing the various labels used in the literature was essential for this study in order to show that it is not focused on the clinical characteristics associated with a particular label but on students. Regardless of what label might be used, all students may face similar difficulties at some point in their life, at various levels of intensity. Thus, in this study, the term SEBD is mainly used as a

springboard towards engaging with potential difficulties that all students may face and ultimately towards fostering all students' social and emotional competence.

2.2.2 Description of difficulties

"SEBD" constitutes an "umbrella" term, encompassing various forms of difficulties and exhibiting a high degree of heterogeneity (McLeod et al., 2012). Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Walker-Noack et al., 2013), school refusers (Head & Jamison, 2006), behavioural difficulties associated with autism (Head, 2005) are only a few examples of what the umbrella of SEBD encapsulates. SEBD could be coarsely divided into "internalizing" and "externalizing" difficulties (Green et al., 2017; M. S. Poulou, 2015), with the former delineating the social-emotional aspects, whilst the latter illustrating the part of observable behaviour. Externalized behavioural difficulties include any behaviour that could draw the attention of parents and teachers, such as aggressive behaviour, lack of attention and hyperactivity. By contrast, internalized behavioural difficulties are mainly characterized by intense anxiety, antisocial behaviour, emotional imbalance, and depression (Bask, 2015). Nonetheless, a common characteristic attributed to every student experiencing SEBD is that they are described as "pupils who are difficult to teach" (Head, 2005, p. 94) due to the fact that some of their features are allegedly hampering both personal and peers' learning.

The way difficulties are manifested influences how teachers perceive the "severity" of SEBD (Green et al., 2017). In particular, "youth with externalizing behaviours are more likely to receive services than those with internalizing symptoms"(Green et al., 2017, p. 2). However, it should be noted that the most frequently reported difficulties are "low-intensity", such as "getting out of their seats, talking out of turn, arguing, failing to comply with rules and requests" (Walter et al., 2006, p. 66).

2.2.3 Factors contributing to "inappropriate" behaviour

Understanding the potential causes of "disruptive" behaviour and what the behaviour is communicating are critical elements in the process of supporting the students. Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to thoroughly analyze this issue, it should be stressed that there is a variety of forces influencing behaviour (Cefai &

Cooper, 2009; Cross, 2011). Most frequently, these factors stem from the interaction of individual qualities with the environment, such as school and family (Brosnan & Healy, 2011; Crnic et al., 2004). A dominant factor in increasing "inappropriate" behaviour incidents is the curriculum, which often does not enhance students' engagement with the teaching content (Kohn, 2006). Therefore, it is rather sensible that when the curriculum is designed in a way that does not stimulate students' interest, they will try to find something else to do, even something "inappropriate" (Porter, 2014). Furthermore, it is reported that family-related factors, such as child neglect, can cause disruptive behaviour (Crnic et al., 2004). Biological factors, such as physical pain or illness, can also directly negatively impact behaviour (Gardner & Shaw, 2008). Moreover, environmental factors, such as noise and temperature, can contribute to behavioural difficulties (Gardner & Shaw, 2008). Finally, it would be a glaring omission not to mention the socio-economic factors that have detrimental consequences on students' school engagement (Cefai & Cooper, 2009).

2.3 Initial review on practices to support students experiencing SEBD

The theoretical approaches of the practices to support students experiencing SEBD could be coarsely divided into two broad categories, behavioural interventions and social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies. On the one hand, behavioural interventions specifically target to ameliorate SEBD, and on the other hand, social-emotional learning strategies to foster all students' social-emotional development.

2.3.1 Behavioural interventions

In the past, teachers were focusing on implementing behaviour interventions targeted at the students who exhibit disruptive behaviour, having as their primary objective to alleviate their difficulties. Even nowadays, many researchers consider the identification of the most effective, targeted, and intensive interventions as the most effective way of supporting students experiencing SEBD (Garwood et al., 2017; Mitchell et al., 2019). As a result, practices based on behaviourism, such as rewards and sanctions, are considered basic means to prevent and "control" SEBD (Payne, 2015). Behaviourism could be defined as a "theoretical perspective of learning that focuses on observable changes in behaviour" as a consequence of punishments and

reinforcements (Tracey & Morrow, 2017, p. 39). Hence, the primary objective of a behavioural intervention program is to modify behaviour, particularly to eliminate unwanted forms of behaviour through the teaching of new desirable ones (Koliadis, 2017; McKenna et al., 2017). In this way, the student reaches a target behaviour, which is socially acceptable and is considered necessary for students' development.

Practices aiming to control disruptive behaviour in the classroom, such as "appropriate" behavioural interventions, are particularly common in the literature (McDonnell & Anker, 2009; McKenna et al., 2017). Some even consider interventions focusing on controlling behaviour as a prerequisite for the smooth inclusion of students experiencing SEBD inside mainstream classrooms (Zweers et al., 2019). However, as Payne (2015) suggests, adopting such a behaviourist approach can often bring the opposite results. By strictly following behaviourist approaches, students are seen as passive learners (Carroll, 2014). Furthermore, in this way, the erroneous assumption that imposing order and control can discourage students from their "choice" to engage in disruptive behaviour and thus allegedly to "cure" their individual deficits is perpetuated.

Students experiencing SEBD often struggle to cope with the strict, competitive demands of school life, such as the classroom rules. Sometimes their disruptive behaviour is a consequence of this unhelpful environment. It is particularly worrisome that many teachers respond negatively to the disruptive behaviour of pupils experiencing SEBD, ignoring that in this way, they exacerbate an already challenging situation. For instance, asking students to "calm down" or "pay attention" without explicit support and instruction is an ineffective approach (Lantieri, 2012, p. 30), which shows ignorance about students' inner, emotional world. Using negative strategies, such as punishments, in order to "correct" the disruptive behaviour creates disgust for the school environment (Koundourou, 2012), leading to students' marginalization (Roache & Lewis, 2011), thus creating a vicious circle of challenging behaviour. Such practices seem to neglect the long-ago established importance of emotion and affect (Damasio, 1996; Perry, 2002), which could be considered as the foundation of all learning. Therefore, the need for the education system to be transformed and find better ways to support the students who are considered the most "challenging" is paramount.

2.3.2 Social-emotional learning practices

In recent years, new approaches in the fields of psychology and education emphasize the need to adopt a holistic approach to child development, which involves promoting all aspects of child development, such as academic, social, and emotional (Durlak et al., 2011). The term social development refers to the ability of students to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships (Chatzichristou, 2015). Chatzichristou also stresses that emotional development refers both to the emotions themselves, as experienced by the individual during life, and the regulation of emotions, that is, the ability to control and shape emotions according to a particular situation. It is also accepted that social and emotional competence are inextricably linked and are essentially two sides of the same coin (Denham, 2006; Denham & Burton, 2003).

These new approaches are reflected in the creation and implementation of social-emotional learning (SEL) programs to support and empower the social-emotional competence of every student, including those experiencing SEBD. The socio-emotional skills pupils are taught through their participation in such programs mainly concern being capable of codifying, understanding, and judging the social and emotional information they receive from the social environment (McKown et al., 2009). Particularly important is to define social-emotional competence, which is "the process of acquiring and effectively applying knowledge, attitudes, and skills in five major areas…including self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making" (Zhai et al., 2015, p. 42).

Recognizing the emotions of others and oneself is considered of primary importance for the individual's social adjustment (Boden & Berenbaum, 2007; Gohm & Clore, 2002). Recognizing the feelings of others is directly related to one's social behaviour and consequently to the development of their social competence (Herpertz et al., 2016). For this reason, Lindquist et al. (2014, p. 375) characterize this ability as a "fundamental part of social life". To be more specific, increasing students' knowledge about emotions and improving the way they process emotional information increases their chances of success in various social situations, such as staying away from people who intend to harm them (Lindquist et al., 2014). Moreover, Subic-Wrana et

al. (2014) found a strong positive correlation between emotion recognition and the ability to self-regulate emotions.

Emotional self-regulation has attracted the interest of many scholars in recent years because it is considered to be perhaps the most critical element of social-emotional competence (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2011; Subic-Wrana et al., 2014). Emotional self-regulation has emerged as a significant factor predicting students' social adjustment and academic success even from the first years of their education (Morrison et al., 2010). Pupils' capacity to effectively manage their emotions seems to be linked to academic progress and successful social interactions and relationships (Ashiabi, 2007). According to Smith and Taylor (2010, p. 684), "self-regulation begins when students take responsibility for their own behaviour", getting used to self-regulatory strategies, such as self-monitoring of "problematic" behaviour, self-control techniques, and self-reinforcement. Struggling to self-regulate emotions (and ultimately behaviour) has been associated with childhood and adult depression (Forbes & Dahl, 2005), antisocial behaviour (Hinshaw, 2002), academic under-performance, and even school dropout (Lopez & DuBois, 2005). Indicatively, emotional regulation involves one's capacity to regain emotional control shortly after being exposed to a stressful, emotional situation (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2011).

Teachers are vital in the education and the broader development of students experiencing SEBD, and it is necessary to understand that their role is more than the mere transmission of knowledge (Poulou, 2005). Hence, developing a relationship based on respect, trust, and honesty allows positive social interactions, which in turn encourage learning and effective management of behavioural problems (Armstrong, 2014; M. Poulou, 2015). Furthermore, positive teacher-student relationships are positively associated with social competence (Burchinal et al., 2010). Therefore, although teachers are neither counsellors nor therapists, providing essential social-emotional support to all students is one of their preliminary duties and not of secondary importance (Kourkoutas, 2011).

The results of the abovementioned studies, which could be characterized as contradictory, indicate the importance of this study regarding what type of practices can facilitate the inclusion of students experiencing SEBD inside mainstream primary

classrooms. Therefore, taking into account the complex dynamics of how to support students experiencing SEBD, in conjunction with the need for more inclusive school, the following research question was formulated:

Are the recommended in the literature practices to support students experiencing SEBD inside mainstream primary classrooms aligned to principles of inclusive pedagogy?

3. Methodology

3.1 Epistemological paradigm

All the methodological decisions in this study, and generally in research, are highly influenced by the research's view of reality (ontological assumptions), of what considers valuable knowledge (epistemological assumptions), and generally the scientific view of the world (Guba, 1990; Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). Given the complexity of the topic, the author's position is that there is no universal truth. As a result, the reality is considered socially constructed with multiple interpretations, resulting in the lack of objective, clear-cut solutions. Instead of solutions in the form of "best practices", this study explores the nature of the practices as an attempt for a more nuanced understanding of why the inclusion of pupils experiencing SEBD was and remains a rather challenging task and how we could move forward. This relativist approach aiming for deep understanding based on interpretation guided this study, and it is called interpretivism (Cohen et al., 2018; Lincoln et al., 2011). Interpretivism involves a high level of subjectivity, a fact which the opponents of this epistemological paradigm recognize as one of its drawbacks (Cohen et al., 2018; Lincoln et al., 2011). However, the perspective adopted is that educational research is so complex that everyone's personal, subjective lenses of approaching reality can facilitate a deeper understanding (Curtis et al., 2014).

3.2 Methods

In an attempt to answer the research question, a systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted. It is a form of secondary research since no empirical data were collected; instead, primary, empirical research papers relevant to the research

questions were systematically collected and meticulously analyzed (Suri, 2013). SLRs constitute a reproducible method of collecting and evaluating all the literature documents related to a narrow topic using transparent procedures and explicit criteria (Dixon-Woods, 2010; Gough, 2017; Torgerson et al., 2012). SLRs also have the capacity to ". . . limit bias in the assembly, critical appraisal and synthesis of all relevant studies on a given topic"(Chalmers et al., 2002, p. 17).

The main reason for conducting an SLR was that it offers the potential to explore and synthesise older research findings using a different perspective, thus creating new findings (Cronin et al., 2008; Irwin & Winterton, 2011; Torgerson et al., 2012). Therefore, a critical component of this SLR is moving beyond the mere description of what has already been stated in the academic literature towards a new, insightful analysis of the primary studies' findings. This asset of SLRs was considered particularly useful for this study, given the significant number of academic papers regarding practices to support students experiencing SEBD.

Searching for high quality, empirical research papers relevant to the research question constitutes an integral part of this study so as to establish rigour and credibility (Cronin et al., 2008; Evans & Benefield, 2001). The typical steps for conducting an SLR involve 1. Thorough searching of academic papers in scientific databases relevant to the research topic using well-formatted keywords, 2. Strict protocols consisted of explicit criteria for including-excluding articles (Booth et al., 2016), 3. Searching the literature and analysis of the papers conducted by two or more researchers to strengthen the study's credibility (Cohen et al., 2018), 4. In-depth analysis and presentation of the findings (Evans & Benefield, 2001; Robinson & Lowe, 2015).

3.2.1 Formulation of keywords

#	Query	Limiters/Expanders	Last Run Via	Results
			Wednesday, June 16, 2021 11:47:23 AM	
S6	S1 AND S2 AND S3	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals; Publication Date: 20110101-20211231 Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - ERIC;APA PsycInfo;British Education Index;Teacher Reference Center	227
S5	S1 AND S2 AND S3	Limiters - Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - ERIC;APA PsycInfo;British Education Index;Teacher Reference Center	355
S4	S1 AND S2 AND S3	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - ERIC;APA PsycInfo;British Education Index;Teacher Reference Center	595
S3	TI ((((primary OR elementary) N2 (school OR education)))) OR AB ((((primary OR elementary) N2 (school OR education))))	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - ERIC;APA PsycInfo;British Education Index;Teacher Reference Center	165,551
S2	TI (((((teach* OR instruct* OR pedagog* OR classroom*) N3 (strateg* OR method* OR techniq* OR intervention* OR practice* OR approach*)))) OR AB ((((teach* OR instruct* OR pedagog* OR classroom*) N3 (strateg* OR method* OR techniq* OR intervention* OR practice* OR approach*))))	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - ERIC;APA PsycInfo;British Education Index;Teacher Reference Center	290,806
S1	TI ((SEBD OR SEBN OR ((social emotional behav* N3 (difficult* OR need*)) OR SEMH OR ((social emotional mental health) N3 (need* OR disorder* OR problem* OR difficult* OR issue*)) OR EBD OR ((emotional behav*) N3 (difficult* OR disorder*)) OR ((behav*) N2 (need* OR disorder* OR problem* OR difficult* OR issue*)))) OR AB ((SEBD OR SEBN OR ((social emotional behav* N3 (difficult* OR need*)) OR SEMH OR ((social emotional mental health) N3 (need* OR disorder* OR problem* OR difficult* OR issue*)) OR EBD OR ((emotional behav*) N3 (difficult* OR disorder*)) OR ((behav*) N2 (need* OR disorder* OR problem* OR difficult* OR issue*))))	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - ERIC;APA PsycInfo;British Education Index;Teacher Reference Center	104,869

Figure 1 Overview of the keyword searching process (1. Individual searches, 2. Combinations, 3. Applying filters)

The first step of conducting the review was a "trial and error" approach to identify the most appropriate keywords that fully capture the research question. Then, except for going through trial and error multiple times, three meetings with college librarians were arranged in order to ensure that the whole searching process is well-structured, thus increasing credibility and rigour. The reason for this central focus on capturing not only as many academic papers as possible is corroborated by Evans and Benefield (2001, p. 535), underlining that "It is crucial in any systematic review that the search for primary studies should be extensive". However, the searches had also to be narrow enough to be feasible to analyze given the time constraints of a dissertation at master's level. Therefore, the searching process was divided into five stages:

1. Breaking the research question into its fundamental components (i. SEBD, ii. practices, iii. primary classrooms).

2. Writing down alternatives/ synonyms for each concept (particular emphasis in the label of SEBD because of the variety of terms that have been used in the literature to identify this specific population).

3. Formulation of its concept in one independent search searching for the keywords only in title and abstract level, using the recommended by the librarians searching tools, such as the Boolean operators (AND, OR), truncation, wildcards, and proximity marks.

4. Searching each concept separately.

5. Combining all searches using "AND". (see Figure 1).

After implementing this process in several scientific databases to identify the most suitable, "ERIC", "PsycInfo", "British Education Index", and "Teacher Reference Center" were selected. These four databases were considered to produce the most relevant to the research question results while also they allowed for an international perspective on the issue. The total number of articles generated in the final trial carried out on the 16th of June, combining all individual searches using "AND" was 595. This number does not include any limitations, such as time constraints. Afterwards, these articles were narrowed down using a three-level, funnelling process to locate those that respond strictly to the research question and analyze them in-depth. Namely, three-level protocols with explicit inclusion-exclusion criteria were formulated: 1. Preliminary level, 2. Abstract level, 3. Full-text level.

3.2.2 Level 1: Preliminary protocol

After collecting the initial 595 papers, the first action was to apply the limitation of peer-reviewed academic journals' articles to ensure that only high-quality academic papers will be included in the study (Booth et al., 2016; McKenna et al., 2021). As a result, books, book chapters, dissertations, and policy documents were excluded from this review. Immediately, the number of articles fell to 355, indicating that 240

articles were not marked as peer-reviewed. Another restriction applied was time constraints. In particular, only articles published approximately the last ten years (starting from the 1st of January 2011) passed to the next stage as an attempt to evaluate only the most contemporary research. In this way, 128 papers were excluded, and the total number of academic papers decreased to 227. Figure 1 above illustrates the whole process that far.

Next, all the articles were exported to the reference management software "EndNote", as Timmins and McCabe (2005) propose. In EndNote, a check for duplicate articles was implemented, and from the total number of 227 references initially imported, 92 references were removed as duplicates. In sum, after this preliminary review of the articles, the number of articles that went forward for review on the abstract level was 135.

3.2.3 Level 2: Abstract screening

At this stage, the 135 articles that met the initial criteria were systematically registered on a Microsoft Excel file to examine one by one if they are eligible to advance to the next level (see Appendix 1 for an example). Since this level involved only abstracts, when it was not clear whether a particular paper meets the criteria or not, it was advanced to the next level (full-text screening) to examine it in greater detail. The abstracts were firstly probed based on three fundamental requirements relevant to the research question: 1. To be focused on students experiencing SEBD (36 articles excluded), 2. To be focused on mainstream primary classrooms (46 articles excluded), 3. To be focused on specific practices targeted at students experiencing SEBD (48 articles excluded). Furthermore, in order for a paper to proceed to the next stage, it was also necessary to be written in the English language for accessibility reasons (six articles excluded) and to include primary/empirical data because it is uncommon for a systematic review to include other secondary reviews (eight articles excluded). Additionally, three more articles were found to be duplicates and were excluded. It is vital to underline, also, that there is a degree of overlap between the reasons for excluding a paper because some papers fulfilled more than one criteria. In sum, after carefully inspecting each

abstract twice, 84 articles from the total number of 135 did not meet the inclusion criteria and had to be removed.

3.2.4 Level 3: Full-text screening

The number of articles that met the criteria in the previous level protocol and thus were advanced to scrutinize them on the full-text level was 51 (see Appendix 2 for an example). The criteria in this protocol were similar to those of the previous one, but this time, the full-text of the papers was analyzed to examine if the articles respond to the research question. In particular, three criteria were posed: 1. Central focus on students experiencing SEBD, with or without an official label (22 articles excluded because the main emphasis was placed, for example, on teachers rather than students), 2. Central Focus on mainstream primary classrooms (14 articles excluded because the main focus was on a different educational environment, such as kindergarten, secondary school, or a special education setting) 3. Central focus on specific practices targeting to support students experiencing SEBD (27 articles excluded because the main focus was placed, for example, on the difficulties students face, instead of practices to support them). Each paper had to fulfil all three requirements in order to be included in the study. Furthermore, three papers were excluded on the grounds that they were secondary reviews. Again, there is an overlap among the reasons for exclusion. In sum, from the total number of 51 articles, 40 were subtracted, leading to a final sample of 11 papers that were proceed for in-depth analysis. The following flow diagram depicts the process from the inaugural search to the final sample of articles included in the review.
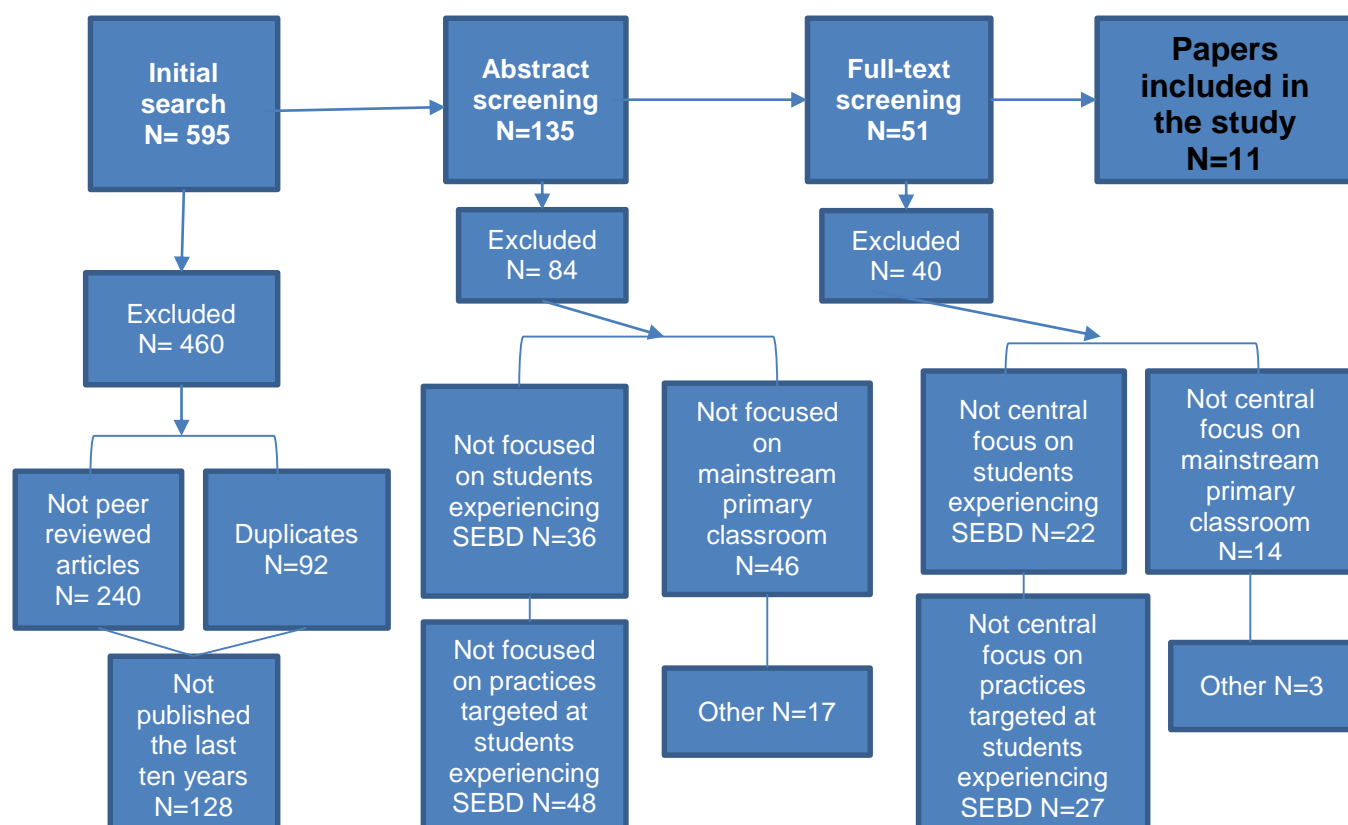
Initial
search
N= 595

Abstract
screening
N=135

Full-text
screening
N=51

**Papers
included in
the study
N=11**

Excluded
N= 460

Excluded
N= 84

Excluded
N= 40

Not peer
reviewed
articles
N= 240

Duplicates
N=92

Not focused
on students
experiencing
SEBD N=36

Not focused
on
mainstream
primary
classroom
N=46

Not central
focus on
students
experiencing
SEBD N=22

Not central
focus on
mainstream
primary
classroom
N=14

Not
published
the last
ten years
N=128

Not focused
on practices
targeted at
students
experiencing
SEBD N=48

Other N=17

Not central
focus on
practices
targeted at
students
experiencing
SEBD N=27

Other N=3

Figure 2 Overview of the systematic screening process (Note: there is a degree of overlap among the exclusion criteria)

3.3 Analysis of Data

The first step of analysing the 11 articles that met the inclusion criteria was developing a critical appraisal protocol (see Appendix 3 for an example) towards a thorough review of each paper's strengths and limitations through in-depth quality assessment (Booth et al., 2016). Critical appraisal involves "the use of explicit, transparent methods to assess the data in published research, by systematically considering such factors as validity, adherence to reporting standards, methods, conclusions and generalisability" (Booth et al., 2016, p. 304). The results from this protocol, which contributed to an initial overview of the papers, are presented at the beginning of the next section.

A critical aspect of every research study is the method of analysing the data to be aligned to the broader methodological decisions and the specific research question (Vishnevsky & Beanlands, 2004). For this particular study, inductive thematic analysis, following the steps illustrated in the exemplary work of Braun and Clarke

(2006), was followed. The exact iterative sequence of steps involves six specific stages: "1. Familiarizing yourself with your data, 2. Generating initial codes, 3. Searching for themes, 4. Reviewing themes, 5. Defining and naming themes, 6. Producing the report" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). In particular, the articles were printed, and colour coding was applied to extract meaningful information relevant to the research question. In order for the information to be recorded accurately and understood in-depth, the author immersed himself in the data by reading the papers several times. Subsequently, the preliminary codes were classified into thematic categories and then these categories were revised to formulate the final themes.

Inductive thematic analysis was considered the most pertinent approach to analyse the papers because it combines flexibility and structure. Thus, it allowed the researcher to identify codes and themes from the data themselves, without stipulating any predetermined, a priori codes based on the literature or background knowledge. What is attempted in this way is to limit bias; nonetheless, as noted earlier, the researcher's assumptions will always be noticeable (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 83-84). The active engagement of the author in the whole process of analysis demonstrated above is in line with Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 96), stating that "the researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'".

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Regardless of whether a study uses primary or secondary data, the author carries the onus of responsibility for adopting and illustrating an ethical stance (BERA, 2018). An ethical approach to research involves having as cornerstones three indispensable values, "non-maleficence, beneficence, and human dignity" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 127). For this reason, particular emphasis was placed on demonstrating an ethical stance throughout the dissertation and avoid confining ethical considerations just to this small section.

Presenting the study clearly to the readers will enable them to understand, evaluate its value, and apply the findings to their everyday experience, either personal or professional (Cohen et al., 2018; Greyson et al., 2019). Thus, the researcher needs

to show ethical integrity and be reflexive and transparent by explicitly illustrating what procedures were conducted and especially for what reason. In this way, the researcher strives towards demonstrating ethical integrity, reproducibility, scientific rigour, and internal validity (Teusner, 2016; Torgerson et al., 2012). Except for self-reflection, the abovementioned use of protocols and well-founded methods to analyze the articles were also measures taken to ensure rigour, credibility, and transparency. In particular, using protocols to explicate the inclusion-exclusion process contributes to a deeper, organized, and systematic examination of the articles (Moretti et al., 2012).

A common ethical pitfall in secondary reviews of the literature has to do with the degree of "sacrificing the relevance or integrity of individual studies"(Erwin et al., 2011, p. 191). To restrain from doing this, the author of this study followed the recommendation of Cohen et al. (2018, p. 138) to avoid "overstating or understating what the data show". Furthermore, the author's ethical stance is also demonstrated by the detailed description of the study's limitations. The methodological limitations are presented below, and the general limitations are outlined in the conclusions.

3.5 Limitations

Limitations in each study not only help frame the research and avoid sweeping generalizations but also comprise indispensable components of exhibiting ethical integrity. For example, during the process of arriving at the final number of articles relevant to the research question, several articles were excluded due to the strict nature of the criteria that were used. For instance, there were 20 articles that were excluded from the final sample because they were not exclusively focused on primary schools and included participants either from kindergarten or secondary schools. This fact has a twofold interpretation. On the one hand, there is a possibility of omitting relevant and valuable data from other age groups. On the other hand, in this way, there is a better chance to answer the research question as clearly as possible. Thus, further, more extensive research may fill this gap by involving a broader review examining, for example, differences between settings, such as primary and secondary school.

Another limitation that is essential to be acknowledged is that, contrary to the requirement of two researchers for an SLR (Cohen et al., 2018), the whole process was conducted by a single person since it is a study conducted as part of a master's degree dissertation. Thus, there will not be a second researcher to measure the consistency between them, the so-called inter-rater reliability (Taylor et al., 2007). Therefore, it is likely that some level of subjectivity and personal bias will exist throughout the research project, from the collection of papers to the interpretation of results.

4. Findings

4.1 Description of the included papers

After arriving at the final sample of articles included for review (N=11), the fourth critical appraisal protocol (Appendix 3) served towards acquiring an initial overview of the articles. In particular, from the 11 primary studies included in this review, the largest part (N=3, 27,3%) were conducted in the United States, while two studies were conducted in Australia, two in Italy, one in Malta, one in the Netherlands, one in Iran, and one in Ireland. This variety of places and perspectives represented in the primary articles constitutes a valuable asset of this review in order to acquire as much nuanced understanding of the topic as possible. For example, some potential implications regarding the contextual-cultural influences on the practices that are proposed to support students experiencing SEBD are deduced.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, generalization of findings is not the primary purpose within the interpretivist paradigm. However, it is vital to acknowledge that even the primary-empirical articles did not manage to draw firm conclusions. Namely, in seven of the articles (63,6%), limited generalizability is reported. Thus, the findings of this review should be treated with even more caution. Nonetheless, an essential feature of the primary studies is that both quantitative and qualitative data are included, a quality offering the potential for a more nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the issue under investigation. It is also critical to note that there was a wide variety of terms used in the articles (even articles from the same country) to describe the students' difficulties. Indicative examples are emotional and

behavioural problems (Carroll et al., 2020), SEBD (de Leeuw et al., 2020), mental health challenges (DeJager et al., 2020). This variety of terms used is significant because it represents the complexity and the versatility of these difficulties and the way they are understood, with a clear focus on disruptive behaviour.

4.2 Practices to Support Students experiencing SEBD inside Mainstream Primary Classrooms

The outcome of all the steps delineated in the previous chapter as part of the inductive analysis was the identification of two main, overarching themes, namely, proactive and reactive practices. In more detail, as depicted in the following table, seven studies (63,6%) were focusing predominantly on proactive practices, whereas two studies (18,2%) were focusing solely on reactive practices, and finally, there are two papers (18,2%), those with an X in both columns of the table (Madden & Senior, 2018; Shook, 2012), that involve both proactive and reactive practices. Further analysis of these types of practices is presented below, along with a demonstration of the specific practices involved in each type and the challenges to their implementation.

Table 1 Papers mentioned each theme

	Citation of Article	*Papers involved proactive practices (practices used prior to the occurrence of an "inappropriate behaviour)*	*Papers involved reactive practices (practices used after the occurrence of an inappropriate*
1	(Carroll et al., 2020)	X	
2	(Cefai et al., 2014)	X	
3	(de Leeuw et al., 2020)	X	
4	(DeJager et al., 2020)		X
5	(Evanovich & Scott, 2020)	X	
6	(Ghiroldi et al., 2020)	X	
7	(Jahangir, 2011)		X
8	(Madden & Senior, 2018)	X	X
9	(Muratori et al., 2015)	X	
10	(Shook, 2012)	X	X
11	(Torok et al., 2019)	X	
Total Number of Articles (Note: 2 articles involved both proactive and reactive practices)		N=7	N=2

4.2.1 Proactive Practices

Proactive practices as a means to support students experiencing SEBD (and generally all students) was a repetitive pattern across the sample of articles analysed (N=9, 81,8%, note: the two papers that involve both proactive and reactive practices are included). First and foremost, it is vital to clarify that proactive practices are practices implemented prior to the occurrence of an "inappropriate" behaviour aiming to prevent such instances (Madden & Senior, 2018; Shook, 2012). At this stage, a critical distinction is imperative because prevention can be pursued via two pathways. In particular, proactive practices can be divided into practices focusing on empowering all students' social and emotional development on the one hand, and, on the other hand, practices focusing predominantly on controlling students' behaviour. Despite their differences which will be illustrated below, these practices represent a whole classroom approach targeted at all students, not, for example, a

specific student exhibiting challenging behaviour. For this reason, they are also frequently referred to as universal practices (Carroll et al., 2020; Muratori et al., 2015). The following table depicts an overview of the paper by paper analysis of proactive practices, including the exact focus of the practices, their objectives, and examples of the particular practices mentioned in each paper.

Table 2 Overview of proactive practices

Papers focused on proactive practices	Focus on empowering social-emotional development?	Primary objectives	Particular practices mentioned	Focus on controlling behaviour?	Primary objectives	Particular practices mentioned
(Carroll et al., 2020)	✓	emotion regulation capacities, friendship skills, empathy, compassion, self-expression, peer collaboration	engaging visual social stories, video modelling, group activities, individual self-reflection, games, written tasks, artistic activities, role plays, story-telling, life mapping, breathing and relaxation, physical games, reflexive listening, and behavioural challenges			
(Cefai et al., 2014)	✓	active listening, self-expression, respecting others, problem solving, peer collaboration	games, role plays, small group work, singing and physical activities such as dancing and running			
(de Leeuw et al., 2020)	✓	social participation, friendships and relationships, interactions, peer acceptance, social self-perception, teacher-student relationship, teachers' professionalisation	peer tutoring, visualising daily classroom structure with pictograms, games with clear rules, classroom-wide complimenting system, broadening teachers' knowledge, working on trust between teacher-student	✓	self-perception, instruction of desirable behaviour	individual action plan, reinforcement of desirable behaviour, direct discussion of expected behaviour, short time-out outside of classroom, discussion of behaviour on video recordings of the student, use of rules and agreements, reduce stimuli
(Evanovich & Scott, 2020)				✓	controlling behaviour by detracting attention to academic skills, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, reading comprehension	opportunities to respond, positive feedback, direct reading instruction, classroom expectations (rules), phonic cards, modelling of letter writing, kinesthetic activities
(Ghiroldi et al., 2020)	✓	attention, self-regulation, body self-awareness, emotional self-awareness, empathy, expression of emotions, global ecological self-awareness	sharing thoughts and experiences, breathing, yoga, meditation, watching videos e.g. on psychosomatic health, relaxing, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go, stay in silence, drawing body feelings			
(Madden & Senior, 2018)	✓	building a rapport with the child, calming down, identifying behavioural triggers, social skills, differentiation, understanding systemic factors influencing behaviour	deep breathing, tensing and relaxing body muscles, going into an imaginary "turtle shell", individualized support, check if basic needs, such as food and water, are met	✓	instruction of appropriate behaviour	praise, positive reinforcement (catch them being good), rewards
(Muratori et al., 2015)	✓	problem solving, social skills	peer networks, perspective taking and problem solving activities, problem-solving videotapes	✓	anger management , self-control	rules, reinforcement, generating alternative solutions, relaxation and self-statements for coping with anger
(Shook, 2012)				✓	behaviour management	rules, routines, positive and negative reinforcement, praise, talking with students
(Torok et al., 2019)				✓	emotional self-regulation, behavioural self-regulation, peer relationships	agreed desirable and undesirable behaviours, use of stimulus to gain attention and achieve silence, rewards, positive reinforcement

As illustrated in the above table, from the total nine papers involving proactive practices three papers (33,3%) were focused on empowering all students' social and emotional development (Carroll et al., 2020; Cefai et al., 2014; Ghiroldi et al., 2020). Another three papers (33,3%) were focused on proactively managing all students' behaviour (Evanovich & Scott, 2020; Shook, 2012; Torok et al., 2019), and the last three (33,3%) used a mixed approach (de Leeuw et al., 2020; Madden & Senior, 2018; Muratori et al., 2015). The abovementioned percentages indicate a balance between papers focused on empowering students' social-emotional development and papers involving a particular interest in directly managing behaviour. For this reason, it is vital at this point to underline their differences.

It could be alleged that sometimes Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) practices and practices focused on behaviour control aim towards developing similar skills, for example, self-regulation of emotion. Nonetheless, what differentiates them is that they pursue this by following two different approaches. The critical difference between them is that teachers complement and strengthen students' skills to regulate their behaviour themselves in the former. In contrast, in the latter, either "appropriate" behaviour is explicitly taught and reinforced, or there is conscious effort to divert students' attention from the "misbehaviour". To illustrate this more clearly, some of the specific practices highlighted as effective in the papers focused on controlling behaviour are positive reinforcement (catch them being good), praise, rewards, rules, routines, direct instruction of agreed desirable behaviour (de Leeuw et al., 2020; Madden & Senior, 2018; Muratori et al., 2015; Shook, 2012; Torok et al., 2019). Even more, Evanovich and Scott (2020) suggest that a specific direct reading instruction program called "Orton-Gillingham" can distract students' attention from the "problematic" behaviour by increasing students' academic engagement. However, this statement should be perceived with a degree of circumspection since the study had limited generalizability because there is a possibility that other factors influenced students' level of engagement.

By contrast, practices aiming to promote pupils' social and emotional development are in most cases presented in the form of SEL programs. To be more specific, four SEL programs are recommended; namely, "KooLKIDS" (Carroll et al., 2020), "Circle time" (Cefai et al., 2014), "Gaia program" (Ghiroldi et al., 2020), "Coping Power

Program" (Muratori et al., 2015). All these detailed social-emotional learning programs and the rest papers that mentioned SEL practices aim for all students to develop a broad spectrum of skills. A few indicative examples are empathy, compassion, active listening, self-expression, peer relationships, emotional self-awareness, self-regulation of emotion, social skills, a sense of belonging, self-esteem, problem-solving skills, cooperative skills (Carroll et al., 2020; Cefai et al., 2014; de Leeuw et al., 2020; Ghiroldi et al., 2020; Madden & Senior, 2018; Muratori et al., 2015).

In order to strengthen such skills, Carroll et al. (2020) recommended visualized social stories showing animated characters facing similar difficulties with the students and how they manage them. The use of visualized social stories is also the feature that discerns KooLKIDS from other SEL programs. Using interactive animations could be a beneficial practice because it involves seeing reality through the lenses of others while also arouses students' interest and engages them in a self-reflection process. Other examples of practices focusing on students' social-emotional development include role-playing, breathing and relaxation, activities in the form of interactive games, listening to each other, small group work, singing, visualization, calming down, perspective-taking activities, sharing thoughts and feelings, and drawing body feelings (Carroll et al., 2020; Cefai et al., 2014; de Leeuw et al., 2020; Ghiroldi et al., 2020; Madden & Senior, 2018; Muratori et al., 2015).

At this stage, it is essential to clarify that the abovementioned SEL practices do not focus exclusively on one aspect of development, for example, social development. Instead, a particular practice may help the students in terms of both their social and emotional development. This specific finding has a twofold interpretation. On the one hand, by taking advantage of the interconnectedness of the skills involved in social-emotional learning, these programs bear a comprehensive character aiming at empowering plenty of students' skills simultaneously. For example, self-regulation of emotion can increase active listening skills, which in turn may enhance the formulation of stronger relationships between students. On the other hand, there was one repeatedly reported word of concern stressed in many of the articles; namely, that these programs seem not to comprise a natural part of everyday teaching routine (Cefai et al., 2014; Ghiroldi et al., 2020). Instead, they look more like an

additional burden on the already heavy workload of teachers. Nevertheless, this is not the case for "KooLKIDS" since it is in line with the Australian national curriculum; thus, the SEL practices constitute an indispensable part of the everyday teaching routine (Carroll et al., 2020). Another proactive program named the "Good Behaviour Game", although this one focused on controlling behaviour, is also "designed to be integrated into the existing curricula" (Torok et al., 2019, p. 293). Both these studies though were conducted in the Australian context; however, it could be that other countries also include SEL practices as part of the curriculum, but it is not reported in the articles included in this review.

There are even more challenges involved in the implementation of proactive practices, partially explained by the contrast between practices targeting towards empowering students' social-emotional development on the one hand and practices towards controlling students' behaviour on the other hand. This fact creates a sense of uncertainty in teachers who often express that practices towards social-emotional development only concern students experiencing SEBD and not all students without exception (Cefai et al., 2014). Another significant challenge in the implementation of proactive practices again involves teachers' assumptions. In particular, according to Cefai et al. (2014), many teachers allege that SEL activities hamper students' academic learning. Furthermore, teachers also stress that large classroom sizes constitute a major barrier against implementing proactive practices (Cefai et al., 2014; Madden & Senior, 2018); for example, a teacher stated that "with 20 kids, each session took much longer than planned" (Cefai et al., 2014, p. 120). It is also reported that, despite the wide variety of practices that are proposed in the literature, teachers actually use a limited repertoire of practices (de Leeuw et al., 2020).

Notwithstanding the barriers in the everyday implementation of these programs outlined above, such practices appear to impact students' social-emotional development positively. For example, it is reported that the "KooLKIDS" program had a statistically significant influence of medium effect size on strengthening students' social-emotional capabilities, such as self-awareness, self-management (Carroll et al., 2020). In addition, the study conducted by Cefai et al. (2014) not only found a decline in the number of internalized difficulties following the implementation of "Circle Time" but also 87,18% of the students reported that they enjoyed the

program, especially kinesthetic activities. Furthermore, it is reported that practices like yoga, breathing, and relaxation exercises as part of the Gaia program, can empower body-emotional-global self-awareness and significantly reduce both internalized and externalized difficulties (Ghiroldi et al., 2020). In addition, the implementation of the "Coping Power Program", incorporating both practices towards students' social development and practices for behaviour control, reported a decrease in hyperactivity and attention difficulties (Muratori et al., 2015). A statistically significant decrease in the overall difficulties experienced by students, including long term decline of externalized difficulties, is also reported with the use of the "Good Behaviour Game" (Torok et al., 2019).

Another significant trend located in the data is the need for a multilevel continuum of support is; namely, practices covering the whole range starting from universal practices for everyone, moving towards more targeted practices for some, and ultimately towards intensive interventions to address individual needs (Carroll et al., 2020; Cefai et al., 2014; Ghiroldi et al., 2020; Muratori et al., 2015). Multi-level support is connected with the following part regarding reactive practices since intensive interventions follow disruptive behaviour in most cases.

4.2.2 Reactive Practices

Papers mentioning reactive-responsive practices represented the smallest percentage of the 11 articles included in this review (N=4, 36,3%, note: the two papers that involve both proactive and reactive practices are included). Reactive practices are defined as those implemented after inappropriate behaviour (Madden & Senior, 2018; Shook, 2012). The following table provides an overview of the papers focused on reactive practices, highlighting their objectives and illustrating examples of the particular practices mentioned in each paper.

Table 3 Overview of reactive practices

Papers focused on reactive practices	Primary objectives	Particular practices mentioned
(DeJager et al., 2020)	reinnforcing socially acceptable behaviour, rule-following, on-task behaviour, decreasing disruptive behaviour	token economy, exchange of tangible rewards, positive reinforcement, punishment type strategies such as taking away points
(Jahangir, 2011)	control behavioural problems in terms of physical aggression, peer affinity, and attention seeking, discipline, order	call the student whose attention is wavering, disapprove behaviour by oral reprimand or tone of voice, look intently at the student, deal immediately with misbehaviour, advise the student in front of the class, deny priviledges, ignore misbehaviour, speak to parents, report to authorities
(Madden & Senior, 2018)	calming down, self-regulation, composure	acknowledging the child's feelings, giving space and time, avoid confrontation, consider what the behaviour is communicating, try to de-escalate
(Shook, 2012)	behaviour management	negative reinforcement, punishment, referring the student elsewhere, instruction on how to behave, talking with students, reprimands, time-outs, removal from classroom

As illustrated in the above table, following the occurrence of "inappropriate" behaviour, there is a clear pattern towards external manipulation of behaviour since three of the four papers mentioned behavioural and even disciplinary practices targeted at imposing order and control (DeJager et al., 2020; Jahangir, 2011; Shook, 2012). Only one of the four papers mentioned a more affective response to the occurrence of "inappropriate" behaviour (Madden & Senior, 2018).

The study conducted by Jahangir (2011) aimed to examine what practices (and why) Iranian teachers use more frequently to control "misbehaviour". In this study, the definitions of socially acceptable behaviour and healthy personality seem to be very strictly stipulated. As a result, the need for student discipline is explicitly acknowledged so as to conform to what is socially acceptable. The need for external discipline could be due to contextual-cultural reasons, but no such evidence supporting this claim was found. A critical factor in implementing a reactive practice, reported by teachers, is to be implemented immediately after an "inappropriate behaviour" occurs.

The emphasis on connecting behaviour with a consequence, eminent in the study of Jahangir (2011), indicates the strong tendency for correcting students' behaviour. Furthermore, it is stressed that there is a strong relationship between the type of "inappropriate" behaviour exhibited and the practice implemented as a response to this behaviour. To be more specific, for low intensity "misbehaviour", teachers preferred to show their condemnation by staring at the student, or discussing the student's behaviour, or even scolding them in front of the whole class. Their rationale was to "teach" the rest of the classmates what is acceptable or not. In terms of more serious "misbehaviour" the practices included "to report to higher authorities and to talk or interview seriously the parent/guardian" (Jahangir, 2011, p. 84).

Other specific reactive practices that teachers reported to be using frequently are "positive and negative reinforcement, punishment, referring the student elsewhere, instruction, and talking with students" (Shook, 2012, p. 131), with the last one to be the most frequently used. Finally, the use of behavioural punitive-type practices, such as offering or removing tangible rewards, is also supported by DeJager et al. (2020) as effective for reducing behavioural difficulties. Therefore, it is becoming evident that such practices aim to control and modify students' behaviour. Nevertheless, it is vital to mention that despite the predominant focus on discipline, all three papers emphasized the need for teachers to avoid getting angry and engaging in a direct confrontation with students (DeJager et al., 2020; Jahangir, 2011; Shook, 2012).

In contrast to the aforementioned practices, one paper stressed that, even when "inappropriate" behaviour occurs, the reactive practice should bear an affective character instead of a disciplinary one (Madden & Senior, 2018). In particular, it is recommended that teachers engage in a conscious effort to empathize and show a caring and understanding attitude towards students, rather than imposing order and control. Such an attitude can be expressed by acknowledging that their feelings are valid, considering what the behaviour is communicating, and giving the students the necessary time and space to regain their composure. Accepting the child's emotions was reported to be a crucial practice to use when an "inappropriate" behaviour occurred (Madden & Senior, 2018). Another interesting observation is that sometimes there is a degree of inconsistency between the practices that teachers

deem effective and those they actually use. The above contradiction could be explained by the emotional distress that teachers are experiencing. The following statement from a teacher illustrates this situation vividly "… it is very difficult to deal with challenging behaviour… sometimes it becomes so tiring and you feel like you won't cope" (Madden & Senior, 2018, p. 195).

5. Discussion

5.1 Chapter introduction

As mentioned in the literature review, the general aims of this study were to explore why the inclusion of students experiencing SEBD inside mainstream classrooms is characterized as challenging and what practices could facilitate this process. For this reason, a systematic literature review was conducted to explore if the practices proposed in the literature are aligned to principles of inclusive pedagogy, as delineated by Black-Hawkins (2017). In particular, the research question was: Are the recommended in the literature practices to support students experiencing SEBD inside mainstream classrooms aligned to principles of inclusive pedagogy? After presenting in the previous chapter the practices, their types, their objectives, and challenges involved in their implementation, this chapter is focused on shedding some light on the research question. The findings are analyzed based on the initial literature review in order to provide potential implications for research, policy, and practice. However, in addition to the initial literature review, few more references are included in this chapter to analyze ideas identified during the analysis of the final papers due to the inductive approach adopted. This chapter commences from a summary of the findings, including overall observations about inclusive pedagogy. Subsequently, each type of practices is analyzed in more detail and associated with inclusion.

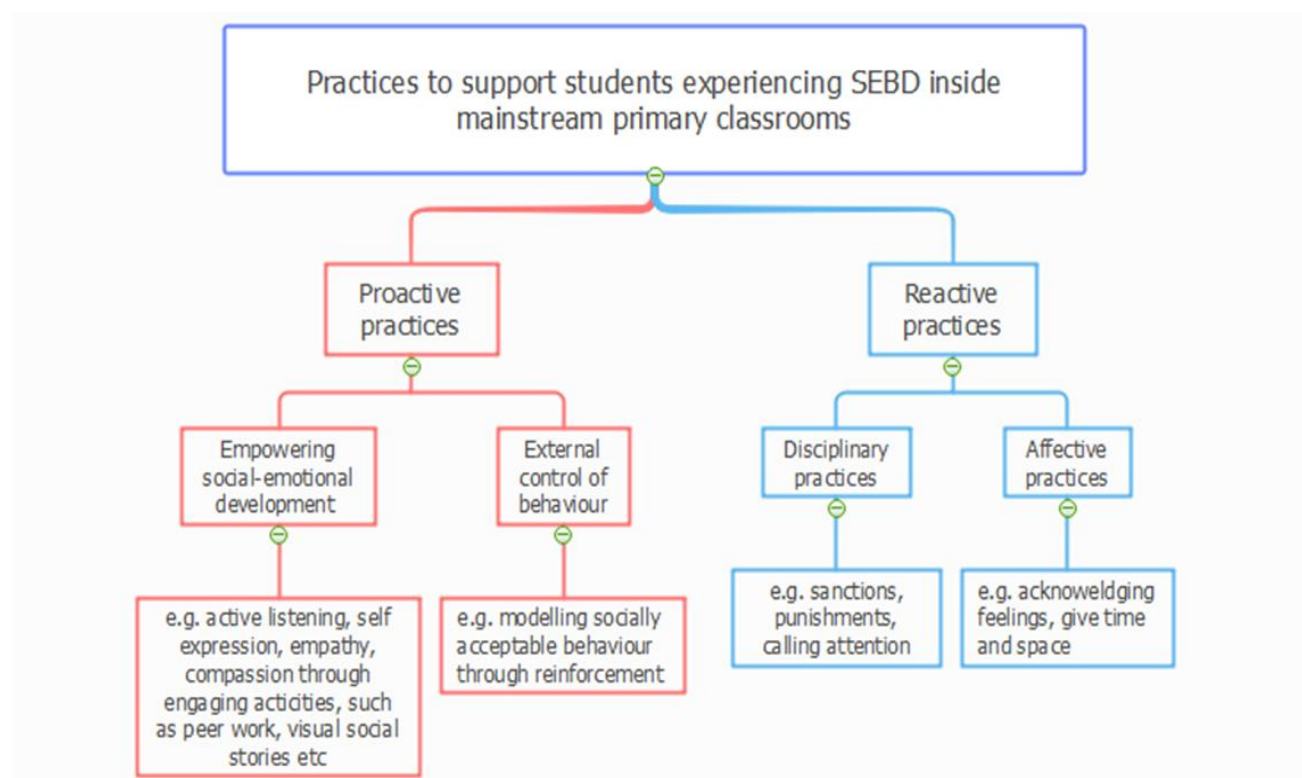## 5.2 Summary of the findings-overall observations

Figure 3 Overall thematic map of findings

The above figure is instrumental in order to guide a meaningful discussion of the findings because it depicts an overall view of the themes and subthemes identified in the analysis of the papers. The results of the study suggest that the practices to support students experiencing SEBD can be divided into two main categories, namely practices used before (proactive) and after (reactive) the occurrence of "inappropriate" behaviour. Proactive and reactive practices are not only chronologically discerned but also based on whether they are formulated to be applied to all students (proactive-universal) or only to some specific students (reactive-individual).

Regarding the content, the articles included in the review mentioned a plurality of practices, often contradictory and opposed to each other. Therefore, there were no clear-cut answers about which practices are the most appropriate for students experiencing SEBD. However, there is a pattern observed in both proactive and reactive practices. On the one hand, there is a strong tendency towards empowering the social-emotional development of every pupil. On the other hand, practices

imposing discipline and order (either directly or indirectly) as a means to control behaviour are proposed. In an initial attempt to answer the research question, the first approach can be characterized as an inclusive one since it is aligned to the principle of expanding what is ordinarily available for everyone and empowering their skills, rather than focusing on the deficits (Black-Hawkins, 2017). By contrast, the second approach is deficit oriented, more similar to an integration perspective, since the primary goal is to normalize the students, that is, to "fix" their "misbehaviour" to fit into the classroom (Kiuppis, 2014; Oliver & Barnes, 2012).

These contradictory practices observed in the findings and the lack of unanimous directions and guidelines for teachers to follow could explain why teachers, as noted in the initial literature review, reported feeling baffled in terms of how to support their students (Bond, 2017; Westling, 2010). In more detail, a worrisome observation reported in the findings is that teachers use a limited repertoire of proactive practices (de Leeuw et al., 2020). According to (de Leeuw et al., 2020), the restricted use of practices could be explained by the fact that teachers are unwilling to engage with the literature themselves and prefer instead support from other professionals in the form of consultations (de Leeuw et al., 2020).

In any case, the need for teacher support to foster the development of their teaching skills and provide quality teaching to everyone is well-established (de Leeuw et al., 2020; Evanovich & Scott, 2020). There is an urgent need for continuous teacher training in order for teachers to expand their skills and be able to support each member of their more and more diverse classrooms. Researchers also need to learn from teachers in order for their findings to be meaningful and practical (Black-Hawkins, 2017; McIntyre, 2009). It is highly recommended that teacher training programs bear an inclusive orientation, focusing on teachers to develop an affective and caring attitude emphasizing the need to see beyond the easily observable external behaviour and empower everyone's internal skills.

Another significant aspect of the findings is that the need for a multi-level continuum of support is widely acknowledged (Carroll et al., 2020; Cefai et al., 2014; Ghiroldi et al., 2020; Muratori et al., 2015). For instance, according to Muratori et al. (2015, p. 437), "more intensive intervention with the at-risk children may serve to reduce their

highly disruptive impact on the classrooms, thereby making it easier for other children to respond to the universal intervention". At first look, this approach mentioning provisions for some or on an individual level may seem against the principles of inclusive pedagogy asking for provisions for everyone. However, Black-Hawkins (2017) underlines that inclusive pedagogy does not exclude the provision of tailored support; nevertheless, it should be provided with circumspection by giving everyone the option for such adaptations to avoid stigmatizing some of the students (Black-Hawkins, 2017). Thus, when multi-level support is predominantly focused on the first level of proactively fostering everyone's social-emotional development, it can be seen as an inclusive approach since it is based on the tenet that everyone can improve their skills (Black-Hawkins, 2017). "Rejecting deterministic beliefs about ability" (Black-Hawkins, 2017, p. 22) is of the utmost importance, given that even slight improvements can have a positive long term impact in terms of both academic attainment and one's mental health (Muratori et al., 2015).

Supporting students to better understand and express themselves in a safe and caring environment, characterized by respect for everyone, is the critical factor that renders proactive practices more inclusive (Cefai et al., 2014). As mentioned in the initial literature review, developing a climate that encourages good relationships between students is essential for inclusive practices (Norwich, 2008b; Warnock et al., 2010). In particular, it is imperative that all students feel welcome, help each other, and do not encounter obstacles when participating in any school activity. Such a caring and friendly environment could be established, for instance, when teachers adopt "a common language with students" (Cefai et al., 2014, p. 123). Thus, instead of focusing on order and control, the central focus should be on empowerment and understanding. This approach is exemplified in the very own acronym "KOOL" of the SEL program "KooLKIDS", which represents "Know yourself", "Understanding Our needs and emotions", "Understanding Others needs and emotions", "Live well with others" (Carroll et al., 2020, p. 856).

5.3 Practices focused on "controlling" behaviour

Practices focused on external control of behaviour, akin to imposing discipline and order, are observed both proactively and reactively. It could be alleged that proactive

practices represent an inclusive approach since they intend to support everyone, not only students experiencing SEBD. Nonetheless, some indications of a deficit approach are still evident since some of the papers included in the review mentioned practices related to behaviour modification, discipline, order, and control (de Leeuw et al., 2020; Evanovich & Scott, 2020; Madden & Senior, 2018; Muratori et al., 2015; Shook, 2012; Torok et al., 2019). Instead of building upon students' strengths to enhance their skills, such practices consider the "inappropriate" behaviour as a deficit that needs to be "fixed" before engaging with learning.

Another deficit perspective mentioned in the findings is the focus on academic activities as an attempt to control behaviour and ameliorate SEBD. However, it seems more of an attempt to distract students' attention from their "misbehaviour" rather than a genuine effort towards academic or social-emotional development. An indicative example is the case of Orton-Gillingham, the academic learning program mentioned earlier (Evanovich & Scott, 2020). In this program, it seems that it was not the program's activities that improved behaviour measured as increased students' engagement; instead, it was a teacher-centred program focusing on students' responses as part of the instruction. Increased "engagement" will definitely be observed since what was defined as "engagement" was, in fact, responding to prompts or stimuli. It was not the academic nature of the activities that influenced behaviour but the way the program was designed having students in the centre. Such observations are particularly worrisome because they show that research is also "messy", a fact that can create confusion to non-academics, such as parents and teachers.

As noted in the initial literature review, such practices are associated with evoking negative students' responses, thus leading to a high possibility for stigmatization, marginalization, and exclusion (Koundourou, 2012; Roache & Lewis, 2011). Nevertheless, both the findings and the initial literature review indicate that there is a strong body of literature supporting the value of these practices (Garwood et al., 2017; Mitchell et al., 2019). Furthermore, reinforcement of behaviour (either positive or negative) and praise, which are relatively common behavioural practices familiar to teachers, can potentially increase all students' levels of engagement by encouraging students towards socially acceptable forms of behaviour (de Leeuw et

al., 2020; Madden & Senior, 2018; Muratori et al., 2015; Payne, 2015; Shook, 2012; Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Nevertheless, the problem with the use of such practices is that teachers do not always capitulate potential opportunities to praise the "appropriate" behaviour, and they focus instead on condemning the "inappropriate" (Evanovich & Scott, 2020; Shook, 2012).

This study does not suggest that the importance of such practices should be underestimated. However, such practices should be implemented with circumspection on the grounds that it is likely to bring the opposite results from what is intended (Payne, 2015). For instance, disciplinary, punitive-type behavioural practices, such as sanctions and punishments, often lead to the recurrence of the disruptive behaviour while also the student gets detached from the classroom teacher (Ducharme & Shecter, 2011; Koliadis, 2017). Using such practices indicates the negative-deficit assumptions and attitudes sometimes held by various educational stakeholders, which blatantly contradict the principles of inclusive education, asking for building upon students' strengths and moving away from considering difficulties as deficits in learners (Black-Hawkins, 2017). In sum, the strict focus on identifying students experiencing SEBD and the use of behavioural practices aiming to change the student are not aligned to the principles of inclusive pedagogy, which focus on empowering all students' capabilities in order to increase their agency, autonomy, and ultimately to be able to regulate themselves without the need of external support.

5.4 Practices focused on empowering social-emotional development

The most critical element indicating the importance of proactive SEL practices is that they "represent important, non-stigmatizing and inclusive means to assist all children build stronger emotion regulation capacities, reduced internalizing and externalizing problems and better mental health and resilience generally" (Carroll et al., 2020, p. 853). According to de Leeuw et al. (2020), teachers' calmness and the formulation of better teacher-student relationships on the basis of trust and respect are essential requirements in order to move towards practices with an inclusive orientation and, generally, for any practice to be effective.

The data described in the findings and the initial literature review indicate that proactive SEL practices are inextricably intertwined with students' increased autonomy achieved by empowering the skill of self-regulation of emotion. Students learn to regulate their behaviour for themselves without depending on external stimuli (Carroll et al., 2020; Cefai et al., 2014; de Leeuw et al., 2020; Madden & Senior, 2018; Muratori et al., 2015). In this way, the students increase their social competence (Herpertz et al., 2016; Onchwari & Keengwe, 2011; Subic-Wrana et al., 2014), meaning that they are capable of developing stronger relationships with peers and teachers, thus creating a positive circle of success. Such skills and practices illustrating an emancipatory approach to increase students' autonomy, independence, and healthy relationships are aligned to the ideological demands of inclusion (Florian & Linklater, 2010; Head, 2014; Kiuppis, 2014).

The study of Ghiroldi et. al. (2020) involved yoga and other breathing and meditation practices conducted by teachers during the regular teaching schedule and involved a large sample of participants. Nonetheless, given the time constraints of everyday teaching practice, it may be unfeasible to implement such activities frequently. Even so, some valuable implications relevant to the research question can be deduced, such as that teachers, instead of focusing on the external-observable behaviour, should concentrate on empowering students' internal skills aiming to increase their agency and autonomy (Ghiroldi et al., 2020). Such implications are significant because they show a positive trend towards inclusion, and further research is vital in an attempt to address the limitations involved in such practices.

Another important feature identified regarding SEL practices was recognising both structure and flexibility as integral (Carroll et al., 2020; Cefai et al., 2014; de Leeuw et al., 2020; Torok et al., 2019). To be more specific, the necessity for practices to have a central core of activities, which teachers may follow consistently, is recognized. Yet, teachers may also perform some adaptations to match the activities with the needs of their classroom. A significant pitfall is that the boundaries between the practices' central features that must be followed faithfully, in order for SEL practices to be effective, and the flexible characteristics are quite vague. Therefore, further research is necessary to ensure consistent implementation of the practices.

It is reported in the findings that teachers often struggle to implement SEL practices because such practices constitute something extra to the already demanding curriculum, and they do not have the necessary time for something like that (Cefai et al., 2014; Ghiroldi et al., 2020). Nevertheless, Muratori et al. (2015) dispute this argument asserting that proactive social-emotional practices do not comprise an extra burden for teachers. Instead, such practices render teachers' life "easier" since they can be translated into more interesting-engaging teaching activities leading to better classroom behaviour, thus fewer barriers for teachers to implement their teaching plans (Muratori et al., 2015). Therefore, the significance of students being the centre of the teaching and teachers facilitating this process by adopting interactive and engaging ways to present the teaching content is becoming evident (Carroll et al., 2020; Cefai et al., 2014).

A worrisome observation stressed by Cefai et al. (2014) is that the assumption proactive that social-emotional learning practices only concern students experiencing SEBD is a rather common misunderstanding among teachers, which indicates a deficit approach. Furthermore, the teachers' misconception that social-emotional learning constitutes a barrier to their academic performance (Cefai et al., 2014) reflects a distorted view of SEL practices. Notwithstanding scientific evidence demonstrating that SEL practices are positively associated with increased academic attainment (Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg, 2010), it is still a common misconception that SEL will distract the attention from academic learning (Benninga et al., 2006).

All in all, based on the findings of this study and the need for practices to bear an inclusive orientation, it appears that proactive practices aiming to empower all students' social skills and emotion recognition and management skills could be seen as one of the cornerstones towards offering quality education to everyone, not only students experiencing SEBD. In the last two decades, there has been a significant increase in research focusing on socio-emotional learning programs at various levels of education (Sklad et al., 2012). However, most of these studies have been conducted in Europe and the United States (Sklad et al., 2012), which could partially explain why in other contexts, such as in Iran (Jahangir, 2011), reactive practices focusing on discipline are at the forefront. However, further research is necessary to examine this issue in more detail.

6. Conclusions

This last chapter of the dissertation aims at an overall evaluation of this study by pinpointing the primary outcomes, implications for research, policy, and practice, and the limitations. Using a systematic literature review was one of the biggest strengths of this study because, as mentioned earlier, it represents a predefined, explicit and rigorous search of the literature. Thus, it was a valuable way to explore if the practices proposed in the academic literature for students experiencing SEBD are aligned to principles of inclusive pedagogy. The latent objectives of this study were to investigate why the inclusion of students experiencing SEBD inside mainstream classrooms is characterized as challenging and what practices could facilitate this process.

Before illustrating the main points presented in this study, it is vital to give as clear an answer to the research question as possible. The research question posed was "Are the recommended in the literature practices to support students experiencing SEBD inside mainstream primary classrooms aligned to principles of inclusive pedagogy? Definitely, there are no easy answers to such complex questions. The results of the study are mixed, involving both elements of an inclusive approach and traits of a deficit one. Nonetheless, what seems true is that there is a positive trend towards non-stigmatizing inclusive practices.

There appears to be a transition from stigmatizing disciplinary practices towards practices aiming to proactively empower everyone's social-emotional skills so as to render students capable of internally controlling their own behaviour without the need for external support. Such practices are based on showing a caring, accepting, empathetic, and understanding attitude towards students, leading to better relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Thus, their ultimate objective is to increase students' agency, accountability, and independence. Although there are several challenges involved, this is a positive pattern since all these features are considered essential for any learning to take place. As teachers, the goal is to promote students' learning, not pretend to be their psychologists, counsellors, parents. However, it is crucial to refrain from the one-dimensional solely academic conceptualization of learning. Therefore, future research needs to harness this

positive trend and address the challenges involved in proactively empowering the social-emotional development of every pupil.

However, it must be acknowledged that there were some concerning observations about disciplinary practices aiming to impose order and control or even "fixing" the "inappropriate" student behaviour before engaging with their learning. This deficit approach considering behavioural difficulties as an in-child deficit is more similar to an integration perspective; thus, it is against the principles of inclusive pedagogy. This approach was presented in the findings in the form of behavioural, disciplinary, even punitive practices targeting to reduce behavioural difficulties. It is vital to note that the significance of some behavioural practices, such as reinforcement of socially acceptable behaviour and praise, is not underestimated. Nevertheless, in most cases, such practices object to decreasing the "inappropriate" behaviour, without explicitly supporting the student in terms of what is considered appropriate.

Having stated all the above, the main outcome of this study is that no particular practices-types of practices comprise a panacea. It is not a practice on its own that can prove to be beneficial; instead, it is the way the practice is implemented that can lead the way towards inclusive, equitable education (Ainscow, 2020). For instance, most practices that have been mentioned can be used both before and after the occurrence of disruptive behaviour. The important thing, in either case, is to respect the student. An example of a positive response, even after the occurrence of disruptive behaviour, instead of disciplinary measures, would be to adopt a caring stance trying to empathize with the students by giving them, for example, space and time to calm down (Cefai et al., 2014; Madden & Senior, 2018).

In sum, it is vital to summarize the main points resulting from the dissertation. First and foremost, supporting students experiencing SEBD should be mainly focused on proactively empowering everyone's social-emotional development and reactively showing an affective response when disruptive behaviour appears. Moreover, the study's findings indicate that positive behaviour support, such as positive reinforcement or praise, should be used with circumspection only to build upon students' strengths. In addition, the use of punitive practices contradicts students' rights and should be restricted. Furthermore, it is highly recommended that the

curricula include social-emotional learning as an integral component. Finally, the findings suggest there is an urgent need for more resources in education to develop a supportive background for teachers, organise seminars of continuous teachers' training, and decrease the number of students in each classroom.

The informative character of this study is essential towards acquiring a more nuanced understanding of the complex issue of how to support students experiencing SEBD. By exploring the tensions and summarizing the existing literature on this topic, this systematic review can be of interest to a variety of readers, from teachers to policymakers. For instance, it could trigger teachers' or even parents' self-reflection on the everyday practices they use and their impact on students. In this way, they can contemplate whether they are doing their best for all their students, including those experiencing SEBD. This study could also be of some interest to policymakers. Taking into account such data, such as the practices and the rationale behind them, they could formulate appropriate inclusive policy frameworks and create continuing development seminars to support teachers. These are necessary steps towards an inclusive classroom friendly and accommodating to every student, not only for students experiencing SEBD.

6.1 Limitations-future research

In the main body of the dissertation, it was pinpointed that further research is necessary to support some of the claims made. Except for these instances, there are also some other aspects of the topic that, due to the narrow scope of this dissertation, were not explored in detail. Hence, future research could be more comprehensive in order to fill these gaps. Given the purposive, exploratory character of this systematic review, its narrow scope, and strict time restraints as a dissertation on a master's level, it is clear that the results have limited generalizability. Furthermore, as stressed in the methodology chapter, adopting the interpretivist paradigm entails a somewhat relativist view that other interpretations of the same data are also very likely to occur. Thus, the results must be treated with caution. Nonetheless, this fact does not constitute a significant drawback of the study since this dissertation was not focused on generalizing and drawing firm conclusions. Instead, the primary focus in this was on gaining a deeper understanding of how to

support students experiencing SEBD in order for them to flourish in the mainstream classroom.

It would be a fallacy to believe that a systematic review conducted as a dissertation on a master's level could directly influence policy or practice. One of the reasons for the above statement is the narrow scope of the dissertation created, for example, by excluding grey literature and collecting articles only from the last ten years. Grey literature is sometimes considered an important part of SLRs; nevertheless, the study opted instead for peer-reviewed papers because the quality was emphasised over quantity. However, the narrow scope is one of the main limitations of the study, which could be addressed in future studies. For instance, in future systematic literature reviews, the inclusion criteria could be expanded to capture and examine the recommended practices more comprehensively. For example, prospective research projects could involve searching the literature over the last ten years and not focusing exclusively on primary schools. It would also be interesting to examine the impact of contextual-cultural influences on the type of practices for students experiencing SEBD.

Finally, in this study, the conceptualization of inclusive pedagogy was mainly influenced by the work of Black-Hawkins (2017), which is a quite flexible perspective. Thus, given that this study did not use strict criteria to define this concept, one could allege that the same study performed by another author could have brought a completely different outcome. However, adopting the broader principles of inclusive pedagogy was a conscious decision because providing a strict definition would seem against the nature of inclusion. Besides, throughout this dissertation, "inclusion" represents a dynamic, continuously evolving concept that is more of a medium towards better education for everyone rather than an end in itself.

Appendix 1 Example of the abstract level protocol

	Abstract Screening							
	Title of the article	*English language?*	*Primary/empirical data?*	*Focus on students experiencing SEBD?*	*Focus on mainstream primary classroom setting?*	*Focus on specific practices targetting to support students with SEBD?*	*Included? (If ambivalent, justification for inclusion/exclusion provided in the notes)*	*Notes*
1	Examining the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Program in a Regular Norwegian School Setting: Teacher-Reported Behavior Management Practice, Problem Behavior in Classroom and School Environment, Teacher Self- and Collective Efficacy, and Classroom Climate	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	Does not mention specifically students with SEBD but it is included to examine it on full-text level because problem behaviour in the classroom is mentioned
2	Effects of Multi-Tier Academic and Behavior Instruction on Difficult-to-Teach Students	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	Caution because instead of SEBD, "difficult-to-teach students" are mentioned
3	Behavior support coaching for a paraprofessional working with first-grade students exhibiting disruptive behavior problems in an urban high-poverty elementary school	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	Not included because it focuses on a teacher training program
4	Educational Leadership and Common Discipline Issues of Elementary School Children and How to Deal with Them	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	Instead of SEBD, behavioral issues are mentioned
5	Game Over? No Main or Subgroup Effects of the Good Behavior Game in a Randomized Trial in English Primary Schools	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	Not included because it focuses on a school-wide intervention
6	Inteligencia emocional percibida y estrategias de afrontamiento al estrés en profesores de enseñanza primaria: Propuesta de un modelo explicativo con ecuaciones estructurales (SEM) = Perceived emotional intelligence and stress coping strategies in primary school teachers: Proposal for an explanatory model with structural equation modelling (SEM)	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	Not written in english and Irrelevant to the research question article
7	Classwide Peer Tutoring for Elementary and High School Students at Risk: Listening to Students' Voices	YES	YES	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES	NO	Not included because it involves both primary and high school students

Appendix 2 Example of the full-text level protocol

	Title of the article	Central focus on students experiencing a form of SEBD?	Central Focus on mainstream primary classroom setting?	Central focus on specific practices targeting to support students with SEBD?	Included? (All three criteria must be fullfilled to include the article	Notes- Rationale
	Full-text Screening					
1	Examining the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Program in a Regular Norwegian School Setting: Teacher-Reported Behavior Management Practice, Problem Behavior in Classroom and School Environment, Teacher Self- and Collective Efficacy, and Classroom Climate	NO	NO	YES	NO	1. Focused on teachers 2. School-wide interventions
2	Effects of Multi-Tier Academic and Behavior Instruction on Difficult-to-Teach Students	YES	YES	NO	NO	School wide support
3	Educational Leadership and Common Discipline Issues of Elementary School Children and How to Deal with Them	YES	YES	NO	NO	1. Secondary review 2. Focused on difficulties rather than practices
4	When worlds collide: Academic adjustment of Somali Bantu students with limited formal education in a US Elementary school	NO	YES	NO	NO	Focused on difficulties not practices an mainly for refugees, not mentioned SEBD
5	Breaks Are Better: A Tier II Social Behavior Intervention	YES/NO	YES	YES/NO	NO	1. Not focused on practices inside classrooms but on a wider system 2. Focused on "typically developing" students
6	Bridging Mental Health and Education in Urban Elementary Schools: Participatory Research to Inform Intervention Development	YES	YES	NO	NO	Practices focused on how to support teachers
7	Evaluating the Effectiveness of KoolKIDS: An Interactive Social Emotional Learning Program for Australian Primary School Children	YES	YES	YES	YES	

Appendix 3 Example of the critical appraisal protocol

					Full-text Analysis				
	Title	*Place*	*Year*	*Methodology/Methods*	*Target/ Focus*	*Research Aims/Questions*	*Type of practices*	*Specific content related to practices targetted to support students with SEBD*	*Limitations*	*Additional notes*
1	Evaluating the Effectiveness of KooLKIDS: An Interactive Social Emotional Learning Program for Australian Primary School Children (Carroll et al., 2020)	Australia	2020	Quasi-experimental waitlist control design	Emotional and behavioural problems, social emotional learning	Determine the effectiveness of KooLKIDS to improve children's social and emotional competence, prosocial behavior, and academic achievement and effort, and reducing emotional and behavioral problems.	Flexible, tailored,highly engaging, interactive (p.852), both proactive practices for all students and reactive for students exhibiting challenging behaviour	KooLKIDS: a teacher-led, structured, interactive, multimedia, SEL program that buildschildren's emotion regulation capacities, social and friendship skills, empathy and compassion for others, and self-esteem (p. 852)	1. Only Catholic Education Schools participated in the study, 2. True randomization not feasible, 3. Possibility of teachers' bias, 4. No data collection regarding program fidelity (p. 865)	854 students participated.
2	Circle time for social and emotional learning in primary school (Cefai et al., 2014)	Malta	2014	Semi-randomised control trial, making use of both quantitative and qualitative data (p. 118)	Social emotional learing, behaviour problems	Objectives: 1. examine the effectiveness of CT by the classroom teacher in the students promoting social and emotional learning, 2. identify the processes that facilitate and hinder its effectiveness, and explore the teachers' and students' experience of CT (p.118).	Circle Time: universal intervention	CT provides a safe base where children can learn and practice social and emotional learning skills such as listening, expressing oneself, respecting others and problems solving within a caring, inclusive and democratic environment (p. 116)	1. Small-scale study, 2. the monitoring of the progranne was also limited with some of the teachers asking for more support	Five classrooms from a relatively large school participated
3	What Do Dutch General Education Teachers Do to Facilitate the Social Participation of Students with SEBD? (de Leeuw et al., 2020)	Netherlands	2020	Digital questionnaire	Social participation of students with SEBD	Gain insights into which teacher strategies are recommended by teachers themselves to facilitate the social participation of students with SEBD (p.1197)	Pre-conditional strategies, social participation strategies	Buddy system, classroom wide compliment system, discuss students' behaviour based on video recordings, ask for advice during team meetings, daily routine cards to structure play and playtime, individual action plan, trust between teacher and student, reading literature about social behavioural issues (p.1204)	1. Insights relate to teachers' perspectives, 2.modest sample sizes, 3. limited contextual information	Large sample of mainstream primary education schools in the Netherlands (N = 500) (p.1198)
4	Comparing the effectiveness and ease of implementation of token economy, response cost, and a combination condition in rural elementary school classrooms (DeJager et al., 2020)	U.S.A.	2020	Systematic direct observations	Supporting mental health challenges	TEs, RC systems, and CB systems can mitigate problem behaviors stemming from mental health issues within classrooms; however, literature demonstrating this is sparse. Less common are comparisons of TE, RC, and CB implemented with treatment integrity within a typical rural elementary classroom (P.42).	Token economy, response cost interventions	Reinforcers, punishers, marks, operant conditioning. Points,	1. Limited generalization since only two classrooms are included in the study,	1. focused on rural schools, 2. two rural elementary classrooms 3. Disruptive behaviors included fidgeting, out-of-seat behavior, verbal outbursts, physically prodding others, and academic underperformance (P.42)

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