I was treated like a person and not a lost cause
Young people’s experience of an alternative to school exclusion

Deborah Júlía Robinson

Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Akureyri
2016
I was treated like a person and not as a lost cause
Young people’s experience of an alternative to school exclusion

Deborah Júlíia Robinson

60 credits thesis for a Magister Scientiarum degree in Health Sciences

Supervisors
Guðrún Pálmadóttir
Hermína Gunnþórsdóttir

Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Akureyri
Akureyri, June 2016
I was treated like a person and not as a lost cause. Young people’s experience of an alternative to school exclusion.
An alternative to school exclusion.
60 credits thesis of *Magister Scientiarum* degree in Health Sciences

Copyright © 2016 Deborah Júlí Robinson
All rights reserved

Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Akureyri
Sólborg, Norðurslóð 2
600 Akureyri

Tel: 460 8000

Registration:
Deborah Júlí Robinson, 2016, *I was treated like a person and not a lost cause. Young people’s experience of an alternative to school exclusion*, Master’s thesis, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Akureyri, 92 pgs.

Printing: Prentstofan Stell
Akureyri, June 2016
Abstract

Students with special educational needs (SEN) are diverse and mainstream schools are finding it challenging to include them successfully. Inclusive education is an approach that expects schools to adapt to students’ needs and has been developing as an ideology at mainstream school level for about forty years. Some SEN students are more challenging than others and students with serious behavioural issues or Emotional Behavioural Disorder (EBD) may find themselves in alternative education outside of the formal compulsory education system. The purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the experiences of young people when attending an alternative school that specialises in working with students with serious behavioural issues. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) was used as a theoretical framework as it allowed the researcher to pay special attention to the importance of contextual factors when considering student participation in learning and acquiring knowledge. The research approach was qualitative and ten interviews were taken with nine former students attending the school during the years of 2000-2010. Data collection lasted over a period of one year in 2015. Data analysis was supported by grounded theory processes of coding and identification of evolving themes. The results showed that the participants’ experience of the alternative school was generally positive. However, sweet success was often preceded by blood, sweat and tears. The major finding was the impact environmental factors had on improvements in learning and behaviour of the former students. Study findings indicate the importance of integrating caring teacher/student relationships, appropriate teaching strategies and diverse curricula into the learning process. There is a need for real alternative education for students with behavioural issues and it must be borne in mind that changes in student behaviour result from a combination of adaptations of environmental factors and a shared responsibility and not just one or the other.

Key words: Former students, alternative education, serious behavioural issues.
Útdráttur


Lykilhugtök: Fyrrum nemendur, sérskóli, alvarleg hegðunarvandamál.
A Philosophy for Weaving I

With the swiftness of a shuttle, trouble sometimes darts across our lives,

its steel-tip trailing sadness, pulling threads that tie

and fasten knots in our existence,

snags and snares that either tear

within us like a wound or else grant us resilience,

the folded cloth prepared to protect us on our journey

from all life’s cuts and bruises, each day’s relentless wear.

Weaving Songs
By Donald S. Murray
Contents

Abstract ...................................................................................................................................................... v

Útdráttur .................................................................................................................................................. vii

Contents ................................................................................................................................................... ix

Figures ................................................................................................................................................... xiii

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................... xv

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 17
  Study background ............................................................................................................................... 17
  Problem statement ............................................................................................................................. 18
  Researcher’s background ................................................................................................................... 19
  Models and frameworks ..................................................................................................................... 20
  Purpose and research question .......................................................................................................... 21
  Qualitative interviews and implications ............................................................................................ 21
  Limitations .......................................................................................................................................... 22
  Main definitions .................................................................................................................................. 22

Literature Review ................................................................................................................................... 23
  The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health ........................................... 23
    ICF-CY (Children and Youth version) .............................................................................................. 26
  Emotional Behavioural Disorder (EBD) in the light of ICF-CY ....................................................... 27
    Body functions ................................................................................................................................. 28
    Activities and participation ............................................................................................................. 28
    Personal factors ............................................................................................................................... 29
    Environmental factors ..................................................................................................................... 30
  Positive alternatives for students with EBD ..................................................................................... 31
    Learner-centred approaches ........................................................................................................... 32
    Adaptation of activities .................................................................................................................. 33
    Enabling environments .................................................................................................................. 33
    Appropriate teaching strategies and diverse curricula ................................................................. 34
    Caring attitude and relationships ................................................................................................... 34
Nurture groups ................................................................. 35
Supportive transition and programme evaluation .................. 35

**Method** ........................................................................ 37
Research design .................................................................. 37
Study setting .......................................................................... 38
The original research plan .................................................... 39
Recruitment and description of participants ......................... 40
Data collection ...................................................................... 41
Analysis of data ................................................................... 43
Ethical implications and overall rigour ................................. 44

**Study findings** ............................................................... 46
Exclusion from mainstream ................................................ 47
  Being marginalised ........................................................... 47
  Physical and psychological distancing ................................ 49
Inclusion in the alternative .................................................. 51
  Contained boundaries ....................................................... 51
  Accepting school climate .................................................. 52
Social Role-modelling ......................................................... 54
  Family modelling ............................................................. 54
  Parenting support ............................................................ 55
Dynamic learning process .................................................... 56
  Caring teachers ............................................................... 56
  Collaborating motivators .................................................. 59
  Appropriate pedagogy ....................................................... 60
Student achievements ........................................................ 62
  Academic improvements ................................................... 63
  Personal growth ............................................................... 64
  More resilient to life’s challenges ....................................... 64

**Discussion** ...................................................................... 67
A positive experience and understanding .......................... 67
The importance of environment ........................................ 68
The setting that sets one free ............................................. 69
Caring relationships that count .......................................... 70
More social and personal development than academic ........ 70
Figures

Figure 1. ICF conceptual model……………………………………23

Figure 2. Definitions in the context of health………………………24

Figure 3. Five themes of the learning process………………………44

Figure 4. Conclusions and key findings……………………………70
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, a big thank you goes to the young people who were former students for being brave enough to participate and share part of their lives with me. The staff at Hlíðarskóli are acknowledged for being facilitators in the study in providing possible participants. Thank you to my two supervisors, Guðrún Pálmadóttir and Hermína Gunnþórsdóttir for your valuable advice and interest in the study. I thank my friends Olga Stefánsdóttir and Guðbjörg Ingimundardóttir for their quick insight and belief in me and Brenda Hartdegen and Steinunn J. Rögnvaldsdóttir for proof reading. My friend, Allyson Macdonald receives a special thank you for timely support and positive guidance. Lastly my husband, daughters and granddaughters are thanked for their infinite patience and acceptance of my sometimes untimely absences.
Introduction

This thesis reports about a qualitative interview study on the experiences of young people who were former students of an alternative school in Akureyri called Hlídarskoli. The school caters for students with serious behavioural issues and the emphasis is on their perspective of that experience and interviews were conducted with nine former students. The chapter will begin with some background information and the reasons leading up to the study.

Study background

The background to the study is the era of inclusion in mainstream schools, how students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) fit into that ideology and why the need for alternative educational settings or resources is emerging.

In short, inclusive education means that all students have the right to attend and be welcomed by their neighbourhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are given support to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school (Campbell and Skarakis-Doyle, 2007; The Compulsory School Act No. 66/1995, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2004). Although it is an ideology of a balanced ecology it was brought to the fore by advocates against discrimination of colour, class, special educational needs and/or disability (Gal, Schreur and Engel-Yeger, 2010; Gasson, 2008). The original concept of inclusive education, has developed from integration due to the pressures from human rights advocates. It was introduced as an international framework by the United Nation’s release of the Salamanca Statement in 1994 with the emphasis of a human rights aspect and equity in education. (Ruijs, Peetsma and Van der Veen, 2010; United Nations [UN] Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 1994). Perhaps the original concept of integration was understood a little too naively by assuming that the physical movement of students with SEN to their neighbouring schools would suffice (Flem, Moen and Gudmundsdottir, 2004).
In Iceland, inclusion has been developing in the system since as far back as 1974, but actual structural efforts still need to be implemented in line with the ideology (Gunnþórsdóttir and Jóhannesson, 2013). The actual term *inclusion* (ice. skólar án aðgreiningar) first appeared in Icelandic law in 2008, but it was not until 2013 that the UN Convention of Rights of the Child was incorporated into Icelandic legislation (Gunnþórsdóttir and Bjarnason, 2014).

At the time of the *Salamanca Statement*, many students with SEN, were attending special schools separate from mainstream education. According to the Nesse Report on Education and Disability/special needs, the function of the special schools became redundant over time as students with SEN were included in mainstream education (European Union [EU], 2012). The result is that European educational systems are now responsible for a large diversity of students as well as providing a differentiated and appropriate education for everyone. This transformation to inclusion into practice appears to be a major challenge in many countries (Ferretti and Eisenman, 2010; Flem et al., 2004). Accordingly, “alternative” educational resources have emerged to answer this need of students with SEN. Establishments of alternative education have developed in a number of countries to combat at-risk students from disengaging altogether from mainstream education (EU, 2012; Gasson, 2008; Johnson, 2008; McGregor and Mills, 2011). Similar developments have occurred in Iceland and today there are three special schools operating in the country. Two of those offer alternative education for students with serious behavioural issues, one located in Reykjavík and the other in Akureyri (Jón T. Jónasson, 2008).

**Problem statement**

The challenge of schools putting inclusion into practice is not lessening as, according to Statistics Iceland (2016), no less than approximately 25% of students in mainstream schools at some stage need special support services. Students with serious long-term SEN have diagnoses that can range from serious health conditions on the physical, mental, behavioural or social level to all forms of learning difficulties. Therefore, the understanding of the needs of students with SEN is very varied and the needs are in the process of being categorised (Clark, 2008; Ruijs et al., 2010). Consequently, a hierarchy is being established to prioritize which needs are seen to according to available
finances and resources. As a result, individual needs of students with SEN are not being met (Ásdís Ýr Arnardóttir, 2011; Ferretti and Eisenman, 2010; Gunnþórsdóttir and Jóhannesson, 2013; Sjónarhóll, 2012).

To compound the problem, certain categories of students with SEN are also more difficult to service in mainstream schools than others. Students with Emotional-Behavioural Disorder (EBD) sometimes regarded as a social-emotional-behavioural disorder, appear to be one of the most difficult forms of SEN to have in mainstream schools (Gretar Marinósson, 2003; Kauffman and Landrum, 2009).

**Researcher’s background**

The researcher has an interest in the study from an occupational therapy point of view. The interest in a school setting came about after working as an occupational therapist in a mainstream school for a number of years providing services to students with special educational needs (SEN). Such work provided the researcher with experiences of multi-disciplinary services with Local Educational Authorities, special education classes and an insight into basic school functions with regard to students with SEN. After several years it became increasingly apparent that students with certain types of SEN were not being accommodated appropriately within the inclusive ideology. In particular, the researcher found it to be students with severe cognitive challenges as well as those with serious behavioural issues or emotional behavioural disorders (EBD).

In adopting the perspective of an occupational therapist, the researcher believes in four key concerns when working with students especially in the era of inclusion. The first is that a student should always be regarded within a context and has to be looked at holistically. Consideration has to be given to the student within his/her context, background, environment or a society as well as the integration of those influences. The second concern is that diversity of the human population is the reality, and that diversity should be celebrated. With this in mind, educators can find out what best suits each individual student and use learner-centred approaches, allowing the student to guide the teacher. The third point is that learning is a dynamic process and one measure of achievement is the extent of engagement through participation of that student. So constant feedback is necessary to gauge the intensity of that
engagement. The final consideration is that the more health issues enter into the schools and the more multi-disciplinary services will be used, the more the pressing need for all parties to possess a common language. Therefore, it will be easier for everyone concerned to ensure that the needs of the student are the centre of attention.

**Models and frameworks**

The framework for this study is based on a model that fits both the world of health sciences and education. The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) is a health model that is increasingly being used in schools with students with SEN (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2001). The ICF is both a conceptual model and a classification system. The most important aspect is that it describes the functioning of a student as an interaction between the health condition and a particular context. The functioning is seen in the terms of body functions, activities and participation and the context includes both environmental and personal factors. The model is therefore both holistic and non-hierarchal in nature (Stucki, Cieza and Melvin, 2007).

The ICF model is also dynamic and integrative, looking at a student’s functioning as an engaged entity, integrated within an environment that either enables or acts as a barrier to the learning process (Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists [CAOT], 2002; Guðrún Pálmadóttir, 2013; Stucki et al., 2007). The intervention should develop from an integrative process, such as a learning process in education, whereby the student becomes engaged in tasks through collaborative, learner-centred approaches, resulting in change (CAOT, 2002; Townsend and Polatajko, 2007).

The final reason for using the model is that it offers a universal taxonomy of human functioning. The common language provides a premise for inter-disciplinary interventions with students with SEN.
Purpose and research question

The purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of the experiences of young people when they attended an alternative school that specialises in working with students with serious behavioural issues.

The research question is as follows:

What is young people’s experience of being placed in an alternative educational setting because of serious behavioural issues?

Qualitative interviews and implications

To answer the research question the method of a qualitative interviewing was applied. In qualitative studies the researcher can access the subject matter and gain insights into the world and context of the participants from their perspective (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). The interview method allows the researcher to elicit data and delve further into specific aspects with the participants thereby reaching a depth in understanding of their experiences. Face to face interviews also offer the opportunity to get data enriched with non-verbal cues from the participants, perhaps increasing accuracy of understanding.

When working in a school setting with students with SEN, the author soon discovered that students are quick to let one know what is suitable or unsuitable for them. For this reason, it was the insight and perspective of the former students that was of interest in this study. There are many studies from the point of view of service providers and not that many from the voice of those for whom the resources have been designed. If education providers could perhaps ‘hear’ what students with SEN say they need, it could offer an understanding of another way of working with students who need support. A new perspective and different emphases could also offer education advisers more choice and open paths to better cooperation with others when working with students.
Limitations

The main limitation to the study is that the participants were identified and reached by a staff member of Hlidarskoli, except for one. This could lead to bias towards the selection of the participants.

The interviews were conducted and transcribed in Icelandic and then line by line coded into English. Although the researcher has a good command of Icelandic almost any work loses some of its meaning when translated. This limitation may not be too serious as the researcher has worked in schools and in the field in Iceland for many years.

Main definitions

*Alternative education* – A term for structures and resources offered to students with SEN outside of mainstream education.

*Emotional Behavioural Disorders (EBD)* – refers to a classification of students used in educational settings and falls within the group of students with SEN.

*Mainstream education* – A term used in this thesis to cover general, elementary or compulsory school.

*Serious behavioural issues* – relates to students with EBD that are not officially diagnosed and fall within the group of students with SEN.

*Special education* – Resources offered for students with SEN within the mainstream school system.

*Students with SEN* – A student who is not able to benefit from mainstream school education available for same-age students without additional support or adaptations in the content of studies.
Literature Review

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) is used as the framework for the thesis (WHO, 2001) and will be explained in this chapter. It is both a conceptual model and a classification system. Furthermore, the ICF-CY, which is the Children and Youth version is described along with its checklist documentation tools as it has been used in the school setting (Tulinius, 2008; WHO, 2007). Emotional Behavioural Disorders as a health condition will be discussed according to the ICF model and relevant dimensions from the perspective of education and learning and how students with EBD or serious behavioural issues function in the school environment. The chapter ends with a review of what is known to enhance the learning process of students with EBD.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health

The ICF is a biopsychosocial health model and classification system. It integrates diagnostic information with psychosocial aspects of life, giving equal consideration to all factors impacting health and functioning (Figure 1). Functioning covers body functions and structures, activities and participation and is the positive outcome of the interaction between an individual and his/her contextual factors (WHO, 2001).

![Figure 1. ICF conceptual model (WHO, 2001)]
Disability in the ICF model is an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions and is the negative outcome of the interaction between an individual and his/her contextual factors (Figure 2) (Peterson, Mpofu and Oakland, 2010; WHO, 2001). An example could be a student with EBD (impairment), experiencing difficulties in group work (activity limitation) in involvement in the student role (participation restriction) in mainstream education (environment).

| Functioning | is an umbrella term for body functions, body structures, activities and participation. It denotes the positive aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual’s contextual factors (environmental and personal factors). |
| Disability | is an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. It denotes the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual’s contextual factors (environmental and personal factors). |
| Health condition | - What a person with a disease or diagnoses as recorded in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) does do or can do. |
| Body functions | - The physiological functions of body systems (including psychological functions). |
| Body structures | - Anatomical parts of the body such as organs, limbs and their components. |
| Impairments | - Problems in body functions and structures such as significant deviation or loss. |
| Activity | - The execution of a task or action by an individual. |
| Activity limitations | - Difficulties an individual may have in executing activities. |
| Participation | - Involvement in a life situation. |
| Participation restrictions | - Problems an individual may experience in involvement in life situations. |
| Environmental factors | - The physical, social and attitudinal environment in which people live and conduct their lives. These are either barriers to or facilitators of the person’s functioning. |
| Personal factors | - The particular background of an individual’s life and living which are not part of a health condition or health states. |

*Figure 2. Definitions of ICF concepts (WHO, 2001)*
The classification is therefore not only impairment specific but also clarifies the consequences of the health issue. The onus of participation restriction in a group is then not necessarily on the student but it could be the result of factors in the environment.

There are three aspects of the ICF model that makes it appropriate for use in a school environment. As described hereafter, it is non-hierarchal and holistic. It is dynamic and integrative and it offers a universal taxonomy of human functioning (Guðrún Pálmadóttir, 2013; Stucki et al., 2007).

Firstly, there are no hierarchal or dominant features to the model in that all components are regarded as important and equal value is placed on the dimensions of an individual’s functional status (Peterson et al., 2010; WHO, 2001). The model is holistic in nature and includes both environmental and personal factors which broadens the whole context of an individual’s health. Environmental factors can both be facilitators or barriers to functioning and importantly offer a different focus for intervention (Stucki et al., 2007). An environmental facilitator to a student with EBD can be access to an appropriate resource, while a barrier could be no funding for that resource.

Secondly, the model also presents an integrated view of health and welfare which is dynamic in essence (Guðrún Pálmadóttir, 2013). The interaction of the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between various health related conditions, within a broader context, helps widen the perspective of health and will also facilitate service or intervention (Peterson et al., 2010; WHO, 2001). Realising the effect and influence of the dimensions on each other can facilitate a student’s functional outcome. By intervening in the student’s activity, it can affect participation and any of the other dimensions.

Thirdly, the model is a universally accepted taxonomy of human functioning. It enables professionals across the sectors to use the same language in order to enable people with health conditions to achieve and maintain optimal functioning in their interaction with the environment. The importance of ICF in the school sector is that it provides a common language that bridges different disciplinary perspectives such as education sectors with health sciences. Some terms are defined slightly differently in the different sectors. When different disciplines share a common language and related knowledge base, it increases the possibility of a shared understanding of intervention goals, procedures and outcomes, thereby improving the quality of service (Stucki et al., 2007). ICF classification also provides opportunities to
document information of life situations in a multi-dimensional setting (Tulinius, 2008). This could assist a teacher and a psychologist in working together on an effective individual educational plan for a student with behavioural issues.

**ICF-CY (Children and Youth version)**

With the implementation of the ICF it was found that factors regarding the development of children and the influence of the environmental surrounding the child were not sufficiently incorporated into one entity. This resulted in the ICF-CY being developed to include these specific characteristics (Hollenweger, 2011). Different ICF codes were needed across the first years of a child’s life to capture the growth and development of the child’s functioning even though the diagnosis did not change. This can serve a significant role for providers caring for children with, for example autism or cerebral palsy. Children with these conditions may have the same diagnoses, but their abilities and levels of functioning vary widely across and within individuals over time. Qualifiers of the codes are used to determine the extent of impairments, activity limitations and participation restriction. The first draft of the ICF-CY was completed in 2003 and published in 2007 (WHO, 2007).

Checklists were developed to be used as a documentation tool as well as to enable inter-disciplinary collaboration which improve intervention outcomes of students requiring these services in the educational environment (Carlson, Benson and Oakland, 2010; Tulinius, 2008). In some countries federal agreement has been reached to use the ICF-CY based tools to determine the support and ensure equity of services for students with SEN (Hollenweger, 2011). There have been calls for a more detailed linkage between pedagogical situations on the checklists to increase the emphasis on student participation in learning activities in the model (Maxwell and Granlund, 2011). The ICF checklists and tools are therefore under constant development to increase its usability within school settings. The ICF-CY specific checklists are a practical tool to record information on the functioning of a school student and have been used in school settings (WHO, 2007). Tulinius (2008), conducted an interview study of teacher experiences of the ICF-CY in six Icelandic compulsory schools, based on 94 students. The teachers claimed that using the ICF
checklists gave them a more holistic view of the students and facilitated cooperation of persons around each students.

In response to the *Salamanca Statement* of 1994 in encouraging enhancement towards inclusive education, the Portuguese National Educational Council undertook to introduce and prepare all special education teachers in the ICF-CY ideology and concepts. The Council now stands on the verge of introducing the model as compulsory in undergraduate teacher education (Saragoça, Candeias and Rosário, 2013).

**Emotional Behavioural Disorder (EBD) in the light of ICF-CY**

In this thesis a student with EBD is considered to fall within the group of students with SEN. EBD is a health condition that also comes under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, called IDEA, 2004. This condition is found in a student who is chronically difficult and disturbing in a group or class context with on-going problems which do not resolve themselves quickly. This results in restricted participation in the life-role of education and learning. Although the disorder is chronic, understanding the episodic nature of EBD is critical as there might be a situation specific to an environment which triggers behaviour. Teachers may not always witness these incidents and miss out on opportunities to verify a behavioural pattern (Kauffmann and Landrum, 2009).

The student also exhibits extraordinary behaviour. There is also a presence of persistent violations of appropriate behavioural expectations that are linked to a student’s social and cultural environment which also makes them unpopular among class-mates resulting in isolation which affects their participation as part of a student group (Kauffman and Landrum, 2009).

According to Kauffmann and Landrum (2009), there are no standardised tests for EBD and it is therefore a matter of judgement and culture that the student’s behaviour and emotional state is problematic enough to need attention from school authorities. On the other hand, there is an assessment in Britain called the Boxall Profile for measuring social, emotional and behavioural developments that was designed by an educational psychologist, Marjorie Boxall in 1969 for vulnerable students in London schools at the time.
The Boxall Profile helps with early identification and assessment, target setting and intervention and tracking progress (Scott and Lee, 2009).

Those students with EBD who receive special education support in the United States are said to be about 1% of students in mainstream schools but according to other sources such as the health services, they suggest that the actual prevalence of EBD is at least 5% (Kauffman and Landrum, 2009). Mihalas, Morse, Allsopp and McHatton (2009) wrote an article examining the potential role of caring teacher relationships based on current literature for improved outcomes for students with EBD. They claim that 2%-4% of any school population meet the criteria for EBD. In comparison with this information, Hlidarskoli in Akureyri serves about 0.08% of students in the area (Statistics Iceland, 2016).

**Body functions**

According to the ICF classification, EBD is an impairment of body functions, specifically within the group of mental as well as emotional functions (WHO, 2001). According to the classification, students with EBD are generally divided into two sub-groups; those with externalising behavioural issues and those with internalising issues. Externalising problems includes aggression causing disruption or any other forms of acting out. Internalising issues includes such problems as depression, anxiety bringing about social withdrawal like playing truant. Other factors that can be common to students with EBD are that some tend to have lower than average intelligence, resulting in lower academic achievements (Kauffman and Landrum, 2009).

**Activities and participation**

In ICF-CY educational functioning of students are the execution of school activities and involvement or engagement in the student role. Students with EBD might well experience activity limitations and participation restriction and their decreased functioning is what results from the interplay between their health condition and environmental and personal factors (WHO, 2007).

Many factors of inclusive education are synonymous with the concept of participation in the ICF model with the connection to human rights and equal opportunities (Gal et al., 2010; WHO, 2001). Students with EBD who are
struggling within mainstream inclusion might experience participation restriction. They could likely find themselves marginalised or excluded from mainstream education in some way.

According to the Nesse Report (EU, 2012), mainstream schools have difficulty in including students who have EBD due to lack of specialist teaching materials and the teacher’s perceptions that perhaps he/she does not have the knowledge required to teach such students. Gretar Marínósson (2003) claims that in Icelandic mainstream schools the typical reaction towards a student that has both socially unacceptable and abnormal behaviours, is that intervention and treatment are conducted outside of the school. On the other hand, students that have understandable and socially accepted behaviour get support within the school. To combat the participation restriction or disengagement of students with EBD, alternative measures outside of compulsory education have arisen. In the Nesse Report, Skårbrevik (2005), stated that in Norway they slowly closed down special schools, due to the promotion of inclusive education. Recently though, they are re-establishing “alternative schools” with specific programmes for students with behaviour problems and at-risk of dropping out of school. The above interventions to increase activities and participation also relate to the student’s environment.

**Personal factors**

Personal factors include gender, race, age, upbringing, social background, experiences and education that can have an impact on functioning as well as the outcomes of interventions (WHO, 2001). There is a possible gender-related issue with regard to which behavioural issues the student with EBD exhibits, externalising or internalising. In a literature synthesis on sustainable services provided for youth with severe EBD, Chitiyo (2014), states that factors relating to the socio-economic status of the student’s family or community can affect the overall functioning of students with EBD in mainstream schools. Some students with EBD have come from industrial settings and have come into contact with the law. An eight-year longitudinal study was conducted by Johnson (2008) on 130 randomly selected at-risk students who were experiencing a ‘tough life’. The person-focused data pointed out the little things the teachers did to promote resilience in students. Some teenage mothers become disengaged from mainstream education having little support with child
rearing practices. Driessen, Smit and Sleegers (2005), who used data from a large-scale cohort study of 12,000 students in their final year of mainstream education found parenting factors affected student outcomes. They stated divorce and/or single parent upbringing is a common factor and can be quite an emotional challenge for many students whether they have behavioural issues or not. Therefore if personal factors are not taken into account it can affect correct identification of EBD as well as affect intervention choice and effectiveness.

**Environmental factors**

Environment is the context within which a student performs and acts out the student role and that relationship is dynamic, integral and inseparable. Broadly speaking, environment will always influence the functioning of a student and vice versa and may explain activity limitation and participation restrictions. (CAOT, 2002; WHO 2001).

In the ICF classification system environmental factors are coded into five categories; products and technology, natural environment and human made changes to environment, support and relationships, attitudes and lastly services, systems and policies (WHO, 2007). For students with EBD, environmental factors will affect their learning. Things such as the lack of appropriate books or computer programmes can limit reading success or a big open classroom can lead to activity limitations because it is hard to concentrate with so many distractions. Elements such as curricula, learner-centred practices, teaching strategies and how the policy of inclusion is implemented or mediated, all adhere to the environment and can affect the functioning of a student with EBD.

The important aspect about environmental factors is that an environment has both facilitators and barriers. A facilitator is one which encourages or increases a student’s functioning and a barrier is one which constrains or decreases the student’s functioning. Consequently, a certain environment can have a double-edged impact and can simultaneously be a facilitator and barrier. A special chair or sitting position can facilitate the student with learning opportunities but on the other hand that same chair can also be a barrier to the student’s socialising with the other class mates if they are working on a project on the floor.
It is also important to consider that changing environmental factors is sometimes easier and more effective than trying to change the student’s status quo behavioural issues in order to increase participation in the student role (CAOT, 2002). Gal et al. (2010), stressed the influence of the environment on the success of inclusion and described that attitudinal, architectural, programmatic and administrative elements all influence and affect each other in the attempt to fulfil the demands of inclusive education. As mentioned before, Chitiyo (2014), emphasises individualised support of the student and family in their natural environment so that the effects of the programme are sustainable. In the World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011) promotion of inclusion is strongly advocated in the chapter on Education. The emphasis includes environmental supports for students such as improving teacher capacity, providing appropriate services and increasing social stability by involving parents and family.

**Positive alternatives for students with EBD**

Some students with EBD are having to face marginalisation and becoming disengaged from mainstream education. Mainstream schools are finding some students challenging and as a result alternative educative resources and services have arisen (Mihalas et al., 2009). Research and literature reviews have suggested a number of elements which enable and enhance achievement of students with EBD. A qualitative study conducted by McGregor and Mills (2011) on a disengaged student population attending flexible alternative schools in Australia indicated a need for such programmes to exist. A total of 71 interviews were conducted on a mixture of parents, teachers, former and present students attending five such settings. Both staff and student teenagers were interviewed and observed in five chosen schools offering similar alternative education to students who had been marginalised from mainstream education. The students specifically mentioned relaxed learning environments, appropriate programmes and teacher relationships as conducive to re-engagement with education. In general the alternative schools changed the focus from the student’s behaviour and towards improved teaching and educational strategies to encourage student engagement. Although the researchers suggested many of the following strategies described hereafter,
there was a caution in that alternative education is not meant to be a ‘one size fits all’ policy that can be transferred as is into mainstream education.

**Learner-centred approaches**

To achieve active participation or engagement of a student with EBD it is important to have a motivational force which causes the learning process to commence. Although person-centred practices originated from Carl Rogers in psychology, the concept has developed into other professions and includes elements such as partnership, empowerment and participation (Guðrún Pálmadóttir, 2013; Mihalas et al., 2009). For the purpose of a school context, learner-centred practices have a similar approach. The learner-centred approach to teaching alters the role played by the students in that the teacher becomes the facilitator and democratic aspects such as participation, equality and empowerment come into the equation. It has been found that learner-centred approaches have a positive effect on students’ engagement, their motivation to learn and attainment of educational goals (Phan, 2014; Watkins, 2014). In a meta-analysis conducted by Cornelius-White (2007), on effective learner-centred teacher-student relationships, there was an above average association between learner-centeredness and student outcomes. The analysis used 119 studies from 1948 – 2004 with over 350,000 students.

A collaborative relationship needs enablement skills of the educator to coach the student to improve outcomes. Coaching means to encourage, guide, challenge, listen, motivate and support the student in tasks and activities for engagement to occur. Collaborate also means to power share and work with the student in a joint effort towards a common goal or to learn something. There should be mutual respect with a genuine interest, empathy and trust e.g. between the student and educator (CAOT, 2002; Townsend and Polatajko, 2007). Studies have shown that collaborative relationships between student and teacher worked well with students with EBD, resulting in successful engagement in the learning process (Johnson, 2008; McGregor and Mills, 2011).
Adaptation of activities

A school task or activity can be adapted, altered, adjusted and graded to enable maximum participation and outcomes for students with EBD. This does not mean that the school project has to be made easier for the student to execute it successfully. It could involve a different way than offered to the majority of students, it could also involve using other materials or it could be graded in a way that it is more challenging or interesting for the student with EBD. Another point with regard to school activities, is that the more meaning and purpose it has for the student the more the student becomes engagement in the process (CAOT, 2002). Flem et al. (2004), suggest that the diversity of students in mainstream education provides a challenging premise for enriching school activities for the long process in striving for inclusion in schools. There is a lot of thought that goes behind an appropriate school task and success with the activity paves the way to a fuller participation and greater inclusion (CAOT, 2002).

Enabling environments

In the McGregor and Mills (2011) study mentioned earlier, a positive school climate and atmosphere made a difference to the participants. They mentioned the importance of a relaxed environment with mutual respect among staff and students. In a literature review of both practice and research conducted by Powell (2003), examining effective alternative resources for students with EBD, the students liked to be given responsibilities and relied upon to complete tasks in order feel competent. A low student/teacher ratio also created an atmosphere of closeness. This encouraged a sense of belonging, a common purpose and a feeling of community. Students who attended alternative programmes through their own choice or voluntarily, felt it was particularly important to them concerning their motivation for attendance. They liked it when deadlines for assessments were flexible, perhaps an agreement between the student and the teacher who was accommodating (McGregor and Mills, 2011).

The availability of social development and family support is another environmental aspect to consider with students with EBD. In two of the aforementioned studies the students were young parents and urgently needed support with child-care or child-rearing skills. Sometimes the school
intervened on behalf of their students with regard to matters of social justice in fulfilling the student’s rights to council support (Driessen et al., 2005; McGregor and Mills, 2011). In the wrap-around services for youth with EBD conducted by Chitiyo (2014), the parents of the students themselves were assisted with effective parenting practices through parental involvement and participation in the programmes. Gasson (2008) conducted interviews with families of 17 severely disabled students at one alternative setting, 12 of whom had been excluded from compulsory education. The alternative setting offered a common experience for both parents and students resulting in feeling more included in society. In another alternative programme the staff were encouraged to model desired behaviour to encourage pro-social development (Powell, 2003).

**Appropriate teaching strategies and diverse curricula**

The importance of curricula choice and teaching strategies, with the emphasis on real-life, hands-on (vocational) subject matter for students with EBD has been pointed out. McGregor and Mills (2011) research revealed that students with EBD had better outcomes with diversity in subject choice and became more connected to their education through the relevance of subjects. Along the same line, Powell (2003) suggested an implementation of practical, meaningful and appropriate individual educational plans by multi-disciplinary teams with continual assessments for proper feedback from the students. A systematic review of nine studies (38 participants) on single subject designs from 2004-2012 on the success of interventions for students with EBD was conducted by Garwood, Brunsting and Fox (2014). Based on the results, they emphasised the importance of a unique and flexible curriculum interwoven with promoting competence in the basics such as reading, writing and arithmetic, saying that academic success improves self-esteem. Some students experienced educational progress and a sense of achievement by catching up with their mainstream counterparts.

**Caring attitude and relationships**

Positive relationships in most learning situations can be dynamic and enhance the process. An analysis of student’s views on teacher-student relationships
conducted by Johnson (2008), showed that it was important to the students that their teachers knew them really well on a personal level. They appreciated it when the teachers were open and honest with them and mentioned that being a good listener was important, calling it the “human connectors”. The students felt cared for, nurtured and protected by the staff who mattered to them. Mihalas et al. (2009) indicated that the access and availability of the teachers was an important factor and the role of the teacher was vital in order to invest in the emotional capital of the student for better outcomes. Teachers were seen as collaborators using motivating and empowering techniques and in some cases instilled, within the students, an ambition for their future.

**Nurture groups**

According to The nurture group network (www.nurturegroups.org, 2016), there has been a resurgence of the nurture group model used in schools in Great Britain. The original nurture groups were established in inner London schools for vulnerable students with significant emotional behavioural issues and set up as an early intervention programme by the same educational psychologist who designed the Boxall Profile. The idea was to set up small classes within mainstream education settings, offering an accepting, nurturing environment which helps improve relationships for social and emotional development. The programme takes one to four terms. Nurture groups now operate in over 1500 schools in Britain and are part of a national policy.

Reynolds, MacKay and Kearney (2009) conducted a large-scale controlled study of the effects of nurture groups on development and academic attainment. The study comprised of 221 students attending 32 schools in the Glasgow City Council area. They claim that all published research conducted on nurture groups indicate beneficial effects.

**Supportive transition and programme evaluation**

The importance of a supportive transition back to mainstream education was emphasised in a study and a review of alternative programmes conducted by Atkins and Bartuska (2010) and Powell (2003). Results showed that it was important to ensure that re-entry into mainstream education was prepared for
a clear, smooth transfer for the student in conjunction with multi-disciplinary support and family involvement.

Powell (2003) suggested the importance of programme evaluation and that alternative programmes should intermittently be evaluated or monitored to determine the impact on the student groups using the programmes. She also suggested authentic feedback on effectiveness should be conducted through independent evaluation.
Method

This is a qualitative interview study with data coded and analysed according to grounded theory principles (Charmaz, 2004). Qualitative research allows one to examine people’s experiences in detail and the researcher has the opportunity to identify certain issues from the perspective of the participants and the meaning they give to it. It is therefore interpretive in essence from a subjective point of view. Qualitative approaches also study people in their natural settings in order to understand how the participant’s experience is shaped by the context of their lives or the research issue (Hennink et al., 2011). Bearing in mind contextual influences, the ICF model seems to mirror this approach and seems fitting to use as theoretical framework in the study. On the other side of the spectrum, quantitative methods shy away from contextual influences for a more objective approach and are therefore too positivist in nature for the chosen method in this study (Hennink et al., 2011).

The purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of the experiences of young people when they attended an alternative school that specialises in students with serious behavioural issues.

The research question is:

What is young people’s experience of being placed in an alternative educational setting because of serious behavioural issues?

Research design

The design is an interview study using working procedures of grounded theory. In order to answer the research question former students were interviewed about their personal experiences of attending an alternative education setting and the meaning they attached to that specific experience. Interviews are a method of data collection on a one-to-one basis to discuss certain topics in depth and for the participant to share their perspectives of a particular reality in the context of their lives at the time. This method would allow an understanding of the complex phenomenon of an alternative educational service to students with serious behavioural issues. Interviews are therefore a method that offers subjective data which lends itself to interpretation during analysis. Perhaps it would provide some useful research-based data for schools on students with EBD in mainstream education (Hennink et al., 2011; Kvale
and Brinkmann, 2009). The drawback to bear in mind in the interview method is that because it is on a one-to-one level, a lot depends on the interviewer to be aware that no-one else will provide feedback on the interview. The interviewer also has to be skilled in establishing a good rapport with the participants to gain rich data (Hennink et al., 2011).

Grounded theory is one of the methodologies within qualitative research and appropriate to use with interviews as the process of data collection, analysis and theory are closely linked and woven together. It has a set of inductive strategies where the researcher adds one interview at a time into the process, slowly developing an understanding of the students’ experiences as the data is processed through the system of coding. There is a systematic procedure that is adhered to in grounded theory whereby the researcher goes back and forth between theory and data. Taking interviews one at a time provides the possibility for the researcher to reflect on and weigh issues as the interpretation develops simultaneously (Charmaz, 2004; Hennink et al., 2011; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

**Study setting**

Hlidarskoli was originally established in 1982 by the District Office of Education for North East of Iceland to provide an alternative education to students, who because of behavioural issues had difficulties in being catered for by the mainstream school system. In 1998, changes occurred within specialised services for mainstream schools in Iceland and the school broadened its services to include a wider range of students. It also added family counselling services and an extra support resource to the schools in the area. The emphasis at Hlidarskoli has always been that it is a temporary solution with the aim of students returning to mainstream education.

In 2001, the school was relocated from an urban setting to about 10 km out of town within a farming community and the number of students increased from six to circa fifteen students, boys only. By 2006, a demand had arisen to provide a specialised service for several girls in need of similar support to the boys. A second department was established for the girls in another building nearby. The total number of students in the school had then risen to 28-30. A few years later, it was decided to combine the different functions of the school.
in the buildings at one site in order to cease gender separation and use available teacher resources and housing more effectively.

Since 2009, Hlidarskoli has operated from the same location with 20 student positions available. The length of enrolment at the school can vary from one year to three years, though some can be shorter or longer, until the student is ready to return to mainstream schooling or graduates from compulsory education. In recent years transition practices have been implemented whereby the transfers to mainstream schools can be gradual to prepare the students better for re-entry (Bryndís Valgarðsdóttir, 2014).

A typical day has been included to set the scene. Students go to and from Hlidarskoli by bus. One or two members of staff are always with them. School is from 08:00 until 14:00 from Monday to Thursdays and on Friday the day ends at noon. Lessons start with quality time where matters of the day before are discussed and the day ahead explained. The school day is generally a mixture of diverse lessons with various breaks in between including breakfast, fruit and lunch time which are spent together with teachers and other staff. Meals together are an opportunity to instil good manners and develop social skills.

There are two 20-minute breaks a day and, depending on the seasons, are a combination of indoors and/or outdoors. Staff members are with the students during their breaks and participate in constructive exercises.

Apart from the basic setup of lessons and breaks the school function also included sports and swimming lessons which take place at other venues. The students are driven to these by the school van and their teachers. Other field trips are very often intertwined into the daily school operations.

**The original research plan**

Initially the research was intended to have a two pronged approach to data collection, i.e. interviews and a Facebook page. Apart from 10-12 interviews the idea was to invite all eligible former students of Hlidarskoli qualifying in a given age span (20-26 years old) to participate in a closed Facebook page. The aim was to encourage a different kind of discourse and supplement the data collected from the interviews, perhaps providing a freer way for the participants to express themselves. The site was to be controlled by the researcher and kept alive with many photographs from the period that the
former students had been at the school. It would be kept open while data
collection from the interviews took place. This form of using social media in
data collection was new in health sciences and the researcher imagined it
would be a method to suit young people. The Ethics Committee of Akureyri
Hospital requested changes to provide extra care in data protection (Appendix
A). After changes were made, the Ethics Committee accepted the proposal for
using social media in health science research (Appendix B). In practice, this
part of the research proved to be unsuited to the accepted communication form
of the former students and was not pursued. However, a precedent had been
set in health science research being the first of its kind to be approved in
Iceland.

The research continued then as an interview study in the following manner.
Permission for the research was granted from all the relevant authorities. The
School Division of Akureyri accepted Hlidarskoli to be an affiliate in the study
(Appendix C). The research was submitted to The Data Protection Authority
(Appendix D).

**Recruitment and description of participants**

Approval was received by Hlidarskoli to contact possible participants, provide
a therapist if participants needed such a service and send letters inviting former
students who met the correct criteria to participate in the study (Appendix E).
Participants were to be recruited through the school through a purposive
method or the snow-ball technique. Therefore, after the first interview the
participant was asked to encourage his/her Hlidarskoli contemporaries to
participate in the study and contact the researcher. Little reaction came from
these efforts except for one participant who was interviewed at the
recommendation of the second interviewee. The school got a member of staff
to telephone some of the former students on the list and see if they were ready
to participate. After an interview had been taken and transcribed, the school
would be contacted again to organise the next participant. They would then
contact two or three, get permission, pass the names onto the researcher who
then phoned them to establish a time and date for the interview as well as send
them a letter explaining the study in further detail (Appendix F).

There were nine participants in the study, three females and six males, all
of whom attended Hlidarskoli for the years from 2000 to 2008. Some of the
participants had been at the school at overlapping times. The girls at that time were in a separate building from the boys. The general rule of the participants was to return to mainstream education to be able to graduate from there by their tenth year. They were attending Hlidarskoli because they were students with serious behavioural issues. At the time of the interviews, the ages of these young people ranged from 20 years to 24 years old.

Data collection

The total period of time for data collection was one year. The first interview took place in June 2014 and the final interview was in June 2015. Eleven names were provided by a staff member of Hlidarskoli for the author to contact and eight of them accepted. Of the three who were not interviewed, two accepted but were then too busy to commit to an interview and the third person was unable to be contacted by phone. One participant was a referral from a previous interview. The researcher tried to secure another interview with a referral but the request was refused. A final attempt was made to secure an interview with a tenth participant via another source but was also refused.

When the participants were phoned by the researcher to arrange a meeting, they were allowed a choice of time and venue which best suited them in order to create a relaxed atmosphere. Some interviews took place in a small classroom at the university, others in the researcher’s home or the homes of the participants. There were four interviews with females and six with males. Three participants were re-contacted at various times after their initial interview and asked to participate in a second interview to allow the researcher to enhance the data. A second interview was taken with one of the participants.

The main aim was to get a descriptive account of the former student’s experiences at Hlidarskoli. The interview questions were open-ended as well as semi-structured in order to obtain the desired data but also to allow participants to respond individually in various ways. The questions did not follow any particular order but instead the interviewer followed the line of information that flowed from the participant and delved into certain aspects as they arose. The participants were allowed total freedom in their giving of information and lines of thought would be followed up if it came up in the interview. Sometimes the participants were unsure about their actual length of stay at Hlidarskoli or when they returned to mainstream schools. In lieu of this,
the researcher did not correct the participant if information arose that the researcher knew to be incorrect. The content of the questions or probes for the first five interviews concerned the following.

- Tell me about your time at Hlidarskoli with regard to why you went there, what suited you, what didn’t suit you, relations with staff, the education as well as the environment and the school setting.
- Tell me about your life since graduation with regard to education, work and family and social life.
- Lastly, tell me about your future plans.

The following five interviews started with a second interview with one of the participants to delve further into some aspects of the previous interview. Additional questions were then put to the former students with regard to their feelings about mainstream school as opposed to Hlidarskoli. The participants were also asked to describe in-depth more about the discipline, teacher relations, other student relations and the effect of the location of the school setting. Everyone was also asked about their opinion of including a unit like Hlidarskoli into their mainstream schools and how they thought it would work.

All the interviews were conducted in Icelandic and transcribed verbatim. The interviews lasted from 31 minutes to 53 minutes. Following the interview participants were asked if they could be contacted again to clarify any points from the interview as well as being offered the opportunity to read over the transcriptions. Participants were also made welcome to contact the interviewer at any time to add to the data but none did.

After an interview had been transcribed the researcher read through the interview before securing the next participant. A notebook was kept to write down thoughts and considerations. Any ideas or interesting points would then be incorporated in the next interview. The researcher also met with her supervisors intermittently for comments to discuss in further interviews. Saturation point was reached when the information began to repeat itself and no new data emerged. The participants started mentioning the same particular things quite early on in the interviews.
Analysis of data

The ten interviews in total yielded approximately 137 pages of data. Working procedures of grounded theory were applied to data analysis (Charmaz, 2004). The analysis was conducted in stages of open coding (line by line) where each sentence was coded into what had been noted and where and why (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The initial interviews were coded in this manner using a spreadsheet per interview and simultaneously translated into English. Any interesting quotes were kept in Icelandic and put in another column, corresponding with the line coding in order to keep the “feel” of the participant to prevent loss in translation. The final interviews were conducted in a way that transcription and initial coding were completed before the next interview was taken to ensure a closer look at the data and to consider emerging categories which would be followed up in the subsequent interviews.

The next stage was focused coding where the data were narrowed down even more and reorganised into certain clusters. During this process all the interviews were coded again as focused coding in the same spread sheets in corresponding columns. This was to condense the data even more and organise emerging ideas. Abbreviations were also given to most of the focused codes which made it easier to form certain clusters of ideas for the next stage in analysis procedure.

In the following stage of axial coding the data were cross-coded and arranged or set up differently to see developing relations or themes. The researcher listened once more to all the taped interviews to ensure that nothing important had been missed or that nothing had been mistranslated. The abbreviations were cross-coded a number of times to check relevance of the data for the emerging themes.

The final stage of selective coding concerned the formation of a hypothesis or theory which had been rigorously regarded from all aspects. The developing themes were set up diagrammatically a number of times to see relevance against the literature until the five themes were finalised. During this process discussions were held with the supervisors and a meeting was held with the school principal and a staff member. When considering the interplay of the themes from the data the transcribed interviews were all re-read to re-establish the researcher with the true voice of the participants for the selection of appropriate quotes to use in the study findings.
Ethical implications and overall rigour

The researcher worked to ensure respect for the participants throughout the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were honoured at all times. A signature of informed consent was obtained from each interviewee before the interview commenced (Appendix G). They were also informed of the opportunity to see a therapist if any procedure in the interview had upset them. They were also assured that confidentiality would be kept and that personal names would be changed. The researcher therefore chose rather unusual Icelandic names as pseudonyms. All interviews were recorded and conducted by the same person.

Only the researcher and the two supervisors were privy to the data at any time. A staff member at the school acted as intermediary in finding participants and the researcher only contacted them after they had consented to participate in the study except for one who was included in the study through the snow-ball method. Participation was voluntary and the participants received a letter describing the study in detail before they signed a written consent. They were aware that they could withdraw at any time from the research project.

With regard to trustworthiness, aspects such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are emphasised (Graneheim and Lundman, 2003; Letts et al., 2007). The researcher will point out aspects from the study that strengthen the overall rigour. The participants had all had a while to digest the experience in the passing of time which in hind sight could provide a more consolidated perspective on their part. To strengthen the credibility of the study of the experiences of the young people, the data gathered covers eight years of the school’s existence. The researcher kept a notebook throughout the research process for on-going thoughts and reflections and possible preconceptions. The notebook was also on hand when the meetings with the supervisors took place on discussions of the data. The scope of the study did not allow for extensive triangulation. The author used a measure of triangulation based on the contribution of the supervisors. Further member checking among the participants was not possible but a second interview was conducted with one of the participants.

To warrant transferability, the researcher has described the school background and setting in as much detail as possible but due to the small
community of Akureyri, few personal details of the participants were noted to protect their anonymity.

Dependability in research relates to consistency between data and findings. (Graneheim and Lundman, 2003; Letts et al., 2007). To ensure consistency, as the researcher was the sole interviewer, particular attention was paid to following the set procedures for analysing data and care was taken to keep the emerging themes alive through cross-checking categories. Confirmability involves strategies to limit bias and preserve neutrality of data which can be combatted through reflective procedures (Graneheim and Lundman, 2003; Letts et al., 2007). To limit bias, interpretation of data was checked during data collection. Certain points from one interview were verified with the next participant. The participants were asked to comment on data from prior interviews to ensure the researcher’s understanding on a particular matter. Emergent themes and diagrams were discussed intermittently with the supervisors and a meeting was held with the school principal and a staff member.
Study findings

When analysing the interview data, five themes emerged to describe the experience of the participants at Hlidarskoli as well as the learning process (Figure 3). The three central themes pertain to the alternative school and how the young people experienced attending Hlidarskoli. The first theme describes their exclusion from mainstream education and the last theme explains the student outcomes of the experience.

![Figure 3. The five themes of the study findings](image)

The first theme is about exclusion and the reasons for the participants being marginalised from mainstream schools combined with the physical and psychological effect of distancing by attending Hlidarskoli. The second theme describes the participants’ experience of inclusion whereby the school provided an inclusive environment of contained boundaries and a school climate which was conducive to acceptance and being part of a group. The third theme of social roles pertains to a homely role model of what a functioning family could be and also includes the participant’s own family through the school’s policy of parenting support. The fourth theme explains the dynamic process the students went through involving an integrated mix of caring teachers, who motivated students and used the positive school setting and appropriate pedagogy for maximum student engagement. The final theme is concerned with student achievements and what the participants gained from
their experience at Hlidarskoli such as academic improvements, personal gains and a form of resilient behaviour which helped the participants back on track.

**Exclusion from mainstream**

There are two components that adhere to the theme of exclusion, being marginalised from mainstream education for various reasons and the concept of a psychological and physical distancing for the students from mainstream to alternative education.

**Being marginalised**

And she [the teacher] wasn’t big…and she had no control over me and sometimes the school principal was called and we got in a bit of a fight…And then they didn’t want me any more at school. And other possibilities were looked into. I then went for an interview at Hlidarskoli. (Manni)

The background and circumstances for each participant attending or being enrolled to Hlidarskoli were varied. They all had had difficulties of some sort fitting into mainstream schools, the primary cause being that they were students with Emotional Behaviour Disorders (EBD) although they had not been diagnosed as such. Some had been expressively aggressive and angry while others had difficulty controlling themselves and were prone to temper tantrums. A few of them said they were just deliberately disobedient and played truant as a demonstration. Others stated apathy, having lost interest in learning as they had gotten so behind in class and described special classes providing low expectations.

Like when I got behind at school, I was sent to special ed classes and the special ed teacher wasn’t really helping anyone to catch up on subjects they had missed out on. We practically coloured in and played games, maybe completed one page of work…she wasn’t helping anyone that is to push one forward. No such power in her to want us to return to our normal classes, which I find should be the purpose of special ed. (Salka)
Their disruptive behaviours were sometimes a combination of things and a few participants admitted to being a typical teenager of going through a period of resistance to authority figures, be it their parents, teachers or other school staff. As a result, all the participants’ academic grades were suffering and some had come to accept failure.

At compulsory school, I had already accepted that I didn’t know a thing and that I couldn’t learn. (Assa)

Each student had reached a crisis point whereby the mainstream school was having trouble coping with their disruptive behaviours. Going to Hlidarskoli was a last resort. Grettir said that he wasn’t learning anything, always playing truant and so they sent him to Hlidarskoli. As Manni states above, the compulsory school did not want him any longer after his fight with the principal. One of the girls had been expelled from her local school, then offered to return there but she refused and the only solution was to spend her final semester of primary school at Hlidarskoli. Finally, there was a situation of doors being closed and them being “guided” towards an alternative education school.

Hlidarskoli was actually the only school known that could possibly help me at all. I had recently had an argument with a teacher who said never wanted to see me again and had had enough of me. (Oddi)

Being bullied or harassed was another reason for being excluded from mainstream. Three of the participants mentioned bullying as one of the reasons for going to Hlidarskoli. It was felt that the school authorities were solving the problem of bullying by sending them away to Hlidarskoli thereby removing them from the situation.

I naturally didn’t feel well at the other school, I had stopped going to school because of a lot of bullying and …difficulties with me, with myself and a lot of other stuff and I always thought that, still a little today y’see, that they were solving the problem of bullying by sending me away. (Melkorka)
After the decision had been made for the participants to enrol at Hlidarskoli, the participants faced another unknown and that was the school itself. Formally, it is a school for students with serious behavioural issues but informally many of the students’ parents thought of it as a school for juvenile delinquents and harbouring future criminals.

No I didn’t really know anything about [Hlidarskoli], I only knew that which someone had said, that it was a problem school and people spoke about that I went to a problem school, or something like that, yes. (Snorri)

The stigma attached to the school had other repercussions too. One of the girls stated that still today people give her that funny look when she says that she graduated from Hlidarskoli. She remembers not knowing much about the school prior to going there but if you went to Hlidarskoli there was definitely something wrong with you. Torfi was a boy who had no learning difficulties at all but yet thought that he had to be stupid or something if you were sent to Hlidarskoli.

Physical and psychological distancing

Well, it’s naturally someplace at the backend of beyond and isolated, but there were no worries out there. I personally found it much easier. I generally have trouble with socialising, speaking to people, and tire both mentally and physically very quickly of being in a large group. It was a small group, far out in the country somewhere with no outside harassments, nothing to bother one, so you could concentrate on what you were doing and it was peaceful. (Oddi)

Hlidarskoli is 10 km out of town and the distance as well as the isolated setting of the school out in the country, made a huge impact on the participants with positive and negative effects. First and foremost, they experienced the distance as liberating them from their lives and troubles in Akureyri. Grettir in particular mentioned that getting on the bus in the mornings was like saying goodbye to one’s troubles and arriving at a new destination where you could be yourself. Those that had difficulty with social interactions found the isolation easier to handle with fewer people and fewer social debacles to cope
with. Melkorka said the open space gave her the freedom to work on her problems. She could walk outside, or down to the water’s edge, to calm down.

Yes, I liked it there. I don’t know why but I just felt so. Y’know, I didn’t feel really well in Akureyri and I naturally had a touch of serious behavioural problems, was teasing and bullying somewhat. Yes and had perhaps gotten myself into a sort of a corner. Thought it just fine to be out there in the country. (Torfi)

For the participants who had experienced being bullied, the distance and setting of school provided a kind of safe haven, away from harassment. They felt secure to be out of the way, so to speak.

Um, I got a lot of protection there, we were in a protected environment. (Frosti)

On the downside two of the participants felt that the isolation was detrimental to socialising with other town teenagers and playing truant was impossible as you had 10 km to walk back into town.

One is so far out of town that you couldn’t skip school at all. One became perhaps a little isolated, perhaps the only disadvantage but it was also part of the programme that you couldn’t run away, because we boys were playing a lot of truant and such [in town] and you couldn’t go anywhere…But one also became isolated really as we weren’t talking much to other people only those at Hlidarskoli. (Manni)

In general the participants experienced being excluded from mainstream education due to schools being ill-equipped to cope with students with EBD and low expectations in special classes. Hlidarskoli was looked upon as a last resort for the participants and they were sent to a school that had a stigma attached to it. The process of going to Hlidarskoli started with its isolated setting and yet it had a positive effect in that it both protected and liberated the students from daily harassments. For some, the isolation of the setting limited social interaction with other young people.
**Inclusion in the alternative**

The theme of inclusion also has two components and they are how the participants felt held together through contained boundaries and included in an accepting school climate.

**Contained boundaries**

Just close fences, y’know a box been built around one…good to have the box but they really tightened it so much at Hlidarskoli…They were very strict and I wasn’t used to it and it was so difficult. Of course, as a teenager I wanted to do as I please and it was naturally very difficult to accept the fences closing in or increased discipline, so that was the most difficult and also to learn to do everything from scratch again…I don’t know how it worked but y’know one just couldn’t get away with anything, the rules were completely solid. (Salka)

The school had few rules but to which they strictly adhered. On reflection, the participants felt that though the discipline was strict at first and very difficult for some of them who were used to doing as they pleased, they saw the point of it in the end. Salka also said that on looking back she found that they used techniques in discipline that made her realise the consequences of her actions and this was good child rearing practice. Grettir pointed out that the discipline was strict at first and used if needed but then tapered off as the boys were there longer or were older. Some described the discipline as part of the school process and Hlidarskoli had strict rules because it was what some of the boys needed, especially for them to be able to function in life in the future.

For example, if you forgot your swimming togs, it was no excuse, you were made to walk. You were driven out along a country road and had to walk back, no matter what the weather was…Ay, the disciplinary process y’see. Many of us boys needed a lot of discipline y’see. That’s how I understood it y’realise? (Manni)
One of the girls said the discipline was always fair and never dished out without cause. She said that if you asked why, the staff could more often than not give you a valid reason for it. Running away or playing truant was also not an option and many of the participants mentioned that you were just fetched and returned to Hlidarskoli to continue your lessons.

You can’t play truant at there, I tried it once and they just came to look for me and took me back to the school, like so. But I can really appreciate it that they came to find me and made me attend classes. (Melkorka)

As related above, the participants saw the point of the strict rules after some time but for Assa, it was different as she was there for only six months. She found the discipline on the other hand far too much and too strict. Her experience of it was as follows.

I could do exactly as I pleased, so when I went to Hlidarskoli, it was like being looked at through a magnifying glass or something. Couldn’t move or go anywhere, like being in a prison. We weren’t allowed anything...It was far too close and small and I felt like being suffocated there. (Assa)

Accepting school climate

I somehow always felt good there and wasn’t anxious or anything y’see. Some kind of feeling of safety. They treated me like I was just normal, I don’t know, it was y’know, I wasn’t treated like someone with a history of behavioural problems or that I was any different from other children or something, I was treated with respect and I showed them respect in return. (Torfi)

The school climate meant different things to the participants but it all constituted the concept of inclusion. Torfi and Melkorka felt accepted as normal and for what they were and not some lost cause. Salka said she felt the staff attitude was one of safety and warmth which all the students’ experienced. Grettir felt that he could open up in front of others and not have to worry about it. Snorri who had very particular interests was free to be himself without any comments from the others and he found the school easier for him than other
mainstream schools. The participants also recounted feeling safe from bullying and other EBD factors. The participants saw few serious disruptions there.

In all the three, four years that I was at Hlidarskoli, I only saw two fights. That is a lot less than I ever saw at the other [school]... there was no bullying, nothing as such, which was rather extra-ordinary. (Manni)

And y’know there was no-one really with behavioural problems as such, at Hlidarskoli, obviously there were sometimes episodes, me included, which was quite normal, what with so many crazy teenagers there. No, I think it was all quite normal really. (Salka)

On the other hand Melkorka and Manni stated the importance for them that problems were solved and tackled immediately instead of building up pressure and exploding one day. Grettir said if he wasn’t feeling good or had a problem he could sit and chat to the staff during breaks. In the same vein, Frosti appreciated the closeness of everything and found it more comfortable to be able to both have access to staff and things and also be watched. He said that he could always talk to them and sort of looked up to them. Finally, some found that being contained or part of the group was important.

One wasn’t lost in the crowd, was regularly checked up on and asked about stuff and showed concern really about everything. One felt somehow that you weren’t lost in some system or some large group. (Melkorka)

The theme of inclusion contained boundaries which provided a premise for effective discipline as part of the Hlidarskoli process. Within the harsher limits was a softer milieu of an accepting school climate where the participants were accepted for what they were, not lost, but protected and comfortable with easy access to staff and immediate action to problem resolving.
Social Role-modelling

This theme includes two components and the social role a) is used to describe the homely setting with model family examples of positive child-raising practices and b) has to do with the school’s support services that extend to the student and their family together.

Family modelling

One naturally really cares about them a lot, it was naturally, really sweet at the end when reaching one’s goals. That’s when you see how good they were. I mean it was like my granny or aunty that naturally brought me up a bit. It’s like I feel they are part of me a little. (Salka)

The staff were referred to as a relative that raised one a bit. Similarly, Frosti referred to the staff as being like parents while they were at school and Manni suggested that because there was so much closeness and few people there, the students experienced it as small close-knit society together as a family. They both stated that there was no bullying at Hlidarskoli and proposed that perhaps it was because the group was so small and diversified that picking on others couldn’t establish itself.

Meals and breaks were part of the family structure where role-modelling took place. The boys remembered the food. Snorri admitted to often being absolutely stuffed after meals and Grettir fondly remembered the rice pudding and other good meals. No-one minded if the cook was ill.

If the cook was ever sick, then we helped in the kitchen and literally cooked something instead of having home economics. And we had to see to our own lunch and stuff. (Oddi).

Sometimes, mealtimes were an opportunity to learn table manners.

There were proper manners and such. Like at breakfast time, they were very strict with rules at the breakfast table which was very good. Also in social interactions or just showing your fellow man consideration, like trying to respect people’s private space. (Melkorka)
On the other hand, breaks provided other social opportunities for the participants where members of staff were always present. Manni said the boys would play games with the adults such as table tennis or pool while Grettir stated that the staff participated with them in an obstacle course like crawling under stuff, climbing fences or running around together. Snorri related learning very tactical snow-ball fights in the winter. Break-time for the girls was described as a little less active but a social occasion never-the-less.

Naturally, all the staff were there during breaks. Though we were given our space in the girls section. Like, we were sometimes allowed to be indoors and then y’know we sat on the sofa knitting and they [the staff] sat around at the coffee table, no wall or anything, just an open area. We had our knitting or books and could listen to music and such. It was like a social get together for twenty minutes or so. (Salka)

**Parenting support**

I think they taught my mother a whole lot, y’see and my step-dad. I remember mostly that the situation at home improved a lot after I started attending Hlidarskoli. (Torfi)

Always, if there was something, they spoke to my family and if my family felt something was wrong they spoke to the school and vice versa y’see. I liked that. They all said there was a big change in me, so they were happy with it all. (Manni)

Hlidarskoli supported the participants’ family with child-rearing practices and some parents were involved in the daily achievements and behaviour at the school. The school managed to keep the parents particularly well-informed and one of the participants remembered a day vividly that was a turning point.

I remember that they made me stand in front of my brother once, look into his eyes and ask him to accept my apologies and that was rather a big moment for me, it still is there with me, so yes, I have to say that they helped with the family. (Melkorka)
Some participants were not particularly aware of extended parental support except that Snorri remembered often going together with his mother to meetings where they set up a system at home to curb his computer usage. Salka related the story that if something happened at home, the problem was more often than not sorted out at Hlidarskoli the next day. She felt that they looked after her family as well. Two participants came to Hlidarskoli through parental request as they knew the teachers and felt that the school would suit their sons better than a mainstream school.

To summarise the theme of family modelling, Hlidarskoli represented a nurturing, small family-like environment for the students to learn social skills. The model family was reinforced with homely meals and break times were used as a venue for socialising. The participants saw the staff as substitute parents in a way and the student’s own families were given support with child-rearing practices. Often problems at home were dealt with at school to create a united family atmosphere.

**Dynamic learning process**

This theme is concerned with the process of learning that occurred within the participants during their time at Hlidarskoli. The three essential components are caring teachers, collaborating motivators and appropriate pedagogy that were integrated with one another as a dynamic process of learning. Although they are mentioned in this text as three entities, one has to consider that their effectiveness lies in their dynamism of being used together.

**Caring teachers**

Y’see, the fact that I think about those teachers still today, y’know, it is far more than I did with any of my other teachers from compulsory school. Y’know one related to them much more and I mean if you didn’t come to school they went and fetched you personally, so it was completely different y’see. (Frosti)
Remembered by the teachers

When the participants were asked what came to mind when one mentioned Hlidarskoli the overriding response was the teachers in some form or other. They were surprised by the fact that they remembered all the teachers and that the teachers still remembered them. Both Oddi and Melkorka got sent regular greetings from their former teachers through their mothers’ work, which they appreciated. Some of the participants who shared common interests with their teachers still visit them today while others will chat to them on the street at a chance meeting. Salka appreciated the concern her old teacher still has for her when they see each other in town. Snorri mentioned being so surprised to see his teacher in the capital one day where they caught up on old times. Torfi especially recalled one teacher at Hlidarskoli who was into punk rock which amused him and Grettir remembered them all with great fondness.

Caring relationships

The participants all commented on the closeness of the Hlidarskoli teachers with the students.

It was much more personal. They worked a lot more with the group, got to know the students more as individuals rather than just as students. You were regarded as a person and that they learned what is was that could help you. (Oddi)

Some of the former students had personal challenges while others had learning difficulties and the teachers concerned themselves with the well-fare of each student. Even Assa who felt very constricted at Hlidarskoli, said that she was close to one particular teacher, like the other students.

…the teachers were very close to us, they helped us with everything. Were always trying to find out what was really the matter if one felt bad and they always seemed to manage it y’see, so it’s really the relationships that first comes to mind when I think about Hlidarskoli, a ‘cute’ school, one feels warmth. One could tell them everything when things weren’t good. Saw straight away that they were good at reading one’s feelings…y’see
they were my friends, one’s friends and if I see my teacher in the street then I still chat to her y’see. (Salka)

True friends

Hlidarskoli teachers were also regarded as their friends. Manni stated that it was just as important for the teacher to be your teacher as well as your friend. His teacher was the teacher in the class and then your friend during breaks over a game of table tennis.

They managed to relate to one on a personal note and we also regarded them as perhaps friends, not only teachers and school principals or something like that, one managed to see them as people that you could depend upon. (Melkorka)

Teacher competence

Here the references were endless from the participants. Manni for instance, claimed to be terrified of mathematics, especially multiplication and his teacher taught him all sorts of tricks to learn them until he realised that you only had to find a way to understand the problem. Frosti and Assa recounted that the teachers just explained things so well which really helped. Salka said she was taught the basics again at Hlidarskoli and some loved the way the teachers were so knowledgeable.

It was great that so many of them were so knowledgeable. Knew everything, especially [Funi, the teacher], I could ask him anything and he would know the answer to it, sort of an encyclopaedia. Yes, I could ask him anything and I loved it. (Snorri)

Grettir mentioned that the teachers really listened to them, allowed them to be themselves and talked to them about life. They had fun with their students and would tease them a bit. He also said one teacher told them about his own life and his passion for horses. Another teacher was more of a poetry man and he could feel that the Hlidarskoli teachers were proper characters and just like themselves really. The participants reported that their teachers showed
personal interest in the subjects they taught as well as adjusting their approach to each individual student.

To be learning about something which is probably useful and connected. To be with a teacher that shows the subject more interest who can explain it properly and also to explain it in different ways to suit each and every student. I have not encountered anything like this before with any other teachers who can do that. (Oddi)

Collaborating motivators

And there’s more y’see, it’s like the teachers they cared y’know, they tried to meet you half-way and they gave one endless chances, up to a certain point naturally, and if anything was the matter, they tried to solve it, tried to find a solution. If anyone had difficulties doing something and wanted to give up, they would always find a way to keep one going, keep encouraging and not allow anyone to stop believing in themselves. (Melkorka)

All the participants in the study mentioned that the teachers motivated them or used motivational techniques in some way or the other to get them to believe in themselves and build them up. Frosti felt supported by his teacher when coping with his learning difficulties. Both Frosti and Snorri said they were encouraged to learn to ask for help which was something that they were not used to doing in mainstream education. Grettir remembered tough outdoor challenges being set to get the students to mature and exercise. He thought this was an excellent way to get the students to push themselves beyond their own expectations. Manni recalled the sports teacher who pushed him further even when he thought he was dying while exercising. Grettir felt he was encouraged to be himself and Salka found that the best inspiration she got was to want to be something in life. Torfi claimed that his teachers were conscientious in imprinting in him that he was intelligent and also kind. He said they believed in him and his leadership qualities. He felt he became empowered a whole lot.

…if you did well they did something nice in return y’understand, and that was often important. And it often helped. Like y’see all this helped
somehow. I found it supported me and gave me self-confidence in that the teachers weren’t undermining you. “If you believe in this, then keep working on it” y’understand...“don’t give up” and it helped a lot. (Manni)

**Appropriate pedagogy**

The school setting was regarded as part of teaching methods or approaches and the Hlidarskoli teachers really used the country-like open setting of the school as part of their curriculum. The participants also made so many remarks about it that it was difficult to differentiate it from how they were taught. There were open green farm fields, wild bilberries, a coastline, trees, a small meandering river and of course animals. The girls mentioned playing with the rabbits during breaks and as mentioned before, Melkorka liked to walk about in the open space or go down to the coastline to calm down.

**Hlidarskoli school setting**

It was fantastic, for example, we had animals there. There were hens there and such and we always went to get the eggs and feed them after breakfast and, and once a raven that had been shot but still alive though his wing was in pieces, we took it upon ourselves to look after the raven all winter long. It was fantastic y’understand? (Manni)

The seasons also had their influence and Snorri loved the autumn when the bilberries were in season. Grettir in particular talked about the wind in the autumn, the green grass and the frozen river in the winter. When the wind blew the students would lift up their coats to make sails and then get blown around and fall over. One of the teachers was really tall and they would make him do it too.

I think the location that we learn in is very, very important. To have such open areas with lots of green grass and wind and let us want to run around and have proper jobs to do. Not let us feel like we’re useless. Yes, very important. There was one particular place, a little river nearby and if it was winter, it would freeze over. As soon as it was break-time, we ran out, dressed ourselves in all our outdoor clothes and started to slide on the ice.
Would take a heavy pick with us and try and break the ice. Make jokes about who would fall down. (Grettir)

Diverse teaching strategies and meaningful curricula

Grettir liked it when the students were given proper meaningful jobs to do like carting bricks to a building site or looking after the hens. Both Frosti and Oddi recalled approaches to teaching such as diversity in subjects which were conducted not necessarily in the classroom but out in the field where they could actually see and handle the subject matter for themselves. He said that he had never learned so many animal names as when they were at Hlidarskoli. The teachers had a knack of making subject matter far more interesting than it actually was.

It was naturally really diverse, full of variety and the normal school routine was often broken up, really and we often went outside to look at and see things in person rather than read about it in some book. (Oddi)

Frosti and Melkorka also felt that the teachers encouraged practical involvement as well as group projects with subjects by making things with their hands and having the opportunity to experience themselves. Many of the participants learned to like to work with their hands.

So naturally all group-work and y’know all outdoor work y’understand. We were a very diverse group with a wide age-range y’see. We did lots of different things within the group and we were outdoors a lot and then there was the workshop or the woodwork shed and such y’see, where we could try our hand at everything, it was great fun. One of the most memorable thing at Hlidarskoli was that I became interested in handwork and such. They are trying to activate I think, things like hobbies for the students. (Frosti)

Hlidarskoli teachers used interests and hobbies as a way to reach the students and both teach and encourage them in learning something new. This did not only pertain to handwork as Manni was in the same outdoor club as one of his teachers and Torfi was reached by instilling in him an interest in
playing a musical instrument. Two of the boys had reading difficulties, but somehow their teachers managed to turn their interest around with books.

Oddi found that the teachers allowed the students to set their own goals for e.g. reading and mathematics, goals that they believed that they could reach and Grettir said they could choose their own reading matter and their own pace.

Many of the participants, especially the boys, thought that the policy of no homework suited them down to the ground as it made life at home much easier by reducing arguments with parents. The girls were not of the same opinion and though they thought it great at the time, in retrospect they thought it was not such a good idea.

Then there was no homework. I thought it fine then (laugh) but I find it a bit strange today. (Assa)

To encapsulate the theme of how the participants experienced a dynamic process of learning the students’ participation was increased by an integrated combination of the following elements: A caring teacher was a teacher who fulfilled a multi-faceted role of being a true friend, a concerned adult, a role model as well as a competent teacher. In return for this closeness the student remembered all the teachers vividly. The next component of the process was that the teachers were also motivators. They encouraged students by setting challenges, believing in them, not giving up, supporting and enabling them and sometimes having to meet them half way in order to get the process going. The final ingredient was using the positive school setting as well as practised individual teaching approaches. The school setting offered a vast amount of diverse opportunities for learning and the students felt the teaching approaches used had been meaningful, relevant and fitting as well as practical, interesting and variable. A policy of no homework existed.

**Student achievements**

In this theme the student gains fall into three areas. There are academic improvements of learning new skills, personal developments in growing up and the ability to use those achievements by being more resilient to life’s challenges.
Academic improvements

The minute I started at Hlidarskoli, my grades flew up, I was perhaps getting three-four at compulsory school but was getting seven-eight at Hlidarskoli. And this was very good. (Manni)

Academically, all the participants showed some improvement, whether it was grades, individual subjects or other aspects of education. As mentioned before Manni’s mathematics improved and he said that before going to the school he could hardly speak English but is fluent in the language today. Torfi said he graduated with the highest aggregate. Some participants spoke of improved skills in reading, so much so that Oddi’s dyslexia was almost overcome with better reading speed and comprehension. Other participants mentioned having learned concentration and techniques for paying attention. Grettir would often ‘disappear into his head’ and said his teachers helped him with this. The school setting, as mentioned before, offered opportunities for the participants to learn a lot about nature and the natural sciences with Oddi learning a vast number of names. They also learned to look after animals and manage a vegetable patch at the school.

Salka stated that she learned to learn again and received enough of the basics at Hlidarskoli to be able to go to comprehensive college after graduation from elementary school. Unfortunately, she missed out completely on Danish, because they did not teach it at Hlidarskoli. Most of the participants reported learning a lot of woodwork, art and music, many of them who have continued the interest and have it as a hobby today. Frosti said he used it as an antidote to being hooked on computers. Oddi still whittled occasionally and Torfi said he played guitar and as well as other instruments.

The participants recounted many physical achievements such as cross-country skiing, fishing, cycling and some learned to horse-ride and swim.

Yes, he was the man that taught me to swim. When we went swimming on Fridays, he would take off his watch and let it sink in the deep-end, right at the bottom and told me to dive for it. Then I would dive down and get the watch and he would do it again and again the whole lesson. So I’m very grateful to be able to swim. (Grettir)
Personal growth

Um, respect one, two and three. Naturally, achieved through the discipline. You did something and then came the consequences…so one learns to say sorry. Um, what more did they teach me? Only that education really matters…put me back on my feet and that life is not in vain, you don’t live for a short while y’see. So, respect and just learning to live life and appreciate it and that education matters, you want to be something. And they taught one to set goals and reach them. (Salka)

All the participants matured or grew up in some way. As Salka said, she went through thick and thin or, ‘sour and sweet’, as they say in Icelandic and she remembered the sweet success of reaching her goals. Torfi learned to curb his strong character and not walk all over his fellow students and use his influence over others positively and to be kind. Frosti said he learned a little about life at Hlidarskoli and Oddi stated that he learned to be more independent and trust himself more. Grettir developed in such a way that he learned to be himself every day and was grateful for the Hlidarskoli experience. He also said that the school was much more than learning from books, much, much more. He used to play truant at his local school but at Hlidarskoli he didn’t miss a day of school and never even once pretended to be ill. Finally, he learned to be more tolerant of others which improved his social skills. Snorri also admitted it was easier to make friends at comprehensive college after leaving Hlidarskoli.

More resilient to life’s challenges

If I think about it, had I not gone to Hlidarskoli, then to be truthful, I have no idea where I would have ended. That’s how it is and I could just as well have dropped out of school and even done more drugs and probably still at it today y’see or not even alive, that could be it. I doubt that I would be where I am today if I had not gone there. (Melkorka)

A number of the participants floundered after graduating from Hlidarskoli. After the intense protection and support they had received, many found it difficult to find a footing on returning to their mainstream schools. Both Grettir
and Oddi described the return to mainstream school as a very difficult time with grades plummeting again and not knowing how to behave. Others who then continued to go onto comprehensive college also suffered setbacks and tended to drop out. When the interviews were taken many had had a colourful and near fatal drug induced life for a few years but were on the path to recovery and some back in tertiary education.

Y’see if I had not gone to Hlidarskoli, then I think I would have been y’know much angrier as a result and y’know I think there would have been more violence, it was starting to be like that y’see, later on, before I went to Hlidarskoli. (Frosti)

I became empowered there. But I still started drinking and doing drugs afterwards but y’know I don’t know where I would be today if I had not gone to Hlidarskoli. I don’t know that y’see. (Torfi)

Two of the participants managed to keep going straight, one directly into college and graduating after four years and the other straight onto the work market and alternative tertiary education.

You know if I hadn’t gone to Hlidarskoli then I would not be sure if I could have looked back on the good years I had at school as much as I have been able to. (Grettir)

To be absolutely honest, no! I would not be in the same place y’see, because all my friends before I went to Hlidarskoli, all the boys are in a mess, many of them abusing a lot…so, truthfully, I would not be where I am today y’see. I find Hlidarskoli really helped me a lot from that, I don’t drink alcohol, don’t smoke either, nothing. So I can say that the school helped me a lot and it also helped a lot of boys. We all felt good at Hlidarskoli, so I can safely say I would not be here. (Manni)

The participants experienced success in three basic areas with regard to learning achievements. Academically, all the participants improved, many raising their average grades substantially. Many of them continued with hobbies learned at Hlidarskoli and all had tried tertiary education. On a
personal note the participants benefitted in a variety of areas but generally they matured and significantly grew up at Hlidarskoli though the process was really hard for some of them. Finally, the participants managed to fill their own well of positive achievements which gave them a certain amount of resilient toughness against life’s challenges. They were an at-risk group but had bounced back even though some of them had had to face adversity and had fallen into the drug-abuse trap.
Discussion

In analysing the data several cross-cutting themes were identified and have been discussed in the previous chapter but it is worthwhile discussing the following aspects in more detail. The main study findings were that the participants experienced their time attending Hlidarskoli in several stages which from the student perspective formed part of a continuous process. The first stage of the process began while still in their mainstream school. The students were marginalised and then excluded from mainstream education providing compulsory education. The former students and their families were guided towards an alternative education option. This stage also provided a new physical setting which was out of town, providing not only a physical distancing but also a psychological one which created a sense of freedom for the students. This freedom developed further in the second stage when participants had opportunities to try out new roles and educative experiences. The turning point in the student’s experience came with their perception of the physical distance from home and school, which not only provided a certain amount of protection from harassments but also the impetus to kick-start the Hlidarskóli process of learning.

When entering the third stage the participants felt accepted and embraced by a nurturing family climate with role-modelling and positive child rearing practices that enhanced social development. The fourth stage included the dynamic interaction of an enabling environment through caring teacher relations, using individualised motivational techniques and appropriate pedagogy. The outcome of the fifth stage of the learning process provided an opportunity for each participant to add to their own personal well of achievements, a positive source that they could later draw on in times of adversity in facing life’s challenges after graduation or returning to mainstream education.

A positive experience and understanding

The participants’ overall experience of Hlidarskoli was by and large a positive one although there was little choice about having to attend. They had to learn many hard lessons in going through the learning process, but even so, the former students did not retain a negative picture of the experience.
All the participants mentioned that they would not be where they are today if they had not attended Hlidarskoli. In retrospect, the participants realised that the important outcome was the whole process and its outcome, not the difficult individual experiences they went through. Like many, Salka mentioned that she understood it as all part of a process, though it was really hard at the time. On the other hand, Assa, who attended the school for a very short period still felt the environment to be stifling and did not have the full benefit of the whole learning process.

The literature search did not reveal studies on the importance of the process over time in an alternative setting as such. An Icelandic mixed methods study was conducted on the life and circumstances of at-risk teenagers (Guðrún Ólafía Sigurðardóttir, 2011). In the qualitative part of that study 12 participants under 20 years of age were interviewed, who worked at a workshop for young people. A few of the younger participants in the study had attended Hlidarskoli and were still angry as they had had no choice. In McGregor and Mills’ (2011) study, the overall opinion of marginalised youth towards alternative education was that there should be more schools like them. The participants in the latter study though, did not indicate any understanding that their experience of alternative education was a dynamic process.

The importance of environment

Environmental factors had a vast influence on the experience of the participants. In fact, most of the themes relate to some aspect of the environment which ratifies the extent to which the environment was used as an intervention to enhance the learning process. Students experienced inclusion in this alternative setting and an enabling environment, where boundaries, acceptance and a family atmosphere with constant social input were used to facilitate the learning experience. The dynamic learning process was also based on collaborative techniques and the deliberate use of environmental factors such as appropriate pedagogy and relationships with caring teachers. This integrative phenomenon is not new, but this study shows the extent of the influence on the participants and their learning and acquiring of knowledge.

The literature review corroborates these findings and many of the individual aspects of environmental factors have been documented. Powell (2003)
mentioned appropriate, individualised curricula, accepting school climate and clear transition support. The importance of relevant teaching strategies, a relaxed, respectful environment and family support was shown by McGregor and Mills (2011). Supporting the family environment of the student was shown by Driessen et al. (2005) and Gasson (2008). Chitiyo (2014) stated the importance of co-ordinated, individualised, flexible services. All the above are environmental aspects used as interventions with students with EBD. The study reiterates the importance and the impact of environmental factors when used together and not just individually as with the principle of synergism.

**The setting that sets one free**

Another phenomenon from the study findings was the sense of freedom felt by the participants when distanced through exclusion from mainstream education. The psychological effects that distancing had on the students will be discussed. All the participants mentioned how the school setting and the feeling of freedom gave them a chance to try out new roles and alternative learning experiences. As Manni pointed out, he developed a new identity as he became the carer of a raven with a broken wing and not a student with serious behavioural issues. The physical distance of the school setting from the urban area protected them from outside harassments and the participants felt free to concentrate on matters at hand as commented on by Grettir. Both these aspects, the new roles and the physical distance worked in conjunction as an impetus for the Hlidarskoli process.

The impact of an alternative setting has not received much attention in the literature. However, some of the participants of McGregor and Mills (2011), commented on having to drive past the mainstream school to get to the alternative setting. On the other hand, in their study, the participants attended the sites on a voluntary basis, which could be regarded as a freedom in itself as opposed to the Hlidarskoli students who had little choice other than attend. Having a choice and experiencing freedom are important parts of the learning process.
Caring relationships that count

The teachers and the special relationships developed with them was one of the first points all the participants mentioned during the interviews. The participants and their teachers developed lasting relationships during their time at Hlidarskoli. The study findings showed the positive influence these relationships had on the overall learning process and the effect on the achievements of each and every one who was interviewed. As Frosti encapsulated, the teachers were prepared to come and fetch you personally if you didn’t turn up at school. The participants mentioned the many roles that the teachers assumed. Salka mentioned that the teachers instilled in her an ambition to want to be something. They were their friends, substitute parents, allies, mentors as well as the teachers.

This phenomenon has been researched extensively, not only among students with EBD but all students. An important aspect is the correlation between good teacher/student relations and student motivation, self-esteem and positive academic outcomes (Johnson, 2008; Mihalas et al., 2009; Powell, 2003). The findings of the current study were in close agreement with those found in the literature search. In particular, Johnson (2008) emphasised that it was the little things that teachers said or did that mattered. In the study, showing an interest, listening with respect and empathy, being available and establishing a collaborative rapport with the students, were the things which enhanced resilience and coping skills. The importance of teacher-student relationships is also verified in the study by Cornelius-White (2007), with the above average association between learner-centeredness and student outcomes, as well as in the study on the nurture groups conducted by Reynolds et al. (2009). In the current study, it was this interplay with the student, the teacher and the external support which lead to positive outcomes.

More social and personal development than academic

The participants in this study made more gains in social and personal development than in academic achievement. Frosti claimed he learned about life at Hlidarskoli and Torfi said he became self-confident. Empowerment was
the culmination of the combination of the environmental interventions that occurred during the process. The accepting inclusive climate, the constant social role-modelling, the enabling school setting and the caring teacher-student relationships all contributed to the participants starting to function as students again.

Several studies have shown how examples of various interventions lead to positive outcomes for students with EBD. Interventions included good teacher-student relationships, enabling environments, parental support, learner-centeredness and individual educational plans with diverse curricula, though few described the actual positive outcomes (McGregor and Mills, 2011; Powell, 2003). On the other hand the beneficial effects from the nurture groups in Britain showed development and academic attainment (Reynolds et al., 2009). Garwood et al. (2014) also stated improvements in reading, writing and arithmetic with unique and flexible curricula. It is important that academic success improved the self-esteem of the participants in the Garwood et al. (2014) and Reynolds et al. (2009) studies and that was the lasting achievement of the interventions.

**Systematic transition and follow-up support**

Some of the participants had difficulties in returning to mainstream education and others with adjustments to everyday life or coping with comprehensive college after graduation from compulsory education. Although this was not a clear theme in the study findings, a lack of support in the final stage of the process was noted in the discussion under achievements.

Support on returning to their old environment is not just relevant, it is imperative. In particular, Powell (2003) emphasises the importance and relevance of proper transition supports as being necessary for students with EBD. The participants in the current study did not have access to such developed services from Hlidarskoli. The transfer back to mainstream for the students should be clear, smooth and multi-disciplinary, including family involvement. Mainstream schools should also be prepared to receive the students.
Conclusions and key findings

The conclusions and the study’s key findings are summarised for easier reference in Figure 4.

**The overall alternative experience was more positive than negative.**

In retrospect the participants realised the purpose of the entire process. The dynamic process, with the interplay of all components, was the purpose of the alternative education intervention. The school setting was special in that it provided protection, freedom and new opportunities for both students and teachers.

**A change in environment supported a change in behaviour.**

Interventions concentrated more on adaptation of environment than behaviour. Family support was a valuable part of the students’ environment. The accepting climate at Hlidarskoli provided a sense of belonging which was in essence an inclusive environment. Presence and access to staff during meals, breaks and classes provided constant social role-modelling opportunities in the environment.

**The importance of an integrated approach.**

Hlidarskoli presented a united front and consolidated approach to students with serious behavioural issues which provided the base and impetus for the learning process. Transition programmes were not fully implemented and resulted in lack of knowledge being transferred with the student back to mainstream education.

**Low student/teacher ratio resulted in collaborative relationships.**

The teachers went beyond the normal role of teacher and fulfilled other roles such as friend, ally, mentor and substitute parent. Appropriate pedagogy included both diverse teaching strategies and meaningful curricula. Individualised educational plans were central to the learner-centred approach.
Student achievements were mostly of a social and personal nature.

The social role-modelling input provided a positive source for resilient behaviour when facing life’s challenges.

School activities were not only diverse but the purpose was also meaningful and of interest to the participants, increasing their sense of self-worth.

School activities were not necessarily made easier but different or challenging for the participants which increased their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Lowering expectations is not the answer to helping students catch up on subjects.

Collaborative teacher/student relationships were motivational and also increased self-esteem and self-confidence in the learning process.

Figure 4. Conclusions and key findings
Implications and future research

The overall contribution of the study findings is that they provide a more detailed understanding among mainstream educators of students with EBD. Furthermore they offer ideas for intervention opportunities, such as increased participation in the learning process and improved outcomes. By providing a better understanding of students with EBD it could also afford school authorities with opportunities for a wider range of interventions and environments for students with SEN within mainstream education. The Hlidarskoli approach and process that are presented in the study findings also offers school authorities with features of an inclusive school environment. Some of this could be implemented in mainstream education.

Since the ICF model and classification system was used as a framework for the study, the interpretation of the results may contribute to further ratification of the framework in practice. A key part of the framework could be extended in that the student and the student’s environment are reciprocal in nature.

Using environment as intervention enables diversity and flexibility

The influence of environmental factors on the learning experience was one of the main study findings. There are four environmental features that can be used with students with EBD to increase their participation in the learning process. Firstly, because the environment is so influential with regard to the well-being of a student and adaptations of it can result in change in student behaviour, it is important to find ways to provide a diverse range of opportunities for interventions when working with students with EBD. It is easier and more effective to concentrate on adaptation of the environment rather than interventions aiming to change the student as a person.

Secondly, because environments are categorised, they can be used simultaneously, sequentially or individually towards the same goal, opening the way for multi-disciplinary interventions with students with EBD for effective intervention outcomes. It is important to remember that a student’s family is an integral part of their environment and the study findings indicated
the valuable support that both parents and students received as part of the alternative intervention process described in this study.

Thirdly, it is important to be aware of intangible environments and their repercussions for students with EBD. These unseen environments include parts of government policy, local school practices, availability of funding or alternative education, and the nature of curricula and teaching strategies promoted in official documents. They cannot be detected directly but their influences can be felt. These are important aspects to bear in mind when providing services for students with EBD.

Lastly, environments can facilitate participation in the learning process for students with EBD or act as barriers. The lack of follow-up support for the transition back to mainstream education proved to be a barrier for some of the participants in this study. It is important to concentrate on enabling environments in intervention practices based on the students’ abilities and interests rather than the reverse. It is also important to bear in mind that the same environmental intervention can be a facilitator for one student but a barrier for another.

**Holistic assessment of students with EBD**

The staff at Hlidarskoli presented a united front and consolidated approach to students with serious behavioural issues. This uniform base provided the impetus for the learning process to commence. Careful documentation of the contextual factors underlying the behaviour or emotions of a student provides a holistic picture which leads to improved identification of the student issues. Using a holistic assessment process can lead to better coherent documentation and identification of learning issues of students with EBD and assist educators in finding effective and appropriate intervention goals. Using a uniform assessment system will also pave the way for inter-disciplinary interventions, where individual educational plans are central to effective intervention outcomes.
The importance of caring teacher-student relationships

The study findings revealed the importance of developing a caring relationship between teacher and student to enhance the learning process. Educators in mainstream schools may have to consider including teacher roles on a broader spectrum when working with students with EBD. It is the collaborative nature of the relationship that motivates student participation in learning and acquiring knowledge. Central to this are learner-centred, individualised, meaningful school activities for increased participation in the learning process.

Recommendations for policy

- Make provision for a uniform, holistic assessment system in mainstream education for all students with SEN.
- Develop the resources for teachers based on a holistic documentation or mapping system (such as ICF-CY) for students with SEN.
- Provide teachers with knowledge on the diversity of students with SEN to enable quicker and more effective identification of individual needs and how to meet them.
- Provide courses on a holistic, common language classification on student diversity such as ICF to pave the way for inter-disciplinary co-operation and the understanding of the importance of contextual factors.
- Provide undergraduate education with a clearer view of inclusive ideology, its benefits and pitfalls.
- Facilitate access to resources on EBD and training for both pre-service and in-service teachers and other professional staff in the education and health sectors.

Recommendations for practice

- Use the vast amount of expertise and knowledge that schools like Hlidarskoli possess for improved co-operation between the student with serious behavioural issues and mainstream educators.
- Use that same expertise and knowledge mentioned above to assist mainstream schools in establishing nurture groups as mentioned in the literature.
- Teachers at Hlidarskoli could become advisers in mainstream schools with regard to students with behavioural issues to assist in establishing more enabling environments for them. Such knowledge could embed itself in mainstream practice to provide guidance for class teachers to work with students with behavioural issues in the future.

- Develop a set of guidelines for the transition from the alternative setting back to mainstream. It is important to ensure that some features of the enabling environment for the student as well as planned transition procedures are in place. Co-operation between Hlidarskoli teachers and class teachers is essential to the success of transition from alternative back to mainstream. This should involve follow-up meetings and services with the students included.

- Because the positive outcomes of the participants depended so much on the caring relationships with teachers, it is important to ensure that Hlidarskoli continues to have quality teachers and staff to keep that dynamic aspect as part of the learning process. Some personal achievements which the study participants drew on later in life depended on the development of the special relationships they had with the teachers.

- One of the study participants mentioned that he preferred having a male teacher. His reason was being brought up by a single parent with no father-figure. Society today is such that many students are in this situation. Mainstream schools should consider the prospect of gender balance among staff in the classes of their schools as students with EBD might need more of one particular role-model than other students.

- The literature suggested the importance of programme evaluation. An alternative programme should intermittently be evaluated or monitored to determine the impact and effect on the student group.

**Future research**

Students with EBD fall within 1%-5% of mainstream school students which is a very small percentage and further research conducted among this population is probably much needed. This study sheds light on the voice of young people who attended an alternative education setting due to serious behavioural issues. It would be interesting to find out more about the life of present participants in five years’ time, perhaps after tertiary education. This would involve conducting a longitudinal study on the former students of Hlidarskoli.
Further studies conducted with students who have recently graduated from Hlidarskoli would provide data on a younger group to find out if they have the same overall positive experience. It would be interesting to find out if time and maturation change the findings. Another possibility would be to conduct a comparative study with young people in the same age bracket who were students with serious behavioural issues but did not have the opportunity to go to Hlidarskoli and compare the results with this study. A repeat study would perhaps reveal if it was the teachers themselves or the school programme that made the difference to the students.

It would be interesting to compare the results from a similar study with the alternative school setting in Reykjavík and interview young people who have graduated from there to find out how the findings compare.

Summary

This thesis has concluded with the contribution the findings can offer educators, future practitioners and school authorities. Recommendations are made for policy makers in government, education and health as well as for local school authorities to implement into mainstream education to benefit their students in need. Ideas for future research are to encourage and broaden the base of knowledge on students with serious behavioural issues.
References


Appendix A: Request for changes by Ethics Committee of Akureyri Hospital
Appendix B: Permission of Ethics Committee of Akureyri Hospital

Tölvupóstur 15. maí 2015

Sæl Guðrún

Siðanefnd Sak álítur að þið hafið nú á fullnægjandi hátt orðið við tilmælum nefndarinnar um breytingar á upplýsingablaðið til þátttakenda í rannsókninni Reyńska ungs fólks af námi í sérskóla og nýting hennar í daglegu lífi.

Þetta verður staðfest með bréfi.

Nefndin vonast til að sú töf sem varð á útsendingu athugasemda hennar hafi sem minnst spillt fyrir rannsókninni og óskar ykkur góðs gengis með hana.

Kveðja

f.h. Siðanefndar Sjúkrahússins á Akureyri

Sigmundur Sigfússon
formaður
Appendix C: Approval of Akureyri School Division

2. januar 2014

Guðrún Pálmadóttir
Deborah Júlia Robinson

Ykkur er hér með veit í fyrir umboðininn ranmsökn. Senda með régíum um ranmsöknir sem fylgja þarf eftir í einu og ólík. Ëg öska eftir því að fá afrit af niðurstöðum ranmsóknarinnar þegar þær liggja fyrir.

Virðingarfallat

Gunnar Gíslason frá fólkastjóri
Appendix D: Submission to Data Protection Authority

Guðrún Pálmadóttir
Áslendin í 8
270 Mosfellshreppur

Persónuvernd
Hofvingsg. 30-40 byginn.
stað. 50380.
hefur.herað 552908
setning.persoonuvernd.is
verkflæ persoonuvernd.is

Reykjavík 9. janúar 2014
Tilhefur: S6582/2014 / HEIK/-

Hér með staðfestast að Persónuvernd hefur möttekið tilkynningu í yðar nafni um vinnslu persónuupplýsinga. Tilkynningin er nr. S6582/2014 og fylgir að hennar húlagt.

Vaktur er athugl að lývi að tilkynningar hefur verið birt á heimavölu stofnuunarinnar.
Tekstur skal fram að með möntoku og birtningu tilkynnings hefur engin afstaða verið lekin af hálfd Persónuverndar til efnis þeirra.

Virðingarfyllt,

[Unterschrift]

Hjál.: Tilkynning nr. S6582/2014 um vinnslu persónuupplýsinga.
Appendix E: Approval from Hlíðarskoli

Guðrún Pálmadóttir

Dósent við heilbrigðisvísindasvið Háskólauns á Akureyri, Sölborg v/Norðurslóð, 600 Akureyri

Vegna óskar um þátttöku Hlíðarskóla í rannsókn Deborah Robinson um „Reynsla ungs fólkafólks af námí í sérskóla og nýting hennar í daglegu lífi“.

Ég undirrúði, Bryndís Valgarðsdóttir skólastjóri Hlíðarskóla, Skjaldarvík, 601 Akureyri, samþykki með ánægju fullt samstarf vegna þessarar rannsóknar. Það felur m.a. í sér að tána ljósmyndir af starfinu frá starfsárunum 2000-2010 og útvega sérfræðing sem viðmælendur geta haft samband við ef viðtaldir kemur rót á huga þettra. Sá sérfræðingur heitir Valdis Eyrja Pálsdóttir, er sérfræðingur og fjölskyldumedferðarfræðingur og hefur starfað við Hlíðarskóla frá árinu 2006.

Með vinsemend og virðingu

Bryndís Valgarðsdóttir, skólastjóri Hlíðarskóla
Appendix F: Introductory letter to participants
Engin þekktir áhættubær eru samfara því að taka þátt í nánstakinni, en af viltalóa kemur röð á hugsu þess að taka þátt þeir til Bryndisar Valgskip黛ttu skólastjóra Hlídaarskóla sem mun visa þær áfram til stuðningsaðild. Þó sem viðmiðandi mun ekki hagast heim af nánstakinni en með þátttaka þannig leggja það af náðum við að verpa þjóðar að þjónustu Hlídaarskóla og hvað meigir það að efna skólastrafð þar.

Fyllta trúnaður vorðu gætt varðandi alla upplýsingar sem allað vorðu í nánstakinni. Engin kvöð er á þannum hendum um að taka þátt og þó getur það veitt við þátttaka heimar sem er í þess að geta um ástæður. Hafð þú frekari spurningar þvét og þegi til að hafa samband við ábyrgðarmann eða nánstakandi.

Rannsóknarfélag, Deborah J. Robinson, mun hafa samband við þig innan fórda daga til að kæma undirtekst þeir.

Með viðnings og vírveinn

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]

[Untá ríkisvísu]
Appendix G: Informed consent

Vegna rannsóknarinnar:
Reynsla ungs fóls af námi í sérskóla og nýting hennar í daglegu lífi.
(Young adults' perspectives of attending special school and how learned aspects are integrated into daily life)

Ábyrgðarmaður rannsóknar: Guðrún Pálmaidóttir, dósent við Heilbrigðisvísindasvið HA.
Meðrannsakandi: Deborah Robinson, meistaranevi við Heilbrigðisvísindasvið HA.

Upplýst samþykki
Ég undirruð/aður samþykki þátttöku mina í ofangreindri rannsókn. Ég hef lesið kynningarbréf um rannsóknina og hef það í minni vörslu. Þátttakan felur í sér u.þ.b. klukkustundar langt viðtal þar sem ég verði beðin/nn um að svara spurningum um reynslu mínar tengdri skólagöngu í Hlíðaskóla. Viðtal verður hljóðritað og afritað orðrétt og upptökunni eytt að því loknu. Ég treysti því að fyllsta trúnaðar verði að og að persónuupplýsningar verði gerðar órekjanlegar.

Mér hefur verið kynnt eðli og umfang þessarar visindarannsóknar og ég er samþykki(ur) þátttöku. Mér er kunnugt um að ég get hafnað eða hætt þátttöku í rannsókninni hvenær sem er án útskyringa eða afleiðinga á þjónustu sem ég á rétt á.

________________________________                                 __________________________
Staður og dagsetning                                                                Undirskrift þátttakanda

Ég undirrituð/aður staðfesti hér með að ég hef upplýst ofangreindan þátttakanda um tilgang og eðli rannsóknarinnar í samræmi við løg og reglur um visindarannsóknir á heilbrigðissviði.

Undirskrift rannsakanda