Defining Inclusive Education in India

through the Perspectives of Educators

by

Dhurka Janani Srikantha

A Master's research project submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Education
Graduate Department of Education,
University of Ontario Institute of Technology

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This project investigates how policies and teaching practices in India affect educators' definitions of inclusive education. Eight educators from private schools in India participated in open, semi-structured interviews to examine their understandings of equity and inclusion policies, the practices that facilitate inclusive education, the barriers that influence effective practices, and reflections on professional development. The teachers' experiences and perspectives, through interviews, revealed their practices of inclusive education. The research analysis employs two theoretical frameworks: UNESCO's Dakar Framework for Action; and Banks' (1993) five dimensions of inclusive education. The findings indicate that the educators articulate early stages of the implementation of inclusive education in India. They understand the need to address existing prejudices, to differentiate learning, and to offer student-centered learning. The findings highlight that an empowering environment needs to be built to address stereotypes that exist within the school community and the society. Additionally, there is a need for community among schools of diverse backgrounds so that educators can continue to participate in professional development through mentorship and reflection.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This Master's research project examines the views of eight practicing teachers and administrators working in schools in India that publicly support equity and inclusion. In this study and in the Ontario, Canadian context, equity is defined as the action of addressing any disadvantage that prevents educational achievement (UNESCO, 2015). Thus, equity focuses on the recognition of the biases and barriers that exist, and aims to rectify the unfair experiences of those placed in disadvantaged situations. Equity does not solely look at the fairness of the opportunities that exist, but also addresses equity of outcomes. Banks (1993b) explains that equity pedagogy exists when teachers facilitate successful academic achievement for all students from diverse groups. Furthermore, Robertson (1998) acknowledges three dimensions to equity, which include equity of access, equity of participation, and equity of outcomes. Equity of access is the base level where all learners are given equal opportunity as barriers are acknowledged. Equity of participation emphasizes that all students are being provided with equal motivation to succeed, and equity of outcomes aligns with Banks's (1993b) equity pedagogy where all learners have an equal opportunity to be as successful as everyone else (Robertson, 1998).

Inclusion is defined as "a dynamic approach to responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 12). In response to the diversity that is present in the student population, inclusive education modifies the content, process, methods of engagement, and adapts the environment to the needs of each individual. The Universal Design for Learning (Center for Applied Special Technology, 2012) encompasses inclusive education as it takes into account 1) how learners stay engaged and motivated, 2) how learners gather and categorize facts, and 3) how learners organize and express their ideas. Bernacchio and Mullen (2007) explain that for

universal design for learning to exist there needs to be flexibility in the methods used to present information and content should be accessible through multiple modalities. In addition, students should be provided choices, supports, and learning contexts in order to be engaged in the classroom. There also needs to be flexibility in the means of expression as students are provided with a variety of options to demonstrate their competencies (Bernacchio & Mullen, 2007). Robertson (1999) emphasizes that an individual can demonstrate varying degrees of inclusiveness in the different areas of equity, and an assumption is not to be made that a person who is inclusive in a particular area of equity is inclusive in all other areas as well (Robertson, 1998). Thus, equity focuses on the actions taken to reverse the historical and social disadvantages that prevent learners from accessing and benefiting from equal opportunities in education, and inclusion is both a teaching model and an approach to openness.

At the time of writing, definitions of equity and inclusion are under discussion in India. According to Singal (2009), Indian policies have been using the term 'inclusive education' since the 1990s, but there is no formal definition of the word inclusion. The term is taken solely to mean the placement of students with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms (NCERT, 2006).This research study documents teachers' questions, hopes and challenges. The graduate student researcher interviewed the participants, and their authentic voices explain their specific educational contexts. This research is important because the information it provides will assist in part with the development of a diagnostic tool for inclusive education for Indian schools.

A review of the literature indicates that schools in India, as elsewhere, are moving toward a universal education system that includes every child. This is a major challenge in India due to the large population, the diversity of the population, and a history of partial implementation of important policy initiatives.

The present stated policy intent in India is to include children with special needs in school, and to include more children from poverty and from scheduled castes and tribes. Many students in these groups have been under-represented or not included in the school system to date. Accordingly, the review of the literature examines the significant complexities of diversity in India. The second aspect of the literature review is an historical summary of policies in India that have been working toward inclusive schools. The literature review leads to the following research questions:

1. What are the present policies on equity and inclusion in the schools in India?

2. How do educators in India define equity and inclusion? How are they broadening the definitions beyond students with physical special needs?

3. What are some of the perceived resources, barriers and gaps to effective inclusive education?

4. Are there links between inclusion and newer models of student learning?

5. What is the vision for professional development in equity and inclusion in India?

This manuscript outlines the qualitative research undertaken, explaining the methodology, the participants, the data collection and the analysis. The findings from the study show the overall commitment toward inclusive schools of the educators interviewed. The study concludes with summary comments and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review of the literature first outlines the range of diverse students who are not yet included in India's public and private school systems. Next, the review details the history of inclusive education policies in India. The third section summarizes some key barriers and challenges. The summary of the literature review indicates that equity and inclusion in education in India have been interpreted different ways in policy. This conclusion leads to the generation of some research questions that focus on determining how today's educators in India understand and enact equity and inclusion in their practice.

2.1 Diversity in India

India, with its population of 1.311 billion people (World Bank, 2015), is a country where many factors contribute to its diversity. According to Hodkinson & Devarakonda (2009), there are 16 official languages, more than 314 spoken dialects, and 4 major religions. The Office of the Registrar General & Consensus Commissioner (2001) and UNICEF (2013) also identify that ranges of income levels and the social hierarchy in India contribute to its diversity. In India, 32.7% of the population is below the international poverty line (UNICEF, 2013). One segment of the poor, 16.2% of the population, are members of a Scheduled Caste, the lowest caste in India which is considered 'untouchable' in Hindu scriptures and practice, and regarded as socially disadvantaged. A second group, 8.2% of the population are part of a Scheduled Tribe, communities of people who live in tribal areas, and are traditionally marginalized and not part of mainstream society (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2001). Historically and culturally, people of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are excluded from mainstream society with the resultant lack of access to education.

According to Singal (2006) and Sharma and Das (2015) enablement or disablement is another area of diversity in India. Disability affects around 40 million people in India, and if the definitions of mental illness and mental retardation are included, the population of those with a disability could be as high as 90 million people (Singal, 2006). Out of this, only 4% of children with disabilities have access to education (Sharma & Das, 2015). UNICEF (2013) also states that diversity exists between gender outcomes, as the Indian secondary school participation rate is 58.5% for males and 48.7% for females. This is significant as India's Census in 2001 states that 52% of the population is male and 48% is female (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2001).

2.2 History of Inclusive Education Policy in India

Bell and Stevenson (2006) state that policy has the "power to determine what is done. It shapes who benefits, for what purpose and who pays. It goes to the very heart of educational philosophy - What is education for? For whom? Who decides?" (p.9). Thus, they emphasize that educational leadership is exercised in a policy context, instead of existing in a vacuum, and is shaped by its cultural and historical location (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). This section of the review of the literature summarizes key events in India's education policy development between the period from 1974 to 2016. The review discusses eight pieces of legislation during this time that were introduced to help more children attend schools. Some of the legislation was authored in India and some of the sources are global, such as UNESCO. Examining the history of education policy development in India provides insight into its philosophy of education.

Goyal and Pandey (2009) explain that India has four types of schools: government schools, private aided schools, private unaided recognized schools, and private unaided unrecognized

schools. Government schools are state funded, whereas private schools can receive partial government aid or be fully privately funded. Private aided schools are privately managed, but receive government aid for teacher salaries and other expenses. Private schools can also be categorized into recognized schools and unrecognized schools, with the latter being in existence without a government license due to not meeting the regulatory requirements of the state. It is important to note that Indian Census data only cover recognized schools and students attending unrecognized schools cannot be administered the any state or central academic examinations. These four types of schools can be found both in urban wards and in *gram panchayats*, which are self-government organizations in rural villages (Goyal and Pandey, 2009).

   In the 1970s: according to the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme was initiated in 1974, with the objective of promoting retention of children with disabilities in the regular school system. This included pre-school education for children with disabilities, and fifty percent financial assistance for schools to manage the expenses associated with educating students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms (NCERT, 2006). The IEDC provided many incentives for the education of children with disabilities including counselling for parents, allowances for uniforms, books, stationery, assistive technology, readers, and boarding facilities. According to Sharma & Deppeler (2005), due to the lack of trained teachers, lack of orientation and professional development regarding the educational needs of children with disabilities, the limited access to equipment and educational materials, and lack of coordination during implementation, the IEDC had little success, as by 1980, it had served 1,881 children from 81 schools.

In the 1980s: Sharma and Das (2015) explain that between 1980 and 1985, the government of India introduced a focus on prioritizing integrated education for children with disabilities within five years. Following this, the government committed to increasing funding and developed supplementary policies to support integrated education within the Indian school system (Sharma & Das, 2015).

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD, 1998) explains that the goal of the National Policy on Education (NPE), which was introduced in May 1986, was to fundamentally change the education system in India, in order to improve the quality of education and promote a sense of citizenship. The policy led to an expansion of the school system so that 90% of rural villages could have access to a school within a one-kilometer radius. However, inconsistencies in the strategy of implementation related to financial and organizational support led to issues of access and quality that accumulated over the years (MHRD, 1998).

Sharma & Deppeler (2005) explain that in 1987, NCERT, in collaboration with UNICEF, initiated Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED). Its purpose was to support integrated education of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. PIED focused on a "Composite Area Approach" where mainstream schools within ten specific geographic areas, known as blocks, in ten states, were all adapted to be integrated schools. Within the specified area, the schools had to share resources, equipment, instructional materials, and special education teachers. Teacher training became a central component of implementation, and three levels of training were offered within each area block: a five-day orientation course for all teachers in the mainstream schools; a six-week intensive course for ten percent of the teachers; and a one-year training program for eight to ten teachers from the mainstream schools who became the resource teachers. The inclusion of training for more than 9,000 teachers led to an enhanced

implementation of PIED, resulting in approximately 13,000 students with disabilities receiving education in mainstream schools (Sharma & Deppeler, 2005).

In the 1990s: NCERT (2006) states that the implementation of PIED led to a revision of the IEDC in 1992, where financial assistance was provided for schools focusing on integrating students with disabilities, and non-governmental organizations were fully funded and tasked with the implementation of the program. In addition, there was provision for one special education teacher for every eight children with disabilities, and a resource room for every cluster of eight to ten schools. The objective of IEDC was to form a liaison between mainstream schools and special needs schools to facilitate the integration process, so that children with disabilities could participate in the community at all levels (NCERT, 2006).

Singal (2009) states that, based on the successes and recommendations of PIED, the IEDC was revised in 1992 as the scheme was moved from the responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare to the Department of Education. With the revisions, the IEDC was able to support 15,000 schools and 60,000 children while providing "financial assistance towards the salary of teachers, assessment and provision of aids and appliances, training of special teachers, removal of architectural barriers, provision of instructional materials, community mobilization, early detection, and resource support" (Singal, 2009, p. 10).

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) explain that, in recent years, the global economy and shifts in global patterns now influence public policies in countries that previously focused on national policies only – now their policies have ties to global systems. According to Singal (2009), the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) placed pressure on India to commit to and advocate for the education for all children. This Statement advises that global education systems should cater to the diversity of students' needs. The statement describes that mainstream schools must be able to

accommodate children with special educational needs through a child-centered pedagogy. In addition, the Salamanca Statement highlights that inclusive schools are the most effective way to combat discrimination and provide effective education for all children (UNESCO, 1994). Singal (2009) states that, due to this global policy pressure, during the 1990's, official documents in India began to incorporate the term '*inclusive education*'. Furthermore, although various policies had been in place for over two decades, countries were strongly recommended to adapt inclusive education in schools (Singal, 2009).

Sharma and Das (2015) explain that, subsequently, the District Primary Education Project (DPEP) was implemented by the Government of India in 1994, which focused on the integration of children with mild to moderate disabilities. In 1996, the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act passed and this was significant as it was the first time that issues stemming from integration of students with disabilities could be addressed in a court of law. With the PWD Act, any form of discrimination against a person with a disability was open to redress. This signaled the beginnings of a rights-based approach to education for students with disabilities, where standards for international human rights protect the person (Sharma & Das, 2015).

In the 21st century: Singal (2009) explains that after changes to legislation, DPEP was incorporated into the Sarva Shiksha Abhiya (SSA) in 2001, a government of India initiative, where a zero-rejection policy was adopted, ensuring that no child could be denied enrolment to a school on the basis of disability. The SSA highlighted that schooling could be received through inclusive education, distance education, home-based education, and alternative schooling. These diverse options moved away from the idea that a child is required to adjust to the mainstream learning environment. Instead, flexible planning was promoted to facilitate education in an environment that suits the child's needs (Singal, 2009).

In 2009, the IEDC was once again revised and renamed to be the Inclusive Education for the Disabled at the Secondary Stage (IEDSS); its aim was to provide opportunities for students with disabilities to complete four years of secondary schooling, on the condition that they had completed eight years of elementary education (Sharma & Das, 2015). This came closer to universal education. Kalyanpur (2008) explains that, eventually this led to the Right to Education Act (RTE), in 2010, which supports inclusive education.

Finally, India created a policy that focused both on children with disabilities and included other disadvantaged groups (Kalyanpur, 2008). The Centre for Civil Society (2013) describes that, in August 2009, the Parliament of India enacted the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE) that came into effect in April 2010. The RTE advocates free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 years of age. It requires that children receive education in elementary school, and in addition, private schools are to reserve twenty-five percent of the admission seats to children from lower economic strata and children who are members of a scheduled caste or scheduled tribe (Centre for Civil Society, 2013). Children cannot be held back, expelled, or required to pass a standardized board exam until they complete elementary school. Also, special training is to be given to those who have dropped out of school in order to raise their literacy rates to be equivalent to students of the same age. Funding for the implementation of the RTE was originally estimated to be INR 1.71 trillion (US$38.2 billion), which was then increased to INR 2.31 trillion in 2010. It was also decided that the RTE would extend down to preschool age range and up to Year 10, which caters to students 16 years old (Centre for Civil Society, 2013). The RTE also provides practical suggestions for schools, such as modified texts and barrier-free environments (Kalyanpur, 2008).

In summary then, as depicted in Figure 1, this (somewhat simplified) review of the history toward more inclusive education shows that there has been a slow but steady progression of legislation aimed at including all students in schools. However, this inclusion is complicated by multiple challenges such as India's diversity and size.
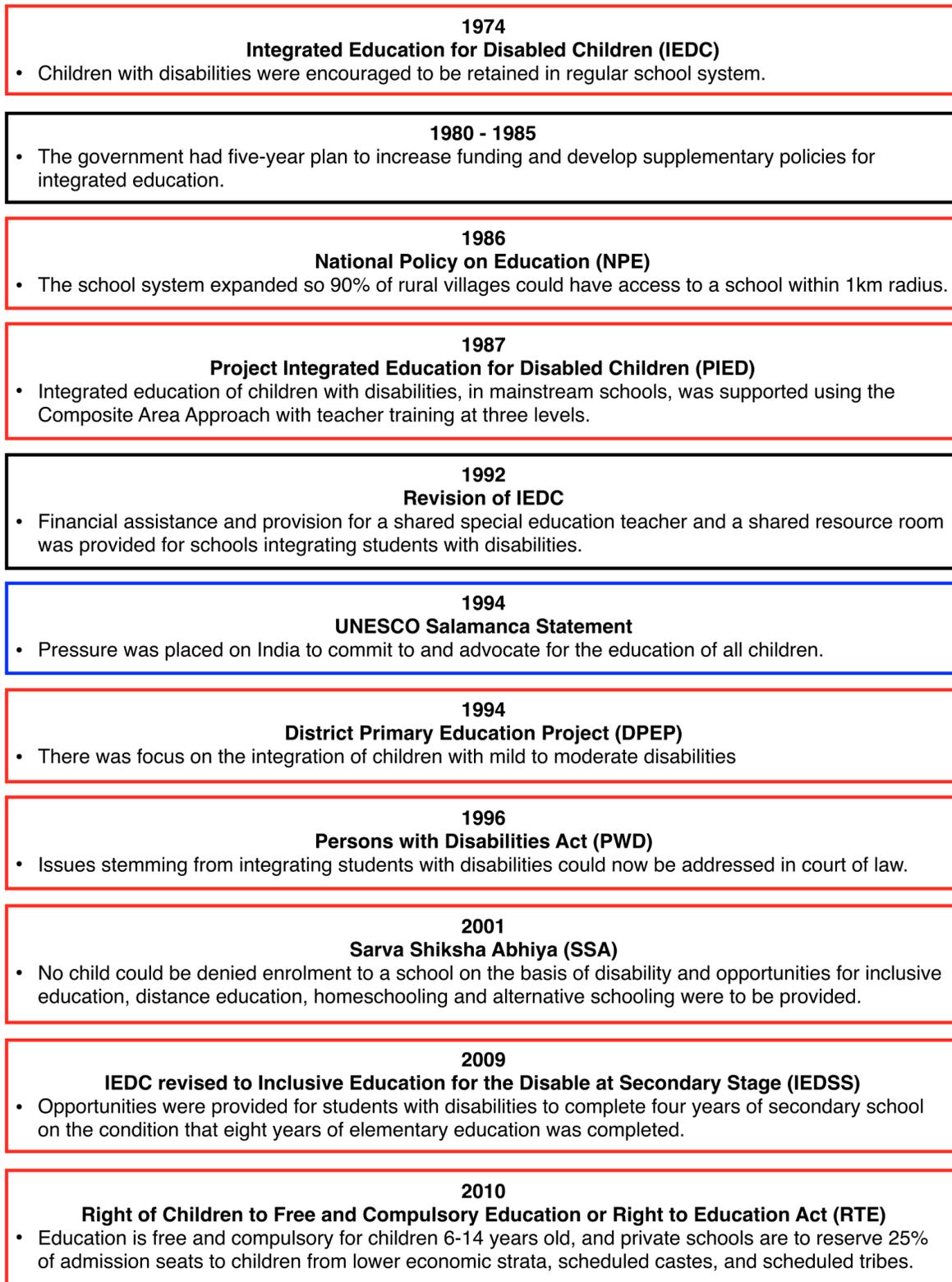
1974
Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)
- Children with disabilities were encouraged to be retained in regular school system.

1980 - 1985
- The government had five-year plan to increase funding and develop supplementary policies for integrated education.

1986
National Policy on Education (NPE)
- The school system expanded so 90% of rural villages could have access to a school within 1km radius.

1987
Project Integrated Education for Disabled Children (PIED)
- Integrated education of children with disabilities, in mainstream schools, was supported using the Composite Area Approach with teacher training at three levels.

1992
Revision of IEDC
- Financial assistance and provision for a shared special education teacher and a shared resource room was provided for schools integrating students with disabilities.

1994
UNESCO Salamanca Statement
- Pressure was placed on India to commit to and advocate for the education of all children.

1994
District Primary Education Project (DPEP)
- There was focus on the integration of children with mild to moderate disabilities

1996
Persons with Disabilities Act (PWD)
- Issues stemming from integrating students with disabilities could now be addressed in court of law.

2001
Sarva Shiksha Abhiya (SSA)
- No child could be denied enrolment to a school on the basis of disability and opportunities for inclusive education, distance education, homeschooling and alternative schooling were to be provided.

2009
IEDC revised to Inclusive Education for the Disable at Secondary Stage (IEDSS)
- Opportunities were provided for students with disabilities to complete four years of secondary school on the condition that eight years of elementary education was completed.

2010
Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education or Right to Education Act (RTE)
- Education is free and compulsory for children 6-14 years old, and private schools are to reserve 25% of admission seats to children from lower economic strata, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes.

Figure 1: Summary of history of education policies in India from 1974 to present.

2.3 Factors Influencing the Implementation of Inclusive Education

India has developed policies promoting inclusive education for over the past four decades to address the diverse needs of children. According to NCERT (2006), the National Curriculum Framework for School Education in India states that,

> Segregation or isolation is good neither for learners with disabilities nor for general learners without disabilities. Societal requirement is that learners with special needs should be educated along with other learners in inclusive schools, which are cost effective and have sound pedagogical practices, (NCERT, 2006, p. 10)

NCERT (2006) claims that despite this belief, and even with full financial support for the IEDC, only two to three percent of learners with special needs were integrated into mainstream schooling (NCERT, 2006). Sharma & Das (2015) state that there has been limited success in providing quality education for all children, even with the revision of policies to move away from focusing on increasing the number of people to work in inclusive education, to addressing curricular pedagogy, resources, and training through policies such as PIED and DPEP. Data show that the various programs did support a growing number of students over time, "with 5,800 through PIED; 203,146 through IEDC; 621,760 through DPEP; and 1.6 million through SSA" (Sharma & Das, 2015), but this is a fraction of the population as these initiatives have only helped 4% of students with disabilities (Sharma & Das, 2015, p.59).

Policies have been using the term 'inclusive education' since the 1990s (Singal, 2009), but no formal definition of the word inclusion exists, and the term is taken to mean solely the placement of students with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms (NCERT, 2006). Singal (2009) also states that the SSA, in 2001, was a national policy that stated schooling could be received through multiple environments to suit the needs of the child, but each district was

tasked with planning the implementation. This resulted in different models of inclusive education that were inconsistent in quality. This is a key issue in India as the term 'inclusive education' is attributed mainly to Western influences, resulting in each district having their own interpretation of the term (Singal, 2009).

Hodkinson and Devarakonda (2009) note that the term 'inclusive education' has no similar expression in Hindi, the national language of India, and thus there is no direct translation of the term. This ambiguity has resulted in inconsistencies in the conceptualization of inclusion within the school system. Vislie (2003) explains that the introduction of the Salamanca Statement was to provide a new educational policy designed to meet the diverse needs of all students in one school, however the terms integration and inclusion overlapped without recognition that they are separate concepts with different foci (Vislie, 2003). Singal (2006) explains that, in India, the terms integration and inclusion are often used interchangeably, where the current best understanding sees inclusion as education for all disadvantaged groups and not just for students with disabilities (Singal, 2006). Kalyanpur (2008) finds that inclusion is interpreted as providing any form of education including segregated schools, and that this demonstrates India's inclination to be 'politically correct' by adopting Western trends in education without a complete understanding of what inclusive education entails; this subsequently results in poor implementation of educational reforms.

There are issues in addition to the classroom placement. According to NCERT (2006) stakeholders, including children with special educational needs, voice that the curriculum is not relevant to them. There is also a dependency on text, and repetition or rote methods, and the arts, sports, and co-curricular activities are needed to build a more comprehensive curriculum with differentiation (NCERT, 2006).

Another issue is teaching practices. Singal & Rouse (2003) explain that many teachers share that their teaching practices have not changed as the students included in their classrooms are not of a lower IQ, and they can adapt to existing classroom practices. In addition, teachers voice that the constraints of large class sizes, the extensive syllabus, and maintaining discipline, which is considered to be the distinctive feature of a good teacher, limit them from making changes to their teaching practices (Singal & Rouse, 2003).

The type of inclusion provided also presents another issue. Jha (2004) states that when inclusive education is attempted, most schools in India, under the private sector, provide superficial peer interaction by having special learning spaces with only occasional social integration in the mainstream classroom (Jha, 2004). NCERT (2006) asserts that India still has the formidable task of linking inclusive education to pedagogy and best practices, and a reform in education needs to take the individual needs of learners into consideration as a more balanced curriculum is developed (NCERT, 2006).

Furthermore, NCERT (2006) suggests that even though all the implemented policies have provided funding and promoted services for students with special educational needs, there is a "dual service delivery system" where children receive a different curriculum and services from different providers. NCERT (2006) highlights that specialist support is needed for everyone to access the curriculum, so that students with special needs are not "inadvertently segregated from the mainstream classroom" (NCERT, 2006). Kalyanpur (2008) explains that even the RTE act which focuses on inclusive education for all children suggests that children with mental development delays not be placed in age-appropriate classrooms, and alternative environments should be utilized for children with profound disabilities (Kalyanpur, 2008).

The implementation of PIED in 1987 diverged from other policies in that it provided teachers with professional development at three-different levels (Sharma & Deppeler, 2005). Despite the focus on professional development, a study that included principals from both private and government schools, showed that only 49% of them knew of 'integrated schools', and only 37% of them had knowledge of 'inclusive education' (Jha, 2004). This research underscores the assertion by NCERT that teacher training should not only include the knowledge and skills needed for an inclusive classroom, but in order to be successful, there must be changes in beliefs and attitudes that all children can learn (NCERT, 2006).

Currently in India, history and tradition play a central role in beliefs and attitudes, and thus meeting the needs of children with special needs is seen as 'ehsaan' or charity (Miles, 2002). Also, professionals use the medical model of assessment where objective indicators and symptoms are used to describe the needs of children with disabilities (Jha, 2004; Kalyanpur, 2008; NCERT, 2006), and thus educational needs are explained using the deficits of the child (Kalyanpur, 2008). For inclusive education to be successful, there needs to be a change in how children with special needs are seen, and a shift has to take place from seeing a child as a "charity case" or a child with deficits, to acknowledging the child's strengths (NCERT, 2006). In addition, Kalyanpur (2008) explains that the legislature has to move towards offering incentives for compliance rather than focusing on punishment for violation, which has led to an almost dictatorial form of advocacy that has further marginalized children with special needs.

NCERT (2006) highlights that reforms that lead towards inclusive education should also lead to an inclusive society, and that initiatives and policies need to include collaboration with the community and parent. Kalyanpur (2008) finds that a significant proportion of the general population is unaware of the laws and policies, and inadequate awareness increases the exclusion

of children with special needs. Low literacy rates and inaccessibility to information coupled

with deficient medical care for children with disabilities leads families to believe that their

children will not benefit from an education (Vakil, Welton, & Khanna. 2002).

In summary, then, there are multiple barriers affecting the inclusion of students with special

needs in schools in India. Given the diversity of the country and its fragmented history of

inclusion reforms, children with special needs could be in both integrated and segregated

settings, and schools may lack clear policy direction on the goals for their education. The general

curriculum and teaching practices may not be flexible enough to support inclusion. In addition,

there are many children who have historically not yet had access to school. This review of the

literature indicates that there are significant challenges in scope as well as policy direction.

2.4 Steps to Inclusive Education for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

The Government of India (2015) declares that as per the Constitution, Article 46 that,

The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of

the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the

Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of

exploitation (Article 46, Government of India, 2015).

Measures of poverty from various expert groups estimate the below-poverty line population to be

around 39.4 to 41.8% (Government of India Planning Commission, 2014), and Scheduled Castes

and Scheduled Tribes are among the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups in India (United

Nations, 2011).

Tilak (2000) explains that in alignment with the Constitution, the National Policy on

Education (MHRD, 1998) aimed to increase the number of schools in habitations or local

community areas, so that young children could walk to a school within half a kilometer of their residence. However, by 1993, less than 50% of habitations had a local primary school and nearly 35% of local community areas did not have a primary school within a distance of half a kilometer. In addition, during the Union Budget of 1999-2000, the government introduced the Education Guarantee Scheme that aimed to provide educational opportunities for students belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, a collective term used by the Government of India to identify castes which are socially and educationally disadvantaged (Tilak, 2000). According to Gopalkrishnan & Sharma (1998), this scheme is based on a similar initiative that was introduced in 1997, in the state of Madhya Pradesh, to ensure that all students had access to education at a school within one kilometer of their residence within ninety days.

   According to Leclercq (2003), the implementation of the Education Guarantee Scheme had four significant conditions:

1. The parents of the local community had to request a school;

2. The community had to provide the premises for a school;

3. A local teacher from the community was chosen by the *Gram Panchayat*, the self-government organization in the village, and

4. The community had to maintain the school. (Leclercq, 2003).

According to Gopalkrishnan and Sharma (1998) the Education Guarantee Scheme is seen to be a cost-effective method of providing primary education, as it provides Rs 8,500 (approximate CAD$180.[00]) per year for training of the chosen teacher and teaching-learning materials. The scheme creates an organic connection between the teacher and the local community, as the teacher is chosen by the Gram Panchayat, and this supports the community outreach role of the

teacher. This scheme highlights that providing universal primary education is not dependent on finances, but achieved by developing genuine partnerships between the government and the local villages (Gopalkrishnan & Sharma, 1998).

Although the Education Guarantee Scheme was responsible for creating 28,000 schools where tribal area schools had a population of at least 25 students and non-tribal areas had a student population of 40 (Leclercq, 2003), the scheme does not require the Panchayats to have the facilities of a formal school, including a qualified, trained teacher (Tilak, 2000). Also, the government is not taking full responsibility for educating all students, as the local community must ask for a school facility instead of it being their right to have access to a school (Tilak, 2000). Section 12 of the RTE Act highlights that all government schools shall provide free and compulsory education to all children, and private, unaided institutions and special category schools shall provide 25% of the admission available in class I or pre-primary classes, without fees, to children belonging to disadvantaged groups and weaker sections. The government reimburses the per-child cost incurred to these schools (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2009).

The MHRD (2009) emphasizes that the RTE Act ensures that children from weaker socio-economic backgrounds form a substantial proportion of the classes they join. They clarify that the rationale behind the 25% allocations is that, in the 2001 census, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes made up 16.2% and 8.2% of the population respectively. As this totals 24.4% of the population, it was reasonable to require both these groups to have access to 25% of the admission spaces at private educational institutions (MHRD, 2009). In addition, the MHRD (2009) rationalizes that a restriction of admission to pre-primary and class 1 students exists because students and teachers who have only experienced homogenous environments in the school system will not develop the required skills and attitudes for inclusion immediately. By

staggering the admission, it allows the school to gradually progress towards a more diverse environment (MHRD, 2009). In doing so, however, the MHRD (2009) officially acknowledges in policy the degree of social disadvantage of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in India.

In just over four decades, India has produced eight key legislations for inclusive education. This review highlights that different ministries are involved in developing educational policy, and implementation patterns are scattered but moving in the general direction of including more children in schools. The next section examines theorists who have proposed means to analyze progress toward inclusive goals. These theories are explained next, and will be used to analyze the data in the study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This research draws upon a toolbox of theories and a framework that address inclusive education. Two theoretical lenses: a) global framework for education; and b) a framework for prejudice reduction are helpful to examine how teachers interpret policy texts and view inclusion of students with special needs.

UNESCO's Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) encompasses both educational policy and classroom practices, and it outlines global goals and strategies to meet commitments to educate all students. This framework has international status and scope. The second analysis lens focuses on the implementation of inclusive education policy within schools and classrooms. This second lens draws parallels from James Banks' dimensions of multicultural education (Banks, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c). Both frameworks are outlined next.

3.1 Looking At a Global Framework

The Dakar Framework: *Education for All* (UNESCO, 2000) aims to provide all people with 21st century educational opportunities that are responsive to their needs without exclusion or discrimination, so that individuals are empowered to transform societies. This research focuses on six goals selected from the Dakar Framework *Education for All,* which emphasizes that "all learners of the twenty-first century will require access to high quality educational opportunities that are responsive to their needs, equitable and gender-sensitive" (UNESCO, 2000, p.12). The Dakar Framework's philosophy is that educational opportunities should not discriminate against groups of students, and there should be diverse formal and informal approaches used to align with the circumstances of the learner (UNESCO, 2000).

Free Access	"For the millions of children living in poverty, who suffer multiple disadvantages, there must be an unequivocal commitment that education be free of tuition and other fees, and that everything possible be done to reduce or eliminate costs such as those for learning materials, uniforms, school meals and transport. Wider social policies, interventions and incentives should be used to mitigate indirect opportunity costs of attending school." (p.15)
Local Schools	"Partnerships between governments, NGOs, communities and families can help ensure the provision of good care and education for children, especially for those most disadvantaged, through activities centered on the child, focused on the family, based within the community and supported by national, multi-sectoral policies and adequate resources." (p. 15)
Multicultural Curriculum	"In order to attract and retain children from marginalized and excluded groups, education systems should respond flexibly, providing relevant content in an accessible and appealing format." (p.16)
Differentiated Learning	"Teachers must be able to understand diversity in learning styles and in the physical and intellectual development of students, and to create stimulating, participatory learning environments." (p. 21)
Equal Access	"These should include their resource implications in relation to the provision of basic education, emphasizing choices that bridge the 'digital divide', increase access and quality, and reduce inequity (p. 21)
Technology / Assistive Technology	"This wealth of information resources must be accessible by all, and the growing disparity between rich and poor, and the urban/rural divide in terms of access to technology must be taken into account when policies about technology are formulated. In addition, these information resources must be accessible in an equitable and structured way to ensure overall improvement in learning achievement. Information resources should in particular be accessible to people with sensory impairments and in a format that permits ready assimilation of content. Further, the deployment of technology in basic education should be done in a culturally sensitive manner." (p.60)

Figure 2: Six goals for inclusive education selected from UNESCO's Dakar Framework for Education for All (2000).

3.2 Policy Analysis

   This research analyses participants' reports of their actions within the classroom and the school in order to understand how they interpret and describe policy. Ball (1993) states that policy texts are negotiated by key interpreters, such as government ministries, and subsequently the meaning of the text also shifts (Ball, 1993). If the meaning of the text evolves, through interpretation, this affects educational practice. This was evident during the introduction of the Salamanca Statement, in 1994, where Singal (2009) describes that India felt the pressure to commit and thus change the text of existing policies to include the term inclusive education. The term *inclusive education* was interpreted in a multitude of ways resulting in inconsistencies (Hodkinson & Devarakonda, 2009; Singal, 2006; Vislie, 2003).

   Ball (1993) highlights that the way text in a policy is interpreted or acted upon cannot be predicted in every situation, as readers will construct their own meanings based on their reactions and experiences. Singal (2006) suggests that the term *inclusive education* was added to the Dakar Framework due to Western influence, thus leaving Indian school districts to interpret the text based on their own experiences and schemas. Hodkinson & Devarakonda (2009) explain that, because there is no matching expression in Hindi, *inclusive education* is interpreted inconsistently. Kalyanpur explains that, when India introduced the term *inclusive education* in policies, it was interpreted as *providing any form of educational service to disadvantaged groups in society*. This resulted in the implementation of segregated schools for those with physical and learning needs, shifting from the intent of the Salamanca Statement to integrate all students with special educational needs into mainstream schools. NCERT (2006) emphasizes that teachers need to have a shift in attitudes and perspectives as well as knowledge and skills to have a fully inclusive learning environment. As explained earlier, the RTE ACT admits students from

scheduled castes and tribes starting at pre-primary so their inclusion into the school system will be a gradual implementation. In summary, while there are multiple policy initiatives, some have generated different interpretations of philosophies or practices.
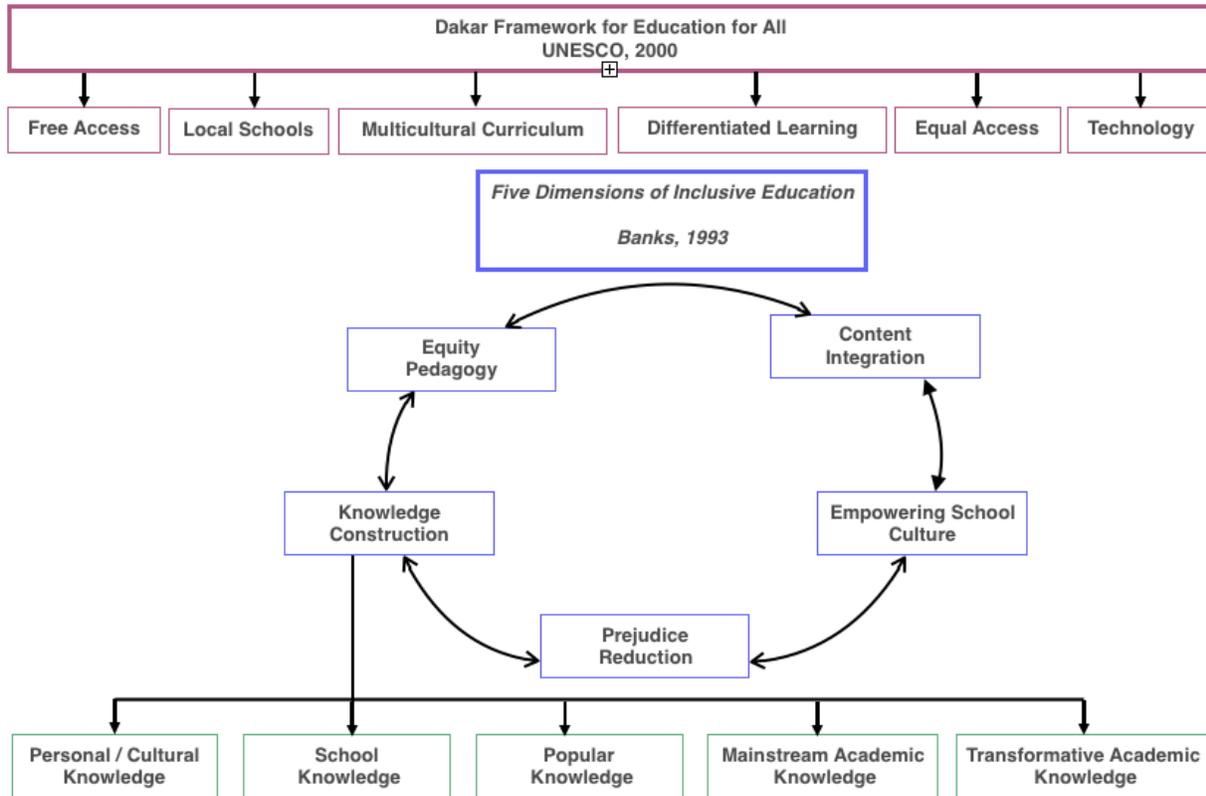

Figure 3: Theoretical toolbox that interconnects to understand inclusive education.

3.3 Banks' Five Dimensions of Inclusive Education

Banks (1993b, 1993c) outlines five dimensions of multicultural education that support inclusion in a sociocultural sense: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, empowering school culture, and equity pedagogy. Inclusive education in India includes not only groups of students with physical and learning needs, but also those disadvantaged by socioeconomic status, and diverse cultures within the social hierarchy in India.

Every caste, tribe, and social group has its own beliefs, attitudes, and customs that form a complex mosaic to be incorporated into a fully inclusive school system. Banks (1989, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c) focuses on multiculturalism and this offers insights into how to interpret inclusion when there are pre-established cultural perspectives about segregation.

3.3.1 Content integration.

According to Banks (1993b), when integrating diversity into the content, educators should examine which resources can be included in the curriculum and how diverse experiences and stories can be integrated into existing curriculum to illustrate key concepts. The four levels of integrating diverse content into the curriculum are: the contributions approach, the additive approach, the transformation approach, and the social action approach. They form a continuum that takes learning from a superficial understanding of different perspectives to engaging students in social justice (Banks, 1989, 1993c). These four approaches reflect increasing levels of content integration. Teachers should use information and perspectives of diverse groups to discuss key concepts and theories in any given subject area. According to Banks (1993b, 1993c), at the basic level, discrete elements of non-included cultures are included without adapting the structure of the curriculum. At the next stage, the structure of the curriculum changes to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and commonalities from the perspective of various groups. Finally, at higher levels of multi-cultural integration, students are able to make decisions on important social issues and take actions to solve them (Banks, 1993b, 1993c).

3.3.2 Knowledge construction.

When the curriculum adapts to look at multiple perspectives, students and teachers can understand that knowledge is influenced by various factors including ethnicity, gender, and social class (Banks, 1993a). This helps students see the ways that "assumptions, frames of

references, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the construction of knowledge"
(Banks, 1993b, p.25). Both NCERT (2006) and the MHRD (2009) policies see that a shift needs
to occur in the mainstream population in order for inclusive education to be possible. In post-
inclusion curriculum, other ideologies in addition to the mainstream become recognized (Banks,
1993b). Different types of knowledge depict values, assumptions, and perspectives, and students
should be involved in debating conflicting interpretations in order to become critical thinkers and
tackle issues of discrimination (Banks, 1993a).

Banks (1993a) describes the different types of knowledge that support inclusion.
Personal/cultural knowledge includes the concepts, ideas, and interpretations children hold due
to their experiences with their family and community. Students struggle to align with established
norms of mainstream society when there is a conflict between personal knowledge and school
knowledge. Banks (1993a) also explains that knowledge about "out-groups" is learned at home
and within society, and it contains misconceptions and stereotypes that can lead to segregation.
When the personal knowledge of diverse groups is included in school, it helps students overcome
stereotypes and value multiple viewpoints (Banks, 1993a).

School textbooks and resources present s*chool knowledge*; Banks (1993a) states that
publishers and school districts are hesitant to present controversial statements and images. As a
result, textbooks depict knowledge that is static, and students learn facts without understanding
the dynamic, complex interactions of the various groups in society (Banks, 1993a).

Popular knowledge is not always explicitly articulated but it is present in the media, in stories,
anecdotes, the news, and in the interpretation of current events. This makes it paramount that
curriculum resources should depict differences in abilities and social-class from the perspectives
of people within those groups in order to give students accurate portrayals.

Mainstream academic knowledge refers to concepts and theories that focus on traditionally Western-centric history, behaviour, and social science. In any educational system, it is critical to begin to analyze the sources of components of mainstream knowledge that are the foundations of present policies and curriculum (Banks, 1993a).

According to Banks (1993a), by understanding what constitutes mainstream perspectives and also by being open to diverse viewpoints from multiple groups while learning about an issue, students can challenge existing attitudes and mindsets. He calls this *transformative academic knowledge,* when the concepts and explanations that challenge mainstream knowledge begin to replace existing paradigms and theories. By explicitly teaching students the skills to gather transformative academic knowledge, the learning environment encourages a social action approach (Banks, 1989) toward a more inclusive education. All of these types of knowledge contribute to knowledge construction (Banks, 1993a).

3.3.3 Prejudice reduction.

The social action approach (Banks, 1989) is a method for prejudice reduction. Educators should see that all students approach the learning environment with prejudices against various groups due to personal or cultural knowledge (Banks, 1993a, 1993c). Banks (1993b) emphasizes that educators need to be mindful to avoid stereotypical images or descriptions in the classroom, and provide an environment where students gain more positive attitudes and behaviours towards diverse groups and develop democratic values. Experiences that facilitate direct interactions and cooperative learning activities support prejudice reduction (Banks, 1993b).

3.3.4 Equity pedagogy.

Banks (1993b) explains that *equity pedagogy* is present in a classroom when teachers are aware of methods that facilitate high achievement for students from diverse groups. In order to

do this, teachers need to expand their pedagogy repertoires and avoid labelling students. Teachers need to use a wide range of strategies and interventions to allow students from all groups to have relevant, academic experiences (Banks, 1993b).

3.3.5 Empowering school culture.

If inclusive education is to go beyond the individual classrooms, it requires a total school culture shift to become more equitable. Banks (1993b) describes an empowering school culture as one where the school conceptualizes itself as a "unit of change" and the school takes steps to change its structure and environment. Banks and Tucker (1998) find that educators can experience a dyconsciousness where they label students by accepting the existing order that includes traditional perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs. This unconscious perception justifies inequities. Educators need to be aware of this potential bias in order to create an empowering environment (Banks & Tucker, 1998).

The research in the present study merges Banks' (1993b, 1993c) dimensions of inclusive education with the goals of the Dakar Framework for Education for All (UNESCO, 2000) in order to analyze educators' interpretations of policy goals and their implications to classroom practice. These two key frameworks provide a toolbox to analyze evidence of rights-based education. The Dakar Framework for Education for All (UNESCO, 2000) provides global standards against which educational practice can be evaluated. The dimensions for inclusive education (1993b, 199c), however, allow educators to comprehend the complexity of inclusive education by providing concrete definitions and examples of practice.

This research also aims to discern the ways that teachers in India report their practice relative to the different approaches theorized by Banks (1989), and how they construct different forms of knowledge (Banks, 1993a). Based on Banks' theories, transformative academic knowledge

coupled with the social action approach leads to prejudice reduction (Banks, 1993b, 199c). The

research will investigate how many of these elements are in place, and how close the classroom

practices described match the goals of the Dakar Framework (UNESCO, 2000).

Chapter 4: Methodology

This research study employs interviews to determine the views of a select group of educators in India. Educators' interpretations of inclusive education and their adaptations of classroom practice are based on individual opinions, personal experiences, and their own philosophies of education (which includes their attitudes and biases surrounding the capability of all children to learn). Therefore, a qualitative study was conducted to understand teachers' views, practices, and vision for the future about inclusive education. A qualitative study allows participants to share the ideas, experiences, and opinions that shape their pedagogical choices and school cultures.

4.1 Participant Selection

Because this study examines teachers' detailed, personal interpretations of inclusive education within schools in India, a small sample size was sought. The Adhyayan Foundation was chosen as a local contact point in India since the researcher was already familiar with the organization. The researcher's Master of Education coursework included guest speakers who were staff and educators from the Adhyayan network. Additionally, the researcher's graduate project supervisor collaborated with the Adhyayan Foundation while they developed a quality diagnostic for inclusive school practices. The Adhyayan Foundation is a branch of Adhyayan Quality Education Services, who have worked with over 270 schools throughout India, and they aim to transform the quality of schooling in India by contextualizing internationally accepted practices to increase learning opportunities for students. At the time of writing this project, the Adhyayan Foundation was developing and piloting an Inclusive Schools Quality Diagnostic framework for schools in India. The research team contacted the Adhyayan Foundation, a not-for-profit

organization in India that works with schools to develop quality indicators in the areas of equity, to identify a pool of participants for this study. This resulted in snowball sampling (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005, p.104) where participants in five schools referred by the Adhyayan Foundation were contacted, and other teachers known to these individuals were also suggested. Participants preferred to have the initial communication through WhatsApp, a cross-platform instant messaging system, on which a larger sample of thirty-three participants were interested in the topic of inclusive education in India. Using purposive sampling, participants were chosen who met the specific criteria (Cohen et al., 2005, p.103) of self-identification as an inclusive practitioner in their classroom or school. The participants work at schools that establish themselves as implementing inclusive education for students with physical and learning needs and/or for students who belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Through purposive sampling, thirteen participants were contacted via the email address that was provided through their individual WhatsApp messages. The researcher contacted participants using a university email account to provide the details of the research and the script for verbal consent, as outlined in Appendix 1. The researcher informed potential participants of the scope and implications of the study, along with an understanding that the research is an inquiry into educators' perspectives and experiences of inclusive education. In order to ensure that the participants fully understood the purpose and depth of the research, the research provided the questions to be used in the interview in advance (See Appendix 2.).

Eight of the potential participants volunteered to discuss their views on inclusive education, and Google Calendar invitations were used to confirm the date and time of the interview. The researcher and participants were located in time zones nine and a half hours apart. Along with confirmation on Google Calendar, both the researcher and participant provided their Skype

username for the purpose of the interview. In order to protect the identity of participants, the interviews were numbered from one to eight, with only the researcher aware of the allocation of the number to each participant. All data collected, including audio recordings and transcripts were labelled using the number allocation, without names or identities.

During the audio recording of the interviews, the participants' names and schools were not mentioned by the researcher. Therefore, identification through the transcription of the raw data is limited. In addition, Adhyayan Foundation was not informed of who volunteered to participate in the research, and educators from the same school were not informed of each other's participation.

4.2 Data Collection

Each participant was interviewed for thirty minutes to one hour on Skype depending on the length of responses. A standardized open-ended interview was used where the wording and order of the questions were determined in advance as this would increase the comparability of responses during data analysis (Cohen et al., 2005).

The questions addressed in the interview began with how participants define equity and inclusion, and how the concept of inclusivity is being broadened beyond physical needs in schools in India. Then participants were asked to share their views on school practices and their alignment to equity policies, along with any gaps that they felt were evident. Participants identified any barriers preventing them from developing effective inclusive education, and shared their experiences with how teaching practices have been adapted. Thereupon, participants were asked their beliefs in the possibility of meeting all students' needs and their vision for future professional development and community involvement to further inclusive education.

In addition, an interview format was chosen as it would enable participants to discuss their points of view and interpretations of their classroom and school environment; closed quantitative surveys might have limited the participants' experiences to specific responses that may be irrelevant or mechanical (Cohen et al., 2005). The aim of utilizing an open-ended interview with predetermined questions was to provide participants with an increased comfort level in sharing their thoughts and experiences, as they would already be aware of what would be asked and could respond using their own words and phrasing. In addition, it was hoped that a conversation, via an interview, would encourage participants to provide greater depth to their answers as they became familiar with the researcher during the discussion.

With the participant's permission, the interview was recorded using QuickTime, and then later transcribed. This allowed the researcher to focus her attention on the conversation and actively engage in the interview. As consent is paramount in this study, the script of the verbal consent was read at the beginning of the interview, and it was only upon agreement from the participant that the interview progressed. Upon completion of the interview, participants were informed that they would receive an update of the findings that they could review.

Two participants could not receive a strong Internet connection through Skype, and as per their preference, the interviews were done via Facetime and email respectively. During the Facetime interview, the same process was followed with the participant agreeing to the verbal consent, the interview questions being asked, and informing the participants that they would receive a copy of the findings to review. The participant who preferred to respond via email was sent a file with the consent and questions, which was returned through email. Upon receiving the responses, another email was sent to the participant indicating that a copy of the findings will be sent for them to review.

To protect the data collected via interviews, all QuickTime recordings of the interviews were transferred to an encrypted USB key, and the files were deleted from the hard drive of the researcher's computer. Further, transcripts of the interviews were also stored on an encrypted USB key. If a school name was mentioned by the participant during the interview, it was removed during transcription to avoid details that may cause the educator to be recognizable. All files that contain data from this research study will be destroyed after two years as per the conditions of the Research Ethics Board approval.

4.3 Data Analysis

Once all the interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were analyzed for key words that represent core ideas from the literature review and theoretical framework. The key words that were used in the frequency search were: goals, access, technology, curriculum, differentiation, ability, disability, awareness, policy, assessment, diversity, and community. Subsequently, the dominant ideas from the transcripts were selected (key themes) accompanied by direct quotations from the participant to provide a context for analysis. Similarities between key ideas in transcripts were also noted. The researcher created a table to analyze trends between the participants' responses to the research questions.

4.4 Limitations

This study is limited by the small sample size of participants. They were in India, a country where the researcher does not practice, and thus access to teachers was dependent on the introductions made by the Adhyayan Foundation. The participants were chosen from schools that identify as inclusive or where there is an interest in inclusive education. All eight participants

for the study work at private schools in India and therefore the sample does not represent the realities of the public education system. Participants volunteered their time for their interviews, suggesting that they have a personal interest in the areas of inclusion and equity. The findings are not generalizable to the wider population, but provide a window on inclusive practices.

The goal of this research was to obtain insight into teachers' experiences and views on inclusive education. The participants shared experiences, observations, and philosophy through in-depth interviews that allowed the researcher to analyze trends about inclusive practices in India. The questions were standardized during the open-ended interview which may have led participants to use key words and ideas from the questions. A completely open interview about equity might have allowed the researcher to see a different data set as participants would have had the freedom to express their ideas according to what they believe as essential to inclusion. However, as a novice researcher, it was an advantage to have a standardized open-ended interview, as it allowed for easier determination of patterns and trends among the participants.

Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter describes the results of the analysis of the interview data. The frequency of key words used within and between participants is examined, as well as repeated ideas found within and between participants' responses during the interviews. The data are organized using the topics of the interview questions, starting with the identification of policies that are relevant to the participants, and followed by their definitions of equity and inclusion. Next, the data that refer to school practices that align with the concept of inclusion and the barriers that the participants face are highlighted. Finally, data was located that describe participants' visions for professional development and the future development of inclusive education in India.

5.1 Frequency of Key Words

The analysis of the key word search in responses showed that none of the participants used all of the key words during the interviews. One participant used nine of the twelve key words, and another participant used two of the key words identified. The other six participants ranged from using five to eight of the key words. This would indicate that there is a general vocabulary of inclusion that is shared among the participants. When looking at the total number of key words used among the participants, the term *technology* was used least frequently and it was mentioned five times. Three participants referred to technology in their responses, and one participant mentioned *technology* three of the five times.

Policy, disability, and access were the most frequently used words in the interview responses. Policy was used by all participants, for a total of 36 times, but only specifically when they were asked about policy and barriers. The term *disability* was mentioned 32 times and used by all participants throughout the interviews which would indicate that this is a shared terminology.

Although *access* was mentioned 30 times in total, it was used by only four of the participants, with one participant referring to access 24 times.

5.2 Relevant Policies

When asked which policies guide their practice for inclusion, three of the participants said that they are not clear on the policies that exist nor have they done a policy review. Two participants mentioned that policies exist, but they are not relevant to the context of a private school. Both of these participants indicated that the school's philosophy, resources, and practices play a more meaningful role for inclusive education than policy. Two participants referred to the policies as limiting as they do not speak specifically of learning disabilities and are still focused on standardized exams as the measure of success. Two participants said that the Right to Education Act was the policy that they found relevant in their practice.

5.3 Definitions of Equity and Inclusion

Four participants referred to *access* when defining equity, as one participant stated that,

> It's about everybody having access to information, access to education. But what
>
> that access looks like has to be different, given each specific individual.

Participants spoke about giving students equal opportunities "irrespective of their caste, creed, or socio-economic background." Three of the participants referred to differentiation when defining equity, as they mentioned planning and giving students what they need in order to be successful. One participant defined equity by indicating that mindset and attitude were key features as educators and parents need to accept the students at their levels of capabilities.

When asked about the definition of inclusion, five participants spoke about differentiating for the needs of students, as they expressed it was essential to consider factors such as the students' abilities when implementing inclusive education. When defining inclusion, one participant shared:

> …try to think through for them. What is that? What does that mean? And, how do I evaluate their writing when they are still learning how to write? Can I find expression? Can I mark the ideas? So there have been a lot of angles to this inclusion thing.

One participant said that inclusion is being aware of the different barriers to learning that a student may experience, while another said they use the terms equity and inclusion interchangeably. Another participant related equity to inclusion, stating,

> For me, the question then becomes - is everyone learning and is everyone learning effectively? To me, when I'm looking at inclusion it's coming back to - it should be related to equity. So everybody should have access to education. Everyone should have access to education related to how they learn best - that may or may not be your typical classroom setup.

5.4 Practice Aligning with Inclusive Education

When asked how educators in India are broadening the definition of inclusion beyond students who have physical needs, all participants responded that awareness was a key factor. They said that teacher-training programs do not have a component on special education, and teachers are not aware of the cognitive and behavioural difficulties that a child can experience. Four participants said that awareness has to increase beyond the school and include society as

well. They expressed that, by increasing the awareness of the extended community, educators

are able to shape the definition of inclusion and learning challenges. This will allow students to

be successful outside of school, in the workplace, and socially among their peers. Two

participants also felt that the government needs to be more aware of a comprehensive view of the

challenges students can experience as educational policies mandate an exam-based measure of

success, which cannot be completed by all students with learning challenges.

When speaking about practices that align with inclusive education, the themes that emerged

were *mindset* and a *disconnect with policy.* Five participants shared that having an open mindset

is key to being able to differentiate for inclusive education. Two participants expressed that

having an open-minded attitude can be achieved through mentoring where they engage with

students in the classroom alongside other educators, apply the training they receive, and are

reflective on their practice. One participant spoke of a successful pre-service program that they

had observed where:

> They had done the ground level work before they got their degree, because they
> had to go into regular classroom, look for children with special needs, identify
> and make an action plan and things like that. I think because they had already
> [set] their minds to it. When they started teaching, I thought that they were far
> more open to having a child with difficulties and then accommodating or
> including that child into their classroom.

Two participants mentioned that although a policy may exist, it does not mean a program

exists in schools for students. They expressed that students will be allowed to attend the school

but an inclusive program is not (necessarily) developed to ensure the students' success. One

participant mentioned their disappointment in educators who express that a special needs program is not relevant to them, despite the law mandating that one should exist.

All participants agreed that inclusive practices change teaching practices. Six participants spoke of differentiation in the classroom. One participant spoke of differentiation leading to innovation in the classroom in this way,

> The diversity in inclusive classrooms is the stuff that leads to innovation because it forces the teacher to just think. There is no other way to teach other than innovating, and problem solving, and experimenting in an ongoing manner in an inclusive classroom, and that's why I feel it goes hand in hand with innovation in teaching.

Furthermore, this participant expressed that reflective practice is essential in order to align with inclusive practices stating:

> I feel my Math practice in general, not just for around the area of special needs, has been transformed because of how much I have had to, how deeply I had to be thinking about what I am teaching, why I am teaching, and what is the best way for teaching it.

Two participants indicate that inclusive practices are present in the classrooms, but only up to a certain point, as the education system is dependent on board exams. Both participants spoke of the need for summative assessments to be more inclusive as the limitation for the teacher. One participant said,

> So I think we've reached a point where we are doing a lot of inclusive practices for the formative assessment. However, when it comes to summative because there's this whole board concept and then standardized tests and all of that, so I

feel somewhere a teacher feels limited in doing inclusive practices or

the differentiation when it comes to summative assessment.

The paper-pencil method of assessment may be used because of a teacher's comfort level and

lack of awareness of inclusive assessments. One the participant explains,

I think there are, especially when it comes to assessments, there are so many more

ways of assessing kids now instead of the typical paper- pencil method. And I

think a lot of us default to that because it may be the way you're comfortable

with. It's the easiest way or whatever the reason may be.

Three participants indicated that technology has allowed students to have more access to

learning opportunities and be able to be successful in the classroom. One participant mentioned

that technology has opened the door to having a vast array of resources for students, and another

participant spoke of the importance of working with families to obtain assistive technology for

students.

5.5 Barriers to Inclusive Education

Three main themes are present in participants' responses when they speak about barriers

to inclusive practices. They identify lack of access, society's attitudes, and a dearth of resources

as key barriers that prevent inclusive education in India. Participants express that, although

policies may mandate that all students to have access to quality education, the schools are not

equipped to cater effectively to all populations. Physical access to the school building is not

present in all schools, and this is reflective of the larger community as well. One participant

mentioned, "even when we look at just like access to transportation, access to different parts of

the city, I'm even thinking that probably people who are physically disabled aren't able to access

them." Another participant mentioned the *compounding effect* of not having access to education, stating:

> First to start with, because you've learning challenges, you're not able to access. Secondly, socioeconomic challenges become a part of that and if you are someone who's from a lower socioeconomic status, plus you have a learning challenge, then you're in a very small minority and I don't think that you have access to education that is appropriate for you.

The attitudes of teachers, parents, society, and the students themselves presented a barrier mentioned by all participants. Three participants expressed that assumptions made by educators can influence the students and when a teacher does not believe that a student can learn, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. One participant shared that even if the school believes in inclusive education, the teacher's knowledge and comfort level impact the student, stating,

> Even if it is an inclusive set up and there are kids who may have learning challenges, they're not actively included. Even if they're part of that class, they're shunned to the back corner because they are struggling with the teachers and teachers don't know how to deal with them.

Five participants thought that the attitude of parents has a significant influence on the students. One participant said that if parents expect the students to learn, and their parents are willing to be involved in the child's school life, inclusive education is more successful. Four participants indicated that the lack of awareness and the attached social stigma of having a child with learning needs is a barrier, stating,

> Lots of parents are embarrassed. Lots of parents are saying, "Is it my fault? Have I done something wrong? What will my family think? What will my neighbours

think?" So, it's just easier to keep that child at home instead of allowing them to

go into society and learn how to integrate them.

Another participant emphasized the importance of parent and the culture by sharing:

The openness that the parents have shown has translated to the children. The

whole triangle of culture, practice and policy and the kind of form that it takes; I

think that works as culture being kind of the base of the triangle.

This reflects significant emphasis on the culture as a determining factor in inclusion scenarios.

The mindset of parents is reflective of society's attitudes toward those who have challenges.

Three participants said that, when students with needs are given the resources they need to

succeed, there is discontentment from others as to why those students are receiving an

"advantage." One participant indicated that the feeling of power is the factor that maintains the

status divide, as they express:

So if I have power, I would not want one from a lesser economic strata or with

lesser education to come up and reach my same level, because that means that I

would have less money and less power. And that's the reason why they do not

want to break this barrier.

Another participant spoke of society's attitude of seeing students with learning challenges as

charity. They mentioned that when people are accepting of inclusive practices, it is not a genuine

desire for everyone to be successful, but rather, "They do it more of a charity and more of a

favour than to say that it is people's right to get equal resources and be able to make it on their

own."

Four participants said that a student being socially accepted by their peers is one of the

biggest barriers they experience. One participant said that students of different social status

interact in school, but a bond is not formed where friendship and acceptance is seen beyond the school walls. Another participant expressed that students are more socially accepted by the peers in primary school, but when they reach higher grades, things change. When summative assessments are crucial, students shun peers as someone who achieves "less" because competition for high marks is evident in school. Two participants indicated that they do not know if social isolation is an issue in schools or whether it stems from cultural attitudes towards socio-economic disparity. In general, participants reflected on the need for a shift to occur as a whole. One participant shared,

> When kids learn to accept each other regardless of their individual differences and genuinely accept each other, and not at a superficial level, then what happens is, it becomes much easier for them when they go out of school to accept other people.

One participant also sees the societal attitudes reflected in the students. Even when given the opportunity to engage in the functional curriculum and programs that provide opportunities for the development of vocational skills, most of the students drop out. The educator expressed that both parents and students see manual labour as beneath them as it "comes around to the respect of labor and the dignity of labor which India is terrible at. It's terrible at that, you know, this built in servant attitude." The participant explained that parents are ashamed of their child doing manual work, and even though they are capable of being successful, parents impart the attitude that it is beneath them socially to engage in labour. Furthermore, the participant said that this attitude is transferred to the child who drops out of the vocational program as they do not have the sense that they have to have a job.

One participant mentioned that with the Right to Education Act in place, there has been a shift in attitude as "the children from the lower economic backgrounds feel that it is [their] right to get

this kind of [private] education [at no cost], and they do not value it." This has become another barrier as educators are attempting to put into place practices that allow for all students to be successful, but the students' attitudes may not conducive to learning.

All participants refer to awareness being a key component in overcoming barriers related to attitude. One participant said, "If I don't know what something is, I'm less likely to be open to be receptive to learning about it." This idea was reflected throughout the interviews that not only teachers, but parents and the extended community as well need to be educated and be more aware of the diverse challenges that students and people can face. The participants mentioned that, with increased awareness, it may be possible to address the attached social stigma. One participant said that it is important to give students a voice when striving for inclusive education as, "What we have thought were best for kids may not be what they want or may not be their own choice for themselves, may not actually be best for kids." The participant also spoke of awareness being present in the larger society as this will allow for a shift in attitude because, "If people are going to get used to seeing disabilities in the workplace, then the families of people with disabilities have to be willing to let them go into it."

Five participants indicated that building a community and forming partnerships is crucial to increasing awareness. Two participants said that working with organizations will help a change to occur in society as both the students and those in the outside community will witness that students' learning will not only impact the school, but society in general. One participant spoke of the importance of demonstrating that one school, student, or group is not "better" than the other by forming partnerships with schools of diverse backgrounds. The participant reflects that this allows for the equal exchange of experiences where everyone learns from others, stating,

So I have seen another format which I thought worked much better where there is a school, where what they did was that they kind of adopted another school which was of a low socio-economic background. And, they had an exchange program. So, they had some of the teachers from the school go and help and be the academic counsellors in that school to upgrade their levels of English. And in return, you had school teachers and students come in, share the Hindi and regional language level of this parents' group. And, then they taught us certain sports that our children had no idea about. The absolute local ones. We are not saying that one school is better than the other.

Another participant also expressed the benefits of equal exchange of ideas between schools and students, stating,

Also, the interdependence that they have on each other, they will realize that they are not exclusive individuals who are not connected, but the fact that they are absolutely connected and each one has an immense level of stuff to contribute to each other's life.

All participants spoke the importance of building partnerships with parents, of not just the students with learning challenges but with all parents, in order to implement inclusive education in schools successfully. One participant spoke of schools in India needing to do better in leveraging parents as a resource as they understand their children in ways that an educator may not see or be able to. Another participant said that it is important to begin working with families in identifying the resources and strategies the child needs to be successful. One participant spoke of the need for parent workshops and mentoring as parents are unsure about how to respond or

unaware of what is needed, and therefore tend to keep their distance. Another said that by giving parents a voice and by using their insights, it might be possible to define the vision for inclusion.

Four participants expressed that there were insufficient resources and expertise for successful implementation of inclusive practices. Two participants lamented that there are no books to read with an Indian context, and when the books are available they are inappropriate. One participant says,

> It's not that they don't take risks but if they do, they are, how do I say very kiddish or the content does not convey everything. They've tried to kind of glorify or they have made it worse. It makes you feel that the case is hopeless and you need to pity the person.

Another participant mirrors that books are not at an appropriate reading level as they explain that,

> All I can get here is Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton and you need to like them. I am exaggerating but there is not much, and that's really a challenge. Indian authors need to write for children. What they write is either too babyish or [have] words way over the heads of the average kid to read. So that's the problem; we have to find [the books].

One participant indicated that books not having an Indian context is not an issue as children are able to make the connection between characters, even if they are not exactly representative of the population. The participant explains,

> Kids don't have a problem with that. Adults do. I don't think kids do, I think kids can identify with kids from other settings. So for example, having kids read *Wonder* which is an amazing work, wonderful work, and then getting them to

think about it, because the quality that you want to have is this empathy and this curiosity and openness, and all those qualities, and self-reflection and kindness, compassionate kindness. Those are the qualities you want, so you can find those other ways. You don't have to match one to one what you see. That's a very simplistic way of looking at it.

Participants mentioned that funding for inclusive practices is limited as the government stipend does not cover the costs in a private school. One participant expressed that the lack of funding, support, and resources to provide the basic needs of a school indicates that inclusive practices are not a priority, stating,

Low socioeconomic schools, I feel face the maximum brute of this situation because the funding is low, the number of students in the class are extremely high, the teachers may not be trained, the care that is available is very poor. I see a lot of schools that are at least like municipals schools do not have enough teachers, do not have a lot of classrooms, do not have proper sanitation, and so many things can be a problem.

With respect to barriers, the need for society to be open to other ideas about status, scarcity and acceptance are important. The participants want curriculum materials connected to India, increased parental involvement, and school partnerships.

5.6 Professional Development and Moving Forward

All of the participants indicated that educators need more training both in pre-service programs and professionally at the school. One participant explained that pre-service teacher training refers to research from the 1980s and 1990s, and it needs to be updated. Another

participant said that, as teachers, they are focussed on imparting knowledge that students can access independently in today's world, and with technology the shift needs to focus on teaching students how to develop the skills they need to access information, understand their findings, and form conclusions to apply their understanding in any subject.

One participant mentioned that professional development should support the development of a more holistic view of the students so that teachers are better able to assess their strengths and their needs to support learning. The participant shared that teachers need to be able to be aware and connect the different facets of the child and their needs, explaining,

> Look at the child holistically, and connect all of these different pieces - it's like a puzzle right? If you have an understanding of the different challenges that a child may face and how they may manifest in the classroom. Along with that, if you have information about what environments are the most conducive, what ways can I assess, what ways can I teach, and what ways can I give a child access to content. If I have all those different pieces, then I can make that puzzle but even if one of those pieces is missing, then I'm not going to be able to effectively teach in the classroom. It's a combination of all those things.

Two people said that educators need to learn empathy and that professional development needs to include an understanding of the issues that children are experiencing today. Another added that reflective practice and the sharing of best practices enable teachers to further tap into their creativity and reassures the teacher of their progress.

Six educators suggested that professional learning communities and mentorship would benefit professional development and further inclusive education practices. One explained that when an external expert provides strategies and understandings in a workshop, teachers leave with the

impression that the external faculty has not observed and experienced what occurs in the teachers' classroom on a daily basis. It would be better and educators would be more receptive if professional development was an exchange program, where experts stayed on campus, asked for the teachers' suggestions, and worked with them to create strategies for inclusive practice. Two other teachers believed that partnerships should be made with schools from diverse backgrounds so that educators could discuss topics of inclusion, working together to develop best practices.

Three participants said that professional learning communities need to be made within the schools so that more reflective practice can occur. One participant said that teacher learning should be scaffolded during professional development by gaining some knowledge of inclusive practices, be given the chance to apply it in their classrooms, have time for reflection and discussions, and then receive knowledge of more strategies and adaptations. Another teacher emphasized the importance of working as a professional learning community with colleagues and reflecting on practice by asking, "You know this is what I tried. This is what happened. What did you guys try? What worked for you? What didn't work for you?" One person said that, by building a community, it becomes possible to aim at looking at each child as an individual, and being receptive to what strategies work and which need to be modified.

All eight participants highlighted that, in order to move inclusive practices forward in India, there needs to be a change in attitude and mindset. One participant said that we need to understand that "children with disabilities do not need sympathy, but they need empathy," as a shift needs to take place to be aware of every child's needs and subsequently provide differentiated resources and strategies to ensure their success. Another participant highlighted that the mindset needs to change to see differences as an advantage to the group and population as diversity leads to innovation. The participant said,

It is not just accepting diversity, but moving more from accepting diversity to diversity being the norm and being essential to progress and innovation. It's the stuff that will let us learn new things. It's the stuff that results in new ideas, and that diversity contributes to so much learning.

One participant explained that a shift in attitude will lead to a growth mindset as students, teachers, parents, and the extended community become open to challenges and failure not be seen as dire (related to standardized exam failure). Another participant hopes that with a shift in attitude, the focus on numbers and grades will also change. The participant explained:

At the end of the year [schools] say, 'You know [that] 100% of our kids cleared exams.' Great, but how many of them actually learned? And that learning is not just about the facts and the things that they have memorized because in today's world, that's not learning, right? That, I can access anywhere. Anyone can access that learning. It's being able to teach them to put themselves in a situation they may not be comfortable with, know how to manipulate that information, and how to problem solve.

In summary, the findings from the interviews indicate that the participants have similar ideas about what they see as successful inclusion and what needs to be developed further for inclusive practice, although a common understanding of terms did not emerge. There was a general consensus that differentiation was crucial in the classrooms, despite a mixed awareness or concern for policies. These findings demonstrate an awareness of the importance of understanding the strengths of each child and meeting their needs for them to be successful learners. A significant proportion of the responses addressed the attitudes and mindset of teachers, students, parents, and the extended community. It was highlighted that the social

stigma associated with having learning challenges is a barrier academically and socially. The

findings also demonstrate that the participants are open to building communities with other

educators, professionals, students, parents, and community organizations so that awareness is

increased, there is space for discussion and reflection, and a joint vision for inclusion is created.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Defining of Equity and Inclusion

In this research, definitions for equity and inclusion were drawn from the World Education

Forum (UNESCO, 2015), and UNESCO's Guidelines for Inclusion (2005) and addressed as

distinct concepts. Equity is a quality or a value stance that recognizes bias and reverses a history

of disadvantage by eliminating barriers. Inclusion is the provision of access to quality

educational opportunities that enrich the learning by responding to student diversity.

This small research study found misunderstandings surrounding the definitions of the terms

equity and inclusion. When speaking about equity, participants referred to access and

differentiation of teaching practices based on students' needs. Inclusion, like equity, was

described as the differentiated learning that occurs in classrooms. There was some awareness that

inclusion meant being aware of the student's history, and being able to understand the obstacles

that are present to prevent learning. Overall, there is room to clarify shared understandings of

what is meant by equitable practices and inclusive practices.

6.2 Alignment with UNESCO's Dakar Framework

UNESCO's Dakar Framework (2000) states that children who experience multiple

disadvantages, including those living in poverty, should have cost-free access to education. The

Right to Education Act in India stipulates that education is a fundamental right for every child up

to the age of 14 years old (MHRD, 2009). The RTE also requires all private schools to reserve

twenty-five percent of their admission seats for children who belong to lower economic status

groups, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes and the associated costs will be reimbursed

(MHRD, 2009). In the views of the participants, the funding is not working. They report that a fraction of the actual costs are reimbursed, stating,

> The sort of financial reimbursement offered by the government, especially in the case of many private schools and many schools in Bombay where fees and expenses are much higher, was a small fraction of the actual fees incurred, and so really the responsibility fell on the institutions.

This suggests that all students have free access to education through public schools, but not to the opportunities provided in private schools. Another participant shared that schools that cater to students from middle class families and above have access to resources, whereas the lower socioeconomic schools are struggling to provide the basic needs for a child to learn. Municipal schools reportedly have lower teacher and classroom ratios to their high student population, and at times do not have proper sanitation. In contrast, schools for middle class families reportedly have more funds to allocate to resources and to gain access to the Internet. This is not an issue distinct to India, as the Dakar Framework holds access to equitable learning environments as a key global goal.

The Dakar Framework also explains that students should have equal access to resources, where the "digital divide" is bridged, which subsequently increases the access and quality of education for all children (UNESCO, 2000). The term, *digital divide* describes the gap that exists between those who have access to computers and the Internet compared to those who cannot readily access them. Information and communication technology (ICT) is a source of learning. In the interviews, only three participants mentioned the use of technology and its potential to allow students to access more learning opportunities in the classroom, suggesting that the use technology is not at the forefront of curriculum planning and the extent of the digital divide is

not clear. The lack of conversation surrounding technology when discussing inclusion, resources, and barriers may indicate that policies for technology use are not in the forefront of the educators' thoughts. Further research is needed as it is unclear as to whether technology is accessible to all students, and where it "permits ready assimilation of content" and is "done in a culturally sensitive manner" (UNESCO, 2000, p. 60).

The Dakar Framework also highlights that teachers must understand the diversity that exists in learning styles, physical development, and intellectual development, and they must purposefully create learning environments that stimulate all students (UNESCO, 2000). In the interviews, all participants spoke of differentiation when describing equality or inclusion, suggesting that the concept of differentiated learning is a dominant theme. However, the Dakar Framework also states that educational institutions should provide "relevant content in an accessible and appealing format" (UNESCO, 2000, p.16).

The interview data indicate that there is some disagreement as to whether appropriate materials are available for all students. In the interviews, four participants shared that there were insufficient resources, specifically referring to books with an Indian context or books that address diversity at appropriate reading levels. Teachers are aiming to locate relevant content that is accessible and appealing for students.

The Dakar Framework (UNESCO, 2000) explains that partnerships, including those with communities and families, are necessary for child-centered education. During the interviews, all participants were in support of this. It was understood that parents are a vital resource, and workshops and mentoring with families should be encouraged. The data also showed that educators believe that partnerships should be built with the community and other schools with diverse backgrounds, so that students can experience exchanges where they learn from each

other. This indicates that the teachers interviewed envision the education system as being deeply tied to their immediate school community and the broader society in general, thus aiming to meet the goal outlined by the Dakar Framework.

6.3 Alignment with Dimensions of Inclusive Education

Banks (1993b) advocates for diversity within the content of the curriculum, so that students are able to view concepts and issues from various perspectives. This was not reflected in the interview data, but educators spoke about their aim to include materials and resources from multiple perspectives. One participant encountered a partnership between two schools from different socio-economic areas that had students from different social classes, and students from both schools were able to teach each other their local customs and issues as equals. This approach allowed for content integration where students began to see the viewpoints of others. This suggests that teachers are experimenting with integrating content in a manner that could lead to curriculum reform.

Different forms of knowledge influence a student's understanding in an inclusive learning environment (Banks, 1993a). All participants indicated that parents and societal beliefs play a significant role in the mindsets of students in India. Children can, as a result of their experiences with their family, learn misconceptions and stereotypes that lead to segregation (Banks, 1993a). Participants spoke of social isolation among peers, and discontentment from parents as they believed that some students were given an unfair advantage when accommodations were made. Popular knowledge, which is interpreted in the media and in books, also contributes for or against inclusive practices, and therefore it is essential for resources to accurately portray differences in abilities and social classes from the perspective of people within those groups

(Banks, 1993a). The participants expressed frustration at a lack of resources that do not stereotype various groups, and are at appropriate reading levels for students. This shortage of resources will also impact *school knowledge* as students are presented with textbooks that do not show the dynamic interactions that occur between various groups of society (Banks, 1993a). At the present time, mainstream academic knowledge appears to have a European-centric (traditional British) perspective, rather than multiple viewpoints. As educators in India begin to accumulate resources that represent diverse groups, and integrate content that reforms the curriculum, they will be better able to address the challenges associated with mainstream academic knowledge. This will allow the curriculum to become reflective of transformative academic knowledge (Banks, 1993a), as students begin to be responsive to multiple perspectives, and challenge mainstream knowledge that leads to social action.

In order to facilitate an inclusive learning environment, Banks (1993b) explains that educators need to provide opportunities for cooperative learning activities between diverse groups of students to work toward prejudice reduction. The school exchange program that was described demonstrates how educators can encourage interaction between students from different schools and share their own unique local experiences. This allows students to gain multiple perspectives where every students' contribution is valued. Additionally, it will pave the path for a social action approach to curriculum reform (Banks, 1989), as it will allow students to gather information and analyze diverse viewpoints to subsequently reduce prejudice in their society.

The interviews identified that teachers' mindsets and attitudes play a significant role in how the students are included in the learning environment. The participants all indicated their openness to professional development to continue to gain knowledge of teaching and learning strategies that cater to diverse groups, along with opportunities to practice and reflect on their

experiences with colleagues and peers. Their attitudes and openness to learn about relevant inclusive practices suggests that equity pedagogy (Banks, 1993b) is emerging in their classrooms. Their understanding and further professional development will support more teachers to be aware of a wide range of strategies that do not label students and enable high achievement for more groups of students.

For inclusive education to be authentically present in a school, the school culture needs to be equitable and empowering. Educators and those within the school community, at times, are unaware of their habits of the mind and pre-conceived ideas about certain groups of people. Banks (1993b) finds that this unconsciously hinders inclusive practices. In the interviews, it was mentioned that sometimes teachers and parents exhibit prejudice, not intentionally, but because they are not aware of other perspectives. The interviews also showed that participants understood that their willingness to practice inclusivity and the willingness of others within the school community to practice inclusivity were paramount. However, they were also aware that some beliefs are deeply entrenched in culture and society, requiring significant shifts to move forward in inclusive education.

At the time of publication, the Adhyayan Foundation is working on the development of quality indicators for inclusive schools. The findings of this research project may be helpful in supporting their groundbreaking work in this area.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Revisiting the Research Questions

This Masters project aimed to understand the present policies on equity and inclusivity in India, and the reported alignment between policy and practice in classrooms. Although the review of literature showed a timeline of policies published in India, the interviews with participants showed that most educators are not aware of them. This highlights that policies are interpreted based on context and individual interpretation (Ball, 1993). Data from the interviews indicates that there is a unanimous understanding of the terms *equity* and *inclusion*. Participants' responses indicated that the concepts of differentiation and access are used primarily to discuss both terms, instead of for example, recognition of bias and addressing equity and access.

This research project also aimed to understand the resources, along with the barriers and gaps teachers experience when implementing effective inclusive education. The data show that teachers are aware of a lack of access to quality educational opportunities for all students. There is consensus that the attitudes of parents, students, teachers, and society towards inclusion are a barrier to be addressed. Additionally, many of the participants identified a shortage of India-centric resources.

The pedagogical model most proposed was differentiation. Participants spoke of their changes in teaching practices to meet students' needs. With respect to their vision, the participants identified that mentorships, community building, professional development, and opportunities to reflect on practice are essential to inclusive education.

7.2 Impact on Teaching Practices

The data show that educators in India are in a promising place in their journey towards inclusive education. They are beginning to understand what is needed in terms of their own awareness and their practices in the classroom. As India progresses to make education more inclusive for all students, they will continue to benefit from collaboration between schools of diverse demographics. These partnerships will provide more opportunities for teachers, students, and school communities to become aware of differences and needs in authentic contexts when both parties share their understandings and views. As educators learn and work together, they will develop a common understanding of equity and inclusion, which will enable them to reform their curriculum to be more student-centered and empowering, allowing students to see multiple perspectives, and seek social action for change. In a digital era, educators will also be able to share more resources to allow students to have a dynamic learning experience beyond their textbooks, and promote technology use for students. As educators in India move forward, they will need to recognize and counter biases that exist, and subsequently remove it as a barrier to high quality learning with the full participation of all student groups.

7.3 Impact on Future Research

Further research is needed to document how teachers in India are adapting their teaching and learning practices as they gather more knowledge and strategies for inclusive education. It is imperative to examine how knowledge mobilization can facilitate a shift in coming to shared understandings of the terms *equity* and *inclusion*, and whether or not this shifts school cultures. As teachers gain awareness of biases and gather strategies to promote equal access, it will be exciting to see if curriculum reform will permit the inclusion of multiple perspectives. As more

technology is put into students' hands, research can monitor if the digital divide is being crossed

through the curriculum and teaching practices. Additionally, future research can include

investigating the dynamics of partnerships between schools and mentorship among peers, and

their impact on a shift towards inclusive education.

References

Ball, S. J. (1994). *Education Reform: A critical and post-structural approach*. Buckingham, PA: Open University Press.

Banks, J. A. (1989). Approaches to multicultural reform. *Trotter Institute Review, 3(3)*, 17-19.

Banks, J. A. (1993a). The canon debate, knowledge construction, and multicultural education, *Educational Researcher, 22(5)*, 4-14.

Banks, J. A. (1993b). Multicultural education: development, dimensions, and challenges. *The Phi Delta Kappan, 75(1*), 22-28.

Banks, J. A. (1993c). Multicultural education: historical development, dimensions, and practice. *Review of Research in Education, 19,* 3-49.

Banks, J A. and Tucker, M. (1998). "Multiculturalism's Five Dimensions." NEA Today Online.

Bell, L. & Stevenson, H. (2006). *Education policy: process, themes, and impact*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Bernacchio, C. & Mullen, M. (2007). Universal Design for Learning. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, 31(2),* 167-169.

Center for Applied Special Technology (2012). What is Universal Design for Learning? Retrieved from http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/

Center for Civil Society (2013). Right to education platform. Retrieved from http://righttoeducation.in/resources/centre

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education*. New

York, NY: Routledge.

Gopalkrishnan, R. & Sharma, A. (1998). Education guarantee scheme in Madhya Pradesh: innovative step to universalise education. *Economic and Political Weekly, 33 (39)*, 2546 - 2551.

Government of India. (2015). *Constitution of India.* New Delhi, India: Ministry of Law and Justice.

Government of India Planning Commission. (2014). *Report of the expert group to review the methodology for measurement of poverty.* New Delhi, India: Government of India.

Goyal, S. & Pandey, P. (2009). How do government and private schools differ? Findings from two large Indian states. *South Asia Human Development Sector Report, 30*.

Hodkinson, A. & Devarakonda. C. (2009). Concepts of inclusion and inclusive education: a critical examination of perspectives and practices of teachers in India. *Research in Education*, *82*, 85-99.

Jha, M. M. (2005). Inclusive education and the common school in India. In C. S. Mohapatra (Ed.), *Disability management in India: changes and commitments* (160-171). Secunderabad, India: National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped.

Kalyanpur, M. (2008), Equality, quality and quantity: challenges in inclusive education policy and service provision in India. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 12 (3)*, 243-262.

Leclercq, F. (2003). Education guarantee scheme and primary schooling in Madhya

Pradesh. *Economic and Political Weekly, 38(19),* 1855-1869.

Miles, M. (2002). Community and individual responses to disablement in South Asian

histories: Old traditions, new myths. *Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal*,

13(2), 1-16.

Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) (1998). *National policy on*

education. New Delhi, India: Government of India

Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) (2009). *The right of children to*

free and compulsory education act. New Delhi, India: Government of India.

Ministry of Law and Justice. (2009). *The right of children to free and compulsory*

education act. New Delhi, India: The Gazette of India.

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) (2006). *Position pa-*

per: National focus group on education of children with special needs. New Delhi,

India: NCERT.

Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India (2001). Scheduled castes

and scheduled tribes. Retrieved from: http://censusindia.gov.in/

Census_And_You/scheduled_castes_and_sceduled_tribes.aspx

Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2010). *Globalizing education policy*. New York, NY:

Routledge.

Robertson, L. (1998). *Educators' response to equity in service* (Doctorate thesis).

Retrieved from National Library of Canada. (Amicus No. 21138350).

Sharma, U., & Das, A. (2015). Inclusive education in India: Past, present and future.

Support for Learning, 30(1), 55-68.

Sharma, U., & Deppeler, J. (2005). Integrated education in India: Challenges and prospects. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *25(1)*.

Singal, N. (2006). Inclusive education in India: International concept, national interpretation. *International journal of disability, development and education*, *53(3)*, 351-369.

Singal, N. (2009). *Education of children with disabilities in India*: *Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report*. Paris, France: UNESCO

Singal, N., & Rouse, M. (2003). 'We do inclusion': practitioner perspectives in some 'inclusive schools' in India. *Perspectives in Education, 21(3),* 85-97.

Tilak, J. B. (2000). *Education poverty in India.* New Delhi, India: National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration.

UNICEF (2013, December 27). India Statistics. Retrieved from: https://www.unicef.org/ infobycountry/india_statistics.html#119

United Nations (2011). United Nations in India: scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Retrieved from: http://in.one.un.org/task-teams/scheduled-castes-and-scheduled-tribes/

United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.(1994). *The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education.* Salamanca, Spain: UNESCO

United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2000). *The Dakar*

framework for action. Dakar, Senegal: UNESCO.

United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2005). *Guidelines for*

inclusion: ensuring access to education for all. Paris, France: UNESCO.

United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2015). *World education*

forum 2015: final report. Paris, France: UNESCO

Vakil, S., Welton, E., & Khanna, R. (2002). Special Education in India: the success of a

model program. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 34(5),* 46-50

Vislie, L. (2003). From integration to inclusion: focusing global trends and changes in the

western European societies. *European journal of special needs education,18(1)*,

17-35.

World Bank (2015). India. Retrieved from: https://data.worldbank.org/

Appendix 1 : Letter of Introduction and Consent

Research Project: Investigating the development of quality indicators in supporting inclusive schools in India

Your name and email address were provided to us by Anushri Alva at the Adhyayan Foundation. You are invited to participate in a small research study entitled, "Investigating the development of quality indicators in supporting inclusive schools in India."

This study was reviewed by the Research Ethics Board (REB) of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) in Ontario, Canada. They approved this study REB # 14309 on April 20, 2017.   Please read this invitation to participate in the research and the consent form, and feel free to ask the researchers any questions that you might have about the study. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the Ethics and Compliance Coordinator at 905 721 8668 ext. 3693 or researchethics@uoit.ca.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Lorayne Robertson, Faculty of Education, UOIT
Lorayne.robertson@uoit.ca
Graduate student: Janani Srikantha, Faculty of Education, UOIT. Email:
dhurka.srikantha@uoit.net

Purpose: The Adhyayan Foundation is developing an Equitable Schools Quality diagnostic tool which will provide indicators of equity for school reviews. In this research project we will interview individuals working in equity and inclusive schools to develop a framework of quality indicators for the Equitable Schools Framework.

Procedure: If you agree to participate in the research, Janani will contact you to set up an interview time on Skype. The interview will take about 30 minutes. We will send you the questions in advance so that you can think about them. We will record and transcribe the interview, and send it back to you right away for you to review.

Potential Benefits: This research is going to support the development of the diagnostic tool by identifying some of the issues, barriers, and indicators of success related to inclusive schools. This will be a benefit to all schools working with the Adhyayan Foundation.

Potential Risk or Discomforts: Just because your name has been provided by the Adhyayan Foundation, we do not want you to feel any pressure to participate in this interview. We appreciate that you will take the time to participate in this interview. You will receive the transcript of the interview and you will be invited to make changes to the transcript.

Storage of Data: We are planning to delete the recording of the interviews as soon as they are transcribed. We will keep the interview transcripts on an encrypted data storage key for 2 years and then delete them.

Confidentiality: Your privacy shall be respected. No information about your identity will be shared or published without your permission, unless required by law. Confidentiality will be

provided to the fullest extent possible by law, professional practice, and ethical codes of conduct. Please note that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed while data are in transit over the Internet.

Anonymity: Any names of participants in this study will be removed from the data.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and discussed only with the research team. You should know that you have the right to withdraw from this research before, during or after the interview and your data will be deleted. You can do this right up until the point that all of the data are synthesized into the data pool. You can withdraw by simply notifying one of the researchers. We will not notify the Adhyayan Foundation with respect to who participates or who withdraws.

Debriefing and Dissemination of Results: You will receive a draft copy of the early findings from the interviews and we will invite you to comment on those findings. Some of the findings of this research will be reported in Janani's Srikantha's Master's research project report. There may be academic publications as a result of this research. Please contact the principal investigator Lorayne.robertson@uoit.ca if you want a copy of any future publications.

Participant Concerns and Reporting:
If you have any questions concerning the research study or experience any discomfort related to the study, please contact the researcher, Lorayne Robertson by email Lorayne.robertson@uoit.ca. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant, complaints, or adverse events may be addressed to Research Ethics Board through the Research Ethics Coordinator – researchethics@uoit.ca or 905.721.8668 x. 3693. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, complaints or adverse events may be addressed to Research Ethics Board through the Ethics and Compliance Coordinator – researchethics@uoit.ca or 905.721.8668 x. 3693. By consenting, you do not waive any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

Consent to Participate: We will ask you for your consent prior to the Skype interview. We will use the following to do so.
Verbal Consent
1. I have read the consent form and understand the study being described.
2. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and these questions have been answered.
3. I am free to ask questions about the study in the future. I freely consent to participate in the research study, understanding that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
4. A digital Consent Form has been made available to me.

Please contact Janani Srikantha via email at dhurka.srikantha@uoit.net to indicate that you would like to participate.

Appendix 2 : Verbal Consent and Interview Script

Verbal Consent
1. I have read the consent form and understand the study being described.
2. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and these questions have been answered.
3. I am free to ask questions about the study in the future. I freely consent to participate in the research study, understanding that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
4. A digital Consent Form has been made available to me.

Skype Interview Questions (and how it relates to project topics)

Questions To Be Answered in Project	Skype Interview Questions
1) What are the present policies on equity and inclusion in the schools in India?	Janani has done a Literature Review of policies in India. 1. Confirm with interview participants which policy/policies speak to them in the most compelling ways to make change.
2) How do community partners define equity in schools?	2. As someone who is working in partnership with Adhyayan (or as an individual) for looking at equity in schools, how do you define equity? How do you define inclusion? 3. From the literature I've read, the notion of inclusion is still often associated with children who have physical special needs. How are educators in India broadening this definition?
3) How are school practices perceived to be aligning with present equity policies?	4. As someone who works with schools, what have you seen in the schools that aligns with your definition of inclusion? 5. From your current observations and experiences, to what degree does practice align with the Right to Education Act? Where do you see gaps between the policies and what is happening in schools? 6. Would you say that inclusive schools are linked to inclusive societies?

4) What are some of the barriers to inclusion that are perceived by educators and community partners in India? -	7. What barriers to the development of effective inclusive education have you observed? 8. How are resources found and allocated for the classroom? 9. What have you observed to be the links between inclusion and student learning in schools? Do inclusive practices change teaching practices? (curriculum, instructional methods, assessment, learning environment) 10. Do you think that it is possible to meet the needs of all students?
5) What is the vision for online professional development and future development?	11. In your view or the view of the partners, what do you see are the pressing priorities for professional development? 12. Do you have any ideas to suggest regarding the best way to involve schools in equity and diversity professional development? 13. How can parents become involved to support inclusive practices in schools? 14. What are some of the messages that you think everyone in schools need to hear? Thank-you for participating in this interview!