CHAPTER 5.1
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Support Systems

There were several supporting factors which helped the child with disability to continue in a regular school. The school has the primary responsibility for helping children learn alongside their typically developing peers. An inclusive school must enable education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the needs of all children, particularly those who face the greatest barriers to achieving their right to education (see also Save the Children 2006)

Schools today need to be creative and responsive places, where collaboration among teachers leads to effective problem solving, shared learning, and a cooperative, welcoming school environment. Innovative school and classroom practices are required if education is to serve all students, including those with disabilities, in an effective way. Through participation and learning in the general education classroom, students with disabilities will have the opportunity to take their place as contributing citizens of communities.

The inclusive schools which have been included in this study have showed initiative in taking on the challenge. All the seven schools in this study have provided supportive mechanisms for their enrolled students with disabilities. The categories of support which have emerged from the analysis are academic, physical, psychological and parental support in the school (figure 5.1.1). I have included the parental support within the school support system as this
support was an integral part of the inclusive educational system in all the inclusive schools. The schools have recognised this support and count on it for maximising the educational experience of children with disabilities studying in the school. All the principals mentioned that the parents had to be involved as they have proved to be the ‘best partners’ in providing education to their children.

Figure 5.11 Types of support systems for children with disabilities in inclusive schools

5.1.1 Academic Support

The concept of ‘supports’ within classrooms is a particularly critical one and refashions inclusion as “supported education” (Snell and Drake 1994). They include accommodations and modifications to enhance learning and acceptance in the regular educational system. Table 5.3.1 enlists the facilities provided by these schools to include children with disabilities. All children included in the study had spent at least two years in the school which
suggest that the schools were responsive to their needs and were providing facilities to ensure continuity.

One of the schools (School 1) prepares ‘Individualized Education Plan’ (see appendix II) for each of its children with disabilities. The illustrated IEP had five components, language and writing skills, number concepts and operations, science, general learning and inclusive activities. This particular IEP was developed for a ‘slow learner’. In each of the sections curriculum is laid out in consultation with the Principal, parents and regular teacher by the resource teacher. An IEP is prepared for all children with disabilities studying in the school. The IEP is the blueprint of the curriculum which is followed for the child with disability by the resource teachers. The teaching and evaluations are based on the learning on the child on those defined areas.

The schools make the ‘writer’ available to the children who may need their help. The ‘writers’ were usually children from lower grades who volunteer their services. Most schools had a policy to give extra time for children with disabilities to complete their examination.
### Table 5.31 Efforts of schools to include children with disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Impairment</th>
<th>No of years in inclusive school</th>
<th>Facilities provided at School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sania</td>
<td>Language and Communication disorder</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Regular remedial classes with the resource teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ishita</td>
<td>Learning Disability</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Remedial classes with the resource teacher thrice a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aakash</td>
<td>Asperger's Syndrome</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Counselling sessions for child and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soham</td>
<td>Slow learner</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Remedial classes with the resource teacher, exemption from one language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikhil</td>
<td>Spina Bifida</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Remedial classes with the resource teacher, Provision of Writer, occasional counselling sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaurav</td>
<td>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Counselling sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakhi</td>
<td>Spina Bifida</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Remedial classes with resource teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanmay</td>
<td>Hearing Impairment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Remedial classes with resource teacher, collaborative teaching in mathematics, exemption from one language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simran</td>
<td>Visually Challenged</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Remedial classes with resource teacher, collaborative teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harshit</td>
<td>Cerebral Palsy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Provision of a writer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In most cases the children with disabilities required personnel supports to allow them to benefit from placement in the inclusive settings in addition to instructional supports. All the inclusive schools had a resource room for students with special needs with at least one resource teacher. The research studies by Lingard (1994) and Martson (1996) show that a combination of resource and regular classroom teaching results in improved educational progress for students with mild disabilities. I perceived the ‘Resource Rooms’ to be the
cornerstone of inclusion in private inclusive schools of Mumbai. They were the ‘alibis’ of inclusion, their presence meant that the school was open to enrol children with disabilities. (Here, I would like to add a word of caution for the audience. This is not a cynical statement; rather it is an observation which may have been affected by the “I” of the researcher). Almost all children need remedial teaching and the schools have made a provision of a resource room.

5.1.1a Resource Rooms

The schools had set aside one room in the school premises which was referred as the ‘resource room’. The room was equipped with various teaching aids and was managed by the resource teacher who was trained in special education. It is for the children with disabilities who need some special instruction in an individualized or small group setting for some part of the day.

Apart from one school where there were six resource teachers; rest of the schools had one resource teacher. For six resource teachers the workload was lesser in terms of number of students handled. It was the same school where an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) was prepared for the children with disabilities. Individual needs were supported in resource rooms as defined by the student’s IEP. Here the children were handled on one-to-one basis. In the other schools, the students were either handled individually or in small groups depending on the nature of help required.

Many practitioners and researchers have advocated for supporting classroom teachers in integrated and inclusive settings (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002a; Mundschenk, Foley, & Swedburg, 2005; Simpson, de Boer-Ott, & Smith-Myles, 2003; Webber, 2005). All the schools were practicing the Resource Room Model of Inclusion and thus, the role of the
resource teacher was of paramount importance. They were seen providing the maximum support in terms of helping the child with disability cope academically, socially and psychologically in inclusive schools.

I have endeavoured to summarize the role of the resource teacher based on the workload handled by them in various schools. Most of the resource teachers in schools are discharging these roles, however in some schools a few roles were less important or totally absent. A resource teacher assists schools in providing support for children with special educational needs arising from disability by:

(i) Assessing and recording a child’s needs and progress or calling for an assessment from a practicing psychologist;
(ii) Setting specific, time-related targets for each child and agreeing these with the regular teacher and principal;
(iii) Direct teaching of the children, either in a separate room or within the mainstream class;
(iv) Advising class teachers in regard to adapting the curriculum, teaching strategies, suitable textbooks, use of Information Technology and suitable software and a range of other related matters;
(vi) Meeting and advising parents, when necessary, accompanied by the class teacher, as necessary;
(vii) Short meetings with other relevant professionals, in the children’s interest – e.g. psychologists, speech and language therapists, visiting teachers, special school or special class teachers.

Resource teachers were mainly responsible to provide the extra support for students with disabilities in inclusive schools. The resource teacher handled the remedial workload, conducted counselling sessions with the child and parents, collaborates with the regular teachers to monitor their progress in class, and takes responsibility of the child during co-
curricular activities. Their favourable attitude toward the children was evident during personal conversation with the researcher. All the children and their parents reported that the resource teacher would go the extra mile to make the child feel a part of the regular school. Almost all the children mentioned their resource teacher’s name as their favourite teacher in school.

_The resource teacher is very good, she takes lot of pains with Sania and keeps me informed of her progress. She even shares the board games she uses with her in school to be played at home. She is trying very hard for her to pick up the language (Pramila, Sania’s mother)_

_Rakhi has to attend remedial classes on a regular basis. She is very friendly with the resource teacher. The resource teacher ensures that Rakhi completes her class work on time and prepares her for the exams. The resource teacher works in collaboration the regular teachers and updates on Rakhi’s progress on a weekly basis. I am allowed to come to the school and have regular interactions with the resource and the regular teachers. She personally knows Rakhi’s friends and she even persuades them to help Rakhi in classroom (Vimla, Rakhi’s mother)._  

_I do not think Soham could have continued in the school if the Resource teacher was not there. She has made a great difference to Soham’s life. She teaches, counsels, and plays with him. Soham thoroughly enjoys his remedial sessions and sometimes ask me why the other teachers are not like her (Uma, Soham’s mother)_

The resource rooms of various schools were closely observed for the support they provided to the students with disabilities and it is summarized in Table 5.32. All the schools have allocated rooms in the school premises which are called the resource rooms. The resource rooms of the schools were variedly equipped and all had some necessary teaching aids. Some of the schools encourage interactive learning through computers.
The internet is a storehouse of teaching material. Whenever I am free, I devote time to surf and download materials for my students with different needs. It gives me immense satisfaction when my strategy works with my students (Fatima, Resource teacher, School 5)

Nikhil simply loves computer activity. He really enjoys learning on computer (Kiara, Resource teacher, School 3)

Table 5.32 School wise description of resource rooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>General description</th>
<th>Consistency of help</th>
<th>Use of Teaching Aids</th>
<th>Provides opportunities to practice learning</th>
<th>Number of students handled per session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>Small with L-shaped wooden plank and chairs.</td>
<td>Generally twice in a week, in some cases once</td>
<td>Depending on each child. More usage for abstract concepts</td>
<td>It is only a 40 minute session. Mothers are instructed for home teaching and practice.</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>Fairly big room with tables and chairs. Cupboards for storage of teaching aids</td>
<td>Once in a week, sometimes ‘zero periods’ utilized for extra teaching</td>
<td>There is extensive use of charts, board games, mathematical games etc.</td>
<td>The classes and practice sessions are alternate.</td>
<td>Three-four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>Huge room decorated with charts. Table and chairs and also ground seating arrangement</td>
<td>Twice a week the remedial sessions are scheduled</td>
<td>Lot of teaching aids, computer and video-viewing arrangements</td>
<td>Recapitulation at the beginning. Home practice is advocated</td>
<td>Two from different grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 4</td>
<td>Big room, ventilated housing the counselor and the resource teacher</td>
<td>Once a week, twice for children in junior classes</td>
<td>Sand tray, board games, mathematical games, computer – lot of language training through interactive websites</td>
<td>Lot of practice activities is given. Home practice is also encouraged if the parents are interested.</td>
<td>Depending upon schedule; generally one at a time sometimes two or three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>Huge room, lighted and ventilated with table and chairs and mats.</td>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>A lot of teaching aids, computer with interactive learning software</td>
<td>Lot of practice is provided during the year. Some sessions are only practice sessions</td>
<td>Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 6</td>
<td>Small room with circular tables and mats</td>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>Some teaching aids; most of them hand made by the resource teacher</td>
<td>Practice is an integral part of teaching and learning. Planned differently for</td>
<td>One</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus, maintaining resource rooms for children with disabilities emerged to be an important support that the schools were providing. Their presence in all the included school was indicative that it was a common belief that resource rooms with a resource teacher were essential component of an ‘inclusive school’ in the given context. Also the mothers of children with disabilities perceived it as an important support for their children.

5.1.1 b Classroom Support

This dimension relates to the rules, regulations and procedures that operate in the classroom. The ‘home teacher’ (in some schools called the ‘class teacher’) had established ground rules for the class and sporadically confirms that the students understand the rules and procedures developed for the classroom. For instance, it is for Tanmay that the students have been allowed to leave their seats to get his attention or assist him with the classroom activity. The teacher assigns a hearing peer to Tanmay through the week for assisting him with the classroom related work.

For Rakhi, the teacher's role was also to help her make connections with other students. The school believes that it was extremely important to give Rakhi an opportunity to learn things on his own, without the constant "shadowing" of a teacher/a particular friend. Her teachers and peers must always remain in the background, helping her with the class tasks. The peers were made responsible for helping Rakhi organize her homework and assignments, and to involve her in the group learning activities. Tests were written during class time as usual, but if Rakhi needed additional time, the peers from the lower classes would assist by offering their help as writers.
Such support network of non-disabled peers in the school is referred as the ‘buddy system’. The ‘buddy system’ is quite popular in three of the schools where the non-disabled children are supposed to help the children with disabilities in the classroom and outdoor situations. The most striking feature of the ‘buddy system’ is the role of the teacher (regular or sometimes resource) in setting up a circle of friends or buddies to provide support.

The present school is quite different from the previous one. Here the students share their notebooks with me. I have a problem with fine motor skills and therefore, do not have legible handwriting. My friends lend their books for Xeroxing and later my mother helps me to complete his class and home work. One of my classmates is asked to help with my regular tasks. They help me to borrow books, take out books from my bag and sometimes even take me to computer class which is downstairs (Nikhil explaining ‘buddy system’).

‘Buddy system’ ensures a particular kind of help needed by the child would be taken care of by his/her friends. The non-disabled children many a times do not consistently take responsibilities. We have seen that when we assign a ‘buddy’, the response is ensured (Principal, School 1).

Some regular teachers were seen providing one to one attention to all the students in the class. This was mainly observed in schools where the average class strength was less (School 1, School 3, School 5 and School 7), indicating that the lesser number of children in classrooms facilitated the process of learning to a great extent. They ensure that the entire class participates in the classroom proceedings. For example, Nikhil’s teacher Sonia ensured that Nikhil is no exception to the classroom activities and is involved as far as possible. This indeed emerged as a factor influencing successful inclusion of students with a disability. If the classroom teacher makes sincere and genuine efforts to make the child feel a part of the
class, it works in favour of inclusion. The child mentioned those teachers who made such efforts and the subjects taught by them amongst his preferences. The child felt more comfortable and confident in company of those teachers.

*Some teachers I found extremely caring and ensured that Nikhil followed everything done in class. These were those whom even Nikhil had named when asked about his favourite teachers in school. The teachers while taking rounds of the classroom gave personal attention to each of the student including Nikhil; inspecting the notebooks, observing the students while they were doing classroom assignments and asking sporadic recapitulatory questions (Observing in Nikhil’s classroom).*

If we look at the contribution of the teachers in case of Tanmay, we come across some specific supports needed by him. One of Tanmay’s teacher informed, “Children with hearing impairment need to have things carefully explained on a one-to-one basis because of the hearing loss. He needs extra help when learning new words and concepts. Physical objects normally do not pose problems, but abstract concepts such as time, feelings and thoughts are difficult to explain”. When explaining things, the teachers try to use short, clear sentences and draw or use pictures, as required, to illustrate what they mean. She always talks to and asks Tanmay questions even though he has problems hearing what she is saying. This was her strategy to encourage Tanmay to speak. She followed some simple strategies suggested by the resource teacher for Tanmay. The resource teachers encourage the regular teachers to prepare visually oriented materials to augment the oral information they provide in the classroom. They suggest making efficient use of the chalkboard to enhance learning for Tanmay. Certain subjects like Mathematics and Language pose greater problems for teachers. The teachers then take help of the resource teacher who makes herself available for these classes. She takes a seat next to Tanmay and ensures that the concepts explained in the classroom are followed by Tanmay. If the special teacher observes that Tanmay is having
difficulty in following the classroom proceedings, she calls him for a remedial class for the subject. During the remedial class she ensures that he has followed the concepts presented in the class and helps him with the home assignments.

The most challenging aspect with Tanmay is to make that Tanmay participate in the communicational activities that is teacher to student, student to teacher and student to student. Also that he is able to handle the reading and writing demands of the class. While most teachers were aware and facilitated the process the communication and extended their support in making him cope with reading/writing necessary in the classrooms, some were indifferent to his needs. Some teachers (few of their names were mentioned by Tanmay under his disliking about the school) never bothered about his presence in the classroom. They would not make an effort to include him in the classroom. They thought Tanmay was the responsibility of the Special Teacher and they had nothing to do with him. Tanmay’s presence only slowed down the classroom proceedings and that they had to struggle to complete their course on time.

Another major consideration related to the physical setup of the classroom is ‘Seating’. The classroom teacher attempts to maximize learning for Tanmay by providing him an appropriate seat in the classroom. Tanmay is made to sit in the front row near the teacher’s desk; this ensures that the teacher speech could be followed by Tanmay. The classroom teacher remarked that it also helps in avoiding distractions for Tanmay.

A similar strategy is employed by Soham’s class teacher. He is a slow learner and often needs a further explanation or extra and simpler instructions to carry out the classroom activities. He is therefore given a seat in the middle of the front row (see figure 5.12). Unfortunately, in case of Soham it is a single seat. The other schools do not have such small classrooms and the students sit in pairs. This facilitates peer learning as in case of Simran. The visual cues are
quickly communicated to Simran by her partner who sits right next to her. While interviewing Neha who teaches Science in Simran’s class, she shared her support strategy for Simran. She mentioned that her subject requires lot of visual inputs and it is not possible for her to give verbal instructions to Simran. She however, finds time to share her concerns with Shobha (the resource teacher) and often help her to prepare teaching material for Simran related to her subject.

![Diagram of seating arrangement for Soham](image)

**Figure 5.12 Seating arrangement for Soham (Slow learner, 10 years)**

Many a times a seating arrangement provides opportunities for greater attention of the classroom teacher for example in case of Tanmay and Soham. Even in the case of Ishita, the classroom teacher prefers to give her a seat in the front row and requests the subject teachers to inspect her notebooks during class exercise and involve her in classroom activities.
It was found that each school grapples with classroom issues depending on the student characteristics. The needs of the student are given prime importance and classroom management is altered to their favour. However, it is not practiced universally by all teachers.

5.1.2 Physical Support

Physical support is an essential requirement for children with differing physical needs. In this research such support was particularly required by Nikhil and Rakhi and to a certain extent by Simran. I will take their case examples to illustrate how the school meets the physical needs of the children with disabilities. The research identified good practice in some organizational and social aspects of the schools visited. However, little good practice, except for the provision of elevators, was found with respect to physical issues in the schools.

Nikhil is a wheelchair user. The school building in which Nikhil studies has an elevator. The school does not employ ancillary staff to help the children with disabilities, rather seeks help from the family of the child. Whenever, there is need such as this the school authorities clarify it to the parents that they will have to arrange help for meeting mobility needs. In case of Nikhil, the family pays an extra amount to the driver who stays in the school for helping Nikhil reach his classes if on different floors. He also helps Nikhil with his toilet needs. The school though has a space crunch, has an accessible toilet for children who are wheelchair users. In fact, one of the toilets was redesigned when they admitted their first child who was a wheelchair user.

Unlike the previous school where Rakhi studied, the school authorities allowed her to use special braced shoes. They also encourage her peers to help her with the wheelchair. Gradually, the school has done away with negative attitudes of parents of non-disabled children in her class. Keeping with its core values and mission, the school has taken Rakhi’s case as a challenge and make every effort to include her in the normal activities of the school (Rakhi’s mother). Rakhi’s school is spread over a large area and is characterized by broad corridors and elevators. The school has always encouraged the non-disabled peers of the child to take responsibility of helping Rakhi with the movement from one classroom to the
other if there is a need. The school has sought help from the mother for helping her with the catheter. She visits the school everyday to help the child meet her toilet needs.

The most important goal for children with spina bifida is to provide them with the maximum level of mobility and independence possible. In adapting the school setting for the child with spina bifida, architectural factors should be considered. This can occur through structural changes (for example, adding elevators or ramps) or through schedule or location changes (for example, offering a course on the ground floor). Children with myelomeningocele need to learn mobility skills, and often require the aid of crutches, braces, or wheelchairs. It is important that all members of the school team and the parents understand the child's physical capabilities and limitations.

Simran needs some help to reach to the classes and the playground. The school encourages the peers without disabilities to help Simran and they take turns to help her (Neha, Simran’s Maths teacher).

Thus, it is seen that though an accessible physical arrangement would help the child in being mobile and independent some support mechanisms do help the child to continue with least difficulty in a regular school setting. However, the children with disabilities expressed their unhappiness over seeking help from others all the time. Rakhi for instance, felt guilty that the mother had to come to the school everyday for helping her. Nikhil as well felt that if the driver was not there or if he refused to help any day he would be stranded. Such apprehensions in children affect their self-concept and enhance dependence.

5.1.3 Psychological Support

The schools play an important role in providing psychological support to children with disabilities facing academic difficulties or other physiological or behavioural problems, and provide help to their parents to minimize apprehensions and anxieties related to their
children. I shall examine this through an example from my respondent; with respect to Gaurav, the school faces the following problems with quite often (as told by Preeti, Resource Teacher, School 4); distractibility, impulsivity and restlessness/hyperactivity.

Because the school is considerate to Gaurav’s needs, he is able to continue in a regular school. There are stringent complaints from parents of non-disabled children and many times, they are justified because their children have been gravely hurt by Gaurav. The Resource teacher manages his medication at school. When the reported incidents of aggression and restlessness increased the school even hired a part-time counselor to look into Gaurav’s needs. She takes regular sessions with him and weekly sessions with their parents. The teachers have noted a marked improvement in Gaurav since his regular therapy sessions have begun.

The counselor even called his friends occasionally and counsels them on how they should behave with Gaurav. She has introduced a ‘smiley’ collecting scheme for the class. The whole class is made responsible for Gaurav’s behaviour. The day any unsolicited incident is reported, one smiley is withdrawn from the class and vice versa.

There was only one school which had full-time Counsellor, one school had part time counselor and two schools had Visiting Counsellors for the children. The visiting counsellors visited the school once a week. They worked on a referral system; the regular teacher often referred cases to the counsellors. The counsellor closely worked with the resource teacher discussing the cases and planning a course of action. Mostly, the caseload consisted of hyperactive children or slow learners. Sometimes, children with disabilities were also referred to the counsellor if their parents expressed a need to the class teacher. The parents mostly complained about irrational behaviours, stubbornness, introvert or aggressive
behavior. The assessments were referred to practicing clinical psychologist in the school vicinity. A copy of the reports is retained by the school for further follow up and action.

The Counsellor administers behavior therapy with the children and takes care to involve the parents, resource teacher and regular teachers. The counselor periodically organized sessions with the regular teachers to sensitize them and guide them how to look for signs and symptoms for common problems in children. They also try to address the concerns of the regular teachers regarding children with disabilities. One of the Counsellors reported that the regular teachers are often in “complaining mode” and consider children with disabilities as additional burden. The counselors ensure that they help teachers overcome negative attitudes during the sessions they conduct with the teachers.

The counselling services are also availed by the parents of the children with disabilities. Whenever an appointment is sought, the school counsellor and in some schools even the Resource teacher calls them at mutually convenient time. Many Resource teachers informed that mostly the parents need to ‘ventilate’ more than actually seeking any counselling help. They reportedly talk of incidents which made them feel hurt in school or community.

The Schools organized sessions for their teachers to develop right attitude and sensitivity towards the children with disabilities and their parents. A couple of resource teachers felt that such sessions facilitate understanding about ‘disability’ and create awareness about the related issues amongst members of the school community. It helps in building a conducive and empathetic environment for the children.

The psychological support is also provided the “good friends” of the children. Rakhi’s peers are sensitive to her needs and help her wherever possible. This has been a result of Principal’s and teachers constant endeavour to educate the non-disabled children on needs of their peers
with disabilities. They often organize such talks during school assembly and sometimes on special events which are celebrated at school. The teachers have also introduced a system of “good points” and distributing ‘smileys’ and ‘stars’ when the non-disabled children help or involve their peers with disabilities.

While these schools were attempting to provide some facilities for children with disabilities, these facilities fall short of what was required. These gaps were filled by the mothers of the children. The mothers were found to execute their responsibilities with dedication and unrelenting spirit. Many (7 out of 10) children of the respondents identified their mothers as the main support provider even during school hours. I shall in the subsequent section highlight their role and responsibilities in their child’s education.

The counsellors were mostly housed with the resource teacher in the resource room. The counsellors looked after the psychological needs of the children and the resource teachers concentrated on the academic needs. Thus, where the responsibility of children with disabilities was shared between the resource teacher and the counsellor, the resource teachers did not complain about excessive workload. Also, the resource room was not only meant for children with disabilities as other non-disabled children with behavioural and emotional problems frequented the resource room to attend sessions with the counsellor. This pointed towards the need for school counsellors in the inclusive settings where they could effectively address the psychological needs of all children.

5.1.4 Parental Support

Parents also need to be involved in the education of their children, especially because they can provide the best source of information about their child’s particular needs (Hornby, 1995:23). The home-school partnerships are widely accepted as important for success of inclusion for children with disabilities (Strickland & Turnbull 1990; Lewis 1992; Hayes 1998). Parents provide a wealth of information about the child which the school could
efficiently utilise for enhancing the education process (Hayes 1998). All the seven school heavily relied on the parents of children with disabilities for implementing inclusion. It was observed that predominantly all the mothers had taken on the responsibility to assist the children in the schools. There were ten mothers of children with disabilities who provided information on their roles in inclusion process. The demographical characteristics of the mothers have been earlier presented in Table 4.2.4 (chapter 4). Mostly the mothers (8/10) were housewives. The demands of caregiving were very high amongst mothers of children with disabilities.

However, none of the mothers expressed disappointment over father’s inability to shoulder the responsibilities at school as they were main financial providers for the family. The fathers occasionally helped at the school when either the mother was engaged somewhere else or on their non-working days. Many of the mothers informed that the fathers helped with the homework or health related issues concerning the child. All the mothers demonstrated and mentioned about their strong commitment to providing their children with all opportunities which their non-disabled peers get to help them achieve their highest potential. They suggested that inclusive schools were the best placements for their children. There were three common beliefs among parents which made them believe regular school was the best possible decision they have made for their children and they will go to any extent to sustain the placement. Firstly, the desire of the mothers that their children lead ‘normal’ lives has motivated them to do their “extra bit” (Sania’s mother).

*I did not want that my son’s life is restricted in any way, if he goes to special school he will get a chance and learn to communicate with only those who know and follow sign language. He has to learn to live in a world which is indifferent to people with disability. He has to find his own way out in a world that is indifferent to special needs* (Tanmay’s mother).
Secondly, they felt that it is their responsibility to share the “burden of school” (Gaurav’s mother). Most of the mothers believed that the schools are “extending a favour” (Aakash’s mother) by enrolling their children. The mothers therefore involved themselves in whatever capacities they could to facilitate the education of their child in the regular school. However, sometimes they got frustrated and blamed the school for not being sensitive to their child’s needs. The following quote was an emotional account of a mother of the annual sports event where her daughter desired to participate. There is an evidence of twin perspective of the mother. She was caught between her daughter’s desire and school’s commitment to serve interests of all children. She has resigned to the fact that her daughter is not a part of all children, she is different from the rest. She believed that the school had extended a great favour to her by registering her daughter on roll. Her expectations from the school had to be minimal as her child was different she believed. This fact leads us to believe that parental expectations from the school are in someway subdued because they feel their children are unlike other children.

I almost picked up a fight with the School Coordinator, when she refused Rakhi’s involvement in the annual Sports Day. I had just requested for her participation in the “House March”, I even volunteered to push her wheelchair. Rakhi was shattered that particular day. She cried the whole day because she wanted to participate with the other children. I am aware that my child is not like other children, she is not ‘able-bodied’ and hence, cannot run and play like her classmates. But she always wants to be like them. She wants to be a part of the school functions and a little cooperation from the school that day could have boosted her morale. Later, I realized that may be I was wrong; the school cannot always prioritize my daughter’s interest. I forgot that school honoured my request of admitting my daughter when no school accepted my child. I must remember the favour all through my life (Rakhi’s mother).
The third element which got evident was the belief that segregated settings could limit their children’s potential. Some of the children had experience of studying in a special school before their enrolment in the current inclusive school. The following quote is a pointer to this belief system that the segregated settings did not provide ample opportunities for social development of their children.

*Simran was in a special school for the blind. I felt that my daughter did not get enough opportunities to develop herself. Amongst the friends there was no one to share the sight of the world. Their conversations were often depressing. Just a few visits to the outside world does not makes one fit to stay there. Now Simran is much more cheerful, wants to see the world through our eyes (Simran’s mother).*

In order to enable the child with disability to attend a regular school, the family has to take on a proactive role even at school through providing additional support in not only caring for their physical needs such as eating, toilet care; but also in ensuring the child is able to keep up with the academic work load. There is a considerable involvement of the parents in the entire process of inclusive education. They are in constant touch with the teachers in the school who inform them about the child’s progress. Nikhil’s mother has taken this responsibility entirely. She visits his school once a week to complete his class notes, meets the concerned teachers and discusses the home teaching approach with the resource teacher. She always wanted to send the child to the regular school so that Nikhil gets a chance to interact with his non-disabled peers. She believed that special school setting could have been very depressing for the child as well as for the family. She believed that Nikhil can manage well in a regular school. She is satisfied with Nikhil’s performance at school. Some mothers like those of Tanmay, Rakhi and Soham visit the school every day for helping them while Gaurav’s mother attends school on call.
The resolution of helping Tanmay to cope in the regular school has brought in additional responsibilities for me. It is my routine to visit Tanmay’s school during ‘zero hours’ or lunch time or at the end of the day to find out how the day has been for him. If there are any class notes which need to be photocopied, or assignments to be submitted next day or any assessments coming up, I have to keep track of everything. Sometimes it is difficult [sighs] but there is no choice. There is no one to share this responsibility with me, not even anyone in the family. There are no compromises anywhere, when it comes to discharging my duties as a mother or as a home maker. (Tanmay’s mother)

My mother comes to school every day during lunch time. She has to help me with the catheter. She never complains about anything. Sometimes, I ask Mummy whether I am a burden to her. She cannot go anywhere because of me, she always keeps worrying about me. She always tells me that she loves me and I am never going to be a burden. But she cries when she says this. (To researcher), Does she lie to me? (Rakhi, 13 years, Spina Bifida).

I have to go the school every day otherwise Soham will not perform well. I have to complete his class notes, talk to teachers and his friends so that he feels comfortable. Soham always complains about behaviour of his friends or teachers and I have to ensure that everything is set right for the following day. Many a times it is his friends who tease and make fun of him and I have to inform this to the teacher or talk directly to the child whom Soham complaints against. I know, I cannot always do this but a mother cannot see the child in pain. I am gradually preparing him to handle situations but it will take time. He is timid and very conscious of his low IQ.” (Uma, Soham’s mother)

I attend my sessions with the counselor and learn new activities for increasing Gaurav’s attention span. I am satisfied with the school’s efforts to include Gaurav. I had sought admission in many schools for Gaurav when there were repeated warnings from this school. She informed that no school is willing to put an ADHD child on roll (Somya, Gaurav’s mother)

As the mothers were involved with the school, some of the mothers had to either quit jobs or dropped the idea of taking up one for the sake of their children. Only two out of the ten
mothers were in service; Vimla and Radhika. The reasons they gave for continuing their jobs were also quite similar.

*I had so many times thought of leaving my job but I couldn’t because I am not working for building my career, I am working for my daughter. We have to buy a car for our daughter because it is difficult to take her around in public transport. Her father alone will not be able to fend for the needs of the family. It is very tough for me to handle everything but I have stopped thinking about my problems; my daughter is primary concern for me* (Vimla, Rakhi’s mother).

*God has bestowed me with a beautiful daughter and I would like to give her the best. In today’s material world, money is very important. It will help her even when we are not there* (Radhika, Simran’s mother).

### 5.1.5 Conclusion

The major support systems as understood through the perspectives of the stakeholders are therefore the collaboration between resource and regular teachers; school-parent partnerships and fostering inclusive cultures in the school. The figure 5.1.3 depicts these three factors as interacting and trickling effect is the overall support required towards inclusive education. These factors are interacting because the stakeholders involved are not independent actors for example, the parents could not fulfil their role if the school, staff and non-disabled children do not cooperate. The analysis brought to the forefront that the resource teachers have an important role to play in the current context of inclusive schools. Their effectiveness could be enhanced if their responsibilities are shared with the regular teachers of the school. Though in many schools some of the regular teachers made attempts to collaborate with the resource teachers and follow their classroom advice for children with disabilities as in the case of Tanmay, there are schools where regular teachers consider children with disabilities as “appendages” (Tripti, regular teacher, School 5) to the class. This ‘collaboration’ could be
direct or indirect as the regular and resource teachers in the seven schools expressed in the interviews. They could collaborate within the regular classroom where both the teachers are present for assisting each other in the classroom proceedings. This would especially work in classes where the subject requires inputs which could be difficult for the child with disability to pick up for instance, Geometry and Geography classes for Simran where a lot of visual cues like diagrams and maps are used or language classes for Tanmay where he is required to pick up lot of audio cues. The resource teacher’s presence in classes like these could certainly prove beneficial for enhancing academic gains for the child. The collaboration could be indirect when the teachers spend some time to discuss the classroom strategies for the child to enhance his/her learning like in the case of Gaurav who has short attention span and has to be frequently involved in classroom activities. Gaurav’s history teacher, Kanya has shouldered this responsibility with the resource teachers and reports his behaviours to her.

The inclusive schools have envisaged a new role for the special education teachers. Training and professional development opportunities must be utilized to ensure that teachers master the essentials of the “new” role (Florian, 1998).

Another factor which emerged as a very vital one was the partnership between schools and parents. In the current context the role of the mothers became apparent where they actively engaged in their child’s education and contributed a great deal in terms of helping to continue in a regular school. Their support in meeting the physical and academic needs of the child is an indispensable one.

The school has a larger role to play in inclusion, its policies, culture and environment must support inclusion. The creation of this environment involves support from stakeholders within school. How the school helps in developing the right attitude amongst regular teachers, peers and parents of non-disabled children is crucial to understand.
Thus, we find that schools are practicing inclusion with their understanding, belief system, arranging resources, support from the resource teacher, regular teachers, non-disabled children and the parents of children with disabilities. We would build on the discussion in the subsequent themes and finally present the contextual model for practice.