CHAPTER 6
THE INCLUSIVE MODEL AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Modeling the Theory: Philosophical Basis

In this chapter, the final research objective of model development is addressed via the findings from inclusive schools. While considering modeling inclusive education in India, we will also discuss how barriers to equal participation in teaching and learning can be overcome. This study seeks to contribute directly to the improvement of the education environment in India and elsewhere by enabling stakeholders to overcome obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education. In addition, it seeks to enable teachers to identify and deal with those factors that act as barriers to the provision of equal education opportunities for all children in their classrooms.

There are three basic principles which govern the inclusive education model. I have derived these principles from the international and national policy documents. These according to me are the basis of inclusive education. For any school to be inclusive, it must adhere to these three principles. It is important to have strong philosophical base for implementing a concept like this, as we have seen from this research. The schools which had explicitly laid out their inclusive policy were more committed in terms of providing support for the enrolled children with disabilities.

- All children have a right to education (Right to Education Act, 2009).
- An inclusive school welcomes children with all background and abilities (MHRD 2005).
- All children benefit from inclusion.
6.2 The Working Model

To put these principles and findings into action, the model was designed to offer an understanding of contextual practice of inclusive education. I have used the input-process-outcomes (IPO) framework to elucidate the process of inclusive education. In the IPO model, a process is viewed as a series of boxes (processing elements) connected by inputs and outputs. Information or material objects flow through a series of tasks or activities based on a set of rules or decision points. Flow charts and process diagrams are often used to represent the process. (Harris & Taylor, 1997) What goes in is the input; what causes the change is the process; what comes out is the output (Armstrong, 2001). The IPO model provided the general structure and guide for the direction of the study. Substituting the variables of this study on the IPO model, the researcher came up with the following model. Figure 6.1 illustrates the basic model the elements of which will be subsequently described. The conceptual map developed for conducting the research served as the blueprint for the model.

Figure 6.2.1a Model of Inclusive Education

Input
* Characteristics of the stakeholders
* Support Systems
* Challenges

Process
* Culture
* Policies
* Practices

Outcomes
* Self concept
* Comparative existence
* Living 'normal' lives
* Exercising rights

Input and resources denote all aspects provided to the system to achieve a certain outcome. In the field of inclusive education, inputs and resources could not only be for example, financial resources, or legislation related to education, but also the qualification level of teachers or any infrastructural issues. Education processes transform these inputs and resources into outputs and outcomes. While outcomes describe efficiency measures such as participation
rates or curricular achievements, this research highlights the relevance of outcome aspects that emphasise the effects, impact or consequences of input and processes, e.g. academic and functional literacy, independence, or citizenship. Process finally refers to all educational activities including procedures, school policies and culture, or classroom instructional practice. The Part A, B and C of the figure 6.2.1 illustrate the substitution of findings of the research to the parts of the model for clarity and discussion.

**INPUT**

At the core of the Inclusive Education Model is the child with disability. I begin with discussing the input variables which would influence the process and the outcomes (see Figure 6.2.1b PartA). The background characteristics of the child play a significant role in child’s education in a regular school. Firstly, the eligibility criteria followed by schools for enrolment of the child in the school is in itself indicative of the interplay of the child’s and familial characteristics. The nature and severity of disability was the primary concern among the decision makers in schools. A child who secures admission in an ‘inclusive school’ fits a particular eligibility criteria set by the school. The schools prefer children with milder disabilities and those children for whom it had enough resources to provide for the special needs arising out of their ‘disability’. The school emphasized and sought parental cooperation at the time of admission. Though it is a good practice to involve the parents and see them as partners in education, excessive expectations from them may lead to stress and distress among parents. Sometimes, their participation is defined like visiting the school every day to help the child with his/her regular activities may prove burdensome to parents who are working or have heavy engagements at home. Another concern could also be the education of the parents, though the sample consisted of mothers who were at well-educated but this may not be a universal. Thus, the schools must have some support systems for such parents who could not be involved for the desired period of time. The other input variables pertaining to
child who played a vital role in the entire IPO cycle were assessment of intelligence and motivation which helped in admission and continuity. The parents had decided in favour of sending their child to inclusive school when they had felt the desire in the child to be a part of the ‘normal’ community. Another encouraging input variable was the fee structure which was similar for all children. There were no extra charges for any kind of support service which was provided to the child with disability. The other factors which influenced the process and the outcomes were the parental support, financial resources, attitude of the teachers and the school environment in general.

**Figure 6.2.1b Substituting the Findings in Model**

**Part A Input Variables**

- **Characteristics of the Stakeholders**
  - Nature and Severity of the Disability
  - Self Concept
  - Parental Support
  - Attitude of Teachers, Peers
  - School policy and practices

- **Support Mechanisms**
  - Partnerships-School-Parent
  - Collaboration - Regular and Resource Teachers
  - Fostering Inclusive cultures

- **Challenges**
  - Attitudes
  - Resources
  - Capacity Building
The favourable background characteristics along with the support mechanisms installed in the schools help in enabling the child’s education in an inclusive school. As the study points out that all children were supported by the Resource Program and classroom programming which, in turn, was supported by the school administration. Collectively, these people work as a team to play an integral part in the child’s development and learning. The Resource Program is run by the Resource Teacher who offers the following services to classroom teachers and to families of children with special needs on a child-by-child basis; direct classroom support, direct family support, curriculum enhancements and modifications, teaching methods enhancements, coordination and assimilation of specialized support services, such as occupational, physical, and speech and language therapy, and, leadership in the community with ideal practices for inclusive education. The other support factors have been favourable attitude of the peers, their support in classroom and school activities, and positive relationships in school.

There are some negative factors within the school system which negatively feed into the process-outcome cycle. The main challenges which emerged were teasing and bullying by the peers, attitude of the teachers, the training of the teachers to handle diversity and the scarcity of resources. The attitude of the teachers and peers may result in inability to form friendships result in social isolation, reiteration of their ‘disability’ status and poor self concept. The challenges were the negative aspects of the model and would share an inverse relationship between the quality of teaching-learning and expected outcomes for the children with disabilities. Therefore, there have to be adequate mechanisms to counter the challenges for strengthening the inclusion system.
PROCESS

The process of the inclusive education was studied within three dimensions of culture, policies and practices (findings illustrated in Figure 6.2.1b Part B). Within the culture, I critically analysed the mission statements. They reflected the school philosophy and their stance on inclusion. The school staff must examine the culture of their school, which can lead to significant transformations. For example, the dominant thinking and culture of the school may have been passed on to passive recipients, and discrimination may have gone unchallenged. The school must develop a system for continually identifying and responding to the reasons why children do not cope well in school. The schools may create an inclusive ethos where a secure, accepting, collaborating and stimulating community where every child irrespective of his/her abilities is valued. These values must not only reflect in the philosophical statements but must be shared among all stakeholders. It must guide all policies and practices in the school.

The policies of the school must aim to enhance the learning and participation of all stakeholders. The study found some school policies of recruitment and professional development to favour inclusion. There are other areas where the policies are either silent on issues pertaining to inclusion or are not clearly laid out like admission, organization of support and non-compliance. There should be clear and written policy statements which are adhered to by the stakeholders.

The practice dimension must ensure that classroom and extra-curricular activities encourage participation of all learners. The study points out that the practice component of the schools was dynamic with respect to the children with disabilities. While some of the practices were common for all children with disabilities enrolled in the school, most were tailored to suit individual needs of the children and thus, were presented case wise. The practices were
largely teacher-centric with some inputs from the resource teacher. In the resource room, the practices were more or less uniform in all schools as they were managed by resource teachers. Since the practice was largely dependent on the educators, they must be encouraged to be creative for assisting the learners to improve their academic and non-academic outcomes.

Part B Process of Inclusive Education

OUTCOMES

The outcomes for children with disabilities as also depicted in Part C of the figure 6.2.1b were both positive and negative. Mostly the parents and the children aspiration of ‘normal’ life got fulfilled to a great extent. This has given the children confidence to face the world and they hope and strive towards positive contribution to the society. However, a constant
interaction with the non-disabled peers forces the children in comparative existence. They cannot help but compare themselves with the classmates in various areas of school life which sometimes was frustrating for the children. The areas of self concept where they lacked also set in negative feelings in the children. Though these outcomes were not measurable but I have still chosen to tilt it towards the positive outcomes; probably because the interviews with the parents revealed that the children had disliked their segregation and always endeavored to be a part of the ‘normal world’. This experience prepares them for a ‘healthy and normal’ life ahead and that sense of achievement was evident with the children and the parents.

Part C Outcomes for Children with Disabilities

The outcomes children with disabilities in certain areas of their lives – physical and emotional well-being, communication and safety – were seen as fundamental and needed to
be addressed before other outcomes could be achieved. The schools must identify those areas and must work towards improving outcomes in those areas in collaboration with parents. Thus, through this model I present an understanding of the practice of inclusive education in the given context. It would be pertinent to lay out certain recommendations which might prove useful in improvising the current practice.

6.4 Implications for Practice and Research

As the issue undertaken for this research is rooted in the ecosystemic layers, I would also like to encompass its relevance and implications for national policy as well. India is still grappling with the issue of achieving “…compulsory education for a majority of children takes precedence over meeting the needs of those with disabilities…” (Ainscow et al, 1995 cited in Singal, 2005b: 338), change for children with disabilities will continue to be sporadic and painfully slow. Inclusive education is a matter of their right rather than a special privilege. Currently, there are not many schools which have taken this responsibility of educating children with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers. The legislations which promote inclusive education in India, the PWD Act 1995 and the most recent Right to Education Act 2009 await strict implementation. Though the latter is a recent legislation, the former was enacted fifteen years ago still requires a legal enforcement mechanisms (Alur 2002).

There is an imperative need for our country to concurrently focus on the enrollment of children with disabilities and creating an enabling educational environment to support the inclusion process through review and adaptations in curricula, capacity building among various groups ranging from policy makers to education administrators, teachers and parents groups. Policy reforms need greater clarity of the concept. Organisational and professional development issues must be acknowledged prior to inclusion. A holistic approach in school
and commitment to policy initiatives are crucial to create an environment that promotes inclusion. Current practice shows that not all disabilities are included in schools. The eligibility criteria of school reflect their capacities and resources to cater to particular groups of children. Thus, in order to bring the maximum children with disabilities in the inclusive schools there must be review of policies and strict implementation.

The research showed that many children felt hurt and segregated due to insensitivity of the treatment at school, particularly by regular teachers and peers. The regular teachers lacked training in dealing with children with disabilities and therefore, lacked appropriate attitude and sensitivity. The evidence from the study showed that the regular teachers were unprepared to handle children with disabilities in their classrooms and highlighted their unfavourable attitudes. Teacher development has to be the heart of initiatives for developing inclusive practices in schools (Aniscow, 2003). This necessitates building competencies of all “regular teachers” to deal with diverse population of students and to learn pedagogical strategies that facilitate the learning of all students in their classroom. The inclusive education system requires a more knowledgeable, highly skilled teaching force (see also Panda 2005). The teacher training must aim to impart necessary skills and develop favourable attitudes towards children with special needs in inclusive classrooms. The standard Bachelor in Education programme has a course on educating children with special needs in India. However, teachers when confronted with the practical challenge of teaching in inclusive classes lacked the skills to deal with the situation and mostly ignored the children with disabilities as being the responsibility of the resource teachers alone. Most (15 out of 20 teachers) teachers interviewed during the study expressed their inability to deal with children with disabilities. When a school introduces an inclusive environment, it would be beneficial for at least the teachers who would be handling inclusive classes to be given some orientation to equip them to deal with relevant situations, if the school organises training workshops at
regular intervals, there could be improved outcomes. In fact prior to planning the training sessions, there could be training needs analysis which would identify areas in which the teachers seek help. At the macro level, however the teachers training curriculum must encompass the required areas of inclusive education and must have an internship period in inclusive schools. There have been innovative teacher training programmes which provide pre-service training in integrated education. One such programme is the BA in Integrated Education offered by the Sir Shapurji Billimoria Foundation. The programme ensures that teachers are able to facilitate the learning of all children in the classroom. Practical experience, exposure to participatory learning methodology, and the ability to teach at the elementary level in a multiple setting are emphasized together with a focus on human development (UNICEF 2003). The various modules which they cover during encounter with self, understanding the child, curriculum development, disabilities, remediations and giftedness, and education and welfare policies. This kind of programme is preparing the prospective teachers to handle diversity in classrooms.

In the study it was observed that all schools except one had one resource teacher for all children with special needs in the school (ranging between 20-25 children). This meant that the proportion of resource teacher to student was very low in most of the schools. A similar finding has also been reported by Sreekumari (2003), that the number of children with disabilities under one resource teacher is high which acts a barrier. For the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme the ratio of resource teacher to student has been decreased to 1:6 (Mukhopadhyay and Prakash 2004). It is important to have resource teachers in the school to be proportionate with the needs of the children with disabilities in order to provide adequate support. Sometimes, children with disabilities display some needs which may require a constant collaborative effort of the regular and resource teacher in the classroom, for instance, a child with an acute hyperactivity disorder may require the presence
of a resource teacher in the classroom. This would only be possible if there are enough resource teachers to share the workload. The one school which was an exception had hired nine resource teachers for around thirty-six children with disabilities, the ratio thus worked out to be one resource teacher for four children with disabilities. It was observed that the resource teachers in this school were satisfied with their ability to keep up with the needs of the children and the children benefited greatly from the level of care and support available to them. The parents of children with disabilities from this school had to come to the school less frequently and were appreciative of the school’s efforts towards inclusion of their child. Thus, the recruitment policy of resource teachers in inclusive schools must ensure that the ratio of resource teachers is commensurate with the extent of disabilities of children enrolled.

Peers could be sensitised by the regular and resource teachers through group sessions where they learn about disability and empathy. A constant effort by the school personnel to include the child with disability in normal activities of the school could certainly bring about a change in behaviour of non-disabled peers towards their classmates with disability.

Children with disabilities have an equal right for education as laid out by CRC. Therefore any School offering education to children with disabilities should be able to provide equal facilities to children with disabilities on par with facilities offered to their non-disabled peers. While the children with disabilities in this study have had access to their right to education along with their non-disabled peers, our analyses show that the facilities provided to the disabled children fall short of their needs. Therefore the inclusive schools need to make efforts to introduce and provide for relevant alternative activities for children with disabilities when their classmates engage in activities which disabled children cannot participate in. Computer games, art and craft classes, additional music classes or any special skill class where the child displays interest could be arranged as alternative activities.
Based on the study, the schools are impelled to develop comprehensive inclusive policies and procedures and direct resources to that effort. Principals need to ensure that their schools are fully inclusive and take a lead role in modelling inclusive attitudes and behaviors. Teachers need to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to adapt their teaching to include all children and the willingness to learn about the experiences of children with disabilities. Finally, we all need to acknowledge and respect the students with disabilities to better understand their realities. With its structures, rules, and objectives, a school is like a microcosm of our world. We have the opportunity to provide schools that model the behavior and attitudes that we want our children to take with them into the real world. In order for the actions to reflect the words, the schools need to provide the necessary effort, educational policies, resources and minimise challenges to ensure that their values and principles are met.

What emerged from the research that the schools were practicing inclusion in their own ways. The schools were catering to some specific kinds of disabilities depending on their resources and expertise bank. Thus, I propose the schools practicing inclusion to come together to form an association where a pool of experience, practices and resources could be created. This would help in enhancing the inclusion process as well as strengthen the belief and practice. These recommended changes in policy might prove beneficial for children with disabilities who have taken on the challenge of studying in inclusive schools as well as being rewarding to the schools which have taken on the challenge of providing inclusive education

This study portrays the experiences of children with disabilities in inclusive school settings. The focus of this research was not one any particular kind(s) of disability. It meant to capture the social reality of inclusive schools with children who had varied needs. It however
emerged that nature and severity of disability did play a role in inclusion processes. Further research is needed to examine the experiences of children with other types of disabilities and learning styles. Also exclusive studies on various aspects of inclusive education like process, outcomes, facilitators and barriers could be undertaken for bringing out other facets which may not have surfaced due to the context and sample size. As the field is advancing there would be numerous new things which would emerge, it is imperative to keep track and document these practices through research. Also, the study on inclusive education could be approached through centring other stakeholders which would help in understanding different perspectives. We also need national level studies which may provide statistical input to small-scale studies. Large scale surveys on inclusive schools, their resources, enrolment ratios, drop-out ratios are required in various Indian States which would help in building a comprehensive national picture for policy and action.