

**INCLUSION OF CHILDREN LIVING WITH DISABILITY IN
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMS IN NEPAL: CONSTRUCTION OF A
STAKEHOLDER INFORMED FRAMEWORK**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Flinders University, College of Education, Psychology and Social Work

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Glossary

CBR	Community-Based Rehabilitation
ClwD in ECED	Children living with Disabilities: - 3-5-year-old children living with disability and their opportunities for access and participation in learning and developmental activities in their neighbourhood Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) programs.
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Professional Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNGEI	United Nations Girls Education Initiative
UDECE	Universal Design for Early Childhood Education

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Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not include any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university without acknowledgement; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief the thesis does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis.

Signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "DDawadi" with a horizontal line underneath.

(Divya Dawadi)

1 March 2019

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Positioning this Research

I hold a vision for Children living with Disability (ClwD) to be included in Early Childhood and Education Programs (ECED) in Nepal. The majority of young children with disability, due to no fault of their own, are currently excluded from education. My background and experiences as a female teacher, a school supervisor, and an education officer in different departments (gender, inclusive education and early childhood education and development) within the Ministry of Education, brought to the fore a realisation that ClwD are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged population in Nepal. I believe that all young ClwD should have the same rights as any other child, to be included in education that will enhance ClwD strengths and help them reach their potential. I have witnessed the happiness and progress of ClwD when they have had opportunities to participate in various educational and social activities with their peers.

Being aware of the Nepalese Government's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability 2006 (CRPD), I am eager to enable the Government to realise and fulfil their commitments.

I believe that educational opportunity is pivotal to young ClwD, as it contributes to their quality of life and independence and provides for their rightful place in society. Exclusion of ClwD from ECED has a long-lasting detrimental effect in the life of these children and the community. I also believe that children's inclusion in and exposure to ECED programs builds the foundation of their learning, all-round development and social competence. For this reason, the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal is of a primary concern for me and I believe it should also be a concern for the wider community.

I am acutely aware that children's disability is not the sole reason for their exclusion. Multiple and complex factors interact to contribute to the exclusion of ClwD and these factors need illuminating before action can be taken. Stakeholders, including parents and professionals are potential sources of knowledge regarding reasons for and factors influencing exclusion and inclusion of ClwD in ECED. However, their knowledge, particularly parents' knowledge, is often not taken into account. Despite a plea for and knowledge about the inclusion of young ClwD in ECED, these parents and professionals have been unable to have their voices heard in policy development in Nepal. I believe stakeholders' aspirations to have their voices heard could be supported by my research, and as such I prioritised their inclusion in the research design. Due to the nature and variety of experiences between parents of ClwD and professionals working in the field, I recognised there would be varying perspectives. Therefore, reporting on my research outcomes aimed to value and acknowledge all these varying perspectives as equally valid and important.

Although I am not a person with disability, nor a parent of ClwD, I have been involved with, understand and have empathy for the experiences of parents of ClwD; their anxieties, helplessness and fear about their children's future. On many occasions, I witnessed parents reporting that they wished their ClwD would die, a day before they died as these parents foresaw only pain and misery for their children in the future. More hopeful parents wished their ClwD could learn some basic skills necessary to live an independent life. With experiences of having heard these stories on many occasions, I was eager to understand the underlying reasons for the exclusion of ClwD from early education, so that I could generate more tangible evidence on which the Nepalese Government could redress educational inequities for ClwD and their families. I am both hopeful and confident

that this research provides significant evidence and direction for future policy development and confirms that the right of ClwD to be included in Nepal's ECED must be enacted.

My experiences of the Nepalese context have heightened my passion to explore why and in what ways the majority of young ClwD are excluded from ECED services. My constant questioning of the situation was a foundation for this research. Why are ClwD excluded? What situations and factors affect the inclusion of ClwD in ECED? How can we overcome the problem of the exclusion of ClwD? I believe my research in this critical area can serve to answer those questions. My questions align ontologically with those posed by Guba and Lincoln (1989), 'what that is there can be known?' or 'what is the nature of reality?' (p.83). The answers to these questions provide a foundation for positive changes in the lives of ClwD and their families in Nepal.

Abstract

Early Childhood and Education Development (ECED) programs in Nepal are recognised as the foundation of holistic development for young children, including their physical, cognitive, social and emotional growth. In the Nepalese context, a significant number of ECED programs are designed to support children with their holistic development and successful transition to school. As such, inclusion of children living with disability (ClwD) in these ECED programs would appear to be an important early intervention strategy for this already marginalised group. However, while inclusion of these children in ECED programs is viewed as desirable, in reality, the practice in Nepal is still not widespread. As a consequence, a vast majority of ClwD are unable to access early childhood education through ECED programs.

This research explored the factors for the lack of inclusion of ClwD in the ECED programs in Nepal, with the aim of constructing a stakeholder informed framework that would serve as a foundation for increasing enrolment of ClwD in ECED programs. In order to achieve the aim, the research drew on a heuristic qualitative design. The framework, termed as *Nepal Inclusive Education Framework* for ECED is the outcome of my knowledge and interpretation of key stakeholders' perspectives as well as available international and national literature on the inclusion of ClwD in education specifically in ECED. This research is underpinned by interpretive epistemology and constructivist ontology. Initially, the Framework was developed by drawing on extensive review of the literature and my knowledge of contextual conditions. It then employed individual interviews, focus group discussions with key stakeholders and document reviews to investigate the robustness and relevance of the framework from research participants' perspectives. Varied contexts influenced stakeholders' perspectives including my

perspectives. Through the research it became evident that several contextual and organisational factors interacted to create multiple barriers to the successful inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal.

Contextual factors included spirituality, caste, ethnicity, language, economic status and geographic location. Organisational factors included policy, attitudes, teacher efficacy, resources, coordination and communication processes and parental and community engagement. The factors and their interaction form the Nepal ECED Inclusive Education Framework, which was the ultimate outcome of the research. The framework is my original contribution to knowledge in this area. This research identified that the interacting effects of contextual factors vary for each individual child living with disability, while organisational factors have universal effects due to the interacting nature of these factors. In addition, the research identified that the interaction of contextual factors and organisational factors as such, are complex and challenging. The illumination of the complexity is an opportunity to develop strategies to resolve the current barriers to inclusion in Nepal. This action is critical to ensuring increased numbers of young ClwD access early intervention and education programs that support their holistic development and offer access to opportunities that education affords others in Nepal.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The best preparation for adult life in a diverse society is education in a diverse classroom (Copenhaver, 2006, p. 20)

Inclusion of ClwD in ECED is a necessity

Inclusion of children living with diasability (ClwD) in Early Childhood and Education (ECED) programs is imperative. ECED provides a strong foundation for all future development, including children's learning, holistic development and ongoing participation in the broader community (Council of Australian Government, 2009).

It is one of the key stages of development in human life, because early childhood experiences are the windows of opportunity affecting the whole life of every individual (Meier, 2014). As the Early Years are critical in the development of the brain, young children need stimulating environments, as well as nutrition, health and hygiene, protection, emotional wellbeing and social interaction. ECED programs are pivotal in creating stimulating environments for early years children (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). For all children, including ClwD, access to ECED programs offers both short and long-term benefits that enhance the overall quality of their life. The short term benefits are improved health, enhanced cognitive and academic development, successful transition to primary grades through child-centred pedagogy (UNESCO, 2009). The long term benefits include higher income, higher likelihood of home and land ownership and lower involvement in crime (Gragnotati, Bredenkamp, Shekar, Gupta, & Lee, 2005). The ECED programs are essential for early intervention for ClwD¹. While the benefits

¹ Early intervention encompasses the timely identification of children's disabilities with continuous support , as well as the creation of learning environments to improve their development through medication and therapies that minimise functional limitation (The Royal Australasian College of Physicians Paediatric & Child Health Division, 2013). This includes health services and therapies, social and psychological supports, counseling and family related services, early stimulation, referral and coordination with multidisciplinary agencies (World Health Organization & UNICEF, 2012).

of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs are recognised in theory, inclusion is not widespread in practice in developing countries. Consequently, the majority of ClwD are unable to access education, and this is due to a range of factors. These factors may include government policies and resourcing, community and professionals' attitudes, teachers' efficacy, parental participation and coordination among professionals and agencies (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; T. E. C. Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2005).

Nepal, although a developing country, is signatory to the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Nepal has made a commitment to provide access for all children including ClwD to a quality education. However, the commitment is not articulated in Nepal's policies (Human Rights Watch, 2011). For example, the recently developed policy of education for ClwD, *Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2016*, does not contain provisions for inclusion of ClwD in mainstream ECED programs. Consequently, the largest groups of children not accessing any education in Nepal are those with a disability (Eide, Neupane, & Hem, 2016). The lack of ECED restricts individuals' learning ability and the development of their potential, as well as productivity, limiting their voice and choice. This in turn perpetuates deprivation and disadvantage, potentially leading to lifelong under-development and exclusion. In the long term, this situation further exacerbates opportunities for ClwD to become active citizens within their communities. This thesis is focused on exploring, in depth, why ClwD are excluded from ECED programs in Nepal and important ways forward in addressing this inequity. The following section presents the contextual and background factors that influence the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal.

Contextual conditions affecting the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal

This section presents a brief introduction to contextual conditions of Nepal; including geography, political and administrative divisions, religion, language, and caste and ethnicity, which are areas of relevance to this research. As will be noted throughout the thesis, these contextual factors greatly influence childrens' access, participation and progress in education in Nepal. Other relevant factors introduced in this section are socio-economic status in relation to education, health and economic development. Such contextual information provides a holistic picture of factors associated with the inclusion or exclusion of ClwD into or from ECED programs in Nepal.

Geography

Nepal's diverse topography, which ranges from the low-land plains through to hill areas and finally to the highest peak in the world is directly linked with the distribution of government services including ECED programs. The plains area is termed *Terai*, being between 30 to 1000 metres in elevation above sea level. The Hill area termed *Pahad* is approximately 1000 to 5000 metres above sea level and finally the mountains are termed *Himal* and are between 5000 to 8848 metres in elevation. In the Terai and urban areas, the existing ECED centres are insufficient to service all children. This is mainly because in the past ECED centres were established without assessing the growing and future needs of densely populated communities, engendered by rural-urban and Pahad-Terai migration. In Pahad and Himal, the challenge is more about how to establish ECED centres in scattered settlements.

The steep terrain in Pahad and Himal often also creates physical challenges for ClwD to access education (Regmi, 2017). The influence of geographic location on

the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs is further elaborated in chapters two, four and six of this thesis. The different geographic locations have generated diverse cultural and ethnic regions, which are considered a treasure of the nation, yet there can also create challenges when striving for access to education for ClwD.

Administrative and political divisions

Nepal's recent administrative and political reformation has resulted in both favourable and detrimental effects for inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. In the last decade Nepal has experienced:

- the abolition of the monarchy;
- an agreement between the major political parties to write a new constitution;
- a peace accord and establishment of a democratic system of governance and
- a political rebellion a Maoist insurgency.

The result was the formation of the first constitutional assembly through a national election in 2008. The task of the constitutional assembly was to develop a new constitution for Nepal. However, the assembly failed in this task. The next constitutional assembly was formed by the election in 2013 and two years later, this assembly completed the task and developed the constitution of Nepal in 2015. The new constitution restructured the former five development regions, 14 zones and 75 districts into seven federal provinces with 77 districts. Within these districts, there are 753 local governments including 246 municipalities and 481 village councils, whose purpose is to engage communities in governance, services delivery and the development of their communities (Ministry of Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2015) .

The new Governments were formed by national, federal and local elections. School education became the jurisdiction of local governments, whereas previously it had tended to be the responsibility of the national government. This reformation of Nepal presents a timely opportunity to review the existing policy of inclusive education and to develop new policies at the national, provincial and local government level. However, this mega policy shift has an adverse effect on inclusion of young ClwD because new policies under the new constitution are still in the process of development and existing policies are inconsistent with the constitution. The influence of political transition in the inclusion of ClwD in education is discussed further in chapters five and six.

Religion and its impact on Inclusion of ClwD

As a multi-religious country, Nepalese religious diversity affects the inclusion of ClwD in education due to the impact of religion on caste systems and the culture of schooling. Sharing the border with India and China has contributed to the formation of multi-religious and multi-linguistic communities in Nepal. It is evident that in Terai and Pahad there is a domination of Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Muslim religions, similar to the northern part of India, whereas in Himal, similar to Tibet, a majority of the population follow the Buddhist religion. In many cases, hybrid religions have emerged in the process of acculturation, assimilation and localisation of these religions (Awasthi, 2004). Table 1.1 illustrates the varying representations of religions in Nepal.

Table 1.1
Major religion in Nepal

Religion	Population in Per cent
Hindu	81.3
Buddhist	9.0
Muslim	4.4
Kirati	3.0
Christian	1.4
Sikh	0.2
Jain	0.1
Others	0.6

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012.

In Nepal, the diverse religious communities exist in harmony (K. Dahal, 2016). The localisation of many religions further resulted in the formation of caste and ethnic systems, that affect individuals' life and culture. Understanding of the Nepalese religious context is important for this research, as religion has a great influence on family beliefs and decision-making in relation to children's education and futures as will be explained in more detail in chapters two five and six.

Caste and Ethnicity

There is a common understanding that caste and ethnic diversity has led to discrimination disproportionately influencing social inclusion in Nepal, including the participation of children in education. The National population census of Nepal in 2011 recorded 126 caste and ethnic groups. Of these groups, 63 were ethnic and 53 were caste groups. Although caste and ethnicity are often used interchangeably in English, these terms carry different meaning with different connotations in Nepal (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Caste is a social group "whose social structure is hierarchical and strongly embedded in the Hindu religious values of purity and impurity" (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014, p.2). Caste (*Jat*) is also a hereditary and occupational division of individuals belonging to Hindu society. The caste system is viewed as the basis for social cohesion and individuals' identities, because caste determines the behaviours, relationship and

expectations of individuals in society (Savada, 1991). As an ascribed identity, ones' caste is permanently protected and preserved throughout life. However as a hierarchical system based on purity and pollution, this system has created numerous inequalities and discriminations in societies where it is practised (Bennett, Dahal, & Govindasamy, 2008; Dumont, 1980).

On the other hand, ethnicity is a cultural group in the population with a common name, common place of origin and community feeling. "The term ethnicity encompasses certain kinds of cultural attributes such as a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history and association with a specific territory" (Smith, 1986, cited in Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014, p.2). In Nepal, ethnic groups are also regarded as Adhibasi Janjati (indigenous ethnic) groups. Many sub-caste and ethnic groups have emerged through inter-caste marriage (Savada, 1991). Inter-caste marriage is viewed as a social stigma, even though it is legal in Nepal. The logic behind the social rejection of inter-caste marriage is to continue the racial purity of particular caste groups (Kolas, 2017). While there are several forms of caste-based discrimination between different groups in Nepal, extreme forms of discrimination against Dalit (lowest caste), and ethnic groups such as segregation in learning and social activities can lead to the inhibiting of access and participation of ClwD in ECED. This is explored further in chapters two, four and six.

Languages

Located as a meeting point of multi-cultural and multi-ethnic communities, Nepal is a multi-lingual nation. The nation's policy for Nepali as a lingua franca has adversely affected children's learning. According to the 2011 National population census, 123 languages were spoken in Nepal. These languages have been developed through four major language families: Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan,

Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian. Compared to the national population census of Nepal in 2001, the percentage of the non-Nepali speaking population increased in the census of Nepal in 2011. Linguistic and cultural identity, in the context of the introduction of an inclusive democracy might be the reason for such an increase in the use of the mother tongue (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Since Nepal shares an open border with India in the east, south and west, the impact of Indian languages; Bengali, Maithali, Abadhi and Hindi are evident in the languages spoken in Nepal. There is also a common culture in border areas. This common culture has contributed to cross-border marriage, leading to the continuation of acculturation. Language, as a vehicle for acculturation has affected the Nepalese languages despite Nepali being the principal lingua franca. In contrast, in the North, the influence of Tibetan language is visible (Awasthi, 2004), even though there is no open border to Tibet.

Linguistic diversity has a socio-lingual effect on children's learning (Vygotsky, 1980), because children's first language is fundamental to cognition, social interaction and internal reasoning. Children have to switch from their first language to a second in schools located in multi-lingual communities. Consequently, schools have faced complexities when instructing multi-lingual children in mono-lingual settings. This issue is discussed in chapters two, four and six.

Socio-economic development

Nepal's slow socio-economic development has both causes and consequences for the inclusion of ClwD in education. Literature indicates that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to attend schools (Considine & Zappal, 2002). Yet school attendance for these children is critical, since education is also the foundation for socio-economic development. The human development index developed by Mahbub ul Haq for the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP) in 1990 measures an individuals' access to and participation in education; longevity, health and standard of living. Nepal has recently moved from a low to medium country on the index. The human development index for Nepal in 2016 was 0.558, which was still lower than that of developed countries. For example, Australia was rated 0.939 on the human development index in the same year. The underlying assumption of this index is that, when the human development index is higher, individuals are able to meet their basic requirements, live a healthy life and have access to education. Although Nepal is classified as a developing country, 25.2 per cent of the Nepalese population is living below the absolute poverty² line including significant regional disparities (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). Since Individuals with disability often require additional resources for regular medication and therapies, disability can result in increased income poverty (National Planning Commission, 2001). There is also multi-dimensional poverty³ related to disability, because individuals with disabilities are excluded and marginalised from communities. Disability has many dimensions and it requires viewing from a variety of these perspectives.

In Nepal, the overall development of health and education has improved compared to previous decades. This is due to an increase in educational and health services and greater awareness of the needs for health and education in communities. This has resulted in increased life expectancy and decreased child mortality (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). However, the per capita income (US\$ 682.20) and life expectancy (70 years of age) are still lower than for developed

² Absolute poverty or income poverty is defined as being situations in which families are unable to afford the cost of necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter, health and education (United Nation, 1995).

³ Multidimensional poverty is defined as both income poverty and poverty related to their opportunity for participation in social and political life (United Nations Development Programme, 2010).

countries. Child mortality is high with 35.8 children per 1000 die before their fifth birthday (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). A serious condition of early childhood development is also the large number of children suffering from stunted growth (37.4 per cent) (United Nations Development Programme, 2016). This is generally due to lack of food, nutrition, health and medication, leading to poor cognitive and academic performance, with ECED support being unavailable for many children.

Pre-primary enrolment at 81 per cent (Department of Education, 2016), adult literacy (64.7 per cent) and expected years of schooling at a little over 12 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014) indicate that overall development in education, health and economic conditions are still far from satisfactory and additional effort and resourcing would be needed to improve these sectors.

Furthermore, a survey conducted by Eide, Neupane and Hem (2016) in 59 districts of Nepal reported that only 40 per cent of school-aged ClwD were attending schools. The number of ClwD in ECED is much less even than this (Department of Education, 2016). This gloomy picture of access for ClwD to education makes it compelling to explore the underlying reasons for this situation.

As the current education system is a recent development (Mathema, 2007), and both inclusive education and ECED programs are relatively new concepts, Nepal has, as yet, been unable to develop policies that address educational opportunities for ClwD from their foundational age of development. The following section presents a short overview of the development of the major policy plans and programs for education and their relationship to inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal.

Inclusion of ClwD in ECED and education policy plans

This section presents a short overview of the development of policies, plans and programs and their relation to education for ClwD and their inclusion in ECED programs. For the purpose of this thesis, the education system of Nepal is identified as being traditional and modern. The traditional system of education refers to the educational system within spiritual schools such as Gurukul, Ashram, Gumba and Madrasa before 1851 and up to the present time. Gurukul is a traditional Hindu education system. Guru refers to master and Kul is extended family. Ashram is shelter. The student resides at the home of the Guru as an extended family member for the pursuit of learning. Students tended to learn Hindu philosophy such as the Vedas and the Mimansa, Sanskrit grammar, literature and astrology. Similar kind of religious schools exist for Buddhist and Islamic groups, for example, Gumba schools for Buddhists and Madrasas for Islamic religious groups.

The modern education system is one implemented in Nepal after 1851. It adopts a Government curriculum and has a School Leaving Certificate Examination Board that authorises children's learning achievements. Educational policy is defined as a course of actions, including plans and programs adopted by the Nepalese Government, in order to ensure access to, participation in and progress of children, including ClwD in education and ECED services.

Public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do; why they do it and what difference it makes in the life of individuals. Governments do many things. ...They distribute a great variety of symbolic rewards and material services to members of the society (Dye, 2002, p.1).

Government educational and public policy will be analysed in this research. A further overview of policy is provided in Appendix A: A brief history of educational development including policy, plans and programs in Nepal and their relation to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED.

The Nepalese education system has introduced many worthwhile plans, programs and policies in an attempt to provide learning environments for children as indicated in Appendix A. However, in traditional schools, the aim is to transfer religious values to future generations, rather than to provide education for all. As a norm, religious schools send children from a particular faith community to their respective spiritual schools. This is a barrier to the inclusion of every child. Despite more than one thousand spiritual schools using a mainstream government curriculum as a strategy for the implementation of the *Education for All National Plan of Action* (Parwez, Rana, & Rajbhandari, 2008), there are many others yet to be enlisted. These schools are not for everyone and they do not include ClwD. Furthermore, these schools are not giving access to early years' children (children between three to five years of age). This issue is discussed in chapters four and six.

As a recent development, the modern education system aims to provide access to education for all children. Many attempts through policy plans and programs have been made. Consequently, the number of children attending schools has increased. However, the system has struggled to design policy and programs with resources that can pay close attention to the inclusion of ClwD; children from disadvantaged communities and ECED programs. Reasons behind the failure of past policies, plans and programs include a lack of government priority towards ECED and education of ClwD due to a lack of knowledge around identifying the factors that inhibit their access. (The Bureau of Publication College of Education, 1956). For example, the commencement of the Nepalese modern education at a Darbar High School in 1854 was coupled with the exclusion of a majority of

children due to the unwillingness of Rana Rulers⁴, to include children from the general public in education. Consequently, only two per cent of the population was literate in 1951.

Such a minimal percentage of literacy and recommendations from the National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC) compelled government and communities to become aware of the need for uniform primary education with one national curriculum, with Nepali as the medium of instruction (UNESCO, 2011a). The NNEPC also postulated that education should be based on individual needs, although it did not describe any strategies to achieve this. This contributed to lack of access to education for ClwD because the commission made suggestions based on a survey not based on in-depth research. Another reason for the exclusion of ClwD from education and ECED was viewing disability as a matter of welfare and charity (Shrestha, Bajracharya, Aryal, Thapa, & Bajracharya, 2008; UNICEF, 2003), rather than viewing the education of ClwD as the right of every child, despite the Nepalese Government's commitment to this right.

A continuum towards inclusive education

It is evident from Appendix A that in Nepal, education for ClwD is a relatively recent development, which commenced in the early 1970s at special and integrated schools⁵; but the pace was slow. Although the establishment of these special and integrated schools opened an avenue for educating ClwD, all of these schools were located in Kathmandu and therefore were only accessible to a small number of students. Students from outlying areas would be required to relocate

⁴ Rana rulers were those who grabbed the political power from the king and imposed autocratic rules by shrinking the King as a figurehead and by making Prime Minister and top-level government positions hereditary in Nepal. They ruled for two centuries from 1846 until 1951.

⁵ In Nepal, special schools are separate from mainstream schools with accommodations for teaching ClwD. Integrated schools are mainstream schools with a separated resource class for ClwD.

from their family and stay in hostel or school-based accommodation. Such a centralised system of schooling would not promote the cause of education for ClwD, who resided in remote locations.

The establishment of these special and integrated schools can be placed at the first and second stages of the continuum of inclusive education (T. E. C. Smith et al., 2005). Inclusive education can be conceptualised as a continuum, which begins from segregation through to integration and finally inclusion (T. E. C. Smith et al., 2005). In the first stage of the continuum, ClwD are segregated from children without disability in self-contained settings, such as a separate school, with separate curriculum and instructional strategies. The logic behind such segregation is that the learning needs of a particular group of ClwD, for example, children with hearing impairments, are different from other children, including other ClwD and that those ClwD are more comfortable and confident to learn with similar peers. There are still 34 special schools in Nepal. These schools aim at educating four types of ClwD: children with physical disabilities; children with intellectual disabilities (children with developmental delay and children with Down syndrome); children with visual impairment and children with hearing impairment. The provision of special education as it commenced in Nepal can be categorised as the first stage of the continuum. Furthermore, these schools are based on the medical model of disability. These models do not allow inclusion of ClwD in mainstream ECED. This issue is discussed in chapters five and six.

In the second stage of the continuum, ClwD are not completely segregated. They are integrated in some extracurricular and some curricular activities with their non-disabled peers, perceiving that ClwD can learn more effectively, if they are included in mainstream classes. Teachers assist ClwD with special instruction and materials in a separate classroom, which is referred to as a resource room (Cohen

& Spenciner, 2005). The resource room is termed as a resource class, and schools with a separate resource class are termed as integrated schools in Nepal. Integration of children with visual impairments in the Laboratory school mentioned in Appendix A is an example of the second stage of the continuum of inclusive education.

The third stage of the continuum of inclusive education is the full inclusion of all children, namely, ClwD, and all other children in the same class. That is, they are not segregated, not integrated, but included in mainstream schooling. Teachers create the least restrictive environments to meet the needs for all. Curriculum is differentiated or adapted. This kind of full inclusion of ClwD in education is not yet in practice in Nepal. As these special and integrated schools focus on primary and secondary years ClwD and do not contain ECED programs, early years ClwD are not able to enrol in these schools. Although the Government of Nepal endorsed the Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disabilities (IEPPD) in 2016, a majority of ClwD do not have access to ECED and schooling generally.

Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2016

Even though the IEPPD (2016) introduced the term inclusive education in Nepal, it would not be able to ensure inclusive practices in ECED, primary and secondary education due to its inability to conceptualise what inclusive education 'looked like' and how it should be implemented. The policy had not clearly defined inclusive education in the context of ClwD. Inclusive education in Nepal lacked clarity. This policy therefore seems to replace the name of special education by inclusive

education without even understanding the essence of what is meant by the term, 'inclusive education'.⁶

Providing inclusive educational opportunities requires moving towards more inclusive practices in communities and cultures. This perspective reflects the guidelines for inclusion by UNESCO (2005) definition of inclusive education:

[as a] process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes in content, approaches, structures, and strategies, driven by a common vision that covers all children and the conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all of them (p.13).

Inclusive education is therefore perceived as a process of providing all individuals with educational opportunities in 'mainstream' educational settings whenever possible, regardless of difference and diversity. This view was also generated in the World Conference on Special Needs' Education (1994) in Salamanca (Salamanca Conference). The key component of inclusive education is accepting, welcoming and respecting diversity, as well as ensuring the participation of all learners in the process of learning (UNESCO, 1994a), which is not enshrined in the IEPPD (2016).

Another reason for the inability of the policy to ensure Inclusion of ClwD in ECED is its weak status and narrow focus. Foreman (2011), in the context of Australia and New Zealand, argued that legislation (law) is more powerful than policies, because legislation is approved by the parliament and, is aimed at controlling human behaviour. Legislation can contain provisions with punishments and

⁶ An inclusive education is an education system that provides the opportunity to meet every child's learning needs in a supportive environment, regardless of their social, psychological or biological differences. The philosophy of inclusive education is that every learner is born to learn, but not through the same processes and methods (Foreman, 2011). Therefore, an inclusive education system should adopt different designs, methods and approaches to include all learners. Inclusive education subscribes to the belief that everyone deserves equity of access and opportunities for participation and progress in learning and that this best achieved in one's local schools (Booth & Ainscow, 2002 ; UNESCO, 1994b)

rewards, such as fines or imprisonment, depending on the degree of breach of law. Policy is an organisational plan of action, which is binding by organisational law. Policy also has the provision of punishment but is less serious and enforceable than the provision made by legislation. While a Minister approves policies, this does not necessarily ensure enough power to reward or punish for compliance or non-compliance. In Nepal, IEPPD (2016) reflects this weakness, with no mandate to implement the provision. Even so, this policy can be considered as a starting point or the basis for future policy, especially for its contribution to the introduction of the term 'inclusive education' in Nepal, for the first time.

The IEPPD (2016) envisioned that every person with a disability should be empowered, independent and able to live a dignified life through a rights-based quality education. In line with the Constitution of Nepal 2015, the recognition of the term 'rights-based education' demonstrates a paradigm shift from a charity and welfare approach to a rights-based approach, which accepts that children have a right to quality education. However, the policy has not guaranteed that right to CIwD. The lack of research and the lack of wider consultation with stakeholders has resulted in the development of an unrealistic policy. This issue is further elaborated in chapter six.

Although the IEPPD (2016) resulted in a change to the name of the existing Special Education Council to an Inclusive Education Council, it is likely the existing special and integrated schools will be retained, by explicitly stating that 'no additional funding is required to implement the existing special education programs' (p,18). This policy therefore, can be considered as stating the Government's intention and awareness of the need for inclusive education, rather than actions with desirable outcomes. This is evident when reviewing the history of

the Nepalese education system, as outlined in Appendix A. The next section discusses the existing ECED programs in Nepal in order provide an overview of the current context.

Current ECED programs, Montessori schools and inclusion of ClwD

ECED programs, like inclusive education, are a recent development. However, the number of ECED services has increased overwhelmingly due to the Government ECED program expansion policy guided by the benefits of ECED. Government, communities and donors' commendable efforts deserve credit for this achievement. Consequently, by the end of 2016 there were 35,991 centres in the country with different names (Department of Education, 2016).

Despite gaining a resultant momentum for the expansion of ECED programs throughout the country, the programs were unable to give access or provide quality education to all children, including ClwD. Although there are minimum quality standards for ECED centres — such as physical environments, teacher short courses for in-service teacher professional development, as well as early learning standards created to enable teachers to assist in developing children's cognitive, emotional, physical, social and communication and self-help skills — there is an issue of the implementation of these standards.

Given that the establishment of the ECED program occurred first at a Montessori school in 1951, it took a long period to expand ECED programs into every community. The inclusion of ClwD in these programs has still not eventuated because the government has not given priority to ECED and education for ClwD. As indicated in Appendix A private Montessori schools were fascinated by the Montessori method of ECED, but they lacked real knowledge of this method

(Upreti, 2013). The ignorance resulted in the rejection of ClwD in schools and ECED centres. Figure 1.2 presents the types of ECED programs existing in Nepal.

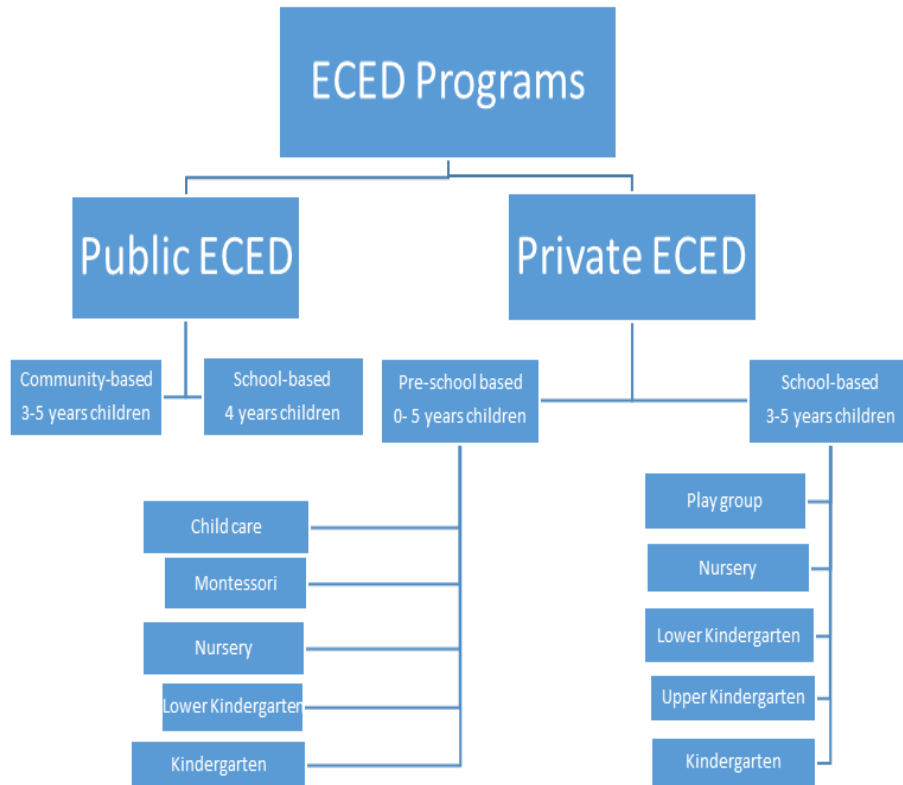


Figure 1.1. ECED programs in Nepal.

Source: Department of Education (2017).

Based on the operation responsibilities, two streams of ECED services are practised in Nepal, public (Government) and private. The public ECED has two modalities of ECED:

- Community-based ECED programs with a two year course, aimed at 3 to 5 year-old children; and
- School-based ECED programs with a one year course aimed at 4 years-old children.

In contrast, all private ECED programs are School-based. Within the private system one stream of ECED is operated in schools, whilst the other is in

preschools. These ECED programs have different names, such as ECED, child care, nursery, Montessori, lower and upper Kindergarten, and Kindergarten, with no clear distinctions between their approaches to services (Department of Education, 2016).

Theoretically and in tune with the theory of Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel, Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner (Bruce, 2011), public ECED programs are oriented towards a holistic approach to the development of early years' children, engaging them in integrated play and learning activities including communication, mathematics, arts, environment science and social studies. In contrast, the actual formal curriculum adopted in the Nepalese ECED programs provides teachers with the roadmap for ECED. Although the integrated curriculum is prescribed, teachers focus on reading, writing and arithmetic (Upreti, 2013), due to their lack of knowledge of how to integrate the various disciplines and their inability to use the curriculum. Teacher professional development to increase knowledge of child development and cognitive psychology is an urgent need for the Nepalese ECED sector. The issue associated with teacher professional development is discussed in chapter two, five and six of this thesis.

The underlying reason for teachers focusing on reading and writing is a lack of conceptual clarity about early childhood care, early childhood development, or early childhood education and development (Aryal, 2002). The operation of organisational ECED programs is reported as more satisfactory than community-based ECED programs, because communities are not capable of operating ECED programs due to factors such as lower socio-economic status and lack of education (Aryal, 2002; Shrestha et al., 2008). With regard to the creation of stimulating environments for children's learning and development in ECED centres, both programs need improvements in relation to quality services including

health, hygiene and nutrition, physical activities and play, as well as early stimulation to learning that addresses the holistic development needs of children. In addition, these ECED programs are unable to serve nearly 20 per cent preschool aged children (Department of Education, 2016). The majority of those children that are not 'served' are ClwD (Eide et al., 2016).

Research problem

Young ClwD in Nepal are generally unable to access ECED programs for reasons explained above. Such exclusion from ECED not only prevents ClwD from accessing learning and building a foundation for their education and development, it also compels them to live unproductive and dependent lives. It further denies their human rights and eventually continues their exclusion from the broader community. This in turn leads to the development of a community in which many are excluded.

As described in the previous section, ECED programs in Nepal have progressed in providing access for children aged three to five. The Ministry of Education is operating ECED centres as an early stimulation to learning programs. The Ministry of Health is serving children with immunisation and health related services, and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare is working in child protection. These Ministries are working in isolation. No one Ministry is assigned to coordinate the actions of others. Overall coordination is necessary to support children with early stimulation, health, nutrition and protection as an integrated approach in ECED centres (National Planning Commission, 2014). As a result, ECED services continue as a piecemeal approach with no sense of full ownership by any Ministries. Even though the constitution of Nepal in 2015 included ECED programs under the portfolio of local governments, the program is underfunded due to the lack of the necessary laws, expertise and experiences to meet the holistic

developmental needs of children. Many national and international non-government organisations are also working in this area. However, providing ECED services with effective coordination and collaboration is challenging (National Planning Commission, 2014; Shrestha et al., 2008), particularly in removing duplication and the inefficient use of resources (Shrestha et al., 2008). Consequently, young children's developmental needs including those of ClwD are not addressed in a coordinated efficient manner.

Purpose and design of the research

The aim of the research is to inform policy through the development of an Inclusive Education Framework of relevance to ECED programs for ClwD in Nepal by identifying factors that influence inclusion of ClwD. This framework identifies the interconnected factors influencing the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. It was expected that the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED (presented in chapter six Figure 6.1, p. 184) would provide an insight to all stakeholders about the essence of effective inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal. Previously there was no research on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal. Stakeholders lacked holistic understanding of the inclusion of ClwD in education — in particular all factors that needed to be considered for its success. Therefore, focusing on just one or some aspects would not address the multifaceted and complex interaction of the many educational and contextual factors, which affect Inclusion of ClwD.

The Literature-Based (L-B) Inclusive Education Framework had initially been designed through an extensive literature review of both western and developing countries' research on the factors of significance in ensuring successful models for inclusion of ClwD in early childhood settings, and my own personal knowledge of contextual conditions in Nepal. In the second phase of the research, stakeholders, including parents of ClwD, ECED educators, Ministry of Education and NGO

representatives were invited to share their experiences and perceptions of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Their perspectives and beliefs were analysed to determine whether these data were reflected in the proposed L-B Inclusive Education Framework and whether any modification or additions to the framework were required. The L-B Inclusive Education Framework was revised to incorporate the factors that these stakeholders believed most important. The new iteration of the Framework for ClwD was shared with a focus group of the same research participants for their feedback on its relevance, soundness and subsequent implications for policy development and action in Nepal. Subsequent to the feedback of the research participants the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED was developed in its final form.

Significance of the research

There is a widely held view that evidence-based or values-based knowledge is critical to initiating informed plans and programs for inclusive education that can ensure their effectiveness and efficiency (Ainscow, 2013; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998). Research is one of the main sources of knowledge in understanding the multifaceted, complex relationship between people's attitudes and behaviours (Shakespeare & Kleine, 2013), and how they influence the inclusion of ClwD in education. The research also identifies the problem and possibilities of programs and practices of inclusive education. There had been no research previously on stakeholders' perceptions of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal. To address this gap in the research and in international literature, one aim of the research was to develop an Inclusive Education Framework of relevance to ECED programs for ClwD in Nepal drawing in part on stakeholders' perspectives and experiences. The framework would contribute to extending knowledge in the realm of inclusive education.

Perspectives of stakeholders are valuable in informing policy for inclusive ECED programs. This research aimed to go broader still, incorporating a wide range of perspectives such as the impact of policy, people's attitudes, teacher efficacy, parental empowerment, resources and coordination for the effective inclusion of ClwD. Research is fundamental in developing contextually appropriate policy. The Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED based on findings from this research will contribute to developing contextually appropriate and research-based inclusive education policy. While there is minimal literature on inclusive education in Nepal, recent research identified that a central reason for policy failures in the past has been due to formulating policies under western donor's pressure, rather than being informed by stakeholders' experiences and views on the opportunities and threats to inclusive education (Maudslay, 2014). Previous research also urged future researchers to pay closer attention to people's experiences and attitudes before developing and initiating policies (Maudslay, 2014; N. Phuyal, Thapa, Bajracharya, & Thapa, 2006; Plan International & London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, 2014). This research was of significance in its focus on including various stakeholders' perceptions in the Inclusive Education Framework. In particular, it has potential to be a foundation for future policy development.

This research was also of importance in its endeavour to raise the voice of marginalised groups. For instance, parents of early years' children, including ClwD, are considered as the most neglected groups in the Nepalese education system (Ministry of Education, 2004). Policy makers underestimate parents' knowledge and wisdom as the key to the inclusion of ClwD, perceiving that uneducated parents could not contribute to policy. This is due to the lack of understanding of parents' abilities to support their children's learning. Indeed, parents are a tremendous source of knowledge, which is built on their child raising

experiences. In this research, even parents with a minimal level of education suggested practical and achievable strategies to promote Inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Furthermore, parents felt honoured to be part of the research. One parent's quote on their inclusion in the research can be found in chapter three.

The effective implementation of any policies depends on the extent stakeholders are involved in the process of policy formulation. Stakeholders provide the information about real issues and the ways to overcome them (European Network for Rural Development, 2015). Stakeholders view policy as removed from them when government develops it in isolation. When stakeholders have a voice in designing policy, it is more likely to be adopted. Hence, this research has provided the evidence of stakeholders' participation by acknowledging their experiences and aspirations as a critical component in the development of policy. Similarly, the research provided opportunities to analyse whether the extant models applied by a small number of ECED programs for inclusive education reflect the recommendations of the key stakeholders in Nepal. Furthermore, the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework as the outcome of this research would be an avenue for all newly formed federal, provincial and local governments to begin inclusive education, as a new fresh start in their electorates, in the context of school level education being in the jurisdiction of local governments in Nepal.

This research was of further significance for me in two ways. Being one of the officials in the program implementation agency of the Government of Nepal, this research would enhance my professional understanding and learning to enable me to more effectively support and implement inclusive ECED programs for ClwD in the country. The knowledge generated from this research would also enable me to contribute to policy development. It would assist me to support educators and

community members to develop their own knowledge and skills to more effectively include children with disability in ECED programs.

The research involved three phases. In the first phase, I reviewed much international literature and the available local literature about the major influencing factors for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. The research then employed individual interviews and focus group discussions with a wide variety of stakeholders to identify their perspectives on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. Finally, the research generated the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED by incorporating stakeholders' feedback on it.

Research questions

The following research questions were the foundation for achieving the purposes of this research.

Research questions for Phase 1 of the research:

1. What literature on effective inclusion is of relevance in the development of an Inclusive Education Framework for ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?
2. What contextual conditions in Nepal are of relevance in the development of an Inclusive Education Framework for ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?

Research questions for Phase 2 of the research:

1. What are stakeholders' experiences of and perspectives on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal?
2. How have stakeholders' experiences of inclusion influenced their beliefs about inclusion of ClwD in ECEDs in Nepal?
3. What factors do stakeholders believe need consideration to achieve effective inclusion of ClwD in ECEDs in Nepal?
4. How are stakeholders' perspectives reflected or overlooked in the proposed ECED Inclusive Education Framework for ClwD?

Research questions for Phase 3 of the research:

1. What are stakeholders' perceptions of the proposed ECED Inclusive Education Framework?
2. How could the Framework contribute to policy design in order to support more effective inclusion of ClwD, in ECED in Nepal?

Chapter summary

This chapter highlighted the research context, purpose and significance. The chapter commenced with necessity of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs as a foundation of learning and development. The chapter then introduced the contextual conditions affecting ClwD's inclusion in ECED programs. The contextual conditions included geography, political and administrative divisions, religion, caste, ethnicity and language. Subsequently, this chapter discussed socio-economic conditions and their twofold relationships with inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. A summary of a history of education in Nepal with a focus on inclusion of ClwD in education and ECED programs was then presented. The chapter was concluded by research problems, purpose of the research, significance of the research and the research questions.

Outline of the thesis

This thesis comprises of seven chapters. Chapter one, as an introductory chapter presents contextualising detail of the research area, which is associated with inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Chapter two reviews international and national literature relevant to informing the literature-based Inclusive Education Framework. Chapter three discusses the research paradigm, design, methodology and methods. The findings of the research are presented in chapters four and five respectively. Specifically, chapter four discusses contextual factors, whilst chapter five includes organisational factors affecting inclusion of ClwD in ECED. Chapter six presents a Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED, with a discussion

of the findings reported in chapter four and five. Finally, chapter seven presents the conclusion and recommendations. The following chapter reviews the relevant literature and presents the literature informed framework.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Children with disability encounter different forms of exclusion and are affected by them to varying degrees, depending on factors such as the type of disability they have, where they live and the culture or class to which they belong (UNICEF, 2013, p.1)

Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the literature informing the development an Inclusive Education Framework for ClwD in ECED. The research builds on extensive contextual knowledge of the current educational opportunities in Nepal for young children with and without disabilities. While literature on the importance of including young ClwD in mainstream education settings exists, what is still required is a comprehensive, evidence-informed understanding of the many factors involved in this pursuit. The following research questions form the focus of the content included in this chapter.

1. What literature on effective inclusion is of relevance in the development of Inclusive Education Framework for ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?
2. What contextual conditions in Nepal are of relevance in the development of an Inclusive Education Framework for ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?

The Inclusive Education Framework for ClwD in Nepal will be developed by drawing on extensive research from western countries, some Nepalese research and some Nepalese grey literature. Specifically, the work of Booth and Ainscow (2002 & 2013), Booth, Ainscow and Kingston (2006), and their *Index for Inclusion: Developing play, learning and participation in early years and childcare (Index for Inclusion)*, will be a primary source in understanding factors influencing models of successful inclusion. There is a large body of western research on inclusion but less so in developing countries, given that access to education for ClwD is still in its infancy in these countries (N. Graham, 2015). There is even less research attention in this field in Nepal (Lamichhane, 2013; Regmi, 2017), with no research

at all on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. Although Nepalese research focuses on inclusion of school-aged children, it is nevertheless of relevance to the development of the Framework as will be noted in the following sections.

Both international and national literature indicates that rather than being influenced by a single factor, inclusion of ClwD in education is influenced by the interaction of many components, such as policy, teachers' efficacy, resources and funding (Booth, Ainscow, & Kingston, 2006; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Forlin, Chambers, Loreman, Deppeler, & Sharma, 2013; Lamichhane, 2013; N. P. Phuyal, Thapa, & Shakya, 2004; Plan International & London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, 2014; UNESCO, 2009; United Nations Girls Education Initiatives, 2010). Similarly, the impact of community attitudes towards disability and coordination and parental engagement in relation to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED is also highlighted in international literature (Alur & Timmons, 2009; Booth et al., 2006; N. Graham, 2015; Öztürk, 2013; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990; UNESCO, 1994b). A review of these factors and the interaction between them are of relevance. Owing to the unique socio-economic and geographic context of Nepal, additional features such as caste, ethnicity, gender, economy and geographic location also needed consideration in the development of the Inclusive Education Framework. All of these factors and the interactions between them are explored in this chapter.

This review commences with an analysis of the *Index for Inclusion in early years and childcare* developed by Booth et al.,(2006) and *Equity and Inclusion in Education: A guide to support education sector plan preparation, revision, and appraisal (Equity and Inclusion in Education Guide)* developed through the United Nations Girls Education Initiatives (UNGEI), UNICEF (2010). The analysis will lead to increased understanding about the dimensions and factors of these two frameworks that have relevance in the development of a similar framework within

a Nepalese context. These two frameworks are elaborated on in subsequent sections. Following this, the chapter reviews additional international and Nepalese literature of relevance to the Inclusive Education Framework.

Index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in early years and childcare

Earlier in 2002, Booth and Ainscow had developed an *Index for Inclusion* targeting the inclusion of school-aged children in education. Booth, Ainscow and Kingston (2006) adapted the *Index for Inclusion* (2002) for early years and childcare settings. Building on their earlier work and in order to enhance all children's inclusion in play and learning in early years and childcare settings in the UK, these authors conducted further reviews of indicators for inclusion and discussed these indicators with stakeholders — children, teachers, administrators, individuals with disabilities and parents. As an outcome, Booth et al., (2006) clustered the factors that promote inclusion of CIWD in ECED into three dimensions; 1) culture, 2) policy and 3) practice, identifying that these dimensions interact to affect children's inclusion in early years and childcare settings.

Cultural factors include:

1. respecting, valuing, accepting and welcoming children to schools;
2. engaging communities in school activities; and
3. collaborating and communicating at various levels in schools (students – students, teachers – teachers, teachers – students and teachers– administrators).

Policy related factors include:

1. fair teacher recruitment and student admission;
2. infrastructure development; and
3. support services and coordination.

Practice factors include:

1. enhancing children's access to, and participation and achievement in their learning and play.

The underlying principle of children's access, participation and progress is to respect and cater for individual differences. All policy decisions and everyday routines designed to engage children in play and learning are underpinned by a culture of valuing and respecting individual differences. Similarly, a policy creates environments for the development of a culture of inclusion. Adhering to the principles of the Index for Inclusion requires evidence of both a policy and culture of inclusion.

Equity and Inclusion in Education guide

In 2010, UNGEI developed an Equity and Inclusion guide for the inclusion of more girls in education. The guide was designed as a tool for use at the local government level. The aim of the guide was to inform policy and planning for equity and inclusion with evidence-based knowledge. The guide categorises three main types of barriers to equity and inclusion. These barriers are related to social, sectoral and infrastructure(al) aspects.

Children might face challenges in some or all three barriers. Social barriers such as family poverty, gender discrimination, parents' migration, child labour and conflict were identified as inhibiting children accessing or continuing their education. Sectoral barriers dominated inclusion, which was affected by a lack of policy, teachers lacking capacity and physical facilities of the educational environment. Infrastructural barriers such as a lack of transportation, remoteness, no amenities and logistics, as well as seasonal factors such as rain and floods were also identified as inhibiting children from accessing and participating in education. Table 2.1 represents the factors and barriers to inclusion identified by Booth et al. (2006) and UNGEI (2010). Section 2.4 analyses these factors.

Table 2.1.

Dimensions of inclusive education identified by Booth et al. (2006) and UNGEI (2010)

Frameworks	Dimensions		
	Culture	Policy	Practice
Index for Inclusion; developing play learning and participation Booth et al., 2006)	Value, accept and welcome all children in ECED	Teacher recruitment policy	Encourage children to participate in various play and learning activities
	Respect all children	Student enrolment policy	Encourage teachers to use various play and learning materials
	Engage community	Infrastructure development policy	Mobilise communities (parents, administrators and carers) to support children's play and learning
	Communicate and collaborate with community and parents	Support service and coordination policy	
The Equity and Inclusion in Education guide UNICEF, 2010)	Social Barriers	Sectoral barriers	Infrastructure(al) Barriers
	Poverty,	A lack of policy	A lack of transportation services
	Gender,	A lack of teacher professional development	A lack of water and sanitation in schools
	Parents migration for employment	A lack of instructional materials	Remoteness
	Conflict	Inappropriate infrastructure	Seasonal factors
	Problem of child labour	Large class size	
	School safety (Violence, sexual harrasement and corporal punishment)		

Comparison of factors in the Index for Inclusion and the Equity and Inclusion in Education guide

The policy-related factors identified by Booth et al., (2006) as presented in Table 2.1, align with the sectoral barriers identified by the UNGEI (2010). Both suggest that factors such as policies, teacher quality, ongoing professional development

and access to resources are universal in nature in seeking greater educational opportunities for those who have previously been marginalised. A difference might be found in the approaches of these authors with regard to the influence of culture on the translation of policy. For example, Booth et al., (2006) believed that the development of a culture of inclusion in early years and childcare would contribute to developing positive attitudes, which in turn would translate policy into practice. These authors argued that policy should determine teacher development, student enrolment, learning materials and infrastructure-related factors. Undeniably, a policy that attends to all aspects of inclusive education has the power to create enabling environments for inclusion of ClwD in ECED.

The experience of Booth et al., (2006) of the issue of policy implementation without developing a culture of inclusion in developed countries might lead them to focus more on a culture of inclusion. For instance, although the inclusion of ClwD in ECED had been practised with the legal obligation of all stakeholders for several decades, inclusion was not part of the culture. Consequently, ClwD and their families were constantly facing significant barriers to accessing ECED in developed countries.

The reason might be that policies alone are unable to guarantee a culture of inclusion. However, developing countries are commencing inclusive education with scanty exposure to the process of inclusion, with either limited policy or without policy (UNESCO, 2017), as well as without a culture of inclusion. As a consequence, minimal practices of inclusion were evident and it is challenging to scale up such practices. Recognising many developing countries' governments were struggling with the commitment to inclusion and equity in education through policy, UNGEI (2010) viewed policy as a sectoral factor.

The practice of inclusive education in both developed and developing countries indicated that developing countries could learn from the experience of developed countries, where inclusive education is proved an exemplary practice. Initiating a mandatory policy with a strong component of a culture of inclusion in day-to-day practices of schools and communities is fundamental, because without a mandatory policy a culture of inclusion would not be possible.

Although UNGEI (2010) did not explicitly discuss the bases of categorisation of the barriers to equity and inclusion, the way it linked the barriers and asked questions of stakeholders indicated that violence was discussed in the context of school safety, along with sexual harrassment and corporal punishment. These three factors were connected to male teachers' behaviour in the classroom and therefore might be included in the sectoral barriers. Given the focus of UNGEI (2010) was to improve education for all girls, including ClwD, in developing countries, it did not specifically discuss the effect of community attitudes on inclusion of ClwD in education. The education of ClwD was viewed as a separate agenda, and other factors of marginalisation, such as gender and poverty were prioritised over disability. Disability was considered a small factor that influenced a minority of children and given less focus. In reality, gender, poverty and disability overlap. This is discussed further in the section of this chapter regarding gender.

An explicit difference in these frameworks is their approach to social aspects. UNGEI (2010), identified additional social barriers to inclusion, such as parents' migration for employment, conflict and the problem of child labour. These social barriers were not discussed in the *Index for Inclusion* of Booth et al., (2006), given that these barrires were not existent in the UK context. In addition, large class size was included in sectoral barriers of UNGEI (2010) which also identified a lack of transportation services, a lack of water and sanitation in schools. In the same vein,

remoteness, as well as seasonal factors such as floods and rain were categorised as infrastructural barriers. These barriers are relevant to developing countries, since they are struggling with the development of infrastructures. As developed countries face minimal challenges with infrastructure these barriers did not emerge in the list of Booth et al., (2006).

The analysis of the two frameworks suggests that the reason for the difference between the dimensions and factors suggested by Booth et al., (2006) and the barriers of UNGEI, (2010) vary as the Index and guide were developed at different times, in different contexts and for different purposes. The *Index for Inclusion* drew on the experiences of stakeholders including teachers, administrators, parents and individuals with disabilities in England. The guide was based on a pilot study in three developing countries in Africa and Asia. The *Index for Inclusion* aimed to improve the quality of inclusion for all children in early years and childcare settings, while the guide aimed to support gender and social inclusion and equity in schools. The similarities and differences between the framework developed by Booth et al., (2006) and UNGEI, (2010) provide evidence of how some factors are of a pervasive nature and how contextual factors affect ClwDs inclusion in education differently.

The relevance of the Index for Inclusion and the Equity and Inclusion in Education Guide to Nepal

Analysis of the *Index for Inclusion* and the *Equity and Inclusion in Education guide* revealed that not all factors in these two frameworks are of relevance in Nepal. For instance, in Nepal school safety-related factors such as violence, sexual abuse and corporal punishment are associated with the inclusion of ClwD in schools, not in ECED, because such cases in ECED are not often evident or reported. This might be due to non-reporting cases of violence and abuse or the priority of the

policy for recruiting female teachers in ECED. The logic behind recruiting this cohort is based on the concept of Freidrich Froebel that women are good at nurturing and caring for young ClwD with love and warmth (Bruce, 2011). The effect of the other factors identified in the *Equity and Inclusion in Education guide*, such as parents' migration for employment, conflict, problems of child labour, large class sizes and seasonal factors are specifically related to primary and secondary education. In Nepal they are not the particular issues of inclusion of young ClwD in ECED programs. Although not all factors of the *Index for Inclusion* and the *Equity and Inclusion in Education guide* are related to the Nepalese context, some factors are still of relevance due to their interactive nature. For example, policy, attitudes, teacher development, coordination, support services and parental engagement are all relevant.

For the purpose of this review, policy, attitudes, teacher efficacy, coordination, resources and parental engagement are categorised as organisational factors because of their interdependent nature. The term teacher efficacy instead of teacher development is chosen as terminology because dimensions of teacher efficacy — teacher quality, access to professional development and confidence in including ClwD — is of high relevance to the Nepalese context. Booth et al., (2006) discussed support services and collaboration as resources required to promote the inclusion of ClwD in play and learning. These dimensions are also equally relevant to Nepal.

The barriers explored by UNGEI (2010), such as poverty, gender, a lack of transportation and remoteness are also relevant to Nepal. However, caste, ethnicity, geography and language associated with these three factors are specific contextual factors (Awasthi, 2004; Bhattachan, Sunar, & Bhattachan, 2009), that affect children's inclusion in Nepalese preschools. Lower educational attainment of

children from some ethnic and caste groups is an indication of the effect of caste and ethnicity on children’s inclusion in education (Bennett et al., 2008). These caste and ethnicity-based factors are categorised and further analysed as contextual aspects. Table 2.2 represents all these factors categorised into the two major components: Organisational factors and Contextual factors.

Table 2.2

Interacting factors affecting the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs

Organisational factors	Contextual factors
Policy	Economic class
Attitudes	Caste,
Teacher efficacy	Ethnicity
Coordination	Language
Resources	Gender
Parental engagement	Geographic location

Organisational factors

This section presents organisational factors, which interact to affect inclusion of ClwD in ECED. As noted previously, these factors include Policy, Attitude, Teacher efficacy, Coordination, Resources and Parental engagement.

Policy

Policy is identified as an overarching factor for the inclusion of ClwD in education, as it serves to create inclusive environments by protecting the rights of beneficiaries through a jurisdictional appeal and the accountability of stakeholders through role allocation to them (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002). Policy helps remove

confusions through objectives, scope and service guidelines. Elements of inclusion, such as teacher development, the development of physical environments and positive attitudes, require sound policy. Similarly, policy is needed for resource mobilisation, coordination and parental engagement in the inclusion of ClwD in ECED (Booth & Ainscow, 2002 ; Booth et al., 2006; Forlin et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2009). Policy directs the planning and designing of programs to address all factors and dimensions supporting organisational structures, resources and functions. The monitoring of plans and programs requires a policy framework. In their research Regmi (2017) and Eide, Neupane and Hem (2016) identified a lack of mandatory policy for inclusive education as a formidable barrier to the inclusion of ClwD in Nepalese education.

Although policy is an essential factor to the successful inclusion of ClwD, not all policies necessarily guarantee access, participation and retention of ClwD in ECED programs. The success or failure of policy depends on its comprehensiveness and clarity, a foundation of research-based evidence and disability data. Contextual conditions, cultural concepts of child care and donor influence on policy are also important aspects. These aspects are reviewed in the following sections.

Comprehensiveness and clarity

Policy must comprehensively incorporate all aspects of inclusive education. Policy must articulate objectives with a clear concept of inclusion and indicate how it will translate into practice: training of competent and confident teachers able to cope with disability; approaches to facilitating attitudinal change and the development of disability friendly physical infrastructures (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). In their research on factors affecting the inclusion of ClwD in education in four Pacific Island countries (Fiji, Solomon Islands, Samoa, and Vanuatu) Sharma, Loreman

and Macanawai (2016) found that policies were not supportive of inclusion due mainly to their lack of clarity and adequacy. Policy objectives and outcomes were not well defined, resulting in confusion and misunderstanding.

Given that inclusive education has traditionally been understood as a special arrangement from regular schools in respect of school setting and pedagogical processes, Sharma (2011) highlighted the need for a common conceptual and operational understanding of inclusive education in the South Asian context. Based on a shared conceptual and operational understanding, every stakeholder would be able to carry out their roles and responsibilities to ensure that every child living with disability participate in learning with a sense of belonging and with intact support from school administration and teachers, who are equipped with teaching techniques and materials in a regular classroom.

Sharma further emphasised the need for a common consensus on the two aspects of the following definition of inclusive education: "Inclusion means bringing children who have been excluded (e.g., children with disabilities, the female child, children from poor families, and street children) from the mainstream school system into regular classrooms" (p,8). The first part of the definition is a general understanding of inclusive education, which is the inclusion of all excluded children in regular classrooms. The second part of the definition relates to the duties and responsibilities of various stakeholders, for example, teachers, school leaders, policy makers, parents and teacher educators in order to change their existing working strategies, so that regular schools will be able to act in response to unique educational needs for every child living with disability.

Ahmad (2013) further distinguishes between the various components of the definition of inclusive education, arguing that inclusive education carries both conceptual and functional definitions in Bangladeshi context. As a concept,

inclusive education "refers specifically to providing education to groups of children with mild to moderate physical or learning disabilities, ethnic minorities, urban street children, tribal children, extremely poor children within the mainstream education system" (Directorate of Primary Education, 2011b, p. 9 cited in Ahmad, 2013). As a function, inclusive education is defined as "an approach to improve the education system by limiting and removing barriers to learning and acknowledging individual children's needs and potential. The goal of this approach is to make a significant impact on the educational opportunities of those who attend school but who for different reasons do not achieve adequately and those who are not attending school but who could attend if families, communities, schools and education systems were more responsive to their requirements" (Ahuja & Ibrahim, 2006, p. 6, cited in Ahmad, 2013). Eg. As such, Sharma's distinction between right holders and duty bears can be further understood looking through then lens of Ahmad's definition, where the concept focuses on children as right holders and the function relies on the actions of the duty bearers.

Ahmad (2013) argued that these definitions were the foundation for the educational opportunities for ClwD in mainstream primary education. Since there was no separate system of special education in Bangladesh (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018), the Bangladeshi policy aimed to build inclusive school system by providing access for every child in regular schools. However, more than access, inclusive education is an acceptance and engagement of every child in learning with the achievement of determined learning outcomes (Ahsan & Sharma, 2018).

As introduced in chapter one, in Nepal, the inclusion of ClwD in regular schools is a relatively new concept. Education provision for ClwD is still in the form of special education in 34 segregated schools and as an integrated education with separate resource classes in 380 schools. ClwD are provided with less opportunity for their

full inclusion in regular schools (Department of Education, 2017). Moreover, these targeted services are not available for ClwD in the early years. For this reason, a clear conceptual and functional definition of inclusive education is necessary prior to develop strategies for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. This issue is discussed in chapters 2, 5, 6, 7 and Appendix 1 of this thesis.

Correspondingly, in Nepal, the Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2016 lacks clarity and comprehensiveness. For example, the policy has neither clearly defined inclusive education in the Nepalese context, and nor has it identified inclusion of ClwD in ECED. Therefore, this policy does not ensure the inclusion of ClwD in ECED.

Research-based evidence

The use of research-based evidence is crucial in developing a sound policy for inclusive education. Research not only identifies problems, issues and components of inclusive education — attitudes, pedagogy, physical facilities and infrastructure — it also promotes new ideas and innovative practices that improve the quality and efficiency of inclusive education services. Research also investigates educational and social outcomes of inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002 ; Forlin et al., 2013; Macartney, 2016). As there is little research on inclusive education in Nepal (Lamichhane, 2013; Regmi, 2017), policies are unable to utilise research-based knowledge. There is a critical need for research to inform an updated policy about the inclusion of ClwD in the Nepalese ECED programs.

Disability data

Nepal also lacks relevant disability-related data, such as demographic statistics and cultural information required to inform policy around disability education. Disability information as such, would provide policy makers with a clearer picture of the needs for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Statistical information is

fundamental for policy decisions, program implementation and for ongoing monitoring (UNESCO, 2009; UNICEF, 2012; World Health Organization, 2011). As highlighted by UNESCO in its policy guidelines for inclusive education (2009):

Lack of information, combined with discriminatory attitudes towards persons with disabilities at all levels of society, contributes to the continued neglect of their right to education. This partly explains the minimal rate of progress that has been made towards the enrolment and participation in the education process of children with disabilities. The factors are complex and extend beyond the boundaries of the school and classroom (p.5).

It has been claimed that in many countries, the prevalence of disability is greater than what is indicated by their government census due to the lack of effective information systems (UNICEF, 2012; World Health Organization, 2011). Eide, Neupane and Hem, (2016) in their research on living *conditions among people with disability in Nepal* found a huge variation in disability statistics between national census and surveys conducted by government and those conducted by non-government agencies. The lack of data not only hinders the identification of ClwD (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Kafle, 2002), but creates confusion for policy makers. Consequently, they develop unrealistic policy.

Contextual conditions

It is vital to understand contextual realities, as well as the needs and interests of local stakeholders and their influence on inclusive education policies. In their research project on four pacific islands Sharma et al., (2016) argued that culture, community, and religion either inhibited or facilitated inclusive education. Policies should well match with community practices so that stakeholders approve and accept the intent and content of policies. In line with the view of Sharma et al., (2016), Forlin et al., (2013) asserted that policies must be localised and contextually appropriate while continuing to respond to a range of governmental, political and educational agendas that drive educational outcomes (p.15).

Understanding the varied needs of ClwD in different cultures and contexts is an important aspect of the policy for the inclusion of ClwD into mainstream education. Hassanein (2015) argued that disability inclusion is a culturally constructed concept and should be understood in a particular cultural context. Cultural practices and concepts inform policies on how ClwD are viewed. What is the priority in nurturing and care for ClwD? How might characteristics of the care and education of ClwD be described and defined? Saul and Phillip (1999), in their research on the perceptions of parents of children with cerebral palsy in Nepal, argued that ... “[there is a need to] recognise that [disability] categories and identities (as well as the causes behind them and the interventions sought for them) are culturally constructed” (p.15). Policies, that are indifferent to cultural practices, norms and values, are less likely to succeed with the inclusion of ClwD in education. Dalal (2002), in his research on disability rehabilitation in India offered a good example of the success of community-based rehabilitation centres to integrate the different aspects of religion and culture with the activities of the inclusion of ClwD in education. This research provides evidence that an understanding of culture contributes to a policy for the effective inclusion of ClwD in education.

Maudslay (2014) argued that in Nepal, inclusive education policies have been based on a donor focused concept of inclusion without understanding the learning challenges of ClwD and with scanty knowledge of factors affecting that learning in the different contexts within the country. One example of internationally imposed policy includes the establishment of special and integrated schools in accessible city areas, which ignored the needs for ClwD to access schools in their own communities. The current provision of 34 special schools and 380 integrated schools in accessible urban areas does not ensure access for ClwD residing in

remote villages. Such policies are often suggested by international organisations providing funds or technical aids to support a greater access to education for ClwD, but the lack of consultation with local stakeholders results in local needs being ignored in policies (Bhatta, 2011; Gautam & Pokhrel, 2011; Maudslay, 2014). The establishment of inclusive schools in local communities with competent teachers and reasonable accommodations such as, ramps, wheelchair, sensory aids, disability friendly toilets and education for communities on the importance of inclusive education would be more effective in ensuring inclusion of ClwD from all areas in education. The centrality of inclusive education such as access to, active participation, achievement and acceptance of ClwD in ECED or lack of these aspects are discussed in the literature review, findings and discussion chapters as well.

Consideration of contextual difference is vital for inclusive education policies. Abawi and Oliver (2013) in their article on inclusive education practices in schools stated that, "Practices that may be successful in one context with one cohort of students will not necessarily work within a different context and/or with a different group of students" (p.159). The local practices of teaching and learning might vary because of differing influence of many contextual factors. In Nepal, the effect of contextual factors in the inclusion of ClwD in education is neither discussed, nor taken into account, in the process of donor intervention. Consequently, in the past inclusive education policies have failed to ensure educational opportunities for ClwD.

Cultural concept of child care

Some cultures have unique approaches to child development, which favour the policy of inclusion. For example, the Nepalese society is culturally guided by

Chanakyaniti (a famous code) developed by an Indian Emperor, Chanakya. In section 3.14 of this code, it is stated that

Lalyet Pancha Varshani DashaVarshani Tadayet Praptetu Shodeshey
Varshey Putram Mitram vadacharet

This means young children should be nurtured with great care and affection until the age of five years. Subsequent to that, for a period of ten years, they are supposed to be well-disciplined under strict guidance. When children become a youth of sixteen years, they should be treated as intimate friends. This culture encourages care-givers to provide developmentally appropriate care and support to young children. It was developed when extended family members, mostly grandmothers and mothers used to care for and nurture young children by using stories, cradlesongs and traditional play. However, due to the disintegration of the extended family system, and the influence on ECED programs by outside agencies, such nurturing, care and support gradually became nonexistent. In addition, family poverty, ignorance about modern child development practices and a lack of health services created more challenges in child care (Bellamy, 2001; Shrestha, 2007).

Although the *Children's Act, (1992)* of Nepal states that care-giving for children is mainly the responsibilities of parents, and the responsibility of government is to guarantee child protection and welfare, parents are not capable of taking their responsibilities. Consequently, the Nepalese culture of childcare is declining. A policy that addresses the issue of parental ignorance, poverty and health services would support parents taking their child-raising responsibility more effectively.

In Nepal, the government commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) makes it pressing to formulate and implement policies to ensure

the rights of all children. This context provides an opportunity to initiate a policy for inclusion. Through a policy of inclusion, government, in consultation with all stakeholders also has the prospect to redefine the roles and responsibilities of parents, communities and governments themselves.

The centrality of policy as an enabler of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED has been widely accepted in the literature. However, in order for a policy to play a central role, it must be lucid and comprehensive, informed by research based-evidence, cultural concepts and contextual conditions. Conceptual clarity and minimising the influences of donors are the other prerequisites.

Attitudes

Individual positive attitudes towards disability is considered as a critical component to the successful inclusion of ClwD in education (Australian Government, 2013; Thompson, Fisher, Purcal, Deeming, & Sawrikar, 2013; UNICEF, 2013). Hannon (2006) in a survey commissioned by the National Disability Authority in Ireland, and Aiden and McCarthy (2014) in their research, *Current attitudes towards disabled people*, argued that despite improved attitudes towards disabilities, globally negative attitudes continued, and such attitudes adversely affected the inclusion and equity of ClwD in education, health, employment and community engagement. The inclusion of ClwD in education would not be possible unless all stakeholders (teachers, administrators, professionals, parents, individuals and the community) hold positive attitudes towards disabilities. Every individual needs to realise disability is part of diversity and no individual is immune from such diversity during their lifetime. It is a collective responsibility to create environments to engage ClwD in education and help them live independent lives to the broadest extent possible. Unfortunately, the stigma of disability is deeply rooted in beliefs

and values. In such cases, a policy of establishing schools or ECED would not ensure the inclusion of ClwD in education. Hannon (2006), argued “Negative public attitudes can be a formidable barrier to the success of particular policies because the public significantly influences how much importance is given to an issue” (p. 8). Creating positive attitudes is fundamental to translate policy into practice. Various facets of attitudes about the causes of disability in Nepal will be reviewed in this section, including the genesis of negative attitudes and beliefs, for example ‘disability is a result of past sin’ and similar beliefs of Tantrism.

There is no universally agreed upon definition of attitudes (Rakap, Parlak-Rakap, & Aydin, 2016). In essence, an attitude could be understood as a psychological construct of an individual, which contains beliefs, feelings, behaviours, and actions. This construct is the result of the experiences of individuals and their relationships with others, an entity or a phenomenon, and hence might be positive or negative (E. R. Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007; Thompson et al., 2013). Negative or positive attitudes towards disabilities are developed through the way they experience individuals with disability are treated in communities. The more individuals experience acceptance and respect for disability the more they develop positive attitudes. As Aiden and McCarthy (2014) write:

A person’s attitudes towards one disabled person might be shaped by their personal experience of knowing another disabled person. And these attitudes often affect the way people behave in particular situations or towards other people (p. 6).

Thompson et al., (2013), in a paper *Community attitudes to people with disability: scoping project* highlighted that, “Familiarity with people with disability—that is, knowing them personally as acquaintances, friends and colleagues—seems the most promising way to increase respect and inclusion, especially if exposure is consistent and recent” (p.vi). Thompson et al., (2013) argue that constant exposure to individual with disabilities and getting to know them personally would

reduce negative attitudes. Knowledge of and acquaintance with individual with disabilities are vital in order to change attitudes.

Genesis of negative attitudes

Negative attitudes have a number of assumptions, traditions and origins. Livneh (1982) explores several origins of negative attitudes to disability. They include socioeconomic, cultural, psychological and childhood experiences. From the socioeconomic point of view, people are judged on the basis of personal capacity. For example, beauty, strengths, physical or intellectual abilities, productivity and incomes are the hallmark of capabilities. Usually, when individuals with disability do not possess these characteristics, they are devalued, and their capacities are underestimated, assuming that they have intellectual or physical sufferings for losing some of the important parts of their body or function. This undervaluing construct is labelled 'ableism.' Ableism discriminates against individuals with disability on the basis of physical or intellectual inabilities characterising people with disability as inferior to persons without disability. McLean (2008) explains it as follows:

Ableism describes discriminatory and exclusionary practices that result from the perception that being able-bodied is superior to being disabled, the latter being associated with ill health, incapacity, and dependence. Like racism, ableism directs structural power relations in society, generating inequalities located in institutional relations and social processes (p. 607).

Ableism perceives people with a disability as a weak section of society and accentuates their inability to perform the tasks in the same way that people without a disability have long been performing.

Disability as a result of past sin

Some Hindu and Buddhist faith groups perceive disability as a punishment of the past sin of either people with disabilities or their ancestors. It is also believed that people with a disability are hazardous because these people might have

committed crime in the past (Livneh, 1982). People who have a strong faith in Karma (individuals' deeds in their past life) and reincarnation, interpreted from Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, tend to think that disability is a result of sin by parents, ancestors or individuals with disability either in their current or past life (Whitman, 2007). This philosophy explained that physical or psychological impairment creates pain, sorrow or tragedy in the lives of individuals, which could not be accepted as positive (Naemiratch & Manderson, 2009). These negative interpretations of disability — linking it to spirituality — perhaps works as a coping strategy for individuals and families to console for the sorrow (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). However, such an interpretation accuses individuals and families of suspicious past crime, for which there is no evidence. These accusations create unnecessary stress and anxiety for individuals with disability and their families, resulting in low self-esteem. This issue is further discussed in chapters five and six.

Saul and Philips (1999) in their research on the perception of parents of children with cerebral palsy found that one-third of the research participants perceived disabilities as a punishment of past evil deeds. Lammichhane (2015) in his research on the barriers to inclusion of ClwD in the Nepalese schools reported a similar finding.

Dalal (2002) argues that the perception of disability as a result of past sin should not be interpreted as a negative view, rather this perception makes individuals resilient to accept disabilities because it is not an unusual and random incident in their life. Such a belief leads to avoiding wrongdoing throughout their current life, so that they will not be punished in the future. All unpleasant experiences associated with disabilities focus on this belief of repayment of past misdeeds. Similarly, this perception encourages individuals with and without disability to

follow the path of morality, as well as spirituality (Dalal, 2002). Naemiratch & Manderson (2009), in their research into Thai Buddhist teachers' attitudes towards disabilities, identified another positive message — individuals without disabilities should show compassion to individuals with disabilities in order to enjoy the rewards of their compassion in a future or subsequent life (Naemiratch & Manderson, 2009).

Despite encouraging individuals to be kind, helpful and empathetic to others for desirable outcomes, the way of portraying individuals having disability as a recipient of their past wrong doings may lead to negative connotations such as thinking of them as immoral human beings. The intensity of negativity increases when pain, sorrow and restrictions are excessively discussed rather than discussing creativity, strengths and successes of individuals with disability. A lack of or limited information about the eastern religious interpretation, as well as biomedical causes and strategies to cope with disability is probably the other reason for such an attitude. However, attitudes as such are still deep-seated in the mindset of individuals (Lamichhane & Sawada, 2013). Negative attitude restricts stakeholders' willingness to embrace the inclusion of CIWD in education.

Saul and Philips (1999) found that a large number of people who had knowledge of bio-medical reasons for disabilities, interpreted disability as related to the biology of the human condition. Those parents who believed in medical causes for disability were interested in modern medical services and those who were unsure about either medical or religious causes of disabilities were interested in applying both biomedical and traditional Tantric services. The research finding by Saul and Philips (1999) indicated that both the medical interpretation and religious belief about disabilities existed in Nepal. These perceptions are further discussed in chapter five and six.

Hindu and Buddhist beliefs embed Tantrism (Mysticism)

Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism (Mysticism) is the spiritual practice of evoking the deities, divine power, or a good spirit, which is existent in everyone (Goudriaan & Gupta, 1981). It is believed that Tantric healers are spiritual persons, who usually have strong relationships with both good and bad spirits. They have the potential to control the bad spirits by pleasing the good ones, both of which are attached to sick persons or to persons with disabilities. Tantric healers apply a controlling power in curing many diseases and disabilities. Tantrism is a holistic scientific approach to the realisation and promotion of deities that exist in everyone. The purpose of Tantrism is to preserve humans from harm, deterioration or loss (Goudriaan & Gupta, 1981).

Nepalese societies value and respect Tantrism. Many individuals are therefore interested in trying Tantric services in the hope of therapeutic support for disease and disabilities and because of their cultural beliefs in Tantric traditional health intervention styles (Saul & Phillips, 1999). It is evident that Nepal, being a Hindu kingdom as well as following Buddhist religious practices for more than 2500 years, has a large number of formal ceremonies and festivals underpinned by Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. Nearly all deities found in Nepal are Tantric (Mystical) deities (Haber, 1988). The commonly seen idols of deities in Nepal confirms this argument. Since religion is a belief system, a cultural practice and the way of life of individuals, religion is embedded in their minds and manifested in behaviours (Saran, 2008). Consequently, every individual consciously or unconsciously supports religious practices of their beliefs. Tantrism is a fundamental aspect of the Nepalese culture and involving or relying on Tantrism to cure diseases and disabilities delays their identification as well as the developmental needs of CIWD.

A review of the literature on the effect of the Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism on people's belief about disabilities has made me completely skeptical about whether or not is it appropriate to use only the biomedical interpretation of the causes and consequences of disabilities, based on a medical model, to change the attitude of communities in the Nepalese context. Taking into account a deep-rooted belief system will also be important.

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy to cater for diverse learning needs is considered as another key component of inclusive education for ClwD (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Darragh, 2007; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Underwood, Valeo, & Wood, 2012). All children, including young ClwD need effective guidance and facilitation from teachers in order to foster their intellectual, physical, social and emotional development to the highest possible extent. Teachers require the understanding of students' strengths, interests and needs prior to setting any instructional strategies. Reflecting on teaching and learning, behaviour management, and the close connection of learning to children's culture are some of the other focal areas of teacher efficacy. Teachers need to apply a number of learning strategies and collaborate with fellow-teachers in order to respond to individual children's needs (Lewis & Bagree, 2013).

Teacher efficacy is teachers' sense of self-confidence about their ability to accomplish the assigned task. This sense of self-confidence is connected to teachers' beliefs in their capacities, their behaviour and the level of motivation (Bandura, 1994; Brownell & Pajares, 1999; Lewis & Bagree, 2013). Teacher efficacy is improved through four ways, namely mastery of experiences; exposure to models of desirable knowledge and skills; encouragement to strengthen

teachers' beliefs and the changing of negative emotions into positive ones (Bandura, 1994). Teacher professional development programs often aim to improve all four aspects of teacher efficacy. However, not all professional development programs enhance teacher efficacy. This section discusses a number of factors affecting professional development programs in general and in particular in the Nepalese context.

Professional development programs

Professional development programs are designed to develop teachers' mastery of experiences, whereby teachers gain the knowledge of content, pedagogy and work place contexts. Teachers are provided with vicarious experiences by allowing them to observe the performance and modelling of successful teachers (Bandura, 1994). Continual encouragement and motivation from leaders as a component of professional development is another source of teacher efficacy. School leaders play a key role in assigning tasks and motivating teachers towards innovative practices, such as designing instruction to respond to individual differences of students (Underwood et al., 2012). Professional development activities also include cooperation among teachers. Cooperation as such, encourages teachers to exchange and sustain teaching techniques and innovative ideas (Florian, 2008; Protheroe, 2008). However, every professional development program does not necessarily enhance teacher efficacy. Sharma, Loreman and Macanawai (2016) in their research in four Pacific Islands and Cologon (2013), in her research in Australia reported that the professional development programs which the teachers attended did not prepare them to educate CIwD in mainstream classrooms. The programs were not able to develop teachers' skills in making the curriculum responsive to the needs for all CIwD.

Konza (2008) in his research paper *Inclusion of students with disabilities in new times: responding to the challenge* discovered that teachers in Australia, for the most part, lacked confidence in educating ClwD using instructional processes. Professional development courses provided limited knowledge of the content and pedagogy as it translates to inclusion. Similarly, research undertaken by Bissaker et al., (2013) on autism professional learning in South Australia, identified that professional learning programs were inadequate to develop teachers for behaviour management, curriculum adjustment, and the process of coordination required with parents, professionals, and support agencies. The professional development programs did not address teachers' needs to adequately include every child.

Continuous professional development opportunities

One time pre-service and external in-service professional development programs alone do not increase the level of teacher efficacy. It is rather increased by continuous professional development opportunities (Department of Education & Training, 2005). These continuous professional development opportunities depend on factors such as school culture, teachers' relationships with peers and students, and organisational strategies (Bissaker, 2009). "School culture can be used to encompass all the attitudes, expected behaviours and values that impact how the school operates" (Fisher, 2012, p. 4). The creation of learning culture plays an essential role in teachers' professional development. Teachers' mutual relationship with colleague teachers, professionals and students also determined their learning. Similarly, task assignment based on the capacities of teachers; an inclination towards innovative practices; providing varied learning experiences and an enriched curriculum as well as inclusive organisational strategies were central to enhancing professional learning (Bissaker, 2009). Such factors influence teacher professional development in general and are relevant to the inclusion of

ClwD in both schools and ECED programs. This is because inclusive education needs broader knowledge of innovative practices in order to accommodate diverse levels and styles of learning in inclusive classrooms.

Lewis and Bagree (2013) argue that, despite teachers being the integral part of inclusion, globally there was often a lack of teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence to implement the inclusion of ClwD in education. Many research projects and studies conducted in the US and Australia revealed the same findings (Almog & Shechtman, 2007). Due to a lack of professional development opportunities, the problem of teacher efficacy for teaching ClwD in inclusive settings is even more serious in developing countries (Lewis & Bagree, 2013).

Teacher capacity to apply Universal Design for Early Childhood Education and the concept of a twin-track approach

It has been argued that, if teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills of Universal Design for Early Childhood Education (UDECE), they will be more confident in catering for ClwD in many play and learning activities (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Darragh, 2007; Underwood et al., 2012). The aim of this design framework is to ensure high quality early childhood education by reducing barriers to learning for all children regardless of their differences and disabilities. UDECE focuses on individual instructional strategies, physical setting, social interaction and curriculum, as well as assessment differentiation. The UDECE ensures multiple ways to access information, resources and engagement for all children including ClwD (Darragh, 2007). Although UDECE is an effective model to guide young ClwD in inclusive settings, this model demands an advanced physical setting, extra resources for assistive devices and learning materials, as well as highly skilled and motivated teachers.

Many developing countries are grappling with the development of teachers' basic skills, physical infrastructures, assistive technology and learning materials (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002), for example, in India (U. Sharma & Deppeler, 2005) and in Bangladesh (Ahsan, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012). The use of the UDECE would seem to be unrealistic. However, teachers require basic understanding and skills of curricular differentiation, including curriculum accommodations and modifications.⁷ Knowledge of curricular differentiation is important to enhance teachers' self-efficacy. Lewis and Bagree (2013) argued that policy makers and trainers should be able to understand the concept of the twin-track approach. The twin-track approach aims to "improve the quality of education for all yet also provide specialised support where needed for children with disabilities" (p.4). It purports that every teacher needs to learn about inclusive education during their training rather than in stand-alone courses, and that all teachers continue developing their inclusive education expertise throughout their teaching career. The more teachers feel confident about teaching ClwD in inclusive settings, the more these children will be accepted and able to engage in education. (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Efficacious teachers might be the pillars of successful inclusion of ClwD in ECED.

The issue of teacher efficacy in Nepal

There is no specific research on aspects of teacher efficacy and how it affects the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal. The existing literature identified that teachers in Nepal lacked capacity to teach children in inclusive settings (Susan Acharya, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Kafle, 2002; N. Phuyal et al., 2006; Plan

⁷ Curricular accommodation is the alteration of instruction styles, without changing the content and assessment, whilst curriculum modifications may change both the content and assessment. The underlying assumption of accommodations is that all children will learn similar skills or achieve the same goals through adapting learning styles. Modifications on the other hand, aim at individualised learning skills or goals (Cohen & Spenciner, 2005)

International & London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, 2014). The Human Rights Watch (2011) found a dearth of professional development courses on inclusive education for educators in Nepal, with Regmi (2017) in his Ph.D. research reporting only 16 per cent of teachers received professional development courses on inclusive education. Factors related to the lack of professional development resulting in the lower level of teacher efficacy in Nepal are further discussed in chapters five and six.

Funding and resources

A lack of funding and resources are viewed as another essential barrier for the inclusion of ClwD in education. Forlin et al. (2013) and Ainscow (2003) recommend the removal of this barrier and maintain that resources must be put in place to ensure successful outcomes when a child with disability is included in a new setting. It is estimated that educating ClwD requires twice the funding compared to that for children without disability (Chaikind, Danielson, & Brauen, 1993). Additional funding is required to create the least restrictive environments, so that ClwD are included in mainstream classroom whenever possible (Ainscow, 2005; Alur & Timmons, 2009; Booth & Ainscow, 2002 ; Booth et al., 2006; Forlin et al., 2013; Loreman, Deppler, & Harvey, 2005; T. Loreman, 2014; The World Health Organisation & UNICEF, 2012). The following section discusses the importance and issues of funding for inclusive education with regard to return for and cost effectiveness of investment.

Investment in education to ensure the rights of ClwD

There is a belief that inclusion of ClwD in education is expensive (Saebones et al., 2015). However, education enables ClwD to learn necessary skills and to become a productive in society. In this sense the outlay of funding adds human capital that yields returns for the investments. Lammichhane and Sawada (2013), in their research on the rationale of financing education in Nepal for individuals with disabilities, found a high rate of investment return. As argued in chapter one, funding education and development of ClwD contributes towards building strong and positive outcomes for society (Council of Australian Government, 2009). These developmental outcomes include children's physical and intellectual development, as well as their social adjustment. However, it is challenging to communicate the contribution of an investment in inclusion and ECED programs to all stakeholders, because it takes time to realise the results of how such an investment pays off and rewards individuals, communities and countries. There is therefore an economic rationale for funding education for ClwD as well as a moral responsibility as previously argued and should not be viewed from only the cost-benefit lens.

Equitable investment is vital for inclusive education

It has been argued that funding for inclusive education should create equitable learning opportunities for the most marginalised ClwD. The International Commission on Financing Global Education (2016), in its report on *The learning generation: investing in education for changing world*, strongly recommended an equitable investment or 'progressive universalism' of education. *Progressive universalism* aims to include every child in education with special attention to those children, who are marginalised and disadvantaged due to biological, psychological and contextual conditions. These conditions include disability,

gender, economic status, culture, race and geographic location. In the same vein, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2016), in a background information report on inclusive education in European countries, also highlighted the need for equitable financing. Equitable financing can be based on the learning needs of ClwD, or their learning outcomes and or services provided for them. The involvement of multisector government and non-government organisations at various level of governance is fundamental to make more equitable financing in education. These organisations should be accountable to the learning outcomes of ClwD. This report was based on the research in developed countries. In developing countries, there is a major problem of inadequate funding. Despite the appeal of UNESCO to governments, since the conference on inclusive education in Salamanca in 1994, to provide sufficient funding to schools, there has been a lack of adequate funding for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in most developing countries (Charema, 2007). Economic crises provided by political instability are given as the reason for not allocating adequate funding in the education sector (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002). Inclusive education, as a sub-sector of education is therefore, also suffering from this funding gap.

Investment in inclusive education is cost effective

One argument that justifies investing in inclusive education is that it is more cost effective and efficient than special education (Hayes & Bulat, 2017; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; U. Sharma, 2012; UNESCO, 1994a). As governments are already financing special education, investing in inclusive education is not an additional cost for them. The issue is their lack of understanding of inclusive investment benefits to the system and to children living with and without disability. Inclusive investment includes a system of staff development in order to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills of therapy, counseling and early stimulation. It

also involves a system of coordination with parents and families who could mobilise curriculum development and the development of conducive learning environments at home and in schools (Booth et al., 2006). Allocating resources to upgrade facilities in the schools in the local community would be economical rather than building large parallel special schools for CIwD. The research suggests there is a need for more understanding about the cost effectiveness of investing in inclusive education.

Resources and funding are lacking in Nepal

Much of the available literature on the inclusion of CIwD in school level education in Nepal reported that schools were not equipped with the necessary human, technological and material resources, or the funding that could meet the needs of CIwD (Human Rights Watch, 2011; Kafle, 2002; Lamichhane, 2013; Plan International & London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, 2014; Regmi, 2017; B. B. S. Thapa, 2012). Despite the commitment made through the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, the Government has been unable to provide adequate funding to schools. Similarly, despite a full awareness of the funding requirements and the commitment to provide funds to developing countries to increase the participation of children in education, the development partners, working in Nepal, are unable to ensure that schools are receiving sufficient funding for the inclusion of CIwD in education (Human Rights Watch, 2011). There is an obvious need for increasing funding for inclusive education. In addition, creating awareness about the investment opportunity that inclusive education provides is equally essential.

Coordination

Coordination and collaboration among families, professionals and agencies to integrate diverse professional services for early identification of developmental needs, is identified as a basic necessity for the successful inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs (Barton & Smith, 2015; Foreman, 2011). Generally, pediatricians, psychologists, speech pathologists, disability workers, and special education teachers are involved in this process. These professionals work together with families to support early years' ClwD in their physical, cognitive, language, communication, and social-emotional development; as well as the development of positive behaviours. Such collaboration not only consolidates the interdisciplinary services required and available to each school but can also serve to optimise the use of the limited resources efficiently (Ainscow, 2005; Corps, Ceralli, & Boisseau, 2012). Coordination between different professionals and agencies is often challenging because of the multi-disciplinary nature of services, the expectation of agencies from its staff, resources and authorities, as well as the limitation of agencies themselves (Atkinson et al., 2002). Both developed and developing countries have the problem of coordination. The following section discusses the issue of coordination in developed and developing countries with reference to the United States (US), Australia and Nepal.

Coordination in developed and developing countries

Literature indicated that there is a problem of coordination in developed countries. The US Department of Education (2015) reported that there was a problem of coordination and cooperation between diverse professionals in the US due to a lack of time and commitment to inclusive ECED services. Lack of coordination was further associated with individuals' attitudes towards the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. A majority of individuals perceived that inclusion of ClwD in ECED would

reduce resources and attention allocated for children without disabilities (Cate, deFosset, Smith, & Whaley, 2015). In a similar view, Moore (2008), in a working paper on supporting young children and their families in Australia accepted that learning needs of ClwD were not met due to the issue of coordination between professionals and agencies. In developing countries, weak interministerial coordination was frequently cited as a barrier to the inclusion of ClwD in education. As there was no effective coordination in these countries, inclusive programs were not devised and practised (Global Partnership for Education, 2016). Nonetheless, effective coordination would be challenging when there is a lack of legislation to ensure accountabilities of various agencies and a well-defined procedure for coordination (Delaware Health and Soical Service, 2013).

Coordination and communication are lacking in Nepal

Since the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs as a coordinated manner has yet to be commenced in Nepal, this is a new phenomenon so far. However, experiences of the education for ClwD in elementary schools indicated that, the Nepalese coordination system for the education for ClwD is based on a multidisciplinary team approach. The need for children to enrol in schools is assessed by a team of educators and health workers who refer their enrolment to integrated schools (Department of Education, 2017). Once children are enrolled, resource teachers (teachers appointed as special education teachers) are supposed to take entire responsibility of ClwD. A consequence is that there is often a communication gap that occurs between resource teachers, regular teacher and head teachers. Head teachers and general teachers tend to think that ClwD 'belong to' the resource teachers. Also, there is for the most part, a situation of non-communication between teachers and health personnel.

Parental engagement

A wide range of research has accepted that parental engagement is a powerful vehicle for the inclusion of ClwD. Naturally, parents have a better understanding of their children's developmental trajectories, strengths and weaknesses because of the nature–nurture relationship (Alur & Timmons, 2009; Öztürk, 2013; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990; UNESCO, 1994b). Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1986) ecological theory suggests that child development is affected by various systems, such as parents, family culture, as well as the belief system of schools and communities. As a sub-system of many systems, parents have the potential to work with teachers to achieve the goal of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Parent engagement involves active collaboration among parents, schools and communities. It aims to make parents aware of the outcomes of their children's learning (Muller & Saulwick, 2006). Involvement refers to the voluntary participation of parents in some of the school activities (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Parents' engagement is desirable, but they are only involved on a voluntary basis in many instances (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014).

Compared to teachers, parents may not be equipped with the necessary knowledge and expertise regarding the teaching and learning of ClwD; however, they may have the potential to create learning environments at home. Parents can contribute to the learning and development of children by providing them with the required material and good parenting support. They can assist teachers by sharing how they engage children at home and how they develop learning environments. Parents could talk on behalf of their young ClwD because young ClwD may not be able or inclined to express to teachers their interest, strengths and desired environments required for learning (Mansour & Martin, 2009; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). Information about home environments guides teachers to determine a

variety of approaches to teaching and learning for home and schools and increases teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy is in the best interests of any education system to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness as a whole. Kafle (2002) in his research on *critical evaluation of special needs education programs in Nepal*, pointed out that “parental involvement in special needs education programs is considered as necessary for the sake of both children with special needs and the efficacy of the education system” (p.142). Parental engagement results in a positive impact on the learning of ClwD, which is the overall goal of every inclusive educational program.

Factors affecting parents’ participation in ECED programs

Even though parent engagement in ECED programs is crucial in educational development and overall wellbeing of children, in many developed and developing countries parents are not participating (UNESCO, 1994b). Several factors affect parental engagement in ECED programs. These factors include; policy, family poverty, language and cultural barriers, administrator’s attitudes to parental engagement, parental level of education and awareness, as well as parents’ time constraints (Joshi, Eberly, & Konzal, 2005; Plan International & London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, 2014; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). Policy for parents’ participation in education for their ClwD determines parents’ participation in education (UNESCO, 1994b). A lack of policy with a clearly defined role for parents adversely affected parents’ participation in children’s education (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Parents’ economic level influences their participation in schools. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) argued that parents from a higher economic status were more likely to become involved in preschools affairs than parents from a lower economic status. However, research has proven there is a positive impact on poor parents’ participation in their children’s learning achievements. Smith

(2006) argued that the engagement of those parents who were relatively poor was more effective in solving children's behaviour problems than the engagement of those parents, who were relatively rich. Unfortunately, the poor parents whose participation is more important, were harder to reach for schools and educators.

Cultural and language difference between parents and school staff restrict parental participation in school activities (Öztürk, 2013; UNESCO and the Council of Europe, 2011). Öztürk (2013) reported that parents from a non-English speaking background and having a different culture were less likely to participate in preschools in the US. Both teachers and parents lack of confidence to communicate with each other was the cause of such restrictions. Parents may feel awkward interacting with individuals who have different lifestyles and cultural values. The knowledge of parents' culture, as well as a culturally appropriate way of communication would improve the communication between school staff and parents (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Joshi et al., 2005). Parents could participate actively, if their experiences in children's learning and nurturing are valued and acknowledged by school communities (Y. Xu & Filler, 2008). Parents would bring traditional knowledge of childcare and nurturing. Teachers would be better informed to design learning activities based on this input from parents.

Although there is no research on parental engagement in the education of their children in Nepal, the government's policy documents, for example, the Education Act (1971) and the Policy for Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities 2016 have ignored that parents are the major stakeholders for the education of their ClwD. This finding can be linked with the lack of participation of Nepalese parents in preschools activities, especially as it is a country of cultural and linguistic diversities. As highlighted earlier, in Nepal, many factors affect parental

engagement in the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. These factors are interrelated with attitudes, culture, economy and education.

This section of the literature review highlighted the interaction of a number of organisational factors, such as policy, attitudes, teacher efficacy, resources, coordination and parental engagement to affect the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal. Among these factors policy influenced all factors, however the other five factors are of an interrelated nature and affect inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. The following section presents a review of the impact of contextual factors on the inclusion of ClwD in Nepalese ECED programs.

Contextual factors

Whilst contextual factors interact to affect inclusion of ClwD in ECED, I consider them individually in this section, so that I can clarify concepts. As noted previously, these contextual factors include economic status, class, gender, caste, ethnicity, language and geographic location.

Poverty

Both international and national literature has identified that poverty is a significant barrier to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED (Plan International & London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, 2014; Rose, 2018; UNESCO, 2009; UNICEF, 2013). Families living in poverty often face difficulty providing health and hygiene support at home, affording health services and enrolling children into ECED. They also lack time to interact with their children due to their involvement in various earning opportunities (Leseman, 2002; World Health Organization & UNICEF, 2012). Petrenchik (2008), in a discussion paper prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, pointed out that, “meeting the physical, social, emotional, and developmental needs of a child with a disability can be

overwhelming for families, particularly in the absence of adequate resources and social supports” (p.8). ClwD from poor families therefore have limited opportunities for the holistic development of their child, due to their parents’ inability to afford education and health services.

Literature reveals that poverty as the cause and consequence of disabilities has multi-dimensional effects on individuals with disabilities and their families because disability increases along with poverty (Kafle, 2002). For example, poverty prevents pregnant women from meeting basic needs, such as food, nutrition and health care. The lack of nutrition and health care results in developmental problems in children, leading to a high risk in these children becoming unproductive, and themselves leading impoverished lives (World Health Organization & UNICEF, 2012). Poverty, therefore, often continues to the subsequent generations (Singal, 2015).

The Nepalese ClwD from poor family backgrounds do not access school due to the parents’ inability to afford the direct and indirect cost of education (Nepal Disabled Human Rights Centre, 2011; Plan International & London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, 2014). Direct costs include transportation, school fees and the cost of school learning materials. Indirect expenses include, for example, the cost of caregivers’ time taking children to school and back home (Plan International & London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, 2014). These direct and indirect costs are similar in the context of accessing health services for ClwD.

Lamichhane (2013), in his research about the barriers to the inclusion of ClwD in education in Nepal, found that a family’s economic hardship was the main barrier to accessing and continuing education for ClwD in Nepal. He found that:

Although there had been other, serious difficulties as well, ... [the] family’s weak financial position was a significant barrier. ... Parents required his [the

child's] assistance in farming and caring for siblings, and he was ultimately obliged to leave school after grade eight (p.320).

This research finding of Lamichhane (2013) reveals that if ECED centres were available and accessible to poorer families in their communities, older siblings would be free to go to school and parents to work, since the centres would take over much of the responsibility of child care and nurture of ClwD. There would therefore be a wider social benefit to the community.

The Nepal Disabled Human Rights Centre (2011), in a small research project, reported some extremely disturbing findings associated with income and multi-dimensional poverty, as it related to ClwD. The organisation reported that parents who had to be away for work, locked ClwD in rooms or placed them in a cage, since there was no-one available at home to care these ClwD. This finding is comparable to a Nepalese daily newspaper report in the Annapurna Post of 17 March 2017. The newspaper reported that in the Dhading district of Nepal, located close to the capital city Kathmandu, a six-year-old female child, diagnosed with intellectual disabilities, was kept at home on a leash like a pet. Her family believed they had no other option, as both parents were committed to work to earn a living, and there was no-one to take care of the child at home. The schools and ECED centres in the community were not ready to enrol and take care of the child. Neighbours did not want to interact with her due to their negative beliefs and attitudes towards ClwD. This child became the victim of both income poverty and multi-dimensional poverty. One would hope that when parents are not in poverty, when they have time to care for their child living with disability, and if ClwD were accepted in schools and communities, then no child would ever again face such inhumane treatment.

Gender

Gender is often viewed as another vital influencing contextual factor for the inclusion of ClWD in ECED. Gender is a socio-cultural construction of the roles, relationships and responsibilities between males and females in societies. Gender roles and relationships determine the position and behaviours of men and women (Vasin, 2005). Literature indicates that in many communities gender inequities and patriarchy creates male domination and preferences for sons (Dhungana, 2006; Lang, 2001; Rousso, 2015b; World Vision UK, 2007). Male domination and preferences for sons, has excluded women from a number of educational, economic and social benefits. When a woman has disabilities, there is a high likelihood of her double exclusion (Armstrong et al., 2011). This notion of exclusion is based on the view that women with a disability are weaker than women without disabilities; that they lack capacity to play the roles that women without disabilities play. The prevailing perception is that education is of no use for women with disabilities (Palmer & Woodcoft, 1990). As a result, “disabled girls may be the least likely to go to school” (World Vision UK, 2007, p. 14), and are at risk of isolation from the entire education system.

Class, ethnicity, race and poverty-based inequalities accentuate the exclusion of women and girls. Claire (2004), argued that “it is important [however] not to fall into the trap of simply arguing between various inequalities ... all pupils have a gender, class and ethnic identity — the factors do not operate in isolation” (Claire, 2004, p. 21). Discrimination against women begins prior to birth and continues throughout their lives (Rousso, 2015a). When gender interacts with disability, women with disabilities are more likely to suffer from additional exclusionary practices.

Drawing on from the argument by Claire (2004), it is evident that Nepalese women are experiencing numerous forms of exclusion and discrimination in different spheres of life due to the interrelation of many factors. As a patriarchy, preference for sons is a basic characteristic of the Nepalese society (M. Paudel, Javanparast, Dasvarma, & Newman, 2018a). There are three main reasons for parents preferring sons over daughters, namely 1) Religious 2) Cultural and 3) Economic. For example, there is a Hindu religious belief that if a son performs the last rites of parents and ancestors, then parents and ancestors will be liberated subsequent to their deaths.⁸ Culturally, it is the sons who reside in their parents' home and inherit the fathers' caste. Parental caste inheritance cannot be continued without sons.⁹ Since sons co-reside with their parents as a joint family, it is the son who provides parents with welfare support during old age. Daughters, on the other hand, are dependent on their husbands and would be unable to play the roles of sons. This culture of joint family is also linked to economics, resulting in parents perceiving a greater benefit when investing money in their sons rather than their daughters' education (Stash & Hannum, 2001). Religious, cultural and economic factors are intertwined to develop such a biased construct against female children in Nepal. Bista (2004), in a review of literature on girls' education in Nepal, raised similar concerns highlighting a common question posed by parents, namely, why invest in a resource that will soon be someone else's? When parents are already unenthusiastic regarding spending money on education for their daughters who have no disability, it is very unlikely they will spend money on a daughter living with disabilities. As Thapa (2012), in her research on schooling of girls with

⁸ In accordance with Garuda Puran, the Hindu genre focused on God Vishnu (Khemaka, 2000), daughters are not allowed to perform the last rites of parents and ancestors. For this reason, sons are preferred to daughters.

⁹ Sons can only inherit parents' caste. When they get married, daughters tend to leave their parental home and go to their marital home. They permanently adopt the caste of their husband.

disabilities stated, “If someone has a girl child with [disabilities] the child is looked on as a burden and parents do not want to spend much on her education and seek help from others” (p.12). Such discrimination of female children living with disabilities begins in the early years.

Organisational factors further inhibit female ClwD participating in education. Thapa (2012) found that schools were unable to provide the necessary services, for girls with disabilities, such as friendly physical facilities and adjusted curriculum and pedagogy. The lack of mainstream schools in the communities compelled girls to go outside their districts, residing in hostels with no gender and disability friendly facilities. Girls with disabilities, therefore, were often doubly disadvantaged from their participation in education, even if they were able to access school.

Caste, Ethnicity and Language

Caste, ethnicity and language are found to be the major influencing factors of inclusive education in Nepal. Caste, ethnicity and language either separately or in interrelated ways impede access and participation of ClwD in ECED programs. These three contextual factors are elaborated on in the following sections.

Caste-based inequalities affecting children’s inclusion in ECED

There is a consensus among educators, that social stratification based on the caste system is creating inequality in the educational attainment of Dalit (lowest caste) and non-Dalit (higher caste) children (Michael, 1999).¹⁰ The caste system was originated from the Hindu Varna Byabastha (caste system), which conceives of a hereditary classification of society into four Varna (caste) (Brahmin-priest and teachers, Chheritya-warriors and kings, Vaishya- traders and Sudra- artisan). The

¹⁰ Caste is derived from Spanish word, 'casta', meaning race classification.

caste system is believed to be designed by God under the rubrics of individuals' profession, qualities and skills. The Varna Byabastha was first introduced in Rig-Veda, one of the four Hindu canonical sacred texts (Veda) written around 1700–1100 BC by sage Vyasha. In the Rig-Veda era, individuals were free to determine their occupation on the basis of their aptitude, qualities, interest, skills and proficiency and changing their Varna or caste was usual. There was no untouchability and caste-based discrimination in this era. The system continued into the late-Vedic period, which is 850–500 BC. Subsequently, the Manusmriti (Hindu law book), which was written around 200–00 BC, created a code of practice that placed the Dalits at the bottom of the hierarchy. This law prohibited change of Varna, occupation mobility and it also enforced untouchability.

According to *Bhagwat Geeta*, a part of the Hindu epic Mahabharata, written in 800–900 BC, the meaning of 'Varna' is colour and 'Byabastha' means system. Hence, Varna Byabastha is a division of people on the basis of their colour. However, in contemporary societies, the colour of individuals is not related to the caste they inherited because people of all castes appear similar. Dumont (1980) argued that despite a hereditary and occupational classification, the caste-based division created many social and economic inequalities, as well as discrimination against those people who are located at the bottom of the hierarchy. This caste-based discrimination has influenced the inclusion of children from the Dalit community in Nepalese ECED programs.

As discussed in chapter one, Nepal has an exceptionally multi-tiered caste system. The Nepalese caste system also originates from the Hindu Varna Byabastha, which was endorsed by the first Muluki Ain (civil code) of 1954, and subsequently regarded as the recorded version of social rule (Gurung, 2002). This

code vertically categorised the Nepalese population into five major groups and 126 sub-groups. The five major groups were:

- Holy thread wearers (Brahmin, Chhetri and high caste Newars), also refer to twice born, meaning they are first born physically and then born spiritually subsequent to an adolescence rite called Upanayana;
- Non-slavable (Ethnic groups/ Adhibasi, Janjati);
- Slavable alcohol-drinkers (Tribal and other Indigenous Janjati);
- Impure but touchable castes (Musalman and Mlechhya or foreigners); and
- Impure and untouchable castes (Dalit) (Gurung, 2002).

The civil code excluded numerous caste groups legally from certain occupations and community engagements. The Dalit caste group is the most excluded among the five caste groups (Koirala, 1996). In Nepal, Dalit castes are traditionally not permitted to go to religious schools and study religious scriptures written in Sanskrit together with Non-Dalit groups (Chapagain, 2016). This belief has hitherto been continued in the current education system (Koirala, 1996; Pariyar & Lovett, 2016). Although this kind of discrimination is outlawed in contemporary Nepalese society, discrimination is manifested in several forms, leading to lack of self-respect and violation of rights and social justice of Dalit caste groups. In addition, the socioeconomic condition of many Dalit communities is lower than people from higher castes (Bhattachan et al., 2009). Figure 2.1. presents the Nepalese caste pyramid enshrined in the first civil code of Nepal.



Figure 2.1. A pyramid of Nepalese caste hierarchy. Source: The World Bank, 2006, p.6.

The National Dalit Commission of Nepal defined the Dalit as socially, economically, politically, religiously deprived, as well as deprived from human dignity and social justice due to caste-based discrimination and untouchability. This definition is similar to the research finding of Koirala (1996), who observed that “[Dalit] are ritually suppressed, economically kept dependent, politically undermined, and culturally made Paninachalne tatha Chhunahune (Water rejected from them and untouchable) persons” (p.41). Although the civil code of 1854 has been replaced by Naya Muluki Ain of Nepal (the civil code) in 1963, the legacy of the first civil code as a culture still continues in Nepalese societies today, despite this code has been amended many times to remove the caste-based discrimination. The legacy of the 1854 civil code demonstrates how difficult it would be to transform culture, irrespective of the intention of policy.

Regardless of several efforts to increase educational attainment of Dalit individuals, such as scholarship and quota reservation for the Dalit in education

and employment, discrimination has not come to an end. For example, Dalit children are less likely to enrol in schools. They are not able to participate in learning even if they are enrolled. Often, these Dalit children are obliged to sit at the back and are not allowed to eat together with their non-Dalit friends, and they are also bullied by peers and discriminated against by teachers (D. R. Dahal, Gurung, Acharya, Hemchuri, & Swarnakar, 2002). Many Dalit children tend not to complete primary and secondary schooling, due to a dissipation of dignity, stress and feelings of anxiety resulting from caste-based discrimination (L. N. Paudel, 2007). When Dalit children have disabilities discrimination in schools is accentuated. Despite recommendations that content about non-discrimination against Dalit be created, such content was not included in the school-level curriculum. As a result, the issue remained unaddressed leading to continued discrimination (Bhattachan et al., 2009).

Intra caste and interregional discriminations

Discrimination between Dalit and Non-Dalit, as well as discrimination within Dalit are the most astonishing features of caste-based discrimination in Nepal (Bhattachan et al., 2009). This intra-caste-based discrimination has made the issue of inclusion of children, more complex, affecting inclusion of children from different Dalit castes differently. For instance, different sub-castes of Dalit such as Sarki (Cobblers) are treated as lower than Kami (Blacksmiths) and Damai (Tailors). Kami and Damai do not eat food cooked by Sarki. Both Kami and Damai consider Sarki as a lower caste than themselves. The magnitude and intensity of caste-based discrimination is different in different regions. Compared to the Himal and Pahad region, there is more caste-based discrimination in the Terai region (Bhattachan et al., 2009). The effect of the Hindu religion and the impact of the first civil code are prominent in this region. More opportunities for education and

effective implementation of laws against caste-based discrimination would assist to remove the negative effects of Hindu religious beliefs and the legacy of the first civil code.

Koirala (1996), in his PhD research on schooling of Dalit children in a western district of Nepal, also concluded that Dalit children were denied access to education. Although the research regarding the impact of caste-based discrimination in education is quite dated, this scenario has not significantly changed. Pariyar and Lovett (2016) identified more caste-based discrimination in schools located in villages than in cities. These findings support the different literacy rates of different caste groups in different regions. Only 15 per cent of Dalit women and 32 per cent of other caste women in Terai (plain areas) were literate, which was 61 per cent in the case of Dalit women, who resided in Pahad (Hill areas). Only 15 per cent of Dalit women and 32 per cent of other caste women in Terai region were literate, which was 61 per cent in the case of Pahad Dalit women (Bhattachan et al., 2009; The World Bank, 2006). School attendance data discovered the same story, for example, 50.2 per cent of Dalit females aged five years were fortunate enough to attend school in eastern Terai (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The unequal literacy and attendance rates between Pahad and Terai Dalit and Non-Dalit women indicate that the interaction between gender, caste and region collectively affects the inclusion of ClwD in education.

Ethnicity based inequalities affect children's inclusion in ECED

It has been widely accepted that, similar to caste, ethnicity is inhibiting children from participating in education (Stash & Hannum, 2001). Ethnicity-based stratification continues in societies, and this disproportionately benefits children from higher ethnic status. Although ethnicity is widely known as more egalitarian than the Hindu caste system, ethnic groups also maintain hierarchy and

stratification. For instance, Rai ethnic groups are considered superior to Gurung and Magar groups (Savada, 1991). The acculturation and enculturation of ethnic and caste groups might be the reason for the creation of these hierarchies, which affect children's inclusion in education due to the domination of mainstream communities over ethnic groups. Subba et al., (2014), in their study on the socio-economic status of caste and ethnic groups in Nepal, reported that 75 per cent of Newar ethnic groups were literate, which was around 52 per cent for marginalised ethnic groups such as Chepang, Majhi, Kumal and Sunwar. It was 50 per cent for Tharu ethnic group. They found the similar trend in school enrolments and attendance rates between these ethnic groups. The finding of Subba et al., (2014) corresponds to the Nepalese School Census Report that more than 20 per cent of five year old children from these marginalised ethnic communities did not go to schools (Department of Education, 2016). The work and day-to-day life of ethnic groups might determine their participation in education. For example, Newars are traditionally engaged with trade, commerce and government services and require education. Chepang, Majhi, Kumal, Sunwar and Tharu by contrast, are traditionally involved in skill-based occupations, such as hunting, fishing, pottery and gold crafts, which many not require formal education.

Stash and Hannum (2001) in their empirical study on education inequalities by caste, ethnicity and gender in Nepal, found that children from ethnic groups in all regions, such as *Pahad* (Hill) *Himal* (mountain) and *Terai* (plain) had lower primary school enrolments and completion rates than children from high caste Brahmin.

Sapkota and Uranw (2013) in their report from a linguistic survey of Chepang in Nepal explained that children from the Chepang ethnic community were not interested in school because their classmates from other caste and ethnic groups

discriminated against them for being Chepang (an uncivilised and wild child).¹¹ If they did go to school, they would often leave without completing the day and go to the cave or jungle, where their parents went hunting and foraging for food. In her research project on females' education in the Nepalese Chepang communities, Tryndyuk (2013) reported that Chepang children are less likely to go to school due to long distances to school and a lack of learning environments at home. Chepang girls, from their childhood, have to take care of their siblings, and are therefore not able to go to school. Parents' lack of education and their focus on their traditional work leads to children's education being a low priority (Tryndyuk, 2013). Coupled with gender discrimination, there is a high lack of access to education for female children in this community.

The culture of ethnic groups affects children's educational attainments. Culturally, children from Brahmin caste are encouraged to enrol in schools, considering these children are academically sound, while children from ethnic groups, such as Rai and Gurung are labeled as Lahure (foreign army), considering them academically poor and, thus are discouraged to enrol in schools (Upadhyay, 2014). This notion of culture was developed because previously education was meant to be for the high caste Brahmin and the ruling caste Chhetri.

In a research project conducted in the rural Sindhupalchok district, Neupane (2017) found that children of Tamang (an ethnic group) had lower learning achievement and higher attrition rates in schools than that of Brahmin and Chhetri caste children. A lack of learning environments at home due to their fathers drinking excessive amounts of alcohol resulting in a disruptive environment was

¹¹Chepang are originally nomads but recently settled as a sedentary community. Their livelihood is based on subsistence farming and collecting forest yams and tuber (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014; Tryndyuk, 2013)

the cause of such a lower level of achievement. The consumption of alcohol is part of the culture of all ethnic groups in Nepal, whereas alcohol is forbidden for Brahmin and Chhetri castes.

Language of instruction

Children from Non-Nepali background struggle with comprehending teachers' instruction in Nepali language (Awasthi, 2004; Mohanty, Mishra, Reddy, & Ramesh, 2009; National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission, 1993). Awasthi (2004) found that those children whose mother tongue is not Nepali are marginalised where Nepali is the only medium of instruction in schools located in multilingual societies. He argued that the use of the mother tongue in the early years, yields better learning outcomes. He further stated that

in the school system, the mother tongue of minorities seems to have been [neglected] and is seen as a handicap. As a result, the non-Nepali speaking students at the early stages of their schooling face exclusion (p, i).

CIwD from non-Nepali speaking background face these barriers to learning created by language of instruction. Classroom instruction in the mother tongue is equally instrumental for preserving the cultural and linguistic identities of minority groups. It empowers and improves the socio-economic status of minority groups by developing their capacity and learning opportunities (Awasthi, 2004; Mohanty et al., 2009; National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission, 1993). This finding is relevant in understanding how CIwD in ECED from ethnic minority groups could be disadvantaged in learning in the early stages of schooling.

The interaction of language of instruction with caste, ethnicity and regional differences multiply the layers of exclusion. However, interaction as such has differing impacts on different groups of children. For example, the medium of instruction in classrooms would not affect Dalit children who reside in Pahad

areas, because Nepali is their mother tongue. However, children from ethnic groups, as well as many Dalit children from Terai areas who speak different languages would not be able to comprehend teachers' instructions (Bennett et al., 2008). In such cases, it would be of importance to examine how the medium of instruction affects a particular group of children, including those ClwD.

Geographic location

In Nepal, there is a consensus that the geographic location influences children's inclusion in education. Parents and children find difficulty accessing education due to the far location of schools from their home and also the often steep terrain (Susan Acharya, 2007; Regmi, 2017). The Nepalese school level census, 2016 showed that 69.6 per cent of children whose homes are located in mountainous regions were in ECED programs, as against a national enrolment of 81 per cent (Department of Education, 2016). In many instances, the lack of inclusive schools and ECED programs in local communities has added the barriers created by geographic hardships. Parents are unable to bring ClwD to ECED programs due to geographic constraints.

Although geographical remoteness adversely affects children's access to education, it is not the only influential factor for children's educational inclusion. As discussed previously, Dalit female children from accessible Terai region markedly have the lowest participation in education (Bennett et al., 2008). The interaction of caste and gender-based discrimination is the leading cause of lower participation of female from Dalit community in this case. Geography has been shown, is a subordinate cause in the case of the remote Terai region. The diverse effect of geography in children's' inclusion suggests that the effect of the contextual factors is case specific, indicating various impacts from dominant and subordinate factors

on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. These case specific examples merit separate policies instead of adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, a Dalit female ClwD from Pahad might face the discrimination created by the interaction of caste, disability, geography and gender, however female ClwD from Dalit communities in the Terai region might be the victim of caste, disability, language and gender-based discrimination. There is need to take into account the effect of differently interacting factors when working towards the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs.

This literature review has demonstrated that a number of contextual factors, such as economic class, caste, ethnicity, gender and geographic location, interact to impede access of young ClwD in ECED programs. For example, when a female child from a poor Dalit community has a disability, she is a victim of four layers of discrimination. If she is from any difficult geographic locations or Terai region and speaks Nepali as a second language, she could experience five times the degree of disadvantage. These are to be added to organisational factors discussed earlier in this chapter, such as policy, attitude, teacher efficacy, coordination, resources and parental engagement, may become additional factors compounding her exclusion. The interaction of these organisational factors as well as contextual factors play a huge and significant role in the potential for inclusion of ClwD in the Nepalese ECED programs.

Literature-Based Inclusive Education Framework

Building on the organisational and contextual factors, I first developed a Literature-Based Inclusive Education Framework, which highlights and addresses these factors — attitude, teacher efficacy, resources, coordination parental engagement, economic class, caste, ethnicity, language, gender and geography. The Literature-Based Inclusive Education Framework is presented as Figure 2.2.

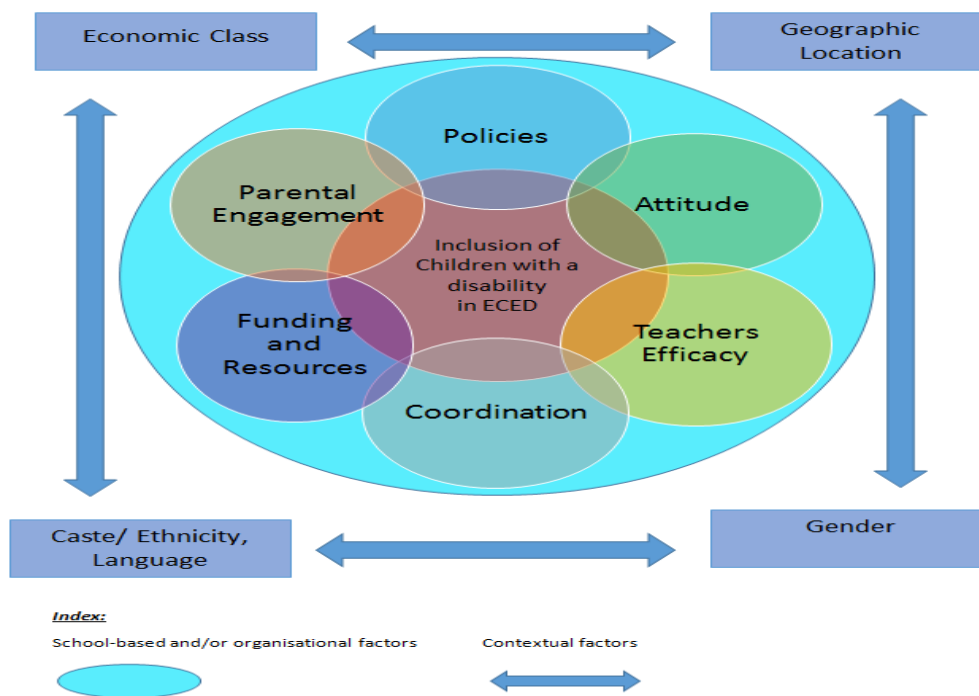


Figure 2.2. Literature- Based Inclusive Education Framework.

Throughout the literature review, I have identified that the interaction of organisational and contextual factors is complex and challenging. A varied effect of the interaction of many factors on different groups of ClwD has made the issue more complex. However, it is essential to address these interacting effects through facilitation of the necessary teaching skills as well as processes of coordination and communication within schools and with other agencies, such as health and welfare agencies.

To develop the Framework, I first reviewed and compared the index for inclusion of children in preschool by Booth and Ainscow (2006) and the equity and inclusion guide, developed by the United Nations Girls Education Initiatives (UNGEI). Building on these other frameworks I identified the interaction of organisational, and contextual factors creating barriers to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal. In Nepal, the interaction of organisational barriers appear to act as the universal factors contributing to the exclusion of ClwD from ECED programs. These

organisational factors (policy, attitudes, teacher efficacy, coordination, funding and resources, and parental engagement), are therefore placed at the centre of my framework, while contextual factors (economic class, caste, ethnicity, language, gender and geography) are placed as the periphery, because every ClwD might not necessarily be affected in the same way by culture, economy and geography and so on.

The Framework is complex in how the various elements interact. This complexity needs a complex change. Lippitt (1987) has identified five aspects needing consideration in order to bring about complex change in working with communities.

These are:

- a clear vision;
- adequate resources;
- necessary skills;
- incentives; and
- an action plan.

In linking this model of change to the inclusion of ClwD in Nepalese ECED programs, there is a need for a clear vision for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs, followed by adequate resources such as additional amenities and equipment. Incentives for teachers and staff are also a prerequisite for this change. Finally, Lippitt (1987) argued that an action plan is essential in order to commence a clear path for inclusion. Lippitt (1987) did not discuss the influence of policy on a vision and on an action plan. She might have assumed that there was already a favourable policy for change and therefore suggested going straight into formulating vision and an action plan. However, where there is no broader policy framework relating to ECED services, there is no guide for the action plan. I believe that first there should be a policy that entitles and provides the imprimatur

for ClwD's access to, retention and advancement in ECED centres with individualised assistance, supported then by an action plan that enacts and implements the policy. This will be discussed further in chapter seven.

Chapter Summary

This chapter first reviewed and compared the index for inclusion of children in preschool by Booth and Ainscow (2006) and the equity and inclusion guide, developed by the United Nations Girls Education Initiatives (UNGEI). Building on these frameworks I identified the interaction of organisational, and contextual factors creating barriers to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal. I developed a Framework which has encompassed organisational factors at the centre of the framework, while contextual factors are placed as the periphery. I have used the Framework in the second and third phases of this research, which have involved interviews with stakeholders — parents and professionals — and the analysis of the interview data. This has then allowed for the examination of the Framework against the perspectives of these stakeholders. The ensuing chapter presents the methodology and methods of how the first, second and third phases of the research were undertaken.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Methodology is the bridge that brings our philosophical standpoint (an ontology and epistemology) and method (perspective and tool) together. It is important to remember that the researcher travels this bridge thorough the research process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 6).

Introduction

This chapter explains and justifies the overall structure of the research design. The aim of this qualitative heuristic research was to construct the Stakeholder-Informed Inclusive Education Framework (S-I Framework) for the inclusion of CIWD in ECED that can inform future policy development in this area in Nepal. The construction of the Framework as new knowledge was an outcome of the interpretation of my contextual knowledge; the data generated from the research participants and relevant literature. The nature and the process of knowledge construction in this thesis was founded on an interpretive epistemology, constructivist ontology and constructionist theory.

The chapter begins with an explanation of my epistemological and ontological stance. This is followed by a more detailed account of my research design supported by theoretical perspectives and reasoning strategies respectively. The chapter then describes the research methodology and methods, along with detailed information about the research participants. This is followed by a focus on approaches to data collection, analysis and a discussion on processes designed to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. The chapter concludes with a review of ethical protocols and the limitations and delimitations of the research.

Epistemology

My research design was grounded on an interpretive worldview or epistemology which evolved through my interpretation and reinterpretation of data, and the interplay between myself as the researcher; the perspectives of research

participants — underpinned by their experiences — and the literature reviewed in framing this research. Bassey (1999), Crotty (1998) and Neuman (2000) enunciated that the underlying principle of an interpretive epistemology is that truth or knowledge is constructed and interpreted by interactions based on human experiences in a specific situation. It is not universally situated or is 'discovered' spontaneously (Crotty, 2010; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Schwandt, 2000). As interpretive research values other's knowledge and their perceptions (Yvonna S Lincoln & Guba, 2002; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2012), incorporation of the research participants' knowledge based on their experiences in the Nepalese context resulted in the modification, reinterpretation and identification of additional factors in the final iteration of the Framework.

I played the role of interpreter of the research participants' perspectives through interview as well as when analysing relevant literature in the area of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Being one of the stakeholders, I too share some common understandings of the factors influencing the inclusion of ClwD in ECED and as such, the interpretive process cannot be separated from my own knowledge, values, viewpoints and subjectivity. However, during the process of interaction, a strong and mutually trusting relationship developed between the research participants and myself as the researcher. The research participants understood that they would contribute to decision about the inclusion or exclusion of the factors in the Framework, and I would interpret the research participants perspectives, considering context and relevant literature. In interpretive research, researchers interpret the participants' experiences in the context (Yvonna S Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Patton, 2002; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2012).

The research participants felt honoured to be part of the research process, given that they had not previously had the opportunity to participate in research in this

field. For this reason, they were interested in sharing their perspectives about the factors associated with inclusion without any hesitation or persuasion. Some of the research participants, specifically the professionals, strongly believed that the researcher should seek to understand and illuminate stakeholder experiences, as the foundation for generating authentic research findings, which would subsequently aim to inform policies. The research participants' understanding regarding my role in the research, their participation and our close relationship, helped generate the stakeholder informed Framework which emerged from this research.

Ontology

As described in the previous section of this chapter, this research strived to analyse the meaning of the participants' perspectives and the literature around the factors that influence the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal. My engagement in this meaning process was situated within constructivist ontology. The framework therefore, should be viewed as a unique, contingent and contextual construction, influenced by the experiences of research participants and myself, which was mostly based on Nepalese practices. This ontology embraces the existence of numerous realities and numerous interpretations of those realities. These realities are locally co-constructed as a negotiation of diverse human beliefs and meanings between the researcher and research participants (Yvonna S Lincoln et al., 2011). Individuals may hold perspectives on any phenomenon, and they make meaning differently, which leads to the generating of multiple realities.

The final Framework was constructed through the process of my engagement with the research participants' perspectives supported by literature. In this endeavour, our perspectives might vary from other researchers, research participants and other contexts. During sustained engagement with research stakeholders, it

became apparent that many professionals including myself, shared the same understanding of the most salient factors that influence the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. However, by contrast and of importance, professionals' understandings were different to those of parents. ECED educators reported additional significant factors in the successful inclusion of ClwD in ECED. These varying perspectives have all been valued and included generating relativist knowledge as a foundation for the final Framework.

The final Framework originating from a relativist ontological perspective is not entirely subjective, because it was not imposed either by the research participants or by myself as researcher, but rather by analysing factors perceived as significant by all stakeholders. These stakeholders were in turn influenced by contextual constructs and authentic experiences (Bassey, 1999) and as such all should feel represented in the framework.

Research design

This research employed a heuristic qualitative design to examine the robustness and relevance of the Literature-Based (L-B) Framework from research participants' perspectives. I developed the L-B Framework through an extensive literature review combined with contextual knowledge, which provided a foundation for further exploration of stakeholders' perspectives about the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. The stakeholders' perspectives were later analysed and incorporated with the L-B Framework to produce a Stakeholder Informed Inclusive Education Framework. This framework was presented in two follow up feedback sessions with the same group of stakeholders to embrace their perspectives on the Framework diagram. As a final point, I generated the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED by incorporating stakeholders' feedback. Guided by Kleining and Witt (2000), the rationale for employing a heuristic design was to

challenge my preliminary perceptions, to value diverse perspectives of stakeholders and to develop the Stakeholders Informed Framework by exploring similarities and differences between the research participants' perspectives on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs and the Literature- based framework. The overall design of this research is presented in Figure 3.1.

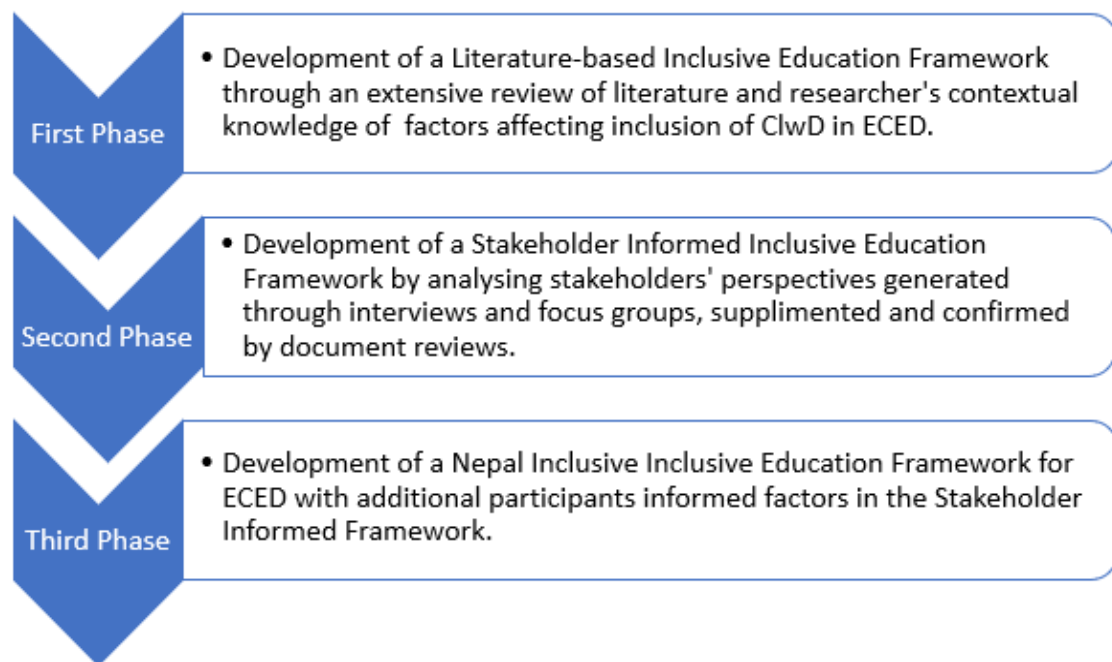


Figure 3.1. Research design.

A heuristic approach acknowledges that research builds on researchers' preconceptions of the research areas prior to gathering data from research participants. This provides the opportunity to generate fundamental knowledge of relevance to the research through a deductive process (Kleining, 2012), i.e. the Literature-based Inclusive Education Framework (now referred to as the L-B Framework) in this research. This process also positions the researcher to better understand and connect with the research participants' perspectives. In this research, my preconceptions assisted in identifying the research scope, problems and generation of the initial Framework, creating a "deductively derived theoretical

orientation, which could then be elaborated, developed, corrected and detailed” into a new and more comprehensive theoretical understanding (Ezzy, 2002, p.29).

While the initial Framework was a preliminary construct underpinned by my contextual knowledge and a review of relevant literature, it was not in itself sufficient to answer all the research questions convincingly without the inclusion of authentic data from the research participants. Without consulting the research participants, the L-B Framework might be improperly interpreted or excessively theory driven and would fail to capture contextual realities. The perspectives and experiences of the research participants changed the Framework to a modified construct, in the way Bissaker (2009) describes when writing, “[w]e are constantly in a process of testing and retesting our knowledge against new information and lived experiences” (p.57). The perspectives and experiences of the research participants were analysed and included in a new version of the Framework (the Stakeholder Informed Inclusive Education Framework, now referred to as S-I Framework). The inclusion of research participants’ perspectives resulted in the development of a more sound and more contextually appropriate Framework.

The development of the L-B Framework, prior to input from the research participants was the outcome of my theoretical and epistemological understanding of the issue of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal. Braun and Clark (2006) argued that researchers theoretical and epistemological understanding direct the entire research process. However, not every qualitative researcher develops a framework prior to entering the field. This does not necessarily mean that they undertake research in a theoretical and epistemological vacuum. An intangible framework always guides the researchers throughout their research journey. However, in this research, a tangible framework was developed as part of

the research process, specifically as nothing of relevance for the research context of Nepal was available.

Qualitative research involves processes that will ultimately develop an in-depth and holistic understanding of individual actions, perceptions, feelings and experiences. This research shared other attributes of qualitative research, such as the use of natural settings, and more focus on the processes rather than outcomes (Bodgan & Biklen, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Ezzy, 2002; Patton, 2002, 2005). Examining the L-B Framework with the touchstone of stakeholders' personal experiences would not be possible without using a qualitative approach. Furthermore, a qualitative approach was essential in order to scrutinise how and in which context several factors of the L-B Framework interact to either inhibit or enable ClwD to access and participate in ECED programs. As Mason (2002) explains,

Qualitative researching is exciting and important. It is a highly rewarding activity because it engages us with things that matter, in ways that matter... We can do all of this qualitatively by using methodologies that celebrate richness, depth, nuance, context, multidimensionality and complexity rather than being embarrassed or inconvenienced by them. Instead of editing these elements out in search of the general picture or the average, qualitative research factors them directly into its analyses and explanations. This means that it has an unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about how things work in particular contexts (p.1).

As will be discussed in detail in the method section of this chapter — all interviews and focus groups were conducted in natural settings. Since the research aimed to inform policy, in the context of inclusion of ClwD being at an infancy stage, only a qualitative approach could provide the opportunities to analyse the robustness and relevance of original Framework.

Theoretical standpoint

As the research was grounded on a constructivist ontology and heuristic design, a contextual constructionist theory shaped the research. Contextual constructionists

accept the context-specific and perception-specific nature of knowledge. As Willig (2013) postulates, “contextual constructionist research is based on the assumption that all knowledge is necessarily contextual and standpoint dependent” (p.172). Knowledge construction is the process of understanding and interpreting many visible and invisible constructs developed in different contexts, rather than knowledge imposed by the researcher or transferred from somewhere else. The generation of the final Framework—the Nepal Inclusive Education framework for ECED resulted from my interaction with the research participants and my interpretation of their beliefs regarding factors affecting the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in the Nepalese context. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) pointed out

[w]e construct knowledge through our lived experiences and through our interactions with other members of society, as such, we must participate in the research process with our subjects to ensure we are producing knowledge that is reflective of their reality. (p.103)

The research participants’ beliefs, based on their experiences, played a key role in my own knowledge construction and the construction of the final Framework. In constructionist theory, historical and culturally-specific phenomena are the very source of knowledge, and such knowledge is constructed in the process of human interaction within these phenomena (Burr, 2015; Young & Collin, 2004). The research participants’ experiences were influenced by several contextual conditions and constructs in which they were involved and that I interpreted. This resulted in identifying the factors that affect the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs, which became the basis for the final *Nepal Inclusive Education framework for ECED*.

Research methodology

An intrinsic case study research methodology, which shares the characteristics of an instrumental case study, was selected for this research. Denzin and Lincoln

(2005), Schwandt (2001), Stake (1995) and Bogdan and Biklen (1982) held that case studies attempt to research a particular case of interest with the aim of exploring it from different viewpoints. This research methodology was appropriate to accomplish the overall aim of the research, drawing on literature, contextual knowledge and stakeholder perspectives that would be relevant for use by ECED in Nepal.

Literature on research methods recommends that intrinsic case studies should be undertaken if a researcher has a deep passion to understand any phenomenon which has previously not been researched (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2011), and if the case is an exception (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). I believed that this research met both criteria. I recognise the initial construction of the Framework prior to drawing on stakeholder perspectives — reflects characteristics of an instrumental case study research. This research, however, was the foundation for the more important process of constructing a Framework informed by stakeholders. Hence the use of an intrinsic case study design overlapping with an instrumental case study design was employed in this research.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Stake (1995), and Yin (2014) reasoned that instrumental and multiple case studies become the best methodological options when cases are examined to hone theories and to make generalisation (undertaken in relevant conditions). In addition, Yin (2014) explained that case study methodology is applicable when answering 'how' and 'why' questions and to deeply understand a phenomenon. This research has 'how' questions. Despite the absence of any specific why questions, the research certainly sought to answer 'why' ClWD are not included in ECED programs. I collected data from multiple sources in order to deeply explore the root causes of the inclusion and exclusion

of ClwD in ECED. Furthermore, there were two additional reasons for selecting case study methodology; 1) Case study offers a holistic investigation and analysis of a phenomenon (Merriam, 1998); 2) Case study research provides a more comprehensive understanding of stakeholders' perspectives on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs.

A case study researcher defines the cases or the units of analysis to determine data collection methods and organise the collected data. In this research, the case was a group of individuals (the stakeholders) and their perspectives about the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal. Yin (2014) stated that, cases could be people, small groups, programs, incidents, partnerships, relationships, communities and organisations. The perspectives of ECED professionals, educators and parents of children with and without disability from selected ECED programs, provided the major data source for this research. These stakeholders held answers to the enablers and barriers for inclusion of ClwD in ECED.

Patton (2002) and Yin (2014) informed the selection of this case. According to Patton (2002) a unit of analysis is a group of individuals, sharing common understandings or worldviews. The research participants, in this sense, shared a broader picture of the reasons for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. However, the experiences of the stakeholders, who were involved with different aspects of education — e.g. policy, advocacy and classroom practice — were crucial for understanding the issues, as well as the enabling factors of inclusion. In the same vein, based on their lived experiences, staff engaged in the inclusion of ClwD in three ECED centres that were located in different places and operated by different organisations, provided insights for this research. For example, they described how the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs had been possible and how the

experience of inclusion had changed their perspectives on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED.

Research participants

This research applied a criterion-based purposeful sampling method to select the research participants. In this method, researchers deliberately concentrate on some relevant and important cases with ample information that are pertinent to the research problem, rather than on a broader representation of cases (Coyne, 1997; Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 1998; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2011). The selection criterion for participants for this research was their involvement in different aspects of policy and practice of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. Patton (2002) explained “the logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (p.238). In order to provide sufficient and relevant information it was important to select stakeholders with varied experiences who were involved in different aspects of inclusion of ClwD in ECED.

Stakeholders’ willingness to participate in the research also influenced my participants’ selection criterion for this research. Creswell (2007) indicated the importance of inviting participants who would be willing to openly and honestly share information or ‘their story’. Therefore, prior to being selected, the research participants were asked whether they were interested in and willing to participate in the research.

The research participants felt honoured to be part of the research process, given they had often been overlooked in research in Nepal. Parents, in particular, with no hesitation or coercion, were very interested in sharing their perspectives on factors associated with inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. One parent, Kali (pseudonym) said,

This is the first time I participate [sic] in such a discussion. I can learn so many things from this discussion. I am fortunate to share my experiences with you today.

The research participants felt empowered and enlightened by the opportunities for sharing their experiences and hearing others' stories in the research. They perceived that the research valued their perspectives.

The key research participants included twenty-six professionals and ten parents. The professionals comprised ten government and NGO professionals, five persons with disabilities from disability organisations and eleven ECED educators and staff. Amongst the ten parents, five parents had ClwD and five parents had children without disability. The number of research participants according to category and their experience is presented in Table 3.

Table 2.1.

Research participants according to category and experience

Number and category of the research participants	Experience
Six ECED staff from three Inclusive ECED centres (three ECED Chair and three teachers)	Experience of ECED management and teaching.
10 parents (Five parents of ClwD and five parents of children living without disability)	Experience of inclusion of children in the same inclusive ECED centre.
Six ECED educators	Non- experience of inclusive ECED
Five government professionals	Engaged in policy drafting and program implementation in the Ministry of Education.
Five NGO professionals	Experience of professional development of ECED teachers and knowledge about education policies.
Five persons from disability organisation	Experience of policy advocacy,

Government, NGO professionals and persons with disabilities

Five individuals from the government and five from disability organisations, who had experiences of developing and drafting policies, plans and programs for education were invited to participate. Five NGO professionals with experience of professional development and knowledge of education policies were also invited. The underlying reason for the selection of these participants was the hope they would be well placed to understand the purposes of the research and in particular the relevance of the Stakeholder Informed Framework to ongoing policy development.

ECED educators from Non-inclusive ECED programs

Five ECED educators, all female from Baglung district with no experience of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED were also invited to participate in the research. These research participants shared a non-experienced perspective. This perspective was of importance because the majority of ECED programs in Nepal employ staff without the experience of including ClwD.

Of the twenty professionals, nine were female and eleven were male. Although I was aware of the influence of respondents' gender composition on their perspectives, an equal participation of male and female was not possible due to the small number of females working in senior position in the government and NGOs. Nevertheless, this gender composition was not detrimental to the overall aim of the research. In addition to the five ECED educators, four female respondents worked in key positions in government and NGOs. Of this cohort, two teacher educators and two NGO professionals had extensive experience of ECED and provided sound knowledge. In addition, of the female participants one female in particular, who had worked with education for ClwD since the 1980s and had

exposure to international programs, brought wide ranging knowledge and experience of inclusion.

All research participants were between 30 to 58 years of age, except for one NGO professional, who was very experienced in inclusion, and who was over 70 years of age at the time of the interviews. The research participants were asked questions about what factors affect the inclusion of ClwD in ECED, and what their suggestions were for future policy development in this area. Their responses and perspectives were analysed and consolidated to develop the Stakeholder Informed Framework.

Staff of three inclusive ECED programs

Six staff, including the chairperson of the ECED management committee and an educator from each inclusive ECED centre in three districts (Kavrepalanchok, Baglung and Lalitpur) were invited to participate in the research. Of the three chairpersons, two were male and one was female. All three female teachers from these three inclusive ECED centres also voluntarily participated in the interviews (see Figure 3.2). These individuals were selected to explore whether their experience of working with ClwD in inclusive ECED changed their perspectives on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. The experiences of these staff around the inclusion of ClwD in three different contexts assisted me in examining the strengths and weaknesses of their programs in different settings, namely the program location and operation responsibilities. For example, the staff of the two inclusive ECED centres in Kavrepalanchok and Lalitpur had experiences of inclusion in urban and semi-urban areas, while the staff of the inclusive ECED centre located in the remote western village of Baglung district had differing experiences of inclusion of ClwD in their program. The selection of the chairpersons of these three ECED management committees and the ECED

educators, provided the necessary management and pedagogy experiences around ECED. The operation of those ECED centres by different agencies, NGOs, municipalities and a district education office would provide data on specific, and at times unique, factors and elements that were of relevance and importance to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs.

The educator and the chairperson from inclusive ECED in Kavrepalanchok had 14 years' experience in the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. This centre included nine children with mild intellectual disabilities, as well as two children with autism, one child who was hard of hearing, and five children without disabilities in their ECED program. Similarly, the staff of Lalitpur had two years' experience of inclusion of ClwD in ECED. They were able to include one child with hearing impairment and mild intellectual disabilities with 21 local children in their ECED. Similarly, the staff of Baglung had one year's experience of inclusion of one child with visual impairment and 19 children without disability.

Parents of children with and without disability

In Kavrepalanchok district, parents of children with and without disability, who had experiences of the inclusion of their children in the same ECED program, were selected as research participants. Parents were important stakeholders in this research, but as there was only one child with disability included in the other two research sites, it was not possible to generate sufficient parent participants. Fortunately, the parents from Kavrepalanchok district provided a rich data source for the research. I employed a snowballing or referral sampling technique to include parents of ClwD in order to find the required number of participants for the research. This type of sampling is used when researchers need to find more respondents and involves asking the already participating individuals whether they know of other individuals who could be nominated as potential respondents

(Patton, 2002). Of the ten parents of children with and without disability, eight parents were female and two were male. Although the intended selection of parents of ClwD from diverse caste and ethnic groups was beyond my control, I was still able to have diverse groups due to the presence of multi-caste and multi-ethnic children in ECED centres. There was one parent from the Dalit community, four from ethnic or Janajati, three from Brahmin and two parents from Chhetri communities. Similarly, I was unable to involve many fathers of ClwD as participating parents. This was because they were unavailable at the time of the fieldwork due to their work commitments. Finally, the participants ages were between 20 to 35 years, as might be expected, since they were the parents of early years' children.

Research methods

As a case study, the second phase of the research employed multiple methods of data collection. Individual in-depth interviews focus group discussions and document reviews were all employed to generate data. These multiple methods were employed for two main reasons. One was to provide authenticity which allows readers to examine the thesis for trustworthiness. The second reason was to generate a rich data set of the enablers and barriers to inclusion of ClwD in ECED. Bassey (1999) points out that case study research requires a data set with sufficient information to reasonably interpret the findings and to claim that the knowledge generated by the research is new and is applicable to similar situations. Data gleaned from three different sources in the Nepalese context were varied, detailed and comprehensive. The research also encompassed the perspectives of many stakeholders, including parents, teachers, program implementers, policy makers and policy advocates. Analysis of such rich data provided many angles from which to generate knowledge about inclusion of ClwD

in ECED. By relating this research to the review of relevant literature, I was able to create and communicate a valuable argument for the inclusion of ClwD in ECEDs in Nepal. Furthermore, as enunciated by Bassey (1999), the data set could provide an audit trail for any fellow or future researchers to agree, challenge, or develop different arguments.

Individual interviews

Individual interviews were included in this research in order to understand the beliefs, experiences and perspectives of the ECED staff regarding the strengths and challenges of the inclusion of ClwD in their specific inclusive ECED programs. Given that there were three different settings in which the small number of ECED programs for ClwD were provided, individual interviews were necessary in order to glean detailed information about the specific programs, and their unique strengths and challenges.

The interviews were important in determining whether the responses of these ECED staff reflected any of the factors identified in the initial L-B Framework or raised issues not identified. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) argued that in-depth interviews are extremely appealing to issue-oriented research, whereby researchers can access an individual's beliefs and thoughts through the participant's own words on a particular issue. Interviews were determined as an appropriate method for data generation because a major aim of the research was to generate a Nepal Inclusive Education framework for ECED, drawing on issues raised by the research participants. Furthermore, Turner III (2010), recommended researchers should genuinely share the information of research projects, where ethically appropriate, with the research participants, as a foundation for establishing positive relationships. In this research, I initially contacted all the six

participants via telephone and made appointments to meet in person to share information about the research project. At the first appointment, I provided background information about myself and the project and provided a letter of introduction. The introductory letter ensured the participants understood the aims, processes and outcomes of the research. In addition, I informed them about the potential benefits of participating in the research.

In line with Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), I was aware of both the physical setting of the interviews, as well as the comfort of the participants. I proposed room arrangements that were quiet, echo-free, of adequate size, appropriate for recording and accessible to the respondents, advising that we could hire a room in hotels in Kavrepalanchok and Lalitpur, if participants thought the hotel rooms were more suitable for the interviews. However, the research participants of all three inclusive ECED programs found that the meeting rooms within their own organisations were appropriate for the interviews.

Turner III (2010) maintained that researchers should take an informal approach to interviews in order to reduce any sense of stress. This informal method of interview builds a close relationship between the researcher and participants and can assist in developing an in-depth understanding of the research participants' perspectives. An informal approach also allows opportunities to ask probing questions once the conversation is flowing. At the outset, I explained to the research participants that the interviews were for the purpose of my research and that the conversations would be informal. A semi-structured interview protocol, consisting of open-ended questions (see Appendix B) was used for the interviews in order to encourage the research participants to openly and honestly share their experiences, ideas, concerns and feelings. The protocol encompassed questions around why they commenced the inclusion of ClwD in ECED: whether their

experiences of the inclusion of ClwD changed their perspectives; what they believed were the enablers and barriers to inclusion and what influenced the effective inclusion of ClwD in their ECED programs. Finally, the protocol included the question of what specific suggestions they would have for government policies. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) recommended that researchers incorporate strategies that motivate the respondents to express their feelings and stories spontaneously without any coercion. Bearing this in mind, I started the interviews by deliberately restating the aims of the research, so that participants were clear about its purpose. I encouraged participants to share their viewpoints freely. I remained oriented towards a constructionists' approach in the interviews and endeavoured to make the interviews interactive between the research participants and myself. While I listened attentively, I did not stay passive in the interview process; I built an interactive and conversational approach.

I indicated that I was actively participating in the conversations by nodding and maintaining eye contact. I showed the participants that I was interested in their stories by repeating what they shared. In addition, I used probing strategies to clarify my understanding of the context of their responses. Subsequent to listening to and analysing their perspectives and stories I was able to determine how their responses connected with the initial L-B Framework. I did not share the initial Framework with the participants until the interviews were completed, because I did not want the research participants to be unduly influenced by it. The duration of each interview was approximately 90 minutes. However, one interview with the Chairperson of one ECED program who was more experienced with the inclusion of ClwD in ECED lasted for two hours. I summarised the interviews at the end, so that the participants could confirm the viewpoints they shared with me. Subsequently, I asked the participants to correct me if I did not interpret their

viewpoints accurately. I ended the interviews by thanking the research participants.

Field notes were generated following the interviews in order to document ideas, dialogue, insights and reflections. In accordance with Bogdan and Biklen(1982), and Saldaña (2003) a detailed account of the process and outcomes of the field notes was also constructed. The field notes were arranged in a chronological index system that kept records of dates and developments in the research. These field notes were of particular significance when analysing the robustness of the initial Framework. Examining the field notes, I was able to capture the meaning of the responses related to my research questions and revise the L-B Framework accordingly.

Subsequent to modifying with the perspectives of individual participants, I presented the next iteration i.e. the Stakeholders Informed Inclusive Education Framework (S-I Framework) at a further meeting with participants. At this point, the participants were invited to comment on whether the Framework reflected their responses or whether additional factors needed consideration. The interview participants then commented on the Framework. This approach was designed to critique my previous knowledge. As Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2012) noted, “the point is to ask a question, so that you can clarify your thinking ... and raise the odds that you’ll discover what’s wrong with your thinking, when you get into the field” (p.37). This argument proved to be true in this research. Significantly, the research participants suggested two additional factors and its six dimensions to be included in the Framework. In such a way, it benefitted from their authentic experiences and knowledge of how the inclusion of ClwD became possible in their organisations and what problems they were facing in this endeavour. I will provide

additional detail about the research participants' influence on the final Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED in chapter six.

Focus group discussion

Focus groups were conducted following the interviews and were used to identify and analyse stakeholders' views on factors that may generally affect the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. The inclusion of focus group discussions provided opportunities for understanding and analysis from a wide range of perspectives — namely parents and professionals — about what factors inhibit and enable the inclusion of ClwD in the Nepalese ECED programs in general, and what factors need consideration for the successful inclusion of those children. The perspectives of professionals, who were involved in policies, plans and programs formulation and implementation, and parents, who were the recipients of policies, plans and programs would provide varied perspectives in this research. This process allowed acknowledging and valuing the voice of those parents, who were previously not given opportunities for participating in research. As argued by Silverman (2011) one aim of focus group is to bring to the fore those groups whose voice are unheard . In Nepal, ECED educators, and parents of children with and without disability require empowerment because they lack opportunities to gain knowledge about the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. This method of inquiry is compatible with constructivist ontology and constructionist theory, as discussed in sections 3.3 and 3.5 of this chapter. The generation of relative and contextual knowledge, requires varied perspectives developed in varied contexts (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Krueger & Casey, 2014). This research employed focus groups to understand various viewpoints, and this

contributed to the development of the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED, which is relative and context-dependent.

Interactions within and between the groups and foregrounding of the differing experiences of group members was necessary in order to examine the soundness of the L-B Framework. The main purpose of focus group research was to draw on respondents' "beliefs, attitudes and feelings by exploiting group processes" (Freeman, 2006, p.493), specifically how group members interact with each other about a particular case. Focus groups are believed to be appropriate for balancing and accommodating the overt and covert behaviours of the group members and varied opinions within groups, because some participants tend to accept the thoughts of fellow group members, while others want to dominate the discussion (Freeman, 2006).

Six focus groups of five participants were formed, two of which were comprised of parents, and four of which were comprised of professionals (see Figure 3.3). Krueger and Casey (2014) and Bloor Frankland, Thomas and Robson (2001) suggested that five participants per group is desirable in order to make the discussions interactive and to ensure everyone has a voice. This group-size made the discussions, lively, interactive, suitable for the physical environments — room-size and seating arrangements — and for the convenience of audio recordings. Each focus group lasted approximately one hour to ninety minutes.

Krueger and Casey (2014) explained that the role of any researchers should be that of moderator, observer, listener and finally analyst. I endeavoured to play all these roles. Furthermore, I believe I created a positive environment by encouraging the research participants to share their views. The participants were generally relaxed and interested in participating in the discussions due to a number of facilitating strategies, such as using markers, as posited by Weiss

(1995), asking follow-up questions, responding to participants verbally and non-verbally. Similar to the individual interviews, the focus group discussions were divided into three segments. I began the conversations with a short introduction of the aims and objectives of the research in order to ensure the participants were aware of the research project. Another aim of the introduction was to build a rapport with the research participants. I then went to the question-led discussions. The strategies used were designed to accommodate the overt and covert behaviours of the group members.

It was difficult to encourage parents to speak who were illiterate or had little education, as they lacked the confidence to speak in a group. However, I repeatedly encouraged them to share whatever experiences they had regarding the issue of their children's inclusion. The experience was similar with the ECED educators. Three were more confident while two were less confident and appeared to prefer to agree with the other group members. One mother cried when asked to share the story of how she found the inclusive ECED centre for her son with disability. After that, I took a pause and asked her whether she wanted to stop the discussion. Instead, she said that she was willing to continue the conversation because sharing those unpleasant moments with someone would reduce her burden to some extent.

The participants shared many interesting stories of inclusion of ClwD in ECED. I have analysed and reported those stories in more detail in the findings and discussion chapter of this thesis. At the conclusion of the focus groups, I thanked all the participants for their invaluable perspectives and for contributing their time. I continuously created field notes, during and following the discussions, in order to include them in my reflections. These reflections were used to revise the L-B Framework. Being a native speaker of Nepali, I transcribed and translated the

interviews that were originally in Nepali, and employed a colleague, who is also bilingual to check for accuracy. Although my research assistant was bilingual, he is a native speaker of Nepali but not English. While translating, my colleague and I endeavoured not to lose the essence of the transcripts. As neither of us were background speakers of English, our translation may lack absolute accuracy in this language. This was one of the limitations of this research, though I do not believe it influenced the outcomes.

Document reviews

Relevant documents from the respective organisations were collected and reviewed in order to supplement and corroborate data from the individual interviews and focus groups and also from the literature review, for as Bowen (2009) postulated, document reviews complement and substantiate the data generated from other sources. Another purpose for the document reviews was to correlate the opinion expressed by the research participants. Document analysis assisted in understanding the research participants' perspectives and contexts. The document review also provided a basis from which to ask the research participants further probing questions.

These documents included government and NGO policies, plans and programs. The most recent and past constitutions of Nepal, as well as government education and disability-related policies were reviewed. Other documents included government policy, plans and programs; the reports of past commissions for educational development; school-sector reform plans; annual strategic and budget plans, and the annual work plan and budget for the Nepalese Department of Education. In addition, organisational documents, such as project documents, annual progress reports and status reports were analysed. Finally, ECED

curriculum and ECED educators' training manuals were reviewed. These documents were accessed with the consent of the authority of each organisation.

Thematic analysis was employed to analysis the data from the different organisations. The same themes as emerged from the individual interviews and focus groups transcripts were used to analyse the content of the documents.

Follow-up feedback sessions of the focus groups

I organised two follow-up feedback sessions with the participants of the focus groups, one with the parents and the other with the professionals from the Ministry of Education, experts from NGOs and representatives from disability organisations. The follow-up feedback sessions were arranged subsequent to incorporating the perspectives of the focus group members into the framework. In these sessions, I presented the Stakeholder Informed Framework, to the participants. The participants were asked to provide their views on whether additional factors should be added or removed to ensure it was comprehensive and contextually appropriate, accurately reflecting voices of the research participants. The participants agreed this new version of the framework was inclusive of their previous perspectives and relevant to the Nepalese context. However, they had two further suggestions. First, reference to those ClwD, who had lost their parents. Second, explicitly include all the dimensions related to contextual and organisational factors. I will discuss how the research participants observed and recommended changes to the Stakeholder Informed Framework in chapter six.

A summary of data collection methods is presented in Figure 3.3. The use of multiple methods for gathering data and the final follow-up feedback sessions contributed in significant ways to ensuring the final outcome. This research and

the resulting Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED is representative of not only an in-depth literature review, but more importantly the lived experiences and perspectives of the research participants. Field work for the research was conducted from September 2016 to January 2017.

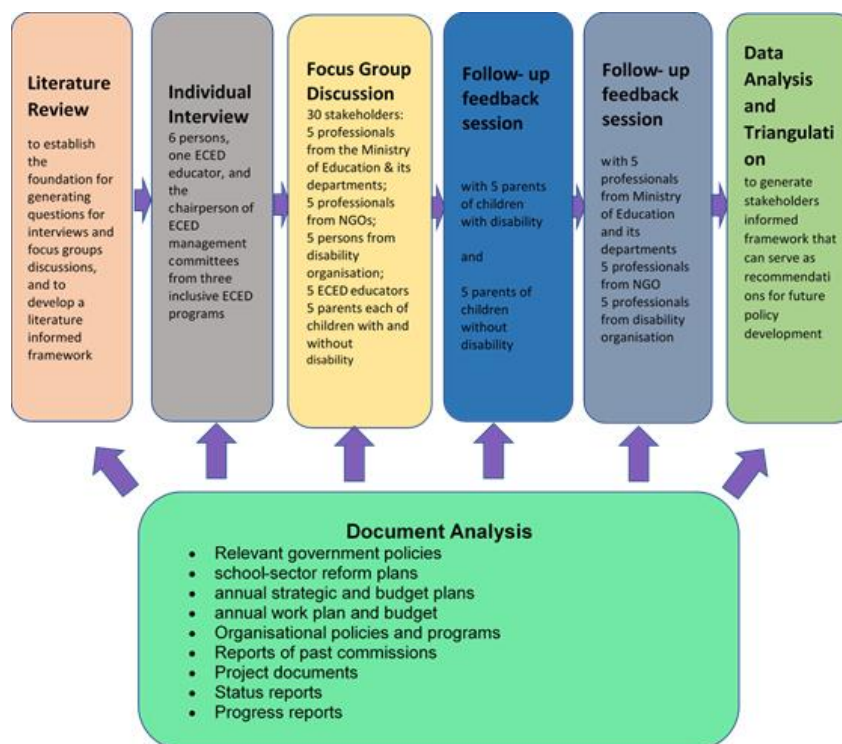


Figure 3.2. Data collection methods.

Data analysis

Patton (2002) recommended that researchers describe their analytic framework, so that readers can attain a deeper understanding of the background to the research findings; for example, how events, constructs, or themes were developed and related. “Researchers have an obligation to monitor and report their own analytic procedures and processes as fully and truthfully as possible” (Patton, 2002, p. 434). This section presents a detailed description of the process and steps of data analyses.

A theoretical thematic analysis procedure was employed to analyse the data generated from various sources. Research questions for each phase of the

research and the literature influenced the data analyses. Bearing in mind, the six steps of thematic analysis recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2014) and Braun and Clarke (2006), data analysis commenced with initial familiarisation of the data by reading and rereading the transcripts several times.

The second step was to identify the latent meaning and pattern in the entire data set and label or code for specific meanings, ideas, themes, theoretical concepts, keywords, participants' stories and policies. An initial or open coding style was employed for the first cycle of coding. Open coding separates the data, scrutinises it closely and then identifies similarities and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Nvivo 11 software was used to code the transcripts, whereby I created nodes as a container of themes, codes, and references. Grbich (2013) pointed out that researchers using qualitative data generally required the following five skills in order to code. These were the ability to:

- perceive data in a wider context rather than attached to a single quote or idea;
- interpret data by linking with theories and/ or literature;
- sequence codes as well as the knowledge of exclusion of irrelevant data;
- ignore the data that do not fit the research; and
- remember and relate similar data in the entire data sets.

In this research, I endeavoured to understand the context of the research participants' perspectives and link with their context, and with theories about inclusive education. Although the entire data in this research were relevant to inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs, I focused more on the data, which related the specific research questions, and the L-B Framework. In the third step of data analysis, I combined the themes generated from focus groups and individual interviews in order to consolidate information.

As I progressed in developing themes, some subthemes emerged. This technique was helpful to discover the interaction and interrelationship among the themes. The fourth step involved reviewing codes by sorting, comparing, integrating, combining and checking them against the transcripts and field notes, as well as the organisational documents. The fifth step was to define codes. As a theoretical thematic analysis, I did not need to define all the themes identified in the data, because many themes corresponded to the themes already identified in the L-B Framework. However, the coding process identified two new themes and six subthemes. In the sixth step, I created the reports of all individual themes.

Through this process, I developed 13 themes and several subthemes by clustering them (see page 120 and 139). Connections between themes were analysed by comparing them with both relevant and available national and international literature. Finally, those themes were linked or added to the existing themes. Although a theoretical thematic analysis approach focused on the deductive process of data analysis, some additional themes were explored through the inductive process of surfacing commonalities. Hence, data analysis in this research was the combination of both deductive and inductive processes.

For instance, I identified in the literature of inclusion of ClwD that policy is an influencing factor that greatly affects children's inclusion in ECED. Policy is indispensable for ECED, in order to ensure rights and responsibilities of beneficiaries and stakeholders and to design the plans and programs for inclusive education. Literature also revealed that policies are required for ensuring inclusive education and to raise awareness about disabilities; as well as for the development of accessible physical environments, resources, coordination and parental engagement in ECED matters. However, the research participants

believed that in addition to the factors identified in the literature, there were other factors that also affected ECED services for ClwD and that these required a policy. Policy is essential for the creation of the concept and vision for inclusion of ClwD in ECED, such as the development of teacher capacity and the accessibility of physical facilities. Without an inclusive education policy there were negative consequences such as institutional rejection, a culture of wait and see and an absence of early diagnosis of disability. The participants also shared that a lack of policy consultation was one reason for Nepal's current unrealistic policy. I further analysed the 12 factors and dimensions identified by participants by comparing them with theories and then by linking them with the Nepalese policy, practice and context. I used the analytical framework (Figure 3.3) as a depiction of policy-related factors for children's inclusion in ECED.

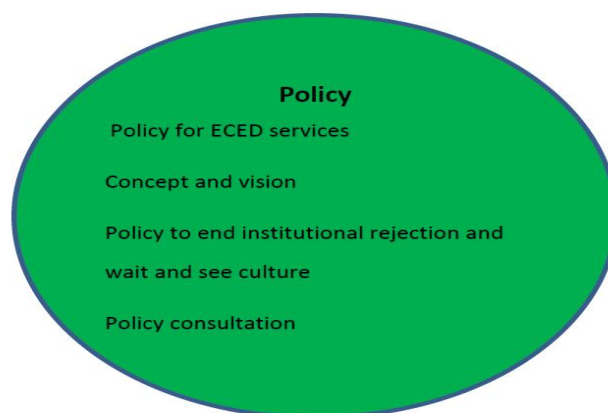


Figure 3.3. Data analysis framework for policy.

Trustworthiness of the research

Qualitative research should reflect verisimilitude or truthfulness, and this is generally achieved through evidence that is credible, dependable, confirmable and transferable in the thesis (Barbour, 2001; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). It is hoped this thesis through its careful explanation and documentation

achieves these outcomes. Credibility is the believability or authenticity of the research participants' perspectives in the data presented. A faithful interpretation requires an original data set, generated from the research participants without any fabrications and manipulations by the researchers. Dependability is reflected in the uniformity of data generated throughout the research period, suggesting participants are reliable and of relevance to the research. Similarly, confirmability is the situation in which the research participants share their perspectives without any imposition or coercion by the researchers (Coll & Kalnins, 2009; Y.S. Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I believe I have reflected all these standards in my research processes.

The research used multiple methods, such as interviews, focus group discussions and document reviews. This helped to enhance the credibility and dependability of the research. The credibility of the research was also maintained by comparing the data obtained from these three different sources. My efforts to build a good rapport with the research participants, as well as my honesty made them willing to spontaneously share their perspectives with me. The Nepalese culture of a collective sense provided additional benefits whereby the research participants naturally responded to the interview questions without any pressure. My faithful recording and transcribing of their perspectives and expressions supported the credibility of the research.

I applied member checking to confirm the interviewees' responses to the recorded data for the individual interview. The interview transcripts were displayed at the end of each interview and the research participants were asked to confirm them. In order to check the consistency of the research participants' perspectives. I presented the re-designed Stakeholder Informed Inclusive Education Framework to participants in both the individual interviews and follow up feedback sessions for

focus groups to determine the credibility of this Framework. These actions complied with recommendations by Creswell (2008), Marshall and Rossman (2014) and Morse et al., (2002). Furthermore, a comprehensive account of the research design, methods and fieldwork was provided in this chapter for others to examine. This detailed account of the research should be sufficient to ensure the transferability of the newly created knowledge in a similar context.

Research ethics

Research ethics is an academic, professional and personal code required in conducting research honestly. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) Guillemin and Gillam (2004) and Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2010) stated that all researchers should have an ethical obligation in providing justice for research participants, as well as meeting research standards. The indicators of ethical codes include ensuring the freedom of participation with informed consent; keeping the confidentiality of the participants' perspectives; being honest to the participants; and respecting their culture.

Research ethics were maintained throughout the research. Prior to commencing the research, ethical clearance was sought from the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at Flinders University by describing in detail all aspects of the research. Gaining approval from research ethics committees not only ensures the moral obligation of the researcher, but also examines the methodological compatibility and the consistency of research design with the aims and objectives of the research. Approval also pays particular attention to ensuring research participants are not burdened or at risk through their voluntary involvement.

In order to translate the commitment made with Flinders University's ethics committee, into my fieldwork, all the research participants were provided with a

detailed information sheet (in Nepali) explaining the aims, processes and outcomes of the research. They were also provided with a consent form prior to the interviews and focus groups. This provided them with time to consider their involvement. On the day of the interviews and focus group discussions, those who had agreed to participate were asked to sign a consent form. Even though, the participants of focus groups and the participants of follow-up feedback sessions recognised each other, I used pseudonyms to assure their anonymity in the thesis. In relation to confidentiality, all the interviews and focus groups occurred at separate times and in separate rooms. The interview data were kept secured in a password protected personal computer that belonged to me. Password protected data travellers were used to send the interview transcripts to the supervisors. As a Nepalese woman and person, I share some basic cultural values with the research participants and I was able to design the interview questions so that they were not culturally sensitive.

Limitations of the research

Taking into account that the research was undertaken within a specific timeframe and with little resourcing, the project was limited to stakeholders involved within the education sphere of ClwD, and did not include stakeholders from health and nutrition, or protection-related services. Similarly, it was not feasible to include parents of children with disability, who were not currently in ECED services, due to the lack of information about those children and their parents. For example, as the researcher I did not know who they were and where they resided. I was also unable to include parents of some of the extremely marginalised ethnic groups — Raute and Chepang — due to the limited scope of my research. This was the same in the case of parents whose ClwD did not access spiritual schools. The situation for these parents could be investigated in future research. Flick (2009)

and Yin (2014) argued that the findings from case study research are often not generalised due to differences in the context of research. As an intrinsic case study overlapped with instrumental case study research, the findings of this research may not be generalisable within the broader context of ECED. However, the outcomes should provide some new insights to effectively provide inclusive ECED services in a similar context.

Delimitations

The scope of the research was to understand the perspectives of stakeholders linked to the public ECED programs of Nepal. Public ECED programs in Nepal were community-based, organisational and NGO-supported. Thus, the research did not deal with persons engaged in privately-run kindergarten and Montessori schools.

Interviews and focus groups were chosen to collect the in-depth experiences and perspectives of 36 stakeholders, including parents and professionals from various fields of education on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. I believe that the methods used in the research were congruent with and answered the initial research questions.

Chapter summary

This chapter highlighted the epistemological and methodological foundations underpinning the research. The research design was then detailed followed by a more expansive account of methods, data collection and data analyses. Attention to issues of trustworthiness and ethical practices were discussed. Finally, the limitations and delimitations of the research were addressed. The following chapter analyses the research participants' perceptions on the influences of the contextual factors in the inclusion of ClwD in ECED.

Chapter 4: Stakeholders' Experiences of and Perspectives on the Contextual Factors Affecting the Inclusion of ClwD in ECED

Education is not simply about making schools available for those who are already able to access them. It is about being proactive in identifying the barriers and obstacles learners encounter in attempting to access opportunities for quality education, as well as in removing those barriers and obstacles that lead to exclusion (UNESCO, 2012, p.1).

Introduction

Phase two of the research involved collecting data from a range of stakeholders through interviews and focus groups. This chapter presents the analyses of the stakeholders' perspectives on the contextual factors that affect the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. Analyses of documents along with the interview and focus group data were substantiated to generate responses to the following three research questions:

1. What are stakeholders' experiences of and perspectives on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal?
2. How have stakeholders' experiences of inclusion influenced their beliefs about inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?
3. What factors do stakeholders believe need consideration to achieve effective inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?

This chapter begins with the stakeholders' experiences of non-inclusion of the large majority of ClwD in ECED programs. The chapter then presents their experience of the inclusion of a small number of ClwD in ECED programs. It presents analyses of research participants' responses concerning contextual factors affecting the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs, followed by their suggestions on how successful inclusion might be achieved.

Non-inclusion of ClwD in ECED

Given the limited nature of inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal, it was not surprising that the research participants commenced their Focus Group Discussions and individual interviews sharing their experiences of the non-inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. All participants reported that they were aware that ClwD made up a large number of the children who were not included in ECED services in Nepal.

The following two responses represented the perceptions of the participating professionals in relation to the non-inclusion of ClwD in ECED. As Nanda and Kubja (pseudonyms)¹² stated:

Nanda: Your five fingers are more than enough to count the inclusive ECED centres for children with disability in Nepal, because only a few ECED centres are including children with disability in their programs.

Kubja: More than 99 per cent of children with disability are not getting access to ECED services. Hence, less than one per cent is accessing these services.

The Nepalese Government's annual school census statistics paint a similarly discouraging picture of the number of ClwD accessing ECED programs. Only 0.23 per cent of children with additional needs were enrolled in ECED programs (Department of Education, 2016). This data supports the research participants' responses that a very low number of ECED centres (less than 5) include ClwD in their programs.

My research found that the majority of participating parents of children without disability were unaware of the existence of inclusive ECED centres for ClwD in their districts. By contrast, the participating parents of ClwD were aware of the non-inclusion of ClwD in ECED in their districts, although they were unclear about

¹² As noted in chapter three, pseudonyms, instead of the real name of the research participants were used to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of the data.

whether there were ECED centres that included ClwD in other districts in Nepal. The focus group discussion and individual interview participants believed that the exclusion of ClwD from ECED was the result of many factors. Collectively, they identified seven interacting contextual factors and six organisational factors influencing inclusion, or in this case lack of inclusion, of ClwD in ECED programs. These contextual factors included family poverty; spirituality; caste; ethnicity; language of instruction; gender and geographic location. The six organisational factors identified were: policy; attitudes; teacher efficacy; resources; coordination and parental engagement. A majority of stakeholders alluded to contextual factors and organisational factors already featured in the L-B Framework presented in chapter two. Stakeholders identified two additional contextual factors — namely, spirituality and the schooling culture of some ethnic communities — as well as several dimensions associated with organisational factors.

Table 4.1 provides an overview of the contextual factors that emerged following analyses of the data. Following this table, each factor will be considered in more detail, highlighting specific data that contributed to the generation of each factor.

Table 4.1

Research participants' responses on the contextual factors affecting the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs

Family poverty	Spirituality	Caste and ethnicity-based discrimination	Gender	Geographic location
Poverty; a twofold effect on the inclusion of individuals with a disability	Religious schools lacking ECED programs	Untouchability, although reducing in cities, endures in villages and at the household level	More gender discrimination in villages and in Terai Differing scenario of discrimination in rural and urban settings	Tough terrain with no infrastructure in Himal and Pahad and remoteness often reduces accessibility to schooling
Inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs demands extra cost		Labeling of Dalit; the changed issue of discrimination	Poverty, culture, policy, urban and rural settings	ECED services in tough terrain: unmet need
		Ethnicity		Need for alternative mode of ECED programs
		Schooling culture of marginalised ethnic groups		
		Language of instruction		
		Mother tongue vs Nepali and English language		

Family poverty: two-fold effects on the inclusion of individuals with disability

Consistent with the national and international literature (Plan International & London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, 2014; UNESCO, 2009; UNICEF, 2013), reviewed in chapter two, poverty appeared to be a significant barrier to the inclusion of ClwD in education. All research participants believed that family poverty not only deprives ClwD from being included in ECED, but that it doubly effects individuals with disability. Narayan, a professional participant in the

research represented the concerns of a majority of parents and professionals in his following response:

Poverty affects disability in two ways. First, parents need more money to cure disability and educate their children with disability. Second, people with disability cannot earn, or earn less, as compared to people without a disability and they become poorer. We need to address these two dimensions of poverty within disability.

This observation resonates with the findings of The World Bank (2012), that reported a similar perspective in relation to the two-fold effect of poverty in disability inclusion, “poverty may increase the likelihood of disability and may also be a consequence of disability” (p.13). Poor families struggle to meet the necessities for food, water, shelter and clothing. Meeting developmental and educational needs becomes a significant challenge. When children’s developmental and educational needs are not met, their disabilities worsen. They become dependent on others and less productive. As a consequence, poverty perpetuates for many generations (Singal, 2015).

Inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs demands extra cost

Parents participating in the research expressed their concern stating that in Nepal, the government stipend policy — the single policy for supporting children from poor families’ enrolment in schools — has become a barrier rather than enabler to early years ClwD, because this stipend is only for primary and secondary school-aged ClwD. Early years ClwD are ineligible for this stipend and ECED programs are not free as are primary education programs. The following view from Ram highlights this concern shared by the participating parents.

I have a complaint that the government is discriminating [between] younger and older children. You see, early years children are not getting scholarships, but primary years children are getting scholarships. This is not fair for parents like us who cannot pay fees for ECED programs.

ECED [services] should be free for poor parents. The government should give scholarships to those children who are enrolled in ECED and who are poor.

Parents advised that the government should provide a stipend and free ECED services based on equity. It should, for example, give a reasonable amount of financial support to those parents who are poor and cannot afford fees for the education of their ClwD. These parents' recommendations for free ECED services and stipends, on the basis of equity, is noteworthy, as more often than not Nepalese policies are oriented to a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, the stipend policy of payment of 3,000.00 NPR monthly (approx. 35.85 AUD) for all ClwD who enrol in primary and secondary schools and reside in school hostels, is allocated without assessing family poverty or specific family needs. This small amount of money only covers the cost of accommodation, which may be sufficient for those families who are able to pay the cost of other education and health related expenses for their ClwD. However, the stipend does not support those families who are living below the poverty line as they forego the stipend for residential schooling and cannot afford the other associated costs (Mishra, Devkota, Karmacharya, & Acharya, 2014).

In essence, the stipend contributes to wealthier families who are not in need of additional funds while restricting access to education for the very children and families who do need support, especially as these families rely on their children contributing to the families' income in the future. As the stipend is allocated with no understanding of the severity of family poverty, how does this support address the needs of ClwD of 'the poorest among poor' families? The parents' response in this research would suggest that the Nepalese Government should reconsider its 'generalist' approach to the stipend and give an increased stipend to ClwD from the poorer families.

Religious schools lacking ECED programs

One finding, which has not previously been evident in international research was the effect of spirituality on the inclusion of ClwD in Nepalese ECED. The professionals shared the concern that many religious schools in Nepal, such as Gurukul and Ashram (Hindu religious schools), Gumba (Buddhist religious schools) and Madarasa (Islamic religious schools), had no provision for ECED services. A large number of families tend to send their children to religious schools in Nepal for three main reasons.

First, parents are religiously or culturally attached to such schools due to their strong faith. Second, non- religious schools are either unavailable or inaccessible to many children, and as such, religious schools are the only option for an education. For example, in Terai (Plain) and the Pahad (Hill), there is a strong faith in Islam and in Hindu spirituality (Hafiz, Parwez, Rana, & Rajbhandari, 2008) and in Himal (the Mountain areas) formal schools are not accessible for the majority of children (R. Thapa, Sherpa, Bajracharya, & Pandey, 2007). Third, religious schools are single-gender schools and do not encourage co-education. Parents of female children generally prefer to send their daughters to single-gender schools in order to prevent them from interacting with male children. This choice is often based on cultural norms and values, as well as a perception that young males lack discipline (Hafiz et al., 2008).

Since these religious schools were established for the purpose of primary and secondary education, they do not operate ECED programs. As a result, all early years' children have to wait until turning six to eight years of age to enrol in these schools. This greatly disadvantages ClwD, as early intervention is vital to minimise their development delays, achieved through an inclusive approach (The Royal Australasian College of Physicians Paediatric & Child Health Division, 2013a). All

professionals who were participants appeared to agree that the existence of the religious schools was a factor in the exclusion of ClwD in ECED. One professional, Pratap stated:

Many parents still send their children to the traditional schools like Gurukul, Gumba, Ashram and Madarasa. These schools do not have ECED programs, which excludes children from modern ECED services.

As parents of those children who were enrolled in spiritual schools were not within the scope of this research, I was unable to include their perspectives. Although some religious schools were streamlined in the government system and used the national curriculum, the focus of those schools is mainly on imparting religious values. They do not aim to cater for the holistic needs of children, such as physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development, or the development of their self-help skills. ECED services are essential to achieve the developmental and learning outcomes of ClwD — the earlier the support the better (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015; The Royal Australasian College of Physicians Paediatric & Child Health Division, 2013b). It is recommended, therefore, that the government should collaborate with these spiritual schools to provide ECED services for all children, including ClwD and where other schools and ECED centres are unavailable and inaccessible.

Caste, ethnicity and language- based discrimination

Caste-based discrimination: urban versus village perspectives

The enforcement of the Nepalese law against caste-based discrimination together with education and awareness has reduced discrimination in the name of untouchability between Dalit and non-Dalit individuals in urban areas. However, Pariyer & Lovett (2016) reported that discrimination still existed in rural areas. This finding was supported by this research. Additionally, the research participants revealed that despite there being no such caste-based discrimination in formal

organisations and in urban areas, it was persistent at the household level and in rural areas. Consequently, being from the Dalit caste became an additional barrier to accessing education for young ClwD. The quote from Paru, an ECED teacher, reflected the discrimination against Dalit children in rural areas.

This is a city area and there is no caste-based discrimination. We treat all children equally. However, parents of Dalit children doubt us whether we discriminate [against] their children similar to their village on many occasions, for example letting them eat together with Non-Dalit children, taking water from the common water filter in schools and letting them participate in many activities.

Teachers and school staff in rural schools tended to discriminate against children from Dalit communities by restricting them eating together with their non-Dalit colleagues and from touching and taking water from a common water vessel used in schools. In many cases, teachers did not allow children from Dalit communities to participate in many curricular and extra-curricular activities. As such, it was not surprising that Dalit families still expected discrimination to occur in urban settings. However, one mother was surprised by the different attitudes of urban ECED staff. Suntali was a parent of a child living with disability from a Dalit community. She compared her village teachers' behaviours towards children from Dalit communities to those of teachers in the city, where she enrolled her child, saying:

I am happy that there is no discrimination between Dalit and non-Dalit children in this school. Although we are from the Dalit community and my child has disability, he can eat day-meals together with his friends at school. He shares his food and accompanies his friend Bibek until his parents come to bring him back home in the evening. He can play and read together with his friends. I could not think that a teacher would treat my son as equal to other non-Dalit children. He would not eat, play and work with his friends, if he were in my village.

As there is still a practice of untouchability in rural schools, where parents migrated from, they suspect the same practice in the ECED centres. In this research, accessing Dalit parents in rural inclusive ECED in Baglung was not possible, due to the lack of the required number of Dalit ClwD included in ECED. Although the Nepalese Government has adopted many strategies to curb caste-

based discrimination against the Dalit community, most have failed due to a deep-seated discriminatory practice. Prem narrated his experience in the following way:

We experience that there is no caste-based discrimination in formal organisations but there is discrimination in household level and in different cultural practices. I would like to share a recent event of rural Saptari district. Dalit families are not allowed to touch and take water from the same public well where non-Dalit community shares this source of water. When BBC Nepali program knew this, it made a strategy of using a renowned film actor to make the non-Dalit community aware of the equal rights of Dalit. The actor and the media people went there and tried to convince the non-Dalit community about the rights of Dalit over the public source of water, but the non-Dalit communities confronted and committed to continue the untouchability tradition. The actor and BBC Nepali program could not change this discriminatory practice. In the end, the actor cried distressfully for not being able to change people's discriminatory attitudes.

Prem's story about the restrictions for Dalit in touching a public well and the failure of the mass media, The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Nepali program, which tried to change the community's attitude about caste-based discrimination in rural Terai, indicates that untouchability is still very much part of rural life. When untouchability interacts with disability there is a high likelihood of children being doubly denied access to education. Greater effort is required to remove deeply entrenched caste-based discrimination in rural areas and at the household level.

Labelling of Dalit: another dimension of discrimination

Another significant issue of the caste-based discrimination between Dalit and Non-Dalit individuals in Nepal was labeling and name calling (Sushan Acharya & Luitel, 2006). The issue of labelling was substantiated by the research participants.

All the research participants believed that there is a problem with words that describe Dalit, for example, untouchable and Dalit. They believed that unless the words untouchable and Dalit are removed, discrimination against Dalit would not be stopped. As Saru, a parent said:

My niece said her friend is getting [a] scholarship for being Dalit. She also said, 'Dalit are not allowed to enter our home', because they are untouchable.

I think the name Dalit itself is discriminating [against] people on the basis of caste. The word Dalit should be removed.

The research participant parents' perspectives on the use of the derogatory terminology 'Dalit' articulates that the term 'Dalit' itself is one of the problems causing caste-based discrimination, because 'Dalit' is widely understood as referring to individuals, who belong to *sano jati* or *sano jat* (lower caste), *Achhut* (untouchables) and are not allowed to enter the house of non-Dalits in Nepal. Since the concept of untouchability originated from the caste system as an inherent characteristic (Bhattachan et al., 2009), it is deeply rooted, and difficult to change. The parents perceived that perpetuating caste-based discrimination against Dalits would not cease unless the government removed the term Dalit from all policy documents. While government policy documents are repeatedly reinforcing, albeit inadvertently, the term 'Dalit' with the concept of *sano jati* and *Achhut*, community attitudes are unlikely to change. The issue of caste-based discrimination with a focus on untouchability and labelling of Dalit communities is further elaborated upon in the next chapter.

Ethnicity: schooling culture of marginalised ethnic group

The stakeholders, particularly professionals, identified one additional factor, which was not acknowledged in the international literature. The factor identified was that the culture of some nomadic populations and ethnic groups did not allow children to enrol in ECED programs. For example, the Raute, an endangered nomadic ethnic community,¹³ does not believe in formal early childhood education. This

¹³ The Raute community lives near or in forests, survive on wild fruits, food and herbs for medicine, hunting monkey and wild chicken and make wooden goods to barter with villagers. The National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities categorised Raute as a highly endangered, and Chepang as a highly marginalised ethnic community. This classification was based on literacy rates, housing, land ownership, economic status, and the size of the population (Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, 2004). As introduced in chapter one, ethnic communities, including nomadic groups are different to caste groups. They are mostly nature worshippers (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Although these two

community avoids permanent settlement and land ownership, believing that permanent settlement is of no use for this temporary life. Children from another semi-nomadic ethnic community, Chepang, also had no access to ECED programs. These communities in particular do not send their children to ECED centres, as their preference is for young children to be cared for by mothers. As Ganga and Jayanti, two participating professionals shared:

Ganga: Traditional norms in some ethnic communities also affect the inclusion of children with disability in education. For example, how can we bring children from Chepang and Raute community in ECED? They are not attracted to modern schools. These communities do not want to separate young children from mothers.

Jayanti: I came to know from the Raute Mukhiya [Head of the community], when working in the District Education Office where the Raute community resides, that they do not like ... modern education. They believe that if they send their children to schools they have to live a slave life like other villagers. Our ECED centres are out of the reach of Chepang communities in remote areas. That is why they find mothers are the best carers for their children.

The Raute developed a culture of mothers educating and raising children in order to transfer knowledge and wisdom of local flora and fauna and their sustainable uses from mothers to their children. However, the question is whether their cultural practice of child care and schooling are sufficient to fulfil children's developmental needs. As there is a substantial decrease in traditional food and medicinal herbs in the forest due to environmental degradation, Raute children are suffering from many diseases. In addition, government community forestry and national parks and wildlife conservation policies have restricted the Raute community from collecting medicinal herbs in the forest (Banu, 2017). This restriction resulted in the Raute's poor health.

The Chepang also believe that mothers are supposed to raise their children and fathers should be involved in farming, fishing, and gathering wild fruits and vegetables (Tryndyuk, 2013). While they do not have as strong a cultural norm as the Raute for not sending children to schools, there are other factors at play, particularly their remoteness. In Chepang communities there are no ECED centres and schools. Parents lack education, and Nepali as a language of instruction, are other barriers to children's access to education including ECED programs. In Chepang communities, children are suffering from lack of necessities and their developmental needs are not being met (Khanal, 2014b). The result is poor health and a greater risk of disability. As current ECED services are irrelevant to the culture and situation of these communities, different approaches to ECED services that respect their cultural practices are required. These approaches are discussed in chapter six.

The parents participating in this research had no experience of the educational issues of these ethnic groups and no parent was familiar with the culture or lifestyles of Raute and Chepang communities. Accessing parent representatives of CIWD from Raute and Chepang groups was not within the scope of this research.

Language-based barriers: mother tongue versus Nepali and English

All professionals interviewed in this research argued that children could comprehend classroom instructions well, if teachers use children's home language. They were aware of the importance of recognising linguistic diversity and using the children's mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Literature also revealed that the use of the children's mother tongue as the medium for instruction in early grades improved learning outcomes of non-Nepali speakers. Children feel more confident interacting with teachers and peers in their native

language (Awasthi, 2004; UNESCO, 2011a). However, despite understanding the importance of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in children's learning, the professionals expressed concern that teacher professional development and the design of learning materials did not cater for this type of learning, stating that the children's mother tongues were disregarded in Nepalese education. As Jayanti and Paru asserted:

Jayanti: Children who come from non-Nepali speaking backgrounds can learn better, if teachers use children's mother tongue during the initial years of their enrollment in school, but it is challenging to find teachers who can speak the mother tongue of different children given that there are many different languages spoken in Nepal. It is also hard to develop learning materials in children's mother language.

Paru: I have experiences of children's active participation in classroom activities when I use children's home language as the medium of instruction, particularly in the first year of their enrolment in ECED.

This view of the professionals corresponds to national and international literature (Awasthi, 2004; S. Kadel, 2013; Mohanty et al., 2009; National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission, 1993; Pinnock, 2009), as well as the Nepalese constitutional provision which states that children in primary grades have the right to use their mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Parents of children with and without disability shared a different perspective. They supported Nepali and English languages as the medium of instruction for their children. They believed that when teachers accommodated children's home languages in instruction, their children would be less competent in Nepali and English and would therefore lag behind their Nepali speaking peers. As Kali stated:

I think teachers should use Nepali and English in the classroom because I want my child to be able to speak Nepali and English as fluently as his counterparts. This would help him work with people without disability in the future. I know that my child can naturally learn Tamang language from me.

It is interesting to note parents' perceptions that there was no use for their mother tongue in children's later careers. The general belief is that if children are fluent in Nepali and English, they will find a good job in the future. Parents were more

interested in their children's fluency in Nepali and English as a prerequisite for employment. This argument is further discussed in chapter six.

Parents were less concerned about the importance of maintaining their native language and the way their native language supports learning. Since parents lacked knowledge of learning processes and language learning pedagogy, they believed that teaching children in their first language would affect their children's Nepali and English competence. Parents required education about the benefits for children of using their mother tongue in their learning, as well as recognising children's ability to switch from their home language to second and third languages, provided that the teachers were capable of teaching in many languages. In order for parents to be aware of the benefits of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, teachers would also need to be proficient in the children's mother tongue, Nepali and English, and to demonstrate that children in multilingual communities can easily learn two or more languages concurrently.

CIWD can develop key conceptual knowledge and cognition by linking their existing knowledge. The use of the mother tongue is instrumental in connecting this knowledge (Pinnock, 2009). Although there is a lack of a common consensus about the appropriate age to begin learning foreign languages (Bot, 2014), research suggests that learning foreign languages at four to five years is the best approach as the brain at this age is more efficient in recording and retaining sounds, words and sentences (López & Méndez, 2004). Parent's perspectives on the importance of Nepali and English, linked to pedagogical research about language acquisition and learning, suggest employing multilingual approaches in education, such as using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the first year of schooling and then transitioning to the Nepali and English languages.

Bridging from children's mother tongue to Nepali and English would develop children's mastery of all three languages.

Gender discrimination in villages and in Terai

Even though significant progress has been made to increase opportunities for female children to access ECED and primary education in Nepal, this research identified evidence of the continued marginalisation of female children in terms of access and participation in education. The Nepalese Government has implemented a range of pro-female equity policies including a stipend for female students, quota reservation for eligible female teachers, as well as community awareness programs. As an outcome, the number of female students enrolled in government schools and ECED centres has increased with gender parity in enrolment now evident in many areas (Department of Education, 2016). However, many female CIWD are still excluded from schools in Terai and rural areas due to a preference for enrolling male students. One focus group participant, Sita, represented the views of all the professionals who agreed that gender-based discrimination still exists in education in Nepal.

There is a discrimination...between sons and daughters... When my father carried me to school, our neighbours in Terai used to ask my father, 'Why are you taking your lame daughter to school? What is the use of educating your lame daughter? Who would marry this girl?' I saw the same case in Sindhupalchok one month ago, after 25 years. Parents brought their son with disability to a primary school, but they didn't think they should do the same for their daughter with disability and kept her at home. When we came to know [of] that case, we went there and convinced the parents of that girl to bring her to school. We gave my own example [of] how I became a successful woman. Now, we are happy we could take that girl out of her home. We could do this because we knew the case, but many cases do not come to our notice.

In remote hill villages and Terai, parents preferred enrolling their sons with disability in schools rather than their daughters because parents identified no benefit for educating female CIWD. For parents, the aim of educating daughters would be to get a good husband for her, but it was harder in Nepal for females with

disability to be married compared to males with disability. For this reason, parents wanted to hide their daughters with disability more than sons with disability. Even with the government's pro-female enrolment policies, Sita reminds us of the influence of deeply held cultural beliefs and how parents' perceptions of the importance of male education compared to female education remains unchanged. Generating parental awareness of future possibilities for young girls living with disability through accessing education, drawing on models such as Sita's story, may be an initial step in shifting parental gender bias and perceptions.

Gender: differing scenarios in rural and urban settings

The stakeholders, including educators and parents, believed that gender discrimination in education was no longer a significant issue in terms of enrolment. However, discrimination still existed in subtle forms. For example, in city areas, parents tend to choose costly private Montessori schools for their sons and send their daughters to less costly government ECED centres and schools. Parents' desire to invest in their son's education rather than their daughters' education has resulted in more female children in government schools (Bista, 2004), suggesting parents are willing to invest more financially in their son's education. Even when schooling is free, as per government schools, some parents still choose not to send their female ClwD to school (B. B. S. Thapa, 2012). If parents are not willing to invest financially or through time to deliver their ClwD to school and back it is highly unlikely they would choose to enrol them in an ECED centre as these programs are even more expensive.

Although there was no system of assessing the quality of privately-operated Montessori schools, parents believed that private Montessori schools were of a better quality, compared to government ECED centres and chose these schools

for their sons. Anita, an educator represented the view of many professionals stating:

There is gender discrimination in ECED. Parents send their sons to expensive private ECED [centres] and daughters to community ECED [centres]. This is the reason why we can see many girls in community run ECED [centres]. Female children are more disadvantaged in terms of getting access to education among the lower caste in the Terai region and rural areas.

This quote indicated that when families are wealthy and can afford private education for all their children, there is a preference for sons to receive private education, while daughters receive public education. This situation is exacerbated in the case of poor and rural families from lower castes. Female children from these families are victims of three levels of discrimination — gender, economic class and caste. They are highly likely not to receive any education. Shrestha, (2007), also supported this view:

Gender-based discrimination against women and girls exists from their early years, and it is interesting to note that even in lower-caste families for social, cultural and economic reasons boys are preferred to girls (p.21).

UNICEF (2003), in a study of inclusion in Nepal, found that “[d]isabled children, especially girls from certain social groups, such as Dalits, Tamangs and Sunuwars in the Hills, and Musahars and Chamara in the Terai, are more discriminated, marginalised and excluded than others” (p.7). Unfortunately, my current research, coming some 15 years later, noted this ongoing discrimination based on gender, location and caste still existed, indicating more focused attention is a paramount requirement. One form of addressing such discrimination would be through inclusive approaches in ECED programs.

Geographic location

As Nepal has extremely challenging terrain in many areas and limited transportation and infrastructure development, it was not surprising that all participating parents and professionals perceived geographic location as one of

the significant barriers to children's inclusion in ECED. The participants intimated that not all children, especially ClwD, could access ECED due to the extremely difficult geography of the Pahad and Himal. Parents reported not being able to bring their children to ECED centres due to the steep mountains or lack of connecting bridges over rivers.

The following quotes by Narayan and Manju (professionals) illustrated that children's exclusion was more significant in challenging locations.

Narayan: Remote and difficult geographic locations, such as too steep land and big rivers near children's homes are the main barriers to inclusion of children with disability in ECED, for people who reside in such areas.

Manju: The ECED centre where I am currently working is in a remote area, located in a high hill of the district and children do not have access to ECED in such a tough location. Children with disability are among those children who are out of ECED, because of remoteness of ECED centres in hills and mountains.

Although there has been a policy of ECED establishment in children's neighbouring communities, the policy has not addressed the needs of ClwD in accessing ECED in remote locations. The participants reported that through policy the Government of Nepal has pledged that every child should be provided access to ECED centres within a walking distance of 15 minutes in their communities. However, in reality, children are deprived of this opportunity due the challenges of policy implementation and the lack of identifying the needs of children who reside in remote and difficult locations. There is no specific plan to address the needs of the ClwD residing in difficult geographic locations. The policy for the establishment of ECED centres accessible to all children in Nepal provides an example of how challenging it becomes to translate policy into effective practice.

ECED service in tough terrain: an unmet need

ECED professionals perceived that bringing children to ECED centres in tough terrain would be impossible until the government adopts a strategy for an alternative service in those communities. Given that there were no resources to develop good roads and transportation, professionals perceived an alternative approach would be required to serve these families. Min reported:

Although we are working to serve parents and children, it is not helping some children and parents from the other end of the Dada [Hill]. They have to walk two hours every day to bring their children to this centre. Time is not the only issue. How can parents bring their children on narrow, steep roads? These roads are unsafe. These roads get muddy and slippery in rainy season. In winter, the frost covers the roads and they become slippery. Many children fell down and injured in the past while passing there. For them, their children's lives are more important than education. Therefore, we cannot force parents to bring their children to ECED centres. If we want to educate children in that community, we need to train someone there and make her work as a teacher.

The need for change in the style of ECED services in tough Himal and Pahad regions was reflected in the viewpoint of another professional, Narayan. He stated:

We will never bring children to ECED centres from those communities who reside in difficult areas in Pahad and Himal. It is not easy to develop the transportation system there. That is why we need to think of a different way. There should be a policy of home or community-based ECED centres in extremely difficult geographic locations, if we really want to include all children in ECED programs.

Being aware of the country's complex geographic landscape with no possibility of transportation and infrastructure development, all the research participants emphasised the need for a policy of alternative ECED services, such as home and community-based ECED, to address the issue of geographic location in the education of ClwD. If the government is committed to providing ECED services and to meeting the needs of ClwD in remote areas, it must seriously consider such alternatives. The proposal to train parents and community leaders to educate their children is a realistic option in the context of scattered settlements in mountainous regions, the lack of transportation and difficult terrain.

Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the stakeholder's perspectives on the effect of contextual factors on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. The research participants' perspectives substantiated most of the factors identified in the Literature-Based Framework including contextual factors such as poverty, gender, caste, ethnicity, language and geographic location and noted how they often interact to contribute to the exclusion of ClwD from ECED. However, phase two of the research identified two additional unique factors in this particular region, namely, spirituality and adherence to the culture of schooling and child raising practices in two highly marginalised ethnic groups. These additional factors may be highly specific but they still contribute to the exclusion of ClwD from mainstream ECED programs. The interaction of the various contextual factors is complex and varied for different groups and families. This complexity and variation influence the access or lack of access to ECED programs for ClwD across Nepal. A review of the research outcomes, in relation to the identified contextual factors provides an opportunity for the Nepalese Government to consider which factors are more prevalent and can be addressed through research-informed policy development. Analyses of stakeholders' perspectives on the interacting effects of organisational factors on the inclusion or non-inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Stakeholders' Perspectives on Organisational Factors Affecting the Inclusion of ClwD in ECED Programs

Children [living] with disability and their families constantly experience barriers to the enjoyment of their basic human rights and to their inclusion in society. Their abilities are overlooked, their capacities are underestimated, and their needs are given low priority. Yet, the barriers they face are more frequently as a result of the environment in which they live than as a result of their impairment (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2007, p.iv).

Introduction

In chapter four, stakeholders' perspectives on the contextual factors affecting the inclusion of ClwD in ECED were identified. This chapter focuses on analyses of the stakeholders' perspectives on organisational factors. The chapter also generates responses to research questions around stakeholders' perspectives on the factors for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs, which were presented in chapter four. The factors are government policy, conceptual ambiguity, beliefs about disability, teacher professional development, investment in ECED, inter-and intra-agency coordination and parental engagement. Each of these factors are composed of a number of dimensions, the majority initially informed by the literature. However, through the analysis of the stakeholders' perspectives several new dimensions were identified, which are discussed in this chapter. The factors and their composite dimensions are presented in table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Research participants' responses to the organisational factors that affect the inclusion of CIwD in ECED programs

Organisational factors							
	Government policy	Conceptual ambiguity about the meaning of inclusive education	Beliefs about disability	Teacher preparedness	Investment in ECED	Inter and intra-agency coordination	Parent participation
Dimensions of each factor			Disability as a result of past sin vs disability as an impairment		The inclusion of CIwD in ECED requires additional investment	Coordination between ECED staff, including educators and health professionals	Parents lack education
	Institutional rejection	Minor professional understanding about the spirit of inclusive education	Tantrics have the power to cure disability	The lack of professional development opportunities	Unequal funding policy doubly marginalises early years' children		Policy and parent participation
	Lack of vision for inclusion		Disability is a contagious disease	Limited experience and exposure to inclusion			Time and disposition
	Disability data			Low qualifications	Logistics and amenities are the responsibilities of the government		
	Wait and see culture resulting from a lack of disability diagnosis services		The relevance of the Hindu stories of Master Astavakra and the quote of Hellen Keller	Morale and motivation	Commitment from school staff and leaders		
			Need to give positive message about disability via mass media	Lack of monitoring and feedback			

Government policy

As depicted in Table 5.1 the interviews and focus groups affirmed that government policy affects all elements of inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Participants collectively identified the absence of a policy in Nepal for inclusion of ClwD in ECED, as having an impact on inclusion opportunities or practices. All professionals agreed that ECED related government documents reflected a lack of policy on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. One professional highlighted that there was no content related to the inclusion of ClwD in the teacher professional development curriculum. Although some non-governmental organisations were involved in teacher professional development programs on inclusive education, the content they were using was inadequate for teachers to engage ClwD in ECED activities. Therefore, it was difficult to expect ECED teachers to be prepared and confident in including ClwD. Similarly, the ECED curriculum lacked attention to appropriate instructional strategies to support the inclusion of ClwD. Participants revealed that the quality frameworks of ECED lacked a vision for creating physical and attitudinal environments for the inclusion of ClwD. The comment below from a focus group participant, Surendra, represented the concern of a majority of professionals.

There is no policy for the inclusion of children with disability in ECED... For example, the ECED curriculum, early learning standard, and minimum standard for ECED and the training package for ECED educators lack [a focus on] inclusion. Nobody discusses the inclusion of children with disability in ECED during the general training of ECED educators. However, a few organisations like Lali Guras call us for one or a half day to orient ECED educators about disability inclusion in the early years, but this is too little for teachers to create learning environments in ECED centres.

Participating professionals believed that policy was imperative for making school or ECED programs available for all children, as policy ensures an intention for the right to access, engagement and learning of ClwD. Policy was perceived as a significant factor to address a number of issues for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED.

For example, building the capacity of teachers and changing negative attitudes towards disability require policy direction.

These stakeholders perceived that the main reason for the lack of teacher capacity was the absence of the component of ECED teacher development and inclusive education in Nepalese teacher professional development policy. Although policy does not necessarily change attitudes towards disability, the adoption of inclusion in education through policy is an essential step in creating change. Policy provides the mandate and guides the procedures for modelling the inclusion of CIwD, how it works and what the prerequisites might be for inclusion in ECED programs. Such modelling may be instrumental in promoting change in attitudes. Policy is highly valued in Nepal and without some sort of mandate there is less hope of practising inclusive education. For instance, the practices of special and integrated schools are sanctioned by government policy. Since the policy focuses on primary and secondary education there is minimal emphasis on education for early years' CIwD.

The stakeholders were adamant that unless there was a policy directed at community awareness, teacher professional learning and the development of physical infrastructure accessible to individuals with disability, the successful inclusion of CIwD in ECED was unlikely to occur in Nepal. Therefore, they called for an urgent need for a policy that addresses these factors. As one participant, Mohan, asserted:

There should be policies for awareness raising in order to reduce negative attitudes to disability, teacher capacity development and the development of physical facilities in and outside the schools, in order to include children with disability in ECED.

Institutional rejection

A further reason stakeholder focused on the urgent need for policy was their bitter experience of the rejection of ClwD from ECED centres, simply due to the lack of a mandatory enrolment policy for ClwD in the government policy purporting education for all. For example, the *Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disability (2016)* and the Education Act 1971 have not made schools and ECED centre management teams legally bound to accept and include ClwD in their programs. Consequently, the enrolment of ClwD is optional, not compulsory. Two professionals Ganga and Jayanti illustrated the issue of institutional rejection in their comments.

Ganga: We do not have policies for the inclusion of children with disability in ECED. So, why do ECED centres include children with disability?

Jayanti: Our policies, guidelines and directives never talk about the inclusion of children with disability in ECED. This is the main reason for children's exclusion from ECED centres.

Jayanti: We cannot force the ECED management team to enrol children with disability without government policies

Parents had no idea whether a policy existed for the inclusion of ClwD or the manner in which a policy ensured compliance. They simply believed that school principals or ECED teachers in the community did not enrol their child due to their lack of capacity to teach ClwD. Suntali, a parent expressed her anxiety about the non-enrolment of her child in the ECED centre. This quote represented the views of participating parents.

Suntali: I knocked on the door of many schools in Kathmandu to enrol my son, but no one agreed to enrol him. The denial of my child in schools made me very sad.

A majority of professionals shared that a lack of bespoke services, due to a lack of a policy, was one of the root causes of rejection of ClwD in ECED programs. The professionals perceived that schools and ECED administration teams required

clear guidelines for customised services and for the role of all stakeholders in engaging ClwD in mainstream ECED programs. The need for a policy that defines services has also been identified by UNESCO (2009), which suggested governments formulate policy with attention to approved services. Similarly, the majority of professionals expressed the need for a policy that allocated adequate resources to pay for the cost of operating ECED programs, as well as the need to assign roles to ECED management teams to ensure effective enrolment and guidance for ClwD in their ECED programs. The following comments by professionals, Jayanti and Nanda echoed the perception of a majority of their cohort.

Jayanti: We require a policy that defines the basic services of the inclusion of children with disability in education.

Nanda: Policy should go together with adequate budget and accountability.

Participating professionals, unlike parents, had been involved in education-related policy drafting processes in the past, so they were more anxious and aware that a policy without a budget would only be a policy, for show, in government ministries, with no positive differences in the inclusion of ClwD in education. The participants' concern about a policy without a budget is exemplified in the recently endorsed Nepalese *Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disability 2016*. As discussed in chapter one, this policy is an organisational policy and, as such, has no provision for any additional budget for inclusive education. The professionals emphasised the necessity for a policy to also have provisions of both budget and recommendations on the roles of all staff involved in ECED services.

Lack of vision for inclusion

Vision serves as a basis for defining values of inclusive education, for pooling resources and expertise and for determining the future course of action (Dove &

Honigsfeld, 2014). Almost all the participating professionals expressed their concern that Nepal was struggling with the development of a vision for inclusive education due to the lack of an adequate policy. Mohan reflected the viewpoints of all professionals in his comment:

We lack the vision for the inclusion of children with disability in ECED, which should come with policies. Without vision, we lose the way.

The professionals believed in the fundamental importance of a vision that provided clear guidance for planning short and long-term inclusive ECED programs. Despite not knowing the words 'vision' or 'policy', parents wished for access to education for their ClwD. One parent, Sukumaya expressed the following:

In my opinion, the government should tell all schools to enrol children with disability in their ECED programs. Parents should understand that we could teach and treat children with disability. Community people should not hate children with disability.

Sukumaya's assertions show that parents had a vision that their ClwD would learn in the same ECED centres together with children without disability. The vision included that there would be awareness of the capability of ClwD to learn within their community, and that ClwD would be loved, accepted and valued.

Disability data

The stakeholders, particularly professionals believed that a lack of disability data, both demographic and disability types, with appropriate support needs, had a serious effect on policy formulation, specifically in the identification of learning needs for ClwD. They therefore, realised the need for a disability information system in Nepal. The unavailability of information about ClwD resulted from under reporting by parents about their ClwD in national census data collections and surveys. In formulating the *Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disability of*

Nepal (2016), the policy recognised that a lack of disability data is a huge challenge for the development of policies, plans and programs in Nepal.

Professionals spoke about parents' unwillingness to expose their ClwD in the community due to the stigma of disability in Nepalese society. One inclusive ECED teacher, Paru, gave an example of how one of her relatives locked his son with cerebral palsy in a room for twenty years, from his birth until his death, in order to hide him from the community. As a special education teacher, she expressed extreme regret for not being able to take the boy out of his room for his entire life. She believed that more education and awareness would remove such a stigma. She explained:

Many people still hide their children with disability because they feel ashamed of having such children. It is evident that my mother in-law's brother locked his son with cerebral palsy in his room for 20 years. He did not even tell his neighbours that his son had cerebral palsy. The boy passed away even without seeing the sun. Unfortunately, despite being an educator, I could not take that boy out of the four walls of his room.

The tendency for some Nepalese families to hide their ClwD is combined with negative attitudes towards disability. This factor affects the quality of information about disability that is available to the government. This in turn affects the policies and planning of the education and health-related services for ClwD.

The lack of reliable data on disability is an inescapable issue in many developing countries (UNESCO, 2009). The professionals, who were involved in policy and planning, explained that the lack of demographic information and statistics about ClwD were significant barriers to designing services for educating these children.

Anita, a professional stated:

We do not have a disability information system and we cannot say how many children with disability are in the community and what services they require?

Parents were unaware of the issue of a lack of disability data. This is due to their lack of understanding of how the system operates to collect data and why it is needed for government planning and resourcing.

'Wait and see' culture resulting from the lack of disability diagnosis services

One unanticipated finding, which was not discussed in the Literature-Based (L-B) Framework, was a culture of 'wait and see' among parents. As there was often no disability diagnosis or medical option available for parents in Nepal, particularly for intellectual disability, they tended to 'wait and see' whether the problem of children's disability and developmental delays would self-resolve (N. P. Luitel et al., 2015). When parents first observed worrying symptoms that they were unfamiliar with they sought screening and medication in the hope that their children's disability would be cured. They would try various medical professionals. When parents came to realise that health professionals were unable to diagnose their children's disability they were naturally distressed. They were unable to imagine how their children could live with disability and they hoped their children's disability would disappear as the children aged. At this point, they could do nothing about the children's disability, apart from 'wait and see'. This culture of 'wait and see' among parents might develop in order for them to cope with the situation and to make them resilient for the time being. The following comment represented the professionals' responses to the culture of 'wait and see'. As Jayanti observes.

We have a culture of 'wait and see' about the development of young children. Therefore, parents do not bring their children with disability to ECED centres. They think children's developmental problems are solved when they grow up. After that children can learn.

Based on their experiences, the majority of professionals and parents expressed their view that children's health and medication needs override their educational

needs. For parents, the diagnosis of a child's disability and seeking medical help and remedies seemed more important than the child's education. As parents would generally spend much time focused on medical care for their ClwD, they tended to disregard their educational needs.

Parents of young children try to identify and cure children's disability during the first five or six years. Children's education is not a priority for parents at this stage. (Ghanashyam)

After consulting available health professional's parents often became anxious and stressed if no-one was able to identify their child's disability, and they eventually relinquished seeking diagnosis. Nevertheless, parents did not completely lose heart. They clung to the hope that their children's disability would be cured as they grew up. As one parent, Kali explained:

Initially, my husband and I tried to consult doctors in my district. When we could not find the doctors, who could diagnose my daughter's disability, we were worried. Then we gave up trying doctors, thinking that we could do nothing to identify our child's disability. We still had a hope that our child's disability would cure when she grows up.

When their children's disability was not diagnosed, and parents did not understand that disabilities are not like diseases that can be cured, they tried to cope by being passive. This coping strategy is further discussed in chapter six.

Conceptual ambiguity about the meaning of inclusive education

Inclusive education is a relatively new concept in Nepal, and internationally, it is often a contested concept (Ainscow, 2005; Forlin et al., 2013). Therefore, it was not surprising that the stakeholders lacked clarity in understanding the concept of inclusive education in Nepal. A large number of participating professionals appeared to be confused about what inclusion of ClwD in ECED and education — in a contemporary context — actually means. More than half of the focus group stakeholders, particularly the professionals, believed that the existing integrated system with separate classes for ClwD in 380 schools was a good model. They

considered that these Nepalese schools were inclusive, because they enrolled CIWD and involved them in separate classes with limited participation in general classes, and with their own separate residential facilities. They did not understand that it is not full inclusion. In ECED centres there was no provision for education for CIWD, not even this partial inclusion model. Of the professionals, 15 of 20 held the same view as one of the professionals Ganga, that partial inclusion was adequate.

We have integrated schools where children with disability are included. We can make ECED centres like these schools.

These participating professionals suggested developing a policy for integrating ECED with boarding facilities, similar to the policy for primary schools for CIWD. Such a perception suggested that the research participants, even professionals who were aware of special education, did not understand that such schools promote the segregation of children. In the same vein, by suggesting the notion of 'boarding,' they appeared ignorant of the fact that young children should stay with their parents due to the importance of early nurturing with familial relationships (Emerson, Fear, Fox, & Sanders, 2012), as well as the right to live with their parents, unless it is harmful for children's overall wellbeing (United Nations, 1990).

A minority professionals understand the spirit of inclusive education

A small number of focus group participants who had exposure to inclusive education through international experiences and teacher professional development programs for inclusion, appeared to more readily understand the spirit of inclusive education. They recognised that the concept of inclusive education in the Nepalese context was vague and confusing for many stakeholders. It was therefore imperative that a clear concept of the meaning of

inclusion of ClwD in education in Nepal was necessary to initiate any movement towards inclusive education both in ECED and schools. Jayanti echoed the view of a majority of professionals.

We have a conceptual challenge with inclusion. Even people working at a high position within the Ministry of Education have no knowledge of the inclusion of children with disability in ECED. They do not think that children with disability could be included and educated in general ECED centres.

Jayanti's observation suggests that those who were responsible for designing policy for education for ClwD, actually had no clear concept of the possibility of inclusive education that did not segregate. Three factors interacted to contribute to this dearth of conceptual clarity. First, there was no policy that defined inclusive education in the Nepalese context, such as asserting that children with and without disability should be given opportunities to learn together in the same class in their own communities. Second, these professionals had no opportunities to study international literature on inclusive education. As, inclusive education was not widespread they had no experiences of and exposure to inclusive education. Third, these policy makers' attitudes towards disability were negative because they were influenced by community attitudes. Disability is considered as a stigma in the community. It is viewed as undesirable condition in human lives (Human Rights Watch, 2011; Lamichhane, 2013).

The professionals, who were aware of inclusive education, shared that, unless a policy is generated which clearly defines inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs, ambiguity about inclusive education would continue. They explained that it is easier to include children with mild and moderate disability in ECED programs if teachers collaborate with health professionals and therapists. However, the inclusion of children with severe disability might require extra support and more individualised instruction. Knowledge of inclusion of children with mild, moderate and severe disability in other developed and developing countries led those

professionals to perceive that inclusion of children with mild and moderate disability would not require a great effort. The following response from Nanda shows further evidence of the conceptual ambiguity about inclusive education:

We do have confusion on the definition of inclusion of children with a disability. We need to understand that it is easy to include children with mild and moderate disability, but tough to include children with severe disability in ECED. We should understand that inclusive education does not say that we should not use separate strategies to include children with severe disability. ECED educator alone cannot support children with severe disability. Children with severe disability may need special ECED services. They need help from health and other professionals. There is a need for policy to define inclusive education in the Nepalese context. The government should consult with all stakeholders before formulating policies.

The professionals knew that teachers and health professionals could collaborate as a team, but that teachers would require guidance to develop skills in curriculum modification. There has been a tendency in the past in Nepal to develop policies without consulting stakeholders. To change this practice and in order to lay the foundation for inclusive strategies for children living with mild, moderate, severe and profound disabilities, the professionals strongly suggested the government consult widely prior to formulating inclusive education policies. This issue is further expanded in chapter six.

In contrast, parents, as the other group of research participants were less concerned with conceptual clarity around the term 'inclusive education'. For parents, there seemed no reason to be aware of the terminology, since they perceived these words, for example, inclusive education, vision and concept, and their significance, as purely jargon, perhaps due to not having any real experience of inclusive education. As a researcher, while parents have more practical concerns, I believe it is extremely important that the terminology is explained and understood, and in this instance, I concur with professionals.

Beliefs about disability: myths and truths

Given the widespread negative attitudes towards disability in Nepal (Human Rights Watch, 2011; Lamichhane, 2013), it is not surprising that stakeholders share several commonly held assumptions which have inhibited the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Stakeholders reported several myths as well as truths about disability:

- Abilism — believing more able individuals are of greater value and that ClwD lack the potential to learn.
- Disability as an impairment.
- Religious belief — disability is a penance for past 'bad' deeds, and that Tantric healers can cure disability.
- Lack of knowledge — disability is a contagious disease.

The following two comments from parents and professionals reflected many other stakeholders' perspectives; that negative attitudes towards disability was a great barrier to inclusion.

Seti: I think the negative attitude of people towards disability largely affects the inclusion of children with disability. People do not believe that children with a disability can learn and will be independent.

Mohan: The most vital factor that affects the inclusion of children with disability in ECED is attitude. Teachers' negative attitudes inhibit them from learning how to use curriculum for disabled children. Such attitudes also do not allow teachers to accept children with a disability in schools.

ClwD were viewed as incapable of learning and living a productive life because of their weaknesses and impairments. As discussed in chapter two, this impairment related problem is associated with the concept of ableism, which views people on the basis of their ability or inability in certain areas. This concept does not allow for accepting and coping with the consequences of disability. A large number of professionals explained that educating ClwD would be nearly impossible due to

teachers embarrassing attitudes towards disability. As a result, teachers themselves avoid enrolling ClwD in schools and ECED Programs.

Disability as a result of past sin or disability as an impairment

In the light of Hindu and Buddhist religious values fundamental to the Nepalese communities, it was common for research participants to perceive disability as *karmako fal* (penance of deed). The research participants stated that many individuals in Nepal tended to believe that disability is a result of past sin of either ClwD themselves or their parents or their extended family members. It is interesting to note that, due to education and awareness about disability no participating professional in this research said that they believed disability is a result of past sin. However, all professionals agreed that “people still think disability is a result of past sin in Nepal”, as illustrated by Nanda’s comment:

Peoples’ negative attitude towards disability is another reason for children’s exclusion from ECED. People still think that disability is a result of the past sin of parents, grandparents or the children themselves.

The responses of the research participants to the maxim *disability is a result of past sin* indicated that religious beliefs about disability continue in Nepalese communities, despite a majority of individuals also believing in the bio-medical interpretation of disability.

Parent’s perceptions of the causes of disability were somewhat different from those of professionals. Nine of the ten parents appeared to be confused whether the saying *disability as a result of past sin* had any real connections to religious texts and that perhaps it was merely a superstition. As Chandra intimated:

The word sin cannot be positive. I heard this word is associated with many religious texts. I do not know what those texts are. I think this is only a superstition in our society, but I know that people do not know the reason of disability. That is why they think that it is the result of past sin. Listening to this

repeatedly, we also sometimes doubt whether we committed any sins. You know ... people not only blame me and my husband for having such a child but they also point the finger at my parents. They think if parents and grandparents do some misdeeds, they will have their children or grandchildren with disability.

Parents' confusion about the maxim was due to limited knowledge about what the Hindu and Buddhist religious canons entail. The concept, disability as a result of past sin, was completely bizarre for these parents. However, they were adversely affected by this concept, even though they were unsure whether or not it was in the scriptures. They agreed with one mother, who said that constantly hearing the saying, disability is a result of past sin, created confusion and made them ask themselves whether they had really committed a crime in the past. They understood that it was derived from the Hindu and Buddhist religious scriptures. However, they were uninformed about the context in which this saying was written, and how it was interpreted. Such confusion further results in parents losing confidence and the ability to cope with the situations of their children's disability.

On the other hand, the participating professionals collectively perceived disability as a condition of physical or cognitive impairment. They stated that the overuse of the saying in communities, disability is a result of past sin, made individuals believe it. All participating professionals agreed with Nanda's following view:

People are continuously saying and hearing that disability is a result of people's past sin but are not listening to the health-related reasons for disability. If you go to the districts where the Resource Center for Rehabilitation and Development is well functioning, you do not hear that disability is a result of people's past sin.

This view indicates that in Nepal, inadequate discussion of the causes of disability in public spheres; no awareness about biological, psychological and social reasons for disability and the lack of government education programs, has resulted in the continuation of this myth and influenced the mindset of individuals.

The government is in a position to contest this view and promote a different belief system. However, long held beliefs and attitudes are notoriously challenging to change without a widespread public education approach. The participating professionals experienced that the effort of a few organisations had been helpful to overcome such a stereotypical belief. For example, awareness programs from the Resource Center for Rehabilitation and Development (RCRD) were instrumental in removing negative attitudes in some districts in Nepal. However, RCRD was not well functioning in all districts. The above comment by Nanda representing a professional's viewpoint, alluded to the fact that awareness and education were vital in creating positive attitudes towards disability.

Surprisingly, only a single participating parent — a mother of a child with intellectual disability — was well informed by a doctor that the cause of her son's disability was brain injury rather than a result of past sin. Suntali explained:

I know that the cause of my child's disability is brain injury. I do not believe in past sins because, if this child with disability were the result of my past sin, my other children would have disability as well.

Those parents who were willing to expose the disability of their children, sought medical support and could access health professionals. They came to believe that disability was not a result of past sin. However, since many parents of ClwD barely access doctors, due to the shame of having a child with a disability, they continue with this widespread belief. In the same vein, the unavailability of disability diagnosis services in the majority of rural areas as well as in cities deprived parents from taking their ClwD to doctors. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a lack of health professional services that are able to diagnose children's disability was another reason for parents not taking their ClwD to doctors.

Tantrics healers have the power to cure disability

A further interesting myth reflecting the research participants' attitudes towards disability was a belief in traditional healers. All the stakeholders perceived that many parents still consult traditional healers to detect and cure children's diseases or disability. However, the professionals and parents had dichotomous views on the capability of traditional healers in curing diseases and disability. The participating professionals believed that only modern medical doctors could diagnose and help children with disability and disease. However, many individuals seek traditional healers, which would delay the diagnosis of disability. The professionals suggested that the traditional healers should be encouraged to refer disability cases to medical doctors for diagnosis and medication. As Jayanti, a professional, put forward:

There is also a belief system about traditional healers. People think traditional healers can diagnose and cure children's disability and disease, which affect children's disability detection and learning at early stages. That is why we need to educate community people that only medical doctors can diagnose and provide therapeutic support to children, by engaging traditional healers in the awareness-raising process.

On the contrary, the majority of parents perceived that traditional healers should be used together with modern medical doctors to cure diseases and disability. They believed that traditional healers had the spiritual power to heal disability and disease. In this research, nine of ten parents of children living with and without disability believed that modern medical health professionals alone would not be able to treat their children's disease and disability, and for this reason consulted Tantric healers (one of the traditional healers). As Bhagawati, a parent, narrated:

We usually take our children to Tantric and doctors concurrently. We believe that doctors alone cannot cure our children. The Tantric suggest us to do Devi-Dewatako Puja [worship Goddesses and Gods]. They help us to do Puja, when it is difficult. They sometimes give our children some herbal medicines as well. They also suggest us take our children to the doctors. When we follow this, we get our children cured of disease. Once my daughter fainted. Tantric

did puja and she recovered without taking her to the doctor and without applying medicine.

On many occasions, Tantric healers determined whether parents should depend on Puja or take their sick children to the modern health professionals or both. A majority of a fellow parent supported Kali, who reported:

When my child does not feel well, I first take her to the Tantric. They try to identify the cause of sickness or disability. If they think Devi-Dewata [Godesses and Gods] are angry with us and Puja will help cure disease. They do it. When they think everything is okay with Devi-Dewata, then they suggest me consult with the doctors. When my child could not speak until four years, I took her to the Tantric. He suggested me take the girl to the hospital, because he knew that this case had nothing to do with Devi-Dewata.

Parents trusted Tantric healers more than the modern health professionals, because they believed that on many occasions Tantric cured their children's disease. The main reason for parents' immense belief in Tantric is that Tantrics are intricately linked to worship and worship is fundamental to everyday life in Nepal.

Parents believed that Tantric healers would refer them to the modern health professionals if they were unable to find remedies. Since there is a culture of taking sick children to Tantric healers, and Tantric healers are associated with Devi-Dewata, parents believed in Tantric healers. The availability of a variety of medical treatments in the country, such as modern medical practices, Ayurvedic, and Tantrism (traditional medicines and healing practices) meant that parents try different remedies for diseases and disability (Subedi, 2003).

A parent who had acquired medical knowledge about her son's disability, by contrast, held a different view, supporting contemporary medical reasons for disability. She was very sure that Tantric healers lacked the abilities to support her son. This understanding made this mother confident not to seek any traditional healers and because the doctors had effectively informed her about her child's health condition. This parent understood disability as being impairments within an

individual. As noted in chapter two, this viewpoint is linked to the medical model of disability (Oliver, 2013). This will be discussed further in chapter six.

The parent's perspective reveals that education and awareness of the causes of disability, as well as knowing the difference between diseases and disabilities; are vital in assisting people to understand the diverse range of causes. Education about disability should include genetic and environmental information, as well as information about the unknown causes of disability (Disabled World, 2018). Genetic disabilities are inherited from parents, for example, muscular dystrophy. Environmental causes of disability include malnutrition, poor medical intervention for children, poor pre-natal, perinatal and post-natal care, as well as infectious disease and accidents, for example, brain injuries.

Disability is a contagious disease

An unexpected finding was a belief in disability as a contagious disease due to the lack of sufficient biomedical information about the causes of disability. In such contexts, it was natural for parents to worry and be confused about whether disabilities were contagious. The parents of children without disability were anxious that their children would begin mimicking the behaviour of ClwD, if they enrolled their child in the same ECED program. They were confused, considering that problem behaviours of ClwD are similar to diseases and could be transmitted. However, gradually they understood that children without disability did not imitate the behaviour of ClwD. As two parents, Ram and Chandra admitted:

Ram: I was afraid whether my son would imitate the behaviour of children with disability, when I enrolled my son in this ECED this year. I was confused in the first few days of his schooling, but gradually I knew that he was learning what he was supposed to learn.

Chandra: The school principal told me that parents of children without a disability did not want to include children with disability in the same class. They think that when we include children with and without disability in the

same class, children without disability would imitate the behaviour of children with disability.

Parent's viewpoint is consistent with the viewpoint of the chairperson and the educator from one of the three inclusive ECED centres. They shared that the main aim of the establishment of inclusive ECED centres in their district was to correct the misbelief that 'disability is a contagious disease' and to demonstrate that children living with and without disability can learn together. They shared their own experiences of how the commencement of the inclusion of ClwD in the ECED program made individuals in his community gradually understand that disability was not a contagious disease. Krishna explained:

We actually began the program to achieve two primary objectives. The first objective was to educate people that [intellectual] disabilities are not transmitted diseases. The second objective was to demonstrate that children with and without disability can learn together in the same ECED [centre]. You know at that time, people in this community thought that disability was a transmitted disease.

Whilst disability inclusion in education is a new practice in Nepal, the kind of effort described by Krishna contributed to build understanding in the community where the inclusive ECED was established. However, the inclusive ECED programs are still small in number. Therefore, there is a need for the replication of such programs throughout the country.

The research participants not only highlighted the myths that ClwD lack the potential to learn but they also suggested some approaches to educate communities about ClwD and their potential to learn, which were appropriate to the Hindu and Buddhist religious contexts.

Relevance of Hindu stories of Master Astavakra and words of Hellen Keller

The next significant finding, which was not discussed in the L-B Framework, was sharing positive stories of individuals with disability as portrayed in the Hindu

religious canons. The research participants anticipated that positive interpretation of the Hindu canons, in relation to how individuals with disability were given opportunities for learning, and how, in the ancient times, they became successful individuals would convey positive messages and promote acceptance of disability and difference as part of human diversity. Positive interpretations as such would encourage communities to create conducive learning environments for ClwD.

The stakeholders proposed sharing an example of Master Asthavakra¹⁴ (A Hindu philosopher with a disability) and an inspiring comment from Helen Keller, in order to help change deep seated negative attitudes towards disability. The majority of professionals were aligned with Aman's statement:

We can share the positive stories of Hindu religious heroes having disability like Guru Asthavakra. There are many such stories. These stories can be linked to the western knowledge of inclusive education.

From the story of Asthavakra, it can be learnt that individuals with disability require environments to develop their potential for learning, and learning begins prior to birth. The story also taught that the strengths of individuals with disability could be identified and respected, in the context of widespread negative attitudes toward

¹⁴ Asthavakra Gita (a discourse between a sage Asthavakra and King Janak) states that Asthavakra, with eight types of deformities in his body, became a Guru (Master) of King Janak, because of his outstanding spiritual knowledge about truth, such as body, soul, their relationships and the spiritual way to salvation. He had started learning all about the spiritualities from his mother's womb, when his grandfather taught his father and mother. On one occasion, Asthavakra reached the Royal Palace to participate in a Sastrartha (intellectual competition among philosophers) organised by King Janak in his kingdom in Mithila (the eastern Terai of Nepal). All the philosophers and audiences intimidated and laughed at Guru (Master) Asthavakra when they saw a person with a profound physical disability for the first time in such a huge intellectual marathon. People underestimated Asthavakra and wondered why such an ugly and physically disabled person dared to enter the competition hall. Guru Asthavakra, instead of feeling humiliated and ashamed laughed hard with eyes full of tears. The king asked him why he laughed hard in such a humiliating environment. Guru Asthavakra, after wiping his tears, answered that although he was participating in a philosophical discourse, he could hardly see any philosophers, but only saw shoemakers. This made him laugh. The King asked why he thought so. Then Guru replied that in spite of viewing individuals on the basis of knowledge, intelligence and spiritual qualities the individuals, who were in the hall, were looking at individuals only for their fine skin with a view to making good shoes from that skin. Everyone including the king was surprised with his powerful and ironical answer. Impressed by this, the king permitted Asthavakra to participate in the competition and Asthavakra won. Subsequently, the king became his disciple and gave him the status of Master with respect and honour (see Asthavakra Gita).

disability in ancient times. Aman, a professional also shared the comment from Helen Keller with the focus group in this way.

A person who is severely impaired never knows his hidden sources of strength until he is treated like a normal human being and encouraged to shape his own life

The majority of participating professionals agreed with the idea of using the story of Master Asthavakra and Helen Keller's words in community education programs. They believed that this strategy would be relevant to increasing awareness in communities about the potential of individuals with disability.

Giving positive messages about disability via mass media

Despite the parent participants being ignorant about inclusive education, all of them agreed with the suggestion of Ram, a parent of a child without disability; that using positive words could change individuals' negative attitudes toward disability.

Ram asserted:

The message related to inclusion should be given in positive ways in order to make people aware. Rather than using 'discrimination' and 'exploitation', 'exclusion' and 'sin' we should use the words 'equity', 'equality' and 'inclusion'.

It is thought that positive or pro-inclusion language encourages individuals' positive feelings and behaviours and their understanding of the rights of others. The use of positive language is foundational in changing others' attitudes and behaviours. Positive language makes individuals feel supported, respected and encouraged (Irvine, 2011; Wood, 2006). The parents' experiences of labelling and negative language connected to disability initiated their belief in the need for more positive language to be used in the discourse around disability. Parents also suggested using the radio and television to help make communities aware of the right to inclusion of ClwD in education and its positive outcomes. They believed that the radio and television would be the best means to communicate positive

messages to communities. The quote below from Ram reflected many parents' perspectives.

The government should mobilise and use the radio and television to educate people about the benefit of inclusion of children with disability in ECED.

It is relevant to note that developed countries, such as Singapore, who have not had a policy of inclusion of ClwD are moving towards this model. They have made extensive use of mass media to educate the wider community on the rights of children and individuals with disability. They also hold nationwide awareness raising days for specific disability, for example, the annual 'Purple Parade' to raise awareness about Autism, which receives extensive mass media coverage. In this research, familiarity with and access to mass media led parents to recommend the government invest in a strategy of using the media as a contextually appropriate means of community awareness (The Purple Parade, 2015).

Teacher preparedness

Proficiency to teach in inclusive settings is one of the commonly agreed factors affecting the inclusion of ClwD in education in Nepal (Human Rights Watch, 2011; N. Phuyal et al., 2006; Regmi, 2017). The stakeholders raised their concern that one of the leading causes for the rejection of ClwD from ECED was teachers' lack of knowledge and skills in educating these children. Although policy is an overarching factor that influences children's inclusion, policy alone does not work unless teachers are skilled and confident to educate ClwD. Hargreaves (1993) identified that teachers, being the major actors and role models in schools, can become the change agents for the promotion of inclusive education. Beyond a positive attitude, teachers require knowledge of inclusive pedagogy, such as curriculum modification, classroom management, adaptation of instructional strategies, peer mentoring and collaborative teaching, as well as the creation of environments for play (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Darragh, 2007; Forlin &

Chambers, 2011; Underwood et al., 2012). Even though parents were unaware of several aspects of inclusion, for example, policy, coordination, and many contextual conditions, not surprisingly, they recognised that for inclusion to be successful teachers require the necessary expertise in teaching ClwD in mainstream ECED programs. As Suntali and Chandra reported:

Suntali: I came to know from the Head teacher of the school in my village that teachers do not know how to teach a child with disability.

Chandra: The Head teacher in my village said that if teachers know how to teach children with disability, they would accept and include our children in their ECED centres.

Parents, on attempting to enrol their child in an ECED program, were informed by school principals that their teachers were not in a position to educate their ClwD due to the lack of knowledge and skills. The following section analyses stakeholders' perspectives on the reasons for teachers' lack of capacity to educate ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal.

The lack of professional development opportunities

Although inclusive education for young ClwD is yet to be enacted in any significant way in Nepal, all stakeholders noted teachers' professional development was fundamental to successful inclusive ECED programs. The lack of teacher professional development opportunities in the area of inclusion was a significant barrier to a move towards inclusive ECED programs. In reflecting on the few examples of inclusive ECED programs, stakeholders reported that educators were not able to differentiate instructions for children with and without disability. In many situations, teachers faced behaviour management problems due to the lack of theoretical as well as practical knowledge and skills of teaching ClwD. They also lacked understanding and access to communication tools such as braille and sign language skills. The following quotes of Gita, Paru, Kamala and Surendra echoed

the perspective of participating professionals in relation to teachers' capacity to educate CIWD.

Gita: Our educators are not trained in educating children with disability. For example, they do not have training on braille, sign languages and behaviour management. They need additional training to care for children with autism, children with dyslexia, learning disability, deaf-blind, and other different types of disability.

Paru: I experienced that theoretical training alone does not work to include all children with and without disability in the same class, because children may have diverse learning needs. We must learn different strategies to identify and address those needs.

Kamala: I think we require some classroom-based training, which focuses on the learning needs of the individual child, particularly, communication, behaviour and self-help activities of each child.

Surendra: If teachers knew how to teach children with disability, they would accept and include those children in their [ECED] centres.

Teacher professional development programs that focus on the process and the outcomes of classroom accommodations and instructional adaptation for the successful inclusion of CIWD are fundamental to enhancing teacher capabilities and confidence. Teachers require knowledge and skills in teaching children with mild, moderate or severe disability, but this requires a systematic and sustained model of teacher education including formal qualification programs. However, as mentioned previously in chapter one, inclusive education is a very recent development in Nepal and teacher educators also have limited background and knowledge. Consequently, both pre-service and in-service teacher professional development lacked any focus on inclusion in their programs:

Our trainers are not adequately capable to deliver the content in the training of educators. (Gita)

Fortunately, Tribhuvan University, the leading university in the country, commenced courses on special needs and inclusive education as part of its Masters' Degree in education from 2015. This is an important starting point. However, additional professional development opportunities are also required at

the community level. Recently, in regions such as Mustang, some RCRD leaders have been involved in community education programs about disability and inclusive education. This has been made possible by leaders having access to learning in these areas, through participating in international aid programs (see below), including Australian Award Fellowship programs¹⁵. Participants in the five-week Australia Awards Fellowship program highlighted the value they gained from the program, as well as realising, through their experiences, the need for ongoing teacher development in Nepal. One participant, Surya Bhakta (personal communication, 2018), in his evaluation of the fellowship program stated:

There is a need for further quality training and human resource development for ensuring quality inclusive education in Nepal. We also need early verification process, tools, and early intervention plans need to be revised and improved. Coordination among support services is also needed.

International aid programs have developed many educational leaders in the area of inclusive education and as Surya Bhakta highlights, there is a need for much greater attention to professional development for teachers and leaders working in early years education before CIWD can be effectively included in all ECED. This will require a significant undertaking and continuing to engage with international programs would be beneficial. This is discussed further in the final chapter.

Experience of and exposure to inclusion

The importance of teachers' exposure to and experiences of the inclusion of CIWD in mainstream education was reflected in this research in both interviews and focus groups. The research showed that teachers who had experienced or been

¹⁵ In 2013 twenty NGO and government leaders participated in a five-week Australia Award Fellowship program in Inclusive Education in Adelaide, South Australia. The Australian Government in collaboration with Flinders University funded the program. Participants in the program have been active in leading professional development in inclusive education on their return to Nepal.

exposed to inclusion appeared more confident and positive in accepting and engaging ClwD. The teacher and the chairperson from one of the three inclusive ECED programs explained that they had been able to commence the program due to training provided by a British volunteer and exposure to inclusive education in India. As Paru shared:

When the volunteer from England told us that we could include children with and without disability in the same class, I was not confident in my ability to educate children with disability and thought it would not be possible. But when I commenced the program, to my great surprise, it happened that children with disability could learn even things I did not directly teach them. That experience made me confident to include children with disability in the class ... However, when I am unable to teach some activities to my children, I feel helpless, as well as hopeless. I think I need more training to address learning problems of every child, for example, sign language, braille, problem solving and communication.

Teachers from two other inclusive ECED programs shared a similar perspective when reflecting on an inclusive education orientation provided by an NGO, and exposure to inclusive ECED in Kavrepalanchok. They commented that it not only helped them develop the confidence to accept ClwD in their program, but also changed their attitudes toward disability. However, all the participants of the three inclusive ECED programs unanimously agreed that teachers lacked the necessary expertise to include children with visual impairments, hearing impairments and intellectual disability in mainstream ECED settings. Kamala reflected:

I had no confidence and courage to cope with the behaviour problems of children with disability before I participated in an orientation program and observation of an inclusive ECED in Kavrepalanchok, where children with intellectual disabilities were included in regular ECED program. When I saw that program, I changed my mind that I can teach children with disability. This experience also changed my attitudes. ... After that, I was committed that I would not send children with disability back home if parents brought them to enrol in this program. However, acceptance only is not inclusion; I need more training on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. I am struggling with teaching this child with intellectual disability and hearing impairment, because I have no training in both areas.

It was interesting and important to note that a short orientation on disability inclusion and one visit to an inclusive ECED program contributed to developing

teacher confidence and changing attitudes towards disability. These short experiences had also made the ECED staff more committed to accepting ClwD in ECED, and as such provides evidence that even short professional development courses can play a key role in the development of teachers' confidence to include ClwD in their programs. A similar professional development strategy should be considered in future policy development in Nepal, particularly when generating a systematic approach to capacity building in the area of inclusive education in ECED programs. Unfortunately, currently in Nepal, the majority of teachers do not have access to such professional development opportunities and therefore lack the confidence to include ClwD in their ECED programs. Until this is addressed it is unlikely the current exclusion of ClwD to local ECED programs will change.

Qualification requirements for ECED teachers

Participating professionals in this research expressed their concern that limited opportunities for professional development was not the sole cause for teachers lacking expertise to effectively include ClwD in ECED programs. Limited qualification expectations for ECED teachers were also a barrier to inclusion of ClwD. For instance, the Ministry of Education in 2004 established a guideline setting the educational qualification for ECED teachers; namely the completion of secondary level (Year 10) with any subjects. Prior to 2004 the eligible qualification for ECED teachers was a year eight pass. Both academic qualifications are much too low to effectively equip ECED teachers to educate young children and especially those ClwD. Teaching in an ECED context is an elective subject in schools but not compulsory for employment in the field. As Gita noted:

I think the present qualification of ECED educator is not sufficient to teach children with and without disability in the same class. A Year 12 pass, with ECED and inclusion electives should be the required qualification to be an ECED educator.

The stakeholders recommended that the Nepali Government revise the ECED teachers' qualification policy in order to recruit academically sound educators, with the skills to more effectively educate all children. This seems an imperative given the research on the importance of early childhood education to long term outcomes (New South Wales Department of Education, 2001). It would mean raising the qualification of ECED teachers to include completion of years 11 and 12. In the year 11 and year 12 curriculum, it would be essential to include ECED content and curriculum differentiation, as well as a focus on understanding the concept of disability, with opportunities for upgrading in-service teacher qualifications as well. Preferably there would be a move towards tertiary education qualifications for ECED teachers in the future. Professionals' recommendations in relation to upgrading teacher qualifications is further elaborated in chapter six.

Although teacher qualifications are vital in enhancing teacher efficacy, teacher morale and teacher motivation are of equal importance. This is particularly the case in the context of unequal salaries and facilities between primary and ECED teachers in Nepal, as discussed in the following section.

Teacher conditions

Based on their knowledge of government policy, the research participants, particularly the professionals, identified additional issues related to teacher efficacy. They include teachers' lack of motivation and morale due to unequal salary and benefits, as well as low social recognition for teaching CIWD and teaching in ECED programs. Lewis and Bagree (2013) highlighted that equal salary and benefits between regular primary teachers and special education teachers led to a greater increase in morale and motivation for teaching children with special needs (Lewis & Bagree, 2013). Receiving less income for teaching

students living with disability resulted in less desire for these teachers to remain in special education settings (Lewis & Bagree, 2013).

Professionals contributing to this research explained that the Government of Nepal, in their teacher remuneration policy, discriminated between regular teachers, special education teachers (resource teachers) and ECED teachers. Special education or resource teachers, teaching in the government's special and integrated primary classes, were entitled to receive a salary equal to general teachers, but were ineligible for pensions because of their temporary job status. Similarly, ECED educators received a very low salary of US\$780 annually and were also not entitled to the pension. In addition, as a hierarchy-based society, teaching ClwD would be viewed by the community as having lower prestige than teaching children without disability. Paru shared her anxiety stating that:

Although I have been working here for the past 14 years, my job is temporary. The government does not have any policies to make my job permanent. This means I will not get a pension and other benefits after retirement. Therefore, teachers like me are discouraged to make a career in this area. Sometimes I think how I can live when retired with no pension. As a female teacher of children with disability, people underrate my job.

A similar situation is also noted in Singapore, a developed country but one in which inclusion of ClwD is still to be achieved. Mitchell and Desai (2005, p.192) commented:

Students training to be special educators must complete their studies while at the same time carrying out their teaching responsibilities ... because of restricted time the content of the program is necessarily focused on 'survival skills' and cannot proceed much beyond introductory concepts. Given this lower level of training, it is not surprising that teachers working in special schools have significantly lower salaries than those working in regular schools. Further they are not eligible to join the Teachers' Union, which exclusively oversees the welfare of those under the Ministry of Education.

Discrimination between teaching conditions in mainstream schools, special schools and classes, and ECED programs, will lead to a lack of motivation to commit to a career in educating ClwD and in early years education in general.

Given the importance of early years education (Mitchell & Desai, 2005), and the additional knowledge and skills required to teach ClwD, it is necessary for teaching conditions and remuneration to be the same for these teachers and be equivalent to that of teachers working in mainstream schools. Governments who support different teaching conditions and remuneration for those working in early years education or with ClwD are reinforcing the belief that these children are not worthy of high-quality education, and educators and that working in this field is lower in status. It is not surprising to find that the professionals contributing to this research identified the lack of motivation and reward for a career in inclusive education as a barrier to successful inclusive ECED programs. Parent participants did not identify this as a barrier potentially because they were unaware of variations in policies about teacher conditions.

Lack of monitoring and feedback

The professionals, specifically, ECED educators believed that monitoring of professional development programs for general ECED educators was not effective in Nepal. General ECED teachers were given 16 days short-term training and assigned their duties to teach in ECED centres. Once they commenced their teaching, no-one monitored how they educated children in ECED centres:

There is no system of follow up of the training and on the spot support is also lacking. (Gita)

Similarly, ECED teachers who participated in special education training organised by some NGOs, perceived that they required more professional development courses. Their focus was on the need for follow up and monitoring of inclusive classroom practices. Being fully aware of the need for follow up of professional development courses, Paru commented:

We need more follow up support of the training to identify and address children's learning needs. I think we require some classroom-based training, which could monitor the learning of an individual child when teaching.

As teachers found difficulty responding to the specific and often complex learning needs of individual ClwD, even in inclusive settings, they believed they would benefit more from models of on-site follow up and monitoring of their teaching. For example, they sought advice and intervention in terms of selecting appropriate instructional styles and identifying strategies to assess the learning of ClwD. Teachers saw on-site monitoring as an ideal way to receive feedback to enable them to better engage all children with and without disability in the same ECED centre. This model of professional development is expensive as it requires individual attention and travelling time rather than working with large groups in one location (Bissaker et al., 2013). However, research has identified this is a very effective approach to supporting teachers to successfully include ClwD in mainstream settings (Lewis & Bagree, 2013)

Additional Investment in ECED required for inclusion of ClwD in ECED

The participating professionals were aware that adequate investment is fundamental to general ECED programs, and inclusion of ClwD in ECED requires additional funding. They identified that physical infrastructure, assistive devices, and learning and play materials are needed in order to ensure that the learning needs of every ClwD are addressed. This investment in materials, and equipment assists teachers to modify instruction and assessment. In addition, ClwD, particularly those coming from families in poverty, need basic requirements such as food and transportation. Professional participants perceived that ClwD were not able to learn on an empty stomach, and without good nutrition. Transportation is equally important for ClwD to access to ECED centres in city areas. In remote

areas, there is a need to consider the development of both infrastructure and transportation. The following view from Sarita reflected the views of the participating professionals:

We need abundant resources and funding for general ECED programs. We need more resources to develop physical facilities, buy devices, prepare learning and play materials for children with disability. Children with disability also require resources for food, nutrition and transportation.

This perspective corresponds to the findings in the literature mentioned in chapter two; that adequate resources and funding are considered as a prerequisite for the inclusion of ClwD in education (Chaikind et al., 1993; Loreman et al., 2005). The professionals were deeply concerned about government underfunding for ECED programs and education for ClwD in Nepal, and they highlighted the importance of attending to this area if change is to be achieved.

Unequal investment policy doubly marginalises ECED aged children

The professionals shared that ClwD were doubly disadvantaged from accessing government funding due to the unequal investment policy between primary education and ECED programs, exacerbated further by no additional funding for inclusive education. The Nepalese Education Act 1971 had included primary education within its structure, whilst ECED was considered as a small-scale project, which was not entitled to the same funding as primary education. The government's *Education for All National Plan of Action 2001–2015* focused on universal primary education. It allocated more funding and resources to this area. It resulted in the development of unequal funding systems between primary and pre-primary education. Pratap, a government professional shared the following:

The ECED program itself is underfunded, and the inclusion of children with a disability needs more funding.

Budget allocation in 2017 by the Ministry of Education for primary and ECED programs reinforced the issue identified by Pratap. Less than two percent of the total budget for education was allocated for ECED, whilst the budget for primary education was 35 percent (Department of Education, 2017). The unequal funding policy not only adversely affects ECED services to CIwD, but also to pre-primary children without disability.

Logistics and amenities are the responsibilities of the government

Parent participants in this research wanted the government to provide the necessary materials and facilities for ECED programs, expressing the hope that their economic burden may be reduced. Parents were unaware of the government's funding policy and its effects on their children living with and without disability. As the recipients of government services, parent participants agreed with Ram's perspective that:

The government should establish inclusive ECED centres with all the necessary materials such as play materials, playgrounds, school uniforms, class materials, day meals and transportation.

Even though parents were uninformed about several aspects of inclusive education, they understood children's basic needs; for example, the need for food, clothing, transportation as well as learning and play materials. As poor parents were unable to afford these necessities, they envisaged that the government should bear the cost of the basics. However, as identified in the previous section, the government currently prioritises its funding towards primary education.

Commitment from school staff and leaders

The chairperson of one of the three inclusive ECED centre management committees argued strongly, that the commitment of teachers and ECED staff was more important for inclusion than resources. Based on his own experiences, he

believed that resources could be generated, if staff were committed towards the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. Loreman et al., (2005) argued that adequate resources and commitment from school staff are *both* essential for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. In this research, the chairperson Krishna gave the example of his own commitment to generate resources in the following manner, stating that:

Adequate resources are crucial, but resources only are not everything. We can generate resources from parents, governments and NGOs, if we [leaders and teachers] are committed to include children with disability in ECED. For example, this program is collecting fees from parents, and the government is providing funds for teacher salaries. The NGO is generating financial and technical resources from other national and international NGOs, because all staff are dedicated and committed to the inclusion of ClwD in education.

In the Nepalese context, resources are viewed as of utmost importance. However, the chairperson emphasised that resource scarcity is always present and schools and ECED centres should find a solution. ECED leaders interviewed in this research revealed that resources were not the major problem, because the staff were willing to generate resources due to their dedication to inclusion.

Commitment from leadership to equity, social justice and positive relations with all stakeholders plays a significant role in the successful inclusion of ClwD in education (Kugelmass, 2003). This perspective is supported by Krishna, the chairperson or leader in one inclusive ECED centre. He explained that he did not experience a huge challenge in funding and resources due to his ability to coordinate with all relevant government and non-government organisations. The experience of other chairpersons of the inclusive ECED in Baglung and Lalitpur were similar in terms of school leaders' potential to generate resources: As Krishna further explains:

I am able to coordinate with several government offices and NGOs due to my passion and commitment to work for inclusion. All teachers in this program collaborate mutually to develop learning and play materials, as well as to address the learning problems of children with disability. Sometimes teachers come to schools on holidays and discuss children's learning. I encourage them to work together.

This chairperson's passion and commitment towards inclusion also led him to partner with several agencies. However, this example was not the case for the majority of schools and ECED centres. In seeking to replicate the model of Krishna's ECED, and to ensure more ECED centres can achieve such outcomes, the government would be wise to examine the multiple factors that have led to Krishna's success. These factors include effective leadership, teachers' commitment, resourcefulness and successful coordination with other agencies.

Inter- and intra- agency coordination

Cross-sectoral coordination between health and education professionals is vital for inclusive education for CIWD, as is coordination between relevant government ministries (Loreman et al., 2005; UNESCO, 2009). Such coordination not only integrates the knowledge and expertise required for inclusion, but it also assists in overcoming gaps in resourcing. Professionals suggested that coordination with all relevant government and non-government agencies from the local to national level would contribute to alleviating the problems of funding and resources. Almost all professionals agreed with the point made by Prem who stated that:

Expertise and resources could be mobilised, if we can coordinate with different agencies. ... If there is a policy of vertical and horizontal coordination between all these Ministries, we can solve the problem of resources and expertise to some extent. ...We have only vertical coordination systems that cannot integrate the efforts of all related agencies within different ministries.

There is evidence of coordination between schools, district education offices, the Department of Education and the Ministry of Education in Nepal. However, there is no mechanism for the coordination of the Ministry of Education and its departments with other Ministries and their agencies, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development.

A professional named Anita explained the idea of resource generation through coordination as part of the process of planning. She commented:

Although we need both human and financial resources for the inclusion of children with disability in ECED, availability of resources is not the only issue. We can mobilise resources, if we coordinate with the offices within the Ministry of Health, Education and the local government. We do not have sophisticated planning like many developed countries. We can use locally available resources and materials in our ECED.

Anita's comments highlight again the importance of greater coordination between ministries and also the potential to draw on local resources.

The chairperson of the other ECED program in Baglung shared that the inclusion of ClwD in his program was possible because of the effective coordination between the ECED centre, the district education office and NGOs. As Min revealed:

There is coordination with the district education office, NGO (LaliGuras) and KOICA. KOICA built a safe ECED centre with fences, the district education office pays teachers' salaries and Lali Guras gives training about inclusion. You see this district is a model in coordination because all government and non-government agencies are accountable to each other. ... because we trust and understand each other. We plan and implement programs together. This helps us gather all resources from the government and non-government offices, which is required to achieve the goals of the inclusion of children with disability in ECED. Other districts should learn from this district.

The experiences of the chairperson of the inclusive ECED program in Baglung district established that there could be effective coordination between government and non-government agencies. Every agency was accountable to their counterparts. Mutual trust, openness and honesty were the underlying principles important to successful outcomes and this should be acknowledged in any new policy developments for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs.

The experience of the staff of the inclusive ECED program in Lalitpur district was slightly different. The sub-Metropolitan (the local government) was actively involved in the process of coordination with the district education office and NGOs. The viewpoints of ECED teachers indicated that they would not be able to operate

the program without coordination between the government and non- government agencies. As Kamala asserted:

There are three things that supported us to include both children with and without a disability:

1. The Lalitpur sub-Metropolitan provided us this room and land
2. The district education office gives us the salary and
3. The ECED management committee motivates us to include children with and without a disability in this centre.

The committee also works with NGOs and gives us the necessary materials when we ask them.

The operation modality of these three ECED centres shared a high degree of commonality in their coordination between the government and non-government organisations. They planned and implemented their work together, signifying a policy of coordinated planning from school level to national level. The success of these three programs provides evidence that inclusive ECED is possible when effective cooperation and collaboration is in place, particularly when drawing on the strengths and available resources of each contributing organisation.

Coordination between ECED staff

Teacher participants from Kabhre Palanchok and Lalitpur experienced effective coordination with each other in their ECED programs. The teachers were adamant that the inclusion of CIWD in these ECED programs was a result of coordination between staff, specifically in the development of play and learning materials and the identification of new strategies in classroom instruction. The following quotes of Paru represented the views of ECED teacher participants in this research:

Coordination among staff is another essential factor for inclusion, because without coordination between teachers and management, inclusion of children with disability is impossible. The reason why we are able to address the needs of children with a disability is we (teachers) are working in a coordinated way

in terms of classroom instruction and the development of learning and playing materials for children with disability.

Coordination between teachers requires more than one teacher working in one ECED centre. Even though there was coordination between teachers in two inclusive ECED programs, this approach was not possible in Baglung. Being a community-based program, it was operated in a separate room in the community, not within a school, with one ECED class and a single teacher. However, there was the opportunity for coordination between the management team and NGOs. Coordination with parents to engage them in children's care, nurture and education is another possibility and a potential untapped resource in more remote locations. The factors associated with parents' participation in ECED programs are elaborated in the following section.

Parent participation

It is argued that parents' participation in ECED programs is important to provide quality care, nurture and education for their ClwD (Lazarević & Kopas-Vukašinović, 2013; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). Being carers and teachers of their children, parents can take the role of advocates for the inclusion of their ClwD in ECED. The stakeholders in this research were also mindful of parents' important role in inclusive education. A majority of the professionals from the government and NGO believed that parents' participation in children's learning yielded better developmental outcomes. They also held the view that a mandatory policy on parental engagement and education would enhance participation. These professionals reported that parents' lack of time due to the need to earn an income inhibited their participation in the learning of children at home and in ECED centres. However, it could be argued if stipends were to be provided to families of young ClwD this may alleviate that need to work fulltime.

Professionals situating of parents

The government and NGO professionals contributing to this research explained that parents have the potential to nurture, care and assist children's development and learning. However, parents' minimal education and lack of understanding about disability and their role as parents appeared to restrict parents from participating actively in their children's education in Nepal. Since parents lacked awareness regarding their significant role in inclusive education, they believed it was the sole responsibility of teachers and ECED centre management teams to care for and educate their children. The comment below by Surendra reflected the viewpoints of professionals:

Parents are one of the major parts of inclusion. Therefore, their involvement is crucial. We need to make them aware of their role, otherwise, they are ignorant of the learning process due to the lack of education. Parents' role is more important in early years, because parents can best support their children. The problem is uneducated parents cannot support their children in learning.

Parents seemed to rely heavily on teachers, perceiving that teachers were the ones who were capable and accountable with regard to the education of their ClwD. Parents valued the knowledge and capacity of teachers and were highly dependent on teachers' guidance and instruction in order to help their ClwD at home. This quote by a parent, Ram, reflected parents' perception of their role in ECED programs:

We parents are like children. We do not know how to help our children because we bring our children to the ECED centre in the morning and take them back home in the afternoon. We come to the centre when we are invited. If teachers do not tell us anything about what we should do to support our children, we do not know. Teachers should let us know about our duty or responsibilities.

Although parents expected teachers to guide and instruct them around educating their children, teachers were not performing this role. ECED educators undermined and undervalued parents' abilities to teach ClwD. They believed that

teaching ClwD in ECED was exclusively the teachers' responsibility, not the parents'. The views of Sarita represented that of many teachers:

Parents of children with disability do not know how to teach children. Therefore, they do not come to the ECED centre.

This type of thinking is problematic and at odds with the international literature on the important role of parents in the education of their ClwD. It represents the parents as incapable of educating their child and removes the power of doing so from them. This thinking reflects traditional models of professional-parent partnerships in which the professional holds the knowledge and therefore also the power. They fail to recognise or acknowledge parents as the experts in their child's development. Unfortunately, due to parents believing they have limited knowledge of the best way to nurture and educate their child they look to professionals for guidance. Turnbull, Turbiville and Turnbull (2000) in their research on different models of engagement, noted that historically professionals held 'power-over' parents for the following reasons:

Power over relationships are characterised by professionals exerting decision-making control over parents through perceived higher competence, professionalised communication, and control of environmental resources. The goal is often to define parental problems on the basis of the professional's 'diagnosis'... (p.631)

Fortunately, they also pointed out positive change in the nature of parent-professional relationships with more collaborative engagement and respect for each other's knowledge bases. In developing future policy for successful inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal, the issue and quality of parent –professional partnerships must be addressed.

Policy and parent participation

The lack of a government mandatory policy for parents' participation in children's learning is another significant factor in parental exclusion from any sustained

engagement in ECED programs. The existing policy for parents' participation in general ECED programs only acknowledges parents' representation in ECED management: there is no reference to parents' role in their children's learning and development. Therefore, parental roles are limited to collecting fees and coordinating with government and non-government agencies for resources and funding. The policy provision for parental participation in ECED management committees is discussed in more detail in chapter six.

In developed countries, children identified with disability are generally provided with an Integrated Family Service Plan (IFSP). IFSP is a basic inclusive education service plan for young ClwD, in which the current development levels of ClwD, their developmental outcomes and specific service requirements are detailed. Input from parents is an integral part of the IFSP (Foreman, 2011). The IFSP focuses on families' needs, strengths and concerns about the overall development of their ClwD, including education. The plan is generally developed in consultation with health and educational professionals and always includes the parents.

In Nepal, as there is no policy for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED, it was not surprising to find all ECED staff and parents, even in the three inclusive ECED centres, were unaware of the use of an IFSP. Educators in the ECED centre in Kavrepalanchok were using an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for every child. However, they did not involve parents in the implementation of the plan. The other inclusive ECED centres were unaware of the need for IEPs and hence there were no individualised learning programs for their ClwD. To assist in the transition to an inclusive ECED program, attention to generating IFSP as a model for successful transition of families and children to early years' education is a possible direction which would need to be investigated for the links to improved education for ClwD

Reflections on parental participation

Although almost all government and NGO professionals realised a need for parental engagement in order to enhance the learning of ClwD, parents and educators believed that the role of parents should be limited to paying fees and providing feedback on an occasional basis. This reflects a model of 'power-over' as previously noted Turnbull, Turbiville and Turnbull (2000). Educators had limited understanding of the importance of the role of parents in learning and developmental activities of ClwD, an important area to be addressed in any future planning of professional development programs.

As identified by Krishna and Kamala, leaders in inclusive ECED, the lack of time was an additional reason restricting parents' participation. They commented:

Krishna: We need parents' support. They are supporting us by sharing their positive experiences about the quality of this centre in the community. They are also supporting us financially by paying fees, but they are not supporting directly the activities of our ECED. The majority of parents are poor and have to work to earn. As a result, they do not find time to be involved in their children's learning.

Kamala: Parents have to work hard to survive in this city. They do not have time to spend in the ECED centre.

These reflections indicate that once again, poverty is viewed as a primary reason for parents' lack of engagement in their child's early years' education. However, even if poverty is addressed by the provision of a government stipend, there is still much work to do in assisting both professionals and parents to recognise the importance of being active contributors working in collaboration to successfully include and educate ClwD in ECED programs.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the analyses of the stakeholders' responses to government policy, conceptual knowledge of inclusive education, prevailing beliefs about disability, teacher professional development, investment in ECED,

commitment and parents' participation and engagement in ECED programs. These factors were all identified in the Literature- Based Framework as organisational factors affecting successful inclusion of CIwD in Nepal's ECED programs. However, the data generated from stakeholders' perspectives on the current situation surrounding organisational factors also included the following which, ultimately provided valuable contextual dimensions to add to the L-B Framework. These additional dimensions as reported in this chapter were:

- Wait and see culture
- Disability as a contagious disease
- Giving positive messages about disability via mass media
- Referring to relevant Hindu religious texts (a story of Master Asthavakra) and the quote of Hellen Keller
- Commitment and leadership.

The detailed understandings of the research participants provided extended understanding of the current situation in Nepal in relation to the exclusion of CIwD from ECED programs and provided much evidence for the need to include these aspects in generating a Stakeholder Informed (S-I) Framework for ECED programs. As an important aspect of the research process, the final iteration of the S-I Framework was presented to stakeholders for review. The outcomes of this consultation and the subsequent recommendations for policy development and action are reported in chapter six.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Stakeholders' Perspectives

Inclusive education can raise the quality bar across education systems, by using strategies that cater for naturally diverse learning styles of all students, whilst accommodating the specific learning needs of some students. They also serve to target and include other marginalised groups of children, helping to ensure inclusion for all (Walker, 2013, p. 4).

Introduction

This section elaborates and explains the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED as presented in Figure 6.1. The Framework was constructed as an outcome of my review of the literature combined with an inductive analysis of the research participants' perspectives through individual interviews, focus group discussions and follow up feedback sessions. A detailed account of data analysis can be found in chapter three. The stakeholders' perspectives have substantiated my initial argument — developed as the Literature-Based (L-B) Framework in chapter two — that several contextual factors and organisational factors interact and contribute to ClwD becoming victims of multiple exclusion.

The contextual factors are economic class, spirituality, caste, the schooling culture of some ethnic communities, language, gender and geographic location; while the organisational factors include policy, attitudes, teacher efficacy, resources, coordination and parental engagement. Of these factors, spirituality and the schooling culture of two ethnic communities, for example, amongst Raute and Chepang are recognised as new factors, which were not identified in the L-B Framework, discussed in chapter two. Several further dimensions emanating from the research participants reporting of organisational factors are also explored. Through this analysis, it became apparent that these factors and dimensions multiply the interaction further and affect the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. The Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED displayed in Figure 6.1 includes school and organisational factors of influence in the central circle surrounded by

contextual factors. The connected lines are designed to note the interaction between contextual factors.



Figure 6.1. Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED.

This chapter is organised into three sections. The first section discusses the effect of the interaction of all predicted and unpredicted contextual factors and their dimensions on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. The effect of the interaction of organisational factors and their dimensions is discussed in the second section. The third section discusses participants suggested changes to the final iteration of the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED.

The interaction of contextual factors affecting the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal

This section discusses the research participants' perspectives on the effect of the interaction of contextual factors, such as poverty, spirituality, caste, schooling culture of two ethnic groups, language, gender and geographic location on inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. The interaction of these contextual factors causes additional detriment to education and development. This finding resonates with the argument put forward in the Global Partnership for Education (2016), stating that:

in developing countries, some children face more barriers than others to accessing education: children who are from poor families or live in remote areas, children from ethnic minorities, girls. Children with disability face all these barriers and more especially, if they combine several of these characteristics. (p. 1).

The Global Partnership for Education (2016) reported that when poverty, remoteness, ethnicity and gender intersect, ClwD are unlikely to be included in education. However, it did not acknowledge that the interaction of spirituality, caste and the medium of instruction may also negatively affect the inclusion of ClwD in education. My research has explored these three significant factors.

Prior to discussing the interaction of contextual factors affecting the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs, it is essential to explain the research participant's perception of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. The research participants reported that 'our five fingers are more than enough' to count inclusive ECED programs for ClwD in Nepal, meaning only three ECED programs in 35 000 are including ClwD. More than 99 per cent of young ClwD have no access to ECED programs, contributing to these children and their families living in a vicious web of ignorance, developmental delays, poverty and exclusion. UNESCO (2009) in its policy brief paper on early childhood, reported the same unpleasant reality that education for more than 98 per cent of children living with disability in developing

countries is an unfulfilled dream, due to the lack of early intervention services and inclusive education approaches. This policy paper, however, did not discuss the effects of contextual factors on the education and development of ClwD. The following section discusses the effect of poverty on the inclusion of children living with disability in ECED programs.

Economic class: poverty

Family poverty has a multidimensional influence over the inclusion of ClwD in educational and developmental opportunities (Groce et al., 2011). Odom, Pungello and Gardner-Neblett (2012) and Park, Turnbull and Turnbull (2002) reported that children from more economically disadvantaged backgrounds have few opportunities for a holistic development. A lack of holistic development including physical, cognitive, emotional, social and communicative development for ClwD results in poor health, lower productivity, lower income and lower quality of life. These children are less likely to interact with their parents, and are often stressed and low in self-esteem (Odom, Pungello, & Gardner-Neblett, 2012). In extreme cases of poverty, ClwD are often left alone for many hours in restricted conditions, neglected and marginalised by their families and communities (Jones et al., 2012).

As introduced in chapter one, in Nepal, 25.2 per cent of its population is living below the poverty line (United Nations Development Programme, 2016), hence, it is not surprising that my research identified that family poverty is a barrier to inclusion of children living with disability in Nepalese ECED opportunities. Family poverty also has a serious effect on the overall development and education of children without disability, which may continue for their entire lives (Treanor, 2012). However, the effect of family poverty is higher for ClwD, because these children need more resources for their survival (Groce et al., 2011). In his theory

of human motivation, Maslow (1943) argued that meeting basic needs such as food, water, shelter and clothing are essential for the survival of every individual and for the functioning of the body. Other needs including safety, love and belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation are secondary in Maslow's hierarchical order. Basic needs in the hierarchy must be fulfilled prior to individuals focusing on attaining higher needs. As impoverished families struggle to meet basic needs for survival, meeting other higher-order needs in the hierarchy becomes subordinate. Therefore, it is not surprising that the participants in the research reported that poor families didn't prioritise the education of their ClwD, being unable to invest time and money in education of ClwD that may require meetings, medication, therapies, counselling, assistive devices, as well as other health related needs. Rather, the need of such families is to prioritise the basic survival of self and family. As they have no income, they become incapable of saving, generating capital, including human capital and investing. When families are unable to invest they are limited to meeting daily needs with any income they may have, and eventually become trapped in the cycle of poverty, which is extremely tough to break (Bauer, 1965). Research indicates there is a high likelihood of continuing family poverty for at least three subsequent generations (Singal, 2015). This may be compounded by a family member needing to take on a caring role for ClwD, restricting their capacity to earn for the family as well.

The effect of poverty on the inclusion of ClwD in education multiplies, when it interacts with, caste-based discrimination, ethnicity and gender. For instance, when ClwD are poor and they are from the Dalit community, their poverty is not the only barrier to accessing educational opportunities. Caste-based discrimination against this group of ClwD interacts with the family's inability to pay for education. When those ClwD are female, gender-based discrimination interacts with poverty

and caste-based discrimination. In cases such as these, layer upon layer of disadvantage confronts ClwD and their families. There is a need for policy to take into account the layers of disadvantage and their interaction. The interaction of poverty, caste-based discrimination and gender is further discussed in the sections focused on caste, ethnicity and language of instruction. Meanwhile, the following section on stipends for families of ClwD is an important factor in addressing the needs of families of ClwD living in poverty.

Stipend policy

In Nepal, the government adopted a monthly stipend as the sole strategy to address the educational needs of ClwD in poor families. However, the reports from the national living standard survey (2003–2004), (2010–2011) by the government of Nepal, and research by Scheuermann (2013) revealed that children without disability from the poorest quintile were less likely to attend and complete primary and secondary education despite the stipend policy for school education. In my research, the government stipend policy was identified as a barrier to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED because there is no provision for a stipend that assists ClwD attend an ECED program. Recognising that early intervention and early education of ClwD is fundamental to enhanced development (The Royal Australasian College of Physicians Paediatric & Child Health Division, 2013; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990), purported that families of ClwD need greater resources and support to enrol their children in ECED programs. ClwD from poor families are often compelled to begin their education later when they are eligible to receive the government stipend, missing crucial developmental opportunities.

Mishra, Devkota, Karmacharya and Acharya (2014), in their research on education for ClwD in Nepal found that the rate of stipend was not sufficient for poor families due to a range of additional costs associated with disability. Parents were reluctant

to enrol their ClwD in school. If they did enrol, they were nonetheless unlikely to continue the education of their ClwD. The researchers argued for the need to provide more incentive for those ClwD whose families are very poor. My research also identified that the current policy of providing stipends based on the 'same for all' discouraged the inclusion of ClwD from the poorest backgrounds. The system of giving an equal stipend to all ClwD, who belong to the same category of disability without considering the magnitude of family poverty or the extent of the disability does not cover the cost of children's education for these poorest families. My research therefore reinforces the finding by Mishra et, al (2014) that as the current small amount of stipend for school-aged ClwD is inadequate to ensure access to education for ClwD from the poorest families, the replication of the same stipend in ECED would continue precluding ClwD from ECED programs. It is important that the Nepalese government develops a stipend policy on the basis of need. Such a needs-based stipend policy would go much further towards achieving equitable outcomes for all ClwD no matter what their background. This may result in different stipends being paid to different families. The focus of attention therefore is to ensure the implementation of a means-based, financially sufficient stipend to provide early educational opportunities for pre-school ClwD. The Nepalese Government needs to establish a policy, which fairly assesses the level of family poverty in order to identify families of ClwD living in poverty and increase stipends for these families, preferably commencing at birth to assist with health-related and early intervention and educational opportunities.

Spirituality: faith-based schooling

There is a scarcity of national and international literature discussing the inclusion or exclusion of ClwD from pre-primary education in spiritual schools in developing

countries. It is evident that some South African Islamic schools have a policy of one year universal pre-primary education, which focuses on education and development for early years children (Ebrahim, 2017). Pakistan also has early childhood education programs in its Madrasas. However, the purpose of these programs is to teach the Quran to children, rather than to engage them in holistic developmental activities (Khan, 2018). My research identified that many children eligible for ECED, including ClwD, were unable to access traditional Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic spiritual schools (Gurukul, Ashram, Gumba and Madrasas) due to the absence of ECED programs in these schools. There are four other central reasons for children's exclusion from these schools. First parent's strong spirituality implies that they prefer to send their children to spiritual schools, even though these schools had no ECED programs. Second, in some communities, parents have no choice regarding their children's schooling because there are no modern schools and ECED services. Third, the culture of non-schooling has a number of interacting factors for the exclusion of children in these spiritual schools. In their research on education in spiritual schools in Nepal, Thapa, Sherpa, Bajracharya, & Pandey, (2007) identified that there was a culture of non-schooling for children from a particular caste and religion in a particular spiritual school. For example, in Gurukul and Ashram, only male children from the Brahmin caste are accepted. Dalit, ethnic and Islamic children, as well as female children are not allowed in these schools. Similarly, in Gumba, children from the Brahmin caste and Islamic faith groups are excluded. Brahmin, ethnic and Dalit children from Hindu communities are not accepted in Madrasas. The underlying reason for the culture of non-acceptance of children from specific castes and religions in some schools is linked to century old practices. Historically, the purpose of Gurukuls and Ashrams is to teach the Veda doctrine (Hindu Scripture), and there is a long-

standing cultural belief that studying Veda is the duty of the Brahmin male, not the female, or ethnic and Dalit communities. In the same vein, Gumba schools aim to educate ethnic minorities while Madrasas serve to educate Islamic communities. Gumba and Madrasas are generally designed as single gender schools. However, these schools often include female children. Despite there being no legal restrictions to enrolling children from all castes and religions in these schools, and the majority of spiritual schools are adopting government curriculum alongside their spiritual content, these schools still do not accept all children — an outcome of long-standing cultural beliefs and practices.

The language of instruction in religious schools further marginalises children from participating in learning and is a fourth reason for the lack of inclusion of CwD in these schools. Gurukul and Ashram employed Sanskrit and Nepali, whilst Gumba and Madrasas employ Tibetan, Nepali and Urdu languages for classroom instruction (Parwez et al., 2008; R. Thapa et al., 2007). Sanskrit, Tibetan Urdu and Nepali languages are generally not children's first language. With regard to ClwD, children with visual impairments and hearing impairments require Braille and sign language respectively as the medium of instruction. However, these schools are not aware of the issue of the medium of instruction designed to support ClwD. The government and spiritual school management communities need to take into account that ECED programs in their schools are imperative. When beginning ECED programs, it is important to acknowledge the interaction of parents' spirituality, caste- based discrimination, and the religious culture of schooling, gender and the medium of instruction.

Caste, ethnicity and language of instruction

Caste

Caste-based discrimination has been entrenched in Nepalese history and culture for hundreds of centuries, so it is not surprising that being born into a Dalit family often results in exclusion from education and more so if the child has been identified with a disability. This section on caste-based discrimination initially focuses on all children from the Dalit caste, identifying how their exclusion from education has many consequences for their future and life opportunities. Following is a more specific focus on ClwD from Dalit communities highlighting how they experience double discrimination in schools and ECED centres.

The Government of Nepal has stipulated policy to eliminate caste-based discrimination. However, it became evident from my research that this policy is not enough to ensure non-discrimination in schools. According to the Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2011, prohibition of individuals to enter, attain and participate in public activities on the basis of caste, race, culture, ethnicity or occupation will result in up to three years' imprisonment or monetary penalties up to twenty-five thousand rupees, or both. However, it is challenging to implement the law because children cannot raise their voices against all forms of discrimination. In addition, long-held cultural beliefs, which are protected by the first code of Nepal enacted on 5th January 1854, continue to influence community thinking. As discussed in chapter two, the civil code clearly divided individuals between *Chhut* (touchable) and *Achhut* (untouchable) groups.

There is a dearth of research on ClwD from Dalit communities' experiences of schooling. Pariyar and Lovett (2016) in their research on Dalit identity in the Kaski

district of Nepal identified that although caste-based discrimination against children from the Dalit community was decreasing, it still existed in rural and urban schools. Findings from this current research reflected the research of Pariyar and Lovett (2016) identifying that discrimination against Dalit students continued, although it took different forms in rural and urban areas.

As pointed out in chapter four of this thesis, in rural villages the Dalit communities are treated as an impure and *Achhut* populace, which is manifested as a more severe form of discrimination. In urban areas, they are deemed as touchable but labelled as Dalit, which means *Sano Jat or jati* (lower caste) to the non-Dalit populace. In my research, one mother of ClwD from the Dalit community shared how discrimination of their children continued in rural schools, in the name of untouchability, including touching and using public sources of water, eating food or drinking water from the same water source as their friends. The discrimination also included exclusion from participating in numerous curricular and extra-curricular activities. Segregation and exclusion as such violate the rights of children from Dalit communities to basic survival and deprive them of their social and emotional needs. Untouchability and exclusion not only make Dalit feel unwelcome and possibly unsafe in schools, but such practices also encourage the perpetuation of untouchability, thereby modelling for children that untouchability continues to be a customary practice. Bourdieu (1974) in his book chapter *The School as a Conservative Force* argued that dominant groups aim to reproduce a culture in their interests in order to hold power in a hierarchical society. He argued that schools play a vital role in the reproduction of culture. In my research, untouchability in schools was manifested as the cultural reproduction of untouchability in the community. Additional research outcomes highlight that children's rights to an education are being denied based on their caste. If this is

not acknowledged and addressed beyond current government policies, particularly the notion of inclusion for all being influenced by school practices, then exclusion and the cycle of educational under-performance for Dalit children and more so for those with a disability, will continue. In this current era, the question should be asked, why do schools in rural and some urban regions in Nepal continue to reinforce such exclusionary practice? Who is to benefit or lose from continuing these unacceptable historical and cultural practices?

While there has been limited research on the effects of caste-based discrimination in Nepalese schools on children's well-being and self-esteem, in his article, *Dalit in modern India*, Michael (1999) argued that prejudices against children from Dalit communities in schools reduced happiness among these children. The author also found negative health and academic outcomes for this group of children. As discussed in chapter two, children from Dalit communities experience lower educational outcomes in the Nepalese school system indicating that this cohort receive less opportunity to develop and participate in learning than their non-Dalit colleagues. As young children from the Dalit community experience marginalisation and exclusion from the early days of their schooling, they may also develop negative attitudes towards the non-Dalit community.

Although parents recognise discrimination in schools against their children, they are unable to report the case, often due to ignorance of existing laws, poverty and their dependence on the non-Dalit communities. In many instances, Dalit communities are unaware of their rights. They find difficulty in accessing the judicial process. Expensive consultation fees for poor Dalit (Poudel, 2007), and the lack of information about the process of complaint registration makes the reporting of caste-based offences complex (Cameron, 2009; Charema, 2007). In rural areas, Dalit communities are reluctant to lay complaints against non-Dalit

communities due to their dependency on non-Dalit communities for their basic needs. That is, a majority of Dalit communities are poor, landless and barter their labour with non-Dalit communities (Cameron, 2009). Consequently, poverty, a lack of access to information and the dependency of Dalit on non-Dalit communities interact to perpetuate deeply entrenched caste-based discrimination in schools.

Cameron (2007), and Pariyar and Lovett (2016) argued that although the term Dalit symbolises a collective identity of a historically oppressed population, labelling is highly problematic as it further reinforces segregation, and degradation of this community. It perpetuates humiliation of children from the Dalit community for an entire generation (Cameron, 2009). My research also identified that the use of the word, *Dalit*, in Government affirmative action policies, while designed to address their exclusion, has resulted in perpetuating the persecuted status of this community. For example, there are incentives for students from the Dalit community. There are quotas for individuals from the Dalit communities in teaching and other employment, and a reserved quota for their representation in local, federal and central governments. Even though these policies enable the Dalit communities to improve their socio-economic conditions, such labelling adversely affects their rights, *in the every-day*, to live dignified lives and reduces their feeling of belonging as equal members of the community. Link and Phelan (2001) argued that although labelling is the recognition of differences in some communities, it leads to negative stereotypical views, segregation and a feeling of stigma. This stigma leads to even lower status and further discrimination. Therefore, the labelling of Dalit communities within government policy, though unintentional, further perpetuates discrimination.

When children from Dalit communities are living with disability, the stigma of being a ClwD (Green, Davis, Karshmer, Marsh, & Straight, 2005), intersects with caste-

based discrimination (Pariyar & Lovett, 2016). Stigma not only excludes these children from many curricular and extra-curricular activities, but also denies them enrollment in schools and ECED centres because ClwD are considered as being incapable of learning (Bakhshi, Babulal, & Trani, 2017). The two-fold stigma of being a child with disability and being from the Dalit community results in greatly diminished opportunities for even a basic education — this basic education being a fundamental right for all children.

The Nepalese Government has made a commitment to ensure the rights of all children to an education through the constitution of Nepal 2015; however, long-held historical and cultural practices make the change process slow, in particular, in rural locations. The effect of the interaction of untouchability, labelling and the stigma of being a child living with disability necessitates the requirement that the government take action on the implementation of laws against caste-based discrimination, in conjunction with information about the rights of ClwD from the Dalit community and the process of settling grievances. Punitive action alone has not proven sufficient to eliminate deep-seated discrimination against ClwD from the Dalit community. Reducing the economic burden of poor families' survival and their access to justice is vital. Encouraging inclusion of all children in local schools and ensuring the same rights and access to food, water and learning opportunities may be one strategy for changing attitudes about caste-based discrimination. More importantly, principals and teachers need to model inclusive practices acknowledging all children as having equal rights and opportunities for learning and social inclusion.

Ethnicity: cultural practices of schooling

My research explored the effects of ethnic cultural beliefs and practices including the extremely marginalised ethnic groups, such as Nomadic Raute and remote

Chepong on their children's access to ECED programs. In the case of Raute, their rigid cultural practice, *no school for Banko Raja* (king of the jungle) is the main barrier to their children's inclusion in ECED programs. This community highly values their ethnic identity and they are proud to be Raute. The Raute community repudiates schooling, even if it is available and accessible believing that, if they send their children to schools, they would lose their existing independence and identity. Subsequently, they have to work for others. The other reason for not enrolling their children in schools is the belief that children will not be taught the valued traditional skills of carpentry, hunting and foraging wild food and spring water. Culturally, it is the role of a mother to raise children with the aim of transferring traditional knowledge and wisdom to future generations (Banu, 2017). Therefore these communities believe that mothers are the perfect caretakers and educators of their children (Banu, 2017; UNDP, 2011). While mothers caring for their children is a common practice in many communities world-wide, the changing nature of the world, including Nepal, has implications for what mothers need to know to ensure their children have access to health and education services. The Raute community needs support for their survival, yet the community continues to reject hospitals, schools and ECED centres, potentially resulting in a diminishing population for this ethnic group. For children living with disability, a lack of education and health services may result in diminished life expectancies or development.

As shown in Figure 6.2, Bank (1976), in his paper on the emerging stages of ethnicity in the United States, proposed five stages of ethnic identity; namely, psychological captivity, ethnic encapsulation, ethnic identity clarification, bi-ethnicity and multi-ethnicity.

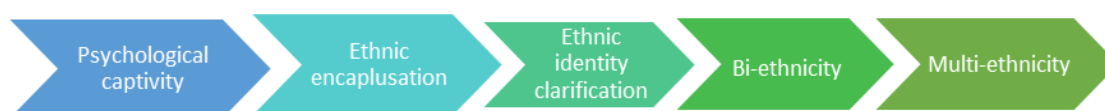


Figure 6.2. Continuum of ethnic identity.

At one end of the continuum individuals in certain ethnic communities develop negative attitudes to their own culture, feeling ashamed of their culture and avoiding contact with other cultures. At the second stage, individuals choose to participate in their community's culture, believing that their culture is the best. Moving to the third stage of the continuum individuals are able to understand the positive aspect of their culture and those of others, thus, begin to develop positive attitudes towards other communities' cultures. At the fourth stage, the community demonstrates an interest in participating in the cultural activities of others. Individuals are able to develop clear personal, ethnic and national identities and value all cultures when communities move to the fifth stage.

In order for communities to move from one to the next stage of their cultural identities, there is a need for frequent interaction between various cultures. As a jungle dweller, the Raute have less opportunity for contact with the villagers and children are not exposed to cultural differences, through school attendance for example. Therefore, Raute ethnic identities are still on the second stage of the ethnic identity continuum, whereby they believe that their culture is superior to others and want to continue their cultural practices.

The Raute community has previously accepted child and maternal health support organised by the United Nation's Development Program. The program was successful in encouraging the community to accept its assistance through skilled

communication and in building rapport (UNDP, 2011). For example, the program organisers won trust by engaging in many rounds of interaction with the *Mukhiya* (Head of the Raute community) and other male members, understanding also that females and children are not allowed to interact with outsiders. They provided food and medicine to sick children and examined the community's response. When the Raute community witnessed the improvement in their children and women's health, they accepted the assistance. However, the support provided by the UNDP was not sustained, due to the temporary nature of services. Therefore, ECED services with early intervention programs provide an ideal and sustainable model for supporting the survival and development of children in the Raute community. Although the Raute accept a government stipend for every adult, they are not interested in the government stipend for school-aged children because they believe education lacks relevance to their needs, cultural values and wisdom. In this backdrop, distributing a stipend would not be an effective strategy to include the Raute children in ECED programs. A useful approach might be collaboration with the community, especially the *Mukhiya* and other male members, as well as seeking to involve mothers and grandmothers in mobile ECED services such as early intervention along with informal education and awareness raising.

In its literature review on early childhood services in remote and rural locations in Australia, the Government of New South Wales (2017), highlighted the importance of place-based learning in ECED services in remote locations. Place-based learning is defined as learning that focuses on engaging children in local environments, culture and language in order to connect their experiences of the local context with education. This culturally appropriate approach to ECED services could serve as a model to address the needs of Raute in Nepal.

In the case of the Chepang, despite not having a strong culture of refusing formal education, there are four interacting factors affecting children's education. They are: their remoteness; (Yadav, 2014), parental lack of education; poverty and the language of instruction (Subba et al., 2014; Tryndyuk, 2013). Similar to the Raute, early intervention and ECED services are fundamental to the survival of children from Chepang communities (Khanal, 2014a). Free ECED services, with early intervention services in the local community, parental education, and economic support to parents for their participation in ECED would be an effective approach for making ECED services accessible to Chepang children, including ClwD. Such a strategy is fundamental to the expansion of ECED services to disadvantaged communities. Policy makers and program designers need to understand and use the cultural practices and knowledge of Raute and Chepang communities. Some examples are, blending their traditional work with ECED activities, and using local materials in play and learning in ECED services.

Language of instruction

The participating professionals' perspectives on the use of children's first language in classroom instruction is vital to both children with and without disability, who are from linguistically diverse backgrounds. However, it is challenging to develop teacher capacity to enable this. The information about multilingual children including ClwD, and teachers in ECED and primary schools is unavailable in Nepal (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014). A further challenge is to instruct children with visual or hearing impairment, as there is currently no Braille and sign language system in children's mother tongues. As an unanticipated finding, these issues have long-term implications for the development of sign language and Braille systems of instruction in the background language of ClwD.

Research has shown that the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction increases children's learning outcomes and interaction. This strategy further contributes to develop their self-perception, confidence and the feeling of emotional security (Tollefson & Tsui, 2003), helping children feel their culture is accepted, recognised welcomed, respected and valued by teachers (Bruce, 2011). The recognition and respect of cultural diversity is a key to an inclusive classroom. The finding about the importance of using children's mother tongues during the early years of education in schools is consistent with evidence provided by Awasthi, (2004), Kandel (2013) and Kadel (2014). These researchers contended that children from non-Nepali speaking backgrounds required multilingual classroom instruction during the early stages of their schooling, in order to fully participate in learning. They argued that at later stages children can easily switch to a second and third language.

The participating parents feared that if teachers used children's mother tongues as the medium of instruction, their children with and without disability would be less competent in Nepali and English, which might prevent them from employment opportunities in the future. Parents' perception is that the main purpose of education is finding a job in Nepal (Groot, 2007). Fluent Nepali and English are essential conditions of employment in government and non-government sectors. This finding calls on the government to assure parents that the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in ECED would not hinder children's Nepali and English languages. This strategy yields better learning outcomes and builds the foundation for switching comfortably from their first language to a second and third language to develop mastery in two or three languages (Ministry of Education, 2015; UNESCO, 2011b). It does however, require the recruiting or training of multilingual teachers.

Caste, ethnic culture and language have combined effects on inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. In some cases, just one factor combined with disability to create the barrier. In many cases, the three contextual factors: caste, ethnic culture and language of instruction combined with each other and with disability and poverty to create multifaceted barriers to education for ClwD. The multiplicity of interactions depends on the structure of a particular community. For example, in multi-lingual and multi-ethnic communities, disability and the language of instruction interacts with caste-based discrimination, as well as with ethnicity-based disadvantages. Whilst in monolingual and mono-ethnic communities' caste-based discrimination may still interact with disability. Even though the interaction of caste, ethnicity and language is multi-layered, the magnitude of influence varies considerably from case to case.

Gender in disability: male preference in education regardless of caste, ethnicity wealth, and rural urban settings

In their research, Panthe and McCutcheon (2015), found that although the gender gap was lessening in primary school enrolments and other years of schooling, female children in higher grades had poorer results than their Nepalese male colleagues. Thapa (2012), Dhungana (2006) and Eide, Neupane and Hem (2016) argued that compared to Nepalese male ClwD, female ClwD were less likely to attend schools. As a majority of Nepalese communities exhibit patriarchal values, it is not therefore surprising that my research identified that female ClwD were more likely to be excluded from education and were doubly its victims; experiencing both gender discrimination coupled with discrimination because of disability.

My research found that Nepalese parents continued to prioritise their sons' education in all geographic settings, economic groups, castes and contributed to gender discrimination in education. Gender discrimination is prevalent in Nepal irrespective of all castes and ethnicities (Shrestha, 2007), meaning women in so called lower castes and ethnic communities have to face multiple discrimination. Furthermore, several dimensions of gender discrimination in rural and urban settings and in rich and poor households, interact and adversely affect many female children with and without disability and their access to ECED. These dimensions are presented as Table 6.2.

Table 6.2

Gender dimensions of exclusion of females with and without disability

Gender	Geographic Location	Economic status	Schooling
Male	Urban settings	Rich	Private schools/ ECED
Male	Urban setting	Poor	Public Schools/ ECED
Male	Rural setting	Rich	Public Schools /ECED
Male	Rural setting	Poor	Public Schools/ECED or No Schools
Female	Urban setting	Rich	Public Schools/ECED
Female	Urban setting	Poor	Public Schools/ECED no Schools
Female	Rural setting	Rich	No School/ ECED
Female	Rural setting	Poor	No School/ ECED

In rich urban families, parents' priority to invest more money in education of sons rather than daughters inhibits female children with and without disability from accessing private schools (Bista, 2004; B. B. S. Thapa, 2012). Two parallel systems of schooling, private and government, contribute to the inequality

between access to education for sons and daughters in rich families (Bista, 2004). As introduced in chapter four, parental misconceptions, namely that all private Montessori schools are of higher quality than government schools or ECED centres, as well as the actual poor quality of many government schools and ECED centres, are two major issues. Policy must acknowledge this issue and enhance the quality of government schools and ECED centres in order to encourage parents not to discriminate against their sons' and daughters' schooling.

The next significant dimension of gender discrimination is the discrimination between male and female children with and without disability in rural poor families. In these families, female children are often unable to access government schools due to the prevailing preference for sons to receive education. In the case of rural rich communities, male children with and without disability have to depend on public ECED programs, because private Montessori schools are often unavailable (Upreti, 2013). Female children without disability are always a step behind in accessing schools and ECED programs regardless of their family's economic status. When female children have a disability, they lag even further behind.

In summary, five interacting dimensions of gender adversely affect the access to ECED programs for female ClwD, namely male preference; disability, family poverty, parents' dismissing education for female ClwD and private and public schools and ECED systems. These dimensions of gender inequity need to be considered by policymakers in order to address the inclusion of female ClwD in ECED programs.

A culture of viewing females as subordinate to males has notably contributed to lower educational opportunities for female ClwD. The Nepalese community does not accept the independent existence of females, due to the influence of a famous Hindu code postulated by Manu in 1500 BC that "Pita rakshati kaumare, bharta

raskshati youvana, putrah rakshati varddhakye, na stree swatantryam arhati” (Manusmriti, 2005, p. 41). This code states that *her father should protect a female in childhood, her husband in her youth and, her son in later age. Women should not be left free at any point of time in their life.* As the influence of the code of Manu continues in Nepalese society, it is not surprising that my research identified that in Nepal the purpose of education for a female is to find a good husband. Since females with disability are less likely to get married, families and communities do not see the benefit of educating them. This perception is consistent with a finding of Dhungana (2006) that globally and in Nepal, most men do not want to marry women with a disability, perceiving that women with a disability would be too dependent on men. They would not be able to raise children and families appropriately. Singal (2016) reported a similar finding that females with disability are unlikely to get married in India for the same reasons. Devanathan (2016) argued that the intention of the code of Manu is for men to protect women from any corporal and sexual assault. In Nepal, this code is interpreted as men controlling women for their entire lives and not allowing them to live independently. There is a need to re-establish the intention of the code of Manu that the role of men is to protect and comfort women, not to control them, and that both genders have complementary roles in families.

There is a need for significant awareness raising in Nepal, that education is fundamental for females with disability to live productive, independent and dignified lives. As Sita shared in chapter four, the portrayal of women with disability who are successfully living independent lives, should be an approach used to educate parents and communities about the importance of education for female CIwD.

Geographic location: remoteness and a lack of infrastructure and transportation

Geographic location is an influencing factor in the inclusion of children in education in Nepal (Beutel, Tangen, & Carrington, 2018). Acharya, (2007) and Scheuermann (2013) reported that tough terrain, particularly in the eastern and western Pahad (Hill) and Himal (Mountain) created geographical barriers. My research substantiated that children are unable to access ECED centres due to the remote location and difficult terrain. In addition, my research identified that lack of transportation and infrastructure development, as well as the scattered nature of settlement, profoundly influenced access for all children, and particularly ClwD. Bringing children to ECED centres via narrow and slippery roads in steep mountainous areas is unsafe for parents and their children. In the case of ClwD, roads with ramps and dropped kerbs to use prams and wheelchairs are required. As the development of transportation and infrastructure, which are key requirements in overcoming barriers for accessing education, is costly and time consuming, my research considered alternate solutions to meeting the developmental needs of ClwD. For example, supporting a couple of families or in many cases a single family to establish ECED centres, whereby ECED services reach children's homes, rather than children travelling to attend ECED programs. Home-based ECED programs that included ClwD would be particularly relevant in remote and difficult geographic locations.

Given that in Nepal the government has not yet developed transportation and infrastructure in mountainous regions and remote locations, home-based ECED with a place-based learning approach could be a model for ECED services as a

short-term solution.¹⁶ However, in the long-term the development of transportation and infrastructure is necessary for the inclusion of ClwD in education, employment and in community engagement.

Section Summary

From the analysis and discussion of findings of my research, I argue that the individual contextual factors contribute to the multiple layers of exclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. The interaction of these factors and their dimensions compounds the complexities and further affect the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Singal (2015), in her paper on the inclusion of children with disability in India and Pakistan, argued that government policy often underestimates the combined effect of disability, religion, gender, cast-based discrimination and poverty in inclusion of ClwD in education. However, Singal did not explicitly mention the ways these factors combined and affected the inclusion. My research explored the interaction of these factors, as well as the interaction of two additional contextual factors, namely the schooling culture of some ethnic groups and how the language of instruction influenced the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. In my research, case specific influences of the interaction of contextual factors for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs were evident. In order to address these specific influences, the Nepalese government requires a case-by-case analysis prior to designing policy for the inclusion of these ClwD.

The following section discusses the effect of the interaction of organisational factors. It discusses the research participants' perspectives on the individual and

¹⁶ As introduced in the ethnicity section of this chapter, [place-based learning] is immersive learning experience that places students in local heritage, cultures, landscapes, opportunities and experiences, and uses these as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum defined as learning that focuses on engaging children in local environments, culture and language in order to connect their experiences of the local context with education (Getting Smart, Eduinnovation, & Teton Science Schools, 2017)

combined effect of organisational factors on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. These factors include policy, attitudes, teacher efficacy, resources and funding, coordination and communication, and parental engagement.

The interaction of organisational factors affecting the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal

Government Acts and Policy

As introduced in chapter two, international literature reinforces the fact that a mandatory policy is fundamental to ensuring the right to education for ClwD (Booth & Ainscow, 2002 ; Booth et al., 2006; Foreman, 2011; Forlin et al., 2013; Global partnership for Education, 2018; UNESCO, 2009, 2017). However, to be strong and abundantly clear, a policy must be enacted through mainstream legal Acts (Foreman, 2011). My research identified that in Nepal, the lack of a legal Act and a subsequent legally binding policy was one of the central reasons for the exclusion of a majority of ClwD from ECED programs. As stated in chapter one, although the Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disability 2016 (IEPPD) has been endorsed, it is neither equipped with the authority nor resources to achieve inclusive education for all. The policy was developed as an organisational policy by the Ministry of Education for the operation of existing special and integrated schools. Therefore, the policy only addresses ClwD in primary and secondary school education and marginalises opportunities for ECED of ClwD. The stand-alone policy has no mandate to involve and incorporate other Ministries and agencies' expertise and it has no resources to support the effective inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. My research finding calls for the government to revise the Education Act 1971 in order to involve all relevant Ministries in designing ECED services for ClwD.

In addition to legislation that supports policies on the rights of ClwD to early years education, the government also needs to generate policy statements and requirements for appropriate teacher education that effectively prepares teachers to include ClwD in ECED programs and beyond. Currently in Nepal, teacher qualifications and development policy and programs do not address inclusive education. As noted in chapter five, NGO representatives developed the capacity to add inclusive education content to their teacher development programs following participation in an Inclusive Education Fellowship Program at Flinders University, South Australia in 2013. This initiative proved to be successful in increasing teacher knowledge of inclusive education, which in turn developed teachers' confidence to include ClwD in ECED in Nepal. Teacher development is a fundamental prerequisite if ClwD are to be successfully included in ECED programs. While the NGO initiative is of a small scale and only designed to address the needs of one organisation, it has proved successful. However, to address teachers' development for Nepal's 35,000 ECED teachers, a wide-scale systemic approach will be required. This recommendation is discussed in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

Policy for concept and vision

Inclusive education is viewed as a multifaceted concept, lacking a universally agreed definition in international literature (Forlin et al., 2013; T. Loreman, Forlin, Chambers, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2014). As discussed in chapter five, as an emergent field and with no policy, a model of inclusive ECED is not widespread in Nepal. Therefore, it was not surprising that stakeholders in my research lacked understanding of the concept of inclusive education. Stakeholders' struggle to conceptualise inclusive education was demonstrated by their suggestion to simply replicate existing models of special and integrated education for ClwD in primary

and secondary schools into ECED programs. Stakeholders did not recognise that ClwD have rights to participate in ECED programs in their local communities and stay living with their parents. Rights of ClwD are ensured when ECED centres are accessible, available, attainable and affordable to all ClwD. As stakeholders lacked the conceptual understanding of inclusive education, they perceived that, special and integrated schools are for ClwD and mainstream schools are for children without disability. Despite parents developing a vision that their ClwD could participate in mainstream ECED, they were unfamiliar with the term, concept, vision and the processes of inclusive education.

Martland (1996), in his article on the ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation, argued that when policy documents lack conceptual clarity, stakeholders are uncertain, confused and frustrated. In Nepal, Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disabilities (IEPPD) (2016) has no definition for understanding inclusive education. That is, the policy assumes that current special and integrated schools are examples of inclusive education.

Creemers and Reezigt (1999) argued that concepts or ideas that underpin educational programs are pivotal in setting goals for children's learning outcomes and for broader society. They identified that vision is essential in translating those concepts and ideas into practice. A clear vision of the immediate and larger purposes of an educational initiative is required for educational leaders and teachers to contemplate changing educational structures and practices. Lippit (1987) explained that without vision, stakeholders lack guidance for their work. They become confused and lose sight of the broader purposes behind their actions. In my research, as noted in chapter one, IEPPD does not embrace a vision for full inclusion of ClwD due to lack of conceptual understanding; namely that every child, irrespective of their diversity, is entitled to participate in

mainstream schooling. To ensure all stakeholders have clarity of understanding, governments, education departments and NGOs, need to formulate a policy on the purposes, principles and philosophy of inclusive education. This action should serve to support families and educators in understanding the value and importance of **all** children attending ECED programs.

Policy to end institutional rejection and the culture of ‘wait and see’

Loreman (2009) in his review on inclusive education, argued that a ‘zero-rejection’ policy on the enrolment of ClwD in mainstream settings is required. The author asserted that ClwD should be welcomed and accommodated in schools. Loreman’s research also identified that in the absence of any government backed zero-rejection enrolment policy institutional rejection becomes evident. He also noted that without mechanisms for complaints and grievances against the non-enrolment of ClwD in mainstream settings, school leaders would not develop a sense of responsibility to provide for the needs of ClwD in their settings. As such, the exclusion of ClwD would continue if there was not a mandated responsibility placed on schools to seek to enrol **all** children living within their community.

A French sociologist, Emile Durkhiem, argued that both moral and punitive laws were essential to codify and instruct the moral behaviours and duties of every individual in the community (Breathnach, 2002). In Nepal, as there is no punitive law addressing the exclusion of ClwD in ECED programs, leaders in these settings don’t feel an obligation to make provision for these children. Moral perspectives based on charity and welfare for childcare and nurture alone will not ensure stakeholders’ commitment to their duties, roles and responsibilities towards the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. Therefore, generating laws to address discrimination based on disability, as are enacted in many countries worldwide (UNESCO, 2009), is also essential in Nepal if ClwD are to access their right to an education.

My research identified a culture of 'wait and see' among parents of ClwD, which resulted in much time passing before parents and professionals addressed health and educational needs of young ClwD. This new finding, which was not discussed in the L-B Framework in chapter two, is important to acknowledge and address if early intervention services are to be provided for ClwD. The 'wait and see' culture is likely to have developed due to the non-existence of effective early intervention with qualified multidisciplinary professionals as part of ECED services. Parents become anxious and worried about their child. Their distress begins when they first notice either symptoms of disability or a delay in development in their children, compounded by a prevailing social stigma associated with disability. The anxiety and stress is aggravated when their children's disability remains unidentified or inappropriately identified (Gupta, Mehrotra, & Mehrotra, 2012). At this stage, parents become completely confused about what action to take. In my research, there were limited or no options for parents except to 'wait and see'. Even under duress, parents remained hopeful and expected their children's disabilities would disappear or improve when they grew up.

Turnbull and Turnbull (1990) and Hasio (2017), argued that parents use a number of strategies to cope with the stress caused by their children's disability. The adoption of passive appraisal is one of many strategies, in which problems are either avoided for the time being, or forever. Since parents have limited or no support to identify their children's disability, they develop the tendencies to 'wait and see' by ignoring and evading it. This finding is important from both a policy and resourcing perspective. Early identification of children with development delay or disability have improved significantly worldwide (Guralnick, 2005), and with early identification can come early intervention and successful transition to pre-school education, especially if health and education services work in collaboration.

To more effectively address the needs of ClwD and their families a review of Nepal's policies on early detection and early intervention for ClwD is called for.

Policy consultation

Although wide policy consultation is fundamental to the development of a realistic policy for inclusive education, in Nepal policy is developed in consultation with a limited cohort of stakeholders such as government officials, national and international experts and donors (Bhatta, 2011; Maudslay, 2014; Poudel, 2007). This top-down approach is designed in the interest of the policy makers. Given a lack of research in this area (Lamichhane, 2013), policy developers are almost unaware of local knowledge. In many cases international donors impose policy, perceiving the strategy that has worked in another context will work in Nepal (Poudel, 2007). Such policy processes limit the identification of elements of inclusive education that need to be addressed by Nepalese government policy. In particular, these processes do not utilise the knowledge, expertise and experiences of local and parent stakeholders, who are key to the success of any move towards inclusive education. My research noted that in Nepal, the IEPPD was designed without this wider consultation.

In reality, "the IEPPD, 2016 was designed with the technical assistance of some NGOs" (Field notes; 2-11-2016). The interest of these NGOs was to technically assist the Government to develop a policy for inclusive education, so that these NGOs could demonstrate to their supervisors and donors that they contributed to progressing the Government's formulation of inclusive education policy in Nepal. However, both the Government and NGOs did not anticipate the negative consequences of this inadequate policy for ClwD. For example, it did not address a lack of resources, accessible physical infrastructure, teacher capacity, learning materials and pedagogy appropriate for the inclusion of ClwD in education. This

finding suggests that at the time of revising the Education Act 1971, a wide cohort of stakeholders should be involved in conducting local situation analyses and building consensus on the needs to be addressed for successful inclusive ECED for ClwD.

In essence, the findings from my research on policy reinforced that policy with legal mandates and resources is vital to clarify the concept and vision for inclusive education, to end institutional rejection and to break a culture of 'wait and see'. In the same vein, developing appropriate policy is vital to address beginning early intervention services as part of ECED programs. It is recommended that Nepal's Education Act (1971) should be amended to consolidate equity and inclusion as an overarching principle. This policy amendment requires consulting a wide cross-section of key stakeholders and utilising available research outcomes.

Attitudes: the chain effect of negative attitudes to policy

This research substantiated the findings from the literature discussed in chapter two (Australian Government, 2013; Thompson et al., 2013; UNICEF, 2013), that negative attitudes towards disability have a detrimental effect on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Policy is certainly not implemented unless primary stakeholders including teachers and educational administrators believe in and value the philosophy of inclusive education for ClwD. Teachers' positive attitude towards disability is vital to accept and effectively educate ClwD (Forlin, 2010).

My research explored the compounding and individual effects of negative attitudes towards disability in the development of policy for inclusive education. Many beliefs, values, prejudices, superstitions and social stigma surrounding disability, such as—seeing it as retribution for past sin, ClwD lacking learning potential, Tantric healers curing disability, and disability being a contagious disease—stand

in the way of inclusive education. These prejudices lead to the perception and attitude that disability is a family matter and as such, cases of disability are often under-reported in the national census held every 10 years.

Beyond social stigma, underreporting of children's disability is often based on a lack of diagnosis or one that is incorrect. The hospitals where babies are delivered could potentially be sources of information about children's disabilities. Unfortunately, the majority of women in rural areas and in many urban areas are not able to access hospitals (Mesko et al., 2003), particularly ones with disability screening facilities. Singal (2009) pointed out a further reason for under-reporting of disability, namely, enumerators were unaware of the proxy questions about disability due to the lack of understanding of disability inclusion. In Nepal, enumerators might not have the skills and knowledge to use proxy questions at the time of census. The finding from my research about under-reporting disability suggests that the government educate families about the causes and consequences of disability, as well as educate enumerators to develop and use proxy questions to uncover cases of disability at the time of data collection. As discussed in chapter two, a disability information system with a detailed and accurate profile of ClwD, including their demography should be a prerequisite for every policy, plan and program (UNESCO, 2009; UNICEF, 2013; World Health Organization, 2011). Without this information, policies and programs for inclusive education will not be effective in addressing the needs of ClwD.

Disability; impairment or the result of past sin?

My research identified that in Nepal, disability is perceived either as an impairment or as a result of past sin, attitudes which are influenced by medical and religious models of disability. The majority of professionals believed in the medical model of disability. The medical model considers that disabilities are biological or

psychological impairments within children. It advocates that CIWD need medication, therapies, counselling and education in separate settings and special schools (Oliver, 2009; Sullivan, 2011). However, the participating professionals identified that in their communities there was a perpetuation of religious belief as a basis for disability. This religious model interprets disability as the penance of misconduct of either the person with disability, or their parents or ancestors, either in their past or present life. Within this religious model the other belief is that disability is the result of evil eyes, in which case, it is remediable. The disability may be fixed by mantras or sacrifices to the evil being (Amponsah-Bediako, 2013; Miles, 2000). Hoffmann-Dilloway (2011), in the investigation of attitudes to deafness in Nepal, finds that people's religious background resulted in an interpretation of those living with disability as being ritually impure including a commonly held belief that the perceived impurity may 'pollute' others .

My research identified that the lack of detailed understanding of the Hindu *law of Karma* in the community led to the continuation of the maxim; *disability is a result of past sin*.¹⁷ The *law of Karma* not only believes that our actions or deeds determine our own happiness or suffering in present or future life, our thoughts and attitudes also have a cause- and- effect relationship to happiness or suffering. For this reason, individuals without disability should not look down on individuals with disability but should serve them in order to be rewarded with pleasant outcomes. Sharma (1999) asserted that:

Disability is the result of past sin] is not for us to say. It is for us to ask, given his or her condition, what is my duty, my dharma? Otherwise, if you blame the victim, you will be blamed, rather than helped, when you happen to be the victim (p, 1).

¹⁷ The law of Karma postulates that individual thoughts, intentions, actions and interaction are binding. It is a continuous self-correcting process that occurs beyond this life. It is a universal law of cause and effect.

In Nepal, as this interpretation is not widely understood, families of individuals with disability are often blamed for their untested misdeeds.

In Bhagawat Gita (Verse 1: 47) Lord Krishna said “you are free to perform actions but are not free to control their results.¹⁸ Therefore, perform actions without attachment to their results”. Since we have no control over the result of our deeds, how are present conditions a retribution for past actions? They are the result of an expanded expression of nature. This interpretation views disability as a natural part of the human experience with the causes of many disabilities being still unknown. The Bhagawat Gita encourages everyone to perform their individual, religious, social, moral, and professional duties and service unconditionally (Fosse, 1992). Performing duty (Dharma) with no desire is of benefit for individuals both with and without disability.

My research identified that the lack of detailed understanding of the Hindu *law of Karma* in the community led to the continuation of the maxim; disability is a result of past sin. Some parents in this research were confused and felt guilty that their families might have committed crimes in the past. Others perceived this as just superstition. Parents also did not believe that the *law of Karma* was intended to assist individuals accept their disability; to make them resilient in coping, and to encourage others to become more empathetic and helpful to individuals with disability and reap the benefits of good *Karma* (deeds). From this understanding, it is essential to challenge the maxim by explaining the *law of Karma* that disability

¹⁸ According to Bhagwat Gita (a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjun about Karma text, designed prior to the great battle of the Mahabharata, the hero Arjuna in his chariot driven by his charioteer Krishna on the battle field), four ways (Marga) correct our thoughts, intentions and action. They are gyana marga, the knowledge of spirituality and self-realisation about the right and wrong Karma. Karma marga, performing individual, religious, social, moral, and professional duties, free from desires and vested interests. Yoga marga, self-realisation through meditation and Bhakti marga, devotion to God.

is a natural phenomenon. This law is developed to create more resilient individuals, who can accept and cope with disability.

The prevalence of medical and religious models means that the social model and human rights model of disability are still unfamiliar concepts in Nepal. Social restrictions to individuals with disability are not recognised and challenged. The social model perceives that disability is a result of the interaction of individuals with disability with their physical and social environments (Oliver, 1990; Sullivan, 2011). For example, this model identifies that societal attitudes and lack of appropriate facilities is the major problem, not the individual living with disability. This model defines the social environments as tangible and intangible. The tangible environment is the physical environment, including accessible roads, buildings and assistive devices. The intangible environment is individuals' attitudes towards disability (Oliver, 1990). While the human rights model of disability understands disability as a crucial part of human variation and argues that all human beings regardless of their diversity have certain undeniable rights; including the right to access and benefit from education, health, livelihood and social services. This model emphasises the utilisation of social resources to achieve these rights (Browne & Millar, 2016).

In Nepal, disability is often viewed as a problem within individuals with disability due to the lack of understanding of the social and human rights model of disability. However, the government's commitment to the UN Conventions on the Rights of Children (1989) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) are based on the human rights approach to disability. Therefore, policy must address the social and human rights related barriers to ClwD. In order to comply with policy, there is a need to educate the community about social and human rights models of development.

The power of Tantrism

As identified in chapter two (Goudriaan & Gupta, 1981), my research found a majority of parents had a strong belief in Tantric healers' ability to cure diseases and disability, which made them reluctant to consult and receive medication and therapies from modern health professionals.¹⁹

Seeking Tantric services to fix diseases and disability is embedded in the Nepalese culture, which is associated with a deep-rooted practice of worshipping many deities in the hope of progress, prosperity and a healthy life. Since 'culture' is everyday human behaviours and practices, diseases and their remedies cannot be separated from culture (Subedi, 2003). In Nepal, it is believed that Tantric healers, as mediators between human souls and goddesses and gods (*Devi-Dewata*), have the potential to please and encourage *Devi-Dewata* to heal human disease by offering Puja (worshipping, praying, reciting mantra and sacrificing food and/or animals). Tantric healers are readily available and accessible in rural communities compared with modern health professionals (M. Paudel, Javanparast, Dasvarma, & Newman, 2018b). The research participants witnessed that some Tantric healers were able to treat children's disease by worshipping and in some case by giving children some herbal medication and concomitantly worshipping *Devi-Dewata*. Therefore, parents believed in the power of the Tantric healer. As parents were confused about disease and disability, parents took their ClwD to a Tantric healer with the hope of finding a cure. In most cases, parents employed both Tantric healers and modern health services to keep themselves on the safe side.

¹⁹ Modern medication health professionals in Nepal are those who are specialised in allopathy medicine including doctors, nurses, health assistants, dispensing chemists, pharmacists, acupuncture therapists, physio-therapist and Tibetan medical practitioners (Subedi, 2003).

My research found only one mother who did not believe in Tantric approaches due to the health professionals' ability to inform her about her son's disability. Since a majority of parents had no access to health professionals (Doron & Broom, 2011), they relied heavily on Tantric healers. Doron and Broom (2011) reported that in Nepal, there was an education program for faith healers on not using uncertified roots and herbs in patients' eyes and encouraging them to refer patients with visual problems to doctors. The program was successful in reducing the use of such ingredients and increasing the number of referrals to doctors. Given this current research found parents continued to believe in Tantric healers, ongoing engagement with and education about early childhood disability and the value in consulting modern health professionals is recommended. No doubt, deep seated cultural beliefs, particularly in rural areas, will potentially see family consultation with Tantric healers continue for many decades to come.

Perceptions of disability as a contagious disease

My research identified confusion around the difference between genetic and environmental causes of disability, as well as the relationship between communicable and non-communicable diseases and disability. Hoffmann-Dilloway (2011) found that, deafness was viewed as a curable disease in Nepal with some believing it was contagious. Given that there is currently no effective system of disability detection and a lack of inclusion of ClwD in the community, it is not surprising that individuals perceive disability as contagious. In the early days of children's inclusion in ECED programs, parents' confusion about whether children without disability would imitate the behaviour of ClwD was connected with the perception that disability is a contagious disease. Therefore, the main objective of one of the three inclusive ECED programs (an inclusive ECED program including children living with intellectual disability in Kavrepalanchok) was to make

communities aware that disability does not transmit from child to child. Over a period of including ClwD in the ECED centres, the education program was successful in achieving this objective in the community. This program provides a model that could be implemented in other ECED programs across Nepal without significant investment. This finding suggests an urgent need for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in every community to educate the community and parents that disability is not transmittable from child to child.

Religious texts and quotes

In changing attitudes in the Nepalese context and to raise awareness about the inclusion of ClwD in education, my research explored the importance of religious texts and quotes from successful individuals who had lived with disability. The research participants suggested using the success story of Asthavakra, a Hindu philosopher with a disability, and Helen Keller, a western woman, who had visual and hearing impairment. This section first discusses the story of Master Asthavakra, and then refers to the quote from Helen Keller.

Asthavakra

As discussed in chapter five, Master Asthavakra's highly developed learning abilities and complex spiritual knowledge from his mother's womb give a strong and hopeful message that ClwD have the potential to learn if the barriers that limit them from learning are removed. Using the example of Master Asthavakra, allows for reflection about the learning processes and barriers for individuals with disability; how their education takes place, how communities underestimate individuals' capabilities for learning, therefore excluding them from mainstream education, but also how individuals with disability can become successful learners. The story of Master Asthavakra can be linked to Foreman (2002) and Hornby (2015) and the reported five intertwined guiding principles of inclusive education.

Local stakeholders could easily accept and conceptualise the global principles of inclusive knowledge below if they are connected with the local context. These principles are as follows:

- the principle of social justice
- the principle of human rights
- the principle of every learner's potentials for learning
- the principle of equity
- the principle of the least restrictive environments.

The *principle of social justice* recognises the constant discrimination and exclusion of individuals in education based on their socio-economic and ability status and suggests ways to promote inclusion through the development of supportive environments. This principle argues that it is unfair to exclude ClwD from learning opportunities and proposes to engage ClwD with their same age peers without disability. According to the book of Asthavakra Gita, although Asthavakra was not included in mainstream schooling, his parents created learning environments for him. The impartial decision of King Janak to allow Asthavakra to participate in Sasthrastha (the intellectual competition) with individuals without disability can be linked to the principle of social justice. This decision by the king provided incredible moral support for Asthavakra.

The *principle of human rights* advocates that all ClwD should have the right to participate in education together with children without disability and without any discrimination. A government's fundamental commitment to inclusive education is necessary to ensure human rights. To this end, laws and policies related to inclusion need to be understood, implemented and enforced. Equity rests at the heart of human rights to redress injustice in educational attainment for ClwD.

Asthavakra's right to participate in Sasthra was ensured through the decision of King Janak, who was policymaker at that time.

The third principle acknowledges *every person's potential for learning*. This principle encapsulates the understanding that every learner, regardless of his or her disability is unique, has strengths and weaknesses, and has learning abilities. Education services must be designed in ways that identify and accelerate the capabilities of every learner. Foreman (2011) states that "All students can learn, but not necessarily in the same manner, at the same time" (p. 83). Master Asthavakra's capabilities in learning to understand complex spirituality can relate to this principle. He achieved it in his own way in his own time with the support of his family and community.

The *principle of equity* recognises that in many instances, children's social circumstances associated with, for example, gender, poverty, ethnicity and geographic location create barriers to education and suggests removing such barriers. It also proposes a minimum level of education for all particularly in gaining literacy and numeracy skills. Linking this principle to the Master Asthavakra's story; as a male child and as a member of a highly intellectual family, these social barriers were mostly eliminated. However, this is not the case for many other children from less privileged backgrounds.

The fifth principle of inclusive education *emphasises least restrictive environments*. This principle necessitates individually appropriate instruction and aids, as well as social support, which enables ClWD to learn together with children without disability.

Basically, a student's Least Restrictive Environment is the environment where the student can receive an appropriate education designed to meet his or her special educational needs, while still being educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate (Copenhaver, 2006, p. 1).

The least restrictive environments' principle aims to offer every child opportunity to access an appropriate education through modification of instruction and/or use of specific resources. Richardson-Gibbs and Klein (2014) identified that least restrictive environments have many components including assistive technology, appropriate teaching strategies and systemic support. Systemic support encompasses professional development and collaboration with families and professional staff. Some people make use of the principle of least restrictive environments to argue for special school settings for ClwD, suggesting their needs can be more effectively met in specialised environments (Weicker, 2012). However, a starting point should be to place **all** children in their local educational setting looking to ensure that the setting can accommodate the special needs of ClwD.

Although the story of Master Asthavakra did not mention the use of appropriate instruction, aids and social support (Asthavakra Gita, n.d), his family may have created conducive environments to his spiritual learning. It might be the case that the master's difficulty moving due to his profound physical disability made him concentrate more on meditation, which met his spiritual needs. It is believed that meditation, peaceful environments and concentration are the necessary conditions for spiritual learning (Sundararajan & Mukgrji, 2003). Importantly, the commencement of Master Asthavakra's learning from the prenatal stage is supported by theories, that postulate that learning begins prior to birth (Mann, 2013; Skwarecki, 2013). Although participants in the research did not mention other stories, there are several cases, both fictional and real, that are relevant in changing attitudes to disability. This includes religious texts about Sakuni, a gambling master with physical disabilities; Ganesh, the elephant-headed god with high intellectual capabilities; as well as real stories, for example, renowned author

and poet, Jhamak Kumari Ghimire,²⁰. She is a woman with severe cerebral palsy, who was awarded for her contribution to Nepalese literature with the 'Madan Puraskar,' for her auto biography *Jivan kada ki Phool* (Life is Thorn or a Flower). Due to her disability she is unable to use her hands to write, instead needing to use her feet. The use of a computerised assistive device would decrease the required effort and improve efficiency. However, Jhamak is unable to access education that provides assistive technology and her financial circumstances restrict her from being able to purchase such a device herself. When a government adheres to the principles of social justice, human rights, equity and the like, then it is more likely to take responsibility to help individuals like Jhamak Kumari Ghimire.

Helen Keller

Participants in this research also recommended sharing Hellen Keller's quote as a way to encourage communities to change their attitudes to disability. The quote states:

A person who is severely impaired never knows his hidden sources of strength until he (sic) is treated like a normal human being and encouraged to shape his own life.

This could inspire contemporary thinking about disability in communities, as it carries two messages. The first message addresses discriminatory conduct encouraging communities to treat ClwD on the same basis as children without disability in order for them to develop their potential (T. Loreman, McGhie-Richmond, Barber, & Lupart, 2009). The second message is that everyone is born with learning potential. There is a need to identify this potential and provide

²⁰ Jhamak Kumari Ghimire was born in 1980 in a low middle-class family in Dhankuta district in Eastern Nepal. Her eminent poems are Sankalpa (Vow), Aafnai, Chita Shikhatira (Own's funeral pyre towards the fire apex) and Manchhe Bhitarka Yoddaharu (Warriors inside humans).

learning environments and inspiration so that individuals can develop themselves. Contrasting global knowledge and local belief systems could provide a valuable pathway to educating the community about contemporary beliefs, thinking and principles of inclusive education.

Use of positive words and mass media

Parents' perspectives shared in this research highlighted the value of conveying, both in real time and via mass media, such as radio and television, encouraging messages about disability through using positive statements, terminologies and definitions. Parents believed such actions would provide a constructive approach to changing negative attitudes towards disability. They suggested the use of words such as 'equity', 'equality', and 'inclusion' rather than 'discrimination' 'exploitation' and 'exclusion'.

The State of Queensland (2012) in its guidelines for the portrayal of people with disability argued that positive words are an effective means of combating negative attitudes towards disability, because words reflect individuals' thoughts and feelings. Continuous use of negative words become definitions by default and support stereotypes of disability. For example, when individuals are labelled as disabled and different, not capable and in need of sympathy, they become marginalised, excluded and discriminated against. The practice of discrimination and marginalisation becomes a norm or guiding principle for the thoughts and actions of both individuals living with and without disability. This in turn perpetuates negativity or a sense of needing sympathy. In my research, parents' bitter experiences of insults, humiliation and stereotyping relating to disability (generated by hearing negative statements and words), provided a strong mandate for addressing unhelpful language, such as the defining and labelling of individuals as incapable. Parents believed the use of positive words that reflect

positive values provide a potential strategy for the removal of prejudices towards ClwD.

Research by Newberg and Waldman (2013) has identified that positive words have the potential to change positive feelings into actions by stimulating the frontal lobe of the brain. This in turn has a direct connection to the motor cortex that organises human actions and behaviours. Although parents were unaware of this research and the potential psychological process generated through the use of positive language, their personal experience of using positive words in bringing happiness and positive feelings to themselves and their ClwD is potentially reflected in Newberg's and Waldman's research. The government and NGOs should certainly consider this parent-initiated suggestion as a potential strategy that requires little resourcing when designing community awareness programs to counter negative attitudes towards disability.

Parents interviewed in this research often migrated from rural to urban areas in order to access schooling for their ClwD. In urban areas they gained access to mass media which they thought would be useful to educate communities about disability and the importance of inclusion. While using television as means of community awareness would not be viable in extreme remote areas, due to the inaccessibility of services, radio broadcasts could certainly be used in these areas.

In this section, negative attitudes towards disability were shown to be a barrier to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Significant causes of these negative attitudes included insufficient interpretation of Hindu religious texts; adherence to old maxims; a lack of bio-medical understanding; as well as little knowledge about human rights. Approaches to changing negative attitudes towards disability in the Nepalese context included analysing Hindu religious texts and quotes from successful individuals who had lived with disability. Linking text and quotes with

the philosophy of inclusive education was a suggested strategy to assist the community to become more aware about the needs for inclusive education for ClwD. Finally, a focus on adapting language and words to convey positive meaning was thought highly important in influencing positive attitudes and thoughts towards the potential of individuals with disability.

Teacher efficacy

Consistent with the national and international literature discussed in chapter two (Susan Acharya, 2007; Forlin, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Kafle, 2002; N. Phuyal et al., 2006; Plan International & London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, 2014), my research identified that despite being the key focus, teachers lack sufficient education and experience of inclusive education in Nepal. They are inadequately equipped and compelled to teach in poor conditions, and thus, they are unmotivated. There is also a lack of continuous monitoring of, and feedback about, their teaching. In the three inclusive ECED programs, the data uncovered that although teachers agreed with inclusion, they were struggling to teach ClwD due to inadequate professional development opportunities. This section discusses the challenges around teacher efficacy. The challenges include: a lack of professional development opportunities addressing content and developmental psychology of children; insufficient experience of, and acquaintance with, inclusive education; low qualifications; poor teaching conditions; and a lack of monitoring and feedback.

Professional development opportunities

My research found that Nepalese teacher development programs were insufficient to prepare ECED teachers for teaching ClwD. Berman (2013) argued that teachers need knowledge about cognitive processes including the function and structure of

children's basic cognition,²¹ for example, how children recognise, memorise and classify information and how to use logical structures to process, generate and transform information. Based on the understanding of cognitive processes teachers can assess the strengths of ClwD in specific functioning areas of cognition and areas which children struggle in. They can then design appropriate learning strategies. This may include helping children connect information, identify patterns and rules, and use abstract thinking.

Cohen and Spencier (2005) and Loreman et al., (2005) argued that teachers require knowledge and skills to assess learning needs and employ differentiated instruction to teach children with different types of disability. In some cases, ClwD may not be able to use all their senses in learning. In these instances, teachers should know how to employ multisensory techniques in classroom instruction.²² Classroom adaptations are fundamental in teaching ClwD.²³ The adoption of direct instruction, the use of simple words, task analysis (breaking the task into small discrete units) and allowing children to perform one task at a time are necessary to teach children with intellectual disability and children with multiple disabilities. Routines and calendars assist these children's learning (Downing & Chen, 2003; UNESCO, 2001). It is apparent from the findings that the Nepalese pre-service and in-service teacher development programs do not offer ECED teachers' opportunities to learn about cognitive processes, differentiated instruction, classroom adaptations, direct instruction and task analysis.

²¹ Cognitive process is the function of the brain in processing information, including, perception, attention, memory (short-term and working), thinking and problem solving.

²² Multisensory techniques are the use of audio, visual and tactile strategies as well as the use of practical examples, movement, and realia and/ or the combination of these approaches.

²³ Classroom adaptation includes classroom management and the use of aids and materials according to individualised needs of ClwD. Class room adaptation aims to achieve the same learning outcomes for all children. This strategy focuses on recognising childrens' learning differences and then accommodates their needs. For example, hearing aids and large print materials for children with hearing impairment and children with visual impairment(UNESCO, 2001).

Teaching children with severe disability requires systematic instruction (Browder, Wood, & Thompson, 2014; Snell & Brown, 2006).²⁴ Teachers may need to develop separate standards for learning outcomes for children with severe disability (Hall, Vue, Koga, & Silva, 2004). Support from various professionals, such as therapists, psychologists, health professionals and behaviour support workers are fundamental to include children with severe disability in education.

My research found that teachers were not professionally developed in how to conduct needs assessment, instruction and curriculum differentiation,²⁵ or in teaching children with intellectual disability, visual impairment, multiple disabilities and other different types of disability. As Nepalese teachers lacked the skills of systematic instruction and there were no support worker services, the inclusion of children with severe disability had been a very challenging task.

When teachers lack professional development opportunities, it is usual for them to depend on the curriculum for content. However, the Nepalese ECED curriculum has failed to suggest ways to change environments or accommodate the content, so that ClwD can access and complete modified tasks. The government has not prescribed any guidelines for curriculum and differentiated instruction. For instance, the ECED curriculum of Nepal 2006 recognised that ClwD may be present in ECED centres and suggested coordinating with health agencies to

²⁴ Systematic instruction includes defining the observable and measurable skills and knowledge that children need to learn, task analysis, minimal and more intrusive prompting, when necessary, time delay, reinforcing correct responses and recording student's responses for continuous monitoring and measuring learning outcomes. Generalisation is another important part of systematic instruction, in which ClwD can learn skills in naturally occurring contexts. Encouraging ClwD towards self-directed learning, as well as recognising the variation in children's learning achievements, are essential to teach children with severe disabilities.

²⁵ As discussed in chapter two, curriculum differentiation is the differentiation of either the content, or of the process or outcomes in the continuum of curriculum considering varied needs, interests and experiences of each individual child.

diagnose children's disability and design 'remedial instruction'.²⁶ However, the process and the methods of coordination with health agencies and the methods of remedial instruction had not been articulated. Teachers required knowledge, understanding and experience of how to enact this suggested 'remedial instruction'.

Cohen and Spenciner (2005) and Davis et al., (2004) argued that the same learning theories applied to teaching children with and without disability, namely constructivist, behavioural and social learning theories. Constructivists hold the view that children learn when their prior experiences interact with their present environments. In this process, children reconcile new experiences with their prior experiences (Bruner, 1990; Kelly, 1955; Piaget, 1969; Vygotsky, 1980). Behavioural theory focuses on changing children's behaviours through positive reinforcement (Pavlov, Gantt, & Folbort, 1928; Skinner, 1950; Thorndike, 1898; Watson & Meazzini, 1977). Ecological theory recognises learning as the outcome of interaction between a number of social systems and subsystems surrounding children's lives, for example, families, schools, extended families, parents' workplaces, political and economic systems, and larger social systems and processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). In many instances, teachers need to employ two or more theories concurrently to assist the learning of ClWD. Additional practice, instructional alterations, use of many examples and rigorous assessment are keys in teaching ClWD (Davis et al., 2004). In Nepal, these theories and practices are completely alien to ECED teachers. As noted in chapter

²⁶ Remedial instruction includes identifying the diverse learning needs of children and designing learning activities to achieve the same learning objectives for all children (Oyekan, 2013). This includes repeating instructions clearly and concisely, using games and aids, graphics and pictures to supplement instruction, observing closely and clearly children's performance, encouraging children to repeat the instruction and providing constant assistance and feedback. Allocating additional time for children to practise the activities, motivating children through rewards for their success and providing individualised additional support between formal classes are other strategies (Education Bureau, 2007).

two, Lewis and Bagree (2013) recommended the use of a twin track approach in order to respond to the diverse learning needs of children.²⁷ As there are no pre-service teacher development programs available for ECED teachers and the in-service teacher training manual for ECED teachers (2003) does not contain the knowledge of inclusive pedagogy,²⁸ teaching ClwD in ECED is an arduous task for ECED teachers and staff.

This finding draws attention to the importance of inclusive pedagogy in teacher development policy for ECED teachers. The need for coordination of support worker services in the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs is further discussed

Teacher qualifications; pre-service teacher development

Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD indicators on early childhood education and care (2017) stated that teachers with higher qualifications improve children's learning through the use of rich vocabulary, targeted lesson plans and problem-solving strategies. The OECD also reported that the majority of OECD countries required teachers in ECED to have a bachelor's degree. However, in Nepal the teacher qualification for ECED is extremely low and there is an obvious mismatch between the teacher qualification policy, and special education and ECED courses offered in the university. To be eligible for ECED teaching the Nepalese ECED Guidelines (2004) specified year eight pass and year ten pass. As special education and ECED courses are offered only in the bachelor's degree, the cohort of teachers completing year eight or ten have no content and pedagogical knowledge of ECED or special education respectively. ECED educators must complete another two

²⁷ The twin track approach is the approach that focuses on all children's learning needs, as well as the learning needs of the individual child.

²⁸ Inclusive pedagogy provides learning opportunities for every child regardless of their learning differences by removing physical, psychological, functional and social barriers to learning (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

levels of schooling, years 11 and 12, before they are eligible to enrol in the bachelor's degree and receive professional input on ECED and special education.

Increasing teacher qualifications by requiring a minimum of a bachelor's degree in ECED is essential for the new intake of ECED teachers. Furthermore, the curriculum of the bachelor's degree in ECED and special education should be revised to incorporate the content and concept of inclusive education. In order to increase the qualifications of current teachers, two types of professional development approaches are necessary. First, it is important to increase the qualification of those ECED teachers, who have achieved year ten, by requiring them to complete year eleven and twelve courses related to ECED teaching, with a focus on inclusive pedagogy. A minimum twelve months professional development course in inclusive education is needed for those teachers whose qualification is a year eight pass. In addition, needs-based specialised professional development courses should be implemented, which also incorporate a twin-track approach. This professional development would equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to respond to the learning needs of children with mild, moderate and severe disability in a mainstream context.²⁹

Exposure to and experience of inclusive ECED centres

Graham and Scott (2016), in their literature review on Australian initial teacher education and ongoing professional development for inclusion, and Lewis and Bagree (2013), in their policy briefing paper on inclusive education, argued that gaining the knowledge and skills of inclusive education through one-time professional development is not sufficient for teachers. Teachers need to

²⁹ Inclusion of children with severe disability may not be possible in some exceptional circumstances. Decisions regarding inclusion of these children in mainstream schooling would be made by education, health and other community professionals collaborating and assessing children's needs on a case by case basis.

continually practise knowledge and skills in various contexts. Similarly, this research identified that teachers' exposure to and experiences of inclusion of ClwD in three ECED programs increased their confidence to accept and engage ClwD. It also changed their beliefs, and they came to realise that inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs is achievable and that ClwD have learning potential. This finding from the three inclusive ECED programs suggested that teachers in the future require more opportunities for practicums. They also require a theoretical understanding of inclusive education that enables them to comprehend and interpret teaching methods and learning activities; as well as to emulate the development and use of learning materials and models of practice. This finding suggests the government should begin to develop a plan for the incremental establishment of inclusive ECED programs throughout the country in order to build teacher capacity and confidence through opportunities for exposure to, and experience of, teaching practice in inclusive settings.

Teacher conditions

UNESCO (2015) stated that

as teachers are a fundamental condition for guaranteeing quality education, teachers and educators should be empowered, adequately recruited and remunerated, motivated, professionally qualified, and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems. (p.22)

My research found a lower level of motivation and morale among ECED teachers due to poor teaching conditions, low salary and few benefits. As noted in chapter five, primary teachers have the best salary conditions, including a pension and medical allowances; special education teachers' wages are like those of primary teachers, but they do not receive a pension, while ECED teachers receive less than one-third of the primary teachers' wage. Thus, teaching in ECED is less attractive than teaching in special and integrated schools or teaching in general

primary schools. Such unequal salaries have significant and long-term implications for ECED.

Qualified teachers are not attracted to the ECED teaching professions. Unqualified teachers, who are provided with in-service professional development leave once their qualifications increase because of the poor conditions and salaries. The implications are ongoing poor-quality teaching and ineffectual professional development. It is essential that benefits and salaries of ECED teachers and special education teachers are comparable to those given to general primary teachers, not only to attract teachers to the profession of ECED and special education teaching, but also to sustain them in a consistent effort, with high morale and motivation. Low pay results in low morale of ECED teachers and lower status in their communities. This finding emphasises the need to develop a policy that increases ECED teacher salaries so that their wages are proportionate to those of primary level teachers.

Monitoring and feedback

Lewis and Bagree (2013), and Bissaker (2013), emphasise the need for more organisational follow up and mentoring for inexperienced teachers in order to transfer learned skills and expertise to the classroom. This research identified a lack of monitoring and ongoing practical support for ECED teachers, who participate in short-term professional development programs. They have no further opportunities to improve their classroom instruction because there is no mechanism for supervising and providing feedback on their teaching as part of continuous professional development. In Nepal, there is a dearth of teacher educators and school supervisors able to provide supervisory support and feedback on inclusive teaching. This is due to the lack of inclusive education courses in the Master of Education in the past, which has caused enduring

negative effects on the entirety of teachers' professional development. The absence of inclusive education courses in the Master of Education resulted in the policy makers' inability to incorporate inclusive education as an overarching principle in all aspects of education. This finding emphasises the need for professional development in inclusive education for teacher educators, so that they monitor and provide continuous support to teachers in the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs.

In summary, increasing ECED teacher qualifications and their salary, and providing pre-service and in-service professional development on inclusive pedagogy and content knowledge are vital. Providing continuous professional development opportunities with regular monitoring and feedback reinforced by teacher development policy are strategies that to improve teacher efficacy in Nepal.

Funding and resources

Literature indicated that additional funding and resources are necessary to make all ClwD ready to learn. ClwD are unable to learn when they are undernourished, suffering from ill-health, and lacking the necessary assistive devices and learning materials (Ainscow, 2005; Alur & Timmons, 2009; Booth & Ainscow, 2002 ; Booth et al., 2006; 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2011; Lamichhane, 2013; Loreman et al., 2005; T. Loreman, 2014; Plan International & London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine, 2014; Regmi, 2017; B. B. S. Thapa, 2012; The World Health Organisation & UNICEF, 2012).

My research substantiated the literature that inclusion of ClwD required more resources for medication, therapies and support services.³⁰ It also found that additional resourcing is required for recruitment, development and retention of teachers. Linked to the lack of funding is the insufficient support for transportation for young children and families to ECED centres, since parents who live in semi-urban areas of Nepal expect the government to provide transportation services for all children including ClwD. Funding and resources are vital to implement all these basics for inclusive education.

Underfunding: policy as the main cause

As reported in the policy section of this chapter, the government's lack of policy for ECED services has influenced the inattention from ministries concerned with ECED programs and authority. As a result, additional resources and funding for the inclusion of ClwD in Nepalese ECED programs have become acute issues. Indeed, funding for ECED programs is shrinking, even though it is the government's responsibility to mobilise funding to guarantee that ECED centres are equipped with all necessary materials. ECED programs are not part of any related Ministry and operate as small-scale projects, with minimal budgets, only under the Ministry of Education. The programs should be part of the structure of all relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, who are responsible for children's health and protection respectively (Shrestha et al., 2008).

Due to frequent changes in the constitution, another stark reality impacting heavily on funding and resourcing of ECED programs, is rapid change and lack of alignment between major policies in Nepal. For example, in 2016, the Nepalese

³⁰ Support services feature speech language pathology and audiology services as well as counselling, mobility services, psychological and physical support services (Rieser, 2013b).

Government, through the 8th amendment of the Education Act (1971), decided to include ECED programs within the framework and structure of school education, and to allocate ECED programs additional funding. However, this policy was not implemented, as it did not align with the constitution of Nepal, 2015, which was the most recent political and administrative restructure.

As described in chapter one, the Constitution of Nepal 2015 stipulated that school education is the jurisdiction of local governments and no longer within the jurisdiction of the national government. Hence, the national government decision to include ECED programs within the national school education framework became redundant.

The International Commission on Financing Global Education (2016) reported that funding for education is decreasing in the least developed and developing countries, with significantly smaller amounts of funding in ECED programs. In Nepal, funding is constantly shrinking for education from 16 percent of the total national budget in 2009 to 14 percent in 2015 (Global Partnership for Education, 2016), and 11 percent in 2017 (Government of Nepal, 2017). The government perceived that holding local and federal elections and the operation of these local and federal governments, as well as restructuring of the physical infrastructure destroyed by the devastating earthquake in 2015, were more important than education. Therefore, it decreased the education budget, without calculating the long-term implications of budget cuts in the lives of children.

The government's focus on primary education has resulted in an unequal budget allocation between primary schools and ECED programs. The government should recognise that financing of ECED will increase children's learning outcomes in the long-term and decrease educational inefficiencies and wastage. Directing finances to inclusive ECED programs also increases future income of ClWD and

productivity, which reduces welfare costs and the cost of dependency on families and the state. At present, since the government's education budget for ECED is minimal, coordination between professionals and agencies is the only possible option to efficiently generate resources and the extra funding that is required for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs.

Although policy is vital, policy without resources will not work. For example, Human rights watch (2018) noted that inaccessible school buildings were a barrier to the inclusion of ClwD in education. The Disability Rights Act (2017) and the building codes of the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development for Nepal, specified that all public constructions such as, public buildings, transport, market and educational institutions should be accessible for all. However, a great number of recent constructions, including schools, are not complying with the policy. Insufficient funding and resources in adding accessibility services, as well as a lack of awareness of accessibility needs for individuals with disability are often given as the cause of this issue (B. Luitel, 2018).

The *World Health Organization* (2011) reported that "in new construction, full compliance with all the requirements of accessibility standards is generally feasible at one per cent of the total cost" (p.173). Generating an additional one per cent of the budget would be viable, if mechanisms for the execution of laws and coordination among agencies were well founded (World Health Organization, 2011), and if stakeholders understood accessibility requirements. This finding recommended that policy should specify resource management, coordination and awareness of the accessibility needs for individuals with disability.

The need for committed leaders

Loreman, et al., (2005) and Kugelmass (2003) argued that school leaders and teachers' unconditional commitment to inclusion is the key to initiating and

sustaining inclusive education. Unless and until stakeholders are willing to commit fully to inclusion, policy is highly unlikely to materialise (U. Sharma, 2012). This research identified that school leaders' commitment to inclusive education in three inclusive ECED centres was pivotal to facilitating teachers' collaboration with colleagues, government and non-government agencies, and other professionals in order to achieve inclusive education. Building knowledge and experiences of inclusive education are fundamental to understanding its essence (Rieser, 2013a). Leaders' commitment increases when they have a deeper understanding of inclusive education suggesting experiences and knowledge about inclusive education for school leaders should be supported in policy. In my research, the leaders who were working in the three inclusive ECED centres understood inclusive education due to engagement in professional development opportunities at national and international levels. Therefore, they were committed to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. These leaders could be used as a role model about the power of commitment from school leaders.

Coordination and communication: a need for multi-agencies' coordination

In its policy guidelines for inclusive education, UNESCO (2017) states that the engagement of all relevant sectors—health, child protection, and education and physical infrastructure development—is a prerequisite for inclusive education. Engagement begins with assessment and intervention including disability diagnosis and continuous support to improve all developmental domains of ClwD. Providing ClwD with health, nutrition and assistive devices also needs coordination between health professionals, educators, therapists, psychologists, speech pathologists, paediatricians and counsellors in partnership with parents (Rieser, 2013b). Coordination is fundamental to the development of physical infrastructure

accessible to ClwD (Global partnership for Education, 2018). Loreman et al., (2005) argued that effective communication is essential in coordination with various organisations, for example, having concrete plans and processes and making collective decisions.

This research identified that in Nepal, agencies that needed to be involved in inclusive education lacked communication and coordination amongst themselves and the concerned professionals. Widmark, Sandahl, Piuva and Bergman (2011) termed this kind of obstacle as a structural barrier.

The structural barriers include differences in the regulatory, financial and administrative boundaries, and the cultural impediments consist of the various ways that the needs of individuals are considered, which are often a product of educational and organizational cultures. (Widmark, Sandahl, Piuva, & Bergman, 2011, p. 2)

This research has identified that personnel in the related Ministries have not considered inclusive education as a common goal due to the lack of comprehensive understanding of the need for connection and coordination for there to be effective inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs.

The levels of complexity are epitomised when considering the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. On the surface, it appears that there is coordination between the Ministries and NGOs through a number of joint committees related to ECED. However, the structure does not functionally support ECED, because these committees lack shared responsibilities, mandates and resources. Additionally, the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development, which is fundamental in the context of developing public infrastructure accessible for ClwD, is not included in these joint committees. Consequently, ECED programs are considered the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Education and agencies under it, resulting in inadequate authority and resources.

Although all committee members meet and discuss issues, they are unable to contribute funding and expertise due to the lack of coordination in their plans and programs. Local ECED centres and primary health care centres receive a budget, programs and guidelines from their respective Ministries. They are accountable to these Ministries, rather than to their counterpart agencies and are compelled to work in isolation from other ministries. For example, parents must take their children out of ECED centres to health centres for immunisation, medication and consultation within school hours, because there is no program of health professionals visiting ECED centres for these health-related services. This finding strongly calls upon all concerned organisations, from central Ministries to local communities where ECED centres operate, to address the need for both vertical and horizontal coordination across all levels. Resources, mandates, and integrated plans and programs should be put in place, coordinated and enshrined in policy. Ministries that are responsible for the education, health, protection and physical infrastructure development for ClwD must develop intra- and inter-agency coordination. Similarly, there should be coordination between universities, ministries, schools and ECED centres. Equally, all international and national NGOs need to collaborate with government ministries and agencies in the same manner. This model for coordination is represented in figure 6.3.

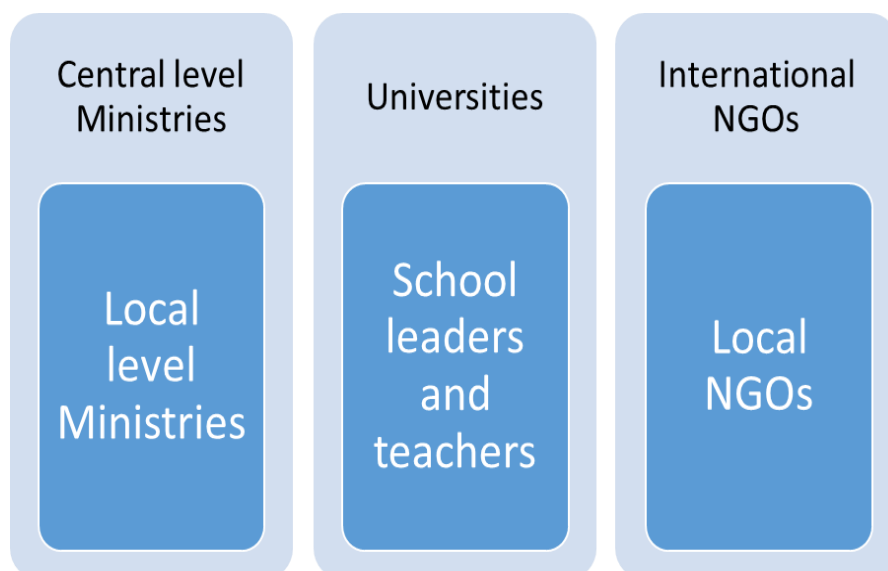


Figure 6.3. Inter- and intra-agency coordination model.

At the community level, there should be coordination between multidisciplinary professionals, such as ECED teachers, parents, community members, primary health workers, health professionals and experts (e.g. pediatricians, speech pathologists, physiotherapists, psychologists and occupation therapists), in order to improve efficiency and quality of support, as well as to devise Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for every child living with disability. As Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programs have been instrumental in raising awareness in Nepal (Mendis & Gurung, 2007), involving CBR in the IEP process is also essential. This support requires mandates, resources and a clear articulation in policy. A model for coordination at the community level is represented in figure 6.4.

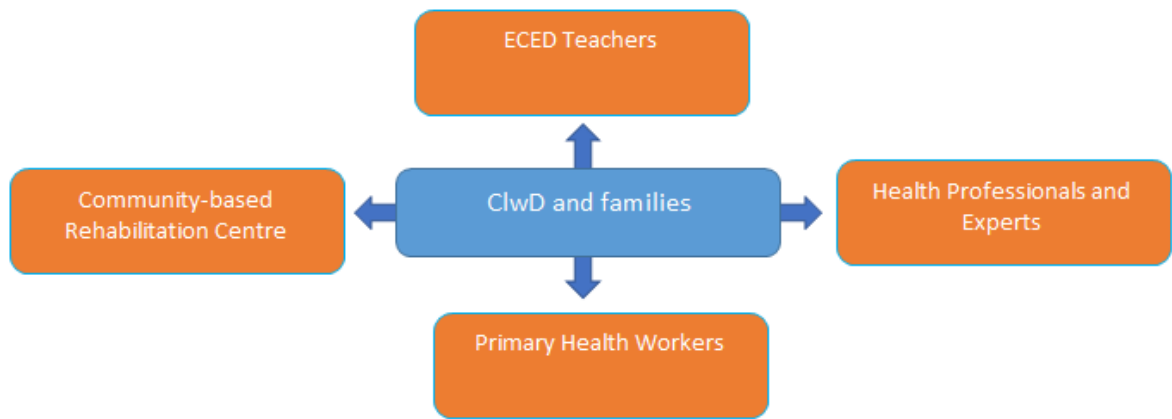


Figure 6.4. Coordination between the health and education sectors at the community level.

The experiences of the staff of the three inclusive ECED programs revealed that the key factor that enabled them to generate resources for the inclusion of CIwD in their programs was effective coordination between several government and non-government agencies at various levels. Coordination between the government and NGOs in Baglung was effective, because the NGO Lali Gurans took full responsibility for professional development and community awareness, and the district education office managed teacher recruitment, curriculum and learning materials. Mutual trust of each other was the underlying factor for the government and NGO to successfully work together. Tschannen-Moran (2014) argued that mutual trust is developed when team members are benevolent towards each other's benefits, honest about each other's actions and behaviours, have open communication, are consistently accountable and dependent on each other, and are competent in handling difficult situations. This research found that both the district education office and the NGO demonstrated qualities of mutual trust. A reciprocal relationship of collaboration, responsibility, openness to each other's contribution and sharing of limited resources, for example in providing teacher training, were key attributes of the partnership between the district education office

and the NGO. This finding suggests extending and replicating this modality through policy would be beneficial to other districts throughout Nepal.

Loreman et al., (2005) recommended that collaboration between teachers is vital to meet the unique needs of every child in an inclusive setting. This research found that in the two inclusive ECED programs, teachers collaborated with each other to explore ideas, pedagogy and to develop learning materials for teaching ClwD. In one ECED centre, the collaboration between teachers did not exist, because there was only one ECED teacher in that community-based ECED centre. This finding recommends replicating the practice of collaboration between teachers in ECED centres, where more than one teacher is working, and to collaborate with other ECED centres in the case of single teacher centres.

Parental engagement

As discussed in chapter two, parental engagement is essential to the education and development of ClwD (Alur & Timmons, 2009; Öztürk, 2013; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990; UNESCO, 1994a). Montessori, Froebel and Steiner argue that parents should act as the best teachers, particularly supporting children's literacy learning at home (Bruce, 2011). When parents are engaged in their children's learning, it assists in reducing their stress, and focuses their attention on educating, caring and managing behavioural problems in their ClwD (Hsiao, 2018).

This research identified that parents' participation in ECED programs is overlooked in Nepal. Three major intersecting conditions prevent parents from participating in the education of their young ClwD. There is a limited number of parents representing this role; parents lack capacity and time, and ECED staff tend to dominate due to the perception that uneducated parents, without the knowledge of

pedagogy, are unable to guide children at home and to inform teachers about the needs and interests of their ClwD.

Parental engagement as representation

This research identified that parent participation was limited to representation on the ECED management committee. In the guidelines implemented by the Nepalese Department of Education in 2004, there is provision for three parents, including the chairperson and a mother, on a seven-member ECED management committee. According to the guidelines, the roles and responsibilities of the committee are to:

1. Coordinate with the district education office, local government and non-government organisations to manage buildings, classrooms, learning materials and indoor and outdoor play materials for ECED programs
2. Recruit ECED teachers and conduct awareness raising programs in the community about the importance of ECED programs
3. Fix the rate of fees with the approval of parents and collect them
4. Report the progress of the programs to respective government and non-government organisations
5. Follow the instructions of the district education office.

Parents' role in these guidelines is unclear and the guidelines do not recognise the significant potential of parents to assist teachers in children's learning. It appears that the main intention is for ECED management committees help generate resources and funding and ensure compliance with the district education offices.

Goodall and Montgomery (2014) perceived parents' participation in their children's education as a three-stage continuum. At the first stage of the continuum, teachers invite parents to school meetings to give them some information and allow them to

observe their children's learning in classrooms. They consider parents as passive recipients of information about their children's education, rather than active contributors. The aim of parents' involvement is to build relationships between parents and schools. At the second stage of the continuum, parents are involved in children's education, either at home or in schools. Parents' involvement focuses on children's learning. Parents and teachers exchange knowledge about children's education at this stage. At the third stage, parents are engaged at a deep level in their children's education with full ownership. Although their participation is based on the information from teachers and school staff, parents take a lead role in teaching their children. In this research, the parents' participation approximated to the first stage of the continuum. It was still restricted to representation on the ECED management committee; it did not include observing children's classroom learning or supporting pedagogy and nurturing; nor did it seek parents' commitment to, and ownership of, education and management.

Parents lack capacity and time

Turnbull and Turnbull (1990) argue that due to poor economic conditions, and the lower levels of education, parents are less likely to participate in the education of their ClwD. Research by Plan International and the London School of Hygiene Tropical Medicine (2014) and Aryal (2002), also found that Nepalese parents of school-aged and ECED children required more education and awareness of child development and growth in order to enable them to participate fully in their children's education. In my research, most parents are barely literate, with one parent totally illiterate. All lack the necessary education and skills to guide their ClwD, to stimulate learning, to manage problem behaviours, to cope with their children's disability and to coordinate with agencies and professionals.

Another reason for parents not participating in education of their ClwD is a lack of time due to poverty. Parents have no time to participate in the committee meetings and to spend time with their ClwD at home, because they must work hard to ensure the necessities for their families. It was evident that a majority of the fathers from participating families of ClwD, had to leave their home to work and were unable to participate in the research.

School staff's domination

Lott (2001) contended that teachers and school staff 'blamed the victim' [parents], perceiving that uneducated and unskillful parents lacked the confidence to discuss their children's learning and development in meetings with teachers. In this research, head-teachers and ECED teachers dominated the committees. It was evident during field work that "ECED staff are the ones who coordinate with various agencies, perceiving that parents do not have these capabilities" (Field notes: 25-11-2016).

School staff believe that parents lack understanding about ECED and the concept of disability and are unaware of the need for coordination with agencies and professionals. Consequently, parents' vision for inclusive education as part of mainstream schooling is not recognised by policy. Since most parents who are members of ECED management committees are viewed as having little education, knowledge and skills, their participation in ECED is not being utilised effectively in assisting the learning and development of ClwD. For this reason, they are incapable of influencing the other four committee members. Even though parents are uneducated, they should assist their ClwD with learning and development. This finding proposes the government devise programs on parent education and awareness raising about their role in children's education.

As an exception, the parent chairpersons of the ECED management committees in the three inclusive ECED programs were active due to their personal commitment to inclusion of ClwD and their capacity to coordinate with different organisations. One chairperson was equipped with the knowledge about pedagogy and child development; however, the two other chairpersons lacked such knowledge. These other two parents, who were also ECED management committee members, were passive and submissive members of the committee and were sidelined from major decision-making.

The general perception among stakeholders and parents themselves, is that parents are not in a position to contribute to their children's learning due to their own lack of education, and in some cases illiteracy. Despite the fact that parents may not be adequately educated to teach their children fully, they have valuable knowledge and wisdom to share. For example, in this research, parents suggested using positive words via mass media about inclusion. However, staff frequently disregard parents as the first educators who know their children best. The use of positive words and mass media are discussed in the section of this chapter regarding attitudes towards disability.

This finding suggests that more parental engagement is a requisite for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs to be effective. A policy for parental education and active participation, with clearly defined roles in ECED activities and pedagogy is essential. The other critical dimension connected to parental engagement is poverty. The way to address poverty was highlighted in section 6.1 of this chapter.

Section Summary

This section discussed the impact of the interaction of organisational factors on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. As noted in chapter two, it highlighted that

the interaction of these factors when not addressed, serve as a universal barrier to the inclusion of ClwD in Nepalese ECED programs. Lack of policy and unhelpful attitudes influence all other factors. Teacher efficacy, resources, collaboration and parental engagement are connected with each other. Barriers may link with the individual characteristics of a ClwD. The effects of either individual or the combined contextual factors can be complex. I argue that due to the interaction of contextual and organisational factors, all early years' ClwD become neglected in the entire education system in Nepal. Addressing individual as well as collective characteristics of all ClwD is the essence of successful inclusion of ClwD in Nepalese ECED programs. Policy must take a case specific view on the interaction between factors and address their complexity, rather than address factors in isolation. While this section discussed organisational factors, a strong connection is evident between organisational factors and contextual factors. The challenges of addressing these factors in their complexity and their overlapping impact informed the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED. The next section discusses the research participants' suggestions on the final iteration of the S-I Framework.

Findings and discussion on stakeholders' final feedback on the Stakeholder-Informed Inclusive Education Framework

This section presents stakeholders' feedback on the final iteration of the Stakeholder-Informed (S-I) Framework, which was the third phase of the research. Subsequent to incorporating stakeholder perspectives generated through individual interviews and focus groups, the S-I Framework was presented back to them in two follow-up feedback sessions. The follow-up feedback sessions sought responses to the following three research questions:

1. How are stakeholders' perspectives reflected or overlooked in the proposed ECED Inclusive Education Framework for ClwD?

2. What are stakeholders' perceptions of the proposed ECED Inclusive Education Framework?
3. How could the Framework contribute to policy design in order to support more effective inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal?

The stakeholders acknowledged that the framework is underpinned by their experiences of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs and also my knowledge and understanding as the researcher. Both parties have a common understanding in relation to the effects of many factors. Since the factors they perceived as important were included in the S-I Framework subsequent to the individual interviews and focus group discussions, the stakeholders approved the Framework, with the belief that the Framework represented their experiences and perspectives as a basic guiding principle for Nepalese inclusive education for early years' children. They perceived that the Framework was contextually appropriate because the framework had consolidated and documented their perspectives and experiences. This would underpin the policy for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED. Yet, looking at the S-I Framework, they suggested three additional aspects that needed consideration for the framework to be comprehensive and clearer. The participants suggested the following additional aspects:

- Expanding the dimensions of organisational and contextual factors
- Including a reference to ClwD without parents
- Recognising the importance of community engagement alongside parental engagement.

Expanding the dimensions of organisational and contextual factors

The stakeholders suggested elaborating upon and providing further details about all organisational and contextual factors that were in the diagram. They agreed with Mohan's view, which he stated as follows:

Since you have similar experiences of the inclusion of children with disability in education to us, the factors you identified really matter for the inclusion of children with disability in education. You have included the factors that we reported in our previous discussions, which are relevant in the Nepalese context. However, all stakeholders would well understand, if you include the dimensions associated with these factors as subpoints below the main factors in the Inclusive Education Framework.



Figure 6.5. Inclusion of dimensions connected with policy.

The first suggestion made by participants regarding the Stakeholder Informed Framework was to elaborate on the organisational and contextual factors in the actual diagram for the framework, in addition to describing them in text. They pointed out that as stakeholders they comprehend diagrams more readily than text. They requested therefore, that the framework diagram include all dimensions or sub-factors showing their connections to the main factors. This would assist in effectively visualising all the areas needing consideration in prospective policy development for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. As shown in figure 6.5, the research participants suggested that the dimensions associated with policy should be incorporated under the main factor (policy), as sub-factors. The sub-factors are:

- policy for vision and conceptual change
- policy for exclusionary practices, and
- policy needs consultation.

The stakeholders suggested that all factors and sub-factors should be similarly listed in the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED diagram. They believed that a picture reveals more than words. Shabiralyani, Hasan, Hamad, and Iqbal (2015) explicated the effectiveness of visual aids in comprehending, communicating and retaining the concepts in uncomplicated and accessible ways. As 'inclusive education' is a new practice in Nepal, the effects of all the dimensions and the factors require greater understanding and conceptual clarity. Listing all sub-factors beneath the main factors enhances understanding and clarity among stakeholders and policy makers.

Including a reference to ClwD without parents

When presenting the S-I Framework in the second follow-up and feedback session, the research participants articulated their shared view that it was essential for the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED to draw attention to and address the issues for those ClwD whose parents were absent. As Nanda asserted,

There should be inclusion of children with a disability with and without parents, because, if we include only children with a disability who have parents, how will policies identify that there are many children with a disability who have lost their parents.

There are specific implications for inclusion of ClwD who are abandoned and do not have parents. The Framework for ECED should identify this group whose specific needs must also be addressed. Parents can take the responsibility for nurturing, raising and educating ClwD, but for those abandoned ClwD, basic needs, including education and health will not be available. It is the government's responsibility to protect children's rights by catering for, nurturing and educating them through social welfare policy (N. Xu, 2014). However, in low income countries, government initiatives are insufficient regarding this responsibility

(Whetten et al., 2009). As a low-income country, Nepal and its government, is not able to ensure the right to survival for these ClwD; in the same way that other rights, such as development, protection and participation are not ensured. Consequently, stakeholders strongly recommended that the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED include the needs of those ClwD who are orphaned and abandoned, so that these children will not be left behind again when developing future policy. The research participants proposed that the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED needs to put forward future policy to address the rights to ECED for all ClwD, including those who have lost their parents.

Recognising the importance of community engagement alongside parental engagement.

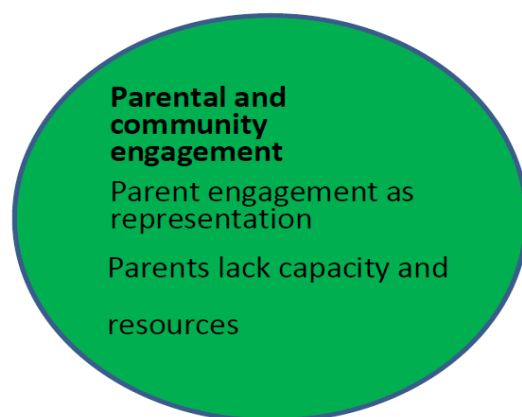


Figure 6.6. Recognition of community engagement with parents' engagement.

Recognising that the community's engagement is essential for the inclusion of those ClwD who are without their parents, professionals proposed adding community engagement to the part of the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED on parental engagement. As Surendra stated,

In the parental engagement part of the framework, you should add community engagement, because when we talk about children without parents, it is the community who should help the government with children's education and care. As we know, Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) is working in this area. We have to make CBR, along with communities, responsible for the education and care of young children and children with intellectual disability.

Since professionals were facing challenges in providing education for ClwD, who were living without their parents, they proposed that the community in partnership with the government, should be accountable for the care, nurture and education of ClwD in their communities. The professionals suggested that Community Based rehabilitation (CBR), should offer ECED programs and include children with intellectual disabilities in their programs. Currently a majority of Nepalese CBR is not addressing the needs of these cohorts. Together with providing basic needs and advancing the inclusion of people with disability through participation in the community, the CBR enables individuals with disability to have a 'voice' and be heard. Greater engagement of CBR would lead to broader awareness, which in turn would create positive attitudes towards disability (Mendis & Gurung, 2007; T. Moore, McDonald, McHugh-Dillon, & West, 2016). This may lead to increased reporting and identifying of ClwD and hence opportunities for school enrolments and engagement.

In Nepal, some CBR programs operate in collaboration with the community, parents, individuals with disability, self-help groups and the government. Others are operated by non-government organisations with the help of international groups (Mendis & Gurung, 2007).

Collaboration with CBR is vital to include early year's ClwD and persons with intellectual disability in education, In the same vein, in many districts, CBR boards work in isolation and do not mobilise community, due to the domination of the CBR management committees (Mendis & Gurung, 2007). Given the resource constraints to the ECED services, community participation in CBR is essential to

utilise community resources (Lightfoot, 2004). As neither the government's efforts nor those of the CBR or communities are individually sufficient to provide these services, partnerships between them must be developed.

Section Summary

This section discussed the research participants' comments on the final iteration of the S-I Framework. They suggested further elaboration of all dimensions; namely enumerating the sub-factors that are connected to organisational and contextual factors. This would provide a clearer picture of the aspects needing consideration when developing policy for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal. They also proposed that the Framework should address those ClwD who are living without parents, indicating that the framework must seek to include all ClwD. To cater for ClwD without parents, the research participants also highlighted the importance of adding community engagement alongside parental engagement. All feedback from the research participants was incorporated into the S-I Framework and developed Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED presented in the second section of this chapter. While the researcher's background knowledge and understanding, generated largely through a review of the literature, is very important, the stakeholders' additional input into the L-B Framework is testimony to the fact that adding authentic and contextualised experiences to the research are just as critical to its credibility, relevance and trustworthiness. The next chapter presents the conclusion to this overall research.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and the Way Forward

[People] who live with a disability face a multitude of barriers to participating equally in society. In particular, their right to education is often not realised, which in turn hinders their access to other rights and creates enormous obstacles to reaching their potential and effectively participating in their communities (Walker, 2013, p. 4).

Inclusive education systems, grounded in a rights-based analysis, must no longer be seen as a marginal policy issue, but as central to the achievement of high-quality education for all learners, and the development of more inclusive societies. The world has to act now to halt the severe marginalisation of disabled children from education (Walker, 2013, p. 4)

Introduction

This concluding chapter reviews the research problems and revisits the research questions and processes. It then discusses the outcomes of the research and its contribution to policy and literature. The chapter also addresses limitations of the research, opportunities for future research and offers concluding remarks.

Reviewing the research problems

ECED is the foundation of holistic development. It includes current and future education, potentially developing talent and skills for all children (Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015). Early intervention as part of ECED for ClwD is vital to minimise developmental delays because, “late identification and poor teaching in the early years will make the child’s difficulties more severe” (UNESCO, 2001, p. 42). Young children learn much from their peers, such as how to communicate, interact and problem-solve (The Royal Australasian College of Physicians Pediatric & Child Health Division, 2013). However, in Nepal, due to the interaction of several contextual and organisational factors, a majority of ClwD are not included in ECED services. This lack of ECED opportunities, for these already marginalised children, exacerbates ignorance, poverty, poor health, discrimination and eventually their exclusion from various aspects of community life. Despite realising the necessity of ECED services for ClwD, actions have not been taken through the necessary

policies, plans, programs and processes in Nepal. In part, this is because both inclusive education and ECED programs are relatively new fields in the Nepalese education system. Unfortunately, as a developing country, many stakeholders lack the knowledge, skills, resources and preparedness to enact inclusive education. This research has sought to address these important issues.

Discussion of the research questions and processes

In developing the Inclusive Education Framework for the inclusion of ClwD in the Nepalese ECED programs, my research responded to the following questions.

Research questions for Phase 1 of the research:

1. What literature on effective inclusion is of relevance in the development of an Inclusive Education Framework for ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?
2. What contextual conditions in Nepal are of relevance in the development of an Inclusive Education Framework for ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?

Research questions for Phase 2 of the research:

1. What are stakeholders' experiences of and perspectives on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal?
2. How have stakeholders' experiences of inclusion influenced their beliefs about inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal?
3. What factors do stakeholders believe need consideration to achieve effective inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal?
4. How are stakeholders' perspectives reflected or overlooked in the proposed ECED Inclusive education Framework for ClwD?

Research questions for Phase 3 of the research:

1. What are stakeholders' perceptions of the proposed ECED Inclusive education Framework?
2. How could the Framework contribute to policy design in order to support more effective inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal?

As there is minimal attention given to research on inclusive education for ClwD in Nepal, a review of international literature from developed and developing countries, was essential to acquire knowledge and understanding of the factors affecting the inclusion of ClwD, as well as an examination of some of the existing frameworks that guide inclusive education. Along with other international literature, Booth and Ainscow's *Index for Inclusion 2006* and the United Nations *Girls Education Initiatives Equity and Inclusion Guide 2010*, provided foundations for the Literature-Based (L-B) Inclusive Education Framework, which was developed first. The initial L-B Framework also included available local literature and my understanding of the contextual conditions.

As there is a huge difference between the context of developed and developing countries (Ahsan et al., 2018), and particular issues in regard to Nepal, the current literature alone would not have been sufficient to inform inclusive education in Nepal. This research, therefore, involved seeking the views of key stakeholders, primarily parents and professionals, in the development of the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED. To identify their perspectives on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs, individual interviews and focus group discussions were a key feature of the research method. The *Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED*, developed through this research, as well as synthesising background literature and others' relevant research, has been specifically informed by the stakeholders' perspectives and has, I believe, been able to significantly address the underlying reasons for non-inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal.

Research outcome: Inclusive Education Framework

The *Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED* highlights the research outcomes showing that the intersection of many contextual and organisational factors results in the multiple exclusion of ClwD from ECED opportunities. The

Framework indicating the interaction of contextual and organisational factors is presented as figure 7.1.



Figure 7.1 Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED.

Contextual factors interacting to affect the inclusion of CIwD in ECED programs

In undertaking this research, it became apparent that children do not discriminate against each other. The socio-cultural and economic environments discriminate against children in the form of the hidden curriculum within and beyond the school. Poverty, caste, language, gender and geographic location either intersect with disability, or *with* each other *and* with disability. Therefore, the disadvantages and

effects of discrimination are compounded, leading to multiple complexities in the exclusion of ClwD from ECED programs. My research explored two new contextual factors — spirituality and schooling culture (specifically of two ethnic communities: Raute and Chepang) — adding further complexity the interaction that excludes children from ECED.

Contextual factors are associated with Nepal's unique economic challenges, and geographic hardship, as well as deep seated cultural practices and customs, which are embedded in the community and difficult to change. These factors alone act as significant barriers to children's access to ECED programs. When these factors interact with each other and with disability, it is not surprising that ClwD fail to access ECED opportunities.

The effects of poverty and harsh geographic conditions require policies centred around poverty alleviation and infrastructure development, as well as additional and equitable distribution of resources. In Nepal and internationally, there is a tendency to categorise children by their disadvantages and to address each disadvantage in isolation. For instance, children from poor families, female children, children living in remote locations and children living with disability, to name a few (UNESCO, 2005). In reality, these children, in common with so many other children, may have several disadvantages in combination, because disability may present in many gender, castes, ethnicity, geographic location and economic levels.

Although policy may be a starting point to address the effects of these factors, policy alone is not sufficient to enact the required changes. Increased awareness of the importance of ECED, modelling the inclusion of all children regardless of their cultural, academic, intellectual, physical and psychological attributes, are also

major requirements for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs, in all communities.

In Nepal, the main reason for the failure of the pilot for inclusive education for ClwD under the Basic and Primary Education Project II 1999-2004 (BPEP II) was the dominant nature of contextual factors such as poverty, gender, caste and geographic hardship over children's disability (N. Phuyal et al., 2006). My research emphasised that while addressing individual factors is fundamental, *unless all factors are addressed in a holistic manner*, no innovation or reform in inclusive education will truly be effective.

Rose (2018) argued that if we unravel the nexus of the vicious circle of poverty, we could overcome half of children's marginalisation in education. He also highlighted that many other socio-cultural factors that lead to marginalisation such as gender and caste-based discrimination must be addressed.

The stipend, aimed at increasing the participation of ClwD from poor families in primary education, has not addressed the needs for young children's inclusion in ECED programs. It is currently still insufficient to meet educational and medical requirements of ClwD. This issue must be acknowledged, and the stipend redesigned within policies, in order to support ClwD from poor families to access ECED.

The interaction of organisational factors, as identified in the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework developed through this research — policy, attitudes, teacher efficacy, resources, coordination and parental engagement — adds complexity to the interaction of contextual factors and creates multiple exclusions for ClwD. Organisational factors have universal effects on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs, due to their nested and interrelated nature. Mitchell (2015)

postulated that the complexity of children’s needs and the inability of organisations to meet these needs, results in children being marginalised from education. In order to enable organisations to embrace inclusion, there is a need for systemic change that will respond to the needs of ClwD’s inclusion in ECED programs.

A need for a systemic change

To address the interacting effect of contextual and organisational factors on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal, the outcomes of this research suggest significant systemic change is required. This change is to be based on a paradigm shift from deeming the inclusion of ClwD as a matter of charity and welfare to one of a rights-based approach.



Figure 7.2. A systemic change model for inclusive ECED in Nepal based on the change management model by Lippitt (1987).

As introduced in chapter two of this thesis, Lippitt (1987), in her model for managing complex change, suggested five interrelated components (vision, skills, incentives, resources and an action plan), which all require attention to bring about positive change when addressing complexities in a community coalition. This model is of relevance in considering how Nepal can move forward towards creating inclusive education for young ClwD.

Vision

Lippitt (1987) argues that a clear vision is essential to achieve successful change. Vision requires clarifying the purposes of changes, in this case the reasons behind the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Without clarity of vision there will be confusion which brings uncertainty into the change process. Given most stakeholders in this research lacked clarity and comprehension about special, integrated and inclusive education systems in Nepal, the development of a vision for inclusive education through policy change is essential. It is recommended that in amending the Education Act 1971, a vision and concept of inclusive education should be established. The Act should stipulate universal ECED, with zero rejection for the enrolment of all children, including ClwD in ECED programs. Furthermore, attention is to be directed towards clearly specifying models of inclusion, noting this is not easy to achieve overnight but something to work towards, paying careful attention to a range of contextual and organisational factors identified in this research. To achieve such outcomes attention to community awareness raising and challenging of exclusionary attitudes is required and either addressed within policy or action plans. Achieving the vision of inclusive ECED programs requires accountability from all stakeholders, and anticipation of the impact of a new policy on teachers and all who are involved (Forlin, 2018). The need for an accountability system regarding policy implementation has already emerged in Nepal. This occurred in relation to ongoing projects in public infrastructure development that required attention to accessibility for individuals living with disability. Many projects were not compliant, resulting in ongoing barriers to achieving the vision. Policies for inclusive ECED must, it would seem, ensure accountability and include wider consultation and engagement with all stakeholders, including parents (U. Sharma, 2018). Equally, harnessing the

experiences of local stakeholders in the formation of policies, through the use of 'bottom up' approaches, is vital to ensuring an inclusive education policy is implementable. Working towards a shared vision of inclusive ECED programs will take time and commitment but must commence with the Government taking a lead in changing exclusionary policies.

Knowledge and Skills

According to Lippitt (1987) attention to vision alone is not sufficient. Knowledge and skills must be developed in order to manage complex change. My research identified levels of anxiety in teachers and parents about the capacities of ECED programs to meet the needs of ClwD. Enhancing the knowledge and skills of teachers, leaders and parents in a range of areas including disability, pedagogy, curriculum differentiation, assessment, reporting and advocacy, is required as part of any action plan to improve inclusive education opportunities. As indicated chapter five (page 166), teaching qualifications lack a focus on knowledge and skills required for early years inclusive education. There is also limited opportunities for existing ECED teachers to engage in quality professional development to enhance their knowledge, skills and capacity to teach ClwD.

Teachers' professional development is possible through in-service and pre-service teacher education programs. For current teachers, a range of professional development modules should be developed which allow for a sustained program, over a period of time and require ECED teachers to apply their knowledge and report back on outcomes at future sessions. Such sustained engagement is fundamental to building teachers' capacities and ensuring an ongoing focus on inclusion strategies in the ECED program. Desimone (1999) argued that high quality professional development, which supports capacity building and change in

educators, should feature a team of educators participating in a sustained professional development program over time, which involves active learning and application of that learning in authentic contexts. As an outcome of this research it is anticipated that in Nepal, a professional development module that engages ECED teachers in sustained learning informed by the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED, is able to be developed and supported by a range of stakeholders involved in the development of ECED inclusive education.

The Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED also provides an opportunity for pre-service ECED teachers in their Bachelor of Education to build greater capacity to include young ClwD in their programs. My research and the Framework can be used to inform courses on inclusive ECED in the current Bachelor of Education. The education courses in the present degree could be revised to incorporate the concepts of inclusive ECED. This requires engagement with the University's academics responsible for the ECED qualification courses and other key stakeholders involved in this research.

In many countries, teacher assistants are employed to support the inclusion of ClwD. Given limited funding and resources in Nepal, developing and employing support staff or special education teachers to assist ClwD in mainstream ECED, as occurs in most developed countries, would not be realistic and sustainable at this point in time but may be an area to work towards in the future.

In order to develop a more effective network of health and education professionals, and government and community leaders who will champion inclusive education, any new policy developments would be wise to stipulate a process of collaboration between various relevant Ministries, national and international universities, NGOs, community-based organisations, schools and parents. Collaboration and networking with Community Based Rehabilitation

(CBR), private organisations, corporate agencies and self-initiated interest groups, such as the Nepal Inclusive Education Forum (an established group of government and NGO professionals, who want to contribute to inclusive education) is recommended to achieve greater accountability in education programs provided for CIWD (Syiemiong, Dey, & Sahu, 2018). Such collaboration and networking would serve to facilitate ways to either espouse or adapt good practices from developed as well as developing countries, specifically in the areas of curriculum adaptation, professional development and the development of physical infrastructure for inclusive education as a few examples. Collaboration is also required to ensure a shared vision is generated and sustained throughout organisations and the wider community.

Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) in Nepal, in some districts, is working effectively in the inclusion and rehabilitation of persons with disability. Currently a majority of CBR programs do not support persons with intellectual disabilities and ECED years' CIWD. CBR programs could be expanded to cover all districts. There could also be additional services for the inclusion of children with all types of disability and early years CIWD. Active participation by communities in the CBR management boards can make the CBR program itself inclusive. Such recommendations would be linked to resourcing which is addressed in more detail below.

My research noted that parents' engagement is often limited to their representation on the ECED management committee, with no influential roles in their children's learning. Parents' lack of engagement was often related to lack of time, poverty and/or ignorance of either disability or the role they play in the development of their child. In developing a shared vision, knowledge and new policy about inclusive ECED centres, the role and potential of parents would be acknowledged.

Parents should be supported in becoming active decision makers in their child's education. They should also have an opportunity to develop their advocacy skills as these will be called upon many times throughout their child's life. Finally, consideration of greater economic support (a resourcing issue) and education for parents of ClwD should also be addressed in any new policy, noting this would act as an incentive. Incentives is one of the five components in the Lippitt model. Through incentives parents are more likely to seek access to early education and become more engaged as advocates for their children.

Incentives

Lippitt (1987) proposed that incentives, together with vision and skills are essential to garner commitment to change. Although it is hoped people would commit to inclusion of ClwD in ECED centres from a moral perspective, Lippitt recognised a need for incentives for people to commit to new expectations and requirements. Incentives are more likely to maximise commitment to develop and use new skills and can buffer the frustration of taking on new requirements. A lack of tangible incentives can delay the change process and increase frustration. In Nepal, as previously discussed in this research, incentives are of even greater importance, given ECED teachers' poor professional status, low remuneration, lack of motivation, unwillingness to engage in professional development or even to stay in the profession.

Remuneration and social status are key determinants of teachers' motivation (Busingye, 2016) and these are factors which will need to be addressed to achieve successful implementation of inclusive ECED programs. Salaries sufficient to cover basic living requirements are fundamental to teachers maintaining an interest in their profession and increasing their wellbeing. Monetary incentives for

ECED teachers to attend inclusive education courses and for their additional work on Individual Education Plans and integrated Family Support Plans should also be provided. Incentives as such demand additional resourcing.

Resources

Lippitt (1987) argued that resources are fundamental to bring about complex change. A lack of resources restricts the system and negatively affects stakeholders' ability to enact their vision even if they possess the appropriate skills and are intrinsically motivated to change. Stakeholders with clear vision often understand the changes required in order to achieve successful outcomes and are willing to commit to enacting change. However, without the necessary resources such as economic support, infrastructure and teaching aids and devices to support accessibility to classrooms and learning, it is difficult for change leaders to accomplish their vision. This ultimately leaves stakeholders demoralised. In Nepal, adequate resources, such as assistive technologies, aids and support services, need to be committed from the government, community and development partners to create barrier free learning environments within and outside schools.

Increasing funding in a poor country is not easy to achieve. However, as Podgursky, (2005, p. 2) noted, "an additional dollar spent on teacher pay yields a discounted stream of student benefits greater than one dollar". If the government departments responsible for the financing of education are made aware that investment in education is an investment in improved futures for their citizens, they may be more inclined to prioritise funding for ECED teachers and programs.

There is a vast difference between budget allocation for primary education and ECED programs. While the outcomes of this research do not recommend reducing budgets for primary education, the research certainly recommends a substantial

increase in budgets for the operation of ECED programs, with a requirement to move to a model of inclusion of all children and additional funding accessed by those ECED centres who are including CIWD. Rapid changes in government policies over the last three decades have severely affected the funding and resources for education, which has further affected funding in ECED programs. During political transition, it remains important that early years children's fundamental rights to education and development continue to be prioritised rather than overlooked.

Action Plan

Lippitt (1987) also identified the need for a detailed action plan to systematically plan for and manage change and to avoid misguided beginnings in the change processes. An action plan is vital in concentrating on policy objectives and priorities. The development of the *Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED* through this research, a Framework that authentically and critically identifies issues for Nepal in developing inclusive ECED programs, provides an invaluable tool for creating any such action plan.

Widespread negative attitudes towards disabilities grounded on deep-seated cultural beliefs and practices are notoriously difficult to change. However, changing the negative attitudes over time is critical, and needs a solid action plan with contextually appropriate community education programs. An action plan related to this issue and informed by this research and the Inclusive Education Framework might include:

- the medical reasons for disability
- the social and human rights models of disability
- a positive interpretation of the Hindu and Buddhist law of Karma
- finding positive role models in the Hindu religious texts

- stories and quotes from western countries and from Nepal about the rights and capacities of CIWD.

Connecting global and local knowledge is vital to develop the context specific understanding of inclusive education in Nepal (Beutel et al., 2018). Constant use of positive discourse about disabilities through contextually relevant mass media can over time counteract the negative discourse.

As the change process is complex and located in a developing country with limited resources, government leadership with active stakeholder engagement to develop a manageable and success-oriented action plan is fundamental. Realistically, a plan may need to start small and draw on current models of success as identified in the following section.

Commitment from leaders

Although Lippitt (1987) did not discuss the power of commitment from leaders in community collaboration, my research highlighted that the success of ECED centres in educating CIWD was, in part, based on leaders' commitment to inclusion and their abilities to coordinate with all agencies to generate resources. The practices of the three inclusive ECED programs reported on in this research are testimony to this argument that leaders' attitudes make a difference. This research finding suggests that there is a need to develop leaders with positive attitudes towards inclusion, who can act as role models and who have an ability to work in collaboration with others with all developing their knowledge and skills together. In seeking to transform current ECED centres to be inclusive of all children policies should include in its priorities the professional development of leaders in inclusive education.

Cooperation with other countries

In addition to the six elements listed by Lippett (1987), I believe that Nepal can benefit from cooperation with other countries who have developed more inclusive education policies and programs. As noted in chapter five, participation in an Australia Awards Fellowship Program conducted by Flinders University in 2013, provided a valuable example of high-quality professional development that contributed in positive ways to the knowledge and capacity of leaders in the field of inclusive education in Nepal. The outcome of the fellowship program led to change in leaders' capacity within a number of areas. Participants in the program designed a range of learning opportunities for Nepalese teachers and as such the Flinders University leaders' professional development had a cascading effect on teachers' efficacy. For example, one of the fellowship participants organised a one-week inclusive education orientation program for ECED teachers and school leaders. This program resulted in the inclusion of ClwD in some ECED programs located in Lalitpur and Baglung (field notes 2016-9-27). Teachers were able to develop new confidence to accept ClwD in their ECED centres. However, as a one-off project with limited resources, it was difficult to sustain ongoing professional development for ECED centres beyond those centres initially involved. Reliance on international aid funding also reduces the capacity to develop a nation-wide model of capacity building for ECED teachers. As Riddell and Nino- ZaraZau (2016, p. 29) argued;

[the success of projects] can never make more than a partial and limited contribution to sustainable educational progress, given the complexity of reforming education systems and the need for all the different and diverse stakeholders in education to work together to achieve lasting change.

My research has involved a range of stakeholders in the hope it will provide a foundation for ongoing engagement of all in achieving sustainable inclusive educational options for young ClwD in Nepal. While Nepal itself should take the

lead in educational changes, being a poor and developing country there is still much benefit in engaging with other countries, particularly at government and university levels, to ensure high quality qualifications and professional development model can be generated. However, as identified in this research there are several contextual conditions of specific relevance to Nepal that need local and national solutions rather than trying to replicate inclusive education models from more developed countries. Issues such as limited qualifications and remuneration will be an ongoing challenge for transforming ECED into inclusive education settings.

Pathways from ECED to Primary and Secondary

In reviewing current policies on ECED programs with a focus on all centres becoming inclusive of all children, attention should also be given to continuing school pathways for ClwD. Although not the focus of this research, inclusive pre-school education should be followed by inclusive primary and secondary educational options. Without such pathways there would be the risk of merely including children in the existing special and integrated schools and perpetuating exclusion and segregation. In order to develop systems for inclusive education, the existing 380 integrated schools could convert into inclusive schools for children with mild and moderate disability.³¹ As these integrated schools will not be sufficient to cater for all children belonging to this category in local communities, it is essential schools also work towards being inclusive for children living with mild and moderate disability. The existing special schools could convert to resource

³¹ Mild disability: The situation where taking part in regular daily activities and social activities by oneself is possible if there is no social and environmental obstacle is mild disability(Government of Nepal, 2006, p.3). Moderate disability: The condition of being able to perform daily activities by oneself with or without taking others' support, if the physical facilities are available, the physical environment is removed and there are opportunities of training and education is called moderate disability(Government of Nepal, 2006, p.3).

centres to provide specialised care and education for children with severe and profound disability.³²

Contribution to policy and literature

Through the development of a Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED, my research has endeavoured to seek and provide some answers for the current issues of inclusion (or exclusion) of ClwD in ECED and how to improve access, engagement and achievement for ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal. Given there is very limited understanding of the essence of inclusive education in existing policies and practices in Nepal, the Inclusive Education Framework was developed with the aspiration of acting as a foundation to policy development across a range of areas. The Inclusive Education Framework is an original contribution to knowledge in the field of inclusive education in the early years of education in Nepal. In the development of the Inclusive education Framework, major factors of influence on the access, retention and learning of ClwD in ECED programs were analysed and synthesised, not only drawing from the literature but also engaging with the stakeholders' perspectives underpinned by their experiences.

My research identified the individual as well as interacting effects of several factors on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Given that limited previous research on the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal has been undertaken, my research not only contributes to early years education in Nepal, but may also contribute to inclusive education in other developing countries and the literature on inclusive education more broadly. Even though the Inclusive Education Framework

³² Severe disability: The condition of having to continuously take other people's assistance in order to carry out individual daily activities and to take part in social activities is severe disability(Government of Nepal, 2006, p.3. [Profound disability]: Profound disability is a condition where there is difficulty in carrying out daily activities even with the continuous assistance of others(Government of Nepal, 2006, p.3).

is designed to support young ClwD, the factors identified are common to the inclusion of school age ClwD, and so the Framework has relevance to ClwD as they transit throughout the years of school. Importantly, this research by including stakeholder perspectives in the development of the Inclusive Education Framework, has contributed to bringing the voice of marginalised groups, particularly the parents of children living with and without disability, to the forefront.

Limitations of the research

All research involves limitations, often relating to research design, scope and available resources, including time. This research had some limitations pertaining to data collection, methods and interpretation. Health professionals who play major roles in providing health support and early intervention for ClwD were not included in this research, which presents limitations. However, this is also an opportunity for further research. Other limitations were the inability to include more than three inclusive ECED centres, and the inability to observe the process of inclusion of ClwD in ECED. A further limitation of the research was the inability to include the parents of those children who were from different religions, castes and ethnicities, who were excluded from ECED. Involvement of parents of ClwD from all three-inclusive ECED in focus groups for this research was beyond the bounds of possibility.

Recommendations for future research

This research was undertaken to progress the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal. A framework was developed by identifying contextual and organisational factors affecting inclusion as well as examining the perspectives of professionals associated with education and those parents who enrolled their children with and without disability in the same ECED program. As the research progressed it became evident there were related avenues of significance for future

research. Recommendations below are grouped according to stakeholder categories.

Future research focus with parents and communities:

- identification of the experiences of parents whose ClwD were not included in ECED programs
- the perspectives of parents from extremely marginalised ethnic communities, Raute and Chepang
- the perspectives of parents who hold strong spiritual beliefs
- how ethnicity in other communities affects inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs
- research on community attitudes towards the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs.

Future research focus with teachers:

- teachers' perspectives on the barriers to accessing professional development to develop their capacity to teach ClwD
- examining teachers and head teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs
- implementation by teachers of a differentiated instruction program in inclusive ECED centres.
- exploring the use of information technology in monitoring, teaching and learning in inclusive settings.

Future research focus with ClwD:

- longitudinal study identifying the outcomes for ClwD, who have been included in ECED
- examining the perspectives of three to five-year-old ClwD about their inclusion in ECED.

Concluding reflection

This research and the resulting development of the Nepal Inclusive Education Framework for ECED, revealed that the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs is unequivocally affected by the intersection of several cultural, contextual and organisational factors. This necessitates a systemic reform involving several actions and strategies and a new way of thinking about education and development for ClwD in inclusive settings. Although restructuring the Nepalese education system may appear overwhelming, there is a compelling argument to start somewhere to determine what can be achieved. It is anticipated that the Inclusive Education Framework will open stakeholders' eyes, including recently elected federal, provincial and local governments to the notion that every child is unique, their learning needs are unique due to their distinct cultural and ability attributes. All children can learn and deserve differentiated support to progress this learning. Understanding the importance, moral value and long-term positive investment outcome of inclusive education is the foundation for changing stakeholders' perspectives. In turn, proactive change will enable ClwD to enjoy their rights to an education and prepare them for a much-improved quality of life in welcoming and inclusive communities. Commitment from governments and communities to collaborate through coordinated action plans is required for the holistic development of ClwD and all children, leading to their inclusion in all aspects of community including education. As the famous African saying suggests, 'It takes a village to raise a child'. Everyone in Nepal is responsible to enact positive change for all children in their country.

Appendix A: A brief history of educational development in Nepal

A brief history of educational development including policy, plans and programs in Nepal and their relation to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED.

Date	Major policy development in education	Major focus of the development	Relation to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in the program
Ancient time	Local religious communities established spiritual schools such as Hindu (Gurukul, Ashram, Buddhist (Gumba) and Islamic (Madarasas). Such traditional schools are still in existence.	Teach the verses of religious scriptures, such as Veda, Quran and Tripitak to the followers of respective religions.	Exclusion of children other than a particular faith community. Exclusion of early years due to no provision for ECED programs in these schools.
1854	The Rana Prime Minister Jung Baha Bahadur Rana established a Darbar School (School for the Palace) to teach English to the Royal families and the Rana Ruler in the Nepalese capital city Kathmandu.	Introduce the Indian education system in Nepal, which in turn was based on the British system of education.	Exclusion of public from education. The Rana ruler feared that, if the general public had access to education, they would be aware of their rights and the Rana would not be able to rule over them. There was no provision for ECED and education for ClwD.
1950	The first Montessori school was established in Kathmandu.	Introduce ECED programs for the first time in the country.	A single Montessori school was able to serve a handful of children in ECED. There was no system of inclusion of ClwD in this Montessori school.
1892	Darbar school was opened to all children with the dawn of democracy and the end of the Rana oligarchy.	Give children from the general public access to Darbar School for the children of general public.	Exclusion of a majority of children, for example children from poor, ethnic and castes groups in and beyond Kathmandu.
1951	Formation of the Ministry of Education.	Aims to operate and upkeep the system of education in Nepal.	The Ministry focused on school aged children and children without a disability.
1952	The Government formed the National Education Board.	Supervise and expand modern schools	The Board suggested the Government form a commission to map existing schools and suggest a framework for the universalisation of elementary education (year one-six).
1954	The Government established the Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC).	Survey existing schools and suggest a framework for the formation of Government policy about elementary and higher education, including the structure of education, physical facilities, teacher preparation, curriculum development, extracurricular activities, instructional materials and adult education, as well as educational supervision and administration.	The Commission proposed free and compulsory primary education. It did not discuss ways to bring ClwD, children from Dalit and ethnic groups to schools nor discuss pre-primary education.
1956 – Till the present	Five-year national development plans later reduced to three years were introduced. They included the development of education. Since 1956 there have been nine five-year plans followed by four three year plans. Currently, Nepal is implementing 14 th three-year developmental plan.	Develop the basic infrastructure for economic development through industry, commerce, trade and employment. Improve education and health. The 10 th plan (2002-2007) and the subsequent plans introduced the stipend for disadvantaged communities, including Dalit children, female children, children from marginalised ethnic groups as well as ClwD and children from remote locations to receive education. Expansion of ECED centres in a coordinated manner in disadvantaged communities was the aim of every plan after the 10 th plan as one strategy in poverty reduction.	Although universal primary education was introduced in the first five-year (1956-1961) plan, it is not still implemented. ECED expansion in disadvantaged communities and remote locations is just limited in policy document. All plans after the ninth plan suggested free and compulsory primary education. However, it is not achieved yet. In the 10 th plan expansion of ECED programs in disadvantaged communities and remote locations was introduced, but it is still limited in practices.
1962	The Government commissioned the All-Round National	Through education, indoctrinate the population to support the existing	A large increase in the number of schools with uniform education.

Date	Major policy development in education	Major focus of the development	Relation to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in the program
	Education Commission (ARNEC) subsequent to another political change in which a one-party political system with an active monarchy was introduced.	political system and a feeling of nationhood.	However, the commission did not recommend the inclusion of ClwD in education nor ECED programs. Nor did it realise the need for inclusion of Dalit and ethnic groups in education.
1962	Nepal Children Organisation (a semi- government organisation) commenced ECED programs in every district headquarters(Aryal, 2002).	Expand child care services beyond Kathmandu.	The program only served children in the district headquarters and children of the Government officials, who resided there, due to the small coverage of the program. The program did not focus on giving access to ECED for ClwD.
1964	A Laboratory School was established for the purpose of providing practicum for pre-service teachers from the College of Education. Within this school, children with visual impairment were integrated.	Introduce integration of ClwD in mainstream schools.	The school was accessible for a small number of children in one urban area. There was no system of ECED for ClwD.
1966 and 1969	The special schools for children with physical disabilities and children with hearing impairment were established (Ministry of Education, 1996b).	Introduce special education for ClwD.	These special schools were available for children with physical disabilities and children with hearing impairment. The school tended to segregate ClwD from their parents because ClwD had to leave their home and communities and reside in school hostels.
1971	The National Education System Plan was formulated.	Bring all modern schools into the Government structure through the first Education Act. Introduce vocational education.	The Plan proposed forming a Special Education Council in Nepal to devise an education system for ClwD. The Plan suggested a special education council.
1970-1980	Private schools and Montessori schools commenced preprimary education as a downward extension of primary schools. Subsequently the country adopted a policy for a neo- liberal economy which allowed for this development.	Involve the private sector in education. Expansion of ECED services.	Private schools and Montessori schools in urban areas were inaccessible to rural children and children from poor families due to the expensive fees (Joshi, 1991). Inclusion of ClwD in schools and preschools were not the priority of private schools. The programs focused on teaching English language through rote learning and drill methods, rather focusing on the Montessori approach to ECED (Upreti, 2013).
1973	The Special Education Council was commissioned with the Education Minister as chair.	Formulate a policy and programs for special education and facilitate all special and integrated schools by providing them with funding, curriculum, and learning materials.	Special and partially integrated schools for education of ClwD were established. However, the focus of the council was limited to primary and secondary education for ClwD.
1980	The Ministry of Local Development through the Small Farmer Development Project (SFDP) and the Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW) established ECED programs in its project areas.	Release mothers from child caring and mobilise them in income generation activities in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors (Shrestha et al., 2008).	The project neither served a majority of rural children, nor was it able to cater for children's holistic development. It did not realise ClwD needed to be included in ECED programs.
1980-1990	ECED programs were expanded in many urban and rural communities with the help of UNICEF, UNESCO and many INGO (Shrestha et al., 2008).	Develop teacher professional skills, learning materials and ECED centres.	The programs were not sustainable due to the one-time nature of the project run by these organisations.
1982	The Government endorsed the Disabled Persons' Protection and Welfare Act.(Government of Nepal, 1982)	Offer an identity card to individuals with a disability based on the assessment of their disability. Focus on teacher development, vocational training and rehabilitation of individuals with a disability.	Provide free education and monthly stipend to school aged ClwD. The Act did not address early years children and they were not eligible to receive a stipend.
1990	Endorsement of the Constitution of Nepal following the restoration of multi-party democracy in the country	Guarantee children's right to primary and secondary education, and the right to primary education through children's mother tongue as the medium of instruction.	Constitutional provision of right to education for ClwD is not translated into practice, due to the absence of the necessary Acts and Regulation. Additionally, the right to education for children aged three -to-five was not stipulated in the constitution.
1993	Special education was commenced as a national program with the technical and	Provide access to educational opportunities for ClwD with a target to establish 180 integrated schools, with	The integration of ClwD in general schools commenced. The special education system continued to operate.

Date	Major policy development in education	Major focus of the development	Relation to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in the program
	financial assistance of DANIDA under the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP I) Phase one.	separate resource classes and residential facilities in 23 districts. The main strategies were teacher professional development, learning material development and community engagement in special education.	The program only focused on children with four types of disabilities (children with physical disabilities, children with visual impairment, children with hearing impairment and children with mental sickness). The reason was the assessment centre's lack of capacity of to diagnose children other than with these four types of disabilities. The Children's Disability Assessment Centre was chaired by the district education officer, a staff member from the district education office as coordinator and health professional. Children other than ClwD benefited from the program due to the communities' priority to educate other disadvantaged groups, such as girls, Dalit and children from poor families and from ethnic communities.
1996	The Special Education Policy was formulated and implemented.	Facilitate existing special and integrated schools. In addition, provide the necessary assistance to NGOs and schools who were willing and eligible to establish special schools and resource classes in regular schools.	The policy focused on special and integrated education rather than inclusive education. The inclusion of ClwD in ECED was not enshrined in the policy.
1997	Based on the recommendation of the previous Commission the Government established ECED centres as Sishu Kashya (Children's Classroom) under the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP II) Phase two (Ministry of Education, 1991)	Limit the enrolment of under age children in year one. Improve children's learning and increase retention in year one (Ministry of Education, 1991).	5023 ECED centres were successfully operating by the end of the Basic and Primary Education Project II (BPEP II, 1999- 2004). However, the programs did not include the component for the inclusion of ClwD and children from disadvantaged communities in ECED.
1999	The Government continued the special education program with the technical and financial assistance of DANIDA under the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP II)	Expand the program in 47 districts with 309 resource classes.	Perpetuated a partial inclusion of ClwD in primary and secondary education. Special education offered in primary secondary schools. No inclusion of ClwD and special education available in ECED programs.
1999	The Government implemented the Inclusive Education Program in 21 districts, with the pilot program as a subcomponent of BPEP II in four districts (Banke, Udayapur, Sindhupalchok and Kavrepalanchok)	Introduce inclusive education in Nepal supported by in-teacher training and community awareness.	The programs did not increase the access or participation of ClwD in education due to teachers' school staff and communities continued priority of other types of disadvantage.
1992 and 1999	The Government formulated National Education Commission (NEC) in 1992, and the High-Level National Education Commission (HLNEC) 1999.	Improve education following the re-establishment of multiparty democracy in Nepal. Guided by inclusive democracy, both commissions suggest some affirmative actions to increase the participation of Dalit and children from disadvantaged communities in education. Propose private public partnerships and community engagement in education.	The Government's affirmative action policy could not ensure education for children from disadvantaged communities. It failed to attract private sector interest in education for ClwD and children from disadvantaged communities.
2001	The National Plan of action for Education for All by 2015 was developed and devised.	Focus on giving access to primary education for all children on the basis of equity and increase quality and relevance.	The plan of action could not ensure access to school and ECED programs for the majority of ClwD and children from disadvantaged communities.
2004	Education for All Program (2004-2009) was formulated.	Implement The National Plan of Action for Education All (2001-2015).	The program was unable to ensure access to disadvantaged children.
2005	Vulnerable Community Development Plan (VCDP) was formulated.	Suggest strategies to include children from disadvantaged communities in primary education. The plan focused on increasing female teachers with knowledge of local language and parents' participation in school management. Developing disaggregated education management information system,	The Plan identified female children, children from poor families, Dalit and ethnic children, ClwD and children from linguistic minorities as the most vulnerable children. It also identified that inclusive education in Nepal is perceived as special education for ClwD. Isolation of children's disadvantages resulted in their exclusion from education.

Date	Major policy development in education	Major focus of the development	Relation to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED in the program
		document local knowledge to be included in curriculum. Raising awareness against discriminatory practices were the suggested strategies.	The strategies suggested by VDCP were partially implemented due to the lack of policy and resources. VDCP did not realise that ECED for these disadvantaged children was a necessity for ensuring their primary education.
2007	The Constitution of Nepal was endorsed to restructure the country to solve problems of caste, ethnicity, region and gender.	Children's rights to primary and secondary education and use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in primary education were considered as fundamental rights.	The rights of ClwD to primary and secondary education, as well as the right to use mother tongue as the medium of education was not enshrined in policy and practice.
2008	The Government implemented the School Sector Reform Plan (2009-2015)	Restructuring school education as basic (year one-to-eight) and secondary (year nine-to-12) to make it compatible internationally. (G. N. Sharma, 2000)	The program included ECED as a funded program. There was no significant change in the access of ClwD to ECED and primary education.
2015	The parliament approved the Constitution of Nepal 2015.	Complete the task of restructuring the country. Operation of primary and secondary education was allocated to local governments. The Constitution stated that '[ClwD's] with visual impairment, by means of Braille script, and with hearing and speaking impairment, by means of sign language, shall have the right to free education as provided by law' (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, P.23)	The Constitution was unable to broadly set the fundamental principles of every child's right to be included in regular educational settings in their own communities. It did not recognise the rights to education of children aged three-to-five and ClwD. Local governments struggled to develop the necessary policy to implement the constitutional provisions.
2016	The Government endorsed the Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disability	Introduce the term inclusive education in policy documents. Propose the development of physical facilities, teacher professional development and learning materials to increase equitable participation of ClwD at all levels of education. Suggest curriculum differentiation, mass awareness, resource mobilisation, and the use of technology as strategies for catering for the learning needs of ClwD.	Policy did not clearly address the issue of inclusion of ClwD in mainstream ECED programs and schools. Policy remained silent about early intervention services, and parental engagement in the education of ClwD. As it is an organisational policy, not an Act, the policy is unable to ensure the right of ClwD to resources and mandates.

(Sources: National Education Planning Commission, 2011; All-Round National Education Commission, 1962; Developmental plans from 1956 to 2018; New Education System Plan, Education Act, 1971; Disabled Persons' Protection and Welfare Act, 1992; National Education Commission, 1992 and the High Level National Education Commission 1999; The constitution of Nepal, 1990, 2007, 2015)

Appendix B: Interview and focus group protocol

Interview Protocol

Research Project: Inclusion of Children with Disability in Early Childhood Programs in Nepal: Construction of a Stakeholder Informed Framework

Opening:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research. This interview is focused on your perceptions and experiences of the inclusion of Children living with Disabilities (ClwD) in the ECED program in this organisation.

This discussion will take about an hour. The discussion will contribute to the development of an inclusive education framework. It may contribute to the development of policy and actions by the government for broader inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs.

Questions

- 1) How long have you been including ClwD in your ECED program?
- 2) Why did you begin this program?
- 3) What types of ClwD are included in your ECED program? Why are these children included but others not at this stage?
- 4) What were the processes for including ClwD in your ECED? For example, how were such children identified and located? Was the community consulted about the inclusion of ClwD? How did staff feel about their inclusion?
- 5) What type of professional development do you feel is required for staff to confidently educate ClwD in ECED?
- 6) What factors do you believe supports the successful inclusion of ClwD in your ECED?

- 7) What do you believe are the barriers to the successful inclusion of ClwD in your ECED?
- 8) What factors do you believe affect effective inclusion of ClwD in ECEDs in Nepal?
- 9) What resources (physical, human) do you think would enhance the quality of your inclusive program?
- 10) Do you engage with other agencies and professionals to support the needs of the ClwD and if say can you tell me more about the history of the partnership, benefits and challenges?
- 11) Do you plan for and teach ClwD in different ways to the other children in your program?
- 12) If yes, what varies?
- 13) If no, why?
- 14) How do you engage with the parents of ClwD and does this level of engagement vary from parents of children without a disability?
- 15) How do you think parents of the children in your ECED feel about the inclusion of ClwD in your program?
- 16) Have you had any personal experiences or stories of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED and if so, has it changed your perceptions about their inclusion?

Focus group discussion protocol

Opening:

Research Project: Inclusion of Children living with Disability in Early Childhood Programs in Nepal: Construction of a Stakeholder Informed Framework

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research. The research is focused on how the inclusion (and exclusion) of Children living with Disability (ClwD) in ECED in Nepal. Our conversation today will take approximately one hour and data generated will be used in the research. You are free to discontinue from the conversation at any time and without signing of the permission form shared with you prior to this meeting, your contribution will not be included in the research. I am particularly interested in developing an inclusive education framework for ClwD in ECED. Your perceived views of factors that affect inclusion or exclusion of ClwD in the Nepalese context will contribute to the framework, so that the framework will be able to recommend the government of Nepal about the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs.

Questions for Professional working with the Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations

- 1) Can you share with me your knowledge of ECED centres, which included Children living with Disability (ClwD) in their programs? For example, where are these centres, what types of ClwD do they include and why do you think they chose to include ClwD?
- 2) Why do you think the majority of ClwD have not been included in ECED programs in Nepal?
- 3) What do you perceive would be required for all ECED programs to include ClwD in their programs?
- 4) Have you had any personal experiences or stories of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED and if so, has it changed your perceptions about their inclusion?
- 5) What factors do you believe affect the inclusion of ClwD in ECEDs in Nepal?

- 6) What specific advice would you provide to people developing a policy for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?

Questions for ECED Educators

- 1) Can you share with me your knowledge of ECED centres, which included Children living with Disability (ClwD) in their programs? For example, where are these centres, what types of ClwD do they include and why do you think they chose to include ClwD?
- 2) Why do you think the majority of ClwD have not been included in ECED programs in Nepal?
- 3) What do you perceive would be required for all ECED programs to include ClwD in their programs?
- 4) Have you had any personal experiences or stories of the inclusion of ClwD in ECED and if so, has it changed your perceptions about their inclusion?
- 5) What factors do you believe affect effective inclusion of ClwD in ECEDs in Nepal?
- 6) What specific advice would you provide to people developing a policy for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?

Questions for persons with a disability

- 1) Please tell me your experience about your early childhood learning? Did you get any opportunities being included in ECED program? If yes why, if no why not?
- 2) Why do you think the majority of Children living with Disability (ClwD) have not been included in ECED programs in Nepal?
- 3) What do you perceive would be required for all ECED programs to include ClwD in their programs?
- 4) What factors do you believe affect effective inclusion of ClwD in ECED in Nepal?
- 5) What type of professional development do you feel is required for staff to confidently educate ClwD in ECED?
- 6) What factors do you believe supports the successful inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs?
- 7) What do you believe are the barriers to the successful inclusion of ClwD in your ECED?
- 8) Do you think parental engagement is required for inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs?
- 9) What specific advice would you provide to people developing a policy for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?

Questions for parents with and without a disability

- 1) Can you share with me your knowledge of ECED centres in your community, which included Children living with disability (ClwD) in their centres? For example, where are these centres, what types of ClwD do they include and, why do you think they chose to include CWD?

- 2) If there are not any ECED centres, which included ClwD in your community, why do you think ClwD have not been included in ECED programs?
- 3) Please tell me how do you feel about the inclusion of ClwD in ECED?
- 4) Do you have any experiences of the inclusion of your ClwD in ECED, and if so, has it changed your perceptions about your children's inclusion in ECED programs?
- 5) What do you perceive would be required for all ECED programs to include ClwD in their programs?
- 6) What factors do you believe affect effective inclusion of ClwD in ECEDs in Nepal?
- 7) Do you think your engagement in ECED program helps the inclusion of ClwD in these programs? If yes how does it help? If no, why not?
- 8) What factors do you believe are the barriers and enablers to the successful inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs?
- 9) What specific advice would you provide to people developing a policy for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal?

Protocol for follow up discussion sessions with the professionals and Parents

Research Project: Inclusion of Children living with Disability in Early Childhood Programs in Nepal: Construction of a Stakeholder Informed Framework

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this workshop. The workshop is focused on exploring whether the proposed inclusive education framework for ECED is appropriate to the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs in Nepal. The framework will inform the government of Nepal on the development of policies for the inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. The framework has been developed by

drawing on ideas about the factors from international literature and national literature which identifies the factors either inhibit or enable inclusion of ClwD in ECED programs. Your feedback is valuable to the development of a relevant inclusive education framework for ClwD in ECED programs because of your experiences surrounding this issue within the Nepalese context. You are free to discontinue the conversation at any time and without your signature on the permission form shared with you prior to this meeting, your contribution will not be included in the research.

You can see in the Inclusive Education Framework, many contextual factors (e.g., poverty, spirituality, caste, schooling culture, gender and geographic location) and school- based and organisational factors (e.g., policy, attitudes, teacher efficacy, resources, coordination and parental engagement) interact to form multiple reasons for the exclusion of children living with disability from ECED programs. Please feel free to comment or provide your feedback on the Framework.

Appendix C: Ethics Approvals

Subject: 7374 SBREC Final approval notice (24 August 2016)

Dear Divya,

The Chair of the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBREC) <http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/researcher-support/ebi/human-ethics/human-ethics_home.cfm> at Flinders University considered your response to conditional approval out of session and your project has now been granted final ethics approval. This means that you now have approval to commence your research. Your ethics final approval notice can be found below.

FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:

7374

Project Title:

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Development Programs in Nepal: Construction of a Stakeholder Informed Framework

Principal Researcher:

Ms Divya Dawadi

Appendix D: Information Sheets



Ms. Divya Dawadi
School of Education
Flinders University
GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001
Flinders Drive, Bedford Park SA 5042
Ph: 61882015584
Email: Dawa0005@flinders.edu.au
CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

INFORMATION SHEET (For the Interview Participants)

Title: Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Education and Development Programs in Nepal: Construction of Stakeholder informed Framework

Researchers:

Ms Divya Dawadi
School of Education, Humanities and Law Flinders University
Ph: 61 882015584

Supervisor(s):

Associate Professor Kerry Bissaker Dr. Virginia Kinnear
School of Education, Humanities and Law, Flinders University Ph: 61882015376

Description of the study:

This research is part of the project entitled. "Inclusion of Children with a Disability (CwD) in Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) Programs in Nepal: Construction of Stakeholder Informed Framework." The project will uncover the factors that affect the inclusion of children with a disability in the Nepalese ECED programs.

Purpose of the study:

This research project aims to develop a relevant inclusive education framework in ECED programs for children with a disability in Nepal, with the intention of contributing to future policy development. In order to do so, this research explores the factors that influence the inclusion of CwD in Nepal by analysing both international literature and stakeholders' perspectives.

What will I be asked to do?

You are invited to participate in an individual interview with the researcher, Divya Dawadi, who will guide the inquiry to focus on your perceptions of the key factors that engender or inhibit the inclusion of children with a disability in ECED. In the interview you will be asked to share your experiences about the barriers and enablers on the inclusion of CwD in ECED programs.

It will take about 60 minutes. The discussions will be tape recorded to assist in result analysis. Once recorded, the discussions will be transcribed and stored on a password protected computer and then this will be destroyed when the report will be finalised. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to decline to participate or withdraw from this study whenever you want.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?

Your perspectives based on your experiences about the effective inclusion of CwD will help to develop the relevant framework for inclusion. This research attempts to persuade the government to consider and value your perspectives and experiences before initiating any policies, plans and programs in ECED. In addition, the factors that affect the inclusion of CwD will be identified clearly by this discussion that will help initiate inclusive ECED in the country. Apart from this, you will be given AUD\$ 11 with a refreshment and a cup of tea as for your time contribution for this study.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?

We will use your pseudonym and you will remain unidentifiable in the research process and report. Once the inquiry has been transcribed and saved as a file, the voice file will then be destroyed. Any identifying information will be removed, and the transcription file will be stored on a password protected computer that only the researcher (Ms. Divya Dawadi) will have access to it. Your perspectives will not be linked directly to you.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?

There will be no possibilities of any risks from participating in this research because participants will not be identified. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you have the right to answer any or all question. The possible risks are the time required to participate in this research and concerns as to whether your comments will be misinterpreted or misrepresented in published materials. However, the risks will be managed by assuring you that your views will not be fabricated or manipulated. In order to do so your views will be rechecked with each of you at the end of the recordings and before including this in the thesis.

How do I agree to participate?

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions and you are free to withdraw from the interviews at any time without and adverse effect or consequences. A consent form will be provided with this information sheet. If you agree to participate, please read and sign the consent form and give it to the researcher.

How will I receive feedback?

Results from the study project will be summarised and provided to you after transcribing the information obtained from the discussions.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 7374). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au



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CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

INFORMATION SHEET

(For the Focus Group Discussion and Follow up Feedback Sessions Participants)

Title: Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Education and Development Programs in Nepal: Construction of Stakeholder informed Framework

Researchers:

Ms Divya Dawadi
School of Education, Humanities and Law Flinders University
Ph: 61 882015584

Supervisor(s):

Associate Professor Kerry Bissaker Dr. Virginia Kinnear
School of Education Flinders University Ph: 61882015376

Description of the study:

This research is part of the project entitled. "Inclusion of Children with a Disability (CwD) in Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) Programs in Nepal: Construction of Stakeholder Informed Framework." The project will uncover the factors that affect the inclusion of children with a disability in the Nepalese ECED programs.

Purpose of the study:

This research project aims to develop a relevant inclusive education framework in ECED programs for children with a disability in Nepal, with the intention of contributing to future policy development. In order to do so, this research explores the factors that influence the inclusion of CwD in Nepal by analysing both international literature and stakeholders' perspectives.

What will I be asked to do?

You are invited to participate in focus group a discussion and a follow up feedback session with the researcher, Divya Dawadi, who will guide the inquiry to focus on your perceptions of the key factors that engender or inhibit the inclusion of children

with a disability in ECED. You will be asked to share your experiences about the barriers and enablers on the inclusion of CwD in ECED programs.

It will take about 60 minutes. The discussions will be tape recorded to assist in results analysis. Once recorded, the discussions will be transcribed and stored on a password protected computer and then this will be destroyed when the report will be finalised. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to decline to participate or withdraw from this study whenever you want.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?

Your perspectives based on your experiences about the effective inclusion of CwD will help to develop the relevant framework for inclusion. This research attempts to persuade the government to consider and value your perspectives and experiences before initiating any policies, plans and programs in ECED. In addition, the factors that affect the inclusion of CwD will be identified clearly by this discussion that will help initiate inclusive ECED in the country. Apart from this, you will be given AUD\$ 11 with a refreshment and a cup of tea as for your time contribution for this study.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?

We will use your pseudonym and you will remain unidentifiable in the research process and report. Once the inquiry has been transcribed and saved as a file, the voice file will then be destroyed. Any identifying information will be removed, and the transcription file will be stored on a password protected computer that only the researcher (Ms. Divya Dawadi) will have access to it. Your perspectives will not be linked directly to you.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?

There will be no possibilities of any risks from participating in this research because participants will not be identified. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you have the right to answer any or all question. The possible risks are the time required to participate in this research and concerns as to whether your comments will be misinterpreted or misrepresented in published materials. During the discussions you may be anxious or may feel stressed by memories of bitter experience regarding the suffering of children, discrimination and subsequently their exclusion in schools or in societies. These might be your children as well. If you feel stressed at any point, I will postpone the conversation for few days. You are completely free to discontinue the discussions if you don't want to be involved in the issue. If it is difficult for you to cope with your anxiety during the process, I will contact psychiatrics, or provide their phone numbers, so that they will help to reduce your anxiety. Furthermore, be assured that the risks will be managed by assuring you that your views will not be fabricated or manipulated. In order to do so your views will be rechecked with each of you at the end of the recordings and before including this in the thesis.

How do I agree to participate?

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions and you are free to withdraw the focus group at any time without any adverse effect or consequences. A consent form will be provided with this information sheet. If you agree to participate, please read and sign the consent form and give it to the researcher.

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जानकारी पत्र (अन्तरवार्ताका सहभागीहरूका लागि)

शीर्षक : प्रारम्भिक बालविकासमा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरण : सरोकारबालाहरूद्वारा सूचित

रूपरेखा

अनुसन्धानकर्ता

दिव्या दवाडी

शिक्षा, मानविकी तथा कानून संकाय

फ्लिन्डर्स विश्वविद्यालय

फोन: ६१ ८८२०१५५८४

सुपरिवेक्षकहरू

सह-प्राध्यापक केरी विसाकर

डा.भर्जिनिया किनेर

फ्लिन्डर्स विश्वविद्यालय, वेडफोर्ड पार्क,

दक्षिण अष्ट्रेलिया, ५०४२

फोन: ६१ ८८२०१५३७६

अध्ययनको विवरण

प्रस्तुत प्रारम्भिक बालविकासमा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरण: सरोकारबालाहरूद्वारा सूचित रूपरेखा विषयक अनुसन्धानले प्रारम्भिक बालविकास कार्यक्रममा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरणका अवसर र चुनौतिहरू पहिचान गरी सो सम्बन्धी नीति निर्माणमा जानकारी गराउने अपेक्षा गरिएको छ ।

अनुसन्धानको उद्देश्य:

यस अनुसन्धानको उद्देश्य प्रारम्भिक बालविकास कार्यक्रममा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरणका अवसर र चुनौतिहरू समावेश भएको एक रूपरेखा तयार गर्नु रहेको छ । उक्त कार्यढाँचालाई नेपाली परिवेश अनुरूपको बनाउन यहाँको अनुभव समेटिनु पर्ने हुँदा व्यक्तिगत अन्तरवार्ता कार्यक्रममा यहाँको सहभागिताका लागि आमन्त्रण गरिएको छ ।

यस अनुसन्धानमा मेरो भूमिका के हुन्छ ?

उल्लिखित कार्यक्रममा सहभागिताका लागि यहाँलाई आमन्त्रण गरिएको छ । प्रारम्भिक बालविकास कार्यक्रममा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरणलाई प्रभाव पार्ने तत्वहरूका बारेमा अनुसन्धानकर्ता दिव्या

दवाडीले सोध्नुहुने प्रश्नका सम्बन्धमा आफ्ना धारणा राखिदिनुहुनेछ, भन्ने आसा गरिएको छ । यो छलफल एक घण्टा भन्दा बढीको हुने छैन । तपाईंका विचारहरु विश्लेषण गर्नका लागि छलफललाई टेप रेकर्डिङ, अनुलेखन तथा अनुवाद गरिनेछ । उल्लिखित कार्यमा गोपनियता कायम गर्न कम्प्युरमा पासवर्डको प्रयोग गरिने छ । अनुसन्धानका क्रममा यहाँले व्यक्त गर्नुभएका विचारहरु हरतरहले गोप्य रहने छन् । यस सन्दर्भमा शोधपत्र लगायतका लेख रचना प्रकाशन गर्दा यहाँको नाम उल्लेख गरिने छैन । नाम परिवर्तन गरी यहाँका विचारहरु प्रकाशन गर्न भने यसले बाधा पुऱ्याउने छैन । छलफलका क्रममा कुनै खास प्रश्नको उत्तर नदिन तथा छलफल कार्यक्रमको जुनसुकै समयमा असहभागिता जनाउन यहाँलाई पुरै स्वत्रन्तता हुने छ ।

अनुसन्धानबाट मलाई के लाभ हुन्छ ?

यहाँको अनुभव तथा भोगाइ समेटिएर प्रारम्भिक बालविकासमा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरण सम्बन्धी रुपरेखा तयार गरिने छ । नेपाली परिवेश अनुरुप तयार गरिने कार्यढाँचामा यस सम्बन्धी वास्तविक समस्या पहिचान भई समाधानका उपाय समावेश गरिने भएकोले कार्यढाँचाका आधारमा भविष्यमा नीति निर्माणमा सहजता पुग्ने अपेक्षा गरिएको छ । यहाँका विचार तथा अनुभवले नेपालका अपाङ्गता भएका कलिला बालबालिकाको शिक्षामा पहुँच तथा सहभागिता वृद्धि भई उनीहरुको सिकाइ तथा विकासमा महत्वपूर्ण योगदान पुग्ने देखिन्छ । छलफलमा सहभागी भई आफ्नो अमूल्य समय तथा विचार व्यक्त गरिदिनु भएकोमा यँहालाई चिया, खाजा तथा यातायात खर्च उपलब्ध गराइने छ ।

यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुँदा मेरो व्यक्तिगत पहिचान हुन्छ कि ?

अनुसन्धानका क्रममा यहाँले व्यक्त गर्नुभएका विचारहरु हरतरहले गोप्य रहने छन् । यस सन्दर्भमा शोधपत्र लगायतका लेख रचना प्रकाशन गर्दा यहाँको नाम उल्लेख गरिने छैन । नाम परिवर्तन गरी यहाँका विचारहरु प्रकाशन गर्न भने यसले बाधा पुऱ्याउने छैन । छलफलका क्रममा कुनै खास प्रश्नको उत्तर नदिन तथा छलफल कार्यक्रमको जुनसुकै समयमा असहभागिता जनाउन यहाँलाई पुरै स्वत्रन्तता हुने छ । छलफलमा प्राप्त सूचना तथा तथ्याङ्क विश्लेषणका कार्यलाई सहज तुल्याउन छलफल टेप रेकर्डिङ गर्नु पर्ने हुदा यहाँको मन्जुरिनामा आवश्यक हुन्छ । यसका लागि यहाँको नाम गोप्य रहने शर्त उल्लेख गरिएको मन्जुरिनामा पत्रमा हस्ताक्षर गरी आफ्ना विचार तथा धारणा रेकर्ड गर्ने स्वीकृति दिनु पर्ने हुन्छ । संकलित सूचना तथा तथ्याङ्क विश्लेषणकै क्रममा अनुलेखन तथा अनुवाद गर्दा कुनै विशेषज्ञ सेवाको आवश्यकता पर्ने भएमा उक्त विशेषज्ञलाई सूचनाको गोपनियता कायम गर्ने शर्त उल्लेख गरिएको दस्तवेजमा हस्ताक्षर गराई यहाँको पहिचान गोप्य राखिने छ ।

यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुँदा मलाई कुनै नकारात्मक असर पर्छ कि ?

यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी भई आफ्ना अनुभव तथा विचारहरु अभिव्यक्त गर्दा यहाँको निजी वा पोशागत जीवनमा कुनै प्रकारको समस्या पर्नेछैन । यद्यपि यहाँले आफ्नो महत्वपूर्ण समयको एक घण्टा भने यसका लागि दिनु पर्ने हुन्छ ।

यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागिताका लागि मैले कसरी स्वीकृति दिनु पर्ला ?

छलफलमा सहभागी हुन यहाँलाई कर गरिने छैन । छलफलका क्रममा कुनै खास प्रश्नको उत्तर नदिन तथा छलफल कार्यक्रमको जुनसुकै समयमा असहभागिता जनाउन यहाँलाई पुरै स्वत्रन्तता हुनेछ । अतः आफ्नो नाम गोप्य रहने शर्तमा छलफलमा सहभागी हुन मन्जुर छु भनी उल्लेख गरिएको मन्जुरिनामा पत्रमा हस्ताक्षर गरी आफ्ना विचार तथा धारणा टेपरेकर्ड गर्ने स्वीकृति दिन सक्नुहुनेछ । अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुनु भन्दा पहिले यहाँलाई जारकारी पत्र उपलब्ध गराइने छ । उक्त जानकारी पत्र अध्ययन गरेपश्चात अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुने वा नहुने भन्नेमा निर्णय गर्न यहाँलाई पर्याप्त समय दिइने छ ।

यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागिताको पृष्ठपोषण मैले कसरी प्राप्त गर्ने ?

छलफलको टेप रेकर्डिङको अनुलेखन यहाँलाई उपलब्ध गराइ यहाँले ठीक दुरुस्त छ नभनेसम्म शोधपत्रमा प्रयोग गरिने छैन । अनुसन्धानको प्राप्तिलाइ पनि यहाँहरु समक्ष प्रस्तुत गरिने छ ।

यस जानकारी पत्र अध्ययन गर्ने समय दिनुभएकोमा हार्दिक धन्यवाद छ । साथै यस जानकारी पत्रको अध्ययन पश्चात यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागि हुनुहुनेछ भन्ने आशा लिएका छौं ।

अनुसन्धान फ्लिन्डर्स विश्वविद्यालय सामाजिक तथा व्यवहारिक अनुसन्धान नैतिक समिति द्वारा स्वीकृत गरिएको छ (परियोजना नं ७३७४) यस सम्बन्धी थप जानकारीका लागि समितिको कार्यकारी अधिकृतलाई देहायको ठेगानामा सम्पर्क राख्न सक्नुहुनेछ । फोन: ६१८८२०१३११६, फ्याक्स: ६१८८२०१२०३५ अथवा इमेल : human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au



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अध्ययनको विवरण

प्रस्तुत प्रारम्भिक बालविकासमा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरण: सरोकारबालाहरूद्वारा सूचित रुपरेखा विषयक अनुसन्धानले प्रारम्भिक बालविकास कार्यक्रममा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरणका अवसर र चुनौतिहरू पहिचान गरी सो सम्बन्धी नीति निर्माणमा जानकारी गराउने अपेक्षा गरिएको छ ।

अनुसन्धानको उद्देश्य:

यस अनुसन्धानको उद्देश्य प्रारम्भिक बालविकास कार्यक्रममा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरणका अवसर र चुनौतिहरू समावेश भएको एक रुपरेखा तयार गर्नु रहेको छ । उक्त कार्यढाँचालाई नेपाली परिवेश अनुरूपको बनाउन यहाँको अनुभव समेटिनु पर्ने हुँदा समूह छलफल कार्यक्रममा यहाँको सहभागिताका लागि आमन्त्रण गरिएको छ ।

यस अनुसन्धान मेरो भूमिका के हुन्छ ?

उल्लिखित कार्यक्रममा सहभागिताका लागि यहाँलाई आमन्त्रण गरिएको छ । प्रारम्भिक बालविकास कार्यक्रममा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरणलाई प्रभाव पार्ने तत्वहरूका बारेमा अनुसन्धानकर्ता दिव्या दवाडीले सहजीकरण गर्नुहुने छलफलमा आफ्ना धारणा राखिदिनुहुनेछ भन्ने आसा गरिएको छ । यो छलफल एक घण्टा भन्दा बढीको हुने छैन । तपाईंका विचारहरू विश्लेषण गर्नका लागि छलफललाई टेप रेकर्डिङ, अनुलेखन तथा अनुवाद गरिनेछ । उल्लिखित कार्यमा गोपनियता कायम गर्न कम्प्युरमा पासवर्डको प्रयोग गरिने छ । अनुसन्धानका क्रममा यहाँले व्यक्त गर्नुभएका विचारहरू हरतरहले गोप्य रहने छन् । यस सन्दर्भमा शोधपत्र लगायतका लेख रचना प्रकाशन गर्दा यहाँको नाम उल्लेख गरिने छैन । नाम परिवर्तन गरी यहाँका विचारहरू

प्रकाशन गर्न भने यसले बाधा पुऱ्याउने छैन । छलफलका क्रममा कुनै खास प्रश्नको उत्तर नदिन तथा छलफल कार्यक्रमको जुनसुकै समयमा असहभागिता जनाउन यहाँलाई पुरै स्वतन्त्रता हुने छ ।

यस अनुसन्धानबाट मलाई के लाभ हुन्छ ?

यहाँको अनुभव तथा भोगाइ समेटिएर प्रारम्भिक बालविकासमा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरण सम्बन्धी रुपरेखा तयार गरिने छ । नेपाली परिवेश अनुरूप तयार गरिने कार्यढाँचामा यस सम्बन्धी वास्तविक समस्या पहिचान भई समाधानका उपाय समावेश गरिने भएकोले कार्यढाँचाका आधारमा भविष्यमा नीति निर्माणमा सहजता पुग्ने हुन्छ । यहाँका विचार तथा अनुभवले नेपालका अपाङ्गता भएका कलिला बालबालिकाको शिक्षामा पहुँच तथा सहभागिता वृद्धि भई उनीहरूको सिकाइ तथा विकासमा महत्वपूर्ण योगदान पुग्ने देखिन्छ । छलफलमा सहभागी भई आफ्नो अमूल्य समय तथा विचार व्यक्त गरिदिनु भएकोमा यँहालाई चिया, खाजा तथा यातायात खर्च उपलब्ध गराइने छ ।

यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुँदा मेरो व्यक्तिगत पहिचान हुन्छ कि ?

अनुसन्धानका क्रममा यहाँले व्यक्त गर्नुभएका विचारहरू हरतरहले गोप्य रहने छन् । यस सन्दर्भमा शोधपत्र लगायतका लेख रचना प्रकाशन गर्दा यहाँको नाम उल्लेख गरिने छैन । नाम परिवर्तन गरी यहाँका विचारहरू प्रकाशन गर्न भने यसले बाधा पुऱ्याउने छैन । छलफलका क्रममा कुनै खास प्रश्नको उत्तर नदिन तथा छलफल कार्यक्रमको जुनसुकै समयमा असहभागिता जनाउन यहाँलाई पुरै स्वतन्त्रता हुने छ । छलफलमा प्राप्त सूचना तथा तथ्याङ्क विश्लेषणका कार्यलाई सहज तुल्याउन छलफल टेप रेकर्डिङ गर्नु पर्ने हुदा यहाँको मन्जुरिनामा आवश्यक हुन्छ । यसका लागि यहाँको नाम गोप्य रहने शर्त उल्लेख गरिएको मन्जुरिनामा पत्रमा हस्ताक्षर गरी आफ्ना विचार तथा धारणा रेकर्ड गर्ने स्वीकृति दिन पर्ने हुन्छ । संकलित सूचना तथा तथ्याङ्क विश्लेषणकै क्रममा अनुलेखन तथा अनुवाद गर्दा कुनै विशेषज्ञ सेवाको आवश्यकता पर्ने भएमा उक्त विशेषज्ञलाई सूचनाको गोपनियता कायम गर्ने शर्त उल्लेख गरिएको दस्तवेजमा हस्ताक्षर गराई यहाँको पहिचान गोप्य राखिने छ ।

यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुँदा मलाई कुनै नकारात्मक असर पर्छ कि?

यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी भई आफ्ना अनुभव तथा विचारहरू अभिव्यक्त गर्दा यहाँको निजी वा पोशागत जीवनमा कुनै प्रकारको समस्या पर्ने छैन । यहाँले आफ्नो महत्त्वपूर्ण समयको एक घण्टा भने यसका लागि दिनु पर्ने हुन्छ । यद्यपि अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाकोहरूको दुःख दर्द, उनीहरू माथि हुने भेदभाव तथा वहिष्करण ती बालबालिका तपाँइका आफ्नै छोराछोरी पनि हुन सक्छन् को कारणबाट यहाँलाई मनोवैज्ञानिक रूपमा कुनै असर पर्न गएमा वा यहाँलाई यस विषयमा कुरा गर्न मा नलागेमा अनुसन्धान केही समयका लागि स्थगित गर्न सकिने छ । केही समय पछि पनि यस विषयमा थप छलफल गर्न असहज भएको महसुस भएमा छलफल पुरै रद्द गर्न पनि सकिनेछ । यस अनुसन्धानमा उठान हुने विषयवस्तुको कारणबाट थप तनाव भएको सहसुस भएमा तपाँइलाई मनोचिकित्सकको सल्लाह आवश्यक पर्न सक्छ । यसका लागि आवश्यकता अनुसार यहाँलाई मनोचिकित्सकको टेलिफोन उपलब्ध गराइने वा उहाँहरूसंग सोभै सम्पर्क गराइने छ ।

यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागिताका लागि मैले कसरी स्वीकृति दिनु पर्ला ?

छलफलमा सहभागी हुन यहाँलाई कर गरिने छैन । छलफलका क्रममा कुनै खास प्रश्नको उत्तर नदिन तथा छलफल कार्यक्रमको जुनसुकै समयमा असहभागिता जनाउन यहाँलाई पुरै स्वतन्त्रता हुनेछ । अतः आफ्नो नाम गोप्य रहने शर्तमा छलफलमा सहभागी हुन मन्जुर छु भनी उल्लेख गरिएको मन्जुरिनामा पत्रमा हस्ताक्षर गरी आफ्ना विचार तथा धारणा टेपरेकर्ड गर्ने स्वीकृति दिन सक्नुहुनेछ । अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुनु भन्दा पहिले यहाँलाई जारकारी पत्र उपलब्ध गराइने छ । उक्त जानकारी पत्र अध्ययन गरेपश्चात अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुने वा नहुने भन्नेमा निर्णय गर्न यहाँलाई पर्याप्त समय दिइने छ ।

यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागिताको पृष्ठपोषण मैले कसरी प्राप्त गर्ने ?

छलफलको आधारमा तयार गरिने समावेशी शिक्षाको कार्यढाँचालाई पृष्ठपोषण संकलन सत्रमा यहाँहरूसमक्ष प्रस्तुत गरी यहाँहरूको सुझावका आधारमा अन्तिमरूप दिइने छ । अनुसन्धानको प्राप्तिलाइ पनि थेसिस स्वीकृत भए पश्चात यहाँहरू समक्ष प्रस्तुत गरिने छ ।

यस जानकारी पत्र अध्ययन गर्ने समय दिनुभएको मा हार्दिक धन्यवाद छ । साथै यस जानकारी पत्रको अध्ययन पश्चात यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुनुहुनेछ भन्ने आशा लिएका छौं

अनुसन्धान फ्लिन्डर्स विश्वविद्यालय सामाजिक तथा व्यवहारिक अनुसन्धान नैतिक समिति द्वारा स्वीकृत गरिएको छ (परियोजना नं ७३७४) यस सम्बन्धी थप जानकारीका लागि समितिको कार्यकारी अधिकृतलाई देहायको ठेगानामा सम्पर्क राख्न सक्नुहुनेछ । फोन: +६१८८२०१३१९६, फ्याक्स: +६१८८२०१२०३५ अथवा इमेल :

human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Appendix E: Consent Form



CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH (By Individual Interview)

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Development Programs in Nepal: Construction of a Stakeholder Informed Framework

I.....

Being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in an interview for the research entitled “**Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Education and Development Programs in Nepal: Construction of a Stakeholder Informed Framework**”.

I identify as: (tick one)

Early Childhood Educator

Chairperson of ECED Management Committee

I have read the information provided.

1. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
2. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.
3. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
4. I understand that:
 - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
 - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on my professional and personal progress.
 - I may ask that the recording stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

Participant’s signature.....Date.....

I certify that I have explained the research to the participant and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher’s name:

Researcher’s Signature:Date:

- *NB: Two signed copies should be obtained.*



**CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
(By Focus Group Discussion/ follow up feedback Session)**

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Development Programs in Nepal: Construction of a Stakeholder Informed Framework

I.....

Being over the age of 18 years here by consent to participate as requested in a focus group discussion for the research entitled “Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Education and Development Programs in Nepal: Construction of a Stakeholder Informed Framework”.

I identify as: (tick one)

- Early Childhood Educator
- A professional who works with the government
- A professional who works with NGOs
- A parent of children with a disability
- A parent of children without a disability
- A person with a disability (representing from the disability organization)

I have read the information provided.

1. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
2. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.
3. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
4. I understand that:
 - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
 - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on my professional and personal progress.
 - I may ask that the recording stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

Participant’s signature.....Date.....

I certify that I have explained the research to the participant and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher’s name:

Researcher’s Signature:Date:

NB: Two signed copies should be obtained.

अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुने मन्जुरिनामा
(अन्तरवार्ताका सहभागीहरूका लागि)

प्रारम्भिक बालविकासमा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरणः
सरोकारबालाहरूद्वारा सूचित रूपरेखा

म..... १८

वर्ष पुरा गरेको व्यक्ति प्रारम्भिक बालविकासमा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरणः सरोकारबालाहरूद्वारा रूपरेखा सम्बन्धी अनुसन्धानको लागि अन्तरवार्तामा सहभागी हुन मन्जुर छु । सम्बन्धित सरोकारवालामा रेजा लगाउनुहोस्

- बालविकास सहजकर्ता
- बालविकास केन्द्र व्यवस्थापन समितिका अध्यक्ष

मैले देहायका विषय राम्ररी जानकारी पाएको छु ।

१. यस अनुसन्धानको प्रकृया तथा यसका उपलब्धिको सम्बन्धमा मलाई उपलब्ध गराइएको जानकारी पत्रमार्फत अवगत भएको छ ।
२. उक्त जानकारी पत्रमा यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुँदा मलाई पर्ने प्रभाव (मैले यसका लागि दिने समय तथा छलफलका क्रममा व्यक्त गरिने विचारबाट मेरा भावनामा पर्न सक्ने असर) को विषयमा स्पष्ट उल्लेख गरिएकाले यस विषयमा म पूर्ण रूपेण जानकार छु ।
३. अतः यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी भई मेरा विचार रेकर्ड गर्न मन्जुर छु ।
४. मलाई उपलब्ध गराइएको जानकारी पत्र तथा यस मन्जुरीनामा भविष्यको प्रयोजनकालागि सुरक्षित राख्नु पर्ने पनि मलाई जानकारी छ ।

यस अनुसन्धान सम्बन्धी निम्नलिखित विषयमा मलाई अवगत गराइएको छ :-

- यस अनुसन्धानबाट मलाई प्रत्यक्ष लाभ नहुन सक्छ ।
- मलाई यस अनुसन्धानको सहभागिता जुनसुकै बेला छोडने स्वतन्त्रता छ र आफूलाई चित्त नबुझेको विषयमा छलफल गर्न वा मन नपरेको प्रश्नको उत्तर दिनका लागि मलाई कर गरिने छैन ।
- मेरा विचार तथा अभिव्यक्ति प्रकाशन वा शोधपत्रमा उल्लेख गर्दा मेरो नाम र परिचय गोप्य राखिनेछ ।
- यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागीहुँदा वा नहुँदा, सहभागी भएर विचैमा छोडदा मेरो पेशा, प्रगति वा व्यक्तिगत जीवनमा कुनै असर पर्नेछैन ।
- यस अनुसन्धानका दौरान कुनै पनि समय मेरा विचारहरू रेकर्ड गर्न असहमति जनाएको र अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी नभएको कारणबाट मलाई कुनै प्रकारको सेवा सुविधात्राट वञ्चित गराइने छैन ।

सहभागिको नाम: मिति.....

मैले यस अनुसन्धानमा स्वैच्छिक सहभागिताको विषयमा सहभागीलाई स्पष्ट जानकारी गराएको छु । सहभागी यस विषयमा पूर्ण रूपले जानकार हुँदै सहभागिताको लागि मन्जुर हुनुहुन्छ ।

अनुसन्धानकर्ताको नाम.....

अनुसन्धानकर्ताको हस्ताक्षर..... मिति.....

पुनश्च: हस्ताक्षर गरिएको मन्जुरीनामादुई प्रति संलग्न राख्नुपर्नेछ ।

Translated Accurately by Divya Dawadi

Verified as being accurate by Kamal Prasad Pokhrel Sharma

अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुने मन्जुरिनामा
(समूह छलफल र पृष्ठपोषण सहभागीहरूका लागि)

प्रारम्भिक बालविकासमा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरणः
सरोकारबालाहरूद्वारा सूचित रूपरेखा

म..... १८
वर्ष पुरा गरेको व्यक्ति प्रारम्भिक बालविकासमा अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाको समावेशीकरणः
सरोकारबालाहरूद्वारा रूपरेखा सम्बन्धी अनुसन्धानको लागि अन्तरवार्तामा सहभागी हुन मन्जुर छु ।
सम्बन्धित सरोकारवालामा रेजा लगाउनुहोस

- प्रारम्भिक बालविकास शिक्षक
- प्रारम्भिक बालविकास पेशाकर्मी (सरकारी क्षेत्र)
- प्रारम्भिक बालविकास पेशाकर्मी (गैर सरकारी क्षेत्र)
- अपाङ्गता भएका बालबालिकाका अभिभावक
- अपाङ्गता नभएका बालबालिकाका अभिभावक
- अपाङ्गता भएका व्यक्ति (अपाङ्गता सम्बन्धि संघसंस्थाका प्रतिनिधिहरू)

मैले देहायका विषय राम्ररी जानकारी पाएको छु ।

१. यस अनुसन्धानको प्रकृया तथा यसका उपलब्धिहरूको सम्बन्धमा मलाई उपलब्ध गराइएको जानकारी पत्रमार्फत अवगत भएको छ ।
२. उक्त जानकारी पत्रमा यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुँदा मलाई पर्ने प्रभाव (मैले यसकालागि दिने समय तथा छलफलका क्रममा व्यक्त गरिने विचारबाट मेरा भावनामा पर्न सक्ने असर) को विषयमा स्पष्ट उल्लेख गरिएकाले यस विषयमा म पूर्ण रूपेण जानकार छु ।
३. अतः यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी भई मेरा विचार रेकर्ड गर्न मन्जुर छु ।
४. मलाई उपलब्ध गराइएको जानकारी पत्र तथा यस मन्जुरीनामा भविष्यको प्रयोजनका लागि सुरक्षित राख्नु पर्ने पनि मलाई जानकारी छ ।

यस अनुसन्धान सम्बन्धी निम्नलिखित विषयमा मलाई अवगत गराइएको छ :-

- यस अनुसन्धानबाट मलाई प्रत्यक्ष लाभ नहुन सक्छ ।
- मलाई यस अनुसन्धानको सहभागिता जुनसुकै बेला छोड्ने स्वतन्त्रता छ र आफूलाई चित्त नबुझेको विषयमा छलफल गर्न वामन नपरेको प्रश्नको उत्तर दिनका लागि मलाई कर गरिने छैन ।
- मेरा विचार तथा अभिव्यक्ति प्रकाशन वा शोधपत्रमा उल्लेख गर्दा मेरो नाम र परिचय गोप्य राखिनेछ ।

- यस अनुसन्धानमा सहभागीहुँदावानहुँदा, सहभागी भएर बिचैमा छोडदा मेरो पेशा, प्रगति वा व्यक्तिगत जीवनमा कुनै असर पर्नेछैन ।
- यस अनुसन्धानका दौरान कुनै पनि समय मेरा विचारहरु रेकर्ड गर्न असहमति जनाएको र अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी नभएको कारणबाट मलाई कुनै प्रकारको सेवा सुविधात्राट वञ्चित गराइने छैन ।

सहभागिको नाम: मिति.....

मैले यस अनुसन्धानमा स्वैच्छिक सहभागिताको विषयमा सहभागीलाई स्पष्ट जानकारी गराएको छु । सहभागी यस विषयमा पूर्ण रूपले जानकार हुँदै सहभागिताको लागि मन्जुर हुनुहुन्छ ।

अनुसन्धानकर्ताको नाम.....

अनुसन्धानकर्ताको हस्ताक्षर..... मिति.....

पुनश्च: हस्ताक्षर गरिएको मन्जुरीनामा दुई प्रति संलग्न राख्नुपर्नेछ ।

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