Teachers as policy actors: An exploration of teacher actions to negotiate the policy demands of inclusive education

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the many teachers who have worked to ensure that students with disabilities are included and accepted as equal members within regular school settings. Against a background of multiple complexities and contestation they have both individually and collectively made a ‘difference’ for some students who were previously excluded.

I would also like to pay tribute to the people supporting me in the quest of identifying the work and skill of the current teacher workforce involved in successful inclusion and quality education for disabled students.
Acknowledgements

Thank you to the participants in this study who so willingly gave up their time to participate in this study and communicate their experiences regarding inclusive educational action.

Thank you to my supervisor Professor Michael Singh.

I would also like to acknowledge the genuine encouragement from Professor Chris Bigum.
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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(Signature)
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CONCLUSION

Recommendation one: Time, communicative space and whole school participation must be provided, to enable school communities to plan for the new responsibilities associated with inclusion.

Recommendation two: Operational understanding needs to be developed as part of the ongoing organization and professional practice within school sites.

Recommendation three: School based collaborative action is important in developing new knowledge, skills and changed pedagogy and needs to be a focus within professional development programs.

Recommendation four: Transactional administrative teams need to be recognised as important contributors to the development of knowledge and culture within schools.

Recommendation five: Participatory and communicative action that contributes to knowledge development within real life situations, valuing individual ‘insider’ practitioner knowledge, must be acknowledged as a dynamic process

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Abstract

While recognising the complexity of inclusive educational policy for teachers, this thesis argues that a constructive approach for future action may be accomplished by drawing on teachers’ own accounts of significant characteristics contributing to effective inclusion. Accordingly, it is proposed that an understanding of the realities constructed by teachers involved in inclusive practice provides imperatives for future action. In particular, this study explores the finer structures of changed pedagogy, professional development of teachers and the vision of quality education for all that underpin the fabric of inclusive schooling. Furthermore, the study suggests that the focus on teachers’ own accounts or voice provides a major resource with which to theorise and analyse the actuality of inclusive practice and to help overcome barriers to success.

In examining the work realities of teachers involved in inclusive education this thesis reports on the results of an empirically grounded and theoretically informed enquiry of the major educational reform of including students with disabilities into regular classroom settings. The case study site for this investigation included two schools, within the State of Victoria, Australia. Primary evidence generated through this study suggests that teachers’ work is a vital contributing factor to successful inclusion, despite the overpowering emphasis on additional funding within the political construction of policy implementation. However, teachers’ existing professional expertise and their professional development needs have not been a key focus of policies directed at sustaining the changed political culture required by inclusion.

Drawing on relevant research literature and research evidence, this study argues against the political reductionism of both liberal pluralism and systems theory approaches that have dominated State policy action in inclusive education. In contrast the evidence presented in this thesis suggests the need to reconsider and revalue the knowledge and expertise generated by the education policy actors in this field, namely classroom teachers and school administrators involved in institutional planning and practice. It is these knowledgeable education workers who really influence policy implementation.
The significance of this research is that the ‘insiders’ are presented as potentially important drivers shaping the mechanisms for educational reform. For this reason the framework of this study centres on the communicative infrastructures within existing institutions (schools) and the policy actors (teachers) who come together to formulate issues and professional directions. Therefore, the review of the research literature sets out to identify key theories and evidence pertaining to the teachers’ knowledge and learning communities. Literature on the importance of individual and collective agency is reviewed and situated in terms of the debates over the communicative action and life worlds of teachers at the sites of inclusive education reform. In turn, this provides a pathway for establishing the secondary evidence concerning what is currently known about the lifeworlds of teachers where change engages with struggles over ideological totality, elitist political agendas and the actualities of educational reform.

Transcending critical and interpretive paradigms of educational research, capturing teachers’ voice on the complexities of inclusive education, the study moves beyond critical analysis of the way policies construct, or fail to construct, institutions and individuals within them. Inclusion is viewed through the lifeworlds of teachers involved in integration and inclusive programs, and situated within the context of their communicative actions.

Data was generated through unstructured interviews where there was an emphasis on informal contexts and open communication that was free from system distortion. Communicative interaction was then expanded through a second semi-structured interview for the purpose of validation of the data and for testing the researcher’s construction of received messages. In addition feedback regarding emergent themes and representative quotes was also requested from participants.

In this study the situated meaning of teachers’ work as an expression of policy-in-practice was explored in relation to the textual framing created by State policy, institutions (schools) and teachers’ own skills and knowledge. The major perceptual elements for this research focus on the interrelation between these policy contexts, the paradigm that frames teacher’s professional knowledge and the pathways and processes for teaching and learning to occur.
Chapter One: Inclusive education: Policy and practice

Introduction
This chapter introduces inclusive education policy as a complex issue for teachers within Victorian schools in Australia. Inclusion is located as part of the increasing socio-cultural change, educational reform and the associated challenges emerging for teachers. In recognising policy concerns by teachers, the chapter then clarifies the aim of this study to identify critical characteristics needed to contribute to successful inclusive policy implementation.

_Schools have complex and conflicting responsibilities, being both products of their cultures and cutting edges to change that culture. That is why involving the local community, local knowledge, and local and informal communication channels are essential in any movement towards inclusive education. Thus, given that human learning takes place in interaction between an individual and his/her surroundings, the social approach enables an equilibrium to be achieved in favour of the learner that balances the capacity of the learner and the opportunities provided (UNESCO, 2001, p. 21)._ 

In Victoria, Australia, the Report of the Ministerial Review of Educational Services for the Disabled (1984), herein referred to as the Review (1984), was instrumental in changing both the policy and practice of education for students with disabilities within the Victorian education system. This meant the restructuring of the schooling system to permit the integration or access of students with disabilities into mainstream schools; it also required teachers to be able to translate these changes into both whole school and student related programs.

Based on the notions of human rights and equity, the primary purpose of integration was to ensure that students with disabilities were given access to regular school settings. However, a further outcome or extension of integration has been the current emphasis on
‘inclusive education’ for students with disabilities and additional educational needs. Inclusive education is based on the concept that schools should cater for the wide-ranging needs of all students within classroom settings. This is a broader and more comprehensive reform issue than simply integrating or placing students with disabilities into community schools with their peers. In turn, inclusive programs maximize the accommodation of all children within the general education curriculum, where there is an emphasis on individual academic performance and outcomes rather than normative results.

Inclusive education, incorporating integration, is an example of the increasing responsibility given to schools for social, economic and cultural change (Andrews and Elkins 1981; Beare and Slaughter 1993; Ashman and Elkins 2005; Sexton 2005). However, after more than two decades of inclusive policy directives, funding initiatives and program guidelines designed to assist schools to cater for individual student needs, implementation remains problematic for many Victorian schools (Andrews, Elkins et al. 1979; Education 1990; Ainscow 1991; Fulcher 1993; Slee 1993(a); Kortman 2001). Hence, the inclusion of disabled students within regular school settings has remained a major and complex task within the multiple dilemmas of social, economic and cultural change confronting both government and non-government schooling systems within Victoria.

**Statement of the research problem**

**Policy concerns and the role of teachers**

This thesis recognises the policy concerns for teachers involved in current educational reforms such as inclusive education.

*Teacher policy concerns have intensified in recent years due to the profound economic and social changes underway and the imperatives for schools to provide the foundations for lifelong learning. All school systems have been engaged in major curriculum reforms, and have placed stronger emphases on gender equality within schools, the incorporation of information and communication technology, and greater integration of students with special needs. Such developments require re-examination of the role of teachers, their preparation, work and careers. A key challenge is to*
understand the complex range of factors – societal, school system level, and school level – that are giving rise to teacher policy concerns (OECD, 2005, p. 23).

The complexity of Victorian inclusive educational policy for teachers and the necessity to understand the historical background of disability and education, as well as the change required for school systems and for classroom teachers, underpins this study.

**Key research aim**

This present study sets out to examine and clarify the skills and operational understanding of teachers involved in effective inclusive education. In so doing it examines the historical background of education and disability to establish the change generated by inclusive policy. The study also considers how teachers have adopted their changed roles and developed their operational understanding of inclusive education. Within this framework, the development and application of professional knowledge and skill, within the context of inclusive educational change, is also investigated. The overall focus of this study rests on the premise that while inclusive policy has originated outside the school (under State governance) the major resource for policy implementation is driven from within the school, primarily through the work and skill of the current teacher workforce.

The major aim of this study is to address the question:

- ‘What are the critical characteristics and skills of teachers that have contributed to the successful implementation of inclusive educational policy within schools?’

This question remains as a gap within current educational literature.

In addressing this aim the initial difficulties encountered in providing education for disabled students in mainstream settings are also examined. Teachers were often faced with complex and contradictory operative issues (Hargreaves, 1994). The examination of these difficulties provides further insight into teachers’ changed roles and the possible skills required to successfully implement inclusive education. Furthermore, in a quest to clarify how teachers’ professional skills and knowledge may develop within inclusive educational contexts, this study also examines the nature of knowledge and the features
and processes contributing to the construction of knowledge within schools. Therefore related secondary questions consider:

- ‘How the development of professional knowledge occurs?’
- ‘What are the critical components contributing to effective change within professional communities of practice such as schools?’

**Statement of the thesis**

Within this context this thesis argues that teachers’ knowledge and skills are critical components in determining school system change and the implementation of inclusive educational policy. Teachers’ pre-conceptions and actions are powerful determinants of the enactment of policy, rather than any given policy directives, program guidelines or funding initiatives. However, the skills and operational understandings that are needed to contribute to successful inclusive education need to be identified.

**Background to the study**

**Integration policy and practice**

Generally speaking, educational research recognises that the *Report of the Ministerial Review of Educational Services for the Disabled* (1984), also known as the Collins Report or Review (1984), was instrumental in changing both the policy and practice of education for students with disabilities within the Victorian public [and then private] education systems (Fulcher 1989; Education 1990; Marks 1993). Prior to 1984, special education within Victoria was structured around the categorisation and segregation of students identified, or labelled, with substantial difficulties. The identification was based on the rationale and assumptions about human ability and the required norm to meet eligibility for enrolment in regular schools. Consequently, there was little opportunity for children with disabilities to attend neighbourhood schools or participate within the communities in which they lived. In principle, the Review was a powerful determinant in the restructuring of the school system to permit access of students with disabilities into regular neighbourhood or mainstream schools. However, directly associated with the aspect of access, is the consideration of the complex process for teachers to maintain the participation of all students in the educational programs and social life of regular schools.
Even though the rhetoric of human rights and increased placement of students in inclusive settings appears to be positive, research remains sceptical regarding policy enactment and the participation of disabled students within Victorian mainstream education (Allan 1999; Corbett and Slee 2000; Thomas 2001; Moss 2003). The practice of inclusion has been slow and disconcerting given the groundbreaking policy in 1984. Proponents of inclusive education (Lingard and Porter, 1997; Slee, 1996; Slee and Cook, 1993) point out that the support and rhetoric was encouraging with legislative and bureaucratic preconditions for inclusive schooling being meticulously established. However, shortcomings regarding effective implementation have been ongoing. For instance, after more than a decade of government action directed towards inclusion Slee (1996, p. 20) noted:

*Apparently, this wave of legislative and bureaucratic reform, consistent with greater concerns for equity in Australian schooling (Connell, 1993), heralds a new era of ‘inclusive’ schooling for disabled students in Australia. One ought to feel assured that this backdrop signifies considerable progress for disabled students and that inclusive schooling describes the practice as well as the rhetoric of Australian education. This is not the case.*

Moreover, the next decade, up until 2005, has not held any greater promise than did the late 1990s. Carrington and Robinson (2006, p. 332) confirm this view when they state:

*After attending the recent International Colloquium on Inclusive Education in Montreal, Canada, in July 2004, we shared the frustration of the colloquium participants about the lack of systemic change in education organizations throughout the world after years of work towards more inclusive schooling. We could all share an example of a fantastic school that was striving to include all students and achieving significant results but we are also aware that these are pockets of innovation.*

Furthermore, the strategies employed in the development, promotion and adoption of inclusive education by schools and teachers, are still relatively unclear. Research over the past two decades identifies the problem of exclusionary practices and segregation of
disabled students emerging under the guise of inclusion (Booth, Swann et al. 1992; Booth 1996; Oliver 1996; Lingard and Porter 1997; Barton and Oliver 1997 a; Slee 2001a; Slee 2001c). One frequent example is the utilisation of funding specified to promote inclusion, that is used to withdraw students from their classrooms for remedial lessons. Given this difficulty, it is essential to consider the operational understanding and construction of teacher knowledge that has the capacity to expand on successful ‘pockets of innovation’ (Carrington and Robinson 2006, p. 332) promoting inclusive practice.

*Conceptual understanding of inclusive education: The problematic nature of practice*

Theoretically, inclusion is a value expressed by teachers in the way they conceptualise and promote the development of all students, even those operating outside expected norms within the schooling system. It is not simply a process relying and being dependent on conditional resources to support disabled students in classrooms. Inclusive programs maximise the accommodation of all children within the general curriculum. Therefore the emphasis is on changing practice that contests the socio-cultural construction of schooling systems advocating exclusion and marginalisation of differently disadvantaged groups.

Slee (1993) argues that there has been a considerable decrease in the theoretical and operative outcomes of inclusion within the Victorian education system. In turn, this has reduced the equitable opportunity for students with diverse differences. The misguided belief in placing students in mainstream settings, with additional resources such as funding, has oversimplified the complex process of inclusion. Consequently, segregation often remains unacknowledged and cultural and institutional arrangements governing pedagogical and curriculum choices remain under-scrutinised. As a consequence schools, positioned as disabling structures, escape the diagnostic scrutiny required for systematic questioning regarding the discursive construction of the schooling system. Within this context, the disabling factors of school structures and educational disablement are suppressed and left un-investigated. However, this study looks beyond student deficit and discursive school structures to consider the main elements of learning environments that are responsive to student needs.
International perspectives on inclusive education: UK and USA
For this research project to further explore critical issues regarding inclusive education it was necessary to look beyond the Australian context, to consider international research literature. In particular, attention has been given to current research literature on inclusive education in both the United Kingdom and the United States of America due to the similar sociological perspectives regarding educational reform for diverse student populations (refer to Chapter two). Accordingly, comparisons have been drawn from the research literature on inclusive education for disabled students within Australia, particularly the State of Victoria.

Undoubtedly the background to inclusion identifying the need for social change has challenged and repositioned many of the established strategies of marginality within society. However limitations pertaining to political reductionism and the socio-cultural construction of disabling school structures are still evident in education systems (Oliver, 1996; Barton and Oliver, 1997b; Clarke, 1999). In many instances inclusive policy has provided a public image of inclusion that is purportedly non-exclusionary. In this way policy has provided an expedient political solution to the identified need for social change. However reductionist solutions and normalising judgements are still evident in inclusive education frameworks (Thomas, 2001).

Given this context, the educational disablement associated with the schooling system has emerged as the core business of many educational researchers. Research has identified how the discursive alliances and political reductionism of inclusion draws a parallel with the historic discourse of special education as a convenience for managing failure (Ainscow 1994; Skrtic 1995; Oliver 1996; Skrtic, Sailor et al. 1996; Ainscow 1997; Barton and Oliver 1997 b; Ball 1998). The politics of inclusion have not always ensured the intended outcomes of policy for individuals. In this sense policy implementation has not focussed on the critical characteristics of institutional arrangements and pedagogy or the reduction of the social construction of special education around disablement (Skidmore 1996). Benjamin (2002, p.310) also questions this aspect in a study of two autistic students attending a British mainstream school:
Are we moving from the surveillant regimes often associated with ‘special education’ toward a differently configured surveillant regime framed by this co-opted version of ‘inclusion?’ Is ‘valuing diversity’ on its way to becoming a cliché: nothing but a euphemism for the enduring reproduction of oppressive social relations and consequent material inequalities.

Furthermore, Clarke (1999) refers to the conflict of interests that are contained within schools. This conflict, based on the ever increasing social obligations imposed on schools by governments, have been documented widely by educational research (Ball 1994; Sle 1996; Vlachou 1997) as a factor adding to the complexity of effective inclusive policy implementation. For instance Sle (1996) argues that such conflict of interests, where academic achievement is juxtaposed against individualisation, helps to explain why the rhetoric of inclusive obligation is often confounded with follow-on, non-inclusive practice. Furthermore, Benjamin (2002, p.320) points out that ‘the standards agenda demands a certain homogeneity in its construction of academically successful students.’

In recognising the complexities and conflicting responsibilities directed towards schools by State governance this study draws on teacher knowledge to identify how effective inclusion occurs within schools and classrooms.

**Concepts and terminology used throughout this thesis**

The terms integration, mainstreaming, inclusion and inclusive education may often be used interchangeably even though there are distinguishing features that represent important differences in meaning. This section defines the terminology as it used throughout this thesis.

*Integration* is a broad term that is used to refer to a student’s access and ongoing attendance in a regular or neighbourhood school. Students can also be referred to as being *mainstreamed* when they are enrolled and participating in a regular school and classroom setting. However, the opportunity to attend a regular school does not always ensure the opportunity for interaction between all students.
On the other hand, the term *inclusion* refers to the increased participation in mainstream curricula with an associated reduction of any exclusionary practice based on difference. It is a term that is extended to culture and communities. *Inclusive curriculum* embraces the notion that all students in the classroom, including those students with diverse needs, are included in the curriculum taught within the classroom. *Inclusive curriculum* denotes opportunities for both participation and success. Furthermore, the term *inclusive education* is based on the concept that a school is obliged to provide for the diverse needs of all students within their community. *Inclusive education* is not intended as a new term for special education or special educational needs but rather a term that refers to the provision of all students whatever their ability or disability.

The terms *impairment, disability and handicapping* may also be used interchangeably, and therefore incorrectly, when meaning is different. The definition of these terms is outlined in Chapter 6; the term *impairment* refers to a medical condition of an individual, a *disability* is a functional consequence of the impairment and a *handicap* is associated with the consequences within a society. For example, because of a physical impairment a person’s disability may mean they are in-ambulant and unable to walk. The handicapping condition may depend on wheelchair availability and access.

The problematic nature of language within this field of education can also be associated with terms relating to policy.

*Policy* within this thesis refers to a program of actions or a set of principles adopted by a group or government. However policy is not a neutral process. *Disability policy* refers to the outcome of the struggle and contestation of a political process that not only decides what beliefs and ideas are acceptable but who should possess the power to articulate them. *Disability politics* applies to the hierarchical notion of power. Here power is understood as the capability of an individual or group to exert their will over other individuals or (often) minority groups.
Overview of this study

*Focus of this study: How does inclusion occur?*

In a quest to clarify the critical characteristics and skills contributing to the successful implementation of inclusive policy within educational settings, this study examines the nature of knowledge and the features and processes contributing to the construction of professional knowledge. The rationale relates to identifying how teachers’ skills and knowledge generate change to classroom practice and promote effective inclusion and what are the critical components contributing to this change. Therefore, this study examines the complexities underpinning the process of inclusion and then turns attention towards critical components for future action. Consequently, this research project examines the social construction of disability within Australian schools, the professional world of teaching and the systematic structures of school life to ascertain the critical characteristics of restructuring the schooling system and pedagogy to promote inclusive education. This is an area that is not well documented within relevant literature. For example, Slee (2001c) points out that the operational understanding of inclusive education is not clear but pedagogical change is paramount for successful inclusive practice. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006, pp. 296, 297) in discussing the fact that there are schools identified as moving in the direction of greater inclusion reflect that:

> ...it remains true that we know relatively little about how unexceptional schools, struggling with the demands of seemingly unsympathetic policy environments, can develop inclusive cultures, policies and practices. Such knowledge is important if we are to move to a position where inclusive approaches are the rule rather than exception in national education systems.

Given the gaps within the literature about the knowledge of how schools and teachers develop inclusive practice this study has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the field of inclusive education.

Accordingly, this study inquires into the scope, implications and effects of inclusive policy within two schools within Victoria. This framework is based on the supposition that the creation of professional knowledge, within a process of social action, is essential
for pedagogical change to meet the challenges of changing educational contexts and inclusion.

To help identify critical characteristics contributing to effective, inclusive education the study draws on a number of understandings from the literature relating to the historical concepts of segregation, inclusive policy and educational change. These include political and State governance of policy development and implementation, the barriers to change within school settings, as well as both individual and collective knowledge creation processes.

While setting out to capture the current knowledge regarding effective implementation of inclusive policy this research project also identifies potential action to reduce the inequities that arise from the culture, social construction and organisation within our schooling system (Slee, 1996, 2001; Lingard, 2001). Therefore the identification of critical characteristics promoting the successful implementation of inclusive education also has the capacity to overcome the risk of marginalisation of disabled students within the new political configuration of integration and inclusion within the Victorian schooling system.

The framework of the inquiry
This thesis reports on the results of an investigation into the complex and multiple realities for teachers implementing the Victorian integration policy and the process of change through which policy has been enacted. It reports on the critical characteristics contributing to the implementation of effective inclusive education practice by teachers. However, within this framework, change within the schooling system and organisation is not overlooked. The thesis situates teachers’ practice within the schooling system. The emphasis on human rights has not only challenged the historical discourse and treatment of people with disabilities but it also brings into question the socio-cultural construction of the schooling system, its ideologies and programs.
This study recognises teachers’ knowledge and skills as critical components in determining system change and the implementation of inclusive policy in practice. The imperative of identifying how teachers meet this challenge is established. In turn, this imperative directs attention to the need for information about the lifeworlds of teachers. Therefore, this research is structured around the principles of critical educational science and social action (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Habermas, 1974) where it takes account of the issues of identity and the realities for teachers.

Seeking to explore the implementation of policy, particularly as it relates to social action for teachers, this study explores and analyses the challenge and critical characteristics inherent in promoting inclusion and equal opportunity for all children to participate within their school communities. Therefore it is proposed that a constructive approach in identifying critical characteristics contributing to effective policy implementation might be improved by drawing on information from teachers.

The following objectives provide a framework to examine and identify the critical characteristics and skills contributing to the successful implementation of inclusive educational policy within Victorian schools:

- To examine the historical and social construction of disability and the outcomes of inclusion for students with disabilities and impairments;
- To identify the outcomes and effects of policies intended to promote educational change;
- To consider key characteristics that have encouraged or detracted from the operational understanding and inclusive practice;
- To deliberate on the shortfall of central governance and outside agencies to develop mechanisms to respond to the multiple realities and differences of individual school sites within the changing education landscapes;
- To examine political and State governance of policy development and implementation compared with the processes and skills within workplace environments promoting implementation;
• To consider how school principals and teachers, as key stakeholders, have been able to overcome the initial resistance to policy implementation and the strategies they employed to do this;

• To explore effective management strategies that acknowledge and support the complex and multiple realities for educational change and reform and

• To consider how school-based communication, organisation and social action contributes to professional knowledge, skill and the implementation of inclusive policy.

These objectives provide a framework to explore relevant literature for this study examining, ‘What are the critical characteristics and skills of teachers that have contributed to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy?’

At the core of this framework is a systematic context that addresses education policy, policy implementation and the processes and skills within the workplace environment promoting policy implementation. Assembled around this construct is the social reality for all stakeholders, particularly the education policy workers (teachers) in classrooms. Within this context, key groups, as well as individual stakeholders, are established as producers of knowledge within the process of identifying crucial factors for future policy action.

**Rationale for this study**

*Inclusion as a controversial site*

Consistent with the concerns raised by educational researchers (Slee, 1996, 2001; Lingard, 2001; Moss, 2003) who uphold an inclusive education rationale for disabled students, this study acknowledges that the educational focus of inclusion has remained as a controversial site.

Even though integration policy and the subsequent inclusive approach for all learners is now generally accepted on the basis of a ‘rights model,’ notions of social justice and placement have not ensured any consistent, overall change in the social construction of
the schooling system. For example, after almost a decade of policy implementation, research by Lewis (1993, p. 5) indicated that integration had created a new category of marginalisation in the form of ‘the integration student.’ Further research has specified that there were also simultaneous struggles over the circumstances of inclusion and exclusion from schools, as well as division that transpired within schools (Fulcher 1989; Young 1990; Slee 1995). Examining this division, Slee (1995, p. 2) has identified inclusion as ‘an ensemble of policies and resources.’ A further concern of ‘…. the failure to interrogate the constitution of special and regular schools that places students at risk’ was also revealed by Slee (1995, p. 2). Expanding on this theme of exclusionary outcomes within the framework of inclusion in practice, problems have been linked predominantly to school culture and the roles and attitude of teachers (Slee, 1996; Foreman, 2002).

Interrelated with the discursive nature of school culture and teacher roles, the need for teacher change and professional development were identified by the Review (1984) as major components for effective integration to occur. Furthermore, the need for development of teacher skills to successfully enact inclusive policy was confirmed in consecutive Reports of the Victorian Auditor General (1992), the Cullen Brown Report (1992), and the Meyer Report (2001). However, effort to this end has not been particularly visible and the situation in 2005, at the time of writing this thesis, is much the same as the report by Cullen Brown (1992).

The findings by Cullen and Brown (1992, p. 61) are quite explicit:

> It is apparent that the Department has not developed appropriate policies and strategies to ensure that integration teachers and regular teachers who teach students with disabilities receive an adequate level of professional development. Such inaction will ultimately impact upon the quality of the education provided to participants in the Integration Program.

Whilst inaction regarding professional development is evident, the alternate strategy of providing substantial funding for teacher aides has diverted attention away from the problem. This fiscal strategy has continued to exist even though ‘funding’ often
contributes to the maintenance of a discourse of special education and exclusion within mainstream settings (Young, 1990; Slee, 1995; Tarr, 2001). Repeatedly, funding imperatives displace the need for professional development of teachers helping to promote inclusive practice (see Chapter two). Educational literature identifies this position as discursive, diminishing policy outcomes. For example, Young (1990) argues that the success of integration and inclusive schooling needs to extend beyond a boundary of placement and ‘normative’ conformity through the reliance on funding. Essentially this is not the Victorian experience.

Inclusive, quality education for all students is a more comprehensive reform issue than the relocation of students from segregated settings to their neighbourhood schools with conditional amounts of funding and unfocused calls for system reform. More than a decade after the implementation of inclusive policy, research by Slee (1995) established that the (mis) understanding of inclusion generated from policy guidelines and resources had been a preventative strategy, detracting from the theoretical underpinnings of inclusive policy reform.

The context for schools: Individualism and continuing deficit
Consistent with the global concerns regarding the educational disablement associated with inclusive school systems (see page 6) the rationale for this study is also based on the concern about the lack of systematic change to embrace inclusive schooling. Marginalisation of disabled and differentiated students within inclusive school contexts is evident within Victorian schools (Slee, 1995; Thomas, 2000; Foreman, 2001) where the focus of individual learning within an inclusive environment has not been well accepted. Thus, the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools has run the risk of developing further disabling conditions, rather than gaining the advantages espoused inclusive policy. For instance, Slee (1998) cautioned against special education reinventing itself under the guise of inclusion unless theoretical analysis is applied to the project of inclusion. He also identified the continuing trend for schools to allude to failure in terms of defective individual students in need of special provision. In addition, Ashman and Elkins (2005, p. 59) refer to the danger of the concept of inclusive education being lost:
In other words, it is not adequate for schools to be structured as if all students at a given age were similar, and with all departures from a hypothetical average student being a nuisance. Schools must differentiate among students in order to give them equal access to common educational goals.

In addition Fulcher (1993) points out that even though human rights principles drive inclusive policy, they are not evaluated easily. However this does not mean that the consequences of strongly principled policy do not need to be monitored or checked. The question remains regarding why schools often escape the ‘judgemental gaze’ that is so readily applied to student failure. There is a need to interrogate why the socio-cultural construction of schooling, in this context, is not perceived as disabling. Failure is still attributed to the individual student. Consequently the re-emergence of deficit based assessment, training and evaluation of students, as a legitimate answer to individual students’ school failure, is a testimony of discursive action in so called inclusive times (Skrtic 1991; Barton and Oliver 1997 a; Thomas 2001). This brings into question the progress of, and belief in, liberating pedagogies when normative developmental discourses are still evident. The re-emergence of reductionist solutions and normalising judgements (Foucault 1977,b) evokes blame, scrutiny and control. Reductionist solutions to disability demand expedient and focussed action if equity and opportunity are to exist for the range of individuals and differentiated student populations constituting Victoria’s education population.

Indeed the question of teachers’ contextual grounded work relating to the specific area of inclusion within school localities remains as the underlying focus of this study. For this reason the realities constructed by teachers about individual learners, learning environments and school communities supporting optimum outcomes are examined. The search has been for evidence of the characteristics promoting inclusive educational practice. Within this context the lifeworlds of teachers and the knowledge they have built or are building is an essential source of evidence for this study. The focus on teachers’ work as a deliberative site of collective agency was necessary to identify the complex challenges of inclusion. This was at variance with the characteristics of
Victoria’s policy implementation where political expedience in relation to solving problems was generated through top down policy delivery and resource directives (Marks, 1990). This concept is explored and analysed in further detail in Chapter two.

At the heart of this research project are the ‘insiders’ driving the knowledge that shapes the mechanisms for educational reform (Habermas 1984). This focus provides the potential for this investigation to identify critical characteristics promoting quality learning within an inclusive framework and to make a considerable contribution to knowledge regarding effective policy implementation.

*Inclusion: Structures, teacher skill and practices*

Educational policy and policy action, through the re-organisation of structures that challenge the historical nature and social process of marginalisation and exclusion of difference in schools, are not the automatic trigger for dramatically new practices; nor do they overcome the dilemma of commonality versus difference (Clarke, Dyson et al. 1999). One aspect that has been explored insufficiently in the literature is the skills required by teachers. Professional skill and action needs to be considered concurrently within the workplace, where the democratic organisation of schools can either promote or detract from a skilled work force and the consequent effective approach to inclusion.

Furthermore, inclusive practice has been acknowledged as a complex process that places further demands on teachers who are paramount to successful inclusion (Gow 1990a; Mousley, Rice et al. 1991; Dyson and Millard 1997). Consistently the conceptualisation and response to this dimension of policy enactment has turned attention to the enlightenment of teachers through guidelines for action (see for instance, *Integration Support Group Procedures, Department of Education, 1989; Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments (Department of Education 1998)*). However this course of action has provided regulatory guiding principles that do not challenge didactic arrangements or highlight the importance of teacher skill and action. Additionally the stop-gap response of resources [funding] to employ teachers’
assistants has often overlooked, or disregarded, the difference that individual teachers can make in responding to individual need in classrooms.

Re-conceptualising the work of teachers
Emerging from the above description is the conceptualisation of teachers’ work as integral to effective inclusion. Furthermore it attaches importance to the need for encapsulating and revaluing the knowledge and expertise of the teachers involved in institutionalised planning and practice. In a longitudinal study of educational reform in Queensland, Lingard (2001) identifies the challenge to build on the thinking and planning of an authentic pedagogy for all students. Slee (2001, p. 395) in his position of Director of Education Queensland confirms this position:

Together with a new framework for curriculum planning across its schools, Education Queensland is attempting to move beyond a curriculum pile up where each new problem and topic is added as a content and outcome statement to the teachers’ job. The preferred position is where schools decide on important knowledge that connects with the world of the students and their future. Such critical engagement with knowledge and the world has the potential to be enabling for diverse communities. In other words the leadership for inclusive schooling may not find itself located in new resource management systems but in changing approaches to teaching and learning for all.

The notion of critical engagement by teachers needs to be encouraged within a framework of curriculum planning. Within such a model, planning can be productive, where an approach endorsing changed approaches to teaching and learning also recognises the importance of the agency of teachers. However, given the historical context of integration and special education there is also the capacity to produce another exclusionary script for teachers to follow. While the ‘critical engagement with knowledge and the world has the potential to be enabling for diverse communities’ (op. cit. p. 395), if flawed, the planning of an authentic pedagogy is problematic. This raises the questions, ‘How does the development of professional knowledge, leading to an authentic pedagogy occur?’ and ‘What are the critical components contributing to this effective change within professional communities of practice?’ If these questions are side-stepped, there
is the potential for another set of prescriptive guidelines instructing schools to make the decisions regarding the important knowledge that students need. Such an edict could re-establish a power laden, expert approach determining limited and limiting curriculum.

Unlike curriculum limitations (alone), it is essential that the importance of teacher knowledge as a contributor to quality, inclusive learning environments is acknowledged in order to prevent, or at least decrease, the chances of misunderstandings and reductions in inclusive principles. It is important that the complexities and multiple realities for teachers are examined within the context of teaching and learning environments. An understanding of the realities for teachers enables the identification of what is actually going on within inclusive classrooms in order to provide future directions for ‘authentic pedagogy’ and effective policy implementation. For this reason, this study seeks to understand the processes of inclusion that operate within classrooms and schools. In other words, it investigates the possibilities for education workers to provide an active voice in identifying the knowledge and practice promoting policy action and implementation. In this way knowledge of inclusive practice is promoted through a collaborative and democratic process. This process characterizes and differentiates this study from previous research within the domain of inclusive education.

The core assumption underpinning this study is the importance of teachers’ work as a vital contributing factor to successful inclusion. Teachers as effective practitioners provide a valuable insight into the way inclusion may be developed in the future.

**The significance of this research project**

*Summarising the issues leading to this study*

The significant need for this study arose from an analysis of the gaps in current educational research regarding the knowledge of how effective inclusive policy implementation occurs. A review of educational literature (see chapter 2) indicates that children, who are disabled, are still typically constructed as a problem in regular educational settings. Inclusion in many instances has been reduced to the contestation
for additional funding and placement in mainstream settings. Schools and teachers have been given responsibility for the implementation of inclusive policy. However the imprecise vision of total system change and the rhetoric of social transformation through educational change have done little to overcome the marginalisation of difference. As a result the construction of disability is often a process of exclusion but within a different context.

The contribution to knowledge by this thesis
In response to more than two decades of contestation and limited success with policy action (Hart 1992; Lipsky and Gartner 1997; Vlachou 1997; Slee 2001c) this research project sets out to identify the critical characteristics and skills that have contributed to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy. To do so, the study addresses how some teachers have responded effectively to the diversity of learners in their classrooms. It also examines the organisation within schooling systems. Within this context teachers are seen as important drivers of policy implementation, shaping the mechanisms for educational reform.

The major contribution of this study is constructed around the identified gap (Ainscow; Booth and Dyson, 2006) in understanding ‘how’ teachers meet the individual needs of students with disabilities and difference within a comprehensive schooling system.

Inclusion and planning for the individual learning needs of different students is now a fundamental aspect of the Victorian education system and teachers’ work (Booth 1995; Clark, Dyson et al. 1995; Villa and Thousand 1995). Against the established structure of identifying failure, the imperative to understand the individual learners’ relative strengths and abilities is also at the forefront of inclusive education (Ainscow, 1994; Rouse and Florian, 1996; Ainscow, 1997). Accordingly, this study seeks to gain knowledge about different ways of thinking about individual learning and learners by examining the actual practice of inclusive educational policy by teachers. Thus, attention is redirected from additional resource driven positioning that has occurred as a result of inclusive policy (Abberley, 1987; Oliver, 1992; Oliver, 1996; Ball, 1998) to consider teachers’ work.
Teachers’ work is the poignant factor that is explored in order to identify critical characteristics that contribute to the successful policy implementation of inclusive education. If educators are able to communicate the ways in which the reality of inclusion occurs it may be one useful way of promoting effective future action incorporating the needs of individual learners.

Theoretical framework of this study

_Inclusive policy in practice: Practitioner knowledge and communicative action_

The implementation of inclusive policy is the focus of this research project. The study explores the foundation of inclusive schooling through the structuring of changed school cultures and pedagogies, the development of teachers’ knowledge and the processes contributing to quality education for all students. Teachers are recognised as the major contributors determining the effective implementation of policy within an inclusive curriculum framework. Teachers’ knowledge and skills are recognised as powerful instruments that shape, if not decisively determine, the enactment of policy. The gap in educational research regarding how this knowledge is constructed gave impetus for this study to acquire further insight into the skills and processes promoting inclusive education. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006, p. 297) in a study of twenty-five schools in England, also comment on this vital gap in knowledge of how inclusive cultures are constructed:

..

.. it remains true that we know relatively little about how unexceptional schools, struggling with the demands of seemingly unsympathetic policy environments, can develop inclusive cultures, policies and practices. Such knowledge is important if we are to move to a position where inclusive approaches are the rule rather than the exception in national education systems.

Much research provides critical analyses of the socio-cultural construction of disability within educational sites (Lewis 1989; Skrtic 1991; Slee and Cook 1993; Slee and Cook 1999). These critical analyses of system change question the acceptance of the human rights model by key stakeholders and draw attention to socio-cultural predicaments. The research also challenges the system and provides advice regarding propositions to refine the political, social and cultural construction of the schooling system (Barton and
Oliver, 1997b; Clarke, 1999; Thomas, 2000). This is in contrast to providing knowledge of the identities, realities and skills of teachers who are the social change agents or policy actors. Referring to teachers as policy actors within this study reflects the position of critical theorists such as Habermas who provides a critical scientific analysis of contemporary society where according to Fay (1987, p. 71):

..the lives of people are cast into a story in which these people are actors with a certain role to play...Indeed, they might at first find this role repellent or frightening.

The focus, within this study, of the genuine realities for teachers as policy actors also reveals the difficulties that emerge when educational reform is politically driven.

Research is also resolute about linking systemic change, pedagogy and classroom strategies to the enactment of inclusive policies (Stainback and Stainback 1996; Tomlinson 1996; Corbett 1997; Forlin 1997; Lipsky and Gartner 1997; Nixon, Martin et al. 1997; Lingard, Ladwig et al. 2001). Research on effective change processes (Blackmore, 2001; Fullan, 1993) documents the importance of school organisation and leadership within the system level. However, an understanding of the lifeworlds of teachers referred to by Habermas (1984) is also important in that it identifies insider perspectives of change. For the purpose of this study, insider perspectives provide individual and collective information about the implementation of inclusive policy that can be utilised to identify characteristics of effective policy action.

Zalta, E (2007, n.p.) provides an account of Habermas’ work relating to the term lifeworld. This understanding of the lifeworlds (of teachers) is utilised throughout this thesis:

Habermas distinguishes the “system” as those predefined situations, or modes of coordination, in which the demands of communicative action are relaxed...within legally specified limits. The prime examples of systemic coordination are markets and bureaucracies. The term “lifeworld,” by contrast, refers to domains of action in which consensual modes of action coordination predominate. In fact, the distinction between lifeworld and system is better understood as an analytic one that identifies different aspects of social interaction and cooperation (Habermas, 1991). “Lifeworld” then refers to the
background resources, contexts, and dimensions of social action that enable actors to cooperate on the basis of mutual understanding: shared cultural systems of meaning, institutional orders that stabilize patterns of action, and personality structures acquired in family, church, neighborhood, and school (Habermas, 1984, chap. 6; 1998, chap. 4).

The exploration of teachers’ lifeworlds would not only help to ascertain the socio-cultural change promoted by inclusion but also better understand how teachers’ mutual understandings and knowledge may promote effective inclusion. To examine the processes of teacher change and knowledge creation, through lifeworlds, the constructs of inter-subjectivity and communicative action are used as key conceptual tools within this study.

Habermas (1979, p. 3) claims that:

The goal of reaching understanding is the bringing about of an agreement that terminates in the intersubjective communality of mutual comprehension, shared knowledge and reciprocal trust with one another. Agreement rests on the basis of the four corresponding validity claims: comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness and rightness…Coming to an understanding is the process of bringing about an agreement on the preposed basis of validity claims that can be mutually recognised.

By highlighting teachers’ perspectives that are not simply informed by the State this study suggests a pathway for knowledge and influence to be directed from the lifeworlds of teachers to the system domain. As such the need for a broad shift in the bureaucratic mechanisms driven by political agendas is explored to consider how successful practice occurs when released from the impediment of State dominance. This means educational change is not justified as an ideological totality or in terms of elitist political agendas, but it relates to the actualities or key characteristics at the implementation level.
Overview of the research site and timeline
This study explores the lifeworlds and complex realities that have emerged for forty-five stakeholders, from two Victorian schools, involved in inclusive education. Thirty-eight participants were teachers and seven were parents.

These schools were purposefully selected according to the information received from Integration personnel within Regional Offices of the Victorian Department of Education. The schools were identified for their successful attempts to implement integration/inclusive policy.

The Department of Education was approached in 1998 for permission to conduct this study and clearance was obtained in 1999. The initial visits to the schools occurred in 1999 and data collection proceeded in 2000 and was completed in 2001. The write up of this study was finally completed in 2006.

Preview of research methodology
The thesis is informed by critical social science and interpretive theories of human research. From an interpretive perspective human actions have reasons; they are preceded by intention and may be accompanied by reflections. The major participants of social reconstruction (teachers) are juxtaposed with policy governance and communicative action. The approach is based on the principle that human actions take place within a structure of social rules within which actions and structures have a multiplicity of meanings that reflect the contestation over powerful ideas. Meanings are then generated through language or other processes whereby understanding, beliefs and actions are perpetuated (Carr and Kemmis 1986; Habermas 1992; Morgan 1983).

The key theoretical resources used to analyse and interpret the primary and secondary evidence presented in this study have been drawn from the work of Habermas (1992, 1996, 1998); Carr and Kemmis, (1986); Kemmis and McTaggart, (2005). However, theory in this sense is a temporary construct or a ‘thinking tool’ that is tested for its usefulness to inform the analysis of the evidence for this study. Key ideas used in this study include the constructs of political power, the discursive construction of liberal
pluralism and the importance of using situated meanings in understanding educational change.

Using these constructs or ideas, the research draws on the methods of critical social science enquiry where the human agency of teachers is analysed through the multiple realities within educational reform. This approach is further supported by Giddens (1976) who argued that such an approach makes it possible to see the production of society as a skilled performance, made to happen, by human beings. Sociologically, this occurs because members of human society are practical social theorists who draw upon their experiential knowledge in an unforced and routine way. For this present study of inclusion within the education system, natural sciences and positivism has been rejected in favour of critical social science. Accordingly, it adopts a social science method for understanding humanity through an identification with the ‘other,’ and a grasping of experience that is significant and on-going (Giddens 1976).

In emphasising this approach the human agency of policy actors was examined through the multiple realities of educational reform within two school sites. The research methodology transcended critical and interpretive paradigms of educational research. The research design utilised the method of case study based on naturalistic enquiry. From this point of view it was envisaged that teachers’ own voice would capture the current complexities and identify need beyond the popularised, and simplistic notions, of bureaucratic decision making and funding. In this way, the study moves beyond critical analysis of the way policies construct, or fail to construct, institutions and individuals within them. Implementation, or inclusive practice, is viewed more pertinently through the communication of teachers involved in inclusion and inclusive curriculum.

The study explores the lifeworlds and realities emerging for thirty-eight teachers from two Victorian schools engaged in the adoption of inclusive policy. Data was generated through unstructured interviews where there was an emphasis on informal contexts and open communication. Communication and interrogation of the data occurred through a second meeting/interview. At a third meeting, data was presented in the form of
emergent themes with the quotations used to represent each theme area. To ensure all meanings were represented by the quotations within each theme, a third meeting with participants was scheduled.

Summary of research methodology
This project adopts a research process seeking to identify an understanding of the lifeworlds of teachers through communicative action and consensus (Habermas 1996). It investigates the political and social construction of educational policy and policy action to provide an understanding of the meanings behind policy in practice that are related to professional skill and knowledge. Consequently the study aspires to identify possibilities for future action promoting the process of effective inclusion for diverse learners.

Focus and boundaries of this study
In this study the situated meanings of teachers’ own practices are investigated within the policy frameworks or texts of the State, institutions (schools) and their own experiential skills and knowledge. The inter-relationship between education policy texts and educational contexts were studied in terms of teacher knowledge about the pathways and processes created for student learning to occur. At the time of this research the problems relating to exclusion in regular schools were evident. Therefore, education policy action beyond political and system frameworks warranted close investigation. As a result, the focus of this study on insider information from the key policy actors (teachers) was deliberate in a quest to identify the critical characteristics and skills contributing to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy.

The delimitations of the study
The delimitations of the study and the focus and boundaries that are intrinsic to the dimension of policy in practice of inclusive education are delineated within this research. The situated meaning of teachers’ own practice was identified across the policy frameworks or texts of the State, institutions (schools) and their own individual skills and knowledge. Although the inter-relation between the policy texts was verified, the paradigm of teacher knowledge and the pathways and processes for learning to occur were the major perceptual elements in this research. This area of research seems, until now, to have been neglected or substantially over-looked. It was this contemporary evidence from
educational research, of exclusion in mainstream schools, that drew attention to the need for decisive policy action beyond political and system frameworks. Therefore, the limitation of the study to ‘insider’ information regarding key policy action was deliberatively constructed as the focus and boundary for this research. This focus was considered as the pathway for identifying future effective directions for the enactment of inclusive policy identifying, ‘What are the critical characteristics and skills that have contributed to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy?’ Accordingly, this thesis argues that the knowledge constructed by teachers, who are identified as education policy actors with the key responsibility for inclusive practice, provides the necessary focal point for future direction and recommendations regarding policy implementation.

The researcher’s positioning

As the co-ordinator of the Master of Education (Special Educational Needs) at Deakin University, this research does relate to the daily involvement I have with post-graduate students. The majority of these students are classroom teachers who are seeking further knowledge in the inclusive and special education fields.

My work, prior to Deakin, was based in Victorian primary schools and then as the co-ordinator of course development - Graduate Diploma of Special Education/Integration at Latrobe University College, Bendigo.

The research base for these courses carefully examined teachers' needs in the field of inclusive education. This work was conducted in conjunction with the Victorian Institute of Education (VIT). In addition units of work are continually up-dated where changes respond to student evaluation and need.

One of the major observations of students’ responses to the academic work within the above Master’s course is the great variance of inclusive educational knowledge between individuals and schools. Often students have no knowledge of the range of Department guidelines or requirements that have been developed by the State to address many of the issues and complexities facing teachers within the implementation of inclusive education.
Therefore, it has become apparent to me that policies do not always deliver their intended outcomes and that there is a significant shortfall regarding the uptake of inclusive policy.

Continually when I am analysing and synthesising research, reports and guidelines in conjunction with students the question of ‘how’ effective practice occurs emerges. Students often reflect on the research literature as confirming ‘what’ they should do but ask ‘how’ does inclusion work effectively. These concerns have informed my review of the literature and the focus of my research.

I am very conscious, particularly from my position as an educator within the field of inclusive education, of the dangers of subjectivity and bias that I may bring to the study. I recognise the possible criticisms relating to the ethics of my own intrinsic knowledge. For this reason I was committed to developing a methodology that would allow open and unrestrained communication leading to emergent information. In addition the scrutiny of data for accuracy and any bias I may bring to study was openly discussed with participants.

**Overview of thesis chapters**
The thesis is comprised of ten chapters.

*Chapter one* provides an overview of this research project, the research problem is identified, and the aim of the study is clarified. The background to the research project is presented briefly in terms of considering the Victorian Integration Policy and the poignant factors regarding its implementation are outlined. Key concepts and terminology utilised in the study are followed by an overview and rationale for this study. A section addressing the significance of this research project leads into an account of the theoretical framework. Following an overview of the research methodology is an explanation of the focus and boundaries and delimitations of this research project. The chapter comes to an end with a statement regarding the researcher’s positioning within the study.
Chapter two provides a detailed account of the historical background that conceptualised this research. The social construction in which policy was developed is discussed purposely, providing insight into the changing role for teachers and of the schooling system as a whole. The central concerns for the schooling system are considered through a review of literature regarding implementation of policy. The review specifically explores the issues concerning inclusive practice within classroom learning environments. This critical aspect was developed as a basis for mutual understanding of theory and practice and the analysis of key change orientations presented within the data.

Chapter three expands on key socio-cultural concepts to analyse primary evidence concerning the changing culture of teachers’ work involving inclusive education. Primary evidence reports on the multiple realities in a learning community. These aspects are analysed in terms of political and socio-cultural dimensions, teacher knowledge, skills and professional learning.

In Chapter four the design explains and justifies the research orientation and overarching principles informing a case study method for this study. The research strategy is defended including issues of identity, location and design sequence. The chapter also includes an operational explanation of open communication relating to the collection and transcription of data. The negotiated, mutual responses and unconstrained consensus techniques used to identify data sets and the generation of emergent themes are delineated. An account of the ethical issues concerning the relationship between the researcher and the researched is also addressed. Finally this chapter locates the study, describing the school sites and communities. The ethos and history of each school are considered as a basis for developing an explanation of the school culture within these sites.

Chapter five provides an explanation and justification for the selection of the key theoretical concepts used to analyse and interpret the primary and secondary evidence presented in this study. In order to justify this position, the major approaches to
educational reform and change are carefully examined and the reasons for engaging in a critical social science paradigm promoting change through social action (Habermas 1996) are explicated.

Chapter six provides an analysis of primary evidence relating to current debates over the construction and dynamics of inclusive education. It analyses key reports and policies identifying the established importance of teacher skill and knowledge in the change process of inclusive educational reform. The interrelated factors contributing to changed knowledge and skills are identified providing an acknowledgment of the personal and situational constraints to change that can be apparent within school sites. Next, the features relating to effective change are identified through the research literature where the organisational climates of the school, as well as the individual change, are considered.

In Chapter seven the primary evidence derived from the analysis of participants’ accounts about their work and school experiences is presented. The evidence analysed in this chapter arose from the emergent themes of State governance and reform grounded within the data. The construction of teachers’ work relating to the arrival of inclusive policy was explored using anecdotal evidence constructed by participants and an analysis of policy implementation.

The following two chapters provide a detailed analysis, interpretation and exploration of further emergent themes. Chapter eight analyses the primary evidence pertaining to school and classroom organisation. Inclusive reform is considered within educational settings where the responsibility to generate inclusive practice and equal opportunity was upheld. The formalisation of collaborative action is explored as a significant and shared value of institutionalised planning and practice. A whole school approach and collaborative effort by education workers is also identified, explored and analysed.

Chapter nine constructs and analyses a portrait of teachers and their professional knowledge, along with the value communicative networks. This analysis utilises the
primary evidence from the perspective of teachers’ own experiences regarding the development of professional knowledge contributing to effective policy action.

Chapter ten concludes with an overview of what has been learnt through this research project. The findings from the project provide a constructive framework for approaching policy implementation. Specifically, it is argued that this was achieved by drawing on insider information of teacher knowledge and actions identifying critical characteristics that promote the enactment of inclusion.
Chapter two: Disability and educational landscapes: the background to this study

Overview of the chapter
This chapter explores the historical background of education for disabled students. In line with the conceptual framework of this study, which examines the implementation of inclusive education through the lifeworlds of teachers, the background to inclusion is an essential component for understanding the impact of inclusive policy. Information regarding human understanding, beliefs and values relating to disability and inclusion, prior to the Review (1984), also offers a rich context for understanding the changed roles and discourses for current educational workers.

Basically, for the purpose of this research, there is a need to have a theoretical understanding of the historical philosophy and action underlying the systematic segregation of students with disabilities and differences. Although theorisation can become a distraction from the real life struggles with issues such as inclusive education, theory is firmly located within that struggle (Barton, 1998; Armstrong, et.al. 1998). Therefore, the use of stories rich in anecdotal evidence and low in theory run the risk of identifying real life struggles without the analysis (or only limited analysis) for exploring critical issues of policy implementation.

By exploring the dominant theories and policies involving segregation and the change to inclusion through social action this chapter provides a background to the understanding of teachers’ attitudes, philosophy and actions relating to inclusion. This understanding provides a temporary construct or resource for framing the analysis of data from this study and can potentially inform and advance the enactment of inclusion.
The dominant theories and practice in special education

Conceptualising the debates within this field of research

The philosophy of Australian education up until the 1980s adopted an approach of separate education for students with disabilities and impairments. This philosophy was enacted in structural arrangements where service provision was constructed around the principles of benevolence and humanitarianism. The history prior to the early 1900s indicates that services evolved from charity. However, with the emergence of State involvement in the early 1900s, the main characteristic underpinning the structure of systematic exclusion became known as ‘special education.’ The influential authority of medical categorisation of individuals, combined with the political and cultural support for dominant normative principles of education, prohibited the inclusion of disabled people into the regular or mainstream schooling system. The justification for exclusion of disabled students was accepted within the structures of school life and corresponded with the embedded principles of educational and cultural practice regarding disability.

The establishment of special education brought with it a client base expected to be grateful recipients of any services. Disabled individuals became the object of classification, regulation and treatment. The process of medical categorisation and exclusion existed for almost a century within Victorian education and the client base expanded to include troublesome students deemed as ‘social deviants.’ The eagerness to extend the client base to include ‘social deviants’ has now been identified as an opportunistic move by education workers to remove another cohort of non-compliant students from a politically controlled normative based system (Marks, 1993); a system that was identified for its hierarchical politics promoting the dominance of constitutional perceptions that overrode any individual consumer need (Fulcher 1989). Moreover, Fulcher (1989, p. 29) has contended that hierarchical politics within the State also promoted the concept of professional eminence, where experts knew best and individual needs were disregarded:

... it expects its clients to be grateful recipients because its sources lie in the hierarchical politics of the Victorian era, it excludes the theme of rights which has emerged recently in welfare states. Consistent with these hierarchical politics it promotes professionalism (the view that
experts know best) and deflects attentions from the consumer’s perceptions and traits.

Finally, against this background, the social construction of special education emerged as a subject of public scrutiny in the late 1960s and 1970s. Influenced by global social justice developments during this decade, public debate regarding the discursive practice of segregation emerged within the Australian political arena. What’s more, significant evidence from overseas research promoting the benefits of integration was combined with further public scrutiny of the established, segregated educational system within Australia. The political response to this public questioning generated investigative enquiries into social justice and equity within the Australian schooling system (Andrews and Elkins et al. 1979). Within this political arena, questioning and misgivings about special education gained widespread momentum during the 1970s (Gow 1990a). In Victoria, this promoted a review of special education and the subsequent policy of integration as an outcome of the Review (1984).

A strong pro-integration stance contained within the Review (1984) had wide implications for schools and turned attention to the need for a more equitable provision of educational opportunity for people with disabilities. The Review (1984, p. 6) defined integration as:

- a process of increasing the participation of children with impairments and disabilities in the education programs and social life of regular schools in which peers without disabilities participate and
- a process of maintaining the participation of all children in the educational programs and social life of regular schools.

Despite controversy and far-reaching potential effects on the structure of education in Victoria, for both teachers and students, the educational initiatives of the Review were implemented and first given financial support through the State Labour Party’s Commitment to develop a Social Justice Strategy (1985).
The characteristics and the principles of the Social Justice Strategy were spelt out in many publications. For example, the publication ‘People and Opportunities,’ (1987) Part 3, The Importance of Social Justice, examined the four underlying principles of the Social Justice Strategy (p. 2). They included:

- **Equity** or fairness in the distribution of resources to enable disadvantaged people to gain control over their lives and thus become self-determining;

- **Access** or a commitment to making it easier for people to gain their basic entitlements to housing, health, education, public transport, energy and general community services such as child care;

- **Participation** so that individuals and groups are more directly involved in decisions affecting their daily lives and the lives of their families, their communities, or people in similar circumstances; and

- **Rights** to ensure equal basic rights for all people regardless of social or economic circumstances.

These principles were reflected throughout the Review (1984). In turn they specified the need for increased responsibility and accountability for the educational provision for all children, including those with disabilities. For instance, the introduction to Chapter one (p. 9) provided an outline of the perceived philosophy and plan of action:

*The Review has proposed a policy of integration which has at its basis the guiding principle that every child has a right to be educated in a regular school. The enactment of this policy leading to the realization of the right as stated undoubtedly presents a challenge of some magnitude to teachers, parents, and the community.*

Educational research has documented the challenge by the Review (1984) to the historic, cultural and social construction of disability and in particular how this pertained to schools. However, it is necessary to examine these long-standing dimensions, structures and analogous discourses within schools to develop an understanding of the lifeworlds of teachers and the changes advocated by the Review (1984).
The major focus of the Review (1984) altered the course of customary exclusion, and acclaimed the right of students with disabilities to an education within their neighbourhood mainstream schools. It was recognised both nationally and internationally as providing a significant policy direction within the area of education for children with disabilities and impairments (Jenkinson 1987 b; Fulcher 1989). For instance, Fulcher (1989, p. 2) argued that it ‘was widely regarded in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia as democratic and controversial, if not radical.’

Additionally the access of deficit based students into regular classrooms was congruent with social justice and equity in schooling for all students (Connell 1993). These principles led to the concept of inclusion that welcomed, tolerated and planned for diversely different students. Articulated through policy and the social imperatives of policy implementation the change opposed the existing construction, if not the very foundation of schooling system, with its entrenched goals of normative success (Ainscow 1995).

The Review (1984) was informed by a discourse of ‘rights’ rather than the medical and/or deficit models that prevailed in special education prior to 1984. Inclusion stood out against the expert-driven, exclusionary model, given unconditional status by medical research and functionalist categorisation that had dominated the ethos concerning disability and special education.

Political construction of disability and State governance
Further examination of the social construction of disability also provides an insight into how disability was de-politicised and guilefully removed from the public agenda prior to 1984. The Victorian experience also reflects the findings of British educational research where clients were the uninformed recipients of services offered according to specific doctrines of the time. Rather than considering the voices of disabled individuals, special education more often served the purpose of power and social control by other key stakeholders (Tomlinson 1982; Barton 1987; Tomlinson 1987; Swan 1988). Even though support for the system of special education was grounded in the rhetoric of so-called benevolence and humanitarianism for disabled people, it is
questionable whether these principles did serve the interests of the disabled in any way. Research signifying coercive action representing power, control and vested interests within society promoting oppression and social reproduction of exclusionary practice represents a more realistic perspective of what occurred (Oliver, 1992). Unfortunately exclusion of this nature has also been identified within inclusive frameworks where the contemporary view of neo-liberal governance highlights the ideas of ‘provider-capture’ serving the State, rather than ‘consumer-capture,’ addressing the needs and social justice for individuals (Barton 1993,b; Barton 1997).

Furthermore, educational and sociological research describing neo-liberal governance has still found inclusive practice to be contradictory to the general beliefs of equitable social policy. These contradictions have been identified as increasingly evident for students at ‘risk’ and those with a ‘disability’ (Marginson 1997; Whitty, Power et al. 1998). Although the social organisation of educational reform may well be saturated with an ideological consistency (such as integration), the ‘trickle down’ to actual sites (schools) has not always been evident. Patterns of injustice have emerged, and indeed may have been promoted by frameworks of local neo-liberal governance (Robertson and Dale 2002).

Local, regional governance of education has been portrayed as having the capacity to plan and respond to district, and indeed individual issues. Given this perspective, the question then turns to the strategic role of the State in relocating aspects of its governance, such as integration and inclusion, to the local level. The strategy of devolution of power to local sites was implemented with the ostensible function of deploying workers with practical knowledge and the best local insight into what was required for effective change. However, contradictions have emerged within the actual practice of devolved power, with services remaining provider based serving the needs of the State and local sites have become instruments of the State.

Lingard and Rizvi (1992, p. 121) pointed out that given this scenario:
Communities become an instrument of the central state, rather than empowered in a way celebrated in the social democratic construction of devolution.

Moreover, the absence of any systematic checking system at the local level regarding educational issues further contributes to this paradox of devolved State-provider services. The benefit of changed governance was politically appealing (Robertson and Dale, 2002). It detracted from the contestation regarding State reform where vested interests maintained an oppositional force. However, the coherence of policy implementation has also been prejudiced by subjectivities of policy actors at local sites often leading to very little change to the social benefits for the consumer population. Nor has there been any opportunity for community networks to inform the public sphere of State governance of the local features required for effective change.

In highlighting how these contradictions were applied to the governance of integration policy, Fulcher (1989, p. 226) drew attention to the problematic chasm between policy and policy enactment:

*It is becoming increasingly evident that there is a need for research to highlight the positive links between government written policy and the existence of enacted policy if integration is to become a successful practice within our school system.*

Additionally the devolved corporate managerialism of integration funding generated from the central bureaucracy of the State has not ensured or monitored, in any way, the enactment of policy at the local level. In fact, quite the opposite: accountability on how funding is utilised for student educational need remains solely within the school’s authority. Therefore funding that is used in a contrary way to policy intentions can (and has) remained unsupervised.

Also emerging from the appraisal of policy governance is the question of policy implications being misunderstood at local sites, or whether they simply clashed with the historical, fundamental and strongly held beliefs and values of difference and marginalisation. The critical issue within this scenario is that disability can be
guilefully side-stepped within the political arena and injustice and segregation can once again prevail within different surroundings (Shakespeare 1996). As a result, history can then be reproduced where exclusion is embedded within the intended social change. Slee (2001) in addressing this concern refers to the discursive net of inclusion where policy governance has been ineffective in changing discourse and actions regarding the entrenched and well-established practice of segregation for students with disabilities.

**Segregation: Development and dominance of exclusionary practice**

*Historical tenets of marginalisation and systematic exclusion*

A sequential view of the historic pathway associated with disability and education identifies the deep-rooted nature of marginalisation and systematic exclusion of individuals deemed as different. The first Victorian Education Act (1872) proclaimed education as free, compulsory and secular for all, however no attention was given to children who did not ‘fit the system.’ Children with disabilities were simply disregarded in the quest for compulsory attendance that was the political imperative of this Act. However, the Education Act (1890) did acknowledge ‘deviants,’ granting children with temporary or permanent infirmity exemption from attending schools.

The justification for exclusion remained unaddressed until 1912 when some public concern was raised regarding educational provision for children with disabilities. However, this sociological move was overshadowed by the compulsion to segregate people with disabilities due to the power and influence of the eugenics movement that arose in the United States of America (1880-1930). It was equally influential in Australia, affecting policies until the 1980s. As the eugenics philosophy took hold, it was regarded as irresponsible to weaken society by enabling the disabled to reproduce. Society ‘needed’ to be protected by containing the disabled. This form of ‘Social Darwinism’ contributed to the compelling case for the segregation of people with disabilities. It was actualised throughout Australia with the building of large, secure institutions designed particularly to segregate individuals with an intellectual disability. Based on negative categorisation and segregation from mainstream society these
institutions remained as the predominant source of ‘care and education’ for disabled people until the 1980s.

The process for the ‘right of passage’ to these institutions required prospective clients to be declared legally insane by at least one medical practitioner. Lack of criteria meant subjectivities were unchallenged (Bessant and Maunders 1987; Lewis 1987; Bessant 1988). Doctors, with unquestioned scientific status and presumed neutrality, usually administered these institutions. Therefore, efforts to categorise and systemise individuals with a ‘deficiency’ reflected functionalist medical knowledge. As a result tests devised and based on anatomical characteristics were widely accepted and used to legitimise discriminatory practices within education. The Education Department appeared to take no serious interest in evaluating this practice, and any initiatives shown by individual medical practitioners to educate mentally, and in many cases physically, abnormal children were to no avail (Lewis, 1987).

Any evidence of early attempts to provide education for children with disabilities were in areas where the disability was readily identifiable (Elkins 1994). Consequently teachers were required to report children who were deaf, dumb and blind to the government authorities so that ‘suitable’ segregated education could be established. Furthermore, The Education Act (1910) compelled parents to refer their children within these categories to a special school or institution. Whether the rationale was educationally driven or just a convenient way of removing difference within learning communities, the responsibility for educational difference was removed rigorously from the normal school system.

Additionally, there was a reliance on voluntary agencies, in conjunction with the government, to provide the fiscal inputs for the establishment of services. Creating a charitable discourse, that still exists today, was a far cry from the political agenda of free, compulsory and secular education for all (children). Benevolence, marginalisation and charitable discourses became the accepted socio-cultural norms for children with a disability.
During the 1930s, it became increasingly apparent that there were many students who had failed throughout their education (Burt 1935; Schonell 1942), in a system where there was no provision or tolerance for individual differences and capabilities. As an outcome of these findings, deficiencies in the system were acknowledged. However, the State response quickly turned the attention towards student deficit rather than the disabling construction of the schooling system. Consequently, more special schools catering for children deemed as misfits in the system were established. Special education became more firmly entrenched as the accepted system response for ‘deviants’ where they were separated from the regular school system. Segregation in this sense prospered, unquestioned for at least another thirty years.

Any challenge to the status quo for children with disabilities and impairments was not evident until the late 1960s and 1970s. This was in response to public awareness that people with disabilities could indeed learn. It was only then that education was considered an essential component of these children’s development (Hegarty, Pocklington et al. 1982; Booth 1983). However, the political response was reductionist, once again, addressing the issue from within the established structures of deficit and segregation. The only visible change was the movement of the administration of segregated educational settings from the Mental Health Department to the Education Department in 1967. The limitations of ‘education’ for children in a single cell of segregated institutional life remained unchanged. Once again, sociological gains and understandings were ineffective instruments for political and socio-cultural change.

Segregation: The authority of medical categorisation
Furthermore, within the segregated regime of education for the disabled students, the scientific study of disabling factors in children was widely cultivated with venerable acceptance. In turn, this paved the way for the development of psychological services in special education. Welcomed by education workers these services supported the interests of delimiting disruption and containing program initiatives within the normative standards of classrooms. Psychological services promoting and validating measures of children’s intellectual abilities (Intelligence Quotient or IQ) provided
substantial authentication for the rigid system of assessment, categorisation and segregation that was to follow.

Lewis (1987, p. 160) argued that:

*The sustained movement towards compulsory schooling ... and the consequent development of a concept of pupil retardation provided for the ingredients on which special education and mental testing flourished.*

The organised response by schools to difference and failure through identifying and ‘removing’ children gained unequivocal support in the political, cultural and social climate that embraced the notion of standardised academic outcomes. The notions of school failure were attributed directly to student deficit where an elitist approach of normative education was upheld in Victorian government education. Cronbach (1967, p. 24) emphasised that tests were used to label and remove students from normative settings with little or no attention being given to these individuals’ educational opportunity:

*When ability tests became available they were used by the schools ... to put it bluntly ... to decide which pupils should be allowed to drop by the wayside or to vegetate in an undemanding slow classroom.*

Supporting this argument (Lewis 1987) pointed out that the use of tests to identify ‘problem’ children gained momentum, legitimising the exclusion of these children into a separate school system. The political rationale for this exclusion was to cater for individual differences, but there is little evidence that programs were developed to meet this end. Additionally, the classification and placement of potential troublemakers was used to contain social deviance rather than to consider any positive outcomes for individual students. The logic and politics of medical discourses once again emerged to legitimise professional practice of delimiting disruptions in favour of conformity within classrooms. The major humanitarian claim to provide opportunity for identified deviants has remained questionable.
Teachers’ agendas of removing children who did not meet culturally specific standards were powerful determinants in the historic construction of ‘difference’ within Australian/Victorian society and the institutions established within it. Disability and education were both culturally and contextually bound with the consequent action of social exclusion for any individuals outside the perceived norms of society and school achievement (Peters 1995). Within this normative approach, students who were unable to perform within the boundaries of a rigid and orderly quantitative level of assessment (IQ) were simply removed. This occurred despite the variability of culture and experiential dimensions that may have confounded results. Historical evidence of children having ‘second chances’ or a system of appeal is minimal. Nor is there evidence of constraints within the process for professional shortfalls of ‘expert’ knowledge or teacher skill. Professional judgement of this nature was rarely contested or placed under any scrutiny until the 1970s. If parents sought to question the process or decisions made within the formalised system, their search for answers met the barriers of professional solidarity.

The solidarity of the major beneficiaries of such action, the education workers, cannot be ignored within such well-sustained mechanisms of social exclusion. Repeatedly educational research has contended that the political response to disability was structured around the demands from the schooling system, and indeed the teachers who supported a norm-based approach to education (Tomlinson 1982; Marks 1993; Fuchs and Fuchs 1994; Tomlinson 1996; Loxley and Thomas 2001). Segregation, the fundamental approach to educational need for individuals with disabilities, or indeed any educational opportunity for individuals outside the normative gaze of society was based on an involuntary model of technical and categorical exclusion. Enhanced by the medical model’s explanations of difficulties in students, the expansion of a ‘social model’ of disability was certified by the political agendas of the State as well as the educational agendas of stakeholders at local sites.

*Social construction of disability: the move towards a ‘social model.’*

The exclusionary practice in Victorian education that was claimed to be on humanitarian grounds may have appeared ‘right’ at the time. However, without
reference to issues of veracity, ethics and/or truth, the principles of exclusion cannot be
evaluated so easily. Furthermore, Newman and Roberts (1996) pointed out that other
well-intentioned pioneering initiatives, established for the ‘welfare’ of children, are
now recognised as having disastrous effects. Examples include ‘the stolen generation’
and the ‘shipping’ of orphaned British children to Australia. Similarly, the negative
effects of segregated educational structures are now well recognised and documented.
Educational research has contributed extensively to public debate around segregation
and inclusion where the challenge to the social practice of exclusion was clear (Dunn
1968; Gartner and Lipsky 1987; Biklen, Ferguson et al. 1989; Oliver 1990; Teichman
1998). However, evidence of education workers recognising or supporting the initial
opposition to segregation was not particularly noticeable within the initial phase of
research challenging social justice and equity (Jones, Gottlieb et al. 1978; Miles and
Simpson 1989). Construction of a segregated system of special education might have
continued with unyielding authority were it not for the world-wide push for civil rights
and subsequent changes to the social construction of disability, which began in the
1970s and continued through to the 1980s. These developments instigated a major
challenge to the orthodoxy of exclusion within the education system.

An influential article by Dunn (1968) provided a positive direction for the integration
movement, headed by parents, which emerged in Victoria during the 1970s and 1980s.
Questioning the justification of special education for mildly intellectual disabled
children Dunn maintained segregated settings could only be justified in terms of the
benefits for teachers and students in regular settings. The main argument and
supporting evidence centred on four main areas: academic achievement, the labelling
effect of segregated settings, racial imbalance in special education, and the
questionable benefits of remedial curriculum. Even though evidence was inconclusive,
criticism based on the actual outcomes (or lack of them) for disabled students in
segregated settings emerged and challenged the socio-cultural discourse of exclusion.
Sociological contexts of human rights in education

*Human rights and social justice*

The emerging sociological contexts of human rights, social justice and the call for the social reconstruction of disabling practices in education also contested the legitimacy of segregation in the United States of America and Great Britain. In Great Britain, research challenged the segregated world of special education by questioning the interests of those powerful social groups in society that developed and supported special education (Tomlinson 1982). Tomlinson challenged the noble morality and ideology of benevolent humanitarianism, arguing that it required the social categorisation of weaker social groups. In turn this process of categorising and classifying individuals led to the negative connotations and treatment of disabled groups and individuals. Furthermore, Tomlinson was critical of the role played by professionals in the expansion of special education. She challenged the rights of psychologists, doctors and teachers to define and affect the lives of disabled children and their placement in society. Presenting evidence of the coercive construction of special education she exposed some of the key influences, power struggles and vested interests that pervaded the special education system, increasing the number of children identified and placed in segregated settings.

Tomlinson’s research can be connected by similarities to the Victorian landscape. The increasing numbers and categories of children classified as having disabilities and consequently in need of special education were confirmed by Lewis (1989). Analysing the figures for Victoria over the twentieth century he identified that in 1912-13 only the ‘feeble–minded’ were considered in need of special or segregated education but by 1915-16 ‘delicate students’ were included. In 1917, provision was made for deaf and ‘dumb’ students. Hospital and school provisions for the insane were added in 1929. During the 1930s, orphans and aboriginal children were also deemed to be in need of special education. Enrolments escalated in the post war years of 1950s-1960s where social deviance was added to the list.
From a sociological perspective it was argued that existing special education services perpetuated their own need. What's more, research by British sociologists provided impetus to this argument providing explanations regarding special education justifying the categorisation of weaker social groups by the more powerful and removing troublesome children from the regular school system (Tomlinson 1982; Booth 1983; Tomlinson 1985; Swan 1988). Consequently, the challenge of segregation based on social and political practices, informed democratic action, particularly from parents, that called for ‘new times’ in special education.

Within this sociological climate several organisations in Victoria, such as the Australian Council for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (ACROD), became active partners in the move for more equitable education for the disabled. The political response resulted in a series of Government Acts including the Victorian Handicapped Children’s Act (Amendment 1973); Commonwealth Handicapped Persons Assistance Act, (1976); Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission Act (1977); and the Commonwealth Disability and Discrimination Act (1993).

Despite the legislative thrust addressing discrimination and educational opportunity, individual rights were still overshadowed by technical issues of exclusion that predominated in education up until the 1980s. However during the 1970s, due to further public pressure, education of disabled students was finally examined from an organisational perspective. As mentioned previously, the culmination of this research (the Review, 1984) advocated the reconstruction of school-based structures allowing the integration of disabled students into mainstream settings.

The following description outlines this emphasis:

[The Review]... believes that education programs for children with impairments, disabilities or problems in schooling are, within a framework of a proper policy of integration, an extension of educational programs for all children. The inclusion and development of these programs will enhance the school environment for the total school community and will provide a more enlightened and realistic preparation for after-school life for all children. This is what is meant
by integration of these children. In improving access to regular schooling for children with impairments and disabilities the quality of education for all should be enhanced (The Review, 1984, p. 99).

The focus was consistent with the social and cultural context of Victoria’s society in the 1980s; it legitimised a strong discourse of rights for individuals. On the other hand implementation was not clear-cut, with the standpoint on integration and inclusion being diminished at the level of policy implementation. Emphasising additional need and compensatory funding, the discourse of special education and compensatory education for marginalised groups has remained evident within Victorian education despite the strong policy emphasis on rights for individuals (Fulcher 1989; Connell 1993; Booth 1996; Rizvi and Lingard 1996; Slee 1996; Slee 2001a; Slee 2001c).

Inclusive reform has not been easily achieved and windows of success are usually attributed to individual teachers rather than any general State directive. Even though the broader implications of the construction of pedagogical practice have been recognised, the question of pedagogical practice remains unresolved. Practitioner skill, promoting sociological change that in turn contributes to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy, provides the underlying rationale for this study and the point of departure to examine ‘insider’ information from educational workers.

The challenge to disablement within communities
The challenge to the education practice of segregation during the 1970s and early 1980s also coincided with a broader and more generic societal dissatisfaction regarding equity and the discrimination against people with a disability. Consequently, society witnessed changed values and attitudes regarding people with disabilities, as well as a shift in the philosophy and provision of services for individuals. These changed values and attitudes were based upon a human rights model as well as the theories of cultural and social reproduction that are representative of the British sociological perspectives (Tomlinson 1982; Booth 1983; Tomlinson and Barton 1984). Providing a pathway that contested the inequitable models within Australian society, inclusive ideologies offered a theoretical basis upon which to scrutinise the existing provision of services.
A central component of inclusive ideology was the concept of placing people with a disability into a ‘normative’ society. This process, referred to as normalisation, (Wolfensberger 1972) maintained that the principle of equal rights and access should be available to all people. Believing that a person’s quality of life increased with the access to normal socio-cultural activities and settings, Wolfensberger also advocated placement within normative society if inclusion was to occur. Within this framework of normalisation, personal competence (embracing cultural norms) was viewed as a significant educational ‘outcome’ of the involvement in ‘mainstream’ society.

Wolfensberger (1972) outlined three levels at which normalisation should occur: individual levels of competence; specific agencies within the structures of society such as schools; and entire communities or government systems. These levels equate with the definitions within this thesis of individual, institutional and State or public domains.

Informed by the principle of normalisation, the development of a range of State policies and service initiatives pertaining to human rights, social justice and democracy occurred in Victoria (see Chapter six). In education the concept of integration with its subsequent focus on ‘inclusion’ was driven by the State to the institutional social reform of Victorian schools.

It is now a matter of history that the Victorian Government, through the Review (1984) adopted a strong pro-integration stance with principles that had wide implications in terms of the approaches of the service provision for people with disabilities within the education system. The inclusion of students with disabilities has remained central to policy and policy action but the presence of continual conflict and debate has been identified extensively by educational research both nationally and internationally (Abberley 1987; Jenkinson 1987; Fulcher 1989; Fulcher 1993; Hallahan and Kauffman 1995; Jenkinson 1996; Kortman 2001). Public domain (State) action is still in crisis with the underlying supposition that ‘placement’ with some minimal guidelines and fiscal inputs would remove the discourse of segregation and the
practices of exclusion enshrined within it. In fact, placement has not removed the division between ‘normal’ and ‘not so normal’ learners, and moreover, new ways are being found to reinstate the tenure of social deviance (Booth 1995; Slee 1995; Booth 1996; Slee 1996; Slee 2001c). The special education and integration arena has continued to be fraught with conflict and a struggle between education administrators, teachers and parents. In addition the intentions expressed though new lexicons of additional need, special need and included students uphold the undertone of difference and the social construction of being outside the norm. The challenge remains for schools and education workers to meet the needs of diverse learners by eliminating the discursive construction of segregation that has emerged contrary to the policy.

In many instances, the reform intended to maximise the potential participation of people with disabilities within mainstream culture has been reworked to maintain marginalisation, exclusion and withdrawal undermining the basic principle of participation in mainstream schools. Additionally, the uneven progress of inclusive practice between regions, schools and classrooms is also a matter of concern where further enquiry addressing the reason for the maintenance of historically and culturally bound exclusion could provide new pathways for educational reform.

Slee (2001a), in examining the predicament of inclusive education within Australia identified the enduring discourse of exclusion in mainstream settings where students are deliberately marginalised. He called for a radical reconstruction of the schooling system:

_Inclusive schooling is concerned with the educational experiences and outcomes for all children. Since present forms of schooling routinely deny human rights and exclude students on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, and class, inclusive education is a project of educational reconceptualization and radical reconstruction_ (Slee, 2001, p. 174).

Coinciding with this finding was the need to identify the actual construction of radical change. What are the particular factors that will contribute to such radical change? How does it occur rather than what should occur? Ultimately the success of this agenda related to teacher insight in re-thinking their own practice that led to the construction of
new classroom roles and expectations regarding student outcomes (Darling-Hammond 1995). However, policy action of this nature cannot be instigated in a political ‘top down’ process where the voices of key stakeholders, particularly classroom teachers, are excluded. Within the Victorian context of educational reform, teachers were expected to implement policies that changed the historic cultural and social construction of disability, with little regard being given to the skills and knowledge and associated processes required to achieve such far reaching reform (Fullan 1993; Hargreaves 1995).

The lack of critical reflection regarding practice was also a major barrier to promoting a cohesive or consistent approach to policy enactment. Teachers needed to be engaged in the development of new knowledge, beliefs and pedagogical direction within reform processes. State governance within Victoria has continued to overlook this need.

Additionally, Thomas, Walker and Webb (1998) asserted that the new notion central to inclusion is that teachers must believe and support the ideal that exceptional (or different) students belong to regular settings and that they will learn in these settings:

>A central aspect of an inclusion project must therefore lie in the deconstruction of the idea that only special people are equipped and qualified to teach special children. It must convince mainstream staff of their competence. This presents quite a task, of course, since for the last one hundred years special educators have been saying the opposite - that there is a set of teaching procedures which is especially appropriate for a segment of the child population (Thomas et al., 1998, p. 14).

These broad explanations have been taken up throughout the policy action process including reports and recommendations (see Chapter six) giving emphasis to the need to provide professional development to assist with the deconstruction of over one hundred years of segregation. However, the State response to teachers’ needs and professional skills to deconstruct segregation has been slow, where the critical components contributing to effective change within professional communities of practice remain relatively untapped.
Enablement and the school system: A new paradigm for education

Dismantling deficit and segregation

The 1984 Review’s deconstruction of the last one hundred years of special education was located within three main concepts: non-categorisation; a systems approach identifying the theoretical framework and processes for schools to embrace diversity; and guidelines for curriculum planning and service delivery. This top-down political process intended to dismantle the ‘deficit’ approach focussed on the category of impairment of the child. The process focussing on the school system, rather than the child’s named impairment, engendered new visions of practice and the unlearning of beliefs about students and teaching that had dominated the lives of the educational workforce. The question of how the school system could adequately meet the needs of the learner, rather than the aim of changing the learner to fit the school, was now at the forefront of educational planning. These changes not only directed attention to school organisation but also challenged classroom practice. ‘Deviant’ students were no longer to be withdrawn or segregated from their peers. The subsequent changed philosophy demanded meaningful and undeviating change in teachers’ practices if the policy structure was not to be at odds with pedagogical visions. As such, policy action incorporating change was essential across all facets of school life.

What’s more, the definition of teachers’ work was extended beyond what occurs within a classroom. In addition to instructional responsibilities, the teacher of a student with a disability was required to be aware of the diverse theoretical, practical, technological and political change that was applied to the inclusion process. Even though it was difficult for schools to refute the philosophical intent underlying these changed dimensions, the failure of the school system to deal adequately with this change has been evident (Slee, 1993, 2001a). Within this framework of reform the efficacy of principles for inclusion into ‘mainstream’ schools has been problematic; exclusion and segregation have re-emerged within teachers’ work (beliefs) and educational
assessment that is counter productive to social inclusion still occurs (Slee 1996; Yeatman 1996).

Consistent with these findings educational research has also determined that physical placement of individuals into ‘mainstream’ schools does not lead to inclusion and social acceptance into society (Booth 1995; Slee 1998; Kortman 2001a). Inclusion has implications for the schooling system as a whole that extends far beyond changed ideologies and principles. Its effects are pervasive throughout the system whereby education needs to become differentiated and geared to meeting a wider range of pupil needs. This has continued to challenge the very nature of schools as disabling structures themselves, where the full participation of (other) students is still prevented (Ainscow 1991; Barber 1996).

Exploring the notion of the schooling system meeting the needs of individual learners Thurman and Widerstrom (1985, p. 167) established that ‘for ecological congruence to be maximised, where learning environments met individual student needs that avoided inbuilt failure, mutual tolerance of individuals for systems and that of systems for individuals was required.’ However their research determined that human service interventions still attempted to change individuals to make them more acceptable to social systems, creating more congruent ecologies. Interventions were rarely designed to make systems more tolerant of individual differences, be that in level of competence or degree of perceived deviance. This feature is still embedded in Victorian educational practice today where special needs children are still at risk of marginalisation within schooling structures (Slee 2001b; Groundwater-Smith; Ewing R. et al. 2003).

The Review (1984) provided a broad overview of the recommended systems approach throughout its second chapter. The change envisaged by the policy included the revision of all curriculum development and school evaluation procedures in Victoria. This focus presented an agenda of fundamental change in the approaches to teaching and therefore service provision within the education system:
In practice, this involves the way schools organised teacher-student relationships, principal-teacher relationships, parent-teacher relationships, the curriculum, the delivery of school based and external support staff and services, the relationships between School Councils, schools, the Regions and central administration; the funding of State education and its accounting procedures; relationships between the Education Departments; between the government and non-government sectors and Commonwealth-State relations in all its various aspects which affect the provision of this area of additional educational services (The Review, 1984, p. 9).

However, the slippage has become increasingly evident in educational planning. The competing discourses of funding, rather than teacher change, and the added component of pre-packaged curriculum initiatives and assessment procedures, has detracted from the inclusive education practice. The wheel has turned to embrace normative principles of curriculum and assessment with the focus on student centred outcomes (once more) rather than the disabling structures of school systems. Raising questions about the underlying advantages of this action is not only the issue of political marketisation but also the matter of powerful influences relating to oppositional protagonists of inclusion. Despite the recognised need for professional development addressing new practices required to enhance policy implementation, there has been no evidence of any substantial strategic plan to meet this need, but rather, more powerful oppositional forces for normative outcomes.

The Resource Question
Opponents of integration, in particular teachers and teacher unions, responded promptly to the policy action adopting the argument that integration was a resource issue. This emphasis overshadowed the rights discourse so clearly articulated in the Review (1984). When enrolment and admission to school became contingent on resources and economic rationalisation, policy enactment was reduced to the narrow focus of resources rather than human rights and inclusive action. The challenge to school structures that embraced concern regarding the system rather than the deficits of children was somewhat reversed when the importance of resources was stressed as a major component of the implementation process.
The discursive structure of conditional funding was signalled in the early stages of implementation. For instance, Coulahan (1988) drew attention to the fact that the allocation of resources should be seen as additional support to the implementation process and not simply a way to support teachers who lack confidence in their ability to integrate students into their classrooms. She argued that integration aides do not equate to integration or inclusion because they provided the mechanism for continuing withdrawal in many mainstream settings. Coulahan also anticipated that this would encourage learned helplessness by disabled students that would also be modelled by peers. The reproduction of disabling structures and actions in education are still evident and cannot be ignored. There is an enduring deficit model related to funding, placement and even exclusion that is ubiquitous in diverse student populations (Skrtic 1995; Ainscow, Hargreaves et al. 1995 a; Oliver 1996). Increasingly this is also part of the Victorian education landscape (Slee, 1993, 2001b).

The scenario of large scale funding has dominated political action regarding inclusive education within Victoria (see Chapter six). Victorian schools, in many instances have become reliant on funding and other resources (chiefly teacher aides), rather than taking a constructive approach in identifying future directions and recommendations for inclusive practice. Funding has become a political diversion for successive governments while the development of teacher skills and knowledge has been marginalised. This action has meant that educational reform, while espousing the optimistic proclamation of social justice, has continued to reproduce educational deficit models through the funding regime. The issue of funding can no longer be ignored or hidden beneath the guise of inclusion that calls for new types of organisation and teaching.

Policy and resources do not control the activities within schools or create new communities of learning (Darling-Hammond 1995). Even State schools that are allegedly regulated by the same government policies respond differently to policy initiatives (Fulcher 1989). Inclusion is no exception. In many instances the mechanics
required for funding applications have become the major focus of policy action. In this sense inclusion remains as a discursive, conditional offering (based on resources) and does not challenge or verbalise the disabling foundations of school organisation, pedagogy or curriculum (Slee 1996).

*Discursive construction of social change*
Within Victoria there are many dilemmas and issues remaining as problematic. Political directions and guidelines, in the form of policy, have not guaranteed the effective enactment of power-based imperatives, nor the corresponding social change required for inclusion to be a reality (Marks 1993; Slee 1996; Barton and Oliver 1997 a; Barton and Oliver 1997 b). The discord between the rhetoric and the professional judgement and reality for educational workers means that Victorian education faces many dilemmas that are also reflected and reported globally (Ball 1995; Benjamin, 2002; Ainscow, 2004). Identifying policies as textual interventions, Ball suggested that educational policies often do not work out as planned. This does not mean that policy action does not have effects, but to the contrary, those effects may be at variance to the original policy intention.

There is no doubt that the course of action taken by the Review (1984) was a catalyst for social change for students with disabilities. The reconstruction of the schooling system was the focus for change and this approach has remained as a significant component of the current educational imperatives within Victorian State (and private) school education.

The limitations of a political theory framework, as an instrument for social change is acknowledged by educational research within the context of the system response by schools to political agendas (Fulcher 1989; Fulcher 1993; Fullan 1993; Hargreaves 1994; Hargreaves 1995). However, the political reconstruction of the Victorian schooling system to include students has remained discursive and politically disabling where a process informed by collaboration, consultation and democratisation was forgotten or overlooked (Marks 1993). Paradoxically, the political imperatives and resource issues emerging under this canopy have continued to direct the attention to student deficit. Once again, student failure has been highlighted as the fundamental problem.
Despite the importance of the work and success of individual teachers and schools, the identification of professional skills and knowledge are, in the main, overlooked. Teachers’ existing expertise and their professional development needs have not been a key focus of policy action directed at sustaining the changed political, cultural and social construction required for inclusive education within Victoria (Marks 1993; Fulcher 1993; Slee 1996; Lingard, 2001). For instance, the disabling or enabling construction of the schooling system may be given a cursory glance within training and professional development programs for mainstream teachers. Professional development has been overshadowed by competing discourses embracing the imperatives of curriculum benchmarks where the effects are seemingly contradictory to the policy intentions for inclusive education. Consequently, the importance of components needed to contribute to a sustainable system of change and the teacher knowledge required for effective inclusive education has been disregarded. The need for further teacher education and training, exploring new knowledge and developing well informed critical practitioners, to analyse the disabling structures of schooling systems is emphasised by Slee (2001b, p. 174):

*Teacher education needs to explore new forms of knowledge about identity and difference and suggests new questions that invite students to consider the pathologies of schools that enable or disable students.*

This observation also relates to the findings regarding Victorian inclusive education (Meyer Report, 2001) that once again cites the need for school organisation and classroom practice to embrace teachers’ changed skills and knowledge. Consequently, the following literature review considers how the development of professional knowledge is best developed and deployed.

**Summary**

This chapter provides an overview of the historical discourse of segregation that conceptualises the change process for teachers involved in inclusive education. The difficulties for teachers and barriers that have emerged within the human rights movement of integration and inclusion are also considered. An overview of the Review 1984 that dismantled the domination of a segregated education for students with
disabilities is analysed. This analysis provides an outline of the State dominated policy and the expected system response by schools. Teachers’ work is taken into account within the examination of the proposed system response to the policy. In addition it is noted that the identified need for ‘new’ skills and knowledge for teachers was overshadowed by the resource issue of funding for teacher aides. As a result the policy, in many instances, did not achieve its objective of inclusive educational practice.

Having established the importance of teachers’ knowledge and skills, if inclusion is not to become just a different form of segregation, the chapter goes on to consider how this may best be achieved. Consequently, the next chapter considers a framework for educational change and professional development where inclusion has changed school cultures and the work for teachers. Therefore, the nature of professional knowledge, within this changing cultural shift, is addressed within the following literature review. The review then moves on to consider knowledge creation processes that may support inclusive policy action.
Chapter three: A review of literature: Educational change and the construction of professional school-based knowledge

Overview of the chapter
This review of literature is built on evidence outlining the changing nature of school cultures and the move towards inclusive schooling that both challenges and adds to the complexities of teachers’ roles. Contingent on the change in school cultures is the knowledge, skills and professional development of the educational workforce. Through the review of literature, this chapter explores the concepts and theories regarding educational change and then moves on to consider the nature of knowledge and how the development of professional knowledge occurs.

The chapter is structured into a sequence of three sections. Initially, the structural and organisational phases of educational change processes and teachers work are considered. In addition the components contributing to social reform and school based restructuring are examined. A search of recent educational research literature identifies the areas of school culture, site based management and professional development as crucial aspects promoting social reform and inclusion.

In recognising that teachers’ skills are a critical factor within school reform processes, the next section explores the changing nature of teachers’ work and professional knowledge. Schools as professional learning communities are also identified within this framework, where schools are considered as knowledge building organisations, embracing the notions of a collective professional community to address educational reform.

The final section of this chapter considers the changing nature of knowledge within contemporary educational sites. Accordingly, this section begins with an overview of the changing nature of knowledge and the consideration of particular theoretical concepts of knowledge and understanding. Processes of knowledge creation and the construction of
teacher knowledge are investigated to ascertain how teachers may generate professional knowledge in schools. The underpinning assumption is related to contextual knowledge creation generated by teachers and shared within professional learning communities.

**Changing landscapes and educational workers**

*Theoretical and operational frameworks for change*

In contemporary, twenty-first century Australian education there is a lack of agreement on the composition of effective educational inclusion producing a predicament, if not an unintended crisis, for students with disabilities. Although the theories of social justice and inclusion identified a plan of action for practice, the theoretical and operational framework paving the way for practice has remained elusive:

>We have reached a crisis in special education where theorising has at best proved inadequate for understanding individuals’ experiences and at worst has been alienating because it has made them, not participating subjects, but objects upon which research is done. Researchers seem unable to shake off the ‘methodological individualism’ inherent in positivist social research and consequently, there have been many calls over the last fifteen years or so for research in special education which is more sensitive to the experience of learning difficulties (Clough and Barton cited in Clarke et al., 1998 p. 21).

Having established the crucial variable of teacher skill and knowledge within educational change processes (see Chapter two) this study now turns to consider strategic pathways for effective policy action. The subsequent change to traditional school functions generated by contemporary policy directives also requires the acknowledgement of changed pedagogical beliefs and values that are both external and internal to the school. However the associated challenge for pedagogy cannot be overlooked or replaced by inputs of administrative directives and resources intended to uphold policy directives or at least minimise any resistance to change. The climate of the school needs to be supportive and enabling for teachers to develop an understanding of change proposals, positive commitments, as well as the skills and knowledge for achievement. At the heart of the focus for effective change is the necessity to take into account the various and varying needs of individual change agents, the educational workers, within organisational structures.
From the organisation development perspective the way to ensure that a change proposal is implemented or considered for implementation, is a matter of establishing a school climate that is continuous through staff development which is embedded in the lives of teachers (Johnson, 1990, p. 5).

It is important to note that recent research analysis, associated with the implementation of large scale reform efforts, is consistent with previous findings generated from the mid 1980s embracing the importance of the acknowledgement of cultural change and the consequent impact on education workers and their classroom practices (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001; Fullan, 2000a; Springfield et al., 1996). Although this analysis is juxtaposed against evidence of individual and performance based models providing successful guidelines for action (Slavin, 1996; Slavin and Fashola, 1998), learning in classrooms remains an essential and central ingredient of successful change enterprises.

In their analysis of multi-site research studies of school improvement over the last two decades Hopkins and Reynolds (2001, p. 462) drew attention to one major commonality:

Unless central reforms address issues to do with teaching and learning, as well as dealing with capacity-building at the school level, within a context of external support, then the aspirations of reform are unlikely to be realised.

Subsequently, the next section of this chapter considers pathways for enhancing a school’s capacity for innovation and change. The examination of research propositions identifying relevant means of learning and responding to change by educational workers provides a vital framework to consider school-based action regarding inclusive education. This framework is associated with two main areas: teaching and learning and educational reform and leadership.

Teaching and learning: School-based human capital

School reform and teacher effectiveness are influenced by both external and internal factors. The range of conventional contexts includes: parent involvement; high expectations; small step approaches to learning; and carefully planned lesson structures. However, while these contexts and/or qualities of teacher skill recognise what is
important, they do not provide information on how to develop the capacity to build and change cultures within schools. Furthermore, research by Hargreaves, et.al. (2001, p.159) emphasises the importance of considering human capacity within contemporary change processes:

*Although educational change can be initiated and imposed by heavy-handed edicts, only the deeper human capacity of individuals and schools can sustain reform efforts over time.*

In addition, the traditional focus of change often side-steps core curricular and organisational issues that is well thought-out to build teacher confidence and competence. As a consequence schools can often remain fixed in the social reproduction of normative schooling (Stoll and Fink, 1996).

In their discussion of conceptualism, operationalism and development of the capacity for school improvement, Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) refer to the strong focus of the 1990s IQEA (Improving Quality Educational for All) Project in Britain identifying the need for a strong focus on internal conditions. Internal conditions include a commitment to staff development; attention to the benefits of enquiry and reflection; commitment to collaborative planning; and transformational leadership (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001, p. 469).

Also the research by Joyce and Showers (1995) relating to staff development has been particularly valuable in transforming thinking about staff needs within a changing educational context, serving to highlight the importance of a constructive focus on peer tutoring. This focus is built on their earlier work during the 1980s (Joyce et al., 1983; Joyce and Showers, 1980, 1982) on in-service training for teachers. Making a case for facilitating change in education, the requirement of an understanding of the personal and individual nature of learning was identified as an essential component to be considered when developing in-service teacher training programs. The delicate balance between recognising staff needs, stimulating action and change and the threat that change can generate for some teachers is also emphasised. Coinciding with this research is the hypothesis of affective and behaviour dimensions of teachers’ responses to change (Hall
and Hord, 1987). This body of knowledge provides foundational insights into in-service training that are still appropriate within the current contemporary context of in-service teacher training and professional development for inclusive education. The response to reform by teachers is viewed not just an intellectual attribute but also a personal and emotional partisanship relating to teacher professional identity (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998; Nias, 1999).

Added to the focus of individual teacher response to change is the proposition that in-service training is more effective if supportive teachers are initially involved as part of a network team (Darling-Hammond, 1995). This paradigm, exploring effective development of teacher skill, identifies peer coaching combined with participatory and reflective frameworks for capacity building of teachers’ practice as a specific model of effective school development. More specifically, peer coaching is referred to as a capacity building element of in-classroom support (Joyce et al., 1999). Peer tutoring or coaching is also advocated as another way teachers can extend their repertoires and transfer them, in an interactive way, to different classrooms.

These models of interactive demonstration and feedback have a high degree of credibility from teachers working in the field - the application of new information becomes evident and useful and it is discussed and reflected upon with colleagues. Furthermore, the use of theory, demonstration, practice and reflective feedback provides the opportunity for flexible on-the-job support relating to individual teacher need (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2000a; Newmann et al., 2000). In this way peer coaching, promoting reflective practice, is an invaluable process for teachers to collaboratively analyse and appraise their own teaching. Subsequently, the exploration for improvement is located within practice, where understandings and values implicit within the objectives of change remain located in schools and classrooms. What’s more these interactive models contribute to the development of a critical and constructive community of teacher enquiry that questions what is taken for granted (historically). As a result neglected possibilities are often regenerated and considered within school contexts (Winter, 1989).
Essentially, the approach of peer tutoring and its related characteristics are premised on the need for cultural change and social action such as inclusion. However, change is not initiated by political edicts on what schools should do but on internal networks related to professional development and training. The over-arching model of peer tutoring is expected to be adapted to particular needs, purpose and contexts (Hopkins and Levin, 2000).

The following statement by Ainscow (1998, p. 16) endorsing the characteristics of an interactive model of professional development relates specifically to inclusive education:

> My own experience leads me to endorse the shift in emphasis which can be detected on recent thinking on teacher development generally towards reflection in practice as the basis for development, rather than reliance on procedures of ‘research’ (of whatever complexion).

Unfortunately the connections between schools and research has often meant that teachers ‘seek out’ programs of a prescriptive nature where supposedly ‘one size fits all.’ This is an outcome that side steps the goal of individual recognition (at many levels) of schools, teachers and students. The contradiction between policy intentions and policy action is particularly apparent when policy developers overlook the need for congruence between the change proposal, existing classroom situations and the personal role and identity of the teachers. It is the investment in human capital, as a deliberative process, that is needed to effect positive change.

There is no doubt that ways to support and further develop human capital, in any industry, is important. However, as Fullan (2000) explains, professional development of individuals cannot be an isolated factor. Social capital is an associated imperative for school improvement where relationships within schools need to be continually developed and where there is an organisational capacity of program coherence. Thus organisational capacity and leadership is an additional, essential component of an evolving professional learning community supporting change and reform within educational settings.
Social capital and educational leadership

Most school improvement programs during the 1990s worked from the assumption that with a clear set of intervening variables at the school level, the process would drive the product. Underpinning this focus was the commonly held belief that principals must be instructional leaders, if they were to be to effective school managers, capable of providing sustained innovation. Synonymous with what could be described as an attempted repositioning of educational administration and leadership, the school principal was identified as a key feature of effective schools. However, instructional leadership involving efficiency, accountability and control is contradictory to effective change processes incorporating human identity, staff development and a commitment to collaborative planning. Throughout the 1990s the ongoing emphasis of instructional leadership flourished within the scope of school effectiveness and self-managing schools. Within the context of social reform, democracy and social equity this was certainly a predicament, if not a disaster. Instructional educational leadership has occurred despite educational research identifying the downfall of an organisation relying on one top leader (Fullan, 2002; 1991; Hargreaves, 2003). Additionally, Blackmores’ (2005, p. 6) analysis suggests:

This paradigm could not indicate what schools or leaders actually did, the process by which schools become effective, other than list an effective school’s attributes (eg. strong leadership, vision, high level co-ordination etc.). The focus was on measurable outcomes i.e. individual student academic success. Leadership was invested in the individual and in the position of authority i.e. the principal.

Furthermore, Blackmore (2005) indicates that leadership happens in many ways and that the vision of one leader imposing change can become static and inflexible producing an inadequate framework for sustained and on-going change.

Bates (2004) discusses how the failure to redefine educational administration as a process concerning the management of knowledge, culture and life chances ignores both criticisms and future opportunities. Leaders are required to be cognisant of the multiple interacting relationships within schools rather than hierarchical logics that are pervasive regarding equity, individual agency and opportunity. Leaders need to deal with these
complexities where there is an involvement of staff, students and the school community within both policy and action incorporating the collective competencies of a school in its entirety (Newmann et al., 2000).

Additionally Hopkins and Reynolds (2001, p. 470) point out that:

> *Since complex social systems have a tendency to produce overload and fragmentation in a non-linear, evolving fashion, schools are constantly being bombarded by overwhelming and unconnected innovations. In this sense, the most effective schools are not those that take on the most innovations, but those that selectively take on, integrate and coordinate innovations into their own focussed programs.*

Incorporating leadership at many levels has the potential for influencing individual and/or group success with systematic support (both internal and external as required) and specifically targeted professional development. Promoting the notions of visionary and transformative leadership, Fullan (2001) refers to this fundamental change of leadership as a catalyst to reform, mobilising the energy and capacities of teachers. Within this context he affirms the prerequisite of ‘the cultural change principal’ to influence action and to build school capacity for the future (Fullan, 2001, p. 2). The primary focus of this discourse is leadership that is attuned to the big picture with the knowledge of moral purpose, a responsibility to others and the environment, combined with an understanding of the intellectual and emotional management work within change processes. Included within these concepts ‘is the ability to improve relationships, knowledge creation and sharing and coherence making’ (ibid, p. 2) that contributes to long-term achievement.

However, principals’ work often remains as a managerial discourse throughout Victorian schools where the impact of one leader can often have short term and fragmented success.

Furthermore, large-scale research (Leithwood et al., 1999) reviewing the outcomes of education reform in USA, New Zealand and the State of Victoria in Australia, has confirmed that professional capacity building has been a major oversight by successive governments. This oversight was recognised as a continuing element that contributed to reform failure. Added to the above conundrum is the failure to recognise systematic, and
therefore critical factors, influencing individual and group (whole school) success. Factors such as staff relations, cultural contexts and system support developing a coherent social environment are factors considered paramount for successful change. Moreover, school improvement literature advocates the need for teacher-student interactions and teacher involvement in decision-making at the school level. However, once again, these concepts have often been reduced to a process of inputs of what should be done rather than identifying how interactions can contribute to cultural change and social reform. As Blackmore (2005, p. 7) indicates:

*The language of reform emerging from both these paradigms was that of ‘ongoing improvement’ (in more effectively imposing policies from above) and ‘best practice’ (to emulate extraordinary examples as generic and universal).*

The notion of instructional leadership has remained relatively static under this guise of innovation and change. However, as pointed out above, outstanding leadership cannot be attributed to merely single icons or one hero (Riley, 2000). The complexity of school sites needs to draw on the knowledge base of all stakeholders to assist in the organisation and response to contemporary educational challenges. Such a model would have the capacity to recognise that there is a ‘collective intelligence’ within school communities (Brown and Lauder, 2001) that is multifaceted and connected to everyone, not just a few staff members. Riley (2000) argues that within this context the capacity for learning and improvement increases significantly. What’s more, this kind of leadership contributes to a network of relationships and support across organisational boundaries, numerous actors, different locations and existing fragmented structures. Hence leadership becomes a group quality rather than a single entity, where there is flexibility and collaboration across a range of tasks. Research by Hargreaves and Fink (2003, p. 5) supports this shift in leadership styles, referring to the need for more distributed leadership:

*For these reasons, more and more efforts are being made to replace individual leaders with more distributed leadership...dependent on interrelationships and connections.*

Leadership in this sense can also be multi-faceted providing complementary but different approaches that address both the intellectual and emotional dimensions of change. In this
way both horizontal and vertical planning can be developed over time and include cognitive and emotional investment in school leadership within different parameters and differently constructed interrelationships.

Underpinning the notion of on-going educational change, literature has recognised both the contextual, collective and cultural aspects of educational change. Consistent with this focus, the notion of situated learning combined with cognitive theories of collective intelligence or knowledge has produced a more recent consideration of knowledge creating schools (Hargreaves, 1999). This foundation has turned the focus of this study to further exploration and open enquiry about professional learning communities, knowledge-based schools and social action including the roles of policy actors within these contexts.

Consequently, the specific focus of the next two sections of this chapter consider, first, the changing roles of teachers and the notions of situated learning, and then the theoretical concept of knowledge-creating schools where consideration is given to the changing nature of knowledge and educational sites as knowledge creation organisations.

**Inclusion changing the work of teachers**

Literature supports the view that the change to inclusive education is confronting, in a number of different ways, for Victorian school communities and the teachers within them (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998; Foreman, 2001). Diverse student populations, combined with the implications of inclusive curriculum, have pressured schools to change the way they teach students. Schools are now expected to provide programs that offset difference, transforming the nature of schooling in order to recognise, value and support the learning needs of all students. This changing context of education has led to political pressure for reform where the glare of publicity continues through a range of contested pathways that often relate to expedient, political ‘market polling’ (Blackmore, 2005, p. 3). Within this context, the rhetoric encapsulating individualisation, democracy, productivity and equality are ongoing. However, despite the assemblage of these interests and struggles within disability policy and reform, teacher knowledge and practice remains a central
imperative for future action (Levin and Reiffel, 1997; Lupart and Webber, 2002; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006).

The current climate of educational reform and the resultant call for a changed schooling system is certainly associated with the move towards inclusive education for students with disabilities and impairments. However, this reform agenda is sustained, if not advanced, by the additional socio-political demand for educational innovation to meet the needs of school communities with a range of diversely different needs. This broader discourse provides the opportunity for both the collective and individual agency of key stakeholders to be integrated into the educational change process of Victorian school communities. In this way school change, and the subsequent quest for improvement, is symbolised at a much broader level, focussing on benefits and outcomes for all students (Skrtic, Sailor et al. 1996). Added to this broader context is the changed placement of diversely different students to ensure that all learners belong to a community. According to Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000, p. 191) this ‘locates the discussion in a social-ethical discourse which is strongly focused on values’ incorporating a broad human rights agenda.

Within this landscape, Victorian schools are perceived increasingly as a vital link to social reform. They are expected to take a key role in creating a cohesive society, rather than simply promoting academic outcomes. This changed socio-cultural construction of the schooling system and the associated ethical discourse has significant implications for teachers (Fullan, 1991, 1999; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998). Extensive change in the workplace includes curriculum, assessment, instruction, the role and expectations of teachers as well as school communities in general (Lupart and Webber 2002).

Within the context of contemporary American education, a perspective not dissimilar to Australia, and Victoria, Darling-Hammond (1995) identifies the extent of this change process for teachers:

*Public schools are being asked to educate the most pluralistic group of students in history for more challenging learning than ever before.*
Teachers and other school leaders are expected to learn to teach in much more sophisticated ways that reach students who approach learning from diverse vantage points while restructuring schools designed many decades ago, for a much different mission, in a much simpler time (Darling-Hammond, 1997 cited in Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998, p. 40).

However, the capacity and resources to meet such a challenge involves both the associated proponents supporting change as well as the underlying, actual change in the work of teachers; the way they communicate and learn professionally (Wenger 1998). This is not an undemanding obligation. The changing socio-cultural environment continues to make the role of the teacher more complex and demanding. For instance, the contemporary re-definition of a successful program includes meeting individual student need.

However, the question of how this occurs can also offer an insight into a more edifying component of change. While the organisational and individual response to the process of inclusion may be considered overwhelming for teachers, solutions and operational understanding may also be enlightening and constructive. This positive focus is often neglected and replaced by the more dominant struggles and interests embedded in existing practice. In exploring this positive characteristic of change, Foreman (2001, p. 392) provides an account of the constructive aspects that may emerge within changing school communities:

Those involved in change may find it difficult and time consuming to explore and implement, challenging them both professionally and personally. However, while presenting challenges, it also presents opportunities for teachers and schools to foster learning environments that welcome diversity and enable teachers to feel that they can make significant contributions to the school and the community: in essence that they can make a difference.

Subsequently, Foreman (2001) turns attention to a more broad ranging set of issues, within the process of teacher change, incorporating the social processes of situational learning which are occurring within actual change contexts. The concept of situated learning within professional learning communities is consistent with the key focus of this
study identifying the critical characteristics and skills that have contributed to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy. Within this context, key stakeholders are considered as contributors of knowledge, an imperative for future, effective policy action and relational school improvement.

The changing nature of teachers’ work within school system restructuring, promoting equity and opportunity, is also identified as supporting Australia’s response to the wider global economy and the coinciding shift from an industrially dependent economy to a post-industrial nation (Beare and Slaughter 1993). This shift impacts on the nature of teachers’ work ‘from the position that information is the commodity of post-industrial society and the management, production and consumption of knowledge are critical to any organisation’s and nation state’s survival’ (Blackmore, 2005, p. 11). From this standpoint schools are positioned as organisations where communication and knowledge contribute to human capital and national investment. Groundwater-Smith (2003) describes education and training as the engine room for such development where the nature of knowledge is experiencing on-going change. Exploring this focus, the next two sections examine more specifically the nature of knowledge and the paradigm shifts positioning schools as knowledge building organisations.

**Nature of knowledge: Ongoing change and understandings**

*Theoretical concepts of knowledge and understanding*

The assumptions embedded in the operational conditions of Victorian schools until the 1960s were symbolic of the British traditions, and indeed most developed nations, of knowledge based schools with an ethos of utility, rationality and scientific imperatives based on empiricism. Thus, knowledge was thought to be based on observed reality, corresponding with goals for increased understanding of objective reality and the natural laws governing society. The belief underpinning objective reality was that an understanding of the laws of nature (and therefore knowledge) was acquired by observation, hypothesis and experimentation. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995) scientific methods of thinking coincided with the philosophical system of positivism applying observation and experimentation to the scientific study of society. Based on the
belief that social life could be understood and analysed empirically, science remained the only source of valued knowledge and understanding of the universal laws of social development up until the first half of the 20th century.

*Under the influence of positivist thought, it was believed by many philosophers in the first half of this century [20th] reported direct observations could provide a neutral body of data against which particular theoretical explanations could be tested (Fay 1987, p. 189).*

Consistent with the belief that the laws of nature, including the idea that human and social behaviour could be understood scientifically, the approaches to knowledge production related implicitly to foundation studies. Consequently teaching and learning revolved around the foundation of fundamental instrumentality, serving the purpose of mass education, in an industrial dependent society based on empirical observed and tested understandings (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing et al. 2003). As a result, teacher training was based on foundation courses that maintained an enduring presence until the 1970s. Groundwater-Smith (2003, p. 17) has described this in terms of the strongly held belief that solid foundations within disciplines provided the core for 'personal theories of practice.' Reflection on this belief provides an insight into the challenge to professional culture when considering the move towards differentiated outcomes dictated by inclusive education.

*A Humanist challenge to scientific knowledge production*

During the second half of the twentieth century, positivism and its notions of grand theories informing personal theory and practice came under scrutiny. Oppositional humanist forces recognised both human knowledge and human power. The challenge maintained that positivism did not have the capacity to take into account the immense complexity of human nature. Further analysis (Kuhn 1962, 1996) questioned rigorously the objectivity and neutrality of positivist scientific methods. Kuhn demonstrated that scientific observation reflected deep-rooted theoretical commitments that threatened the concept of neutrality. Fay (1987, p. 177) supports this notion:

*Indeed what the scientific community takes to be the stock of true observation changes, or - more importantly - what it takes to be the*
form of correct observation sentences, changes under the force of shifts of theoretical knowledge.

Added to the argument of the rational discrepancy of neutrality was also the challenge from critical rationalists, particularly Popper, that scientific theory went beyond evidence to constructions that endeavour to make sense of mass data. Knowledge, in this sense is more than information, it is constructed around belief systems and competing theories of how the world works. Recognition is now given to the ways in which knowledge can be legitimately produced within social spheres and the interaction between individual actors (Sachs, 2000). Knowledge within this construction is recognised as an interactive process where there is a nexus between theory and practice that continually evolves. Much of this signifies a shift in the nature of knowledge production away from an individualised model of inductive thinking, to a deductive method of thinking based on interdisciplinary approaches to problem solving (Gibbons, Limoges et al. 1994). This shift is particularly evident in the social sciences, humanities and education.

The implications for education are delineated clearly by (Blackmore 2001, p. 24):

Furthermore, as education becomes even more central in a knowledge based society than it was in an industrially based economy through moves towards post-foundational inter-disciplinarity, it is even more important that our understandings about the nature of knowledge production, dissemination, reception and legitimation in education adopt more critical approaches.

The shift in ways of knowing and knowledge production has presented a dilemma for the schooling system where procedural knowledge compared with content knowledge remains at the forefront of the debate (Gibbons et al., 1994). The associated dilemma may have contributed to a greater theory or practice divide questioning what is meant by valid knowledge. However, the vision of knowledge that underlies the nations’ school renewal focus requires teachers to re-think their own practice as reflective practitioners, becoming theorists rather than ‘a technical operator, an inhumane instrument in the delivery of a bureaucratically defined curriculum …’ (Tickle 2000). This position also
supports social constructionists’ accounts of knowledge creation that are contextual, meaning specific and generated through interaction.

However, whilst advocating the move from positivist theory to more interactive models of theory and practice, Groundwater-Smith (2003, p. 17) has still noted the importance of disciplines as part of the necessary criterion for teaching and learning, ‘not as foundations, but as important intellectual tools.’

Gibbons et al., (1994, p. 81) have also taken the notions of interactive learning models into account when they state:

*Knowledge can no longer be regarded as discrete and coherent, its production defined by clear rules and governed by settled routines. Instead it becomes a mixture of theory and practice, abstractions and aggregations, ideas and data.*

The understanding of the nature of knowledge is relevant to this study when considering the construction of teachers’ knowledge within contemporary education settings and inclusive practice. Also important is the process of knowledge creation relating to how knowledge is developed. Hence, the next section of this review of literature moves on to the examination of knowledge creation and the conditions and social relationships of professional learning. Knowledge creation combined with social action is a critical aspect for this study, focusing on the contextual knowledge and multiple realities of educational workers involved in inclusive education.

**Knowledge creation: Features contributing to the construction of professional knowledge**

*Social construction of knowledge and inclusion*

This section of the review is designed to provide information regarding knowledge creation within contemporary school organisations. Having gained an understanding of the conceptual nature of knowledge, this section provides an insight into the range of meanings and beliefs embedded in the social construction of knowledge. The examination of this paradigm relating to various attributes and descriptions of knowledge creation is
designed to provide a succinct, yet important overview of ways in which educational workers can contribute to changing educational contexts. Providing an overview of the attributes of knowledge creation organisations and the types of knowledge valued within contemporary school systems identifies critical factors within this paradigm. The next section of this chapter explores the literature to determine the processes of how knowledge creation can be facilitated within the complex and changing landscapes of educational work.

Learning organisations as the mechanism for change: contextual knowledge within the changing landscapes of educational work

Change theorists, drawing upon post-modern discourses of knowledge as a social construction and the notions of situated learning have produced more recent literature on knowledge building schools (Hargreaves, 1999; Groundwater-Smith and Hunter, 2000). Implicit in this notion is the recognition that teachers, acting as enquirers, will inform systematic and on-going improvement within a collective professional community (Wenger, 1998). This view of knowledge creation regards individuals as inseparable from their communities and environments where knowledge is situated in the social and cultural fabric of learning environments (Hutchins 1995). In this way knowledge creation is considered as the ability of individuals to participate in the practices of communities and be involved in developing practices and skills that are valued within their specific communities. Inclusive education is one such example. This belief is consistent with many of the features emerging from the paradigm of organisational theorists.

Organisational theorists (Senge 1992; Argyris and Schon 1996) emphasise that knowledge creation is assembled around organisational features facilitating capacity building and continuous improvement and innovation. Furthermore, they note that knowledge creation is built on existing knowledge and success. Additionally studies on effective learning organisation (Fullan 1995; Hargreaves 1999; Hargreaves 2003) identify the need for learning opportunities to be developed within organisations encouraging participation in practices of enquiry. Within this framework participatory practice is seen to support the identity of skilled inquirers and develop motivating practices of discussion, communication and debate. Both these positions are linked to the concept of
organisational knowledge creation within a network society and the perceptions of how knowledge is created and disseminated in complex organisations (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995).

Senge (1992) outlines how the learning organisation within this paradigm is perceived as being linked to the broader view of the contribution of learning organisation social production, encompassing a commitment to changes needed in the larger world. Within this context learning organisations are the mechanisms for bringing about change, building on individual skills and knowledge.

Moreover, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) have clarified the important distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge, explaining that it is the conversion of tacit to explicit knowledge that leads to the construction of organisational knowledge. Thus knowledge creation in an organisation becomes a cyclic process or spiral (Nonaka and Nishiguchi 2001); the organisation providing the context for creative individuals to create knowledge with on-going interaction between these epistemological and ontological dimensions (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

Organisational knowledge creation, therefore, should be understood as a process that ‘organisationally’ amplifies the knowledge created by individuals and crystallises it as part of the knowledge network of the organisation. This process takes place within an expanding community of interaction (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, p. 59).

Within the organisational paradigm knowledge is not perceived as a simple matter of learning from others - acquiring knowledge from outside either voluntarily or obligatory. It is built around intensive interactions among members of particular organisations.

Although the framework promoting knowledge negotiation though discourse communities is seen to be enabling, it must also be noted that dialogue can have both an enabling or constraining effect on thinking and knowledge creation. Embedded theories of practice, often unspoken beliefs, may discount, restrain, ignore or reinterpret new concepts to reproduce ‘old rules.’ This suggests that organisational culture has a
significant role in socio-cognitive processes that reaffirms the importance of organisational or institutional culture of schooling systems addressed earlier in this chapter.

**Cognitive and collaborative approaches to knowledge creation**

Traditionally human intelligence was conceptualised as part of individual thinking processes. This perception, advocated by psychology, was informed by cognitive theories of knowledge creation that sought to understand and describe the working of the mind (Piaget, 1970). Within this framework was constant debate regarding individual and contextual knowledge – the nature verses nurture debate. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that the seminal work of Piaget (and associated cognitive theorists) recognised the value of reflection, conceptual growth, problem-solving and reasoning within individual knowledge landscapes. Even though these concepts only relate to the construction of individual knowledge, attention was drawn to knowledge creation through enquiry. In this way, learning was perceived as an active re-construction of existing knowledge structures (rather than passive knowledge construction) with learners using prior knowledge and experiences to construct new knowledge (Newell and Simon 1972). Additionally more recent studies by cognitive theorists have recognised the connection and overlap between the boundaries of individual, group and organisational structures in knowledge creation contexts (Pea 1993; Greeno, Collins et al.1996). The overlapping perspective highlights the point that learning can also be situated and processed though networks rather than just individually located. Describing the situated learning perspective, Blackmore (2005, p. 8) states:

> Cognitive approaches recognise that there is a blurring between inside and outside, context and individual, individual and group, and that learning is ‘situated’ and processed through networks of learning and institutional contexts.

Cognition is now recognised as being contextualised, social and distributed (Putnam and Borko 2000). Situated cognition is practice-centred knowledge, where context is an integral part of knowledge creation, grounded within the interactions of groups. Furthermore Putman and Borko (2000) propose that knowledge and ways of thinking emerge from group interactions over time where communities of practice develop
common ways of thinking, speaking and interacting. Thus interaction is a major
determinant of what is learned and how learning takes place (Wenger 1998).
Accordingly, new understandings are constructed from a common voice where
community discourse provides the cognitive tools - ideas, concepts and theories - for
stakeholders to make sense of their experience or world. It is also important to note that
while this suggests that social processes may be viewed as situated cognition, recognising
the inter-dependence of relational aspects of organisations, the cognitive systems created
through collaborative activity also provide a context for learning (Nonaka and Takeuchi,
1995; Tsoukas 2000). Collaborative theory asserts that where people are involved in
thinking collectively, the socially distributed cognitive system they assemble also
becomes an essential part of their own cognition and individual competencies (Rogers
and Ellis 1994). Importantly these perspectives are both dynamic and complex and need
to be considered as a scaffold for defining group activities rather than providing a script
of any one set of values (Blackmore, 2005).

Situated learning is more than information acquisition; it is concerned with learning
through authentic social interaction within a community of practice (Wenger, 1998,
Foreman, 2001) that generates different forms of knowledge creation and action. As a
result, knowledge is constructed through cultural belief systems of how the world works,
utilising both individual and collective theories. It is also about developing knowledge in
real life situations based on professional (tacit) knowledge learnt through experience and
knowledge (explicit) communicated between education workers (Blackmore, 2005). This
perspective draws attention to the significance of experiential learning as well as tacit and
explicit knowledge (Wenger 1998). The following section explores this perspective more
specifically.

Tacit and explicit knowledge
Conventional approaches to knowledge construction focus on information collection and
storage, where explicit knowledge is viewed as a matter of learning from others.
Accordingly, this approach endorses the acquisition of knowledge from ‘outside’ (the
organisation) and the utilisation and management of this knowledge for effective action.
However, while outside information may be seen as significant, an alternative view of
knowledge creation values ‘insider’ practitioner knowledge as an important component of knowledge building and knowledge creation. For example, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) draw attention to the fact that while outside knowledge is capable of providing additional ways of understanding and clarifying activities (or policy directions) it is fellow workers that construct or create knowledge, beliefs and commitments within the workplace context. From this perspective knowledge is interconnected to social interaction and the exchange of ideas where the conditions and social relationships within professional learning organisations are important (Von Krogh, 1998). As such knowledge is linked to effective action within learning organisations and it may be tacit (intuitive) knowledge or explicit (variously described as expressive or specific) knowledge.

Explicit knowledge is interdependent and mutually accountable to the dominant forces valued in cultures, communities and organisations. It can be articulated, confirmed and communicated between individuals, across groups and across organisations (Von Krogh 1998; Nonaka and Nishiguchi 2001). Alternatively tacit knowledge is more equivocal and difficult to document and share. It requires unrestrained communication (Habermas, 1996) to share what is generally seen as personal knowledge, embedded in experience and involving values and personal theories.

Knowledge creation theorists (Von Krogh, 1998; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) identify the importance of tacit knowledge and have incorporated both tacit and explicit knowledge into their theorising. Implicit in their philosophies is the recognition of knowledge being more than compiling facts, but it is something possessed by individuals and passed on to others. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995, p. 10) assert that: ‘Knowledge has to be built on its own, frequently requiring intensive and laborious interaction among members of the organisation.’ Moreover this interactive perspective has endorsed the view of knowledge as a dynamic human process that is a both context specific and relational. Therefore knowledge is a contextualised social construction.

However, knowledge creation theorists, drawing upon the dialogue between tacit and explicit knowledge, often have the propensity to view each dimension separately even
though these two forms of knowledge are inter-related and inter-active. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) has deemed knowledge to be created and expanded through the interactions connecting tacit and explicit knowledge. Takeuchi (1998) supports this view with the theory that tacit and explicit knowledge interact and change into each other within knowledge creation processes. Citing the work of Elbaz and Elbaz (1983) this theory is further analysed by Blackmore, (2005, p. 12):

_Tacit knowledge can be made explicit when codified through social interaction and discussion, or it can remain unstated but part of an unconscious set of understandings that inform practice i.e. the automatic response of teachers to different contexts and know how or commonsense professional knowledge learned through experience._

Moreover, Blackmore (2005) argues that the conditions and social relationships of professional learning are also an important imperative to consider. Tacit knowledge can be made explicit depending upon the dominant organisational factors or triggers that prompt different stages of knowledge creation. However, triggers can be multi-faceted, contributing to an array of pro-active or reactive outcomes. Initially, triggers may not be organisation-wide but commence in informal groups, within communities of practice, due to the fact that different groups within organisations may change at different rates (Wenger, 1998). However, Senge (1998) has further explored this dimension and has identified the paradox of new learning and change promoting a threat to those not predisposed to change, thereby triggering an aggressive and negative response. In addition, Blackmore (2005) points out that there is often an assumption that the acquisition of knowledge will automatically change practice. However, without any sense of commitment or motivation, this is not the case.

What's more, in contradiction of its initial purpose, knowledge creation revolving around tacit and explicit knowledge can be destructive rather than constructive. For example, tacit knowledge can be reductionist if collective practices are focussed on an instrumental view of ‘what works.’ Consequently, within this scenario, knowledge creation may be focussed on narrow notions of evidence-based practice adopting a mechanistic and technicist approach to practitioner research. Too easily the notion of a school as a
knowledge-building organisation (Hargreaves, 1999) can be developed around verified, and maybe limited, facts. This presupposes a particularly narrow conceptualisation of knowledge creation. The subsequent result is that teacher knowledge may be defined by a set of evidence based attributes or competencies rather than practices of enquiry, reflection and problem solving in a particular context.

However, Elliot (1999) has argued that Hargreaves’ focus on knowledge building schools still runs the risk of giving status to categorical knowledge of a technical kind, where the appeal may be to prove one particular practice works best, rather than understanding and analysing practice. Blackmore (2001, p. 52) cautions against such a linear approach to change processes:

Evidence alone, without a wider analytic framework of how policy works and of social relationships, cannot provide a wide enough epistemological, least of all professional base, upon which to build teacher practice. Evidence based research makes particular epistemological assumptions about the nature of the world premised upon certainty and linearity, whereas teachers experience the world as one of uncertainty and pluralism.

For knowledge production to be a dynamic process teachers need to be positioned as teacher researchers, moving beyond the simplicity of collecting evidence, to analysing what, how and why the evidence has occurred and can be utilised. In this way reachers would be acting as theoretically informed practitioners, engaged as activist professionals (Sachs, 2002) and providing optimum opportunities for all students. Blackmore (2001, p. 52) clarifies how such an approach would overcome the possible uptake of categorical, technical knowledge:

Narrow conceptualisations of 'what works' will constantly be mediated by teacher practice that derives from a range of different sources and forms of knowledge – intuitive, evidence (evaluation, data, assessment) as well as professional and ethical positions.
Teachers positioned as deliberative practitioners within pluralistic and inclusive societies are required to be critical and active professionals based on democratic principles of equality of opportunity.

**Summary of this chapter**

The above sections provide an overview of first, the nature of knowledge and second, teachers’ ways of knowing within the knowledge creation process. In the second section the distinction between organisational knowledge and individual knowledge is established. These areas are examined through two main bodies of research, one focussed on the organisational aspect of situated cognition and the second area identifying individual learning within the framework of tacit and explicit knowledge. Additionally the dichotomy between individual and organisational learning is further defined – recognising the importance of both areas in the creation of new context specific knowledge.

While much of what has been discussed relates to investigating learning and the reconstruction of teachers as deliberative practitioners, an important component of this study is the identification of teachers as producers of knowledge and how this development of professional knowledge occurs within the process of inclusive policy action. Chapter five explores these concepts in practice. Subsequently the focus turns towards how knowledge creation processes are established and sustained in practice.
Chapter four:  
Design and method

Overview of the chapter
This chapter is designed to provide an account of the research method, which has informed the orientation, design and conduct of the investigation reported in this thesis. Each element in the research process is explained and justified. Initially the research orientation for constructing principled research is examined. Attention is then given to the research design, incorporating an account of the overall steps in the research process, the site selection, participants and the data sampling procedures. The chapter concludes with an outline of the principles and procedures for data collection and analysis, including the application of ethical research procedures.

The research orientation of the study
Educational research is not always obtained from an immediate or straightforward approach. It may be constructed circuitously through individual and institutional practices. Furthermore, the critique of successive paradigms of quantitative and qualitative research has highlighted the problems with ethnographic research and the claims made about truth and reality (Lincoln and Guba, 1995). Taking into account these critiques of the neutrality or objectivity of any research method, the aim is to make this research practice credible, assessed by its transparency, coherence and communicability (Rubin and Babbie, 1997). For this reason the research design has drawn on qualitative, critical approaches to construct a principled research procedure, with the theoretical orientation of critical social science (Giddens, 1976). The practice of inclusion is examined through the lifeworlds of teachers where teachers’ own pre-conceptions are seen as powerful determinants of the enactment of policy. This study proposes that knowledge is constructed through social action rather than objective reality waiting to be revealed. Therefore, the research method has been articulated closely with literature examining teacher knowledge and change that has provided resources for analysing the data presented in the evidentiary chapters.
There has been no attempt to make large generalisations about inclusive education. The study aims to increase the understanding of this change for teachers and to explain the process within a particular context (Rogers, 2002; Sachs, 2002). The objective is to gain an understanding of the realities constructed around disability and inclusion through the unrestrained consciousness or awareness of teachers (Habermas, 1996). Therefore, this enquiry has the potential to move teachers’ consciousness into the realm of communicated descriptions of action, providing the basis to analyse the social reality for teachers engaged in inclusive practice (Welton, 2001).

The summation by May (1983, p. 46) helps to both clarify and validate this position:

> When we refer to people’s consciousness we are concerned with what takes place—in terms of thinking and acting—within each of us. These subjective states refer to our ‘inner’ world of experiences, rather than the world out there. To concentrate on subjectivity, we focus on the meanings that people give to their environment, not the environment itself ... we cannot know this independently of people’s interpretations of it ... Our central interest, as researchers, is now focussed upon people’s understandings and interpretations of their social environments.

Accordingly the design is intended to encourage participants to negotiate meanings and pose questions using analysis and consensus where a fluid relationship between the researcher and participants exists. There is scope that participants may become not only the only the changer but the changed (Gitlin, 1994). In this way participants are involved in the examination of the topic and the quest to gain further understanding of inclusive schooling and the critical characteristics and skills contributing to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy.

**Constructing principled research**

*Research and disability: Quantitative, positive research*

Historically, research and subsequent reform in special education and disability has been based on the scientific method of quantitative research methods with the perceived strengths of precision and control. Connole et al., (1995) pointed out that this approach could be seen most clearly in behaviourist psychology and its applications.
They refer to quantitative research methods as philosophical determinism, meaning that human behaviour is determined by external conditioning. This approach was strongly upheld in the treatment and management of people with disabilities until the 1980s.

Furthermore, empiricism based on or characterised by experimentation and observation is still widely used in special education. However, Oliver (1992), in his exploration of the specific application of the positivist paradigm to disability, contended that this paradigm reinforces the model of disability as a problem. The problem is located within the minds of able-bodied people where either individual or collective prejudice manifests as hostile social attitudes (Oliver 1990, p. 82). The problem with empiricist or rationalistic theories based on empirical data is that professional discourses become a set of technical, objective procedures promoting the oppression of disabled people where their voices are normally silenced. Ideologies that propagate and reproduce disability as a problem can no longer be sustained in a schooling system claiming to recognise social justice and reform for students with disabilities (Fulcher, 1989; Ainscow, 1991; 1994; 1995; Oliver, 1996; Vlachou, 1997). The positivist view of education fails to recognise that policy, aims and processes are intrinsically related and thus decisions reflecting values and discourses of moral acceptability and cultural norms are ignored.

In addition, rationally organised systems of action based on empiricist theories more often focus on objective outcomes of what works for the good of the system. Outcomes are objectified and the system drives the outcomes based on instrumental questions where individual activity aims to achieve pre-determined system goals. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) argue that the idea of educational decisions being neatly separated into instrumental questions concerned with means (processes, curriculum and pedagogy) and value questions concerned with ends (aims, objectives and outcomes) is illogical when ‘means’ are value laden. They go on to point out that viewpoints and discourses of individuals cannot be measured in terms of instrumental value alone.
In framing research from an instrumental perspective, educational reform is presented as unbiased and separated from its historical and social contexts. In adopting an instrumental approach educational reform becomes a ‘top-down’ approach to change, where state directives ignore the needs and differences within educational sites, setting goals that educational workers (teachers) are expected to implement. Fullan (1993), in his extensive research on educational reform and teacher change, confirmed that change is less likely to be accepted or adopted if it is initiated as a ‘top-down’ approach informing teachers what to do. These findings further negate the value of instrumental directives that do not elicit the voices of key stakeholders and policy actors.

*Qualitative research approaches*

In the 1960s and 1970s, with growing criticism levelled at positivist conceptions of knowledge, research practice in education began to be informed by models of qualitative research that were derived from an interpretive view of social science with a long history in hermeneutics. According to Kemmis (1990) interpretive social science includes a number of positions arguing the need for the self-actualisation or motivation of individuals. However, he also points out that proponents of these theories tend to argue that educational reform must constantly be interpreted at the local school and classroom level. Therefore this deliberative position provides the potential for research, involving educational change, to encourage the role of various interest groups within the change process.

A further criticism of deliberative, interpretative research is the limitation placed on the scope of social sciences to obtain an understanding of social activities within a particular context. Obscuring the actors’ own definitions of the situation and providing a subsequent assimilation with scientific understanding is once again restrictive. Consequently, in the case of inclusive education and disability, educational reform can still centre on definitions of inclusion based on the historical discourse of deficit (Tomlinson, 1993). In assuming certain interpretations of inclusion and establishing directions for educational reform it neglects the issues of the knowledge and the skills of policy actors (the teachers). The never-ending bid by educational workers for resources and funding is one such example. In this case the narrow interpretation may
over-look underlying messages of ‘the researched’ that may be far reaching in terms of self perceived confidence and skills regarding inclusion. As a result the limitations of deliberative, interpretive research can once again ignore how ‘means’ are reflected within the multiple realities and contextual complexities of this field of research.

Singh (1989) also points out that within the framework of deliberative interpretive theory crucial issues of social change could be neglected, where the mechanisms of education reform shaped by the state remain curiously unchallenged. Moreover, conservative assumptions of state intervention in educational reform can become part of unquestioned ‘slippage,’ with a compliant respect for the status quo, overshadowing the initial intentions of policy action. Consequently, the functional outcome of interpretive theories of educational reform can serve to maintain the wider (and historical) social discourse on disability rather than effect social justice and change. In this way social action can overlook the process of deliberative democracy (embracing participation in an authentic deliberation) and the conception of knowledge (Habermas, 1996; Cooke, 2000). In the case of inclusive education this form of action leads to unacceptable implementation strategies that are detrimental to the cause of inclusion and the enactment of policy (Booth, 1992; Slee and Cook, 1993; Rizvi and Lingard, 1996; Ainscow, 1997; Barton and Oliver, 1997a).

Oliver (1996) has documented the paradigm shift of deliberative, interpretive educational research as being informed by a view of disability as a social problem. In this sense, an understanding of the needs of people with disabilities does not emerge within this research context, nor does it promote the voice of disabled people. He further contends that interpretive research rarely promotes changes to service provision or the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The shortcoming of interpretive theory-related practice is well addressed through the ground breaking critical perspective of educational research and reform that emerged so strongly in the 1980s. Critical theories view educational reform as emancipating. Reform is intended to empower individuals and minority groups, including the
disabled, through the redistribution of power, resources and decision making in order to change the policies and practices of educational institutions (Singh, 1989). While this approach has the capacity to promote significant policy change at the political level, the contribution to change within strategic practice is not always evident.

Critical theories of educational research explain how education could promote social reproduction. In turn, critical theorists explore how education, as it stands, has little power to change society, providing the converse view that schooling is both a means of maintaining social stability and also a means of transforming society (Kemmis and Fitzclarence, 1986). While critical theorists take into account the potential of individuals to promote change they also recognise the capability of individual resistance and contestation within educational sites. Referring to this aspect as contestation theory, reform is viewed within the context of the political struggle between stakeholders upholding embedded past practice and those enunciating ideal new pathways. Contestation of this nature often diverts attention from the substance and potency of the reform process as well as the policy action required for effective implementation. Singh (1988, p. 9) clarified this point:

Contestation theory does not unmask, reveal or discover something that those participating in the policy's formation do not already know... However we are often inclined to dismiss matters of disagreement as merely commonsensical, in preference for a more mechanical theory.

Contemporary research in the field of inclusive and special education has devoted considerable energies to the critical and post structural analysis of special education and inclusion. Given all the contested, discursive constructions of special education, the quest for the development of alternative rationalisations, understandings and responses to individual difference is well recognised. There has been extensive research directed towards this end within the orientation of post-structural deconstruction (Fulcher, 1993; Loxley and Thomas, 2001; Lingard et al., 2001; Slee, 2001a, 2001b).
However, as Skidmore (1996) points out, there are also shortfalls within this particular orientation of critique; he argues that the deconstruction of practices within this paradigm, are reductionist. This is due to the fact that the analytical tools of enquiry lend themselves to an ever more refined critique (of schooling) which almost becomes an end in itself. Furthermore, Clarke and her colleagues argue that there are very few works within this paradigm which do not open with a substantial attack upon what is taken to be the status quo (Clarke et al., 1998). Within this context, discrimination, oppression and exclusion are confined to the causal factors of social institutions such as schools. Providing the focal point of research activity is the concept to analyse what schools are actually like and how they need to be organised to embrace the principles of social justice, equity and inclusion. Contemporary commentators provide a wealth of literature identifying the downfall of political policy action and the shortcomings of institutional reform regarding disability and inclusion (Skrtic, 1991; Ainscow, 1994; Villa and Thousand, 1995; Slee, 1995; Slee et al., 1998; Slee, 2001b). Nonetheless, a flaw that is inherent in this approach is the notion of the need for ideal types and ideal models rather than the realities of individual schools and the lifeworlds of key stakeholders (Lingard, 1996).

The call for new times in educational research relating to inclusion is still current. Exploration of theory and practice draws attention to a process of participatory action to meet the educational needs of differentiated student populations and the education workers involved in inclusive education. Considering the processes of school change and educational reform, the relevance of participatory social action is explored within this study. It is explored through examining the theory of critical social science and communicative action that incorporates the understanding of the individual lifeworlds of teachers and the development of professional knowledge as a pathway to promote effective policy action (Habermas, 1970; 1987; 1996).

One example taking up this process is the method of action research contained within the paradigm of critical theory. Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) have outlined action research as a process acknowledging the strength of educational enquiry that is
undertaken by practitioners within their own workplace. This process identifies the need to gain a deeper understanding of the nature and outcomes of individual educational contexts and given situations (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 1988; Ball, 1994; Ainscow, 1998, 1999). Ainscow acknowledges the positive nature of the shift from the positivist to critical paradigm of educational research:

... an exploration of forms of enquiry that have the flexibility to deal with the uniqueness of particular educational occurrences and contexts; that allow social organizations, such as schools and classrooms, to be understood from the perspectives of different participants, not at least the pupils; and that encourage teachers to investigate their own situations and practices with a view to bringing about improvements (Ainscow et al., 1995, p.76).

While action research upholds the value of practitioner knowledge and flexible practitioner research, it also has limitations. A failure to address the political and administrative constructions implicit in the principles of reform remains a questionable, moot point. Research within this paradigm can also be limited to ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ team knowledge. Given this situation, the understanding of the outside expert tends to emerge, in a sometimes lengthy and indirect way. It possibly positions action research as a misleading approach, placing responsibility for education reform in the hands of ‘outsider’ skill and knowledge. In this way teachers’ investigative practice is once removed from the classroom environment.

*Critical social science and social action*

Having considered the limitations of the positivist, deliberative interpretive and critical approaches to educational research, the characteristics of inclusive policy action is explored within the parameters of the critical social science theory and the concept of social action (Habermas, 1984; 1996). Habermas’ contemporary work recognises the limitations of interpretive and critical theories of educational research. His work presenting a theoretical framework that actively promotes the achievement of a civil society provides a suitable framework for the theoretical orientation of this research project (Habermas, 1984; 1996; 1998).
The Habermasian view of civil society encourages active citizenship and communicative action through the lifeworlds of key actors (in this case, the teachers). Accordingly, social action and the individual agency of teachers is captured within a given ‘moment.’ This means action is not generalised through political and systemic imperatives, however questions of the potential of disproportionate power internal to communication are still apparent. Highlighting these dangers, Pellizoni (2001) refers to three main aspects providing a safeguard against such dominance of power:

- resolution in terms of independent and consensual criteria;
- mutual comprehensibility; and
- the view of segments of reality within different frameworks.

Correspondingly, these safeguards pre-suppose the possibility of being able to say the same thing in different ways. But the idea of morality and ethics recognises shared features and unity of reason (Pellizoni, 2001).

Critical social science (Habermas, 1984; 1996) provides a methodological framework that does not delineate theory from practice. Allowing for the identification and flexible construction of a pool of professional knowledge, informed and shaped by the actual policy actors, it provides a lens of opportunity for sustained analysis of individual and organisational agency that supports inclusive practice. In turn critical social science provides a methodological framework to address the key focus question of this study:

‘What are the critical characteristics and skills that have contributed to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy?’

This inquiry rests on the view that teachers’ voices and experiences about inclusive education provide an opportunity to scrutinise the characteristics contributing to successful policy action that are at times taken for granted, if not veiled, in school and classroom routines. Therefore social action and how it relates to school organisation and classroom life are deliberately fore-grounded in this study. Interest is focussed on professional knowledge, skills and strategies promoting inclusive policy action. In addition, while considering that all description is an epistemological activity, the need
for theoretical analysis is acknowledged. Therefore the data generated in this study is treated as texts and discourse where the analytical approaches embracing the concepts of social action through the lifeworlds of teachers are employed.

**The research design**

*Qualitative case study*

The method of case study, based on the axioms of the naturalistic paradigm, is utilised in regard to the scope, design and then data collection and analysis for this study. The naturalistic paradigm has been selected because of its characteristics of choice, the perceived absence of conventional, positivistic limitations and the capacity for the emergence of theory (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). It is also suitable for this case-study given that it is inductive, intensive, holistic and analytical in the context of a particular case site (Merriam, 1998; Guba and Lincoln, 1998). Consequently the generation of knowledge regarding the implementation of inclusive practice is explored through free and open discourse (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). Promoting unimpaired self-participation, characterised by mutual expectations, this approach aspired to create an ideal speech situation that is free from systematic distortion (Crotty, 1998). This element of naturalistic enquiry provides the foundation for unconstrained consensus (Habermas, 1970, p. 372) to emerge for the purpose of analysis involving consensus by research contributors (insiders).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 39) the axioms or systematic set of beliefs of naturalistic enquiry include:

1. The nature of reality (ontology) where there are multiple realities that can only be studied holistically, where prediction and control are unlikely outcomes of the research process;

2. The relationship of knower to known (epistemology), where the enquirer and the ‘insider’ interact to influence each other and therefore are inseparable;
3. The possibility of generalisation provides the opportunity to develop a body of knowledge in the form of a working hypothesis that gives a practical discourse to inform further decision-making and future action;
4. The possibility of establishing causal linkages;
5. The recognition that the enquiry is value bound enquiry so it is impossible to separate causes from effects and the role of the enquirer (axiology).

Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 39-44, 187-220) outline fourteen characteristics of operational naturalistic enquiry that, they claim, logically depend on these axioms. The study design takes account of these characteristics including purposive sampling within a setting where the inquirer is the primary data-gathering instrument. This technique utilises the understood knowledge of participants, including historical and current theoretical frameworks for inclusion, along with inductive data analysis that helps to identify multiple realities contributing to an emergent design focussed on the individual understandings and voice of education workers. Emergent design does not mean that there is no initial plan for the structuring of this study. Rather this term signals that the plan can be changed during the study as a result of engagement with the research and theoretical literatures. Thus, a more informed understanding of the research process is developed as a consequence of doing the fieldwork and undertaking the data analysis.

The nature of this design also allows scope for consensus where the understanding is verified and confirmed by the education workers involved in this research. Data analysis allows for specific understandings and communications to emerge. As such, individual particulars are identified and assessed in terms of the facts and variables involved in the inclusion process within a particular context. In this way, the guiding substantive theory is grounded in the data rather than prior generalisations. In addition, within the paradigm of naturalistic enquiry, the characteristics of qualitative methods are recognised as being sensitive and adaptable to the many influences and value patterns concerned with multiple dimensions and realities. The following sections of the research design outline the ways in which this study incorporated such characteristics.
**Phases of the study**

The study consists of three overlapping phases. These include the ‘orientation and overview’ phase; the ‘focussed exploration’ phase and the analysis phase.

The orientation and overview for this study was gained through the exploration of policy and educational research related to the focus of the enquiry. Elements of the enquiry were established through the analysis of a range of research literature relating to the historical and current context of inclusive education. This developed a foundation for the initial orientation of this enquiry. Moreover, the aim of this phase was to contribute to the understanding of the nature and complexity of the focus of the study.

The structure of this study became apparent during the second phase of the enquiry. With further focussed exploration of the research literature, the focal point for this research was established. Additional clarification of the research process was also delineated.

The third phase of the study involved an initial orientation with the school settings. This was followed by the collection of initial communicated information from teachers and the verification and analysis of this information by conducting member checks through out the study.

In order to enhance the trustworthiness of the verification of responses the credibility of the recording, structuring and interpretation of each respondent’s information was established through consensus. At the end of this stage a provisional case report was drafted.

The following diagram provides an overview of the research design for this study:
Initial research question

- review of the recent research literature
- develop research method
- framing of conceptual tools, for data collection and analysis

Prepare research proposal

collecting data via focused, semi-structured, purposeful interviews - documents

- School A
- School B
- Policies, Reports

data analysis

Figure 2: Research Project Design: Components and Relationships
Within the initial orientation of this enquiry I visited two schools to establish a degree of familiarity with the schools, as well as to discuss the research focus. In both settings I was given time at a staff meeting to speak to teachers about the research. Members were then invited to participate voluntarily. Additionally, these initial contacts allowed me to develop a sense of trust with staff and provide evidence of the nature of confidentiality and ethical practice that would be applied to the study. It also provided an opportunity to examine Departmental and school policies as well as the organisation of the schools in an informal and accessible way. This observation was not designed to detract from the ‘inside stories’ but to gain an initial overview and understanding of each school environment. The observation commenced as part of the initial orientation with the school settings, in the third phase of the study.

**The research strategy**

*Purposive sampling*

Purposive sampling is a characteristic of this study. It is an approach where the inquirer chooses purpose over random sampling thereby identifying key generalised elements relating to participants in this study; that is their involvement in the process of inclusive education. Additionally, this approach does not suppress unpredicted communication and therefore it ‘increases the scope and range of data exposed … as well as the likelihood of the full array of multiple realities’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 40). Specifically, ‘maximum variation sampling [of teachers with different responsibilities within the two schools] is utilised in order to document unique variations that have emerged in adapting to different conditions, is thought to be most useful in naturalist enquiry’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp. 300-301). This aspect embraces the scope of this enquiry with the goal of identifying multiple realities and dimensions of educational change in action within each site.

Purposive sampling exhibits an emergent design rather than a pre-ordinate approach to research enquiry. Therefore all of the actual participants could not be determined prior to the beginning of the enquiry. However, initial elements were identified, as were the ways the sample might emerge and be refined. Initially ‘insiders’ were identified as
key stakeholders who were involved in inclusive programs. These included classroom teachers, year coordinators, curriculum coordinators, specialist teachers, parents and students. Refinement of the sample occurred during the study as other ‘insiders’ identified additional stakeholders. Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to this process as a qualitative information isomorph, or snowballing technique, whereby members of the initial group in turn identify others and so on until a point of redundancy is achieved in relation to information being obtained.

**The research context**
The location of the case study was determined by the need to situate the research at schools that had incorporated the guidelines of inclusive education into their policy and had disabled children involved within their school programs. In addition, sites were identified on the basis of geographic location, that of a rural and city school serving local communities, typifying the many schools in country and city regions of Victoria. The study was carried out in the natural settings to obtain the greatest understanding possible of the interactions within the research contexts.

At these sites, teachers from different grade levels and with school-based responsibilities were given the opportunity to communicate their own realities in an unstructured interview. Stakeholders representing parents and students were also interviewed the same way. The purpose of this initial interview was to obtain some form of conceptual framework of the multiple realities of inclusion ‘through the eyes and actions’ of the teachers. It obtained ‘sufficient information…. on what is important enough to follow up in detail’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 235). For example, certain teachers felt differently about external factors, such as in-service programs, and therefore follow up communication focussing on this aspect was continued within the interview. In this way realities defined the focus of ‘insider’ information through inquirer–respondent communication were established.

Local conditions, mutual shaping and values were taken into account when devising this study based on the axioms of naturalistic enquiry. The concept of emergent theory,
that is, a process of inductive theory building, contributes to the identification of multiple realities through the analysis of interactive communication within this study.

**Choosing the research sites**

The schools in this study, where inclusive education and integration is apparent and relatively successful, provided the scope to examine critical characteristics contributing to successful inclusive policy action. In examining inclusive education through the life worlds of the policy actors within these schools, crucial understanding of process was obtained.

This section provides an overview of each school and a brief overview of the setting, school procedures and the workplace environments. The evidence was gained through the examination of school documents (including policy documents, committee terms of reference and school charters and mission statements) as well as informal observation in classrooms and information from introductory discussions. (Appendix A provides an inventory of the school policies on integration, inclusion and social justice). In one school I was welcomed to visit all classrooms. In this setting team teaching was the main model of classroom organisation, except for the specialist areas. In the other school, classroom visits were organised around a cross-sectional sample of Year levels and teachers involved in inclusive educational initiatives and this study. Fifteen separate classrooms were visited in this school. Initial introductory discussions were informal, mainly in the staffroom, as well as corridor chats. This was even extended to wandering around on yard duty with teachers and principals.

Furthermore, excerpts from the teacher interviews illustrate particular features of each school community (see Appendix B). These insights provide a richer description of the school settings. My aim was to capture the ethos of each setting: the culture, the structures and the values and belief systems that characterise each school. However, the possibility of similar detail being raised and analysed in the context of emergent themes, in the following evidentiary chapters, was recognised. This section explores each school as an environment: the communities it serves, the working environment, its ethos, organisational structures and the values and belief systems.
School locations and communities
The schools in this study were purposively selected. There were a number of reasons why these schools were approached to participate in the study; criteria related directly to the nature of the school communities, their size, location and the openness to be involved in this research project. The core criteria were for the schools to have an open policy regarding inclusive education and to have subsequent enrolments of students with disabilities and specific learning needs. In addition, the principals were highly regarded by teachers and regional education administrators for their commitment to social justice and their active involvement in each school’s response to inclusive education policy.

The schools selected provide a cross-sectional, purposive sample of variants regarding demography and location. One school is located in a provincial city, within the State of Victoria and the other in an outer metropolitan area in close proximity to Victoria’s capital city, Melbourne. The provincial city is located a significant distance from the central bureaucracy of Melbourne and the State governance of education. It is a three and a half hour journey by road. The outer metropolitan is located within proximity of one of the metropolitan regional offices for the Education Department and draws students from outer suburbs and semi-rural communities. Both schools serve a general population that has remained reasonably stable, rather than itinerant, and represents a wide socio-economic mix of individuals within their communities. However, one major difference between each school setting is the higher representation of families of Anglo-Saxon background within the provincial setting. The semi-metropolitan school is diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, language and religion. The differentiation between school populations was another factor in my choice of school sites, as I believe it is an important factor contributing to the multiple realities of teachers’ work, and has enabled the critical characteristics of inclusive education to be examined across a broader base of school communities. Acknowledging this factor, outcomes were examined for any related differentiation due to school demographics.

Neither school is considered disadvantaged according to Federal Government criteria including isolation, limited curriculum offerings or a high percentage of families.
receiving high levels of government family assistance. The administrators within each Regional Office, where these schools are located, indicated that they did not differ to any extraordinary degree from many of the school communities within the Victorian educational landscape. Enrolments at the schools were 630 and just under 800 students respectively. In each case a significant proportion of students travel over 10 kilometres to the schools, approximately 15-20%. Travel in the provincial area is mainly by organised State school transport, where the semi-metropolitan area is by private and public transport. Both areas are well serviced with a choice of primary and secondary schools that includes representation of the government and private sector. There is a Special Education facility and a School Support Centre in the provincial area. The semi-metropolitan school has three special education facilities close by, with Tertiary and Further Education (TAFE) and university options also available. In the provincial city the nearest university campus is 120 kilometres away.

The working environments
Both schools were staffed according to the Education Department’s guidelines for staffing quotas - staff numbers were 34 and 43 respectively. School organisation included specialist staff for library, art, physical education and music. Both schools have elected to appoint special education staff to facilitate inclusion as well as provide support for learners deemed to be at risk. At the provincial school the focus is directed towards inclusion of disabled students. The outer city campus also has a student counsellor.

Class sizes are average for schools with a median tally of 25 pupils within each class. Staffing is stable in the first school with long-term employment at the same school for over 50% of members. The second school has had a stable core of members but the turnover has been higher due to the availability of job opportunities within the metropolitan area. However, given this context, staff turnover has still been comparatively low. Buildings are a mix of old and new facilities that are all well maintained in both settings. Grounds and sporting facilities are very well established in the outer city campus where community utilisation was high.
School ethos, organisational structures, values and belief system

Parent participation

Parent involvement in the both schools is apparent with participation evident through a range of activities from school council, fundraising, staff liaison, communication through newsletters and a degree of participation in decision making, especially in regard to specialised programs and school facilities. Overall both schools reflect the value of parent participation in their policies. Implementation of this policy reflects some differences. One school conducts an open door policy drawing away from a formalised appointment process for parents. The other school, while more formal, is welcoming with availability for parents to contact staff. In both schools there is an ethos of knowing and understanding parents. Parents are also involved in a voluntary capacity in both schools in a range of ways that seem to depend on individual class teachers. Opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the school are numerous, including Parents’ and Friends’ Association meetings, information evenings and social functions.

The parents of children who are technically ‘integrated’ into the schools are also given additional opportunities to develop close links with the school. This is provided mainly through involvement or observation of class programs, the regular meetings of Program Support Groups (PSG) and liaison through specialised staff as well as communication processes such as student diaries.

School administration and organisation

The school organisation and administration procedures differ between the settings and although, at first glance, this may appear to be of marginal significance, I am electing to present an overview of each school separately.

School A

In School A eleven participants (see Appendix C for details) volunteered to be involved in this research project. The group comprised one administrator and ten classroom teachers who have been involved, in some way, with integrating and including disabled students within the school life of this mainstream setting. The snowballing effect of participants occurred during the interview phase where additional members involved in
the study extended to two parents, two consultant teachers from the local special setting and one additional co-ordinator within the school administration team.

Informal discussion, with the initial participants, portrayed similar accounts of the school’s organisational history. After a long period of ‘conservative’ leadership, reported as being ‘top-down’ and ‘authoritarian’ in nature, the school had a change of principal in the early 1990s. This change was accompanied by a change in the way leadership was enacted. Excerpts from teachers’ dialogue, (see Appendix B), provides a snapshot that constructs a working account of this change where school renewal and participatory processes were actualised. The Principal’s perception of his role, combined with his management style, was reported as having a significant impact on the school’s organisation.

The school’s public image within the community has always been important for staff members. This includes issues such as school discipline, classroom programs and management. However, teaching excellence was not recognised in any particular way and there was staff division regarding ‘what’ was best. Staff reported how the new leadership had contributed to building a more cohesive school staff.

Many staff had taught in this school for over 10 years and even 20 years in about 20% of cases. According to these teachers, the (new) principal acknowledges their experience where distributed leadership, teacher involvement and collaboration are paramount to the current school operation.

The Principal also mentioned that different members of the leadership team have different qualities that tend to counterbalance any one type of authority. “School effectiveness” and “best practice” are very much at the forefront of this school’s organisation but leadership is democratic, recognising the need to acknowledge both human and social capital of the school. The aim has been to develop a pedagogy that recognises, respects and encourages every child as a special person with individual strengths, talents and needs.
The School Charter and Vision Statements also reflect the insights above that contribute to an overall commitment to a professional learning community, as does the policy. Thus, the commitment to the development of a collective, professional learning community emerges through a range of mediums - written, spoken and observed - providing an overview of the ethos of this school.

School B

School B had twenty participants who volunteered to be involved in this research project. These include teachers who have a range of responsibilities in areas of administration, curriculum co-ordinators, year level co-ordinators, teachers and parents. Parent representation was established by way of a group interview of five parents who have a child who is involved in the integration program or has specific learning needs. The snowballing effect of other ‘insiders’ being identified and drawn into the study as key stakeholders was minimal with only one additional volunteer. This seemed to be due to the initial response being representative of all groups within the school community.

Initially the school had opened to serve a semi-rural community being encircled gradually with a predicted suburban spread. The school’s background of striving for academic ‘excellence’ was still at the forefront of discussion and documentation but the cultural changes of contemporary education addressing individual need were evident within school policy and current considerations regarding planning and organisation raised by stakeholders within the teacher cohort involved in this study (see Appendix B).

Furthermore, the promotion of building relational social capital, with an emphasis on active involvement by all stakeholders, is a significant school focus that promotes communication within the community. This change, that appears to be influenced strongly by the principal, did raise some tensions regarding the number of programs and compliances required within the school’s charter and operational plan.

The Principal’s perception of his role, combined with his management style, is orientated towards distributive leadership. This is evidenced within both the policy documentation
of the school, as well as the accounts from the administrative team. The perception of School B being a good place to be was an over-riding aspect within the leadership team; the Principal plays a critical role in the goal of school capacity building and the development of supportive teams within a whole-school approach.

Overall the theoretical underpinning of the Principal’s leadership, practices and subsequent school policy has promoted staff cohesiveness. Individual stakeholders are able to build on, and contribute to, school organisation in a variety of ways. Support for the development of ongoing best practice is a focus of school organisation and leadership where teaching excellence is not only recognised but staff development is seen as an imperative for a climate of continued capacity building. Staff members contribute to a collaborative team effort. Staff knowledge is recognised by the Principal who not only builds on this through the organisational structures of distributed leadership but also establishes processes to address areas of conflict regarding best practice. According to teachers, if issues are unable to be resolved through internal democratic processes, ‘outside’ expertise is employed. Once again, the focus is on best practice to reflect the policy focus of the school.

The Principal indicated that he is aware of change being stressful for staff and how innovations or political demands could often seem unconnected. Thus support through staff development and reflective practice based on trials and/or shared knowledge underpins many of his administrative decisions.

This account of the schools and the operational details provides an initial understanding of the school ethos and the perceived realities for these education workers.

**Principles and procedures for data collection and analysis**
Conventional criteria for trustworthiness (internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity) are not compatible with the axioms and procedures of naturalistic and emergent design. Consequently, alternative criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, which affirm the trustworthiness of naturalistic
approaches, are required to reaffirm validity and reliability (Merriam, 1990; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Cohen et al., 2000).

**Trustworthiness**

Research studies of this nature need to meet criteria by which they are deemed to be believable and trustworthy. In the ‘conventional paradigm’, these criteria are ‘internal validity’, ‘external validity’, ‘reliability’ and ‘objectivity’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). However these criteria are based on the beliefs and goals of the instrumental enquiry mode, and are inappropriate when assessing the trustworthiness of a naturalistic study.

In response, naturalists have developed comparable criteria that are dependent on the axioms of the naturalistic paradigm. The criteria are: ‘credibility’ (equivalent to internal validity); ‘transferability’ (external validity); ‘dependability’ (reliability); and ‘confirmability’ (objectivity) (Denzin, 1983, p. 57). The following techniques were implemented to take account of these criteria:

- prolonged engagement and
- persistent observation and triangulation of methods (to increase the probability that credible findings are produced).

The initial orientation for the study took place over three months and the data collection phase over a period of six months. The methods of data collection (interviews, observations and record analysis) formed a triangulation of methods that verified multiple realities within inclusive practice. The purpose was to confirm information generated by the primary method of communication with emergent observation and document analysis.

**Negative case analysis**

Negative case analysis is ‘analogous’ for qualitative data as statistical tests are for quantitative data. It is a means of identifying error variance. Negative case analysis makes data more credible by reducing the number of exceptional cases to zero, or close to zero (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This technique is also employed within this study.
**Member checks**

Members of the group generating information verified data, interpretations and conclusions of the study. This gave members the opportunity to ensure data presented an accurate representation of their reality. Member checks were completed throughout the study giving respondents a chance to correct errors and misinterpretations immediately. To provide an opportunity for members to request any final modifications a draft of the enquiry report was made available for review. This was a formal member check conducted at the end of the study.

**Verification**

A further significant aspect of this design was that meanings and interpretations of the data were communicated between the respondents and the enquirer who employed the concept of consensus and mutual understanding (Habermas, 1984, p.251). It was evident that those with ‘insider’ knowledge within the context of the study were in the position to verify and confirm their mutual interactions and understandings and communicate truths and realities (Habermas, 1996). Throughout the process every endeavour was made to ensure that the theory emerging from the interactions related to the lifeworlds of educators. Methodologically, the actors’ views of actions, organisation and objects within the civil society were valued.

The focus was planned deliberately as an ‘information–verifying’ device supporting consensus rather than an ‘information–generating’ device (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As a result the naturalistic emergent direction of the study was contingent on individual and collective agency of key stakeholders. However, this also produced a visible process of communicative action.

**Transferability**

The degree of transferability is dependent on the degree of similarity of this enquiry to other contexts involved in the implementation of Victorian inclusive policy. I recognise that any ‘generalisability’ that may occur could emerge in various ways within different settings. In addition, a reflective journal was kept to help build credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Containing three sections, the journal
provided important information for the auditor. This included a daily log and logistics of the study, a personal diary, and a methodological record.

**Bias**

As stated in Chapter one, I was very conscious, particularly from my position as an educator within the field of inclusive education, of the dangers of subjectivity and bias that I may bring to the study. Recognising the possible criticisms relating to the ethics of my own intrinsic knowledge I was committed to developing a methodology that would allow open and unrestrained communication leading to emergent information.

In order for the human instrument to overcome any possible bias there needs to be frequent, continuing and meaningful interactions between the respondents and inquirer. Accordingly, a substantial level of interaction between the inquirer and the respondents was established to avoid, as much as possible, my own knowledge influencing any findings. In addition the scrutiny of data for accuracy and any bias I may bring to study was openly discussed with participants.

However, the justification of my own knowledge was also maintained as an aspect in this study that would maximise adaptability, insight, interaction and consensus throughout the study.

**Data collection procedures and instrumentation**

The naturalistic design of the study calls for the researcher to be the primary data-gathering instrument (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As the researcher I am positioned as the human instrument or primary data collector facilitating communicative action that involves interviews, negotiation, consensus, observations, and document analysis of inclusive policy (Wolcott, 1983; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). All such measures were used in this study, along with a reflective journal, in order to provide for the triangulation of methods. However, the areas of observation and document analysis were utilised within a confirmative process of consensus rather than in an investigative tactic. Summaries were also used in this design as a way of obtaining member checks.
The design also allows for maximum opportunities for adaptability and adjustment of interactions to the variety of realities. Whilst recognising that human instruments can evaluate, appreciate and take into account values and elements of communicative action it is also acknowledged that values of the inquirer might be reflected in the interactions through ‘intuitive’ (tacit) and ‘expressed’ (operational) knowledge.

**Interviews**

The open-ended format of the initial interview was designed to identify and then verify the understandings participants brought to the site and the consensus relating to the truths and realities for education workers involved with inclusive education. Except for the final interviews, used for member checking, all interviews were unstructured, in-depth, interviews pertaining to the broad issues of the research questions:

- the features of teachers’ work in inclusive landscapes;
- key characteristics encouraging operational understanding and
- how teacher knowledge contributes to classroom action (see page 8).

These broad areas were also outlined within the plain language statement (see Appendix F). As opposed to structured interviews, this mode of interviewing employs a non-standardised format from which the interviewer does not seek normative responses that are system restrained.

*Such interviews involve stressing the interviewee’s definition of the situation; encouraging the interviewee to structure the account of the situation; and letting the interviewee introduce a considerable extent of their notions of what they regard as relevant, instead of relying upon the investigator’s notion of relevance*’ (Dexter cited in Guba and Lincoln, 1985, p. 155).

The interviews are also overt, where respondents are aware of being interviewed. The need to build and maintain open and trustworthy interactions is an essential feature of this study where the nature of knowledge and the complexity of the lived experience of key actors needs to be sustained and remain undistorted (Cohen *et al.*, 2000).
Additionally unrestricted communication is required to ensure optimal interaction that is vital for the study. Therefore the mode of data collection is an important consideration. Electronic data collection modes, such as tape recorders and videotape equipment, do have certain advantages that handwritten notes do not. For example, interviews and observations recorded electronically can be reviewed multiple times, helping to ensure that a complete understanding has been reached (Merriam, 1998). Alternatively, handwritten notes cannot record everything and may also slow down the pace of the interview resulting in smaller amounts of data collected at the time. Despite the advantageous aspects of electronic modes, a handwritten mode of data collection was considered preferable for this study for a number of reasons. First, this approach established a more equal level of interaction. The use of recording equipment can dictate a semi-power base where respondents may be uncomfortable and therefore less candid. Second, handwritten notes also require the interviewer to focus on what is being said, as well as providing more opportunity for communication including questions or comments. Additionally notations onto paper tend not to distort the interaction between the participants and interviewer. And third, handwritten notes ‘need not rely on his or her memory [the interviewer] to compose the all–important summary that should be included at the end of the interview’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 272).

Hand written notes were utilised within this study promoting unimpaired presentations by participants, distinguished by mutual understandings, rather than any systematically distorted communication.

Observation

There are several methodological arguments for the use of observation. Observation ‘maximises the inquirer’s ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviours, customs and the like;’ it ‘allows the inquirer to see the workplace as his [her] subjects see it ... to capture the phenomenon in and on its own terms, and to grasp the culture in its own natural ongoing environment’; and it ‘allows the observer to build on tacit knowledge, both his/her own and that of members in the group’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 273).
However, as Merriam (1988) pointed out, the focus must be allowed to emerge and in fact may change over the course of the study. This study used observation to confirm and further validate the ‘insider’ information of the lifeworlds of teachers and other key stakeholders in a collaborative way. Stakeholders demonstrated and discussed policy implementation that built on the stated knowledge of each respondent. Therefore an emergent or evolving checklist of elements to be included in each observed task was not established as part of the data collection process.

Alternatively, observation of policy implementation for the purpose of generating information would not have been consistent with the basic principles of understanding change and social action using insider information. Therefore observation by the researcher to gain information about policy implementation was not included in the design of this study. However, observation for the purpose of gaining an initial overview of the school was employed (see Appendix E for emergent features of observation).

**Document collection**

Additionally record (document) analysis was used as a further source of information within this study to gain an overview of each school. Predominantly this was structured around each school’s policy and mission statements pertaining to inclusive education (see Appendix A for inventory analysis) where the inter-relation between the policy texts was verified. The paradigm of teacher knowledge and the pathways and processes for learning to occur are the major perceptual elements within this analysis. The critical, distinguishing features of the policy documents were reviewed to confirm and further substantiate the expressed operational knowledge of stakeholders. This was an important feature of this study, as operational knowledge has often been overlooked in inclusive education research where more often document analysis was applied to investigative procedures.

This study does not apply a watchdog approach to document analysis, where critical elements of policy are compared to classroom planning and procedures. Rather it
endeavours to understand, through communication, how teachers might interpret and develop policy guidelines within their classrooms, and provides an analysis of these actions. Moreover the study considers the motivational aspects that may promote policy action.

**Data analysis procedures**

As discussed and justified earlier in this chapter, critical approaches to data analysis were applied to this study, beginning with the very first communiqué in order to facilitate the emergent knowledge and grounding of theory. In addition data analysis was required throughout the study, rather than at a singular point in time, where the emergent structure continued through subsequent data collection phases establishing significant content. Although content analysis has been viewed typically as a quantitative research technique, Lincoln and Guba, (1985) argued against such an interpretation on the grounds that the frequency of an assertion is not necessarily related to the importance of that assertion. Therefore problem significance did not relate to the quantification of symbolic interactions, although these also contained meaningful messages.

It must also be noted that although naturalistic research methods use data analysis as a means for developing ‘grounded theory,’ it does not exclude previous research and theories:

*Seeking theory grounded in the reality of participants does not mean a disregard for previous work. The researcher must become thoroughly acquainted with related research and theory so that he [she] can use it whenever it is helpful for explaining events. Similarly, he [she] contributes to the development of knowledge by pointing out corroboration and contradiction of findings with the findings of other researchers. Moreover, he [/she] uses previous research and theory to select the setting he is studying and to inform the initial focus of his information gathering (Wilson, 1983, p. 16).*

The development of emergent or grounded theory is not haphazard. Unlike pre-structured research designs, inquirer-respondent interaction is a constant necessity for developing theory from the data emerging through the reality of communication
(Wilson, 1983). This constant comparative method of data analysis has been utilised within this study. It involves the identification of emergent realities; integrating realities and their properties relating to the lifeworlds of education workers; defining or delimiting the theory; and verifying and recording the theory (construction).

Within this context every effort has been made to ensure that realities emerged as a construction from respondents. Categories arose from consensus regarding particular properties. The researchers’ contextual knowledge of inclusive education was used to define initial realities that were confirmed or changed within the consensus process. Identifying groups or sets of realities required a process of comparing realities to properties describing the skills and knowledge of teachers. The realities were tested in light of the communicated knowledge of the life-worlds of key stakeholders and were refined where necessary.

Delimiting begins to occur at the level of the knowledge construction, where fewer and fewer modifications of sets or categories of realities emerge. The original number of categories lessened due to improved articulation, interactions and refinement, constructed in various forms. To assist in the formation of knowledge sets (categories) knowledge of inclusion was viewed as a major educational reform that challenged the socio-cultural construction of schooling. The information generated was examined within these guidelines unless deemed too restrictive by participants.

Negative case analysis, a variation of the method already described, was also used in conjunction with the above techniques. In such an analysis, a hypothesis is made and continuously refined until it accounts for all, or a reasonable number of, communicated realities. Negative case analysis is also a means of assuring ‘trustworthiness’, an important aspect of naturalistic enquiry that is associated with the concept of phenomenology. This process is clarified by Crotty (1998, p. 47):

Phenomenology suggests that, if we lay aside, as best we can, the prevailing understandings of those phenomena and revisit our immediate experience of them, possibilities for new meaning emerge for...
In relation to this study, negative case analysis provides an account of facts formulated to explain certain experiences. Explanations are based on data, other research literature and the researcher’s insight to redefine or review propositions.

**Research ethics and risk management**

Ethical clearance was gained for this research project. I addressed the issue of transparency for this study by providing a plain language statement (see Appendix F) giving a detailed account of the research project with information about the data gathering process and method of analysis. The voluntary nature of participation was emphasised, making clear that participation could be withdrawn at any time. Explanatory statements addressing ethical issues regarding privacy, any possible deception or risk, combined with confidentiality details were also addressed within the ethical code of practice. Written consent was obtained from all participants ensuring their understanding of the research project; voluntary consent with the option of withdrawal at any stage; the use of findings and the confidentiality agreement regarding the release of information (see Appendix G). An additional ethical feature was the consideration of a plain language statement that could be presented verbally, as well as obtaining the consent on behalf of a minor or dependent person, if students volunteered to be included in this study.

In consultation with each school staff member it was decided to provide pseudonyms for each school and a numbering system relating to individual staff responses. Names were discussed and finally an alphabetical symbol was agreed to be more suitable for the purpose of confidentiality. Subsequently I referred to the provincial school as School A and the outer city school as School B. Care was taken to maintain anonymity in this same way throughout the following evidentiary chapters, particularly when presenting data and knowledge that relates to one individual school or individual participants. Individual participant information was coded according to the school and participant number, for example, A1 or B10. Participants agreed with this coding procedure, however concerns
were raised about data being presented in the body of the research under this coding system. Confidentiality and/or identification of individuals or the school location were at the forefront of this discussion. Therefore, within the body of this study, the teachers’ accounts are not labelled using these codes. This ensured that concerns about confidentiality were accommodated. At times the general themes from specific areas such as a curriculum area or class levels are identified when attention is drawn to a specific aspect of inclusion in a particular and identifiable circumstance. Therefore, confidentiality was discussed and negotiated throughout the progress of the study.

Relationship with school educators
In the present study, the research problem, to identify critical characteristics contributing to successful inclusive policy action, was stated explicitly at the outset of the initial contact with the schools; it became the ongoing focus of conversations between school staff and myself. Interview times were structured into conversations where school staff initiated questions and topics. Notes from the initial individual conversations provided an indication of the trend of staff communicating about classroom and professional practice and concerns. Often they were seeking confirmation about their professional practice. Listening to their questions and responding in an interactive way meant an insight was gained into what preoccupied them in their work relating to inclusive education. Thus, my agenda quickly turned to a responsive role foregrounding my work as the researcher in this study. However, as the researcher in this study, I was conscious of not wanting to add substantially, or further burden teachers, with an additional workload. Furthermore, I did not have, or expect to have, the same relationship with all participants. While I always responded to teacher’s requests I acknowledges that individual interactions would be constructed differently; the relationships I negotiated and the kinds of roles I took were therefore not fixed.

The initial conversations indicated that there were different degrees of professional knowledge and expertise amongst staff as far as inclusive pedagogy was concerned. The principals, as well as teachers themselves, spoke of teachers as highly competent within the integration process, whereas other teachers were seen as having strengths in other areas of education. There was a sense of collective agency in each school where it was
recognised that teachers could assist each other. Working with each teacher I learnt much about inclusion within each particular classroom context. Each teacher was working through their own dimensions related to theory, policy and practice in inclusive education. I sought to learn from these teachers and as a result was also invited into classrooms and the inner world of student and teacher action.

My role in this study
Some of the criticisms of qualitative research are linked to the problems with ethnographic truths and the ways which researchers may represent others. Therefore, I acknowledge my role in the construction of this research and that writing up case study research is not always a neutral activity (Lather, 1994). For this reason my intention is not to provide a neat account of the outcomes of this study but a text that foregrounds the complexity and multiple realities of inclusive education, while at the same time identifying patterns that promote effective outcomes. Therefore I have deliberatively included representative selections of the texts illustrating the multiplicities of positions that each teacher holds. However, constructing a space where statements could be made that were unacceptable, in official school talk, presented a dilemma when teachers perhaps vented negative representations relating to their school community. In writing this thesis I was critically aware of the tensions and dilemmas that arise from ethnographic research. However, my concern not to betray informants was constructed around a broad context of how the schools worked for and against integrated students and the critical characteristics that were identified as promoting inclusion. In this context the research problem was extended, such that not only were characteristics of effective practice identified, but in a number of instances teachers also discussed improvements to their future practice.

Outline of this study
Key sources of data
Thirty-eight teachers from two Victorian schools were engaged in this study. Participants also included seven parents. The teachers represented a range school based personnel: class teachers; year level and curriculum coordinators; subject specialists; as well as members from the administrative teams, including both school principals (see Appendix
C and D). All teachers were currently involved or had been involved in the development and implementation of inclusive policy. Parents were involved in the Program Support Group (PSG) meetings held to plan the educational programs for their disabled child.

In addition data was obtained through the analysis of school policy documents and classroom observation.

Instrument for data collection and time line for the study
The instrument for data collection is outlined in Appendix D. Data collection commenced with observation and document analysis in March 2000. This process provided the opportunity to develop an understanding of each school’s operation regarding inclusion. Initial interviews commenced in May in School A and September in School B.

A summary of the case study methodology employed in this study is defined in Appendix H. The interviews commenced with an open-ended format where the key issues outlined in the plain language statement provided the broad parameters for the interview. These parameters include the nature of integration and inclusion; what worked and how inclusion has worked. Initially four main themes emerged within the data (see Appendix H). Through further consultation and consensus the participants reduced the number of themes to three main areas.

The process of consensus was established to enhance the verification of responses, the credibility of the recording, structuring and interpretation of each respondent’s information. Accordingly, member checks were conducted two weeks after each initial interview. For the purpose of member checks, data was recorded according to the initial interview and it was also organised into emergent themes with associated sub-themes. After a member check of the initial data and consensus was reached, each participant was given a copy of their own particular data organised into main themes. Open-ended discussion and consensus included the scrutiny of information and the themes or categories that had emerged. The scrutiny of representative texts provided the opportunity to ensure interpretation of the evidence, by the researcher, was a fair and
accurate account of participant knowledge and information. Any changes or additional information was added to the initial data.

In the final stage of the member check process the emergent themes were documented and representative quotations were included. Quotations correlated with all the aspects or of each theme. Care was also taken to represent the range of participant’s views and voice. This data was sent to participants and a further visit to each school was conducted to provide the opportunity for scrutiny regarding the representative nature (and accuracy) of quotations. This process was specifically designed to ensure the findings and emergent themes were well grounded in the collection of evidence for this study and that the researcher did not selectively choose quotations presented within the evidentiary chapters.

As stated above, three main themes emerged within the data. Each theme is the topic of a separate evidentiary chapter.

A final outline of themes and quotations were sent out to participants early in 2001 and an initial case report was drafted later in September, 2001. The final write up of this study was completed in 2006.

Summary
This study has aimed to facilitate an understanding of the implementation of certain innovations in a particular context, namely the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools. It employs a naturalistic design that collected, interpreted and confirmed data, resulting in a construction grounded in the context in which the study took place. The evidentiary chapters have provided details relating to inclusive education for these schools, representing contextual factors and dominant themes emerging from the data, presented and analysed in the form of field notes.

In this study, examining teachers’ talk and actions about inclusive education provided an opportunity to scrutinise the scope of the reform and actions that are at times taken for
granted, if not veiled, in school and classrooms routines. Therefore social action and how it relates to school organisation and classroom life are deliberately fore-grounded in this study. Interest is not only focussed on what inclusion is, but how it occurs. In addition, while considering that all description is an epistemological activity, the need for theoretical analysis is acknowledged. Therefore, the data generated in this study were treated as texts and discourse where the analytical approaches, informed by the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter five, are employed.
Chapter five:
Inclusion, change and teacher knowledge: The social construction of inclusive educational reform

Overview of the chapter
In outlining the theoretical framework for this thesis, this chapter identifies a range of theoretical concepts that have been used to inform the collection of evidence relating to inclusive practice and the analysis of data presented within the study. Subsequently, these conceptual tools have contributed to the construction of new insights regarding evidence about inclusive educational reform, action and the relational aspects of teacher knowledge. The key concepts, within the theoretical framework of this thesis, function as a lens through which the project’s main research question is explored:

'What are the critical characteristics and skills of teachers that have contributed to the successful implementation of inclusive educational policy within schools?'

It is anticipated that the key concepts identified in this Chapter will facilitate the development of specific answers to the above question, in turn, helping to shape the future of inclusive education reform. Furthermore, it is expected that these answers will address how the experiential knowledge, drawn from teachers engaged in the process of implementing inclusive policy, may contribute to successful policy implementation. Therefore, it is proposed that a constructive approach in identifying critical characteristics contributing to effective policy implementation might be better accomplished by drawing on information from teachers.

Accordingly, this Chapter examines a range of conceptual tools for analysing evidence of change through social action. The gap between the expectations of change and the actuality of social change may be explained partially by the dimensions of special education and inclusive educational change being under-theorised. Across the corpus of research in inclusive and special education, exploration has often been objectified
around quantitative outcomes and discursive structures within the schooling system, rather than understanding individuals as participating subjects within social conditions. Concepts and theories regarding educational change are important when examining policy implementation but by themselves are limited in gaining an understanding of the realities for key stakeholders and the social action needed to promote change. Referring to teachers as policy actors within this study reflects the position of critical theorists such as Habermas (1984; 1987; 1989) who try to provide a critical scientific analysis of contemporary society.

Specifically, this Chapter examines theoretical tools of enquiry related to teachers’ lifeworlds as social change agents. In considering the conceptual tools that might be used in framing this research, the Chapter outlines theoretical observations and recent work in relation to these specific areas. Consequently, the chapter explores the construction of a range of theoretical tools and then assembles those most appropriate for investigation and analysis in a study of social action promoting change within communities. Theory, in this sense, is a temporary construct providing techniques to construct a useful framework for this research to transcend critical and interpretive paradigms of education research. Rather than providing one system of enquiry, this research does quite the opposite. While recognising that credible educational research must be grounded in the self-understandings and interpretations of teachers, informing them about the nature of their work and their role within inclusive education, this study also aims to identify a systematic understanding of the characteristics that influence and decisively determine action.

Therefore, the exploration of teachers’ lifeworlds (Habermas, 1984), linking action theory with rationalised processes, is explored through a practical discourse of active participation and consensus. For Habermas the rationalisation of the lifeworld is the path by which social change, including emancipatory opportunity, is said to occur. Within the framework of this study, the participants (policy actors) and the researcher are linked in a common task of identifying critical characteristics contributing to effective inclusive policy implementation. Rather than the researcher being positioned as an ‘outsider’ the
goal was to reach communicative understanding and agreement terminating in ‘the intersubjective communality of mutual comprehension, shared knowledge and reciprocal trust with one another (Habermas, 1979, p.3).

Against a background of exclusionary discourses of difference, this study inquires into the multiple dimensions and realities of inclusive education and the processes by which social rules change. In order to justify this position, the major approaches and the construction of principled research into education reform were carefully considered in Chapter three. Major concepts derived from critical theory and Habermas’ emphasis on critical social science, provide essential concepts and techniques within the research methodology, to incorporate the exploration of ‘how speaking and acting subjects acquire and use knowledge’ (Habermas, 1984, p.11).

A snapshot of Habermas: German philosopher and sociologist

A brief background and overview of major works

Habermas was born in Germany in 1929. In 1956 he began the study of philosophy and sociology, in the tradition of critical theory, at the Institute for the Social Research at the Frankfurt School, Johann Wolfgang Goethe University Frankfurt am Main.

Jürgen Habermas is currently recognised as one of the most influential philosophers in the world. His comprehensive and wide ranging publications include topics extending from social-political theory to aesthetics, epistemology and language to philosophy of religion. His ideas have significantly influenced philosophy as well as political-legal thought, sociology, communication studies, argumentation theory and rhetoric, developmental psychology and theology (Zalta, 2007). Habermas' theoretical system is devoted to revealing the possibility of reason, emancipation and rational-critical communication concealed in modern institutions and in the human capacity to deliberate and pursue rational interests.
His most notable works relate to the political domain and to issues concerning rationality, communication and knowledge. He first gained serious public attention, at least in Germany, with the 1962 publication of the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (English ed., 1989) a detailed social history of the development of the participatory, bourgeois, public sphere from its origins in the 18th century salons up to its transformation through the influence of capital-driven mass media (Zalta, 2007).

Habermas (1989, p. 30) refers to the public sphere as mediating between the ‘private sphere’ and the ‘sphere of public authority.’ ‘The private sphere comprises civil society in the narrower sense, that is to say, the realm of commodity exchange and of social labor’ (op. cit. p, 30). Alternatively, the ‘sphere of public authority’ deals with the state, or realm of the police, and the ruling class (op. cit. p.30). The public sphere crosses over both these realms and ‘through the vehicle of public opinion it put[s] the state in touch with the needs of society’ (Habermas, 1989, p. 31). Drawing on Habermas’ account of the public sphere Fraser (1990, p.57) states ‘This area is conceptually distinct from the state: it [is] a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state.’

The concept of the public sphere describes the space where rational discussion, debate and consensus can occur, mediating between the private interests of everyday life in civil society and the realm of state power. For Habermas the transformation has involved private interests assuming direct political functions such as powerful corporations controlling and manipulating the media and state. His work on the public sphere informed another major work, *Theory of Communicative Action*, a two volume study published in 1981 (English, 1984; 1987), the first volume subtitled *Reason and the Rationalization of Society* and the second, *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*.

*The theory of communicative action*

The public sphere is examined, somewhat differently, by Habermas in Volume Two of *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1987) as he discusses the distinction between lifeworlds and systems. Within this context the difference between the sphere of public
authority and the private sphere is considered within the perspective of accepted cultural knowledge of members of society and the externally imposed influences of the system world. Therefore, Habermas (1987) argues that action in the modern world is coordinated by systems which function according to means-end rationality. For example the market is a paradigmatic example of such a system. On the other hand, within Habermas’ concept of the lifeworld, actions are coordinated primarily by communicatively mediated norms and values of individual actors and by the socially defined ends and meanings that constitute the fabric of the lifeworld. Habermas (1987, p. 124) asserts that the lifeworld ‘is represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organised stock of interpretive patterns’ that are essentially familiar.’

Even though the scope of the lifeworld may change and move in complex and different ways, as contexts and action plans change, Habermas maintains that the culture and language in the lifeworld makes it possible for each individual actor to intersubjectively share their understandings and reach consensus.

Two or more actors---seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement. The central concept of interpretation refers in the first instance to negotiating definitions of the situation which admit of consensus (Habermas, 1984, p. 86).

For Habermas, social action is either communicative or strategic. He makes the distinction between these two areas according to the way in which individual social actions are organised into patterns of interaction.

Concepts of social action are distinguished ...according to how they specify the goal directed actions of different participants; as the egocentric calculations of utility (whereby the degree of conflict and cooperation varies with the given interest positions)... or as reaching understanding in the sense of a cooperative process of interpretation (Habermas, (1984, p.101).

Communicative action, or what Habermas later came to call ‘strong communicative action’ in Some Further Clarifications of the Concept of Communicative Rationality
speakers are seen to coordinate their action and pursuit of individual or collective goals. This is on the basis of a shared understanding that the goals are inherently acceptable. By way of comparison, strategic action succeeds on the basis of actors achieving their own individual goals, whereas communicative action succeeds insofar as the actors unreservedly agree that their goals merit a collaborative effort. Communicative action is therefore an inherently consensual form of social coordination, in which actors ‘mobilize the potential for rationality,’ (op. cit. ch. 7) through ordinary language and the focus of rationally motivated agreement. Working toward consensus both tests the boundaries and validity claims (truth, rightness and sincerity) of a given situation and examines personal perspectives such as values and beliefs (Habermas, 1987). Furthermore, Habermas uses the concept of communicative action to describe agency in the form of communication, under which understanding is confined to a deliberative form of democracy where the free exchange of beliefs and intentions are absent from domination (eg. the state). Habermas (1984, p. 287) claims:

..a communicatively achieved agreement has a rational basis; it cannot be imposed by either party, whether instrumentally through intervention in the situation directly or strategically through influencing the decisions of opponents .... what comes to pass manifestly through outside influence ... cannot count subjectively as agreement. Agreement rests on common convictions.

In addressing how communicatively agreement may be achieved Habermas refers to theories of rationality. His definition of rationality is one that is epistemic, practical, and inter-subjective. For Habermas (1984, p. 11), rationality consists not so much in the possession of particular knowledge, but rather in ‘how speaking and acting subjects acquire and use knowledge.’ Such a pragmatic account recognises interpreters as competent and knowledgeable agents where reason is be established in actual communicative exchanges that accept the universal pragmatics of consensus within an ideal speech situation. Defined in procedural terms, inter-subjective and argumentative operations must be set in motion before an assertion or change can be rationally validated - rather than engaging in the traditional foundations of political directives (Healy, 1997). Furthermore, Roderick (1986) interprets communicative rationality as attempting to identify the historical development of rationality structures as well as applying rationality
to different spheres of modern life. These different spheres, such as political action and culture, represent distinct domains whose underlying logic demands to be clarified.

Unlike the essentially familiar and knowable lifeworld, the systems world is external, strategic and more often imposed on individual actors. However, to be effective the systems world must be embedded in the values, beliefs and interactions of the lifeworld. Habermas (1987) suggests that as the systems world becomes increasingly complex it uncouples from the lifeworld. Accordingly, the differential aspects of the two worlds create tensions even when the system world functions are embedded within the lifeworld values and beliefs. For example, as societies expand through complexity and pluralization, social integration becomes more difficult to achieve. Systems, such as the legal system, eventually form and organize around the political and socially integrative force of the state organisations, primarily to facilitate and supervise transactions of power and exchange (Habermas, 1987, pp.119-152).

..communicative rationalization of everyday action and the formation of systems of purposive-rational economic and administrative action [are] complementary developments [but there are also] counteracting tendencies (Habermas, 1984, p. 341).

Furthermore, in his later work *Between the Facts and Norms* (1996) Habermas reflects that system theory has completely rejected individual and collective agency and ‘cuts the public of citizens [from its] …lifeworlds roots in a civil society, political culture, and socialization’ (Habermas, 1996, p. 335). Clarifying that system theory allows for the role of the citizen, he observes that it has collapsed into an elitist concept with competing elite leadership teams related to the value questions of aims, objectives and outcomes.

**The significance of Habermas’ work**

There is no doubt that Habermas’ work by its very nature is controversial. His debates defending his own reconstruction of the modern enlightenment tradition have challenged political theories and resounded within the newer forms of political action and thinking, relating to the post-modern era. The post-modernism debate on the problematic issues relating to the tradition of the modern, instigated by Derrida, Baudrillard and Lyotard,
calls for change to rectify the disadvantageous concepts within this tradition. For Lyotard (1984), Habermas’ project of modernity has become obsolete and society has entered the ‘postmodern condition’. Within this context there is the claim that Habermas’ communicative action is hopelessly outdated as a generalist and abstract narrative of emancipation. Furthermore, Lyotard (1984) claims that modernity cannot think intellectually without distancing itself historically from its own achieved implementations.

Postmodernism offers to move beyond Habermas’ modernist narratives and has rapidly gained currency throughout social and human science disciplines into the 21st century promoting strategies of individualism and diversity (Powell, 2001). Themes include: distrust in absolute truth; emphasis on the particular rather than the general; local power rather than the nation state; universal reality is profoundly doubted; the demise of consumer power in the global market place and diversity and difference is emphasized and valued above commonality based on homogeneity.

From his earlier work, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, first published in 1962, (English, 1989) and the publication of Theory, of Communicative Action (Vol.1, 1984; Vol. 2, 1987), to the more recent publication Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory, of Law and Democracy (1996), Habermas has pursued his quest for a viable democratic practice at a rather complex level of interconnection between the ideal and the real. Although there is a heavy reliance on a set of idealising pre-suppositions and tension between the ideal and the real is recognised as problematic (McCarthy, 1994), the moral fibre of Habermas’ theory stands up to scrutiny. Habermasian processes underpinning the major dimensions of his theory are still acknowledged despite rigorous debate within the academic field ( see McCarthy, 1994; Hoy and McCarthy, 1994).

For Habermas, one of the main purposes of communicative action is deliberative democracy and the reform of the classical notions of democratic theory, especially the concept of popular sovereignty that exists within current democratic societies. In turn, the
challenge by Habermas seeks ‘to do justice to the praxical, situated and inter-subjective nature of contemporary reason’ (Healy, 1997 p. 3). In such a context reason and associated change is not found in the structures of realised perceptions but in actual communication exchanges. Accordingly the deliberative model of democracy:

_.is a necessary condition for attaining legitimacy and rationality with regard to collective decision making processes in a polity, that the institutions of this polity are so arranged that what is considered in the common interest of all results from processes of collective deliberation conducted rationally and fairly among free and equal individuals (Benhabib, 1996, p. 7)._ 

Furthermore, the socio-political aspects of Habermas’ (1990) theory maintain a communicative nucleus within the scaffold of an ideal speech situation where each subject (with the ability to speak and act) is allowed to take part in a discourse. This ideal speech situation is linked to the notions of a civil society. It has not overlooked the contingency that the public domain brings into the social process but it has provided scope for understanding the limitations of social action within the political and cultural constructions of society (Strydom, 2001). Consequently participation is recognised as a strategic force in policy implementation:

_.in positing the ideal of a society characterised by free and open communication and by rational and participatory decision making, this theory has the decisive emancipatory advantage of providing an important political yardstick with references to which distortions in current practices can be readily diagnosed and corrective action set in train (Healy, 1997, p. 4)._ 

Communicative power of the citizen acting, speaking, talking and contending in various communicative spaces within society is upheld as an imperative component of critical social science theory and social reform. Welton (2001), in explicating Habermas’ (1996) articulation of a civil society, drew attention to communicative power being rendered impotent within the system domains of political administration that are thought to be self programming and self-referential. He goes on to say that this vision of a self-programming administration horrifies Habermas and that ‘citizen impotence captures real,
historical experiences of ruling class monopoly over decision–making’ (Welton, 2001, p. 2). Welton also points out that the functioning of such a political administrative system produces (or reproduces) a neglected and powerless underclass where system defects do not emerge from a vacuum but are evident in the core of ordinary citizens. According to Welton (2001), Habermas does not believe that any administrative system can integrate society, but key stakeholders can negotiate the various spheres of civil society through communicative interaction.

While Habermas (1996) documented the need for ideal speech in a civil society, in his more recent work he acknowledged misguided conceptual strategies where communicative power was rendered impotent within political administrative systems and where expert perspectives on societal organisation proceeded at the expense of the citizen. He asserted that citizens of our late modern world have little say in the political deliberative process and that administrative systems run the risk of a justifiable crisis generating pathologies unless there is dialogue within civil society. Accordingly ‘systems theory is consistent with capitalist economy and not the public administration specialised in planning and welfare’ (Habermas, 1996, p. 353).

Although not prescriptive, this view of political and systems theories helps to understand education policy and action in recent times. It also provides a strong position by which to challenge some of the major sacrosanct assumptions made by contemporary research and the western educational discourses on equal opportunity, social justice and inclusive policies and policy actions. Welton (2001) contends that Habermas provided the challenge to speak circumspectly and purposively about the role of the system (work and state) and the lifeworlds (civil society). Welton (2001, p. 11) deduces that ‘this means fundamentally that civil society is the privileged communicative learning domain.’

This position is vigorously challenged by post-modernist theorists who defend relativism and contextualism, advocating political liberalism (Rorty, 1990). In providing a response to the challenge of pluralism in society, political liberalism does not validate certain normative presuppositions of speech and action that communicative actors unavoidably
make once they engage in practical argumentation (Habermas, 1998). Defending his ideals on a procedural basis, Habermas insisted that ‘the situatedness and impurity of reason by no means commits us to a destructive relativism’ (Healy, 1997, p. 2) where reason, although situated, can maintain its inspirational perspective.

Moreover, political liberalism could be seen as contiguous to ‘educational disablement’ that is contextualised within the discourse of ‘discursive inclusion’ where there is scope for difference to be contested within a new set of rules. Although the macro and micro level of analysis of political liberalism may bring fresh political insights, they are usually confined to the macro-physics or formal discourses of politics (Fairclough, 1992). Hence the main capacity of political liberalism would be seen as re-producing the direction of failed policy action that is already identified within the reform process of inclusive education. In addition, identified political imperatives would potentially emerge as the major basis of contemporary policy action overriding the communication and knowledge of education workers.

**Lifeworlds: agency of key actors**

*An orientation for understanding and analysing communicated texts*

From the point of view of this study Habermas’ (1987) work is constructive in challenging the reductionist, deconstruction of contemporary political action and promoting a positive role of deliberative democracy and communicative action.

According to Crotty (1998), the focus of Habermas’ theories, relating to the oppositional forces of political imperatives and communicative structures of the lifeworlds or civil society have remained as significant components of his work, although they have undergone several revisions. Habermasian theories have remained as a topic of discussion regarding oppressive practices that have emerged within the interactions, associations and organisations of society. The concept of lifeworlds provides the structure to extend simple interactions to an ‘orientation of understanding’ (Welton, 2001, p. 4). Supporting this perspective, McCarthy (1984, p. 272) emphasises that:
Habermas’s entire project, from the critique of contemporary scientism of the reconstruction of historical materialism, rests on the possibility of providing an account of communication that is both theoretical and normative, that goes beyond a pure hermeneutics without being reducible to a strictly empirical-analytic science.

It is within this framework the concept of systematically distorted communication and the subsequent call for communicative competence promoting an ideal speech situation was explicated by Habermas (1970). Embedded within the concept of a civil society, ideal speech is free from the distortion of closed political systems. The ideal of free and open communication is correlated with informal contexts of communication found in the public sphere and in civil society where reasoned agreements occur (Habermas, 1996). The notion of reasoned agreements is endorsed by O’Neill (1998, p. 353) where the foundation for collective and individual agency or identity and integrated spheres of communication emerge:

*In order to reach reasoned agreements citizens may have to engage in a self-transformative process of dialogue in which they reinterpret their needs, interests, values, convictions, or indeed their identities.*

Thus the lifeworld forms a ‘network composed of communicative actions,’ (O’Neill, 1998, p. 354) and within a civil society actions emerge in structures such as schools, families and law.

**Using Habermas to explore inclusive policy action**

Although Habermas’ work relates to the continued exploration of the political domain and issues of communicative knowledge, it has provided a theoretical background to the methodologies supported by action research advocates (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990). The application of action research within the focus of education is explored later in this chapter providing further insight of how Habermas’ theories can be utilised to consider effective education practice. However, to begin with, Habermas’ concepts of lifeworld and system world are considered, within this thesis, in the context of inclusive education reform. The lifeworld relates to the cultural knowledge and actions of teachers (actors), including the communicative structures contributing to an orientation of understanding.
On the other hand, the systems world includes strategic, external and imposed influences, such as inclusive policy, imposed by the state.

**Inclusive policy action: Teachers as the actual agents of change**

The research problem, in this thesis, examines the critical element of how teachers have responded to diversity in their classrooms and the skills and processes required for policy to be effective. The implementation of the Victorian integration policy (now known as ‘inclusion’) is the foundation for this study. It investigates imperatives for future action by drawing on ‘insider’ information of the lifeworld of teachers who are the major policy actors within the process of successful implementation (Habermas, 1984, 1987, 1996).

The focus, within this study, of the genuine realities for teachers as policy actors also considers possible difficulties that may emerge when educational reform is politically driven by the State system. The historical background, with its tradition of difference, and segregation needs to be understood if the structures of social rules are to change regarding disability. In this way, the dimensions of the change can be anticipated and accounted for within the change process for policy actors by providing a constructive insight into why barriers continue to transpire.

In contrast to the partisanship or political leanings of educational change being instigated through the political imperatives of policy development and implementation, action can then occur as part of a network team. From this point of view it becomes possible to question the taken for granted practice of political action and what the discursive effects might be at the actual sites of change. It also becomes possible to examine the inadequacy of strategic, political approaches and why the conditions for effective social action need to be identified for inclusive education to become a reality. For instance research by Booth (1998, p. 79) stressed the importance of theorisation where practice can be explained and barriers removed to facilitate, effective, future action:

> If theory not only provides ‘a scheme of ideas to explain practice’ but also ‘a framework to guide practice,’ then we have here a diagnosis of the ills of special education and a remedy.
Undoubtedly, the policy of inclusion and its related challenge to the school system has provided a framework for a new paradigm in education where knowledge, understanding and action that is pervasive and far reaching, needs to be understood in terms of theory and practice. However, change in education has tended to be something that is initiated by outside forces promoting organisational hesitancy and doubt that averts the focus from systematic reform. Consequently:

*There is uncertainty, conflict and cultural ‘sea-change’ at the level of organizations... change must focus upon more equitable outcomes and substantive moral and ethical issues (Blackmore, 1998, p. 478).*

The largely unacknowledged obstruction to educational democratic reform rests with ‘top-down’ processes endorsing change and equity (Hargreaves, 1998). Furthermore, educational research maintains that the consequent knowledge of the conditions for effective change may be identified through the construction and use of teacher professional knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Hargreaves, 2003). Chapter three of this study has investigated the construction and development of knowledge as an important component of effective change. Recent research by Mitchell (2005, p. 19) highlights some of the critical aspects promoting effective knowledge building:

*The implementation phase involves putting an innovation into practice, with attention to ongoing personnel training, consultation, project coordination, commitment, maintenance, materials dissemination, conducting pilot studies program evaluation, innovation revision and diffusion. Institutionalisation involves removing the novelty of the innovation and making it part of the normal, continuing administrative and professional practice.*

Mitchell’s research addresses not only the processes of knowledge creation but how new knowledge might be developed and become part of the lifeworld that is familiar practice for teachers. This perspective corresponds with Habermasian theory and the importance for individual actors to be participating subjects and have the opportunity to inter-subjectively share their understandings, even when the lifeworld moves in different and complex ways. Within the context of this study the lifeworld relates to the known body of knowledge and development of new cultural knowledge that teachers are able (or need) to access to make decisions about inclusive practice. Therefore, when critical
aspects regarding cultural knowledge are overlooked, coordination of communicatively mediated norms and values constituting the lifeworld is at risk. In turn, this risk can create tensions that impinge on the way teachers make decisions about inclusion within school settings.

Furthermore, Habermas’ theory relating to lifeworld and system world provides a practical framework to explore possible tensions between these two dimensions connected with social action. While the state system may intend to guide social action, Habermas points out that it must still be embedded in the values, beliefs and interactions of the lifeworld. For instance competing discourses, embracing imperatives such as curriculum benchmarks, where the effects are seemingly contradictory to the policy intentions for inclusive education, can create further tension and misunderstanding. Habermas (1987) draws attention to the dichotomy of the system becoming uncoupled from the lifeworld, where the system world becomes a more political endeavour. Consequently, the differential aspects of the two worlds or systems create tensions and social integration becomes more difficult to achieve. The two systems must integrate and cooperate to maintain social cohesion within social change processes. For instance, when options for action are reduced to an ever-increasing complexity of system demands, the human capacity to deliberate and pursue rational outcomes may be overlooked within institutions such as schools. Therefore, in the context of this study, the disabling construction of the schooling system may remain unacknowledged.

Habermas (1987) stresses that all stakeholders have a common need to understand prevailing conditions in society so that the options for action in each situation may be relevant and valid for everyone concerned. Teacher education is one such option to learn about social-cultural understandings. However, it is also pertinent that the research reported in this thesis explores and understands the changing focus of education over the last two and a half decades, placing particular emphasis on those changes that have occurred for individual teachers who are the actual agents of change (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994). Furthermore, changed roles, structures and educational outcomes promoted by inclusion need to be examined through critical praxis
or informed, committed action, relating to existing, transformed social action (Habermas, 1996). How these changes have occurred in the actual classroom situation, is an issue that needs to be understood, if teachers are to embrace the basic principles of inclusion and provide differentiated and inclusive programs and practice adapted to meet the learning needs of individual students.

**Inclusion and civil society**

To allow for an analysis of the social construction of disability and an understanding of the lifeworld of inclusive policy actors, this research study is also framed around the concepts of the private sphere, comprising civil society and the overarching public sphere explicated within Habermasian theory. Habermas (1996) argues that a way of making democracy stronger is to strengthen civil society’s capacity to consider what should be done and the actuality of what is done.

*Civil society is composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organisations, and movements that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private life sphere, distil and transmit such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere. The core of civil society comprises a network of associations that institutionalises problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest inside the framework of organised public spheres. The ‘discursive designs’ have an egalitarian, open form or organisation that mirrors essential features of the kind of communication around which they crystallise and to which they lend continuity and permanence (Habermas, 1996, p. 367).*

With a historical background of institutional failure by schools to implement inclusive policy, there is a need to re-consider the process of policy action or implementation (Slee, 2001). Within this dimension Habermas (1996) provides key concepts applying to theories of politics, civil society and communicative action within the lifeworld of education policy actors. In considering the private life sphere [incorporating civil society] of educational policy actors, Habermas’ work is useful. Importantly, it draws attention to how failure within a civil society can be related to the tradition of philosophies that pertain to subjectivities, such as inclusion, and the incorrect partisanship created to achieve goals within societies. Starting from this point, this investigation raises questions regarding the tradition of philosophy pertaining to the subject of ‘difference’ in education,
the preconceived notions about inclusion, as well as strategic partisanship developed to achieve these goals.

Habermas makes a number of suggestions that provide a positive direction for this research to challenge key assumptions about educational change generated by actors. This in turn helps to analyse or make sense of the current complexities relating to inclusive education and indeed the shortfall of educational change processes to capture the ‘voice’ of key actors. According to Habermas (1996, p. 373), the forefront of this over-site is [once again] the political leanings of policy action:

.... groupings of civil society are indeed sensitive to problems, but the signals they send out and the impulses they give are generally too weak to initiate learning processes or relevant decision making in the political system in the short run.

The path forward for social and cultural change is therefore related to inter-subjectivity and the theory of communicative action ‘where community reason is directly related insofar as acts of mutual understanding take on the role of the mechanism for coordinating acts’ (Habermas, 1985, p. 196). The above perspective supports a philosophical stance that necessitates the understanding of human beliefs and activities (Habermas, 1996, p. 347). In turn, this approach helps to raise questions concerning the connections, inter-dependence and problems of meaning and knowledge that take place during the implementation of educational change. Accordingly, the need to establish a cohesive understanding of the lifeworld of teachers as education ‘policy actors’ presupposes that policy alone does not ensure educational change. The capacity of teachers to contribute to effective change is also incorporated within this standpoint. Indeed the lifeworld forms a kind of ‘network composed of communicative actions’ (Habermas, 1996, p. 354) with the collective capacity of teacher skill and knowledge contributing to change. Such an environment may also promote the concept of the ‘public sphere’ (Habermas, 1989) acting as an intermediary between private interests and state power. Employing the principles of rational discussion, debate and indeed, consensus, the public sphere would not only recognize the individual and collective agency of policy actors (teachers) but could also inform the state of effective, future action. For instance,
Blackmore (1998) has argued that Habermas’ work has identified a map of strategic pathways for the development of an enthusiastic and effectual learning domain, informed by and informing cultural and social change, where communicative power can be channelled to the state.

The above propositions were key components examined using the theoretical and informed evidence collected and analysed for this study. This research delineated the connections and interdependence between the texts of human rights, pedagogy and programs in an effort to ascertain an understanding of the lifeworld of teachers involved with effective inclusive education. Based on the supposition that the creation of professional knowledge, within a process of social action, is essential for pedagogical change to meet the challenges of changing educational landscapes and inclusion, this information provided a constructive framework to analyse effective policy implementation of inclusive education. An essential component within this framework also includes the consideration of the historical and political background to the policy, the consequent challenge to the school system and the lifeworlds of teachers as the educational change agents.

*Communicative action and teachers’ voice*

The concept of communicative action, Habermas (1984, pp. 95-97), helps to explore and analyse the successful implementation of inclusive educational policy within schools and consider how teachers have coordinated inclusive education ‘action.’ The question of the critical characteristics and skills of teachers, contributing to the successful implementation of inclusive educational policy within schools, is explored through lifeworld and teachers’ voice. Moreover, the agency of actors is investigated utilising the concepts of deliberative democracy within an ideal speech situation where there is free exchange of ideas and beliefs between all stakeholders (Habermas, 1996).

*Teachers’ voice within change processes*

Teachers’ voice was a major resource and technique to theorise and analyse the issues of inclusive policy action that was transparent and related to a constructive approach to education reform. Consequently, effective, policy action could then be determined by
drawing on insider information. Here, the individual and collective agency of educational workers’ own lifeworlds provides an understanding of the realities within schools and classrooms. This study recognises that a well-grounded imperative for future action needs to be constructed through the identity and communicative action of key stakeholders.

Teachers, both individually and collectively, have needed to make sense of the reform of inclusive education, interpret and change practices, and consider the consequences for teaching and learning. This has not been recognised sufficiently within the boundaries of system theory or the political agendas associated with the inclusive reform process. To accomplish reasoned actions, within the notions of a civil society (Habermas, 1984), there is a need to restore the value and regard for collaborative and democratic action connected with the lifeworld of education workers involved in educational reform.

These points are underpinned in the theoretical framework of this research. The critical theorems have been analysed, providing the proposition that for inclusive education to be a true reform process attention needs to be given to communicative action through a civil society and the lifeworld of teachers. Inclusion can only occur if there is understanding and rational communication. Within this context, decisions regarding future action are guided and rationality identified by the social actors and agents of change (themselves).

**Critical social science and action research**

The process of critical social science combines collaboration in the development of analysis that moves beyond the realm of critique, to critical praxis or informed, committed action, relating to existing, transformed action. In this way critical social science has the capacity to overcome contradictions and barriers in the rationality and justice of social actions within social systems and institutions of society (Kemmis, 1993). It is also a form of practice that serves to enlighten education actors involved in transformational social action. Historically, this form of analysis or critical praxis has often been overlooked in teaching practice where communication for the purpose of social action is replaced by political and cultural agendas and propositions for technocratic mechanisms and funding regimes.
Within critical social science the relationship between theory and practice cannot be focussed on narrow, prescriptive theories of practice. It is the organisation of enlightenment and understanding through which theory and practice is interrelated and developed (Habermas, 1984). Practice is then distinguished between the functions of critical theorems and the way theoretical elements and understandings are developed and tested. Thus, processes for the organisation of social change and the organisation of action need to be based on communicatively agreed rationality, rather than political and cultural agendas or given guidelines for action.

For the purpose of this study, Habermas’ theories and concepts serve to identify ways of moving forward, within the framework of school-based planning that does not inhibit the capacity of policy actors to provide inclusive education. In addition, Habermas’ argument that the rationalisation of the lifeworld can [still] take place, if communicative understanding and logic open up the dimensions of reason, provides scope for the systematic distortion and barriers to inclusion to be addressed. However, while the concepts of lifeworld, system world and communicative action help to inform analysis within this study, the practical applications within Habermas’ communicative theory provides a framework of communicative processes to further inform the case study method and techniques within this research framework. For instance, the key processes of collaboration, participation, ideal speech, consensus and validity contributing to intersubjective understandings are components built into the case study methodology. The work of action research advocates Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) provide further insight into critical education research where participants become the researchers, and vice-versa, researchers become the participants.

**Critical educational science: Action and participatory research**

Drawing on the work of Habermas, Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 162) define action research as research oriented toward the enhancement of direct practice.

*Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality*
and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out.

They go on to say that educational research, relating to the concepts of critical social science needs to ‘link researchers and practitioners in a common task in which the duality of the research and practice roles is transcended (op.cit. p 158). This perspective is in contrast to researchers who remain as ‘outsiders’ within educational situations they aim to reform.

Within this study the common task is to identify the critical characteristics and skills of teachers that have contributed to the successful implementation of inclusive educational policy within schools. Furthermore, there is an emphasis on the importance of collaborative communicative action providing a basis for validity, consensus and trust between individuals within the group.

The approach is only action research when it is collaborative, though it is important to realise that action research of the group is achieved through the critically examined action of individual group members (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988, p. 5).

From this perspective action research is essentially participatory. Rather than being a method or procedure for research it is a series of commitments or techniques to observe and carry out social enquiry. McTaggart (1991, p. 11) states ‘action research is the way groups of people can organise the conditions under which they can learn from their own experiences and make this experience accessible to others.’ This perspective correlates with the intended outcome of this research project.

To gain further insight into critical education science and participatory action research the following section examines more recent work by Kemmis and McTaggart (2005).

Participatory action research
In discussing the history of participatory action research Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) draw attention to the tensions and shortfalls within this area of research and practice. In
turn they argue that whilst participatory action research is applied across many fields of social practice, including organisational practice, classroom action research, action learning, action science and critical action research, there are key criticisms that need to be addressed. In particular, criticisms relating to the justification of social positions of power and the delay in relation to progressive educational movements are seen as significant. To further illustrate these tensions they refer to the diagrammatic spiral of participatory research that presents a neat self-contained view of the process, where in reality there is a greater need for fluidity and openness that is responsive to the realms of the individual and the social (Habermas, 1992).

Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, p. 5) in referring to the spiral of participatory action research, incorporating the steps outlined below, note that there is a need for a genuine understanding of practices rather than a set of steps to:

- Plan;
- Act;
- Reflect;
- Replanning;
- Acting and so on.

They emphasise that:

*The criterion for success is not whether participants have followed the steps faithfully but whether they have a strong and authentic sense of development and evolution in their practices, their understandings and the situations in which they practice (op.cit. 2005, p. 5).*

Furthermore, they note that participatory action research needs to be collaborative (a view not held by all theorists) that is in itself a social and educational process. Drawing on the work of Habermas’ notions of the public sphere as a way of activating progressive educational movements, participation and social change is explored. As an outcome of following a line of investigation related to social change and participation, Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) have developed a comprehensive view of social practice reconceptualising research as social practice:
The ‘subjects’ of participatory action research undertake their research as a social practice. Moreover the object of the participatory action research is social: participatory action research is directed towards studying, reframing and reconstructing social practices. If practices are constituted in social interaction between people, then changing practice is a social process (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 5).

It is seen as obligatory for participatory action research to move away from the politics of conventional social research and practice, often condensed into a set of guidelines, and to be responsive to the needs and opinions of ordinary people - the key community actors. In this way research has the potential of providing multiple resources for a given task, addressing individual behaviour and intentions, social interaction and discourse, as well as reflective practice incorporating history and human agency (ibid, p.13). In principle the idea of participation cannot be a static process but an evolving process including opportunities for all key stakeholders to be involved. Identifying the requirement of providing opportunities to create collaborative forums, promoting co-participation (in what is termed the struggle to remake established practices) in which rationality and democracy win through, draws on the notion of opening communicative space (Habermas, 1996). Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) then examine the broader concept of participatory action research in practice and the characteristics promoting cohesive professional learning communities. Furthermore, using a communicative framework, they demonstrate ‘how’ critical participatory action research is constructive in contributing to the capacity of knowledge creation and capacity building within educational settings.

The next section of this chapter draws on recent literature to further examine these theoretical features, incorporating multiple approaches and techniques contributing to effective strategies for participatory action and knowledge creation processes within changing educational landscapes.

**Professional communities of enquiry**

At the forefront of this section is the consideration of change in praxis within a social enquiry community where participation is seen as the shared experiences and negotiations within a purposive community. In turn, this changing focus within
professional learning communities calls for the establishment of actual networks of communication among key stakeholders, as well as communicative space, to build understandings and legitimacy for practice.

**Networks of communication**

The fundamental idea of networks of communication is a practical matter of bringing people together to share and learn from each other’s experience. Within such an environment organisations can be seen as a network of conversations rather than a context built around multiple and unrelated fragments. Teachers bring a range of aspirations and motivations to their work and this diversity and difference needs to be recognized and understood for knowledge for action to become apparent. Ultimately, ‘shared knowledge’ takes different forms, at different times, by different individuals, even though the philosophy of ‘whole school’ commitment has often implied that change should produce immediate cohesive results where diversity and difference is ignored. In reality, social action requires concrete and practical contexts for communication to recognise difference and the evolving formations arising from interdependent networks. Therefore, enabling contexts need to have the capacity to adjust scripts for action that acknowledge the values, interests and complexities of individual stakeholders and their associated groups (Forester 1999). Additionally, Habermas’ work *Between the Facts and Norms* (1996) outlines further conditions under which people can engage in communicative action within notions of public spheres that are constituted as actual networks of communication, among actual stakeholders.

Drawing on the work of Habermas (1996), Kemmis and McTaggart (2005, pp. 23-31) define further key features of public spheres contributing to participatory communicative action. First, they assert that there are many public spheres and open textured networks established for communication and exploration that are both self-constituted and relatively autonomous. Formation is frequently interconnected around concerns regarding the legitimation and/or deficits of changed policy deliberations where the ultimate aim is to reach some sort of inter-subjective agreement, mutual understanding and unforced consensus about what to do:
Thus, communicative spaces organized for essentially instrumental or functional purposes— to command, to influence, to exercise control over things—would not ordinarily qualify as public spheres. They create communication networks aimed at communicative action, and at projecting communicative action into practical inquiries aimed at transformation of social practices, practitioners’ understandings of their practices, and the situations and circumstances in which they practice (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 26).

Within this context, public spheres also need to be inclusive of people with diverse interests and values, including people who are routinely excluded, for example, parents within schooling systems. Ideally, networks necessitate inclusive, barrier free communication devoid of specialist discourses and bureaucratic hierarchies. In other words, communicative action involves ordinary language and allows for equitable communicative power to create legitimate, shared beliefs offering unrestrained freedom. In this way, there is also a focus to strengthen civil society’s capacity to consider what should be done (Habermas, 1989). The overarching public sphere centres on the idea of participatory democracy and provides a forum to reach common judgement. The public sphere is a realm of social life where public opinion can be formed; public opinion may also inform the state.

Importantly, although public spheres are often associated with social movements, they are not necessarily established to directly affect social systems. Moreover, impacts of public spheres can be an indirect response to social order, where participants aim to change the way things are thought about and how things are understood or enacted. Describing the nature of the space potentially contributing to social interaction, public spheres can specify ways in which people can strive collectively for inter-subjective agreement and thus the process of knowledge creation.

*These are the conditions under which participants regard decisions, perspective and points of view reached in open discussion as compelling for - even binding upon - themselves. Such conditions are different from many other forms of communication - for example, the kind of functional communication characteristic of social systems (which aims at achieving particular ends by the most efficient means) and most interest-based bargaining (which aims at maximising or*
optimising self-interests rather than making the best and most appropriate decision for all concerned.
(Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 32).

Communicative space
Within this context, the knowledge sharing process between stakeholders is vitally important requiring not only a shared community environment but one where common understandings and terminology also opens up communicative space (Von Kroogh, 1998). Moreover, Huberman (1992) has indicated that without the development of common language, enabling colleagues to communicate to one another, tacit knowledge cannot be shared. Ainscow (2004) also points out that without language to express detailed aspects of their practice, teachers find it very difficult to experiment with new possibilities. Thus, shared language and concepts are enabling for teachers to construct new meanings and practices, whereby taken-for-granted assumptions can be subjected to mutual critique.

Additionally, professional conversation provides the context for groups to transform their thinking, creating a greater acumen than the sum of individual talents that generate new insights and meanings (Senge et al., 2000). Conversation is a powerful mode of enquiry where dialogue allows for new repertoires of knowledge and collective thought. In articulating their own perspectives teachers can learn from each other and help create space for re-thinking, interrupting existing discourses and focussing attention on problem solving, to move practices forward.

*It acknowledges that each person, no matter how smart or capable, sees the world from a perspective and that there are other legitimate perspectives that could inform that view.*
(Dixon 1996, p.49).

With the development of settings in which certain ways of engaging with evidence can be altered, dialogue also provides windows of opportunity for entirely new kinds of collective knowledge. Dialogue producing new kinds of collective knowledge, correlates with what Ainscow (2004, p. 5) termed as alternative approaches in attaining evidence
and working with teachers. Alternative approaches include staff surveys, mutual observation and structured group discussion. These approaches may be combined with statistical analysis of data from pupil and parent interviews and professional development, based on case study and school-to-school co-operation.

_Under certain conditions, therefore, all of these approaches can provide 'interruptions' that help to 'make the familiar unfamiliar' in ways that stimulate self-questioning, creativity and action._ (Ainscow, 2004, p. 6).

Ainscow (2004) portrays communication as a field of enquiry that pushes the boundaries beyond individual problem solving, applying ‘old practice’ to new situations, by giving voice to individual stakeholders. By giving voice to individuals or particularised questions of logical truth, authentic and morally right claims and shared aspirations surface through dialogue and reflection where common goals are not yet even an enacted reality (Scharmer 2000). However, there is collective thinking and enquiry. Furthermore, Kemmis and McTaggart, (2005) draw on the work of Habermas (1984, 1987) describing interactive processes that have assisted a common understanding of communicative action and the need for inter-subjective agreement, mutual understanding and unforced consensus relating to particular situations.

_That is, the validity claims do not function as merely procedural ideals for critiquing speech, but as the basis for, or underpinnings of, the substantive claims we need to explore in order to reach mutual agreement, understanding and consensus about what to do in the particular concrete situation in which a particular group of people in a shared socially, discursively and historically structured specific communicative space are deliberating together_ (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 17).

The assertion that communicative space also builds solidarity between stakeholders, who through shared practice, reflection and the formation of shared desire, open their communication to one another, is discussed by Kemmis and McTaggart (2005). With the provision of a setting and time for communicative action, decisions have a legitimacy that is authentic, both individually and in the context of mutual participation, where people decide for themselves:
• What is comprehensible to them (whether in fact they understand what one another are saying);
• What is true in the light of their own knowledge (both their individual knowledge and their shared knowledge represented in the discourse used by members);
• What participants themselves regard as sincerely and truthfully stated (individually and in terms of their joint commitment to understanding), and
• What participants themselves regard as morally right and appropriate in terms of their individual and mutual judgement about what is right, proper, wiser, and prudent to do under the circumstances in which they find themselves (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005, p. 17).

Summary
To reiterate, communicative, participatory action builds self-awareness, in concrete and practical forums, where stakeholders are genuinely acting and working collaboratively to address specific issues. Within this case study research was organised around the principles of participation where communicative action centred on the collective goal of identifying effective characteristics for inclusive action. Therefore, the major tenets of critical social science and critical social science provided a major set of conceptual tools to construct the framework for this study. These tools were also utilised within the following Chapter to help analyse the process by which the State Government expected social rules to change within Victorian education.
Chapter six:
Inclusive reform and educational change: The construction and dynamics of inclusive education

Overview of the chapter
This chapter provides an analysis of the current debates pertaining to the construction and dynamics of inclusive education. It outlines critical characteristics pertaining to the nature and features of inclusive education identified by research literature. Structured into four main sections, the chapter initially explores notions around the construction and dynamics of inclusive education providing further insight into the agency of teachers, locating their work within this significant change process. Second, policy initiatives and key reports are analysed to develop a conceptual understanding of educational reform and the restructuring of the schooling system to incorporate inclusion. This section is also constructed to provide further insight into the Victorian Government response to action identified as essential for successful implementation. In the next section of this chapter consideration is given to the community of educational change and ongoing school improvement. It is expected that theoretical concepts emerging from this analysis will provide specific answers pertaining to the socio-cultural construction of the schooling system and the enactment of educational policies-in-practice. The focus then turns to school organisation and change addressing professional dimensions of teachers’ work and the multiple realities that contribute to a positive learning community. Here, the questions of professional renewal and the critical components contributing to effective change within professional communities of practice are addressed.

It is anticipated that the key concepts that are explored in this Chapter will facilitate an understanding of the effective characteristics promoting educational change, in turn, helping to shape an understanding of future inclusive education reform. The research literature on bureaucratic mechanisms and political agendas is analysed, but more importantly, so too is the research literature which has identified how successful practice can occur when released from the impediments of state dominance. The literature identifying teachers’ discontent with liberal pluralism, where equal
opportunity in decision-making has collapsed, is explored through various research findings. Furthermore, it is expected that these concepts will address how the experiential knowledge, drawn from teachers engaged in the process of implementing inclusive policy, may contribute to successful policy action. How teachers perceive and describe their experiences and see possibilities for alternatives are inseparable factors relating to this standpoint and the research focus of this study.

The chapter also provides additional insight into the major research question of this study and the secondary questions identified in Chapter one:

- What are the critical characteristics and skills that have contributed to the successful implementation of inclusive education policy?
- How the development of professional knowledge occurs?
- What are the critical components contributing to effective change within professional communities of practice?

Effort to this end provides a basis to conceptualise statements within the data and further analyse and report on the perceptions of teachers who are involved in the process of inclusive educational reform.

Historical review: Victorian integration policy and practice

The challenge of school reform

Having acknowledged the increasing responsibility given to schools as structures for social, economic and cultural change this section considers the impact on school communities and the change experienced within Victoria education during the latter part of the 20th century. Against the background of the Federal Government report of Schools in Australia (1973), otherwise known as the Karmel Report, the political agenda for educational reform in Victoria became increasingly clear (Bates, 1985; Bessant, 1988; Sarason, 1971). The Karmel Report (1973) failed to challenge the basic assumptions underlying an equitable system of education and the pre-conceptions of the social and cultural construction of the schooling system. However, it had a
formative role in shaping policy development within Victoria’s education system. In the late 1970s Victorian education had undergone a review process examining the equality of outcomes for minority groups and individuals. Rather than upholding the point of view urging the need for an equality of ‘means’ of educational delivery, it maintained the necessity for equal opportunity and allocation of educational resources for minority groups within the Victorian education community. Taking up the notions of regular classrooms in Victoria catering for minority groups, the Minister for Education, Mr Robert Fordham, announced a major review of educational services for disabled children in August 1982. A participatory process was seen as the foundation for collaborative and democratic decision-making to address the requirements of disabled students and this was reflected in the initial consultancy approach taken by the Review committee (Kortman, 1992).

In line with the Review’s concept of non-categorisation, a systems approach or appraisal of the service delivery within Victorian schools was adopted. Replacing the ‘deficit’ approach that had focussed on the named impairment of a child was the scrutiny of the upheld regulatory practice of segregation within schools. The ensuing concern with the education system, rather than the child’s impairment (the ‘system approach’) aimed to change the ‘discourse of normality,’ shifting the imperative for schools to meet the needs of individual learners rather than individuals to ‘fit’ the school system. This promoted an important change in thinking about children with disabilities and additional needs where students were no longer to be labelled as ‘remedial’ or ‘special’ and withdrawn or segregated from their peers. Alternatively, disabled students were to be given every opportunity to fully participate in classroom life and the programs within them. In practice this change involved all the components of school organisation and planning, including the teacher’s role.

Consequently the era of State educational reform in Victoria, during the 1980s, commenced with a school-focussed approach in participatory planning for students with disabilities. Within this context, key stakeholders, namely the teachers, were to have the
opportunity to consider the critical characteristics and skills needed for the successful implementation of policy. However this ideal was almost immediately replaced with a contradictory approach delivering State administrative guidelines (Marks, 1993) where political expediency dominated policy development and action. For instance, the opening chapter of the Review (1984, p. 9) provided a clear example of the ‘State edict’ that was directed to schools regarding integration:

*In practice, this involves the way schools organise teacher-student relationships, principal-teacher relationships, parent-teacher relationships, the curriculum, the delivery of school based and external support staff and services, the relationships between School Councils, schools, the Regions and central administration; the funding of State education and its accounting procedures; relationships between the Education Departments; between the government and non-government sectors and Commonwealth-State relations in all its various aspects which affect the provision of this area of additional educational services (The Review, 1984, p. 9).*

Without delay there were mounting criticisms by a number of stakeholders, including the teachers of both mainstream and special education settings, regarding the direction outlined by the Government within the Review (1984). Nevertheless the process of implementation commenced with the release of the *Integration in Victorian Education* (1984) *Report of the Ministerial Review of Educational Services for the Disabled* (also known as the Collins Report, 1984 or the Review, 1984). There have been several evaluations and reports leading to some modification of the guidelines within the initial document. The most significant was the Cullen Brown Report (1992) and then the Meyer Report (2001). However, in spite of these evaluations, the main focus and guidelines for integrating or including students in mainstream schools have been maintained where teachers have been the main drivers of policy action.

*New philosophical directions*

The perspective taken by the Review 1984 was that the segregation of students with disabilities generated differences rather than acknowledging the similarities and rights of these students. The policy stated that all children, irrespective of type or degree of disability, had the right to be educated in their local neighbourhood school. This
process was defined with a focus on two major aspects. First of all, the Review (1984) defined ‘integration’ as a process directed at increasing the participation of children with impairments and disabilities in the education programs and social life of regular schools in which peers without disabilities participate. This concept not only challenged and changed the taken for granted practice of excluding ‘difference’ within one of the main institutions of Victorian cultural life, it placed schools in the position of instigating social action.

Secondly the emphasis on ‘integration’ within the Review (1984) was informed directly by British sociological perspectives that defined ‘integration in education’ as the process of increasing the participation of all children in mainstream schools, not just children who were in segregated settings or deemed to be special (Booth, 1983; Tomlinson, 1982; Tomlinson, 1985; Abberley, 1987). This broader perspective reflected and gave expression to the general sociological climate within Victorian education and the examination of equity and opportunity for all students within the schooling system. Importantly, it also challenged the taxonomies and nomenclature of normality and endorsed the deconstruction of special education for students who were different.

*Guiding principles of the Review*

Added to the process of increasing and maintaining participation of disabled students in regular schools, the Review (1984, pp. 13-14) included five guiding principles that were accepted as the basis for Government policy. They informed future directions and processes established by the Ministry of Education (previously referred to as the Department of Education) that were consistent with the general principles of inclusion. These principles embraced the concept of ‘rights’ for every child in the Victorian education system. Accordingly, the first principle asserted that every child had a right to be educated in a regular school. However, the converse position that they also had the right not to attend a mainstream school was evident with the maintenance of a special education system (Marks, 1993). This is now referred to as a dual system of education, providing choice for students with disabilities and impairments.
It is important to note that the justification for this choice of maintaining segregated settings for students with disabilities and impairments is often attributed to ‘parent struggle’ against the changes bestowed on their children by the political imperatives of policy and subsequent policy action. However the tactical manoeuvring of individuals and groups with vested interests in exclusionary practice [education workers] also remains questionable. As a result, there is continual marginalisation and blocked opportunity for students with disabilities occurring surreptitiously across the State of Victoria (Kortman, 2001a).

The second guiding principal addressed the historic imperative relating to the classification of individuals with disabilities and stipulated that legislation and service delivery would be non-categorised. This principle aimed to extinguish discriminatory practices on the basis of any given category of students. However, despite these authoritative political directions, funding has been used to defend and sustain categorisation. Even the Cullen Brown Report (1992), reviewing the implementation of integration, made a case for categorisation to address special educational needs and the associated school based funding.

Paradoxically, in an endeavour to embrace the principle of non-categorisation, the Department incorporated the recommendations of the Cullen Brown Report into its school-based funding regime based on categorised ‘educational need.’ Thus, categories became a component of the application formula for funding related to ‘additional educational need.’ These categories are outlined in the Education Victoria publication, *Programs for Students with Disabilities and Impairments* (1998).

The third guiding principle stated that resources should, to the greatest extent possible be school-based. Subsequently this guideline provided an opening for the deliberate, or maybe even wilful, misunderstanding of resource allocation and its utilisation. The allocation sanctioned the revitalisation of identified individual deficit, based on categories, as the accepted direction of individualised educational planning (or
funding). As a consequence the provision of school-based services aimed at including students, by limiting withdrawal that involved specialist services, lost its potency. The re-emergence of ‘certified deficit’ promoted a loss of momentum towards non-categorisation and the obligation of teachers to understand the needs of individual learners. The focus on deficit, prompting remedial action, has been re-established in many school sites supporting another diminished response to inclusive action.

The fourth principle referred to collaborative decision-making processes that were aimed at promoting equal participation of all stakeholders concerned with decisions about a child’s educational process. This principle has been maintained in various guises within the Department Guidelines since 1984. The main vehicle for this process has been the requirement for parents to participate in Integration Support Groups, now known as Program Support Groups (PSG). This framework was intended to ensure that the imperative of parent participation within educational decision-making occurred. The intention to empower parents has not ensured ‘equal power’ in any way as a result of pre-empted decisions and agendas from the State and local schools. Moreover parent and teacher roles within this contemporary framework are still lacking clarity. Research by Marks (1993) has identified that both parents and educational workers have emerged as restricted stakeholders. The consistency of democratic decision-making between the State, institutions and individuals is not evident within this process. Ironically, contestation has occurred regularly within these dimensions contravening the original focus of collaboration. A further irony is that if (or when) schools have refused to implement these guidelines, they have not been held accountable and parents’ struggles to be involved in decision making have been ignored politically (Kortman, 2001a).

The fifth principle, that all children can learn and be taught, provided the driving force behind educational planning for students with disabilities. It is the basis for substantial political pressure for all schools to embrace inclusive, individual program planning for all students with disabilities.
These principles reflected a significant change in thinking about children with disabilities who did not fit the normative system of Victorian education. The rapid move to the human rights model during the 1980s was designed to ensure that children’s rights to participation and maintenance within the regular school system were upheld. While acceptance of these idealised principles has not prevented divisive practices or the foreclosure of the inclusivity debate, they have provided a strong foundation for inclusive education in Victoria and still represent the chance for rights, opportunity and justice. However the question remains as to how this can be best achieved.

The challenge of inclusion

According to Fulcher (1989) Victoria’s integration policy was considered to be highly innovative both nationally and internationally, so perhaps it is not surprising that controversy surrounded its implementation (Fulcher, 1989; Jenkinson, 1987b; Fulcher, 1993). Against the social, cultural and political discourses of exclusion, schools were reconstructed, as a result of community pressure and directions by State governance, to allow all students to be educated within their neighbourhood schools. This process of change was not faultless. While controversy is no longer overtly at the forefront of the implementation process, contestation and the discourse of exclusion and marginalisation are still apparent across the schooling system (Clark et al., 1995; 1998; Slee, 2001). Paradoxically, inclusion in many ways has come to represent a technical problem of resource management, in which the practices of exclusion, disadvantage and separate needs of special students are reproduced within inclusive contexts (Riddell and Brown, 1994; Barton and Oliver, 1997a; Slee et al., 1998).

The inclusion of disabled students still poses a major challenge to the school system under various guises. The contested discourses of special education, integration, special educational needs and inclusion, are still related to a focus on educational disablement. Policy and policy action have not ensured the enactment of social change or educational inclusion relating to curriculum and program implementation (Kortman, 2003).
Consequently disablement has occurred despite the groundbreaking advice contained in the Review (1984).

The Review (1984) identified that new teacher skills and attitudes were critical for effectiveness within this change process. However, there is little evidence of any significant effort to professionally develop well-informed and self-determining teachers who are confident in meeting the needs of diverse student populations, including students with disabilities.

**Key updates and reports relating to inclusion**

*Defining disability: Continuing disabling structures*

Central to the modus operandi of inclusion are the various ways disability can be defined within current educational landscapes. This aspect has necessitated the need to define ‘disability’ within the existing socio-cultural framework before analysing the resurgent policies and reports regarding inclusive education. The absence of a clear working definition is a striking oversight within educational reports and guidelines where the dominant view of disability permits the continued construction of disability and deficit.

Prescriptive definitions of disability and handicap have probably been the most misused terms in special education and have maintained many of the fundamental consequences in terms of categorisation, marginalisation and inadequate outcomes for individuals (Kortman, 1992). The stigma and negative social consequences that categorisation can produce are now recognised and well documented (Ashman and Elkins, 2005; Barnes, 1995; Fulcher, 1989; Oliver, 1990, 1996; Slee et al., 1998). However for a variety of reasons, in both medical and educational fields, labels still persist. The penchant for prescriptive approaches serves two main purposes. First it reduces complex and contested areas into simple scripts of ‘problems’ relating to individuals. Second it is ‘easier if a prescription is offered rather than the range of ways in which a particular concept is used’ (Booth, 1998, p. 80).
The broader application, considering the individual disability and the handicapping conditions within society, serves to identify many of the inconsistencies in educational practice within Victorian schools. In theory, the Department of Education has adopted The World Health Organisation (1980) definitions, clarifying the construction of impairment, disability and handicap, as authoritative. Within these definitions the term ‘impairment’ refers to a medical condition, a ‘disability’ is a functional consequence of the impairment and a ‘handicap’ is associated with the social consequences within a society. That's why it is no longer acceptable to use the terms ‘disability’ and ‘handicap’ inter-changeably if the climate of social justice in Victoria is to prevail.

Within the context of schools these progressive features need to be embraced if quality educational provision for all students is to be achieved. The extent to which a disability becomes a handicap often pivots on the attitudes of other members of society where the conditions are socially constructed and imposed.

*Equity.......implies the restructuring of what is offered in such a way that the final outcome is equally attainable. In one case, the responsibility is on the individual, in the other it is on the provider. For example, in the early days of educational integration, it was thought enough to include a child with Down’s Syndrome in a mainstream classroom, from which he or she had previously been excluded. The responsibility was his or hers to learn. When such children could no longer ‘cope’ they could be removed to the special school. Later it was realised that more than simple exposure was required if integration was to succeed (Garner and Sandow, 1995, p.97).*

The focus of the Review (1984) corresponded with the re-definition of the concept of the problem with the individual. Subsequently policy attention has been transferred to the sociological concept of schools as disabling structures. The consequence of paying more attention to the social consequences of disabilities and less attention to categories was expected to turn the focus to educational strategies and the contextual characteristics of learning environments. Thus the social construction of disability (and difference) has remained as a focus of Government policy and reports of educational provision for disabled students in Victoria over two decades. However, the Victorian landscape in
2005, provides a striking resemblance to the scrutinised shortfalls in Britain identified by Garner and Sandow (1995). Unless theory can provide directions for change and relational understanding, the process becomes caught up with short-term fixes and discursive action and further exclusion. Regrettably the commitment to evaluating individual learners rather than learning environments has remained as the core business for many educational workers within Victoria (the PENG Report, 2000; Meyer, 2001). These findings have raised the question of whether the nature and structure of addressing individual need has been adjusted in operational terms to provide practical understanding by educational workers associated with inclusive learning environments.

**Recognising teacher skill and knowledge within inclusive change processes**

The need for teachers’ operational understanding including teacher skill, curriculum knowledge and school organisation to achieve the practice of inclusive education was recognised throughout the Review (1984). However in actuality this was reduced to the expedient establishment of administrative structures and processes when integration policy was implemented. The flow of Ministerial memoranda, reviews and reports that dealt predominantly with operational issues of funding are of specific interest to this research. The assemblage of guidelines for resource allocation dominated the period leading up to and including 1993. The next decade was also consumed by this resource discourse that directed implementation proceedings. Consequently, the major quest for a more even-handed allocation of resources and the mechanisms for this to occur was a significant imperative of Ministerial deliberations in the decade commencing in 1993. The analysis of key reports and policy initiatives has provided evidence recognising the importance of operational understanding. However, imperatives for action are overshadowed by the compromise for funding. Teachers are a pivotal factor in determining how to make inclusive curriculum models operational. It is unfortunate that Victorian integration quickly became synonymous with the compromises around funding for integration aides (Tarr, 1988).

The following analysis of key documents, reports and actions provides a framework for this study to unveil the operative issues and contradictions relating to policy action. In addition, efforts by the State to overcome operative difficulties are recognised and this
assists in defining the critical characteristics and actions needed for successful implementation.

*The Task Force Report (1986)*

The Review (1984) recommended that a State level committee on integration be put into place to oversee and monitor implementation. Consequently the Standing Committee of the State Board of Education Integration Task Force was appointed in 1985. However this was after the initial phase of implementation had occurred.

The initial circulation of the Review (1984) to schools, school councils and regional directors included a memorandum from the Minister, Robert Fordham (1984) that addressed the devolution of authority, responsive bureaucracy, collaborative decision-making and school council responsibility for educational policy action rectifying disadvantage and discrimination (Marks, 1993). School councils were urged to consider immediately the formation of an integration sub-committee to assist with the formulation of policy at the local level and facilitate the process of integration of disabled students into community schools. The Minister also encouraged the immediate establishment of Enrolment Support Groups to assist the parents of any disabled children wishing to enrol their child into a local regular school.

Enrolment support groups (now known as Program Support Groups) were perceived as the major mechanism to assist the integration process at the school level. At the State level an Integration Unit was quickly established to oversee policy development and Regions were directed to develop (or duplicate) appropriate support mechanisms to enhance the integration process. Accordingly, teams of consultants, namely Special Education Units, were established within each Region to support classroom teachers in their duty to integrate disabled students into regular classrooms.

The major brief of the Task Force Committee was to oversee the gradual implementation of the Integration program. Thus, the Committee determined in May 1985 the ‘need to gather information about the present state of play with respect to the progress of
integration in order to define areas which policy needs to be clarified or developed’ (The Task Force Report, 1986, p. 2). Consequently a report on The Progress of Integration from the Perspective of Government and non-Government Schools in Victoria was published in January 1986. The Report provided comprehensive quantitative data relating to integration students as well as extensive descriptive information of programs, processes and resources. Factors which were a means or a hindrance to integration were identified (ibid pp. 20-21) and in particular it was noted that:

There was a general theme of dissatisfaction regarding the lack of government finance to help promote integration….Lack of personnel, lack of in-service education, inability to purchase aids and the cost of transport were clearly expressed as issues which require addressing. It was evident also that careful planning and co-ordination must occur, even prior to the use of the formalized integration procedures, for the integrating process to be ‘successful’. In the schools which have clearly responded to the issue of integration, there is evidence of increasing strain on their own facility in terms of staff and physical resources (Task Force Report, 1986, p. 25).

These general findings identified the range of resources needed for teachers to implement policy. They extended beyond funding imperatives and included professional development and co-ordinated planning, endorsing the recommendation of the Review (1984, 10.5, p. 114) that:

the proposed State Board Standing Committee on Integration undertake an investigation of the distribution of resources and the ways in which this may be made consistent with a policy of integration.

It is now a matter of history that beyond the recognition of resource and planning issues any proposed action by the State board was vague and reductionist in nature. The broader resource issue was reduced to a process of funding, left open to petition and lobbying by stakeholders. As a result, recurrent government funding was forthcoming but the distribution remained a moot point where inequities in funding allocations were made transparent (see for example, the Review of Human Resources for Integration, 1987; Allocation of Integration Resources, 1992). Even with the inconsistency between findings and action revealed, the construction of disparate processes continued as part of the policy action for inclusive education. Action was not sufficiently constructive to offer
any improved result regarding implementation procedures. Essentially the same findings were replicated in a major performance audit of integrated education for students with disabilities *(Special Report No 17, Victorian Auditor’s General Report, 1992)*. Herein referred to as: the Auditor General’s Report (1992).

The Review had identified teacher roles as important within school systems where programs for teacher, parent and community education were pivotal in promoting the enactment of the policy. This was addressed in a two-fold process where the need for initial and ongoing support was clearly identified by the Review (1984, p. 81):

> The ongoing Integration Program will comprise both formal and informal in-service education for teachers, parents, and the community, as well as the pre-service and post-service and post initial courses for teachers and other integration personnel. To a large extent the ongoing integration program will involve continuing with and consolidating established modes of teacher, parent and community education.

Consistent with this directive the Task Force also embarked on a study of in-service education programs for teachers. The findings were documented in a further report of the *Integration Task Force of the State Board of Education*, (1987) revealing that in-service strategies, crucial for teachers to implement the policy initiatives, had not been developed, let alone introduced.

Educational research had also identified that action to resolve these recognised shortfalls was not adequately or systematically dealt with by the Department of Education (Sykes, 1989; Slee, 1993). This underperformance was also reiterated in the Auditor General’s Report (1992), condemning both the actual policy action and policy performance.

*Auditor General’s Report (1992)*

The Report identified problematic inefficiencies in pre-service as well as in-service teacher training. The Auditor General communicated explicitly that the Department of Education had not provided teachers with the prescribed level of training to disseminate information regarding the requirements and strategies needed for inclusive curriculum
planning and successful integration. Additionally, the lack of any cohesive policy and strategies for such professional development was also identified as unsatisfactory.

However, dealing with the issue of equitable funding distribution, the Auditor General argued that the policy of non-categorisation should be changed ‘to ensure that resources are being applied in the most cost effective and efficient manner for the ultimate benefit of students on the Integration program’ (Auditor General’s Report, 1992, p. 78). Without doubt the recommendation of policy changes was beyond the audit brief. However, of greater magnitude was the support given to the misplaced and reductionist premise of integration as a categorised funding issue (Marks, 1993; Moss, 2003). Consequently, public uproar emerged challenging economic management and regenerating the deep-rooted claims in relation to the very nature of the policy. With the central contention of exclusion re-emerging, human rights and equity were reduced to a political battle unconnected with the needs of children with disabilities (Rowe and Sturman, 1992; Haskell, 1992). Symbolic of the contestation and debate of the pre-history era of integration, during the 1970s, and the more formative era of the 1980s, the line of argument exposed the on-going resistance towards inclusive policy, particularly from factions with embedded interests in exclusion. This window of opportunity for antagonists meant that the very nature of the policy and the guiding principles were at the centre of debate again. However one positive outcome was that the Auditor General’s Report identified integration as a curriculum issue and this was expressed as an additional guiding principle. But once again, driven by political expedience, policy action turned to funding as a quick fix to the problem of contestation. Relevant to both oppositional protagonists and supporters of inclusion, a resource index was established claiming more equitable and efficient resource allocation (Program Support Group Guidelines, Directorate of Education, Victoria, 1996a). The development and dissemination of index funding guidelines (purportedly providing a more equitable approach) seemed to consume the Ministerial and Department’s observable efforts during the 1990s. Yet again, the narrow focus of funding detracted from the complex concepts of inclusive educational action and the change processes needed for potential success.
Department of education response: the Cullen Brown report (1993)
The immediate response by the Department to the Auditor General’s Report was to commission an advisory committee with the brief of providing a strategic plan for the future education of students with disabilities and impairments. Accordingly, the committee submitted a Report on the *Educational opportunity for students with disabilities and impairments: Future directions*, 1993, otherwise known as the *Cullen Brown Report* 1993. Significant aspects identified were first, to provide guidelines for appropriate action to support teachers in mainstream schools integrating disabled students into their classrooms and second, to provide a more equitable funding system. Accordingly, recommendations to achieve these objectives were made. Support to regular teachers through ongoing consultation with special schools, visiting teachers and integration teachers were endorsed by the strategic plan. Integration teachers were to be drawn from a core of senior teachers with specialist training. The accomplishment of a more equitable funding system was addressed though the recommended establishment of a funding resource index.

Yet again the need for a core of well trained and experienced specialists to drive inclusive theory and practice was at the forefront of identified need. However evidence of any commitment to this end and subsequent action was not apparent. What transpired was a disregard for special education qualifications by the Education Department based on the conviction that teacher skills, required for successful integration and inclusion, were generic and accomplished by all teachers (Tarr, 2001).

Conversely, teacher support through funding became a priority. The recommendation by the Cullen Brown Report (1993) to develop and trial a resource index for additional funding to meet student need (and to ensure adequate funding to support teachers and aides) received a dedicated and zealous response within Department mechanisms. This was evidenced in the new Ministerial guidelines: *Program Support Group Guidelines* (1996). The main focus of these guidelines provided advice to schools regarding program support group procedures and resource funding mechanisms.
Moreover, the importance apportioned to funding procedures was substantiated with comprehensive in-service programs on the requirements for index funding. This component was established expediently at Regional levels. Student funding included allowances for the provision of external resource personnel and integration teachers that were to be established at a school based level.

*Curriculum standards frameworks*
In addition to funding provision, *Guidelines for Implementing the Curriculum and Standards Framework for Students with Disabilities and Impairments* (Department of Education, 1996b) were produced to provide support to schools and teachers to develop their own curriculum, policies and inclusive individualised programs for students with disabilities and impairments. However, once again, there was no affirmation of supportive planning processes beyond guidelines and funding directives. As a result the second decade of implementation action resulted in little change and the continuance of school based decisions being locked into funding equated with purchasing aide time (Tarr, 2000). Tarr also pointed out that under this veil, aide time provided the scope for increasing withdrawal of students with disabilities rather than promoting inclusive practice.

Within this significant review period the need for teacher change was contextualized at the forefront of required action. It was identified throughout every stage of policy implementation but failed to be a key component of the political imperatives developed to initiate successful change in schools and the social reform of inclusion.

*The Meyer Report, 2001*
Insofar as the work of teachers and more equitable opportunity for students is concerned, the Review (1984), and the subsequent reports and guidelines, should have brought about considerable change. However the identification and removal of barriers in special education remained problematic and dominant divisions re-emerged. The marginal response to the realignment of professional and political interests was even more evident at the beginning of the next decade when a review of all programs for students with

While the PENG report added to the proliferation of evaluations regarding inclusion, importantly it turned attention to substantial emphasis on assessment and funding related to disability in these new times of inclusive education. Additionally the need for increased accountability regarding funding was a justified concern. In turn it was recommended that funding should be contingent upon evidence by the school of educational programs developed for ‘funded’ students (the PENG Report, 2000, 7.3, p. 55).

A response was expedient from the Office of School Education. Professor Luanna Meyer, Pro- Vice Chancellor, Massey University, New Zealand recognised for her expertise in the area of education for students with special needs, was commissioned to report on inclusive education in Victorian public schools. Professor Meyer submitted a paper containing her findings in March 2001 to the Director, Office of School Education Victoria.

The concerns with Victoria’s education were clear-cut. The emphasis on disability and dependence promulgated by the focus on non-teaching support (aides) rather than program development to meet specific needs was at the top of the ‘problem’ list. Combined and related to this problem was the loss of a State-wide consistency of expertise for the development of quality inclusive programs. Additionally the loss of commitment to inclusive education, innovative practice and strategic planning was identified as a weakness within public education.

As a result, a working paper containing twelve recommendations responding to these concerns was circulated to all schools. A timeline for feedback was provided with the proposal for a subsequent trial of final agreements to be implemented in 2002.
The messages with reference to educational workers, funding and accountability were unambiguous and clearly identifiable. The provision of inclusive education programs delivered by schools and put into operation by classroom teachers were identified as the major contributing factors to quality education. This emphasis not only maintained the general focus of inclusion, it also cited professional development as a crucial, causative factor pertaining to the goal of quality inclusive education. Furthermore, a proposal for increased accountability into school-based funding agreements coincided with a broader definition of students with special needs, including those with learning difficulties. Accountability, combined with the recommendation of a review process for allocations, was a significant factor to help ensure support for students’ educational needs and participation (rather than withdrawal and exclusion). Even more relevant to this research was the recognition that professional attributes were important in providing the highest quality educational programs for students. The role of special schools to provide support, training and expertise for regular school personal was cited again, as a strategic pathway for professional development and training. Additionally school networks to support and assist each other were endorsed as part of the resource regime.

The Meyer Report reinstated the imperative for teachers to incorporate inclusion into their everyday classroom practice. The need to implement this change orientated reform in a way that is cognisant of teacher need and training was apparent from both theory and practice.

The above analysis of the key reports regarding inclusion in practice re-confirmed the demand for strategic changes to policy action to provide efficacious pathways for the implementation of inclusive practice. These Reports re- affirmed the gaps in policy action and the importance of the objectives of this study to examine how schools can implement the critical factors required for systematic change - endorsing inclusion, valuing diversity, nurturing social relationships, rights and choice within a pluralistic society.
The community of educational change

Textual discourses and action

There is no doubt that the shift from non-inclusive education to inclusive education has been confronting in a number of different ways to Victorian school communities and the education workers within them. Diverse student populations, combined with the implications for inclusive school structures, have pressured schools to change the way they teach students. Schools are now expected to provide programs that offset difference, transforming the nature of schooling in order to recognise, value and support the learning needs of all students. This changing context of education has lead to political pressure for reform where the glare of publicity has continued through a range of contested pathways that were often related to expedient ‘market polling’ (Blackmore, 2005, p. 3). Despite the assemblage of diverse interests and struggles within this reform environment including individualisation, democracy, productivity and inequality, teacher knowledge and practice has remained a central imperative for future policy action (Levin and Reiffel, 1997; Lupart and Webber, 2002).

The current climate of educational reform and the resultant call for a changed schooling system is certainly associated with the move towards inclusive education for students with disabilities and impairments. However, this reform agenda has been sustained, if not advanced, by the additional socio-political demand for educational innovation to meet the needs of school communities with a range of diversely different needs. This broader discourse has provided the opportunity for both the collective and individual agency of key stakeholders to be integrated into the educational change process of Victorian school communities. In this way school improvement has been symbolised at a much broader level, focussing on benefits and outcomes for all students (Skrtic et al., 1996). Added to this broader context is the changed placement of diversely different students to ensure that all learners belong to a community that ‘locates the discussion in a social-ethical discourse which is strongly focused on values’ (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000, p. 191) incorporating a broad human rights agenda.
Within this landscape Victorian schools have been perceived increasingly as a vital link to social reform, expected to take a key role in creating a cohesive society, rather than simply promoting normative academic outcomes. This changed socio-cultural construction of the schooling system and ethical discourse had significant implications for educational workers (Fullan, 1991, 1999; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998). Corresponding with the global concepts of education systems moving toward inclusive education, change has been constructed across a broad range of areas including curriculum, assessment, instruction, the role and expectations of teachers as well as school communities in general (Lupart and Webber, 2002). This has led to extensive social change in the educational workplace impacting on classroom practice (Ainscow, 2000).

The creation of inclusive school environments meeting the needs of all students continues to be a priority within Australian education, resulting in a similar change process for school personnel (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2003). The capacity and resources to meet such a challenge has involved both the associated proponents supporting change as well as the underlying, actual change in the work of teachers: the way they communicate and learn professionally (Wenger, 1998). This is not an undemanding obligation. The changing socio-cultural environment has continued to make the role of the teacher more complex and demanding with the contemporary re-definition of what creates a successful teacher.

However the question of how this occurs can also offer an insight into a more edifying component of change. While the organisational and individual response to the process of redefining education has been considered as overwhelming for education workers, the identification of operational transformative action can also be enlightening and constructive. Providing greater opportunity for professional agency and development within learning communities, this positive focus has often been neglected and replaced by the more dominant struggles and interests embedded in existing practice. In exploring this positive characteristic of change, Foreman (2001, p. 392) provided an account that epitomised the constructive aspects that have emerged within changing school communities:
Those involved in change may find it difficult and time consuming to explore and implement, challenging them both professionally and personally. However, while presenting challenges, it also presents opportunities for teachers and schools to foster learning environments that welcome diversity and enable teachers to feel that they can make significant contributions to the school and the community: in essence that they can make a difference.

Subsequently, Foreman (2001) turned attention to a more broad ranging set of issues within the process of teacher change incorporating the social processes of situational learning that occurs within the actual change contexts. The concept of situated learning within professional learning communities is consistent with the key proposition of this study. Within this context, key stakeholders are considered as contributors of knowledge and an imperative for efficacious future policy action in inclusive education and the relational school improvement.

**Educational reform and change**

While policy acts to influence schooling and its purposes, change is entrenched within the practice of key stakeholders. The influence constructed by educational workers within the change process that include both individual pedagogical skills and school-based organisation is well documented (Fullan, 1991, 1993; Hargreaves, 1994; Hopkins, Ainscow and West, 1996; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996). Subsequently, along with the recognition of the positive contributions teachers can make to the capacity for change and improvement, the personal and situational constraints to change that are apparent within schools must also be recognised (Kortman, 1993, 1999; Hopkins and Levin, 2000; Hargreaves, 2003). For proposals of change to become actual (and sustained) change, all stakeholders need to be aware of the inter-related factors that exist within the process of policy development, policy action and the work of policy actors. Stakeholders within school cultures are required to be aware of the institutionalised structures that perpetuate human attitudes and actions as well as examining their own ‘roles’ in education. Many proposed changes have not moved effectively past the initial implementation phase due to the failure by governments and school leaders to adequately address barriers to change preventing new practices being integrated effortlessly into teachers’ repertoires (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003). Despite the considerable amount of research confirming
these findings (Hargreaves, 2003; Ainscow, 1999; Reynolds, 1996; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Fullan, 1991), two decades of integration policy in Victoria side–stepped this crucial element of policy action, ignoring the potentially discursive outcomes of such an oversight. Consequently barriers have remained and school improvement action has not acknowledged the required long-term investment in the development of teachers’ skills. When considering change within the Australian educational context, Johnson (1990) identified three sets of factors that relate to the response and implementation of change by educational workers. He focussed on aspects related to the nature of the change proposal impacting on schools and teachers; the nature of classrooms and schools as organisations and individual teachers as learners within change processes. These factors, when organised around a conceptual framework of change, illustrate the relationship between the various components of the change process:

\[\text{Nature of the change proposal} \quad \text{Change processes} \quad \text{Individual teachers as learners} \quad \text{Schools as organisations and nature of classrooms}\]

Figure 1: A framework for considering teacher response to a change proposal (Johnson, 1990, p. 2).

For the purpose of this research Johnson provides a systematic way to examine the process of total school change and a framework to examine contemporary educational literature relating to school improvement and teacher change.

*Nature of change proposals impacting on schools*

The source and nature of change proposals, as well as the background of the developers who determine such change, are significant aspects contributing to actual change (Johnson, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994). Although the nature of change can vary due to an inter-relationship of historical, cultural, political and institutional features there are a number of common elements that have emerged within the scope of education policy change and action. Traditionally, the pattern is for policy developers to make externally devised pronouncements that are handed down to teacher. This course of action has been
found to be less than effective as it merely aims to enlighten and challenge education workers rather than provide action orientated and sustained implementation, building on an existing knowledge base of school improvement (Hopkins and Levin, 2000).

Consistent with the implementation of change through Government regulation, the complexity of reform is often reduced to explanations and guidelines that are permanent and universal in nature (one size fits all). Additionally, centralised analytical control, whilst at the same time decentralising the responsibility for implementation in supposedly neo-political frameworks, is limiting in terms of policy actors contributing to changed practice (Huberman and Miles, 1984; Power, 1998). In actual fact, centralised governance often places new pressures on educational workers with the given responsibility to achieve politically orientated aspirations. Consequently, while governments announce more directives of what should be achieved, school systems struggle to figure out how to action and maintain these achievements. In reality directions given to teachers do not necessarily validate them to be the mechanism for political action within devolved educational systems.

**Individual responses of stakeholders**

Connected to the perspective of centralised directives is the particularly important factor relating to the extent that changes need to be understood. For instance, a factor such as inclusion needs to be understood as a guiding principle for all education workers rather than simply the placement of disabled students in a mainstream setting (Ainscow, 2004; Corbett, 2001). If this is not the case various meanings can be construed and applied in practice. Furthermore, a loss of clarity or ‘slippage’ in the terminology has often contributed significantly to a lack of common understanding between stakeholders of the very nature of the change proposal, adding to the uncertainty of what is intended within an educational reform framework. As a result, educational reform is particularly difficult in these circumstances (Fullan, 1991) and inclusion can be considered as a leading example of how unclear terminology has led to the reduction of ideas and policy action (Watson, 2003).
Ainscow (2004) while recognising that some of this confusion may be tracked back to Government or State policy announcements, explicated the disparity in policy action in Britain:

*For example the use of the term ‘social inclusion’ has been associated mainly with improving attendance and reducing exclusion from schools. At the same time, the idea of ‘inclusive education’ has appeared in most national guidance in connection with the rights of individual children and young people categorized as having special educational needs to be educated in mainstream schools, whenever possible. Most recently, Ofsted, the [school] inspection agency, has introduced the term, ‘educational inclusion’, noting that ‘effective schools are inclusive schools’*  

Similarities within the Australian education landscapes are apparent (Marks, 1993) where the uptake of definitions is often conceptualised differently within the local ethos and cultures of school communities. While this confusion and lack of certainty regarding understanding is often identified as an unfortunate paradox relating to the nature of school-based initiatives, the nature and limitations of policy action directed towards schools, by governments, must also be taken into account. Clarity needs to be sustained coherently across the system, at the levels of policy, policy action and with policy actors; within the perception of all teachers (Fullan, 1995). Furthermore, Hopkins and Levin (2000, p. 5) endorsed the shortfalls of the rhetoric of systematic reform. They concluded that if system reform was to become a reality policy implementation needed to comprise both ‘system-wide’ and ‘system-deep’ dimensions:

‘System-wide’ applies to the coherence and contingency across the policy spectrum. There needs to be ‘joined up thinking’ between policies, they need to be informed by the same values base.

‘System-deep’ refers to the policies’ ability to create a framework for implementation that leads to change in practice (Hopkins and Levin, 2000, p. 6).

There is also an increasingly strong research base suggesting that operational initiatives need to be concurrent with not only the nature of change proposals but the variables relating to the immediacy of that change (Huberman, 1992; McLaughlin, 1990; Wang et
al., 1993). Change within the nature and purpose of schooling is occurring, albeit less visibly than the social change external to schools. Within this context there are many internal factors impacting on contemporary educational systems that include resources, demographics and the paradox of political struggles combined with the number and speed of change directives. For instance, the current demographics of the teaching force, with a low turnover of staff contributing to a static and ageing organisation, brings with it a certain inevitability impacting on educational systems and change orientation (Hopkins and Levin, 2000). While this may not be a sole complexity, it requires an understanding of the life-worlds of teachers and the approaches needed to motivate and encourage internal change reflecting and incorporating societal changes external to the school.

Additionally, this does not detract from the importance of recognising the differences between schools, pedagogy and their programs and the need to build on individual school-based knowledge. Moreover, Hopkins and Levin (2000, p. 4) have drawn attention to the shortfall of many education reforms that ‘are insufficiently differentiated to allow schools to choose or adapt programs to fit their own particular practice.’

In addition it must be recognised that State innovations can often be isolated and unspecified contributing to an either/or mentality regarding the approach to be adopted in practice. This constructs a further confounding aspect that inhibits educational change (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). An extension of this complexity is the proliferation of a default vocabulary (Slee, 2004) associated with educational reforms where political agendas regarding implementation strategies do not help to sustain specified institutionalised change but rather they detract from it:

*Value added, benchmarks, world’s best practice, flexible implementation, community partnerships, empowerment, performance management, core accountabilities. Collaborative decision-making processes, and the stakeholder society is a random selection from management and government lexicons that have invaded colonised education discourse (Slee, 2004, p. 59).*
Watson (2003) referred to isolated and jargon-laden blueprints for change as a matter of discursive control and reductionist action where language, ideas and communication becomes stifled by terminology. In turn, Huberman (1993) emphasised the need for helpful communication and identified the importance of the development of a shared understanding of transformative language, where stakeholders can reflect and communicate with mutual purpose and insight. Furthermore, Ainscow (2004, p. 5) suggested that without an understanding of transformative language change can be inhibited:

It seems, moreover, that without such a language teachers find it very difficult to experiment with new possibilities.

Johnson (1990) also pointed out that change proposals often come in a form that is theoretical in nature (with jargon) that does not appear to have any immediate or practical application for educational workers.

Combined with the political expediency applied to change initiatives, giving little attention to comprehensive implementation strategies needed for educational reform and school improvement, governments have often underestimated the uphill battle (for teachers) to achieve changed educational objectives (Hopkins and Levin, 2000). Ostensibly policy change involves pedagogical change where teachers are expected to implement policies as given, with little attention being given to the mastery of new skills and understandings that it may involve (Joyce and Showers, 1995; Joyce. et al., 1999). Furthermore, Joyce and Showers (1995) made the distinction between change proposals that require a teacher to ‘fine tune’ existing skills or methods compared to those that involve the mastery of new teaching strategies. Although there is an adequate account of these findings from educational research (Joyce and Showers, 1995; Nias, 1999; Power, 1998) these insights are not a comprehensive part of documented teacher change initiatives (Slavin and Fashola, 1998). Teachers’ knowledge has been identified as important for policy initiatives to realise their aspirations and take educational change into classrooms. Therefore it is a component that needs to be incorporated into the
comprehensive plans for on-going change and school improvement (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001a).

School organisation and professional development
Whilst an explicit focus of quality teaching and learning has evolved around policy change and school improvement initiatives aimed at changing school cultures and pedagogy, school organisation is also an imperative that has been considered within this framework of policy change. There is substantial evidence suggesting that the organisational arrangements of schools impact on the professional development of teachers both individually and at a school based-level (Groundwater-Smith and Hunter, 2000; Hargreaves, 1999; Joyce and Showers, 1995). Many initiatives promoting organisational change within schooling systems have been narrowly focussed emphasising supposedly straightforward structural changes with the notion of these changes being relatively effortless (for instance, the placement of disabled students in mainstream schools). Therefore teachers’ work has been reconstructed within a process of governance that has been limiting in promoting a systematic, programmatic and coherent approach to school change (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001; Hopkins and Levin, 2000; Hargreaves, 1995). Moreover change efforts focussed simply on structural provision (even the medium of money) at the level of school organisation, can not only be limiting but perplexing for educational workers, where the conundrums and meta-narratives associated with school improvement remain un-resolved. This model has contributed to change being fragmented in its conception and application at the school level (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). Change in this sense runs the risk of becoming yet another product built into enduring educational regimes. Research evidence pertaining to the shortfalls of this approach has demonstrated the failure of successive governments to take sufficient account of strategies for sustained improvement to meet major societal changes (Ainscow et al., 1995a; Fullan, 1995; Slavin, 1996; Hopkins and Levin, 2000).

The construction of discursive school sites diminishing actual change
A further factor within this milieu is the nature of schools and their features as an organisation. Organisational factors detracting from whole school planning enterprises are often pre-emptive, diminishing prospects of actual change. Goals are often vague and
diverse in a system where student skills and outcomes are no longer the only ‘product’ of educational endeavour. What's more, in many cases schools are loosely coupled organisations with department and/or individuals often working independently rather than interdependently. Within this context school-based incentive structures become more intangible where democratic decision-making becomes even more elusive. Given this scenario, whole school change is difficult to implement where the capacity to develop the crucial variable of relationships (and communication) contributing to successful change is diminished (Fullan, 2002).

Furthermore, reform strategies based on short-term political imperatives have been identified as contradictory, detracting in many cases from original policy intent. For instance, performance outcome strategies relating to school effectiveness are just one example of the way the autonomy of self-regulating schools is contradictory - where government machinery over-rides any internal system response by schools in relation to the communities they aim to serve (McNeill, 2000). Hopkins and Reynolds (2001, p. 460) have explicated how judgements and indeed strategic plans relating to school effectiveness within ‘contemporary times’ have contributed to further fragmentation from within: ‘disaggregating schools into their component parts of departments and teachers.’

In many instances, teachers (and schools) are discursively positioned in contradictory ways, first as the source of professional activism and change and second as compliant workers beleaguered with the increasing demands on schools by government directives (Fullan, 1991a; Hopkins and Levin, 2000). Added to this predicament is the interminable generation of large-scale research knowledge about what works at a school level to potentiate student outcomes. The on-going expectation of gaining this acquired knowledge has contributed to confusion and self-doubt for many educational workers (Hopkins and Levin, 2000). Within these environments, the take up of some concepts as the core components of school improvement has occurred without any substantial acknowledgement of the criteria for change systematically building on existing school based knowledge.
Essentially school environments are organisations dependent on the interaction between people. Educational change theorists recognise that contextual, collective and individual variables can reduce or add to the capacity of school innovation (Blackmore, 2005). Environments impact on individuals and vice-versa. Therefore school change and development needs to work from the assumption that there is a combination of variables operating at the school and classroom levels, that contributes to the change process. Focussing on organisation or classroom programs and learning environments in a singular context has not led to sustained change within contemporary educational settings (Wenger, 1998). Therefore policy action needs to be vigilant to take into account both the needs of individual change agents as well as organisational functioning.

A further feature of positive change processes is related to the support of classroom practice by appropriate curriculum and organisation (and vice versa). Support in this sense does not depend on a set of static curriculum requirements but rather information to assist with informed decision making and planning. Hopkins and Levin (2000, p. 7) referred to this process as a synergy between teaching, learning and organisation:

> Once we have made informed decisions about teaching and learning, we need to find the programmes and organisation that best facilitate the chosen approach. School improvement strategies need to focus on both how to accelerate the progress and enhance the achievement of [all] students as well as establishing effective management practices within the school. This approach is neither top-down focussed in the main on management arrangements: nor bottom up-committed to specific changes in individual classrooms, but a combination of the two.

**Summary**

Teachers’ skills and knowledge and the agency of their work within educational reform processes are complex and significant. Through the analysis of key reports and research literature this chapter has attempted to validate the importance of both skills and knowledge and the action of teachers within reform processes such as inclusion. This chapter endorses the importance of teacher change initiatives and school capacity building. Change in this sense has been considered from both the individual and organisational levels of school based planning where an insight into the shortfalls of State dominance within change processes has also been identified. The importance of
individual and collective agency is situated within the context of debates over the communicative action and lifeworlds of teachers at the sites of inclusive education. The chapter further substantiates the need to consider critical characteristics contributing to successful policy action that have emerged from the experiences of teachers engaged in the process of implementing inclusive education.
Chapter seven:
Discussion and findings: The construction of teachers’ work within inclusive educational landscapes

Overview of the evidentiary chapters
The evidence emerging from participants’ accounts signalled each school’s ongoing commitment to integrating students with disabilities and meeting the needs of diverse student populations within their educational setting. This evidence is firmly grounded in the data and is explored through a practical discourse of active participation and consensus. In other words, teachers constructed their own visions of integration and inclusive practice, where they considered the difficulties relating to their work, as well as the factors contributing to effective outcomes. While these accounts represent only part of the multiple complexities for each school, they seek to provide an understanding of each environment against a background of policy and policy action related to inclusive education.

In analysing teachers’ responses I worked within individual transcripts as well as across the body of data. While contexts were at times clearly delineated and differentiated between schools, care was taken to maintain the anonymity of each school community.

Within both school contexts, transparently identifiable themes emerged relating to a lack of knowledge of the initial policy and its associated guidelines; teachers’ interpretations of this changed discourse; school organisation and action; policy action within classrooms and the issue of teacher knowledge, support and resources. These themes highlighted many of the critical components contributing to effective change that had not been addressed through State governance (Fullan, 1993; Tomlinson, 1996; Lingard et al., 2001; Slee 2001c; Ainscow, 2003). However, more importantly, the subject matter conveyed by participants constructed an image of how these changes actually occurred within the classrooms of policy actors and the dynamics that contributed to effective implementation of policy. Teachers reported their frustration regarding the nature of the
implementation process of the policy. On the other hand, they related to their own work with a sense of satisfaction.

Furthermore, the sub-themes signifying the capacity of teachers (policy actors) to enact inclusive policy were juxtaposed with an acknowledgement of the value of teacher networks that contributed to effective change. To a great extent these components reflect the concepts expressed by Habermas (1996, p. 367) regarding civil society forming ‘more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organizations and movements attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private sphere.’ This emphasis highlighted the importance of teachers’ own actions and collective agency in dismantling the deficit approach and exclusionary action relating to disability.

Through ongoing analysis and consultation, with participants, the data was organised into three main themes with associated sub-themes. In broad terms the themes addressed the strategic areas of:

- The arrival of inclusive policy and the construction of teachers’ work;
- School based policy action and classroom action and
- Knowledge construction within school-based communities of practice.

A detailed analysis, interpretation and exploration of these themes is then presented within the following three chapters.

Accordingly, this first evidentiary chapter, chapter seven, addresses the arrival of this policy and the impact on teachers’ work. In chapter eight the emergent themes of policy action within classrooms, along with school organization and action are analysed. The final theme emerging from the evidence, relating to the areas of teacher knowledge, school-based support and resources, is explored and analysed in chapter nine.

Within each evidentiary chapter representative descriptions by teachers are utilised to illustrate key points within themes and sub-themes. Participants and the researcher were involved in a participatory process to ensure descriptions were representative of the meanings conveyed within each theme.
Overview of this chapter
The dominant theme within this chapter identifies a general lack of knowledge of the initial policy and its associated guidelines and then considers how school principals and teachers overcame the initial resistance to policy implementation. Key strategies employed by educational workers are clarified as crucial factors within the process of putting inclusive education into practice. This was despite the overpowering emphasis on the need for funding and the political construction of policy implementation.

The construction of teachers work with the arrival of this policy

Initial resistance to policy: school based strategies to promote inclusion
The accounts that lead this chapter relate to teachers’ descriptions of initial policy implementation, as well as their own initial responses. They talked about the policy as a decree from above where there was little assistance or structure to assist them in this new challenge, and the debate, and indeed controversy that occurred within their schools. The comments from two classroom teachers captured the general sentiment of teachers’ lack of confidence and addressed the reason this occurred.

They stated:

In the beginning I was sceptical as a teacher, as I did not know how much the integration child would interrupt the normal child. It was a well-grounded concern at the implementation level as they do interrupt other children unless you have a strong or well skilled teacher.
Resistance came mostly from the lack of preparation for teachers. The area of behaviour management was a particular problem for me. I thought, how do you discipline someone who doesn’t understand you?

Teachers needed time to build up confidence about integrating disabled students into their classrooms and the direct enrolments happened sooner than this. It made staff resist and even resent this imposition imposed by the Department.

These teachers’ statements echo the themes of lack of preparedness to accept responsibilities, uncertainties for teachers, and planning that was reactive to policy rather than being part of a learning process. These aspects added to the demands placed on teachers who were vital operatives with the process of successful inclusion (Dyson and Millard, 1997). Teachers’ work in this context was understood to be about the
incorporation of students with disabilities into their classes and the resistance came from lack of preparation. The failure of State governance to recognise that the coherence of policy action could also be contested by teachers’ subjectivities (and their lack of preparation) at local sites (Fulcher, 1989) seemed to be supported by these statements. This was despite the extensive research and reports identifying this critical element (see Chapter six). Furthermore, there was evidence of what Habermas (1996) termed as incorrect partisanship, in this case State directives, to achieve the goal of inclusive education rather than to draw on or improve the collective knowledge and skills of teachers involved within the change process of inclusion.

As a result the actual perceptions and implementation of policy varied according to individual historical and ethical discourses, organisational change and concepts of what inclusion actually meant and involved.

As two teachers, each from a different school, noted:

\[It \text{ depended on individual teachers as to how integration worked. Some teachers even refused to try saying they were not trained to teach disabled students. In some areas of the school approaches of collaborative teaching made it easier.}\]

\[The choice of teachers was very important. They needed to be strong but also flexible towards children’s learning. Initially the integration program was left up to them. It was sort of like a punishment for being a good teacher but on the whole they made integration work. However it could have been much better for everyone with planning and team work. That was with our previous principal where teachers were left to their own devices to do the best they could.\]

Combined with teachers’ own concepts of their skills, and what they could actually do, initial implementation lacked coherence where windows of success were attributed to individual teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1995). Whilst teachers did not speak with one voice, the theme of State policy engendering apprehension regarding the practical implications of inclusive education was apparent across a range of texts. Teachers in some cases were still less than confident regarding their ability to teach children with disabilities but they identified processes and strategies that were most helpful to them.
such as peer support and flexibility. Here, community reason and the search for mutual understanding emerged as a key concept for these teachers in what Habermas (1987, p.30) terms as civil society creating activity and productivity. In addition teachers whose own life-worlds contrasted sharply with inclusive educational goals, specifically teachers whose practice was entrenched in, and supported the ideals of competitive markets and high academic achievement, responded with greater uncertainty regarding their work with inclusion. Classroom programs with the multiplicity of many different goals and measurable outcomes were still a major concern, especially where normative outcomes were still sustained, if not advanced by market forces and disparate political endeavours.

For instance, one teacher of a senior class stated:

*I did not know how these students could be included in our transition plans [to secondary colleges]. It was all very well to set up individual goals but how could this be reported?*

This also resonated with the contradictory nature of State governance in schooling, identifying the varying demands made on teachers and indeed the counterproductive consequence of fragmented goals detracting from what Habermas, (1996) identified as the collective capacity of teacher skill and knowledge contributing to change. The need to acknowledge change as a process or a ‘network composed of communicative actions’ (Habermas, 1996, p.354) rather than simply delivering disorganised change to many differentiated classroom doors, was evident throughout both school communities (Ainscow, 2003; Hopkins and Levin 2000; Yeatman, 1996). Opposing demands made on teachers by State governance was a major issue for many teachers.

Hopkins and Levin (2000) identified the traditional pattern of policy developers making externally devised pronouncements, handed down to teachers to implement through Government regulation, as being far from satisfactory. Although participants’ accounts regarding the initial policy implementation were varied, their statements about a less than satisfactory implementation process were like-minded and consistent. A key focus that emerged reflected on changed policy engendering social reform that impacted on the educational workplace. Changed student populations, including students with
disabilities, called for changed practice. These teachers’ discourses about inclusion provided an insight into the dimension of change within their practice. However, discourses can be both enabling and constraining and do not have general and predictable effects (Ainscow, 1991). They are assembled within the organisational and individual agency of key stakeholders and their associated responses. Therefore what is relevant is an understanding of how socio-political demand for educational policy to include and meet the needs of diversely differentiated students impacted, and still impacts, on the everyday roles of educational workers and the issues that are apparent within the implementation process.

From the above standpoint the chapter proceeds in two sections. The first section discusses how policy, its requirements and the implementation directives were handed down to schools and teachers. The second section presents an account of these educational workers’ initial responses to the inclusion of disabled students within their classrooms. Here teachers’ statements about the collective and individual agency of stakeholders within this change process were also explored.

**Integration policy and the decree to include these ‘disabled kids.’**

In the statements made by teachers, there was an identifiable theme relating to their lack of knowledge regarding the Review (1984), the subsequent policy, and the corresponding deficiency in the preparation for classroom teachers regarding implementation. Their evidence constructed integration policy as a directive. The policy guidelines had little relevance to the thinking and planning that occurred when a child was actually enrolled in the school. Explanations relating to a humanistic approach to ‘these kids’ were offset with the apprehension about catering for ‘these kids’ in a normal classroom where all children had rights.

The following examples bring together a view of the variables experienced by teachers within both school contexts. They stated:

> Basically the policy was bestowed on you and you had to accept it as part of your professional role. (Thus) the policy was taken on board
with the attitude that with no knowledge of disabled students we will just have to do the best we can.

When a child was integrated there was no real consideration of the policy (guidelines). We knew we had to do the best we could for the child.

The first real experience I had with integration policy was when I found out that I would have a cerebral palsy (CP) child in my grade the following year. I spent a lot of time in the holidays wondering how I would manage the child, as I had no prior experience and knowledge. I accessed material about CP and I suppose it gave me an idea of what to expect but it didn’t help me to work out how I would manage this person with the other 27 students in the grade.

Integration policy was thrust upon us - and still is - without any prior in-service to help schools or teachers cater for students with disabilities. The range of disabilities is vast. This still causes some problems within our school where there are different views.

The humanistic approach was the main plea that was touted by the Regional Office but it didn’t help with the knowledge of how it could be done. We were made to feel guilty if we didn’t take on this new role. I quietly hoped, not my grade.

We know and understand the issues regarding human rights and equity but it was very difficult to know how we could tackle this change.

In these statements teachers constructed the policy as a ‘top down’ pressure (Hargreaves, 1998) forcing them to change their own approaches and discourse regarding disabled students who had been traditionally excluded from the mainstream schooling system due to their different needs in the areas of curriculum, assessment and instruction. The dialogue from teachers correlated with the political pressure for reform where a less than effective system of change (Hopkins and Levin, 2000) was externally devised and announcements were handed down to schools through government regulation. It is worth noting that this occurred despite the rhetoric regarding the consultancy and participatory approach taken by the Review committee (The Review, pp. 35-36).

The teachers, in this study, described policy as being produced and implemented by the Department without any prior consultation. Their statements indicated that they were expected to take a key role in this social reform without any consideration by the
Department of their personal and situational constraints, particularly their knowledge, to instigate this changed practice of including disabled students within their classrooms. Here teachers’ accounts captured the importance of teacher skill and the need to identify how to develop this capacity within schools (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001).

**Political imperatives and change**

Educational research has confirmed that change is entrenched within the practice of key stakeholders, including both pedagogical skills and school-based organisation (Fullan, 1993; Aisncow and West, 1996; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996; Hopkins, 2003). The problematic nature of the failure by governments to adequately address change issues entrenched in practice, thus creating ‘barriers’ to change, is well documented by educational change theorists (Fullan, 1980; Johnson, 1990; Fullan, 1991; Hopkins and Levin, 2000). However, the failure by State and Regional bureaucratic management to consider what was needed for inclusive educational change (integration) to occur was a key reality for the stakeholders in this study. All indications suggested that the Victorian government and its associated bureaucratic departments ignored the findings within this extensive body of educational research regarding teacher change. This also raised the question of inclusion being a fragment of popular sovereignty, relating to the human rights and social justice movements of the time, rather than a contemporary reason for meeting the educational needs of a diverse range of students.

These teachers’ statements captured this notion:

> At first these children were placed in the grade with no prior help or in-service to prepare us as teachers.

> It was difficult as a teacher- I had no experience in this field. In fact I had never had contact with any disabled people.

> The government seemed to implement policy with no apparent explanation and I felt very unsure about why segregated schools would be closed except as a money-saving initiative.

The evidence suggested that written policy directives and central governance was expected to promote effortless change and a turn around in more than a century of practice embedded in segregation and difference (Fulcher, 1989; Slee and Corbett, 2000).
What was of interest here, was the analysis by teachers of how they came to be aware of policy and its implications. They talked about the (sudden) arrival of disabled students whilst simultaneously giving an account of their lack of professional knowledge of what ‘these kids’ needed.

Furthermore, educational literature has identified that many proposals do not move effectively or smoothly from an initial implementation stage to being part of teachers’ repertoires (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003) due to government and bureaucratic departments inadequately addressing the implications for action. Within this study, teachers constructed a snapshot of the effort required by them to even envisage the reality of inclusion with no prior skill or training with ‘these kids.’ Some expressed concern at the consequent ‘trial and error’ approach that evolved, along with the associated stress for all stakeholders, including parents. Others, although recognising the degree of anxiety about how inclusion would work, expressed an isolated or individual position of ‘just’ doing the best they could, given the Department directives. The emphasis on individual teachers doing the best they could, turns attention to research by Weik and Roberts (1996) who cautioned that in a culture of individualism, too few connections are made to develop a collective mind or focus within an organisational framework. Individualism may also detract from a process of communicating shared beliefs and practical knowledge, limiting the understanding and realities for key stakeholders and the social action needed for change (Habermas, 1996).

Accounts of individual teachers adopting the best approach they could were frequent. A further point, within this context, is that individual problem solving is particularly open to a range of discourses and actions. Accordingly, initial individual reactions and problem solving produced a fragmented approach to inclusion in both school settings. Consequently, the implementation process provided little opportunity for the policy actors, these teachers, to shape the mechanisms for educational reform within their school settings prior to the enrolment of students with disabilities.
This present study also raises two key and problematic points regarding implementation. First, the deconstruction of the last one hundred years of special education was equated to expedient policy directives and the placement of students in mainstream schools rather than any designed process and forward planning for school communities. And second, the nature of the change proposal for educational workers related to what Fulcher (1989) referred to as hierarchical politics, promoting the dominance of constitutional perceptions, being reproduced to serve the State.

Furthermore, the above points are related to the findings by educational sociologists such as Barton (1997) who described contemporary neo-liberal governance as a process of ‘provider capture’ serving the State rather than a focus on ‘consumer capture’ serving the need and social justice for individuals. The need for a well-planned educational response to meet the needs of this new cohort of students was undetectable within the conversations of these teachers’ about their lifeworlds and their experience with integration. Moreover the lifeworlds of teachers had become embroiled, once again, in what Blackmore (2005) described as political pressure related to expedient market polling by incumbent governments.

It is important to note that the expedient response to policy, with the placement of students in mainstream schools and the development of structures such as Integration Support Groups and funding, was viewed as a way to promote the visibility of policy implementation (for the Government). Within this scenario inclusion became a compilation of directives and resources (Slee, 1995, 2001). Indeed the teachers in this study talked about how these structures were not the essential solution for effective implementation. Instead, and most importantly, they identified critical aspects of building a school-based commitment to integration, along with the time and space needed to develop this changed direction within their learning communities. The value of communicative action with driving the knowledge that shapes reform (Habermas, 1984) was at the forefront of their discussions.
The following accounts by teachers and one principal captured this emphasis:

_Bureaucratic support is of assistance, as it provides money. This needs to be matched with one’s own philosophical commitment and an overall school plan._

_The integration policy also demanded the establishment of Integration Support Groups. This collaborative approach was a challenge for some teachers but our principal was very supportive by chairing the meetings._

_At first I found it hard to discuss (integration). It made me feel stupid not knowing what to do- but group discussions did work and helped develop ideas that were useful. It would have been helpful to do this well before children arrived._

_Meetings were arranged with special education staff. Some of our staff objected to this but it was really good to share different knowledge once we developed some common ground and understandings of what we were trying to achieve._

Once again, the evidence raised questions about the lack of in-service and time to access and utilise both ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ knowledge and expertise. Implied in these descriptions was the importance of teacher knowledge and skills that needed to be developed within school environments. The importance of capacity building within both schools emerged as an essential aspect contributing to the success of integration/inclusion - rather than a reliance on funding (Young, 1990). The examples also signalled the value these teachers placed on professional ‘insider’ responses to change. They talked about inclusion as being a value expressed by their school and how it needed to be conceptualised and promoted by all staff - with or without conditional funds. However what was missing from these teachers’ accounts was evidence of any strategies by the Department to ensure that integration teachers and regular teachers, who teach students with disabilities, received an adequate level of professional development. This was despite the recommendations of consecutive reports and reviews (e.g. Review, 1984; Cullen Brown Report, 1992; Meyer Report, 2001).
Central policy directives and school response

The reality for education policy actors

Overall, within a tentative and clouded initiation, the teachers in this study felt obligated, in the main, to take on board the policy direction of integrating disabled children into their own classrooms. However, the silences about the reform process and the guidelines embracing social change within the schooling system were significant. Teachers did not speak concurrently about policy guidelines and the processes employed with the placement of students in their schools except for funding. No reference was made to the policy document, or the guidelines contained within it, when describing any initial planning involving the enrolment of a disabled student.

In fact, the following statements by teachers expressed quite the opposite. They commented on the insignificance of policy:

*When the child was integrated there was no consideration or discussion of the policy. I guess policy wasn’t going to overcome the issue of the moment.*

*I wasn’t aware of any policy document. Maybe I had missed a staff meeting when this was discussed but I don’t think policy statements would have helped me integrate a disabled child into my classroom. I just had to try. I had to consider how this child could fit into our class program.*

Additionally, the teachers made no reference to school reform and the systems approach advocated by the Review (1984). Their emphasis related to the placement of the student into the normal education setting. Consequently, the well-grounded research within the Report regarding system change and teacher skill was not developed within these school contexts prior to any enrolment procedure. The lack of teacher skill was identified in relation to the time restraints caused by the political expedience of the policy implementation. Within this context the call for a changed schooling system as a vital link for social reform, creating a more cohesive society, was overshadowed by the day-to-day concern of ‘inclusive placement’ in the life-worlds of these teachers. Indeed, these teachers’ accounts can be related to research by Aisncow (2004) who identified the problematic nature of centralised directives overlooking the need (and time) for inclusion
to be understood as a guiding principle for practice, rather than the compulsory placement of disabled students in mainstream settings. Potentially, this oversight alone may have contributed to the ongoing research that has identified schools as disabling structures within the inclusive education of many students with disabilities (Slee, 2001b).

Evidence of the lack of clarity regarding policy governance, guiding principles and system change emerged strongly from teachers’ evidence. Consequently, plans to help disabled children fit ‘into their classrooms’ became the major emphasis of the implementation process and the teachers’ endeavours to give students equal access. Even though efforts addressed the initial policy ‘decree’ of access, the question remained regarding the process of increasing and maintaining the participation of students with disabilities in these regular school sites. The silence on the subject of social reform was significant. Policy was constituted as ‘an add on’ to the status quo of a normative schooling system in many of the statements made by teachers. The many efforts to include disabled students were clarified in the following teacher statements:

*Basically the policy has been taken on board in this school. Children are given the opportunity of equal access and participation in school life. We also believe these children can learn.*

*The general school attitude regards integration kids as part of our school community. All children are expected to abide by the school rules. There has to be equity for all students.*

*Over time we developed a clear perspective that the integration child belongs but there is still a place for segregation if it is too difficult for the child to fit in.*

Emerging from these deliberations of policy governance is the question of how policy action was constructed at local sites. The statements by teachers provided evidence of the lack of clarity of policy directions and the initial, consequential exclusion and injustice, based on the ability of the child to fit in. Teachers’ accounts captured how the implications of policy were initially misunderstood at these local sites due to, at best, an expedient response to the policy directives of enrolling disabled students within their school settings. Robertson and Dale (2002) have referred to the shortfalls of policy evolving in a framework of local neo-governance (schools) identifying outcomes in terms
of a ‘trickle down’ effect of strong ideological reform, where the strategic role of the
State is somewhat fragmented. The teachers’ accounts within these settings captured the
notion of the fragmentation of the central thrust of the reform of schools meeting the
needs of individual students.

However, the notion of human rights and social justice emerged strongly within these
teachers’ discussions. They were very aware that it was the standpoint of human rights
juxtaposed with discrimination that had forced this significant social and ethical change
in education but this was not correlated with any notions of school reform.

This middle school co-ordinator provided a representative sample of these notions when
stating:

_We know the argument for human rights is (ethically) sound but there are many issues of equity once these kids arrive. How to meet the needs of these kids was and is a difficulty for some teachers. This meant we were not delivering what was required nor addressing these students’ welfare, self esteem etc. We had to be careful that they were not worse-off - discriminated against in this setting._

Furthermore, there was a general consensus, by participants, that in the main that local
Regional offices simply supported the policy of inclusion, raising fears about
discrimination if students were turned away. This emphasis suggested that Regional staff
were more concerned about reprisals than actual student and teacher welfare. Literature
suggests that the rhetoric of human rights and the placement of students with disabilities
in inclusive settings, within Victorian schools, occurred against an unconvincing
backdrop of policy action (Moss, 2003; Slee and Corbett, 2000). The teachers in this
study shared the positive nature of their own individual policy action but the gap of any
comprehensive State planning became clearly apparent. Additionally, education research
suggests that placement, along with legislative and bureaucratic pre-conditions for
inclusive schooling, has not equated with any considerable progress towards successful
inclusion of disabled students (Slee, 2003; Slee, 1996; Lingard and Porter, 1997). Whilst
this is an overall view that does not represent individual examples of positive progress, it
encapsulates the shortfalls of policy directives experienced in the initial stages of integration for the teachers within the case study settings within this study.

The statements from the participants in this study also supported the lack of relevance of bureaucratic guidelines in the day-to-day tasks of providing programs for ‘these kids’. In the interviews they described how the limited in-service that did emerge, presented integration as a positive initiative (with no real difficulties) and how guidelines told them what to do, but not how to do it. Here, conceptual strategies within political administration detracted from communicative power and the collective agency of teachers running the risk of what Habermas (1996) refers to as a deliberative process of understandable crisis, generating a pathos of gloom, unless there is a dialogue within [civil] society. This view of political and systems theory helped to analyse and comprehend the downfalls of policy action identified by the teachers within this study.

However, with no prior skill or knowledge to assist in planning quality and appropriate programs for ‘these kids,’ teachers still provided evidence of a professional approach to meeting students’ needs.

Teachers across all levels of school co-ordination focussed on how school principals and teachers overcame the initial resistance to policy implementation and lack of in-service support. They stated that:

*There was little back up from outside the school. The Program Support Group was the only regular opportunity for any outside support.*

*As teachers we still had to be positive about what could be achieved. So it was important to maintain a positive professional attitude even though we were very apprehensive.*

*The main consideration was the child and what she would gain from being integrated into a mainstream classroom. Students were transferred without warning from specialist [segregated settings] with the promise of integration aide funding. Even having an aide in the room was threatening for some teachers.*

*The trial and error approach meant that we got there – but it was probably a lot slower. And caused a lot more angst than if the
Department had given us time and space to clarify our needs and develop our school policy and vision.

There seemed to be a general tendency to just leave schools with the problem and hope something worked. This type of response, from the Region and the Department, generated a lot of anger.

The evidence from these statements suggested that teachers on the whole took on board the adoption of policy. Nevertheless, it was not without concern and an overall lack of preparation for inclusion as a comprehensive reform process (Ainscow, 2004). The comprehensive accounts by teachers described integration as something they had to do if a child was enrolled in their school (or class) and they reflected on the apprehension they experienced. For these teachers, integration was the relocation of students from a segregated setting with conditional amounts of funding and unfocussed directives for change. As would be expected, the understanding of inclusive practice that was generated from this rationale diverted attention away from inclusion as a guiding principle for practice and school reform (Ainscow, 2004). Once again the statements by participants did not refer to school reform. Moreover, these teachers expressed concern about the tendency by the Education Department to let teachers ‘sink’ or ‘swim’ regarding the enactment process. Additionally, they believed that ‘these kids’ were also left to sink or swim in what was a questionable transformative policy that overlooked the skills and knowledge needed by teachers to implement the dramatically new practices of inclusion (Clarke et al., 1999).

Including disabled kids: Teachers’ professional response

Faced with these (disabled) children, teachers constructed accounts of the everyday realities of integrating students with disabilities into their school and classrooms. Some teachers expressed concern, shock and surprise at the initial thought of special educational facilities being closed. In these statements a sense of initial chaos was evident and the change was discussed as a political move to save money. This view did not only relate to mainstream settings. One teacher who was working in a Special Educational setting in the late 1980s reported on the realities in this setting. She/he reported the prospect of job losses, with no insight into any re-deployment. Here the social and physical reality of integration intruded into school practices and promoted concern
regarding employment security. Explanations of apprehension within the mainstream settings were also evident where the teachers’ responsibility for ‘these kids’ learning was cited as a stressful factor for many staff members.

The account by one co-ordinator reflected the essence of many discussions relating to the initial opposition to the access of disabled students within mainstream classrooms. The key points are outlined in the following statement:

Initially in the school there was a great deal of opposition by some power brokers who refused to have these kids in their classes. This provided an insight into some of the resentment towards integration—it was even against the spirit of integration. Even some staff that agreed to have integration students in their classes debated the purpose and benefit of these students being integrated [or transferred in from segregated settings].

Given this scenario the pervasiveness of deficit discourses also became evident. Unlike talking about ‘deficit,’ talking difference was a legitimate topic that could be discussed openly. Difference was something staff explored in terms of how the student could catch up (to normative goals) where ‘deficit’ meant they never would, thus participation of these students was problematic. Subsequently, ‘these kids’ was a label used more widely to categorise a group of students who were seen to be problematic and different from ‘normal kids.’ Discussions often began with ‘these kids needed….’ and ‘we didn’t have that here!’ Several teachers apologised for what they were saying but explained that they needed to say ‘the way it was’ if a true understanding of the initial process was to be known and evaluated. Initially, disabled kids were seen as generating difficulties in relation teachers’ roles. Here a snap shot emerged of the historical response to disability that was structured around a norm-based approach to education (Tomlinson, 1982; Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994; Loxley and Thomas, 2001). The rhetoric of integration rarely concealed this ‘normative gaze’ (Slee 1996) regarding ‘these kids.’ Instead the discourse of special education and compensatory education for ‘these kids’ tended to form a new category of disablement (Booth, 1996; Slee, 2001c).
This is not to suggest that all teachers spoke in this way about disabled students. Some identified the important change in educational thinking and the need to change the ‘discourse of normality.’ Principals said less about the students and described school organization and planning needed to support these new directions.

Many teachers commented on the initial apprehension and consequent contestation about this reform. This is captured in the following statements:

At first when we were talking about integration I was very apprehensive and I did not want to be involved with the suggestion by our principal of working collaboratively with the local special education facilities. I couldn’t see the point but chose not to debate this with our principal. I think this coincided with the thoughts of many staff members but it was not discussed openly.

In the beginning I was sceptical as a teacher as I did not know how much the integrated child would interrupt ‘the normal’ child. This is still an argument that some people put up.

The argument of disruption is well-grounded if the teacher isn’t strong. It is another burden for teachers who find running a classroom difficult.

Talking about difficulties is something that many teachers found difficult and I think this added to the anxiety about disabled students. Teachers could not pretend to have all the answers.

These teachers’ statements illustrated that policy was not adopted smoothly and teachers’ disparate responses impacted on the implementation process within each individual school. Teachers’ accounts and understandings are consistent with findings from educational research regarding the inequitable progress of inclusive schooling within Victorian schools, after more than a decade of policy being actioned (Slee, 2001; Lingard and Porter, 1997; Slee, 1996).

The somewhat negative responses described by teachers in the interviews mainly related to a lack of confidence that stemmed from a genuine concern of lack of professional training and knowledge. In addition there was some attention directed to the non-teaching role of special education or integration staff and the lack of withdrawal into special classes. These comments were not meant to be disparaging or discriminatory towards
students, but were simply another signal of the lack of confidence to maintain ‘these kids’ within the demanding pressures of classroom life. However, a corresponding return to the historic discourses of exclusion was apparent within this scenario (Thomas and Loxley, 2001).

Integration, pedagogy and change

It is interesting to note that combined with this perceived lack of confidence, at the planning and implementation level, was the perception of the classroom teacher being ultimately responsible for the integrated child in the school. On the other hand, the means of learning and responding to change through the vital avenues of collaboration, networks and systematic reflection (Fullan, 1991, 1993) were initially seen as threatening.

One principal explained how problem solving connected with inclusion was a difficult concept for some staff. He highlighted the difficulties and progressive steps taken to overcome this issue:

Collaboration and problem solving within the areas of teachers’ own expertise is an acceptable process and evidenced as beneficial by most staff members, however in unchartered waters (of inclusion) it was an ominous task. Teachers felt threatened to discuss what they were unsure about and what they didn’t know. However dialogue has opened up and collaboration is now part of our capacity building process. I had to be aware of individual staff differences and overall this has been an important component in our whole-school planning processes.

In the interviews teachers also discussed the effects of integration on whole school planning processes. Within this context they recognised and described the benefits of collaboration and problem solving processes within the traditional areas of curriculum. However, alternatively, some teachers and co-ordinators stated that integration had detracted from or created interruptions to the development of collaborative team approaches that were being fostered within (known areas of) their school communities. The effect of these ‘interruptions’ were seen as not only detrimental for students but also had the capacity to ‘divide’ the school staff (Argyris and Schon, 1996).
One co-ordinator commented on the tensions arising from the multiple pressures on staff. Inclusion was highlighted as a major difficulty:

*For many of us school planning has been like a roller coaster, we get one thing in place and then something like integration can be counter productive. Collaboration has been more difficult in this area. There is a greater divide between staff. Underpinning some of the reticence about integration is a deep –rooted resistance that often remains unexpressed. It is often a skill-based problem.*

The uncertainties of change and the snowballing effect this can have on school capacity building were evidenced in this data. This perception endorsed many of the comments made by a significant number of participants relating to staff division and the ‘add on’ inclusion had to other planning initiatives (for example curriculum). Hence, inclusion was seen as detracting from other aspects of school-based planning.

In addition, the time line needed for comprehensive reform to become part of teachers’ repertoires was an apparent issue raised by many teachers. Expedient implementation, with a political means-end rationality, did not give teachers time to share and deliberate on their understandings and hence implementation was seen as being particularly inconsistent in the early stages of inclusive practice. The time line was insufficient for what Habermas (1984, p 86) refers to as intersubjective collaboration where barriers to effective implementation where indentified as still existing. Furthermore, the research by Clarke et al., (1995) noting that while the controversy regarding inclusion was no longer at the forefront of inclusive processes, contestation and marginalisation were still apparent across the schooling system. Information from this study supported the supposition that the principles of exclusion and disadvantage were still being reproduced in some individual instances within each school context.

This study also provided evidence of the shortfall in addressing teachers’ expertise and professional development needs to enable them to direct a sustained approach to the changed political, cultural and social construction and the discourse required for operative inclusion. However, the processes presented within the data from this study, to date, provide insight into school-based action supporting individual teachers. Fullan
(1990) identified that teacher needs can be best addressed through staff development that is both related to the teacher as a learner, as well as taking in the very nature of the school concerned. In this sense, staff development needs to be highly individual and sensitive to individual requirements that cannot be articulated by way of written guidelines but rather through capacity building within a whole school context. Evident within this study was that school support structures, promoting some collective capacity (Habermas, 1996), had helped individual teachers develop skills and knowledge related to integration and inclusive practice.

Through the series of interrelated statements within this emergent theme teachers constructed their view of the changes that occurred for individual teachers and the importance of social action within their own school settings (Habermas, 1996). While the political leaning of State government policy action, identified in this study, tends to portray a belief in inclusion as a voluntary act around a discourse of rights, participants indicated how such a process can be discursive and contrary to the preconceived notion of inclusion. Even the acceptance of rights did not mean that the established practice of withdrawal and remediation was out of favour and replaced by individually planned programs maintaining the quality participation of disabilities in school life. What was important here is that principals and teachers identified the importance of the critical elements of inter-dependence and communication that needed to take place during this process of educational change. In procedural terms there is an underlying principle of an identified need for intersubjectivity rather than engaging in the traditional foundations of political directives (Habermas, 1996; Healy, 1997).

**The construction of an authentic pedagogy: collaboration and problem solving**

With due recognition and a response to the initial difficulties experienced in each school there was an overall tendency to solve problems through school based action and capacity building. This does not mean that both schools chose a similar pathway. What was similar was the emphasis on whole school philosophy and the exploration and acknowledgement of teacher need.
Teachers commented on the value of communication and problem sharing that had evolved around integration/inclusion. They emphasised:

*The reaction (refusal by power brokers) highlighted the need for communicating and planning at the whole school level about how we could start in the right direction. Leadership was very important here. At first integration was just left to the teacher who agreed to tackle it.*

*One strategy that was promoted was communicating and reporting back to the whole-school staff about what was happening within the school and the need for a whole-school focus and responsibility. This was opposed by some staff but by and large the sharing of knowledge was helpful.*

*Initially the people or staff within the school that were involved in integration got together to work out and plan what they could do. This sharing of the problem was a positive step as it provided a forum for individual teachers to express their concerns and address issues that were a problem to them. Sharing, such as this, is a component of whole school planning and it meant that everyone had the opportunity to work through any problems. It was also an avenue to identify outside help that would be useful. Our principal was very supportive of this.*

*Once the school policy was defined our team leaders were asked to identify any specific areas of help needed (through consultation). At first this seemed to be over whelming. We had to prioritise but that was ok.*

The critical components that emerged in the texts above were what Lingard (2001) referred to as an authentic pedagogy that encapsulated the knowledge of education policy actors and the challenge to build on the thinking and planning for all students. Combined with this aspect was the focus of ‘insider’ knowledge driving system change to implement inclusive practice within individual settings. Here policy action and the challenge to the school system was investigated by teachers using communicative understanding (Habermas, 1998) to help promote policy in action where information from the lifeworlds of teachers is channelled into a system domain. Teachers were then given the opportunity to express their concerns and also draw on relevant outside help.

Consistent with the findings within this evidentiary chapter educational research has also determined that physical placement of individuals into mainstream classrooms does not
automatically lead to inclusive action (Booth, 1995; Slee, 1998). Nor do policies employed as textual interventions into well established practice and discourse control the activities within schools or create new communities of learning (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Ball, 1995). The teachers within this study constructed a view of the reality of how textual interventions created discord between the rhetoric and professional action as well as the many dilemmas to be solved at the school level. This was compounded by the unavailability of appropriate support from the system domain. However, the evidence from the participants in this study provided an overview of the capacity of school-based planning and action to overcome the initial difficulties of resistance and the strategies that promoted this change.

**School-based reform in action**

Given these identified circumstances, the following question emerged: How did these teachers construct their work and their professional identity within a changing landscape of educational reform?

The following statement is representative of many teachers’ accounts:

> Generally, now, the school attitude is positive to towards inclusion and social justice and the integration of disabled students into mainstream settings. This means there is a shared approach, in some ways, where there is some help and back up. We still need to improve on this process and make sure individual teachers feel supported. We still need to develop a consistent approach to inclusion where there are common understandings on the best ways to engage students in learning.

The explanations by these teachers provided a scaffold for the understanding of the school based reform processes regarding inclusion and the complexities of the change process encountered by teachers. Here one critical characteristic of a shared approach to successful policy action emerged. What was also apparent from the statements was the implementation of successful inclusive reform through school-based practice, often referred to as a ‘bottom up’ process to address change. Here the consequent knowledge of the conditions for effective change was generated through the construction and use of the professional knowledge of key stakeholders (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Hargreaves, 2003).
The evidence from this study indicated that inclusive policy action had failed to recognise that policy, aims and processes are intrinsically related and thus decisions reflecting values and discourses of moral acceptability and cultural norms were ignored within the domain of State governance. However, the ‘bottom up’ process developed within each of these school environments addressed the individual agency of teachers and actively promoted different but whole-school based learning communities. It was here, that the importance of the time and space for the flexible construction of a pool of professional knowledge began to emerge within this study. Importantly, at the forefront of this emphasis teachers considered how they acquired and used knowledge to effectively integrate students into inclusive programs (Habermas, 1984, p.11).

**Summary**

The statements in this chapter portray inclusion as a work in progress. School sites were constructed as a community where communication and a shared approach to change and problem solving emerged as valued components of school organisation and culture. Seeing students as individuals changed how teachers acknowledged and catered for difference within their classrooms. The importance of all students belonging to the school community is also interwoven throughout the texts. This chapter concludes by highlighting these emergent themes of inclusion, first within a changing school culture and organizational structures and second around the education workers catering for difference. These themes are explored further in the following chapter around the notions of school-based social action and the development of professional knowledge.

The process of change, identified from teachers’ accounts, is summarised within the following table, identifying the schools’ capacities to implement change and the critical elements of communication for social action rather than political agendas or given guidelines for action.
Table 1: Initial themes of the process of change emerging from inclusive action

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<td>Integration challenged the social construction of one hundred years of discursive practice and exclusion in education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcomes and effects of externally devised policy handed down to schools with political expedience was a less than satisfactory approach to promote educational change with a shortfall of central governance to develop mechanisms for effective policy action.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational workers were able to overcome the initial resistance to policy implementation by developing knowledge and skills that were contextual and meaningful using strategies incorporating collaborative processes and problem solving.</td>
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Chapter eight:  
Policy action: School organization and classroom action  

Overview of this chapter  
The evidence in this chapter expands on the findings of the previous chapter which established that the Victorian context of inclusive educational reform expected teachers to instigate policies changing the historic, cultural and social construction of disability with little action regarding the skills, knowledge and planning required for such a significant change process (Hargreaves, 1996). Given this context, the teachers in this study constructed an account of how their school community engaged in the exploration of beliefs, development of knowledge and pedagogical directions pertaining to inclusive reform processes. These concepts are explored within this chapter.

At the forefront of the evidence, the consideration of individual and school-based beliefs were the central focal point in relation to inclusion, incorporating the need to establish a sense of belonging for all students within each school community. The data provides an ongoing account of individual teachers as the actual agents of change (Hargreaves, 1994) and school organization and leadership strengthening individual capacity to collaborate and consider what needed be done and the actuality of what was done. Findings generated from the data embrace the importance of teacher skill and knowledge within inclusive change processes but furthermore, the philosophical stance of the necessity to understand human beliefs to build what Habermas (1996, p. 347) terms as ‘hermeneutical bridges’ emerged. This line of discussion helped to identify the connections, interdependence and problems of meaning and knowledge that took place, at the actual sites, during the implementation of inclusive educational change.

These beliefs and values are explored and analysed within the following three sections of this chapter: the school-based accounts of inclusive social action, school organization within this policy development and the lifeworlds of classroom teachers.
The school based accounts of inclusive social action

Making sense of this reform

The concept of inclusive school environments meeting the needs of all students, rather than students fitting into school structures, emerged within the data as participants expanded on the ongoing process of inclusive action. The inclusion of all students and a sense of belonging to the school community, for all students, was a high priority at both school sites. The descriptions communicated below showed evidence of the shifting emphasis of including ‘these kids.’ The shift in thinking about how the system can plan (and change) to accommodate students rather than aiming for ‘these kids’ to fit in to existing school structures and normative instruction was a central emergent theme. Many teachers explained the evolving process. The following excepts capture the main essence of their accounts:

*The general school attitude now regards integration kids as part of us: part of the school community. We are working on ways we can best include them. A lot of planning is similar to any student.*

*Generally the school attitude is positive to integrating disabled students into mainstream classrooms. This also means there is a shared approach, in some ways, where there is some help and back up.*

*The general staff emphasis (for children) revolves around a sense of pride and belonging (and contributing) to the school. Integration kids are no different; they are viewed in the same light as all students.*

*Gradually we started to consider inclusive programs rather than just modifying the curriculum. This is a challenging task and often seems contradictory to other directives that come through like early years.*

*Overall there is a clear perspective that we have to become more skilled at planning programs within our classrooms to meet individual needs. Something I was not trained for but with support and help from within our team we have developed some understandings and effective strategies to include students.*

Teachers discussed how both individually and collectively they needed to make sense of this inclusive education reform, interpreting and changing practice and considering the consequences for teaching and learning. This emphasis on teachers as policy actors reinforced the notion that policy alone does not ensure educational change. A central
aspect of these accounts was the deconstruction of the myth that only special education personnel can teach disabled or different students. Indeed, as teachers suggested they became involved in reflecting on their own traditional beliefs and practice. In one proposition the teacher stated that ‘we’ began to consider inclusive programs rather than modifying curriculum. Here, the value of the development of a collaborative approach to inclusive practice is implied and the meaning of inclusion, where the structures of social rules are to change, were considered. This is an illustration of the way many teachers spoke about how the reform was gradually assembled within their school sites, where networks of communicative action and collective capacity contributed to change (Habermas, 1984, p. 101).

According to Thomas, Walker and Webb (1998) dismantling the myth, that has convinced mainstream staff of their incompetence in the field of special education for over a century, could be perceived as quite an insurmountable task. However, these teachers’ discussions were not only informed by the ideology around inclusion, they also encompassed approaches contributing to the collective deconstruction of the tenets of historical pedagogy and exclusion. Within this context there was an underlying concept that these students could be included in regular settings where teachers believed and supported the ideal of disabled students belonging to the whole school community. A notion that Thomas, et al., (1998) asserted as central to inclusive practice.

In addition, the value of communicative infrastructures within schools and the actors who come together to address change and consequent professional directions has been well recognised within the research literature (Habermas, 1984; Blackmore, 1998; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). According to most teachers the development of communicative infrastructures was a valuable process developing within their schools. However, time restraints and the multiple demands on classroom teachers were often cited as a deterrent for such constructive policy action.

The teachers in this study also confirmed the polarisation that occurred within State governance and different policy directives that were often inconsistent (for example
inclusion and normative benchmark outcomes). As a result they recognised that schools and staff were often discursively positioned, in contradictory ways, where communication becomes stifled by jargon and where student outcomes and government directives are juxtaposed with social reform. This type of positioning is also consistent with educational research (Vlachou, 1997; Clarke, 1999).

The discursive and somewhat indistinguishable features of inclusion were expressed by one of the younger participants in this study. He/she stated:

*I honestly found the jargon very confusing...inclusion and integration seemed to be two different things and the concept of IEPs (individual education plans) within the mainstream curriculum was even more confusing. I sat in meetings hoping things would eventually make sense and they did. I don’t suppose I should admit this really but at that time I didn't have any integration kids in my area of the school and I felt I could be doing other things.*

He/she went on to describe that [I] honestly didn’t know what people were talking about at times, especially when they were referring to integration, inclusion and special educational needs within a singular frame that was then put side by side with the concept of schools as disabling structures. These statements re-affirmed the standpoint identified by Johnson (1990) acknowledging that change proposals are often theory laden (jargon) and do not appear to have any immediate or practical application for educational workers. Furthermore, Fullan (2000) pointed out that schools are often loosely coupled organisations where departments promote individuals to work independently rather than inter-dependently. This also detracts from the capacity of schools to develop communicative infrastructures crucial to the process of school reform (Fullan, 2000).

However, the position that emerged from this study provided an insight into how school based policy actors, or insiders, could contribute, collaborate and affect the provision of differentiated and inclusive educational processes. Thus, internal actions contributed to changing educational discourses and had specifically altered the number of barriers that were inherent within State governance and instigated through the Education Department’s implementation of inclusive policy through the Review (1984).
Towards a whole-school approach: ‘Insider’ action

In addition, the participants in this study acknowledged the value of school based organisational structures supporting communication and promoting educational reform. Yet, staff reported that communication and collaboration evolved slowly within some sections and/or staff groups within each school. Contingent features identified and discussed relating to the topic of progress included: the way the policy was imparted or initially communicated; individual staff repertoires; and school-based processes. However, drawing on the knowledge of these contingencies the teachers talked about the progress they themselves, and the school, had made towards developing an inclusive framework within the last decade. How they overcame the obstacles was a central and re-emerging theme within these teachers’ statements that emphasised the importance of individual and organisational knowledge and efficacy as crucial components facilitating policy action. Many teachers reported on the establishment of a team focus and school-based support as a recurrent feature that had contributed to the progress and evolving positive response to integration and change. The team focus framework had provided a guide for practice (Booth, 1998) where there was evidence of teams providing sensitivity to the problem of inclusion and ‘a network’…. ‘that institutionalises problem-solving discourses on questions of general interest….’ (Habermas, 1996, p.367).

The following statements by teachers describing the emergent team approach reflected the discussion around this theme:

Initially the class teacher was responsible for the total supervision of some integration students. This meant that they were put in a position of responsibility for all sessions including play and recess periods. Recess supervision is now a whole school responsibility.

The principal encouraged a whole-school approach; overall this has been a success.

This doesn’t mean that the problem is gone, or that they are of any less significance, but the teacher concerned doesn’t have to own the problem; it’s a whole school issue.

Working as a team was very difficult for some staff at first but gradually we have built up a process that not only shares problems but also contributes to a pool of knowledge about the child.
The key problem of governments underestimating the uphill battle for teachers (Hopkins and Levin, 2000) was also evident in teachers’ statements describing the changes impacting on their work. Once again their statements were constructed around the school-based solutions, developed to overcome barriers to change, where collective capacity was at the forefront of planning. Solutions had been established, in most instances, within the confines of their own school organisation and knowledge, although there was some indication of the establishment of ‘outside’ contacts being helpful. These contacts included speech and psychological services, as well as special education staff from specialist services and settings.

The value of these services were described by several teachers:

*It is important to have the speech therapist there as you need to blend the programs (between school and therapist) in an integrated way. As a school we are always keen to work around problems. The speech therapist is one example. They couldn’t visit the school because they were a hospital-based service, so we just all met at the child’s home. The school addressed this problem in a flexible way and all the professionals gained an understanding of the reason for programs and future directions.*

*Working with special school staff gave me new insight to the programs that I could offer.*

*The speech therapist was an enormous help for the student in my classroom and gave me a starting point for program planning. It was not a singular approach of individual articulation. The focus on communication with students in the classroom was extended through different approaches including pictures, signs and the utilisation of receptive language. Something I hadn’t thought of.*

*Specialists were valuable team members when it came to developing appropriate strategies for students.*

An important feature, within this perspective, was that the focus was not so much on the assessment of students (deficits) but acquisition of knowledge about the student. Here the historical tradition of deficit was being dismantled where social action was evident at the actual sites of change (the schools) rather than through political action. Additionally, in one school, one participant portrayed input by staff from a nearby specialist setting as
useful. These shifts of obtaining information to understand individual students demonstrated the deconstruction of deficit discourses and discursive action within new educational times of inclusion.

Additionally teachers explained how aides supported program planning rather than being a necessity for any inclusive placement to be effective. The following statement provided an overview of this development:

*During the five years or so of integration in this school [up until 1994] I thought it was essential to have an aide to support the child. Now I am very aware that the aide is there to support the program we plan for the individual child, not vice versa. An aide does not ensure a quality appropriate program for students that are different.*

Difference, categorisation and funding were not the centre of attention by these teachers. The focus on difference at these two school sites did not support educational research indicating that within inclusive frameworks new ways were being found to reinstate social deviance and exclusion in many contemporary school settings (Slee, 2001c; Slee, 1998; Booth, 1996). This was not surprising due to the fact that the schools in this study had been identified as settings promoting positive inclusion; accordingly they demonstrated features of inclusive action. Moreover, within discussions about the need to understand students, the focus turned towards planning procedures, pedagogical adjustments and communication between stakeholders. What emerged from this data is how change, within these settings, incorporated social action (Habermas, 1984,1996) and the development of learning communities.

Indeed, as teachers suggested, supportive planning processes needed to extend beyond guidelines and funding directives to pedagogical action, contributing to new knowledge (Hargreaves, 2003; Habermas, 1996). School-based action that was locked into funding decisions was not deemed as an imperative for inclusive practice but rather as a support to school planning that incorporated inclusive practice.
Additionally, the principals’ views in both schools supported the need to create a framework developing a cohesive approach to inclusion and their own planning was directed towards this end. Planning included a cognisance of the importance of supporting teachers in mainstream schools who were integrating students with disabilities into their classrooms. Support to regular teachers through on-going consultation and communication was endorsed within the strategic plans of each of these schools. School-based action had supplemented the underperformance of the State policy action regarding the recommendations of teacher knowledge and skill contained in both the Review (1984) and the Cullen Brown Report (1993). Also the imperative to implement inclusive reform, in a way that was cognisant of teacher need and training, was again re-affirmed by the Meyer Report (2001). However some schools, such as those in this study, had already devised their own strategic pathways containing many of the recommendations identified by research literature and then the Meyer Report (2001) and the subsequent guidelines for 2002. Moreover, these schools had not only recognised what needed to occur, but how it may be implemented. In addition an important feature emerging from the data established that collective deliberation, drawing on insider information of the major policy actors, had contributed to successful implementation (Habermas, 1984; 1987).

Overall the dialogue not only provided scope for understanding the limitations of social action within political constructions but it also, once again, highlighted the failure of political deliberation to recognise the capacity of major policy actors. This study identifies existing ‘excellence’ already developed by education workers, albeit under difficult circumstances, where system wide planning providing coherence and consistency across the policy spectrum was not apparent (Hopkins and Levin 2000). This point also highlighted the reality that schools can be proficient (or not so proficient) and operating at very different stages of implementing of State driven guidelines. Within this context, the analysis of what individual schools had achieved would have been a useful process to complement the 2002 guidelines, identifying how guidelines might be achieved.
The educational workers within this study pinpointed many characteristics located within this gap where there was a strong emphasis and emergent theme around how inclusion occurred within these school sites. Therefore, this chapter has further examined the important characteristics of successful practice and progress regarding inclusion that emerged within the data. Communication and organisational structures were identified as significant features contributing to change and were discussed at length by most participants within this study. Here, while recognising many reform strategies were based on short-term political imperatives, that are contradictory and detract from policy intent, there was an identifiable theme relating to the need for cohesion within each school. The themes related to pedagogy, school culture and school-based organisation that had assisted teachers to incorporate inclusion into their everyday practice. In further exploring and analysing teachers’ views of policy in action, school-based leadership and organisation emerged as an important factor in enhancing the capacity to implement inclusive reform. This was then extended and linked to the action within individual classrooms. The importance of communication was interwoven into both of these emergent themes.

**The life world of school organisation within this inclusive policy**

The statements that guided the analysis of this topic related to teachers’ repeated accounts of the importance of whole school planning and the nature of the work in their own classrooms. In the first instance they emphasised the importance of school based planning and the strategic role of the principal when dealing with the challenge of inclusion. Here they acknowledged that within the complexities of school systems, the nature of schools and their organisational features could detract or enhance school planning projects and therefore detract or facilitate the actual outcomes of change proposals (such as inclusion). A concept also highlighted by Lingard, *et al.*, 2001, in their extensive research of Queensland education that had adopted similar inclusive policies to Victorian education. More often positive statements of school organisation were featured within the context of the two schools within this study. Faced with changed educational landscapes, teachers spoke at length about the role of the principal and the associated management structures, enhancing social and pedagogical change within a supportive framework.
In addition, the indecisive nature of State educational policy was noted. Teachers reiterated across a range of texts that the goals for inclusion were vague, within a diverse and often contradictory system of educational endeavour, where schools were left to their own devices to develop positive responses to the policy. According to the accounts by teachers from each school involved in this study, positive responses required school-based organisation and planning (rather than the State guidelines). Educational research has recognised that State educational guidelines can lead to opposing views within school-based organization and planning and consequently whole school change can be difficult to implement (Fullan, 2000). But here, teachers’ own voices highlighted the importance and capacity of relationships and communication within school-based structures contributing to successful change, despite incongruous State authority and guidelines. A distinguishing feature, within both school sites was that relational communication had assisted in overcoming some of the barriers that had occurred due to State impositions basically ignoring the challenge for educational workers. The concept of the discursive construction of political deliberation (Habermas, 1984) was well grounded within this data. Unlike talking about authoritative guidelines, talking about supportive school structures was a positive and constructive topic of conversation, highlighting the collective capacity within each school community to consider what should be done and carry out the actuality of what is done (Habermas, 1996).

The following statements provided an insight depicting how educational workers promoted policy action, within their own school settings, when they were confronted with the problematic concept of State endowed policy upholding integration and inclusion.

These teachers explained the strategies needed to support inclusive action. They emphasised that:

For integration to be successful you also need the support of the principal – someone who can support classroom teachers by way of planning and action. It needs to be addressed as a whole school if it is going to be successful. Support also needs to be within the school and on a day to day to basis.
The principal supported teachers and this was an essential component to have when dealing with integration issues that were new for us and there was little outside help. He (the principal) realized that this change was very threatening for some staff members and that small steps needed to be taken where possible for these staff members. He was a front line person who consulted with staff. This took some of the pressure off individual staff.

Initially the people or staff who were involved in integration got together to work out and plan what they would do. This sharing of the problem was a positive step as it provided a forum for individual teachers to express their concerns and address issues that were a problem to them. Sharing, such as this, is an important part of whole school planning. In the past we had been encouraged by management to adopt a team approach to planning but this tended to focus on good ideas and taken for granted practice. Integration was different in this sense but we made decisions and the school (and principal) supported us to find programs and establish organisational procedures that would best facilitate our approach. I guess we were lucky, some schools in this area didn’t get past arguing about funding.

Interwoven throughout many teachers’ discussions was the imperative of in-school support where emergent texts and discourses indicated the need and the value of ongoing whole school planning and communication.

Essentially these school environments portrayed an image of what Blackmore (2005) described as organisations recognising the importance of communicative interaction, problem solving and team efforts to enhance the capacity of school innovation and change. Drawing on their experience of integration these teachers acknowledged the need for a strong focus on internal conditions and attributed much of their success to the on-the-job support available within their schools. Consequently, this study strongly endorsed the findings by Hopkins and Harris (2000) valuing the related characteristics of peer coaching, promoting teachers to appraise, collaboratively, their own practice and develop a community of critical teacher enquiry. Furthermore, this explanation was taken up with specificity to inclusion by Ainscow (1998) noting the value in the shift of emphasis regarding teacher development moving towards reflection in practice, rather than prescriptive programs where one size is expected to fit all needs. Throughout a series of statements relating to school capacity building, guidelines and set procedures were
unappealing to this group of education workers, seeking to provide an inclusive educational framework for their students.

In interviews teachers frequently made the case that school based structures were supportive, and in describing this support teachers also referred to leadership and organisational management.

*Transformative leadership: a pathway for action*

The feature of leadership contributing to positive change was embedded in the data within this study, identifying support generated by appropriate planning and organization at the school level. Support in this way did not depict instructional leadership, with a set of static guidelines, but rather knowledge and structures assisting informed decision-making processes. In referring to informed decision making approaches Hopkins and Levin (2000) discussed the merit of developing a synergy between teaching, learning and organisation that was neither a top-down focussed management approach, or bottom-up approach supporting individual classrooms, but a combination of the two.

While these teachers did not talk about synergy, they did identify the benefit of a combined and balanced interrelation between all school-based personnel working towards common goals.

The following statements by teachers explained the importance whole-school planning and leadership. They are representative of the many statements contained within this theme. The principal’s role was emphasised:

*Support from administrative personnel is important and highly essential when looking at the effective implementation of our inclusive policy in this school. This is a component of the whole school approach to planning and it comes from the principal, vice principal and integration/special education team.*

*The principal supported teachers and this was and still is an essential component to have when dealing with issues such as integration and inclusion.*
[The principal] is aware of individual staff strengths as well as the difficulties that class teachers can experience. I think the planning, while aiming to delegate power is to also avoid unnecessary over load. There is evidence of a strength-based approach to staffing that is positive and assist with the sharing of knowledge within this school.

Here there was evidence of school leaders addressing the barriers of change through operational, transformative action rather than imposing change in an inert and inflexible way where leadership was reduced to the vision of one (Blackmore, 2005). Synonymous with the dimension of transformative action was the recognition of the value of education leadership being repositioned to the role of operational management rather than authoritarian leadership (Blackmore, 2005). A common theme emerging within this study was the importance placed on the need for leaders to be cognizant of the multiple interacting relationships within their schools, rather than maintaining hierarchical directives that disregarded individual agency and opportunity. Bates (2004) pointed out that the failure of administrative teams to redefine their educational administration processes, in this way, often meant that the management of knowledge, culture and life chances ignored future opportunities. When the teachers in this study talked about administrative support they emphasised the importance of leaders dealing with complexities through the involvement of staff, students and the school community. Again this drew on the notions of collective competencies of each school in its entirety (Newmann, et al., 2000).

The following accounts are linked to the above perspectives and indicated the importance of a collaborative school-based approach within the inclusive change initiatives developed within these two schools.

*The management committee that oversees or co-ordinates the running of each teaching area is also a vital component when it comes to teacher support and addressing school issues. Issues and problems with integration and inclusion are also addressed at this level. Issues are presented to the management committee through unit representatives and appropriate solutions are sought at this level.*

*The issues that arise are dealt with in a fairly anonymous way. This is amazing. Issues do not have be presented or owned by any one staff*
member. The range of issues is also extensive. However, decisions are collaborative and usually consultative.

The management committee provides a collaborative problem solving approach at the whole school level. Communication is important and it needs to be honest and open. This committee must work at this level if it is to be effective.

Within our administrative structure there are also middle management groups that meet once a fortnight. These meetings provide a forum for the range of day-to-day perspectives that emerge within our teaching roles. The meetings are quite extensive in nature and often take about two hours or more but the outcomes are positive where a supportive network is in place to tackle a range of operational issues.

Drawing on the statements and similar emergent features, the construction of leadership was an important factor for these teachers. They spoke about the appeal of communicative structures that identified new pathways for enhancing their school’s capacity to address change within their own life-worlds as educational workers.
Incorporating leadership at many levels provided opportunities for individual and group success, as well as a framework for action giving a sense of involvement and ownership throughout the process (Hargreaves, 2003). These strategies were reported as instructive and supportive, once again challenging the limitations of political and systems theory frameworks as an effective instrument for change (Habermans, 1984).

Furthermore, the discussion of policy operationalism identified a strong and significant focus on internal conditions promoting professional development. These included organisational structures that supported enquiry, reflection and problem solving, collaborative planning and a commitment to staff development to take educational change into classrooms. Subsequently, a comprehensive plan for ongoing school improvement and development that involved some fine tuning of some areas of each school’s operation, as well as new strategies where necessary, was incorporated into the Strategic Plans of these schools. Educational research has also supported the validity of such an approach. For instance, Hopkins and Reynolds (2001a) argued, as an outcome of their extensive research, that approaches incorporating a comprehensive plan of ongoing school development is a necessity for policy initiatives to realise their goal and take
educational change through classroom doors. Such planning not only supports teachers but also turns attention to the mastery of new skills and understandings that may be involved in educational change. The teachers in this study endorsed the research findings by Hopkins and Reynolds (2001a) and re-affirmed the need for structures to facilitate distinct school based knowledge addressing specific needs such as the development of inclusive education.

**School structures and change**

Within their accounts of on-going school development and inclusive education these teachers frequently made the case that there was a need for them to extend their repertoires and transfer information in an interconnected way into classrooms. Recognising the requirement for motivation and confidence, they talked about school structures that provided the opportunity to deal with educational change, where there was a balance between the recognition of individual need and that of stimulating action. There were many interrelated discussions identifying the threat that change can produce for some teachers by stakeholders, at all levels within this study. Here educational workers recognised change as not only an intellectual activity but also a personal challenge for some teachers. This focus was indicative of an overall knowledge of the dimensions of change processes in education (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998). Some teachers spoke of their own personal distress while others, mostly those in leadership roles, discussed processes that were acceptable and credible for teachers. It was in this context that the development of structures and the shortfalls of theory (policy) not being followed up by demonstration, practice and feedback was discussed. Thus, the need for flexible on the job support was described as the catalyst to develop school-based learning and management committees.

Committees were not discussed as mandatory structures but rather as a source for support help and guidance. It was here that there was a very clear concept of the need for a strong focus on internal conditions within each school setting that was rationally validated rather than originating from political directives (Habermas, 1987). Here again the importance of recognising staff needs, stimulating action and the threat that change can create for some teachers was recognised repeatedly. This line of reasoning was emphasised
Throughout the study where the building of human and social capital were seen to be important. The historic discourse of disability and segregation was also recognized as an issue within current educational landscapes where theory (policy) could not stand alone and where shared practice and reflective feedback were identified as providing an opportunity for adaptable on the job support for individual teachers (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001). This approach was valued by the stakeholders in this study where there was a high degree of credibility given to this field based approach.

The following statements further explained this approach in action. Teachers emphasised:

*It is important to have staff that will back each other up where there is a feeling of a team effort. Inclusion was a huge change and a whole school approach had to be developed.*

*Resources that assist individual teachers are important - this is not just funding - but sharing ideas; a principal where you can go and get help; a general flow through the school of team support; good liaison with parents; and democratic decision making where teachers feel free to talk.*

*The team that work with X shares ideas and solves problem as a team. One example is behaviour in specialist areas and out in the playground. We work as a team and try to be consistent.*

Leadership was incorporated at many levels, within each school, where there was an emphasis on developing network teams that were interactive and supportive. Although this approach had been developed via different pathways within each school, the outcomes were similar with evidence of the development of a critical community of teacher enquiry that continued to evolve.

The following statements provided examples of evolving networks in practice. Teachers stated:

*People have now become much more comfortable with the system of raising concerns and discussing them. Individual concerns are always valued within our system. This adds to a team approach.*

*The representative nature of our committee structures ensures there is an understanding of the support needed at all levels. There is also a*
concept of roles and accountability that is taken on board in the problem solving process. This can be quite difficult at times but is a necessary process to unveil difficulties and move forward.

Here there was an emphasis on cultural change and action where the basis for teacher development was teachers’ voices, rather than programs of any sort of prescriptive nature. Ainscow (1998, 2003) endorsed this shift in emphasis, with specificity to inclusive education, and the move away from teachers seeking ‘one size fits all’ prescriptive (and often remedial) programs. Moreover, the teachers in this study placed a high degree of credibility on reflective practice as the basis of teacher development where structures and leadership helped to effectively integrate and co-ordinate innovations into their own focussed programs (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001).

Fullan (2001, p. 2) referred to the fundamental change contributing to effective leadership as the ‘cultural change principal’ influencing action to build school capacity and mobilising the energy and capacities of teachers. The teachers’ accounts in this study identify this type of approach in their schools, where they speak of leadership being focussed on the big picture, that was combined with an understanding of teachers work in classrooms. Leadership was identified as facilitating a network of relationships and support across the organisational boundaries of each school, where there was a general sense of a collective intelligence within each school community (Brown and Lauder, 2001).

The representative extracts below illustrate the value placed on communication and collaborative teams within each school setting.

The management teams are becoming a more vital force within our school planning. Decisions are made providing a clear direction for staff and support is given when and where necessary. Inclusive education is highlighted at this level, it is part of our school policy now and we must deliver. The mechanics for communication are well structured and if we have a problem we know it will be taken on board. This applies to parents and students. His (the principal) philosophy does have an effect on the school and his general approach is open where communication is valued.
Our principal and management team are always there as back up – not really trouble shooters – but ready to advise accordingly. It is also good to have a team providing complementary approaches from different angles.

Within both school contexts the principals were identified as strategic facilitators of policy action where they contributed to an effective school-based response to inclusion. What is more, leadership and the organisational capacity of each school were described and analysed by these educational workers as valuable components of effective change and the incorporation of inclusive practice within their classrooms. A great deal of time was spent discussing the implementation of inclusive policy within a school climate that was supportive in developing an operational understanding of integration and inclusion. These discussions related to both whole school and classroom planning procedures.

Within the above texts teachers also reported on the constructive nature of teamwork and collaboration within and across teams. This common thread continued to emerge across a broad range of areas including curriculum, assessment, teaching strategies and the examination of the role and expectations of teachers. Furthermore, the value of collaboration as a facilitative process, encouraging internal change, was interwoven within a further emergent theme pertaining to inclusive action in classrooms.

**The life-worlds of classrooms**

Faced with ‘these kids’ teachers discussed the multiple realities within their classrooms and how they drew on commonsense knowledge to deal with the issues that they were confronting within the process of integration. In listening to the ‘inside’ accounts there was a sense of questioning to further investigate: What did these teachers find important? What counted as inclusion? The lack of uniformity in responses portrayed the complexity of teachers’ work within the integration process and the struggles to fulfil multiple, and at times contradictory, purposes within their professional roles. In their statements about classrooms these teachers constructed a view of what they did before there was any coherent approach to inclusion established within the school and what they believed would assist them in the future. In exploring the discourses and practices that had emerged from these discussions, evidence was generated regarding the importance of how inclusion was shaped within classrooms. A further dominant feature was the
emergent theme identifying the need to consider inclusive pedagogy from teachers’ perceptions. Here two frameworks emerged around student identity and teacher skill that incorporated operational understanding.

This theme will be discussed in two sections. First the discourses around student identity and the distinguished features of individuality within the classroom context were explored. Also the ways inclusion was embedded in teachers’ institutional work, as part of the normalising practices existing within each school, was considered. Second, the occasions where teachers identified the problem with normalising practices was examined, identifying solutions to this problem.

**Student identity: Caring, managing and teaching ‘these kids’**

Teachers’ contextually grounded work underlined this part of the study. The realities, constructed by the practitioners, were explored in the search for evidence of how teachers carried out the work of inclusive education that aimed to change the discourses of exclusion and normality. Here the pivotal factor revolved around instructive arrangements and the dilemmas for teachers regarding commonality versus difference rather than simply considering academic outcomes. Group membership was juxtaposed with individual need within teachers’ discussions.

Discussion highlighted instructive arrangements and pedagogy:

*There is no one method that leads to successful integration or inclusion. No one method is right for all kids. It is ultimately the teacher’s responsibility to select and implement appropriate strategies that start with a knowledge of the child.*

*Contact with previous teachers is vital. They are a great source of information about the child and this helps to establish an on-going program that is consistent. Transition is vital and should be as smooth as possible.*

*My personal view is that the child must fit in with other children, particularly where behaviour is concerned. Ideally that is what integration is. This is different to the academic side where we cater for individual need. We do this at this school anyway.*
Another important component is that the children’s self esteem must be promoted. Good teachers do that automatically.

Educational research has recognised that State governance and guiding principles did not challenge the didactic and philosophical arrangements at a system wide level (Oliver, 1996; Lingard and Porter, 1997; Slee, 2001a). However these teachers assembled their work as a challenge to build the thinking and planning of pedagogy to meet the needs of all students. Lingard 2001 referred to this process as an authentic pedagogy where unlike curriculum limitations, the vital factor of teacher knowledge contributed to inclusive learning environments.

Within this study, the pedagogical approaches discussed by participants included the imperative to understand individual students with an underlying emphasis on positive modelling and socialisation (group membership). The understanding of individual students was not equated to any development scale but rather to consider practices that would promote inclusion. At the heart of this study was evidence of the ‘insiders’ (educational workers) shaping the mechanisms of educational reform (Habermas, 1984). The accounts below represented many of the tenets or code of beliefs that were explored throughout participants’ dialogue in this study. Essentially there was a turn around in thinking, from how the child was going to fit into the normative programs within the school, to consider how to promote opportunities for individual students. This change embraced notions of systematic change with ‘insider’ information providing the driving force behind the implementation of inclusive policy in action. Furthermore, communicative action between stakeholders was frequently mentioned as a strategy that assisted with the understanding and development of programs promoting system change and inclusive action.

These teachers reflected on their own journey relating to inclusion. They highlighted the development of teacher knowledge and skills:

The change for me came slowly (acceptance of integration and disabled students in my class). The first experience with these kids came in the specialist areas of art. I had four kids coming in from four different
grades. Two of these children fitted in well and the goals of integration seemed to be achievable. The other two were very questionable in my book but by working as a team with outside specialists and our own staff I came to see how I could give these students the chance to participate in art and creative activities. I guess I also saw the benefit of building their self-esteem.

The ability to involve disabled students does take organisation and knowledge. It is easier for an experienced teacher who has background knowledge in behaviour management and resources to adapt programs. However we help each other in this respect.

Contact with the previous teacher is vital. They are a great source of information regarding specific programs and needs. This helps to quickly establish an on-going program that is consistent. Transition is vital and should be as smooth as possible. We support this with additional time release for this purpose.

The initial program and organization was based on the previous teacher’s program until I could gain further knowledge and understanding in the current class situation.

The above texts constructed an image of how inclusive schooling developed and extended beyond the boundary of student placement in normative settings and conformity through a reliance upon funding (Young, 1990) within these schools. Within this context inclusion emerged as being a value that was expressed by teachers in the way they conceptualised and promoted the development of all children in their classrooms. As an underlying principle of inclusive education outlined by the Review (1984), this identified focus, of meeting children’s individual needs, achieved a number of things. Specifically, change that contested the socio-cultural construction of schooling, the removal of the diagnostic gaze of individual disability and the consideration of learning environments that are responsive to student need are fore-grounded; these texts constructed the schools within this study as a place where children were at the centre of planning. A position that is contrary to educational literature replete with the predicament of the re-construction of exclusionary practices within inclusive settings (Lingard and Porter, 1997; Slee, 2001c). Another layer of positive action is also added where the ongoing elements of communicative action and whole school planning promote a whole-school community of practice (Habermas, 1996). Furthermore, within a framework of curriculum planning, moving towards a model of productive pedagogy, there is an emphasis on teachers
responding to diversity with the support of teacher aides. Once again, the emphasis on teacher aides in a supportive role is important; it has redirected attention from the resource driven arrangements that have upheld inequality (Ball, 1998) within many school cultures and pedagogy.

Here the professional roles of teachers are constructed as the driving force (and therefore the major resource) contributing to successful policy action. Teachers reflected on their roles in the statements below:

*The main emphasis is to that [the student] feels they are part of the class. Within this context I had to be careful not to simply let the aide deal with the student. I agree that segregating in a mainstream classroom with an aide is not what integration and inclusion at our school is about. Our principal also takes a very strong position on this view and has been strategic in turning around some of the thinking regarding an aide being attached to one child.*

*The aide can’t be involved with the one kid all the time they need to work with other kids as well.*

*Initially it may be necessary to have the aide work intensely with the child to help establish routines and reinforce skills. However after that the aide must step back so independence is developed.*

*At first the student worked on her own until a routine was established - and then moved quickly to a cluster group situation. If students are to be integrated effectively social interaction with other children is important and working in isolation does not promote interaction. Clusters need to be of a flexible composition for all parties.*

*An aide does not help me to develop an understanding of the student or how to analyse student information for the purpose of program planning. This is the area that I need help in; I have not got these skills.*

*Aides are very helpful to establish a program but you have to careful that the student does not rely on them. I move the aide on to another task once the student is established in the routine.*

*In this school we don’t consider that students working with an aide is equivalent to integration.*

*In many instances the outcome of integration revolves around the program that is established and implemented within the classroom. Programs need to be practical and realistic in terms of application.*
In the analysis of data, the discourse relating to support from teacher aides was frequent and broad in context, locating assistance in the areas of the development of routines, preparation, class assistance and specific teaching strategies. Importantly, the discursive structure of conditional funding so that ‘these kids’ could be maintained in the classroom was not evident; a move away from the disabling structures of funding identified by educational research (Ainscow et al., 1995a; Oliver, 1996; Slee, 2001c).

Moreover, within these school sites, there was a focus on individual learning and learners where the process of increased participation and the maintenance of students within classrooms were at the centre of policy action. The provision of educational opportunity for people with disabilities was a matter of importance for these teachers. Correspondingly, there was evidence that the schools directed considerable effort towards upholding the principles of the Review (1984, p. 6) rather than contesting them. Funding was not a political diversion to uphold the historical tenets of disability and exclusion in these schools. To a great extent there was a constructive approach in identifying future directions and recommendations for inclusive practice to continue to develop and improve.

Inclusive communities within these schools
The following accounts captured the overall philosophy of ‘these kids’ being given the opportunity to fully participate in classroom life and the programs within them. However, this was not intended to detract from the complexities of the life-worlds of classroom teachers and the difficulties they encountered within contemporary landscapes of educational settings. The critical element or real issue was how these teachers responded to diversity.

In the interviews teachers across all sectors of each school provided similar accounts of their program planning. They emphasised inclusive action:

> It is important to develop a whole group spirit where students learn to co-operate with one another and accept each other at their own individual level. My program is organised so that X can fit in. Like any
student they are expected to participate but always at their own level of ability. Some staff thought that this would be easier in infant grades but it also works at this senior grade level.

All class members are expected to have a go and contribute to the class programs. I need to ensure that all students feel they are involved in programs and have something to offer.

There is a major emphasis throughout the school of co-operative learning and this model certainly supports the process of integration where (all) children can contribute at their own individual level.

Social inclusion is also very important in this school and one of the main goals when considering difference. Teachers also need to be flexible and accept that some tasks are just too difficult. Often another approach will work if we stand back and look at our program. Although this requires time it is very rewarding.

Initially some teachers were more willing to approach inclusion more positively. This was valued and additional time release or a smaller grade was one form of recognizing the extra work put in. This was within our school – not from the Region.

The above texts provided an overview of how teachers were able to translate the social and cultural change of inclusion into student related programs. Rather than highlighting the difference between ‘normal’ and ‘not so normal’ learners, the agenda related to teacher insight and the re-thinking or reflection of their own practice. The construction of new classroom roles, expectations and student outcomes were included in this dimension. As Darling-Hammond (1995) pointed out, changed practice relating to policy action cannot be instigated in a political top-down process where the voices of key stakeholders are excluded. This study illustrated the general concern and stress for teachers when initially faced with the prospect of integration presented through political deliberation in such a hierarchical way. However given time and space there was evidence of an evolving confidence with the formation of knowledge at a school-based level. Within this context communication and problem solving techniques were at the core of social action (Habermas, 1996). Demonstrated within the texts of this study was also a shifting focus on what inclusion meant. Within the initial stages of their discussion regarding policy action these teachers spoke about how ‘these kids’ would fit in. Yet with the
development of school based organisation and support, the emphasis shifted to the construction of classrooms to include ‘these kids.’

One teacher captured this change succinctly:

*It is of prime importance that the child experiences success within the program; this involves the teacher being accepting of the child and aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the child.*

On this occasion the teacher explained the operational understanding of inclusion within her own class of students where the strategies related to strength based programs and planning became a priority.

*[The student] was allowed to use the computer for some programs as it helped with presentation. [He/she] was quite good with keyboard skills. This simple adaptation allowed for participation in the same program activities as other students without aide assistance.*

Many teachers saw the importance of developing programs that provided opportunities for success and participation of all students, conceptualising an overall pedagogical emphasis on change to include ‘these kids.’ Here there was evidence of a cultural change where the focus on teaching and instructive arrangements represented a huge shift from student deficit based approaches, so often upheld within inclusive structures (Moss, 2003; Slee, 2000; Allan, 1999), to inclusive planning. Inclusion was a high priority at these schools where there was evidence of teachers translating the change prompted by policy into both whole school and child related programs. Teachers were paramount to the process of inclusion, providing insight into the ways they contributed to the challenge. School-based proponents supporting change, as well as an actual change in their own work, contributed to positive learning environments. Three important points emerged. First there was recognition of the positive contributions teachers can make to the capacity for change and improvement in their own schools (Hargreaves, 2003). And second, the broader base of the changed placement of disabled students ensured all students belong to a community located policy action in an ideological and socio-ethical discourse that was expressed by these teachers. This changed socio-cultural construction of these schooling
landscapes had significant implications for these educational workers as social change agents (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1998).

However within each site teachers described operational initiatives that were sufficiently differentiated to allow them to adapt programs to fit their own particular practice.

*The curriculum is adapted so that goals are realistic but the integrated child still participates in the same subject as other children. Resources and class materials based on different levels are utilised to facilitate this process.*

*Behaviour management is an issue. Action has to be fair and consistent for all children. A behaviour management approach works best for me with the current child I have.*

*One of the main reasons for adapting the program is to try and ensure that the student is involved in class activities. It is important that she feels that she is working as the other children do.*

*A breakdown of the goals into small steps is also important from both a parent and teacher perspective. Achievements are then clearly signalled and can be monitored. In this way success is more easily identified.*

*Some skills present great difficulty. I still believe the child should participate but the task can be limited. Other children quickly learn to accept different skill levels and they also quickly accept integration if it is introduced in a positive way.*

Inter-woven into these texts was evidence of individual educational workers exploring the positive characteristics of change along different, but merging, pathways. This type of autonomy provided a greater opportunity for individual, professional agency within their learning communities. In turn, there was evidence of teachers considering the positive characteristics of change, where change emerged in a constructive way (Foreman, 2001). Although there was evidence of change being time consuming and challenging professionally, these teachers described the opportunities made available through organisational and individual responses to change. Moreover, this action enabled them to recognise the contribution they could make to the significant reform process of including diverse learners within their classes of students.

Evidence from the interviews presented a summary of this dialogue:
Programming can be difficult and time consuming at the start - especially at the beginning of the year when you are taking over from someone else. Things can seem to be standing still or progress not at an optimum but to see the child involved in the class program [eventually] is very rewarding as a teacher.

Teachers need to be flexible and run an interactive program that involves children in their own learning. A 'talk and chalk’ would not be suitable as it is difficult for diverse learners to participate in these circumstances. This teaching has been challenged for some time. Maybe integration will further challenge teachers that have already resisted the call for interactive learning and individual progress.

To initiate an effective program information is needed on physical and cognitive skills. This was already in the file and I could discuss the information with colleagues at any time.

The purpose in presenting this emergent theme was not to overlook the difficulty and stress that change can generate for individuals but to turn attention to the value of teacher change incorporating the social processes of situational learning within the actual change sites (Foreman, 2001). Situational learning was a pivotal discourse relating to inclusive policy action in these two school locations. Within this context teachers considered themselves as contributors to knowledge that was also an imperative for on-going policy action. Furthermore the maintenance of a communicative nucleus, within a scaffold promoting the ability to speak and act, promoted the scope for participatory action to contribute to policy action (Habermas, 1990).

The understandings constructed by these workers not only identified inclusion as a curriculum issue (Auditor General’s Report, 1992) but it also overcame the lack of in-service and the conditional funding perpetuating discursive exclusionary practice (Yeatman, 1996; Slee, 2001). Even though teachers’ work was reconstructed within a process of governance that was limiting in promoting a systematic, programmatic and coherent approach to school change (Hopkins and Levin, 2001), this study revealed how school sites can promote change and inclusive policy action. Change in this sense was not another product built into continuing educational regimes and directives; it was assembled around the crucial variable of teacher skills and attitudes within a supportive school climate. Given this framework, teachers were able to develop an understanding of
the inclusive change proposals contained within the Review (1984). The evidence from teachers’ statements provided an insight into a school community that developed a positive commitment to integration/inclusion, as well as the skills promoting policy enactment. Importantly, with a focus on the multiple realities of school and classroom organization, change occurred within these communities of practice that was informed by people engaged in a process of collective learning (Wenger, 1998; Habermas, 1996).

Summary
In scrutinising the statements leading this chapter of the research, indicators pointed to a strong sense, from both organisational and individual specificity, of factors generating optimum policy action. The range of contexts included leadership, representative committee organisation, open communication and collaborative team efforts. Here there was a strong sense of internal conditions promoting change that gave teachers tools to capture what was important in their day to day planning to include ‘these kids.’

Subsequently the focus turned to what was important in their classrooms. These indicators or qualities focussed on what needed to occur in classrooms within an underlying recognition of teacher skill and knowledge.

Within the context of inclusive policy action, this study identifies the capacity of school communities to develop knowledge and changed pedagogies needed to promote inclusive reform. An important feature of this development is management strategies that understand and support teachers’ professional needs, promoting a synergy between communication, social action and teacher knowledge. Although not prescriptive, this view of the communicative learning domain contributes to the understanding of effective inclusive policy action. Furthermore, it confirms the shortfalls of political and systems theories of action that have dominated inclusive educational planning and system change over the last two decades of Victorian education.

This research confirms that teachers, both individually and collectively, have needed to make sense of the reform of inclusive education, interpret and change practices and consider the consequences for teaching and learning. The utilisation of communicative
structures within these schools, to achieve this end, has given impetus to the key assumption of teachers as policy actors generating change (Habermas 1994, 1996). Furthermore, this study captures the significance of key policy actors collaboratively addressing issues and devising professional directions to develop strategic pathways for the development of effectual learning domains, teacher change and inclusive education. This process is represented in Table 2 (below).

The next chapter expands on this operational understanding and the knowledge creating processes identified by participants within this study.

*Table 2: Organisational and individual action generating optimum policy action*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School communities engaged in the exploration of beliefs, development of knowledge and pedagogical directions pertaining to inclusive reform providing the mechanisms to respond to the changing landscapes of education and inclusion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management strategies that acknowledge and support the complex and multiple realities of inclusive educational change and reform.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based communication, organisation and social action contributing to knowledge creation promoting inclusive policy in action.</td>
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Chapter nine: Communities of practice: Constructing school based knowledge

Overview of this chapter
This chapter analyses the concept of teacher knowledge as a resource for policy action. Within this study, knowledge emerges as a major theme and is recognised as a necessity for inclusive policy action to be effective. Teacher knowledge is also embedded in the notions of changed pedagogy and school culture that occurred, and is occurring, within these schools sites. Hence, the expansion of inclusive practice revolves around the value of teacher knowledge and the philosophy of changed pedagogy and school culture, with an overarching principle of the processes promoting these qualities. This chapter explores these notions with the view of gaining further insight into the substance of teacher knowledge and why it is purposeful within the lifeworlds of these teachers. Furthermore, the way knowledge is channelled, using meaningful processes promoting change in practice, is also examined. In focussing on knowledge and knowledge creation, teachers revealed the changing nature of their work. They spoke at length about how pedagogy changed, the knowledge they needed for change to occur and how pedagogical plans emerged.

To explore these themes the chapter is divided into in five main sections: the construction of teacher knowledge within inclusive educational sites; knowledge creation and the construction of knowledge; teachers’ work in professional learning communities; social action contributing to the change in teachers’ work; and the overarching principle of the conditions contributing to social action and knowledge development in local school sites.

Although these sections are presented separately it is necessary to point out that within the data these themes overlapped and were interwoven.
The construction of teacher knowledge within inclusive educational sites

The knowledge based school: Teachers as the drivers of knowledge within inclusive educational reform

The statements that led the theme in this chapter relate to the operational understanding of inclusive practice and the knowledge required for policy action to be efficacious. Re-emerging are the questions of what is the nature of this knowledge and what are the characteristics of how was it developed? Here the dialogue relates to past, present and future directions for inclusive practice. Within this context the teachers become the drivers of knowledge, offering insight into critical components for action. Their accounts, relating to inclusive educational reform, expand to the notions of ongoing school improvement that recognise a collective intelligence within connected (school) communities (Brown and Lauder, 2001). Whilst recognising that classroom teachers are the most critical factor within inclusive school reform, aspects such as school culture, site based management and professional development are also significant for these teachers.

Teachers commented on the evolving school culture:

At first there was a narrow representation of staff involved in integration and some people perceived that it wasn’t relevant for them. Staff members were drawn into questions and discussion about beliefs where values and concerns were shared. Our principal was the main facilitator of this action and it drew disparate teams together.

As integration has worked with each individual teacher the focus on inclusion has become part of the whole school process and integration has become part of our school philosophy and mission statement.

We had to ease people into in very gently, showing them that what was expected was not impossible. We had to do this where integration and inclusion were not seen as radical but part of the contemporary educational landscape.

Once again site based management, considering the nature of the change proposal for stakeholders, is evident within data. Also a commitment to the development of a collective, professional learning community, as part of a deliberative democracy that contributes to the conception of knowledge, was a central emergent theme (Habermas, 1996; Wenger, 1995). The conceptualisation of teachers’ knowledge has been identified
as important for policy initiatives to realise their aspirations and take educational change into classrooms (Hopkins and Reynolds, 2001a). At the outset, the understanding and development of individual teacher knowledge was a component built into the comprehensive accounts of on-going change and school improvement within the two school sites in this study.

Two co-ordinators made the following observations about professional knowledge:

We had to consider teachers’ professional concepts of knowledge and the change (and indeed threat) integration could produce.

By working together we were able to increase our knowledge base and reflect on our own practice. It was not just one or two people having the knowledge. I think we had (previously) divided ourselves into ‘knowledge boxes’ but inclusion is different, it cuts across all areas of school planning and curriculum.

Furthermore, both principals indicated the awareness by management teams of a pedagogical plan to link teachers’ (tacit) knowledge to practice, thus opening up communicative space and enabling colleagues to share new possibilities (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Ainscow, 2004). The pathways within this framework were quite disparate. One school concentrated on a ‘bottom up’ approach to knowledge development, the other adopted a broader school perspective figuring out what was important, producing a school vision statement and then focussing on skill-based implementation strategies. However, in both schools, as teachers worked together to make sense of inclusion, they envisaged what the school would be like in the future, discussing their own practices, sharing their beliefs and gaining information about colleagues’ personal pedagogies (Sachs, 2000; Senge, 1992). Within this context effective change was identified through the construction and use of professional knowledge (Hargreaves, 2003).

Teachers spoke about this process in positive terms:

I think integration and inclusion got us thinking in an atmosphere where everyone needed to have a say. We all had to be pretty clear about what is said and stated in our school policy and mission.
It got us going and stimulated us to sort out problems beyond curriculum content, behaviour management and new directives. This [inclusion] needed whole school planning, we spent time where we actually got together and talked through what we were going to do school wide and at various year levels where there were different curriculum issues and reporting for transition.

It was the first time in this school [that I can remember] where the differences between teachers were open for discussion. I was wrong to assume that all experienced teachers had the same knowledge of how inclusion could work. It brought home to me how isolated we had been in our own sections. I guess this had developed a ‘them and us’ attitude in the school.

Problems were just discussed openly and somehow we came to a consensus fairly easily.

Interwoven within these texts was a perceptible notion of professional development being meaningful and relevant to stakeholders that in turn assisted the facilitation of the successful enactment of inclusive educational reform. In addition teachers’ accounts emphasised how professional growth occurred through strategies promoting interaction and associated with a process of social action (Naonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Habermas, 1996). Overall the participant observation and analysis within this study corroborated with the findings of Villa and Thousand (1995) and Slee (2001c) identifying the need to understand and analyse what schools are actually like and how they need to be organized to embrace the principles of social justice, equity and inclusion.

This summation by a year five co-ordinator captured this emphasis.

What we basically did was to consider how our school would meet future projections. Ongoing planning is now part of our professional life. Schools are part of the broader community where change is continually evolving.

However, within this process it was the particular realities for the individual school and the lifeworlds of individual stakeholders that were upheld rather than any notion of ideal models being developed. What is important here is that the caution espoused by Lingard (1996) around sustaining a sense of ownership and involvement in advancing teachers’ incentives to acquire new knowledge was part of the knowledge building capacity of each
school. This critical characteristic for effective change, also endorsed by educational theorists (Hargreaves, 2003; Sachs, 2000; Von Krogh, 1998) was explored further within the dialogue by participants. The purpose was to consider the knowledge creation strategies and processes within the lifeworlds of individual stakeholders and to also examine the move away from the historical notions of prescriptive solutions to problems, where political imperatives often overrode the communication and knowledge of education workers.

The knowledge-based school: Identifying the nature of knowledge and these teachers’ roles

Further questioning revealed that the participants in this study believed that successful integration required teachers to be flexible, considering how they could structure activities to maintain participation. Although not stated explicitly, the changing school culture and a system response to include children was embedded in their changed practice and reconceptualised roles. New expectations relating to educational outcomes and the valuing of different knowledge turned the focus to an appraisal of curriculum and assessment practices.

These teachers commented on their own professional development. They believed:

Until we realised integration and inclusion were based on a common sense approach, building on what we knew, reactions were not always positive. A common sense approach was essential. We needed to figure out the relationship between the theory and practice and decide what this meant in practice. Teachers already running an interactive classroom found it easier to adapt to participatory processes and inclusion.

We had to consider what was our main objective. Through various meetings and discussions it became evident that integrated students would not be assessed in the same way as other students. This was a relief and an enigma for teachers reliant on student outcomes as an indication of progress.

One of my first reactions was how we were going to account for different outcomes in the Curriculum Standards Framework if outcomes were to be different. The CFS required quantitative outcomes and added to the debate about what is valid knowledge.
Accounts relating to student outcomes were frequent and quantified standards were still upheld strongly by some staff members. Upper grade teachers tended to support quantitative student assessment. Although this had the potential for long lasting contestation and a school divide, team management, characterised by an approach promoting shared individual knowledge, helped teachers to identify common ground and the inconsistencies between their pedagogy and practice. Goal based assessment was built into the school charters.

Within each setting the knowledge of individual stakeholders was valued and shared within an organisational school framework rather than seeking to develop any one prescriptive solution (Senge et al., 2000). The findings by educational change theorists (Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves, 1994; Hopkins, Ainscow and West, 1996) regarding the influence constructed by educational workers within change processes, including both individual pedagogical skill and school based organisation, was well grounded within this data. The importance of operational understanding, including teacher skill and curriculum knowledge, was at the forefront of these teachers’ discussions. Teachers noted the importance of developing understanding and skill through effective communication highlighting the importance of an ideal speech situation free from distorted political systems (Habermas, 1984, 1996).

Participants in this study constructed their own school sites as the springboard for taking up operational issues and promoting efficacious policy action. This was despite the assemblage of multi-faceted complexities generated by various State policies and edicts that were unrelated to individualisation, democracy, productivity and equity (for example curriculum guidelines and assessment and reporting procedures).

Essentially teacher knowledge and practice remained as a central requirement in considering and implementing inclusive policy action within these schools rather than state governance. Through collaboration teachers had learnt from each other, providing windows of opportunity for new kinds of collective knowledge. There was also evidence of the development of a cohesive approach to inclusive education, and a move away from
simply promoting productivity based on the normative academic outcomes of students. This focus of directing attention away from normative outcomes, not only embraced an important principle of inclusive policy it was a good example of a cohesive society promoting change (Hagreaves and Fullan, 1998; Lupart and Webber, 2000).

Several accounts by teachers and co-ordinators described how collaboration assisted with inclusive program development:

As a teacher, I have had to gather skills as I have gone along. I have used as many resources as possible for answers and ideas on structuring a suitable program. Programs had to build on the child’s knowledge and yet be part of the class program. Teachers who had already adopted group approaches to teaching found it easier as inclusion was simply an extension of this practice.

When we got down to discussion we found that we already had individual approaches in place - in reading for instance. We had managed this difference but still reported on bench-mark outcomes. Why? This type of discussion really made us think about our practice without demanding huge change. It raised a very important issue. In reading we used this knowledge to tailor programs to children’s level of achievement rather than label them in any particular category [as in the past]. What was alarming though was that there was still discussion about reading failure instead of progress. It gave me insight into how we had individually interpreted reading levels and just left the gap between policy and practice unexplored.

The co-ordinator concerned identified the inconsistency, cited above, as almost humorous. Reflecting on staff meetings she captured a vision of notional agreement, with the nods of agreement being couched in so many individual agendas. She reflected on how this action was perceived as consensus when everyone must have continued in his or her own way. However, the fundamental value of bringing people together to communicate and learn from each other’s experience remained important.

Continuing statements expanded on knowledge creation within these schools:

Integration needs the commitment of everyone; that commitment, or whole school approach, is pretty well apparent and we are still building on our knowledge. While the approach of learning as we go has worked, the question remains as to who ultimately suffers. The
development of shared beliefs and action is important. However this needs time to be developed effectively.

With time we have developed a school vision with an associate whole school approach to inclusion. This has been an onerous and time consuming task but the effort has been worthwhile. There is now a process in place to keep building on our knowledge and teachers’ requests for help are specific.

With specific requests we are able to action appropriate resources that address the needs identified by teachers and/or teams. The clarity of our planning directions is very positive. We have identified what needs to be done and now the ‘how’ is part of teachers thinking and we are have allocated resources and funding to facilitate this process (Principal).

The evidence from the data identified the collaborative role and expectations of teachers that was extended to the school community. Collaboration was a significant and on-going factor interwoven throughout the statements by the majority of stakeholders within this study. Learning was both situated and inter-subjective (Blackmore, 2005; Habermas, 1884).

An important point was that at the start of discussions relating to knowledge there was an emphasis on curriculum planning and student outcomes. Implicit within these initial notions of curriculum planning was the view of teaching and learning revolving around the foundation of fundamental instrumentality and student outcomes.

Teachers discussed the inconsistency regarding the measurement of student outcomes:

Curriculum outcomes are still our major objective and this has been, and still is very confusing. We are required to provide measurable outcomes for all students.

There were two sets of directives that were inconsistent. Integration with modified outcomes, Curriculum Standards Frameworks with benchmarks for student outcomes and then Early Years Programs with progressive, measurable outcomes. I remember feeling quite perplexed with this ever increasing and inconsistent number of bureaucratic directives.

We had to be strong and keep our own school philosophy in place as well as meeting guidelines [from the Department].
Within the interviews teachers reflected on how accountability was still based on curriculum outcomes and they expressed concern about how to measure modified outcomes. Some teachers reported how this concern was intensified by the successive and conflicting guidelines regarding student outcomes generated by central bureaucracy (the Department of Education).

The statements leading this next section, while acknowledging the contradictory nature of curriculum guidelines, turned the focus to knowledge extending beyond empirical measurement and modified curriculum embedded within political imperatives. Piecing together their views of how knowledge can be legitimately produced, discussion initially centred on how curriculum would be modified for ‘these kids.’ However, within this context, discussion turned to examine the theoretical shift in ways of knowing and knowledge production (Gibbons, 1994) and the implications for practice within learning environments. Here the broader concept of knowledge was explored, within a framework of procedural knowledge compared with content knowledge, raising the question of what is valid knowledge. While some teachers indicated a degree of difficulty in clarifying what really counts, there was evidence of the understandings these education workers had about the evolving theories regarding the nature of knowledge (Fay, 1987; Groundwater-Smith, 2003).

Overall, the understanding about the nature of knowledge related to the variables of individual teachers and the specific students discussed within this study. However, a significant number of accounts supported the position of the need for knowledge to be contextual, meaning specific and produced through social interaction (Putman and Borko, 2000; Habermas, 1984; 1987). These accounts emerged across the range of structures within each school site and were emphasised in different ways, including the concepts of interactive and experiential learning, participation with modified tasks, contextual and strength based planning and social inclusion and interaction.
One teacher commented on the quantitative versus qualitative debate as an on-going issue in the school:

*The debate between measurable student outcomes and more qualitative outcomes was a big issue in this school and was promoted, once again, by integration and the philosophy of inclusion. I thought [the new principal] would run into the same problem as we had before but it was managed very differently this time. Staff teams were asked to make a presentation highlighting key features of their area. This started the sharing of beliefs in a positive way and common interests and beliefs were quick to emerge. I guess it promoted a dual system [to assessment] where everyone felt valued. However people did make adjustments to their practice by utilising each other’s good ideas that suited them.*

*Deliberate discussion regarding assessment achieved two things. One, through discussions teachers were able reflect on their beliefs and understandings. And second, by defining what they really wanted for their students we were able to come up with some common goals regarding assessment and teaching. Both personal and school wide perspectives were agreed on.*

One principal noted:

*... at the same time as developing a school-based pedagogy, people[teachers] were reviewing their personal beliefs and strategies regarding pedagogy.*

The focus within these statements identified a developing pedagogical framework requiring teachers to reconsider or re-think their practice as reflective practitioners (Blackmore, 2005). A shared priority was evidenced by the move towards teaching and learning environments catering for the difference in knowledge and student outcomes.

The other major generalisation across all facets of these school sites was that teachers combined discourses, beliefs and practices, from competing pedagogical approaches, to construct shared beliefs about teaching and learning. Beliefs about student learning were substantiated in both policy and practice.

Policy statements included the following points:

- The recognition, respect and encouragement of students with individual strengths, abilities and needs;
• The acknowledgement of individual rates of learning where every child is given the opportunity to participate in appropriate, quality programs within the classroom context;
• Teaching that caters for individual learning styles;
• All children can learn and experience success;
• Learning is supported by teaching strategies and learning environments; and
• Providing a supportive and encouraging environment that challenges and extends the ability and learning outcomes of all students.

Observation of class programs also identified school policy in action. Action was not limited to any prescriptive model of what a learning environment should look like. It was constructed in various ways, where teachers were using a variety of teaching strategies to meet individual student need. Within these contexts children were working at individual levels and rates, using different means to achieve knowledge, engaging in different tasks but participating in class activities.

Progressive practices, embracing inclusion were evident in these schools. Importantly, teachers were the drivers of professional knowledge where recognition was given to the ways in which knowledge could be produced through interaction between individual actors (Sachs, 2000). Practitioners not only recognised the nexus between theory and practice but also demonstrated an understanding of the conceptual nature of knowledge and changed pedagogy to meet the needs of individual students. In addition, the process of exploring the initial understanding of the nature of knowledge created in each school provided a general idea of strategies leading to a process of renewal. The contextual factors of a positive and supportive socio-emotional climate produced a cohesive staff, a high morale, efficacy regarding inclusion and a positive communicative environment.

The above process also contributed to a research based school wide pedagogy, corresponding transactional leadership and a deliberative democratic model of whole school planning. Within each setting tensions were brought together and mutually valued
and discussed. Evidence from this study constructed teachers as practitioner researchers who were repositioned from the foundation of what Tickle (2000) described as technical operators, in the delivery of bureaucratic defined curriculum, to being reflective professional practitioners. Significantly, the endeavour to understand the nature of knowledge within these school sites also led to an understanding of more interactive models of theory and practice as criteria for teaching and learning (Sachs, 2000). Interwoven within the accounts of changed pedagogy, by these participants, was the consideration of how this knowledge was developed. Teachers spoke frequently and at length about the ‘ways’ this change was achieved and how the effects on teachers’ lifeworlds, as well as new professional knowledge, were considered to be an absolute achievement.

This next section explored these critical characteristics, drawing on teachers’ information, in an endeavour to examine the knowledge creation process within the lifeworlds of these teachers, where contextual factors strongly influenced educational action.

**Knowledge creation and the life worlds of teachers**

*Interactive learning models and professional renewal*

These school communities became engaged in a process of professional knowledge development that built on their own pedagogical understandings. According to teachers, this process has continued to evolve. Reportedly, within this context, concepts of knowledge were expanded from individual cognitive theories of practice to group and organizational structures within a knowledge creation context (Putman and Borko, 2000). Drawing on the research of Gibbons, *et al.* (1994) to analyse statements by teachers helped to further clarify the concepts of interactive learning models that had emerged within these schools.

*Knowledge can no longer be regarded as discrete and coherent, its production defined by clear rules and governed by settled routines. Instead it becomes a mixture of theory and practice, abstractions, aggregations, ideas and data.*

*(Gibbons, *et al.*, 1994, p. 81).*
In the statements pertaining to the examination of traditional roles of teaching and school-based productivity, teachers emphasised how interactive learning had been cultivated and influenced by the conditions of inclusive policy (being ‘dumped’ at classroom doors). Initially some teachers had been prepared to carry the process forward in the absence of any broad-based bureaucratic support and little time for the development or cognisance of any whole school-based support. However, the findings in this study demonstrated how the life-worlds and organizational structures within the school had a profound effect on the way change, incorporating changed professional knowledge, was experienced, understood and enacted (Fullan, 1995; Hargreaves, 2003).

Correspondingly, with the development of school based supportive structures, the dialogue moved to the question about individual and modified curriculum to meet the needs of ‘these kids.’ Rather than simply accepting ‘what works,’ the assumptions underlying inclusive curriculum practice were questioned within a framework of noticeable and recognised contested positions regarding curriculum outcomes. Here the nature of knowledge and knowledge creation transcended the debate of inclusion and curriculum outcomes, to the questions and the processes of professional renewal.

Teachers described how their professional learning evolved within the school. It was situated and developed through networks of learning within their schools or institutional contexts (Blackmore, 2005). From this perspective, the communicative power of the citizen, outlined by Habermas (1996), became an important element of inclusive social reform. Moreover, at this juncture, the genre of participants’ dialogue turned towards the collective agency of the stakeholders in each school rather than the preceding individual notions of change. Generally the teachers’ use of pronouns was revealing and informative regarding the evolving change processes. Notably the genre changed from ‘I’ in referring to changed pedagogy to ‘we’ when expanding on the types of knowledge valued within these two contemporary school contexts. The dialogue and focus moved to considering what types of knowledge were valued. The statements, from participants, directed attention to the coexistence of two value systems about knowledge. These were described as knowledge regarding student outcomes and the more broadly defined teacher
professionalism, knowledge and skill that is accomplished by drawing on insider information to map a pathway to policy enactment (Habermas, 1984).

The above factor led to the consideration of how knowledge creation (and change) was facilitated within these professional contexts. The following summary, by a coordinator working within a junior school area, captured the general consensus of the change process within both school sites.

Accepting an integration child is extra work but overall it's a positive professional challenge. It made me think beyond the boundaries of my own beliefs and also put into perspective some of the changes and directives coming from the department. We did not have to make a clean sweep of our teaching practice but add new skills and understandings to existing practice. We had to work out how changes intersected with what we knew.

Although this point may seem rather trite and repetitive it is important to note that school practices and roles, normally taken for granted, were called into question within a supportive school environment. Consequently, the potential for contestation was overshadowed by collaborative procedures relating to individual teacher queries. Intrinsically, the process of social action (Habermas, 1984, 1996; Wegner, 1998; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005) emerged as important throughout a range of texts from the participants’ interviews within this study. The construction of knowledge, within a process of individual and collective agency, emerged throughout many statements revealing the concept of the capacity of a civil society (schools) to inform action within the public sphere to be communicated to the State (Habermas, 1989; Fraser, 1990). This research identified how the communicative core of policy actors can contribute to educational reform, social action, and in turn, evolving inclusive practice.

These teachers expanded on the notions of social action in practice:

I was not quite sure how integration was going to be built into schools of the future planning. Integration must be included in the planning and there was a need for this to be put into the charter and the decision made around what could be documented representing the whole school approach [or what]. At first we relied on leadership to make [or at
least help] with these decisions but now we are making more decisions that we present to our management teams.

Through teamwork we are making progress. Now we can say what we need to further develop effective practice. It is amazing how our attitudes have changed by working together rather than being told what to do [but not how to do it]. Our different types of knowledge have been very positive within this context. When we put our different views on the table there were more similarities than differences. The ‘how’ factor is improving and we are doing this based on our needs.

Teachers’ statements captured the complexities underpinning the process of inclusion and the critical components of redefining education to include diversely different students in their schools. Evidence illustrated how change was rationally validated through actual communicative exchanges rather than political directives. Teachers described how different values were explored and how good sense, rather than resistance, prevailed. Habermas (1987) was emphatic that reason must be established in actual communicative exchanges that accept the universal pragmatics of consensus within an ideal speech situation. At the forefront of these teachers’ statements was the notion of Habermas’ ideal speech situation that captured how current knowledge regarding efficacious inclusive policy action had developed within both school sites.

The development of contextually based knowledge through critical social action
Although the evidence constructed an image of different perspectives and pathways about what had occurred (and was still was occurring) in each school, broadly speaking both schools engaged in a process of social action to re-examine knowledge and practice within inclusive education. Meaning was contextual and the texts were interwoven. There was evidence of each school developing processes of social action to create learning communities, demonstrating the capacity for these schools to respond and implement inclusive policy. The evidence from stakeholders indicated how professional understandings of the nature of knowledge production needed to adopt a more critical approach (Gibbons, et al., 1994; Blackmore, 2001) with strategies based on shared beliefs and communication. Here the deep-rooted model of instructive skill based thinking was substituted with a deductive, less concrete method of thinking based on interdisciplinary
models of practice and inter-subjective action (Habermas, 1987). The outcome was a more reasoned approach to addressing barriers relating to inclusive education.

Teachers and co-ordinators commented on the features of the changed school cultures that emerged within the interdisciplinary models developed within their settings and the scope of inter-subjective action. They emphasised:

There is now a move away from the negative emphasis of integration and the teachers/school community are becoming conscious of the key focus of the broader dimensions of teaching and learning. It does vary according to the individual teachers involved but each year the concerns and the dramas are becoming less significant. Recently in our team we had a discussion about celebrating difference and diversity. I think the topic would have been avoided five years ago. Even though there is still ‘a cone of excellence’ at the end of schooling [VCE] there is more recognition for the need for different pathways to learning. We believe that the different pathways for students allow for the important ways young adults can contribute to communities.

For too long schools have contributed to inbuilt failure with an emphasis on the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots.’ This aspect needs to be reinforced to teachers by the integration teachers. In this way they are not just concerned with the academic program; socialisation and various contributions to society are important. Society is not a composition of sameness and schools need to reflect this fact. Sometimes I still have difficulty planning how to put this into action.

Outcomes, or performance indicators, seem to be the major evaluative procedure to ensure accountability or value for dollar, in terms of the new integration funding (for example student T will attract about $15,000 under the new funding scheme). It is a great concern to think that outcomes will only be viewed in measurable terms. This is step backwards for us. There are many qualitative indicators as well.

Overriding the focus of individual teacher response to change (to include students with disabilities within the schools and classroom) was the commentary, within these statements, that captured changing school cultures and pedagogy. While observations identified the actuality of changed action in classrooms, these accounts provided an invaluable insight into the enterprises or processes contributing to pedagogical change. The use of theory, demonstration, practice and reflective feedback provided on-the-job support for classroom teachers. Teachers’ dialogue provided actual examples of decisive
factors providing flexible support (Newman et al., 2000) that included individual and
group knowledge building and collaborative enquiry (Ainscow, 2004). Moreover, the
enterprise of inclusion contributed to a critical community of teacher enquiry (Blackmore
2001; Groundwater-Smith, 2003) questioning what is taken for granted (historically) in a
constructive way, where often neglected possibilities of differentiated curriculum,
pedagogy and school culture were regenerated and considered within existing school
contexts.

Analysis of the evidence from this study also ascertained information about the active re-
construction of existing knowledge (Winter, 1989) and the knowledge creation processes
constructing new knowledge within the two case study schools. The range of meanings
and beliefs embedded in the social construction of knowledge was represented in
teachers’ statements about the progression of inclusive practice. Inclusive policy action
and how they carried out this work highlighted the features and approaches contributing
to knowledge creation and the social construction of knowledge within these learning
organisations.

Social construction of knowledge: Situated professional learning in knowledge
building schools
Implicit in the accounts of knowledge creation within both school sites was evidence of
school organisational features facilitating the capacity building and continuous
improvement and innovation for all educational workers (Riley, 2000; Hargreaves, 2003).
Knowledge emerged as a social construction where the notions of situated learning
changed the basic tenets of personalised blocks of knowledge (Groundwater-Smith and
Hunter, 2000).

The following statement about knowledge creation processes captured the essence of
many responses by participants:

Planning of this nature is not always about just making decisions. Issues may revolve around seeking further information to ascertain how to best deal with a situation. One example of staff input at this level was to consider how we would write curriculum for disabled students. The action plan drew on staff knowledge. It was an interesting mix.
Experienced staff could share their embedded knowledge. Young staff often had new ideas. The outcome was a realisation that we did not need a ‘special’ curriculum for ‘these kids’ but the development of appropriate goals within our curriculum areas. This took the pressure off a lot of staff.

Recognising that teachers’ enquiry and the quest for information was strategic in producing systematic and on-going reform raised two main points. First teachers had a sense of belonging to a collective professional community; and second they recognised the concept of knowledge creation within a network society where reason and learning, although situated, maintained its inspirational perspective (Habermas, 1996, cited in Healy, 1997).

Shared beliefs are explored and commented on by two classroom teachers within the following transcripts:

*In sharing our knowledge we were able to develop a vision about school wide pedagogy. I think he (the principal) had some very strong views about what he would like to see but he did not let that interfere with our ownership of the problem and the ways we thought we could address it. I think the process starts off slowly in this way and there is a degree of trial and error but consensus and ownership is important. He made staff feel valued.*

*The process in this school built on existing values but there was never a push to replace them. In this way people were more comfortable in putting forward their views - they did not feel threatened.*

Collective professional communities of practice were explicitly evident within the accounts of the life-worlds of the educational workers in this study (Wenger, 1998). Importantly, such a process was reported as a pleasure and a break from the isolation and self doubt that was openly discussed in one school (in relation to previous leadership). Also there was a collective view on the positive nature of learning opportunities that had emerged from the participatory, social action within each school. Participatory processes are a crucial element identified by learning and organisational change theorists, emphasising the need for organisational features to facilitate capacity building and improvement (Argyris and Schon, 1996). Furthermore, Fullan (1995) and Hargreaves
(2003) have devoted attention to organisations encouraging participation in practices of enquiry, supporting the identity of skilled inquirers to motivate the practice of discussion, communication and debate. These theoretical positions are linked to the emergent data within this study. The evidence from many participants captured the notion of knowledge creation becoming a cyclic process, impacting not only teaching but on teacher interaction and policy development at a whole-school level. Within this context, organisational knowledge creation ‘amplifies the knowledge created by individuals and crystallises it as part of the knowledge network of the organisation’ (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, p. 59). Teachers talked about their involvement within this type of learning spiral when they discussed how they were involved in curriculum planning.

One curriculum co-ordinator commented on how curriculum developed within the framework of a changing pedagogy within their school stating:

... the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of curriculum planning that moved on to consider the ‘what’ again. For instance we discussed what integration meant in terms of curriculum and assessment and how it could be achieved. This led to the further consideration of pedagogy- another ‘what’—and then ‘how’ changed pedagogy could be achieved.

Once again, the evidence from this study suggested that organisational culture had a significant role in the socio-cognitive processes of knowledge creation and ongoing processes of enquiry, within these educational landscapes. Embedded within the descriptions of the majority of participants was that knowledge was situated in the cultural and social fabric (Hutchins, 1995) of these learning communities. There was also an acknowledgement of the changes in the notions of cognitive knowledge production and the conventional approaches to knowledge construction. The social construction of learning was a significant factor contributing to knowledge creation within these school communities (Sachs, 2000). This social construction demonstrated an overlap between the boundaries of individual and contextual knowledge (Tsoukas, 2000) highlighting the point that professional learning was situated and processed through networks rather than just individually located.
Wegner (1998) referred to networks as a major determinant of what is learned and how learning takes place. Habermas (1984) argued that individual and collective agency of people’s life-worlds (teachers) provided an understanding of the realities within communities (schools and classrooms). Communicative action contributing to reason and identity is a recognised imperative for future change action (Habermas, 1984, 1996). The knowledge these teachers had created through communication provided a window of opportunity for inclusive action and future change orientated initiatives. Teachers described collaborative action that was contextual, affirming and very powerful. This was a difficult task given an environment that was discursively constructed by the limitations of political and systems theory, established by State governance, as the driving instrument for social change (Moss, 2003; Clarke, et al., 1999).

The emergent themes from this study provided an insight into communicative school based networks contributing to social action and educational change. The change implemented by individuals provided the scope for specialised planning and implementation of inclusive policy within the spheres of civil society (within school groups and school networks).

*Cognitive understandings and approaches to knowledge creation*

Findings from this study also indicated the importance of teachers being cognitively engaged in the knowledge creation process, where collaborative activity provided a context for learning (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Tsoukas, 2000). Accordingly, new understandings were constructed from a common voice where communication provided the cognitive tools - ideas, concepts and theories - for stakeholders to make sense of inclusive policy. Thus cognition was contextualised, social and distributed (Putnam and Borko, 2000); grounded within the interactions of education workers within each school site. The cognitive systems created through collaborative activity were identified as a context for learning and the development of new pedagogical frameworks.
One co-ordinator commented:

_We are going through a process of unpacking teachers’ ideas and reconstructing them within a new pedagogical framework. I think the development of school pedagogy comes before a school vision. Then we at least know what components can work as a starting point._

It was clear that given the diversity of staff and the differences within each school cognitive engagement did not occur in the confines of any one prescriptive mechanism. In describing inclusion in practice, the critical factor of knowledge creation, was initially located within individual practice. Therefore it was perceived as part of individual thinking processes. Given this scenario, the understandings and values implicit within the objectives of inclusive change remained located within the practice of individual stakeholders. These understandings drew on traditional operational conditions of individual knowledge based on utility and object reality. To become actively engaged, teachers needed to understand or at least get a glimpse of the link between their perceptions of successful practice and the information being shared by the group. The statements by educational workers within this study focussed on the changing development of knowledge, in real life situations, based on their own knowledge and knowledge communicated between colleagues.

One teacher, reflecting on the effect of shared approaches, provided a sound summation of the discussions relating to the critical aspect of knowledge sharing processes stating that:

_I think our school was a bit like an empty house - when you go home you have no-one to talk to. The sharing of ideas and skills has helped people tremendously. Individual knowledge can take on a different perspective when shared. New meanings and understandings have surfaced in our discussions_

Teachers reported how the organisation of change and the organisation of action were based on communication, rather than on political or cultural agendas or given guidelines for action. This point of view demonstrates ‘how speaking and acting subjects acquire and use knowledge’ (Habermas, 1984, p.11).
In turn, this perspective drew attention to the co-joint significance of these teachers, as part of professional learning communities, making use of shared tacit and explicit knowledge. The sharing of tacit knowledge was a further component contributing to the move from the ‘I’ to ‘we’ genre and action. However, it is important to note again, the different pathways that were evident within each school’s practice in gaining a whole school collaborative approach to planning and effective inclusive policy action.

The following excerpts from participants’ interviews provided examples and insight into these pathways:

*It was a challenge for me not to hold on to what I thought was right. It is also much easier to say ‘no I won’t do that’ than to explore alternatives. What has been most surprising is that I tend to find meetings purposeful and go in with a mindset of ‘what do you think about this’ instead of setting my watch.*

*Staff groups sat down and considered what was important to improve outcomes for all students. This drew attention to the number of students not meeting bench marks. We had to consider what the school was doing for [or to] these kids. We needed a consistent approach but this didn’t mean prescriptive guidelines.*

*We started by clarifying our vision and developing a mission statement where our commitment of catering for diverse learners was visible to the whole community, including parents. We have made that commitment and we have to deliver the goods.*

*I guess we are at a point where we know collectively what the main goal of inclusion means. Classroom teachers now identify the skill required for effective inclusive practice [rather than outside specialists].*

Implicit in these statements was the recognition of knowledge being more than compiling facts; it was something that belonged to individuals and collective groups (Tsoukas, 2000). Individual knowledge can be passed onto others endorsing the acquisition of knowledge from outside or inside organizations (Sachs, 2000). The conventional approaches to knowledge creation and policy action that have been built on the foundation of outside advice providing additional ways of understanding and clarifying
policy was less than appealing to these teachers (Hargreaves, 2003). Outside directives were not seen as building on school-based knowledge or in helping to recognise specific issues. Consistent with the exploration of the nature of knowledge, inclusion opened up communicative space to identify ‘insider’ practitioner knowledge as an important component of capacity building and change within these school sites (Hargreaves, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1995). A significant factor emerging within this framework was that the focus had turned, once more, from a dialogue of how ‘these kids’ will fit in; to ‘what works’ to include these kids; to practitioner knowledge to help include ‘these kids.’ Here, once again, teachers did not speak with one voice, nor did they discuss the technicalities of tacit or explicit knowledge. But the move from a normative and then instrumental view of what works, to the consideration of professional learning communities, was a general focus emerging from participant discussions. Professional knowledge was presented as a dynamic and human process that was connected to pedagogy, social action and the exchange of ideas (Von Krogh, 1998; Habermas, 1996).

However the conditions to develop these collective ideals were interrogated. For instance, one teacher stated:

*The collaboration in this school has been positive but I don’t think it has made a huge difference to our classroom practice.*

This school had developed a comprehensive vision statement to embrace inclusive policy action that was grounded in theory and the school’s existing successful practice. However as the principles of pedagogy were being developed, to ensure the vision was advanced, the connection with successful practice became extremely shaky within some areas of the organisation. Further exploration of this dimension suggested that inclusion had presented a threat to some teachers, triggering an opposing and negative response (Senge, 1998). Grounded within the data from this school was a snapshot of how knowledge can be reductionist if collective (in this case minority) practices remain focussed on an instrumental view of ‘what works’ best. Here teacher knowledge can be defined by a set of competencies rather than practices of enquiry, reflection and problem solving. The competency-based approach to inclusion was problematic for some teachers but it was
resolved by communication and the examination of school based pedagogy. Once again teachers were positioned as critical and active professionals. As Wegner (1998) pointed out, different groups within organisations may change at different rates. The above snapshot illustrated this point clearly but more importantly individual beliefs were valued and explored through social action within this professional learning community. The situation was emotionally bound and left little doubt of the potential for ongoing contestation and resistance.

Although ‘the problem’ seemed to have subsided it was important to gain an insight into the processes and outcomes for individuals involved in these competing discourses. Both schools employed specialist staff to assist in the process of integration and inclusion (and the historical notion of remediation still was apparent in one setting). Here was the real issue. Teacher identity had been constructed around the notions of ‘outsider action’ for classroom teachers to support students.

Many teachers acknowledged these competing discourses and the need to develop clear guidelines for (all) staff commenting that:

> Our vision no longer embraced this approach and I think the planning of a different school vision was very threatening for [X].

> I could only see that my job would be gone but eventually I became aware that my skills still had a place within this new vision. I could support students and teachers together by helping students to develop skills identified as promoting inclusion. These skills would then be transferred to the classroom.

> The role of integration teachers needed to be clarified. Last year they developed and taught programs. This year it has been different. They help classroom teachers and provide consistency across the school regarding our whole school philosophy. But teachers are responsible for the development and implementation of programs.

Whilst the boundaries of individual and group structures are evident within this data, there has also been an overlap of roles promoting the dilemma (captured within the above transcripts). Initially skills and knowledge had been conceptualised around individual
student need and individual staff knowledge (expertise). Within the changing landscape this knowledge had been re-constructed to support teachers through knowledge creation and shared beliefs, rather than take over responsibility. This was a changed approach and it was embedded contextually within the school vision. Here the guiding principle for change was based on the school (organization) and education workers as the unit of analysis, providing a dual focus on individual and collective knowledge.

Teachers noted the processes driving this change:

Last year the role of the integration teacher was not as clearly defined and they did develop programs and withdraw students. As the year went by we clarified roles and learnt by experience. This year the emphasis has changed and the responsibility for programming remains with the classroom teacher. They are the people that have to implement programs but the skills of the integration teachers are vital in helping teachers to include students. This occurs in a number of different ways.

This school had always withdrawn students with learning difficulties but this does not embrace the current emphasis of inclusion. We need the skills and resources in classrooms.

We still have specialist staff that believe withdrawal works and I guess it is an escape for students who are battling with their work but class teachers need to develop inclusive curriculum rather than exclude them. Change has been slow in some areas. We need to demonstrate how specialists can help classroom teachers develop more appropriate curriculum. We have some good partnerships operating in some groups and this needs to be expanded.

Here, even in a contested pathway, communicative action emerged as a function of the learning organisation where problem solving was the driving force within this professional community. It is important to note that this did not detract from the need or recognition of specific skills. However, what was evident is that teachers, as deliberative practitioners, identified these skills and applied them in a way that was contextual and meaningful within their own processes of inclusive policy action at the school-based and classroom levels.
Pedagogy in local sites: Teachers’ work in professional learning communities

Teachers’ voice contributing to shared beliefs and actions

The teachers within these two schools were committed to inclusive, innovative practice and they cared about the welfare of students. Observations provided many snapshots of students being treated with respect in a safe and caring environment. Children’s rights and opportunities were a high priority. This was reflected in school policy statements and in practice even though the directive for access and equity for disabled students was at times, overwhelming for teachers.

This teachers’ emphasis was prevalent within many statements.

*My first priority is that children enjoy themselves at school. This applies to any child, not just students who are at risk or different. There needs to be a trusting enjoyable atmosphere in classrooms. All members need to be valued.*

*Each teacher approaches integration differently. Inclusion demands a degree of flexibility that works against not spelling it out in a high level of detail but rather embracing the process of a school based pedagogy recognising difference and analysing how teaching strategies can cater for individual learning styles and needs.*

Even though teachers’ work was subject to contradictory and multiple demands evidenced in political and educational discourses (Hargreaves, 2003) inclusion did not lose visibility at the classroom level. The process was not self-contained and inclusion was constructed in a number of ways where fluidity and openness was responsive to the domain of the individual and the social (context) (Habermas, 1992). Within this context teachers outlined how they originally faced similar situations without the benefit of shared practice and that members coming together raised the potential and knowledge for resolution. Teachers talked about the adaptation in ‘what’ was considered important and the shift in ways of knowing and knowledge production as a process that did not accumulate facts but grew out of social interaction and collective agency. They also constructed an account of an ideal speech situation where each subject could contribute openly (Habermas, 1990). In turn, they constructed themselves as an active voice within the educational processes within their schools. Here there was no real criteria or checklist
for success but a genuine sense of the evolution in their practices, their understandings and the situational constraints within their practice.

These statements by teachers substantiated this point.

Integration brought about changes that the teachers themselves had to address (and solve). Members came together to do this. The integration aide is not a solution to this issue nor can practice be condensed into a set of guidelines reflecting the political imperatives of the day.

At first some members totally believed that the integration teacher took the responsibility for integration but our whole school approach raised strategic perspectives about teacher responsibility and curriculum issues that were secondary to the aide.

Once again there was a general emphasis on the limitations of political imperatives and resources (alone) in the form of teachers aides.

Emergent practitioner research

Analysis and observation revealed a connectedness in defining the joint exercise of inclusion. As a result a discourse of practitioner research and the associated instrument of communicative social action accounted for the complexity and multiplicity of subjectivities that were an intrinsic component of teachers’ work within these schools. Change was embedded in social practice, where practices were constituted in the social interaction between people (Habermas, 1996; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). In principle, the potential of participation processes or social action has been recognised to provide multiple resources for a given task; address individual behaviour and intentions, social interactions and discourse; as well as establishing reflective practice incorporating history and human agency. These multiple resources became evident as members of this study discussed what their inclusive practice was about.

One principal commented on the differences incorporating history and human agency and how, through participatory action this could be a positive force.

Many teachers had different views about integration but they also had skills to contribute to the overall need for solutions. It was important to draw out each teacher’s strengths and utilise them positively. We had to think about social inclusion as well as curriculum issues. Another issue
was to ensure integration remained as part of our day to day functioning were ideas and solutions remained as part of our overall vision while we recognised individual responses and (staff) needs.

Throughout the interviews teachers discussed the value of working together. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) noted participatory action research and knowledge creation needed to be responsive to the needs and opinions of ordinary people, in this case the key policy actors, the education workers within these schools. Although they participated in different ways, these education workers were engaged in a collective process of learning (and research) related to the process of inclusion. They developed knowledge that was a positive feature contributing to inclusive policy action.

Nevertheless, the demands and difficulties of creating professional collaborative environments constituting the tenets of participatory action research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005) were constructed within the emerging evidence of these teachers. The multiple realities that led this research project captured the experiences of teachers moving from compliant technical operators to deliberative practitioners within a pluralistic and inclusive society. The proposition that critical and active professionalism is a major component contributing to the successful inclusive policy action was at the forefront of the discourse relating to efficacious inclusive policy action. Once again teachers’ work within these sites was constructed around the notions of participant research and collaborative action to form professional communities of action (Habermas, 1996). Teachers talked about communication and collaborative action as a critical component within the construction of inclusive practice. Here, once again, there was a focus on pedagogy and a whole school response rather than the focus being on the information acquisition of students. However the whole school response was determined by insider knowledge and action. Hence changing practice, to include students with disabilities and impairments, was a social process opening communicative space in which rationality and democracy prevailed (Habermas, 1996).

**Social action contributing to the change in teachers’ work**

Overall, the education workers in these two school sites recognised practitioner action, involving knowledge creation and research, as a critical component contributing to
change and the corresponding implementation of inclusive policy. The examination of
teachers’ evidence, policy documents and reflection on observations provided evidence
regarding how this change was facilitated within each school site. The statements by
these teachers constructed a comprehensive explanation of what happened in their
schools to deconstruct the discursive normative practice still occurring within the
changing educational landscapes of Victorian education (Fulcher, 1989; Slee, 1993). The
on the spot acceptance (by some staff) of ‘these kids’ into their schools was promoted by
the general belief in human rights and the corresponding right of ‘these kids’ to
participate in community life and hence regular education. The statements then moved on
to delineate programmatic issues that emerged for these education workers. Program
planning was the first indication of a whole school response for the integration of
students to occur within these two these school communities. The ensuing move away
from the discursive construction of student deficit, to changed curriculum, challenged the
basic system of beliefs connected with school culture and school productivity. These
challenges turned the focus to pedagogy and the broader definition of professionalism
gained legitimacy within evolving communicative networks contributing to a whole
school culture.

Communicative and collaborative action
In addition, the concentration by teachers on changed productivity (student outcomes)
increased the integrity of differentiated student outcomes compared to documented,
quantified evidence of student success. To meet this challenge, teachers’ needed to re-
think their practices, roles and expectations rather than produce any tangible checklist
signifying the products or factual outcomes of inclusion – a process involving continuous
qualitative improvement and innovation to build on existing success. While these new
visions had some impact on teaching, the initial challenge related to the changed
theoretical understandings and the know-how needed for practical theory to become
action. A culture of individualism was replaced by communication and collaborative
activity where the process of knowledge creation, questioning how inclusion would
happen, built on professional ‘ways of knowing’. This collaborative activity produced
shared practice as community members engaged in a process of learning. Here, active
citizenship and communicative action though the lifeworlds of key policy actors
contributed to the identification and flexible construction of a pool of professional knowledge promoting inclusive action.

With the development of school wide pedagogies and knowledge creation processes by policy actors, professional interaction outside the classroom increased. Teachers began to view their role as active professional participants taking (some) responsibility for what was happening beyond their classrooms. They were openly seeking solutions of how issues such as inclusion would work, not only in their classrooms but also as a whole school initiative. By considering key contextual factors, vision, concepts and questions regarding inclusion, they developed significant knowledge that transformed part of their own professional practice while contributing to whole school organisational knowledge distributed across the staff and implemented across the school.

The development of school-wide policy action was evidenced by inclusive change praxis within a social enquiry community. The texts from the data are rich with accounts of collaborative achievement, where shared experiences and negotiations occurred within a purposive community (Habermas, 1987). Social change evolving in a capacity building environment also provides a lens of opportunity for individual and organisational agency supporting inclusive practice. Reason and associated change is found in the actual communication exchanges within a deliberative democracy (Habermas, 1996) rather than in the structures of realised perceptions and directives.

Democratic, critical praxis facilitating inclusive policy action
Communication for the purpose of social action was evident within these two school sites, replacing political and cultural agendas and the discursive propositions for technocratic mechanisms and funding regimes identified as major concerns by educational research (Moss, 2003; Lingard, 2002; Slee, 2001). At this juncture, participants described communication as a way they overcame the contradictions and barriers within the deep-rooted socio-cultural practice within their schools. The two examples below explicated the different approaches taken within each school. However, communication remained a central component of inclusive policy action over riding the problematic nature of political State governance.
Teachers commented on the pathways supporting inclusive practice:

*The main support for integration came from within the school. The support by management teams helped to unravel many of the mixed messages from the Department. At the same time the solutions added to knowledge about integration.*

*In developing our school vision we were able to clarify future directions and goals. We were also able to identify the specific knowledge and processes needed to support this vision.*

As a result of supportive in-school structures, the critique of teachers’ practice was turned towards critical praxis (Kemmis, 1993) aimed at enlightening educational actors. Thus the processes of change were based on social action and consensus (Habermas, 1984, 1987). A number of crucial points from Habermas’ work (see Chapter five) emerged within the data. These points were linked to free and open communication within the scaffold of an ideal speech situation and correlated with the notions of a civil society (Habermas, 1989). Furthermore this analysis constructed these schools as sites promoting multi-faceted democratic practice that intersected the ideal and the real.

Teachers and co-ordinators discussed democratic action and problem solving strategies:

*Each teacher approaches integration differently within the overriding vision of the school. A consistent focus of inclusion needs to be maintained but different pathways are there and provide an enriched learning environment for all students. Initially we had to collaboratively solve problems that occurred if difference meant total diversion from inclusive practice.*

*Although the integration aide can be of enormous assistance, having another adult in the room was quite threatening for some teachers. We had to accept that not everyone would welcome this type of additional support. It was another change that had to be addressed by the school and teachers at the implementation level and the role of integration aides was negotiated and varied not only according to students but also teachers.*
The transcripts above reinforce how reason and associated change occurred through communication exchanges, rather than in the structures of individuals’ realised perceptions. Teachers spoke simultaneously about the organisation structures promoting staff involvement and the opportunity for all members to speak, act and contribute through participatory decision-making.

**Conditions contributing to social action and knowledge development in local school sites**

*Realities for education workers*

The realities for the education workers within these two case study schools demonstrated how their obligation to implement inclusive policy action led to new ways of working together, establishing connections and patterns of interactions based on a foundation of support, knowledge and school vision. This foundation was interwoven throughout the statements documented and analysed within the each of the evidentiary chapters.

Inclusive policy provided a structure and a purpose for educational workers to engage in professional conversations, sharing their values, beliefs and knowledge. The knowledge created by teachers, through social action, opened up opportunities for the advancement of professional learning communities and the development of a school wide vision and pedagogy relating to inclusion. This kind of professional practice went well beyond the process of sharing resources and ideas; it provided the basis for new ways of working in a professional and collaborative environment. With the recognition of thought and planning as a process, these schools could be seen as communicative networks rather than a context of multiple fragments.

*Shared beliefs and communicative networks*

There is no simple formula addressing the demands and difficulties of transforming school structures where individual teacher competitiveness, coupled with the reluctance to share information and perceptions of credibility, have often eroded participatory action and collaboration. However, the positive social climate and transformational management of each school nourished the move towards professional conversations and collaborative teamwork. Effective organizations have been identified as depending and prospering on
trust (Toole, 2000). The social climate, within each school, gave support to an environment characterised by trust, empathy and support that was devoid of blame. These high care environments were cultivated with conditions valuing trust and openness through the promotion of learning orientated conversations. Although teachers recognised the difficulty in establishing open communication and the threat that this could provoke regarding credibility, they upheld the necessity for whole school collaborative environments to promote inclusive policy action. Within this climate there were also the notions of democracy underpinning the changed culture of these schools (Groundwater-Smith, 2003). There was also a notable shift from the conventional type of conversations identified in research literature (Slee, 1996; 2000a; Oliver, 1996) regarding integration and inclusion that was grounded in either antagonism or advocacy.

In each school the sharing of tacit knowledge enabled teachers to develop explicit statements of vision, pedagogy and practice. The positive factors emerging from discussion was how engagement with colleagues contributed to a stronger sense of efficacy and belief in their own abilities where people had become skilled at more open communication (Hargreaves, 2002). Enabling contexts also need to have the capacity to adjust to scripts acknowledging values and complexities of individual stakeholders and their dialogue groups (Forester, 1999). The need to recognise the array of roles, personalities and dynamics engendering different interactions were recognised and used to facilitate the emergence of knowledge within each school site.

Teachers’ statements captured a representation of a civil society that comprises ‘a network of associations that institutionalises problem solving discourses on questions of general interest inside the framework of organised public spheres’ (Habermas, 1996, p. 367). Problem solving discourses, evident within the communication of the majority of participants, were interconnected around concerns regarding inclusive policy and action, with the ultimate aim of reaching some sort of inter-subjective, unforced consensus (Habermas, 1984; 1996).
In addition, evidence of opening up communicative space was threaded throughout teachers’ statements. The analysis of this dialogue established that new kinds of collective knowledge relating to teaching strategies and pedagogy had generated new insights and meanings for these educational workers (Senge, et al. 2000). Although the pathways for individual problem solving and professional development, involving teachers as learners, were different within each school, outcomes were very similar. Subsequently, the difference tended to be more visible through the analysis of teachers statements, rather than the actuality of practice, where ongoing involvement and engagement in inclusive practice was a whole school process. This point illustrated not only the enabling context of shared knowledge but also that shared knowledge takes different forms, at different times, by different individuals and that change does not produce immediate cohesive or prescriptive results. At the central core of this process was social action and participation by stakeholders, where the purpose of communication was to make the right decision for all stakeholders rather than the functional purpose of control, ignoring diversity and difference (of teachers).

**Professional development within professional learning communities**

Both schools developed a compilation of contextual, organisational knowledge that built solidarity between stakeholders and the formation of a shared school vision and culture. It opened up the sharing of knowledge that was sustained and ongoing. This evolving process provided the basis for professional support and development, an important feature where teachers were required to re-think their own practice and professional needs.

The excerpts from interviews below presented an overview of the teachers’ reflections:

*We all have knowledge to share but often we have not valued it. Within our current climate we have all had the opportunity to share issues and solve problems. This has been great - a very positive development within our own school environment. Often we don’t value our own knowledge but alternately we haven’t accepted outsiders telling us what works in our school.*

*Basically outside in-service did not relate to what was relevant for us. I remember sitting there thinking that ‘I know this, it’s nothing new.’*
However when our management and planning groups were established we discussed real issues - issues that related directly to where we were at regarding integration. This also seemed like a rollercoaster at first and then our progress was evident when more people [teachers] were sharing information about what worked.

Integration and inclusive education has been one of the hardest things I have dealt with. We worked together on it and I think that has been the major reason that any progress has been evident. So many different directives arrived at once and somehow people then revert to what they know best [quantitative assessment]. Our principal gave us the confidence to stand up to what we believed regarding inclusion.

The knowledge for inclusive theory to become practice has not been satisfactorily pre-packaged through mandatory guidelines and texts (Fulcher, 1989; Slee, 1996). The teachers in this study illustrated that inclusive education relied on a greater understanding of student learning and pedagogy and the access of knowledge through involvement. In one school this involvement followed a pathway outlined by Foreman (2001, p. 392) where although inclusive educational change had been time consuming and at times difficult to implement, ‘much of the innovation in classroom practice and curriculum has [had] arisen as a result of the concern among teachers to find new ways to manage a complex task.’ In the other school, while critical and collaborative reasoning had developed a school vision delineating associated roles and practices, it turned attention to the ‘difficult tasks of learning the skills and perspectives assumed by the new vision’ (Darling-Hammond, 1995, p. 1). However in both scenarios the attention turned to professional development, knowledge and training to involve teachers as learners revaluing their skills and knowledge within their own school contexts.

Two teachers discussed their view on the nature of the change involving professional development:

*Originally I saw professional development as someone coming to inform us about what to do, whereas professional dialogue is just talking amongst ourselves. However I now realise that by sharing information through dialogue we are learning new ideas that are meaningful and contextualised within our own practice and school*
based visions. Regional office staff do not have this understanding of the uniqueness of each school.

Sharing our knowledge is part of our professional development in this school and time is given to this end.

These statements constructed professional development as an inside arrangement for knowledge and skill development. Professional development was anchored in the problems of inclusive practice, allowing for collaborative action over time (Carney, 2003). Thus professional development contributed to the development of professional learning communities defined along three dimensions:

* What it is about—its joint enterprise as understood and continually renegotiated by its members;
* How it functions—the relationships of mutual engagement that bind members together into a social entity; and
* What capability it has produced—the shared repertoire of communal resources (routines, sensibilities, artefacts, vocabulary, styles, etc.) that members have developed over time (Wegner, 1998, p.1).

An important component emerging within this context was that teachers overtly identified the on going skills and practice required for improvement where the response was fluid and responsive to needs of individuals and the collective. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) have endorsed the need to move away from the politics of conventional social research and practice that is often condensed into a set of guidelines, and be responsive to the needs and opinions of the key community actors. Drawing on the work of Habermas, (1992) they have recognized that participation needs to be an evolving process in which rationality and democracy win through. Participants’ statements within this study captured the value of timely and flexible responses contributing to a cohesive professional learning community rather than guidelines that did not address specific needs.

These teachers’ comments explored aspects contributing to on-going professional improvement that reflected an overall theme from the majority of participants:
We know what we are trying to achieve and have set structures in place to achieve this end. Structures need to be evaluated and accountable to our needs.

The integration team need to keep the lines of communication open. Collaboration is important and information must be delivered in a timely and useful way. There is scope for this to improve in our school.

Overall we have a very good theoretical knowledge of the vision for this school. Now professional development is very important to ensure we have the skills to deliver. Teamwork has been excellent but professional support needs to be extended to meet identified needs.

Skills at the classroom level are important. For instance I still need help to develop strength-based programs. One of the best examples I can think of is when the teacher of the deaf gives me some guidelines for suitable learning strategies – I can then develop suitable programs. We need more of this type of assistance from inside and outside our school.

The account by these teachers provides examples of the critical characteristics of professional communities of practice at work. Inside and outside information, that is contextual and meaningful, provides a basis for professional learning. Another important component emerging from the evidence was that teachers are in control of their own learning; it is a sustained process not an event (Carrington and Robertson, 2001). Within these school settings, teamwork and collaborative partnerships contribute to a shared vision of an inclusive school culture and associated inclusive practice. Participatory social action is constructive in contributing to the capacity of knowledge creation and capacity building within both educational landscapes.

Summary
The following table provided an overview of the social action related to inclusion. Participatory action contributed to teacher knowledge and skill and practical action.

Table 3: Participatory social action contributing to knowledge building

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contextual and meaningful strategies contributed to participant research and social action within evolving inclusive educational school sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
The capacity of school-based knowledge creation and patterns of purposeful interaction informed the system domain about strategies for inclusive education action.

Teachers within his study identified three distinct phases of inclusion. They are outlined in the table below. These phases have assisted with the understanding of inclusion as a process in action and the characteristics needed to assist progressive and on-going inclusive action.

*Table 4: progressive phases of inclusive action*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. School based productivity:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Student outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contextual knowledge and learning

The nature of knowledge

Theoretical concepts of understanding and knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Knowledge creation processes</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conventional constructs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tacit and Explicit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Processes of inquiry in action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participatory action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional communities of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter ten:
The Inclusive education process: An edifying analysis

Overview of the contribution of this research
In line with the aim of this research teachers involved in the process of implementing inclusive education identified key characteristics that contributed to successful policy action. The findings supported the literature regarding schools as a vital link to social reform where teachers need to become creators of knowledge. Knowledge of this construction was recognised as an interactive process where there was a nexus between theory, practice and policy directives that continually evolved.

However, the characteristics from this study identified a much more complex relationship within the lifeworlds for these policy actors. The concept of how school-based communication, organization and social action contributed to school re-culturing and knowledge building for policy actors (teachers) was a crucial finding within this research. By ascertaining the ways in which knowledge can be legitimately produced within social spheres and the interaction between individual actors, this research identified a positive characteristic for change that has often been overlooked within the systems theory approaches and dominant struggles and interests driven by State policy action.

This research has made a valuable contribution toward understanding the nature and dimensions of teacher knowledge and skills contributing to pedagogical change embracing inclusive educational action. It also identified how collective knowledge building processes, incorporating administration and communication, contributed to the professional development, evaluation and commitment to inclusion. In addition, effective policy action was also linked to participatory action where on-going processes of school-based administrative and professional practice were part of a connected plan. In this way participatory action was not a process of participation followed by action but a series of actions directed toward a particular aim, that of inclusive education. Action was coordinated through shared knowledge and understanding in a way that was practical and inter-subjective.
The importance of this research

In examining the challenge of inclusive education for the Victorian schooling system this research identified teachers’ work as a vital contributing factor to successful inclusive policy action, despite the overarching emphasis on additional funding within the political construction of policy. Through the analysis of literature regarding the implementation of inclusive policy, the research findings supported previous evidence about inclusion as a controversial change orientated process for these teachers. In exploring the agency of teachers within this significant change process the study confirmed the political reductionism of both the liberal pluralism and system theory approaches that have dominated State policy action in inclusive education for over two decades. Teachers found these approaches less than satisfactory. Furthermore, the multiple complexities of bringing about teacher change, involving pedagogical skills and organization, outlined by educational change theorists (Hargreaves, 1994; Fullan, 1995) were evident within the findings of this study.

However, consistent with the aims of this study, the research undertook a more comprehensive and focussed exploration of the finer structures of changed pedagogy and professional action utilising teachers’ own accounts or voices as a resource with which to theorise and analyse the key characteristics contributing to successful policy action. The findings established a much more complex relationship between skill development and organization, where knowledge revolved around belief systems and was socially constructed and situated within the fabric of each school environment. Pedagogical change occurred through the ability of individuals, including school administrators, participating in the change process. This information suggested that individual teachers can no longer be expected to deal with complex educational reform without the sharing of understandings and agreed whole-school perspectives.

Consequently, this research has made a valuable contribution towards understanding effective policy implementation in inclusive education by drawing on ‘insider’ information to identify a constructive pathway for enactment of inclusion. Adding to otherwise limited research on the capacity of schools to implement policy through a
process of social action and knowledge creation, it has identified key elements necessary for the development of change orientated professional communities of practice that include:

- Trust;
- Time;
- Communicative space and
- Participatory processes.

Importantly, these elements expand on the existing educational change literature identifying leadership, organization and professional development through in-service programs as key strategies promoting effective change. Within this study, school-based communicative action was identified as a further key strategy contributing to professional knowledge and pedagogical change.

Furthermore, this study identified the importance of teachers’ work, as a vital contributing factor to successful inclusion, encapsulating the value of teachers' knowledge and knowledge building processes within school sites. This provided insight into how policies may be more successfully implemented. Educational reform requires the interrogation of existing practice, understanding individual ideologies and knowledge building processes. This denotes a move away from the previous political governance and guidelines directing school-based policy action to school-based processes and action promoting change.

In addition, the way individual teacher knowledge was channelled to a collective resource revealed the importance of the individual and collective agency of educational workers in developing productive pedagogies to meet the educational needs of diverse student populations. Consequently, the ‘insider’ knowledge and skills of educational workers in schools were recognised as critical contributors in determining system change and implementing inclusive education.

Within this study the evidence of school-based inclusive action identified the multiple realities for education workers and the complexities and critical characteristics
underpinning inclusive policy action. The critical characteristics outlined above are discussed in more detail in the following sections of this chapter, where findings are linked to recommendations.

**Critical characteristic one: The nature of inclusive knowledge**

While the evidence from educational workers represented the ‘actuality’ of what did occur when these schools were faced with the major challenge of social and cultural change, connected with inclusive policy action, the issues of social construction of disability and school culture also emerged within their discourses. Analysis of the social construction of disability (see Chapter two) provided a more comprehensive view of the realities confronting teachers when the significance of policy, school structures and social processes were revealed within the dialogue of participants.

Coinciding with educational research literature (Sexton, 2005; Ashman and Elkins, 2005; Slee, 2004) was the evidence, from both schools, of the major challenges created by the inclusion of students with disabilities and impairments into regular schools. Inclusion deconstructed a history of exclusion, confronting notions of normality, and the socio-cultural traditions of segregating students with disabilities. This research identified how debate, and indeed controversy, in their schools was related to the lack of assistance by State governance to implement the policy and deal with the shortfall in considering the professional skills and knowledge needed to implement such a change. Contestation, also identified by educational research, (Moss, 2003; Lingard, 2001; Slee, 2001), was acknowledged by participants within this study. However, the teachers in this study provided an insight into the reasons contributing to contestation and the subsequent barriers that emerged towards inclusion. They identified the uncertainties they faced, with little skill and knowledge of what was required, and the lack of preparation to accept and plan for the new responsibilities related to inclusion.

With a lack of knowledge regarding the Review (1984), the consequent policy was confronting in many ways to these two school communities and the educational workers within them. The evidence presented an overview of the pressure from government deliberations to accept and change the way they taught students, as well as
the opposing demands made on teachers through additional, externally devised policy
directives (Ainscow, 2003; Hopkins and Levin, 2000). The statements by teachers
endorsed the view by educational change theorists (Hargreaves, 2003; Hopkins and
Levin, 2000; Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves; 1994) of political pressure for reform being an
unsatisfactory system of change.

Recommendation one: Time, communicative space and whole school participation is
required to plan for the new responsibilities associated with inclusion.

This study offered an insight into how the contestation towards inclusion occurred within
school sites. The deconstruction of inclusion through political deliberation created
uncertainty for teachers where there was a lack of time, communicative space and whole
school participation to plan for the new responsibilities associated with inclusion.
Inclusion was a significant change process requiring changed pedagogy.

Critical characteristic two: The expansion of operational understanding
The teachers in this study were committed to the philosophy of inclusion and meeting the
needs of individual learners. Whilst their statements constructed inclusion as a challenge
they were forced to take up due to State policy, they were also aware that inclusion was a
work in progress and a priority that needed constant monitoring. The view that inclusion
should promote social change for diversely different students was well accepted and
several teachers employed a vocabulary of equity, belonging and participation for
students who were previously excluded. There was also awareness of inclusion being an
issue that teachers continually struggled with, even though it had been part of the
educational landscape for nearly fifteen years. As discussed in previous chapters, policy
action and subsequent issues were continually and progressively refined and re-appraised.
The statements by participants provided a working model of what had been achieved. In
addition, teachers’ own reflections recognised some of the limitations within the complex
challenges created by inclusion.

In Chapter seven an analysis was presented indicating the ways in which teachers
embarked on policy action ‘bestowed from the top’ and how teachers ‘did the best they
could’ in a less than satisfactory conditions. Expanding on these statements teachers expressed a commitment to social justice and drew on the variables of their own experience, tacit knowledge and practice to include students within their classes. The contestation and barriers to inclusive reform, although acknowledged, were not wide-ranging in these schools. The resource discourse directing implementation proceedings was minimal. However the initial reaction to inclusion was to consider how ‘these kids’ would fit in. The analysis indicated the deficit undertone relating to this action that was hardly surprising when policy guidelines re-defining education were vague and there was an absence of any clear working definition to change existing socio-cultural frameworks relating to disability (Garner and Sandow, 1995). Given this limitation, how was policy action determined? What did teachers do to embrace inclusion?

The analysis in Chapter eight clarified the ways teachers in this study continued to gain an operational understanding of integration or inclusion within their own school sites. They addressed understandings and expanded on the limitations of their practice both individually and collectively. School organisation established collaborative structures, providing not only a knowledge-sharing environment but also an environment where common understandings and terminology opened up communicative space (Von Krough, 1998). School-based problem solving provided the scope for teachers to address activities that embraced policy and to consider how they could implement the required action. Curriculum emerged as a major emphasis, where the tenets of strength based planning became apparent, within the context of a modified but inclusive curriculum for ‘these kids.’ Consequently, the exploration of change and improvement was located within the practice implicit within these school structures. Given the ‘insider process,’ teachers related theory to practice. Subsequently, with changed practice, the social construction of schooling also changed. Participation, socialisation and individual progress for students challenged the limiting historical notions of normative academic outcomes for differentiated student populations. This changed culture was not a mandatory directive; it emerged in conjunction with changing knowledge and practice focussed on the principles of participatory action.
Recommendation two: Operational understanding needs to be developed as part of the ongoing organization and professional practice within school sites.

A crucial factor promoting successful inclusion was the emerging operational understanding of inclusion where equity for students was juxtaposed with the struggles to include ‘these kids.’ Importantly, ‘insiders’ addressed change. Knowledge and collective goals were developed inter-subjectively (Habermas, 1984) by educational workers.

Critical characteristic three: School-based capacity and action to promote inclusion
Given the initial implementation process, outcomes were described as a trial and error approach to inclusive policy action. However, an important emergent factor was that policy action was constructed around a change in educational thinking. By developing knowledge and skills that were contextual and meaningful these schools were able to overcome the resistance to policy. Using strategies that incorporated collaborative processes and problem solving, a pedagogy building on the thinking and planning for all students emerged. Lingard (2001) referred to this knowledge building process by education policy actors as an authentic pedagogy.

School based capacity to implement inclusive policy action
Though examination and analysis of participants’ statements, this research project captured the capacity of educational workers to contribute to effective inclusive policy action despite the initial debilitating mix of expedient policy action and political governance. Participants described planning centred on social inclusion and modified curriculum to ensure ‘success’ and participation for students. This action by school-based personnel reduced the inequities for students that had previously emerged as an outcome of the deep-rooted culture, social construction and organization within Victoria’s schooling system. Hence, this research provided a broader view of inclusion by acknowledging the potential of discursive action (Slee, 1993,1996; Thomas, 2001 Moss,
2003) but pinpointing positive characteristics contributing to change, rather than just analysing the disabling construction of schooling systems.

**Knowledge building communities**

The exploration of efficacious policy action within these two school sites provided vital evidence of how teachers carry out inclusive work. From this position, the investigation identified how teachers’ collaborative community practice contributed to knowledge creation and school based capacity building promoting inclusive policy action that was translated into planning processes and classroom practice. With ongoing collaboration and problem solving integration emerged as a work-in-progress where the concept of inclusive school environments, meeting the needs of students, emerged. Teachers both individually and collectively provided evidence of how they made sense of the reform to interpret and change practice. In turn, this had implications for teaching and learning.

An additional aspect of the school-based knowledge building process was the deconstruction of the myth that only special educational personnel could teach disabled or different students. In this study, teachers became involved in reflecting on their own beliefs and practices, considering pedagogy rather than simply modifying curriculum. Within this context, there was an underlying ideology of teachers supporting and believing that integration students belonged in these regular settings - a concept that is central to effective inclusion (Thomas, et al., 1998).

**Recommendation three:** School based collaborative action is important in developing new knowledge, skills and changed pedagogy.

Continued school-based problem solving and collaboration contributed to operational understanding and policy action.
Critical characteristic four: Transformative leadership and teachers lifeworlds in classrooms

A significant characteristic facilitating inclusive educational change was school leadership that facilitated school-based organisational structures and planning. Positive accounts of school-based planning by teachers supported the importance and capacity of relationships and communication at the school level, rather than from the State. While Fullan (2000) recognised the difficulty of State authority promoting change, this study emphasised a positive alternative of teachers’ relational communication to enhance social and pedagogical change as a critical component of educational change and inclusive practice.

The value of communicative infrastructures within schools and the educational workers who come together to address professional directions and change has been well documented in the research literature (Habermas, 1984; Blackmore, 1998; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). Teachers’ accounts, within this study, endorsed the above focus and provided substantial evidence about the significance of each principal’s role and the associated management structures established within each school. Evidence focussed on the value of transformative action and operational leadership rather than static instructional leadership (Blackmore (2005). Within both school sites leadership was redefined, where administrative teams were cognizant of the multiple interacting relationships within their schools. Bates (2004) emphasised the value of administrative teams contributing to the management of knowledge and culture within schools. Research by Newman et al. (2000) referred to leadership dealing with complexities through the involvement of key stakeholders, as leadership built on the notions of collective competencies - of each school in its entirety. Teachers in this study identified the value of administrative support that promoted interaction and problem solving where multiple ways to include disabled students within their classrooms were accepted and explored. Teachers’ ‘differences’ were valued and acknowledged, building on the collective competencies of ‘insiders’ that provided the tools for educational reform.

The above texts construct an image of how inclusive schooling developed and extended beyond the boundary of student placement in regular settings through insider knowledge and action.
**Recommendation four:** Transactional administrative teams need to be recognised as important contributors to the development of knowledge and culture within schools.

School-based communication, organisation and social action were critical characteristics contributing to efficacious policy action within this study where insider knowledge creation emerged as a resource for policy action within these school communities. Transactional leadership was an important component within this process.

**Critical characteristic five: School-based communities of practice**

*Teachers constructing school based knowledge*

Consistent with research literature (Habermas, 1987; Healy, 1997; Cooke, 2000) was the evidence of teachers’ ownership and involvement in knowledge creation processes. Collaborative operations were set in motion to address change and goals were established in actual communicative exchanges regarding integration policy. Motivation was promoted through what Habermas termed as an ideal speech situation (Habermas, 1984, 1996). In this way knowledge was acquired through critical elements being developed and tested, by educational workers within each school site, rather than being the result of political directives. As a result, teachers’ roles were constructive in developing a deliberative and purposeful democracy, based on communicative action to address inclusive education where teachers were acting as enquirers, to inform systematic change and improvement, in meeting the needs of diverse student populations.

*Situated learning: Practice centred knowledge*

In the interviews teachers identified the development of practice-centred knowledge, where context was an integral part of knowledge creation, positioned around social interaction. Knowledge was developed in real life situations valuing individual ‘insider’ practitioner knowledge. This approach referred to by Wenger (1998) as situated learning, concerned with learning through social interaction within communities of practice, was a characteristic identified within both school sites.
Practitioners’ own tacit knowledge was strategic in addressing the multiple realities and complexities of inclusive policy action. This was in contrast to the conventional approaches of knowledge construction based on explicit knowledge, learning from others or in the case of inclusion, from State directives. However, knowledge was expanded through the interconnections of tacit and explicit knowledge where outside knowledge was utilised for further clarification to promote identified effective action. Accordingly, professional development needs were identified by stakeholders and were therefore contextual and meaningful.

**Participatory action within professional communities of practice**

Within these school sites knowledge production was a dynamic process with teachers positioned as critical and active practitioners. This focus extended beyond change relating to culture, skills, knowledge and capacity (Hargreaves, 2003; Fullan, 2000) and the shortcomings of system or institutional reform (Slee, 2001a) to a dual focus of research-activism or knowing for action.

The educational workers within this study identified participatory and collaborative processes, that were responsive to the needs and views of stakeholders, as a way of activating inclusive education. Teachers provided multiple resources to navigate policy action where collaboration combined with reflective practice, that incorporated an understanding of history and human agency, was an evolving process within each school.

*Recommendation five:* Participatory and communicative action that contributes to knowledge development within real life situations, valuing individual ‘insider’ practitioner knowledge, must be acknowledged as a dynamic process.

This process provided the opportunity for all stakeholders to be involved in establishing a cohesive learning community where collective thinking about inclusion led to practical action.
Conclusion

In conclusion, this research identified how knowledge creation through social action contributed to pedagogical change to meet the challenges of inclusive policy action. In this way ‘insider’ knowledge informed the system domain about strategies for inclusive education that included collaboration, operational leadership, school-based knowledge and capacity building, and participatory action research building on the tacit knowledge of educational workers. Consequently, ‘insider’ knowledge and action navigated an efficacious pathway to inclusive policy action.

Although this research reported on the results of an investigation into identifying the critical characteristics and skills of teachers that have contributed to the successful implementation of inclusive educational policy within two schools, generalisations may apply to other sites. The thesis situated teachers’ policy actions within the schooling system where the emphasis on human rights not only challenged the historical discourse and treatment of people with disabilities but also questioned the socio-cultural construction of the schooling system, its ideologies and programs. This is a central issue for Victorian education.

The evidence from this study supported the theory of the individual and collective agency of educational workers, within school sites, as critical components in determining system change and inclusive policy action. The critical characteristics of individual teacher’s knowledge development and school-based organization, contributing to successful change, have provided a basis upon which to consider future efficacious policy action albeit at different sites.

The recommendations summarised below provide a clear pathway for future planning for the implementation of inclusive education. These recommendations are not intended to detract from the need for government support regarding the implementation
of policy, but to emphasise actions, at the school level that will lead to more effective outcomes for students with individual needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation one: Time, communicative space and whole school participation must be provided, to enable school communities to plan for the new responsibilities associated with inclusion.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation two: Operational understanding needs to be developed as part of the ongoing organization and professional practice within school sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation three: School based collaborative action is important in developing new knowledge, skills and changed pedagogy and needs to be a focus within professional development programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation four: Transactional administrative teams need to be recognised as important contributors to the development of knowledge and culture within schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation five: Participatory and communicative action that contributes to knowledge development within real life situations, valuing individual ‘insider’ practitioner knowledge, must be acknowledged as a dynamic process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above recommendations can be used to ascertain the stage of development and level of need and supportive action in schools endeavouring to negotiate the policy demands of inclusive education.

The recommendations offer a constructive approach to address the policy concerns for schools currently involved in meeting the needs of diverse student populations. They recognise and acknowledge that while inclusive policy has originated outside the school (under State governance) the major resource for policy implementation is driven from within the school, primarily through the work and skill of the current teacher workforce.
Appendix A

Inventory of school policy on integration, inclusion and social justice

- To enable students to participate in as normal a school life as possible;
- Give all children the opportunity to be educated in a regular school;
- Access to educational experiences that are challenging, purposeful, comprehensive and result in students improving their educational and social outcomes;
- To ensure that different groups of students are not disadvantaged as a result of their socio-cultural background;
- To ensure that all students should have access to a comprehensive curriculum and experience success in the school program, thus finding schooling worthwhile;
- To explore the implications of social justice regarding pedagogy;
- Students to be introduced to necessary skills, so that they can contribute to a just society that develops tolerance, fairness, respect and truthfulness;
- Development of a partnership between parents, students and teachers that encourages the sharing of common responsibility and contributes to consistency between home and school;
- The establishment of a Program Support Group (PSG) for each child integrated into the school that is in accordance with Department guidelines;
- In cases where consensus cannot be reached collaboratively the Principal will refer the case to a Regional manager;
- The PSG team will work together to provide a suitable program to include the student that can be reasonably implemented by the classroom teacher.
- The school, with support from the PSG team, will provide opportunities for the student to develop and use social skills enabling them to integrate socially into the community;
• The class teacher will liaise with any relevant support staff (for example, paramedics, occupational therapists, special educators and visiting teachers) to ensure that programs are appropriate for the student, as well as appropriate for whole class and whole school implementation and
• Every student will be given the opportunity to learn.
Appendix B

Excerpts from teachers’ dialogue contributing to an overview of each school’s ethos

School A

Even though school renewal and school-based participation of community members was in place this principal made it happen with an open door policy and the emphasis on listening to staff and parents. You really feel welcome in this school now.

We were following directives and department policies as we had before but he [principal] brought a greater understanding to what we were doing. Seeing ‘why’ helped a great deal although at first it seemed to create a lot more work or time consuming meetings but these are really streamlined now. He puts an enormous amount of time and energy into his job. I think it has been good for the school’s renewal.

Before [this principal] there was little reason to team-teach or even plan in teams, we worked in a fairly remote way. I was a co-ordinator then and I am now, but now I do more than administrative tasks. We showcase our successes [and failures]. This is a good way to be part of the school. Often there is a discussion in the staff room about our teaching rather than general chatter. I think this communication has been good for everyone, especially young teachers.

There is an administrative team where representatives report back to staff with ‘reasons.’ There is always an open door for staff with the top team but we have options to go to any of the three members (Principal and Assistant Principals). This is great because they all have different backgrounds and understandings. Sometimes one or the other is easier to talk to.

School B

We have always promoted academic learning and academic outcomes as a major goal within the school along anti bullying and good discipline. But now the added component of individual student need is very much at the forefront of our policy. Sometimes it is hard to juggle all dimensions. The cultural background of students can also be a significant factor and we have to consider that. Learning is valued and
recognised; each student is given the opportunity to reach their potential. Our policy reflects the value of respecting the uniqueness of every person.

We agree that we need to listen and be responsive to students and families but with the barrage of other programs and compliances there is never enough time. Our council and school charter indicate many changes that need to actioned. It is not always easy. It is easy to feel snowed under.

Within the Department guidelines and policies we have set up supportive teams based on vertical [year levels] and horizontal structures [curriculum]. In this way teachers with certain expertise in curriculum areas are recognised and year level co-ordinators are usually senior staff that have a lot of expertise and experience to share. Problems and back-up is also shared, so problems are often resolved before they go to the office.

Our principal is keen and very supportive of staff being part of the school community and feeling valued. He is keen to trial new approaches and allows teachers time to attend useful in-service programs. Different teams work on different models quite often and the reporting back procedures helps keep us up to date. I guess this school has a focus of innovation and excellence and it does ‘rub off.’
### School A

**Table 5: Participants from School A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Co-ordinator: Year level &amp;/or curric</th>
<th>Class teacher</th>
<th>Consultant/integration teacher</th>
<th>Parent</th>
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### School B

*Table 6: Participants from School B*

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Appendix D

Instrument for data collection

Figure 3: Data collection: Who, What and How

Human instrument $\rightarrow$ principal data collector

$\rightarrow$

Interviews $\rightarrow$ communicative action, tacit and operational knowledge

Member checks $\rightarrow$ concensus

Observation $\rightarrow$ operational overview of the setting, activities and interactions

Document analysis $\rightarrow$ inventory of school goals and ethos
Appendix E

Emergent features of observation

- **Overview of the setting**: the physical environment; the teaching and learning context; the school ethos.

- **The school community**: the participants; their roles; collaborative processes; common goals and school organization.

- **Interpersonal interactions**: interactions around group activities; interactions between key stakeholders; definable roles including leadership and whole-school capacity building.

- **Consistency between policy and practice**: supportive structures; implementation processes; roles of stakeholders and school-based knowledge building.

- **Subtle factors**: valuing all stakeholders; recognising strengths; cognisance of individual need; a whole school supportive framework and viewing change as an on-going process.
Appendix F

Plain language statement

*Human Research Ethics Approval*

Project Title:

*Teachers as policy actors: An exploration of teacher actions to negotiate the policy demands of inclusive education*

My name is Wendy Kortman and I am studying for my Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Western Sydney. A research project is an important component of the study and I am undertaking mine under the supervision of Dr Jeff Bailey, a Professor in the School of Education and Early Childhood Studies, University of Western Sydney. I invite you to consider participating in this project, the details of which appear below.

The aim of this project is to identify the critical characteristics contributing to successful inclusive education that have emerged from the experiences of teachers engaged in the process of implementing inclusive policy. Inclusive education, initially referred to as the integration of students with disabilities and impairments into mainstream schools, remains as a challenge for many schools. Current teacher knowledge regarding efficacious inclusive policy action is critical for ongoing effective inclusion. I believe that the findings of this research project will identify the nature of this knowledge and it will be useful in contributing to future planning.

I am seeking school-based personnel, including classroom teachers and school coordinators and administrators, prepared to discuss their experience of integration and inclusive education. Parents are also welcome to be involved. Involvement would include an interview of no longer than one hour and a follow up discussion to ensure your information was accurately recorded. These sessions would be undertaken at your convenience. Key issues to be considered will include:

- The nature and features of teachers’ work within inclusive education;
• Characteristics that contributed or detracted from the operation of inclusive practice; and
• How did teacher knowledge and school based organization contribute to classroom action?

However, discussion will be open ended where you will have the opportunity to raise your own important issues.

No findings will be published which could identify any individual participant. Anonymity is assured by our procedure, in which your name or the name of your organization will not be published in any findings from this project. Access to data will be restricted to my supervisor and to myself. Coded data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet for six years, as prescribed by University regulations.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and if you agree to participate, you may withdraw your consent at any time by declining to participate in any section of the procedure.

If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the overall research finding, please contact Professor Jeff Bailey, telephone 02 97726781, fax. 02 97726783

Thank you,

Ms. Wendy Kortman
Appendix G

Consent Forms

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

CONSENT FORM: PARTICIPANTS

I, [Name], of [Address]

Hereby consent to be a subject of a human research study to be undertaken by Wendy Kortman

I have read the ‘Statement for Participants’ relevant to the research study and I understand that the purpose of the research is to identify:

What critical characteristics contributing to successful policy action have emerged from the experiences of teachers engaged in the process of implementing inclusive education?

I acknowledge that:

1. The aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.

2. I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in such research study.

3. I understand that findings will be used for research purposes and may be reported in journals.
4. Individual results will not be released to any person.

5. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature:

Date: / /19

NOTE: If the research involves minors or persons under legal liability as participants, then the researcher will be required to have completed for each minor or dependent person participating the consent form entitled ‘Consent Form: on behalf of a Minor or Dependent Person’.
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL
CONSENT FORM: ON BEHALF OF A MINOR OR DEPENDENT PERSON

I, of

Hereby give consent for my son / daughter / dependent to be a subject of a human research study to be undertaken

By Ms. Wendy Kortman

I have read the ‘Statement for Participants’ relevant to the research study and I understand that the purpose of the research is find out:

What has contributed to the successful inclusion of your child within the school and your child’s classroom?

I acknowledge that:

1. The aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.

2. I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my child's / dependent's participation in such research study.

3. I understand that the findings will be used for research purposes and may be reported in academic journals.

4. Individual results will not be released to any person including medical practitioners.
5. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, during the study in which event my child's / dependent's participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature:

Date: / /19

NOTE: Probably both parents should consent if both parents are living together. If divorced or separated, certainly the parent who has legal custody of the child should consent, and it would be prudent to obtain the consent of both even in this event. If such consent of the other parent is not readily obtainable the consent of the custodial parent would be or should be sufficient unless the second parent actively refuses consent. If this occurs, the child or dependent person should not participate. Joint guardianship of a dependent should be treated in the same manner.
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<td>How inclusion evolved within each setting. Who and how achieved?</td>
<td>Individual recall and opinion; observation; school documents</td>
<td>Interviews; Member check discussion; Observation; Document analysis</td>
<td>Field notes analysed and discussed with indiv. participants. Analysis of school policy documentation. Analysis of observation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ques.1: Nature</strong></td>
<td>What did inclusive practice mean for teachers roles? Strategies to overcome issues. What for students?</td>
<td>Individual discussion and reflection; lesson and student observation; administrative plans.</td>
<td>Interviews; focus groups; member check discussions; lesson student observation</td>
<td>Analysis of the key concepts, content and reported policy action from field notes. Analysis of admin records and observation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ques. 2: Action</strong></td>
<td>Positive and negative factors in the process. Strategies to achieve positive outcomes; limitations; outside influences</td>
<td>Recall, reflection and opinion of administrative plans; evaluation of policy implementation; peer support.</td>
<td>Interviews; observation; document analysis; records eg. school professional development; member checks</td>
<td>Analysis and discussion of key concepts emerging from field notes. Analysis of observation re policy action. Analysis of records and classroom action. Intersection of information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ques 3: Development of knowledge for classroom action; outcomes; capacity; future directions

| Development of knowledge for classroom action; outcomes; capacity; future directions | Whole school action plan – documents, opinion and observation documents Classroom/student observation. | Interviews; member check discussion; observation. | Analysis of data from interviews. Discussion, analysis and modification from member checks. School policy analysis. Triangulation of interview data, observations and records. | from different focus areas. |
Appendix A

Inventory of school policy on integration, inclusion and social justice

• To enable students to participate in as normal a school life as possible;
• Give all children the opportunity to be educated in a regular school;
• Access to educational experiences that are challenging, purposeful, comprehensive and result in students improving their educational and social outcomes;
• To ensure that different groups of students are not disadvantaged as a result of their socio-cultural background;
• To ensure that all students should have access to a comprehensive curriculum and experience success in the school program, thus finding schooling worthwhile;
• To explore the implications of social justice regarding pedagogy;
• Students to be introduced to necessary skills, so that they can contribute to a just society that develops tolerance, fairness, respect and truthfulness;
• Development of a partnership between parents, students and teachers that encourages the sharing of common responsibility and contributes to consistency between home and school;
• The establishment of a Program Support Group (PSG) for each child integrated into the school that is in accordance with Department guidelines;
• In cases where consensus cannot be reached collaboratively the Principal will refer the case to a Regional manager;
• The PSG team will work together to provide a suitable program to include the student that can be reasonably implemented by the classroom teacher.
• The school, with support from the PSG team, will provide opportunities for the student to develop and use social skills enabling them to integrate socially into the community;
• The class teacher will liaise with any relevant support staff (for example, paramedics, occupational therapists, special educators and visiting teachers) to ensure that programs are appropriate for the student, as well as appropriate for whole class and whole school implementation and

• Every student will be given the opportunity to learn.
Appendix B

Excerpts from teachers’ dialogue contributing to an overview of each school’s ethos

School A

Even though school renewal and school-based participation of community members was in place this principal made it happen with an open door policy and the emphasis on listening to staff and parents. You really feel welcome in this school now.

We were following directives and department policies as we had before but he [principal] brought a greater understanding to what we were doing. Seeing ‘why’ helped a great deal although at first it seemed to create a lot more work or time consuming meetings but these are really streamlined now. He puts an enormous amount of time and energy into his job. I think it has been good for the school’s renewal.

Before [this principal] there was little reason to team-teach or even plan in teams, we worked in a fairly remote way. I was a co-ordinator then and I am now, but now I do more than administrative tasks. We showcase our successes [and failures]. This is a good way to be part of the school. Often there is a discussion in the staff room about our teaching rather than general chatter. I think this communication has been good for everyone, especially young teachers.

There is an administrative team where representatives report back to staff with ‘reasons.’ There is always an open door for staff with the top team but we have options to go to any of the three members (Principal and Assistant Principals). This is great because they all have different backgrounds and understandings. Sometimes one or the other is easier to talk to.

School B

We have always promoted academic learning and academic outcomes as a major goal within the school along anti bullying and good discipline. But now the added component of individual student need is very much at the forefront of our policy. Sometimes it is hard to juggle all dimensions. The cultural background of students can also be a significant factor and we have to consider that. Learning is valued and
recognised; each student is given the opportunity to reach their potential. Our policy reflects the value of respecting the uniqueness of every person.

We agree that we need to listen and be responsive to students and families but with the barrage of other programs and compliances there is never enough time. Our council and school charter indicate many changes that need to actioned. It is not always easy. It is easy to feel snowed under.

Within the Department guidelines and policies we have set up supportive teams based on vertical [year levels] and horizontal structures [curriculum]. In this way teachers with certain expertise in curriculum areas are recognised and year level co-ordinators are usually senior staff that have a lot of expertise and experience to share. Problems and back-up is also shared, so problems are often resolved before they go to the office.

Our principal is keen and very supportive of staff being part of the school community and feeling valued. He is keen to trial new approaches and allows teachers time to attend useful in-service programs. Different teams work on different models quite often and the reporting back procedures helps keep us up to date. I guess this school has a focus of innovation and excellence and it does ‘rub off.’
## School A

**Table 5: Participants from School A**

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<th>Participants</th>
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<th>Class teacher</th>
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School B

Table 6: Participants from School B

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Appendix D

Instrument for data collection

*Figure 3: Data collection: Who, What and How*

- Human instrument ➔ principal data collector
  - Interviews ➔ communicative action, tacit and operational knowledge
  - Member checks ➔ consensus ‘ negotiation
  - Observation ➔ operational overview of the setting, activities and interactions
  - Document analysis ➔ inventory of school goals and ethos
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Emergent features of observation

- **Overview of the setting**: the physical environment; the teaching and learning context; the school ethos.

- **The school community**: the participants; their roles; collaborative processes; common goals and school organization.

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Plain language statement

*Human Research Ethics Approval*

*Project title:*

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If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the overall research finding, please contact Professor Jeff Bailey, telephone 02 97726781, fax. 02 97726783

Thank you..

Ms. Wendy Kortman
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Consent Forms

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<td>Individual recall and opinion; observation; school documents</td>
<td>Interviews; Member check discussion; Observation; Document analysis</td>
<td>Field notes analysed and discussed with individ. participants. Analysis of school policy documentation. Analysis of observation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques.1: Nature-</td>
<td>What did inclusive practice mean for teachers roles? Strategies to overcome issues. What for students?</td>
<td>Individual discussion and reflection; lesson and student observation; administrative plans.</td>
<td>Interviews; focus groups; member check discussions; lesson student observation</td>
<td>Analysis of the key concepts, content and reported policy action from field notes. Analysis of admin records and observation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques. 2: Action</td>
<td>Positive and negative factors in the process. Strategies to achieve positive outcomes; limitations; outside influences</td>
<td>Recall, reflection and opinion of administrative plans; evaluation of policy implementation; peer support.</td>
<td>Interviews; observation; document analysis; records eg. school professional development; member checks</td>
<td>Analysis and discussion of key concepts emerging from field notes. Analysis of observation re policy action. Analysis of records and classroom action. Intersection of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ques 3:</td>
<td>Development of knowledge for classroom action; outcomes; capacity; future directions</td>
<td>Whole school action plan – documents, opinion and observation documents Classroom/student observation.</td>
<td>Interviews; member check discussion; observation.</td>
<td>Analysis of data from interviews. Discussion, analysis and modification from member checks. School policy analysis. Triangulation of interview data, observations and records.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


*Between facts and norms*. Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.


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Roderick, R. (1986). *Habermas and the foundations of critical theory*. Basingstoke,


