

**EXPLORING EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT NECESSARY
SUPPORTS FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICE: DEVELOPMENT AND
ASSESSMENT OF A CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

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Amanda Michelle Ramoutar
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Faculty of Humanities and Education
St. Augustine Campus



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ABSTRACT

Exploring Educators' Perceptions about Necessary Supports for Inclusive Practice: Development and Assessment of a Conceptual Model

Amanda Michelle Ramoutar

This study addresses an area of research that has not been well described within inclusive education. In the ethic march towards inclusion in schools in the CARICOM region, educators have been left feeling less than confident in their ability to fulfill their responsibilities in meeting students' needs due to the lack of facilitating conditions. The purpose of this two-phase, exploratory sequential mixed-methods study was to explore participant views about the provision of supports and to use this information to develop and test a model of necessary supports for educators' inclusive practice. The first phase was a qualitative exploration of which supports are deemed essential to improve inclusive practice, in which individual and focus group interview data were collected from a sample of 10 education directors. Since there are no existing instruments to assess the provision of supports for inclusive practice, the themes from the qualitative findings were used to develop an instrument so that a series of hypotheses could be tested that relate to educators' views about the key categories of supports necessary, and the relationship between supports and inclusive practice. Quantitative data collection for the second phase of the study was from a larger sample group of educators consisting of education directors, principals, and classroom teachers. Survey data were analyzed using basic and inferential statistical methods. The study found that five categories of supports are necessary for inclusive practice: an administrative plan of action, an educator efficacy mechanism, a coordinated response to student functionality, ecological infrastructure, and sensitization and advocacy. Further, the study revealed that these all impact educators' inclusive practice.

Keywords: inclusive education; inclusion; facilitating conditions; supports; SEN; special education; Caribbean schools; CARICOM.

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To my family members – at home and at church - thank you for your encouragement and faith in me to see this work to the end. I am grateful for your prayers and words of advice.

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DEDICATION

*Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech,
in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity (English Standard Version, 2016, 1 Tim.
4:12)*

This work is dedicated to all Seunarine and Ramoutar family members who I hope would follow along this doctoral path in scholarship. We did not inherit luxuries, but our Father in Heaven blessed us with everything that we needed along the way. I have persisted at an early age as one of the first, hoping that my future and yours will be brighter.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APA	American Psychological Association
ASCD	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
BSAB	Basic Skills Assessment Battery
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARU	Caribbean Union Conference
CEE	Common Entrance Examination
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CIRCLE	The Curriculum and Instruction Resource Center Linking Educators
CITI	Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DI	Differentiated Instruction
DOVE	Developing a Vision for Education Unit
EFA	Education for All
ESL	English as a Second Language
EU	European Union
GUT	Grenada Union of Teachers
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KMO	Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Value
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MOE	Ministry of Education

NCF	National Community Foundation
NELP	National Enrichment and Learning Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
RQ	Research Question
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SPBMP	Schools' Positive Behaviour Management Programme
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SSDF	St. Lucia Social Development Fund
T&T	Trinidad and Tobago
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background to the Study

Introduction

Consider the role of educators in elementary or secondary school classrooms, which typically consist of diverse groups of students. Educators are responsible for delivering instruction in these classrooms to these various groups, and it is expected that they meet all the students' learning needs in that group. However, students may be at risk of exclusion and marginalization due to the presence of characteristics such as physical/sensory limitations, developmental differences, behavioural/emotional challenges, socioeconomic factors, and academic aptitude. As such, the ability of educators to meet students' needs through inclusive practice ensures that exclusion and marginalization do not occur and that involvement in learning is fully afforded to each student. If educators are not able to work with their diverse groups of students, then student outcomes will be poor and inclusive education will not be achieved. This is the context within which supports are justifiably needed by educators to practice inclusion.

Research suggests that the orthodoxy of inclusive practice has been proving to be difficult for educators to uphold without the adequate provision of supports (Able et al., 2015; Florian & Spratt, 2013; Okongo et al., 2015). Just like a bridge is quintessential for providing a pathway over an obstacle such as a river, supports also offer the path for facilitating the needs of all, both learners and educators, in the school environment. As explained by Thompson et al. (2009), the word "supports" refers to the provisions that are made available that remove the mismatch between one's personal competency and the environmental demands. For students, on the one hand, the school environment demands that they access the content being taught and demonstrate their learning through various means of expression. Student supports remove the ability barriers for students to successfully and efficiently access content and demonstrate learning.

On the other hand, for educators, the school environment demands that they facilitate the process of learning for all students through appropriate methods of instruction. Educator supports remove the ability barriers for educators to successfully and efficiently facilitate the process of learning. In this way, it should be noted that supports for students and supports for educators are related and intertwined, in some areas, since the process of learning which educators facilitate includes students' access to content and their demonstration of learning.

While the distinction of supports for students and supports for educators are related and, in some cases, intertwined, this study promotes the understanding that there are necessary supports for inclusive education to be practiced by educators in schools. In practice, supports needed for students will be included in those needed by educators, with additional provisions being required by educators. For example, instructional tools help make concepts clearer for students and related services like psychoeducational evaluations and therapies benefit students, but also benefit educators in their planning for facilitating classroom learning. Coaching on how to use an instructional approach such as Response to Intervention in the inclusive classroom is an example of additional support that is required solely by educators. Much has been said in past studies of inclusive education about the supports which are required for students, but the opposite is true for supports that are required for educators. What is clear is that barriers to inclusive practice are removed when a variety of supports are available for use by educators. This promotes conditions that facilitate educators' inclusive practices, such as differentiated instruction (DI), classroom accommodations, and modifications (Daunarummo, 2010; VanWeelden & Whipple, 2014).

This study's initial chapter affords a view into the area of inquiry that involves exploring the perceptions of educators about what they deem as necessary facilitating conditions (referred to as supports) for inclusive practice. The investigation involved the development and assessment of a conceptual model about necessary supports. Explored in succinct fashion are key areas relevant to the topic of this thesis. Following a brief introduction that

contextualizes the need for the work based on international and regional developments in the area of inclusive education, this chapter goes on to provide a statement of the problem, the research questions that guided the work, the purpose, and the objectives of the research. The chapter also highlights the initial conceptual framework which guided the research, a discussion of the justification for the work, and presents delimitations enforced for the research. At the conclusion of the chapter, conceptual and operational definitions of terms are shared, and an outline of the way forward for the write-up of this research work is presented.

International Context of Inclusive Practice by Educators

Over the recent decades, the movement towards the practice of inclusive education has increased momentum, and educators have become more aware that inclusive practice by them is desired. This encompasses modifications and changes in how content is delivered, which specific approaches are utilized, what school structures are put in place, and what strategies are applied during instruction. It also includes a shared vision and an acceptance of the idea that the regular school system's obligation is to teach all students (UNESCO, 2009b, pp. 8-9). In the application of inclusive practice around the world, the needs of all learners are considered by educators. This takes into account those who may be marginalized, at risk of failure, from diverse cultures or ethnic groups, living in poverty, or persons who for any additional reason may find gaining access to the regular school challenging (Forlin et al., 2011).

From an international perspective, there have been many developments that have contributed to the expectation of inclusive practice being carried out by educators today. Trembay (2007) confirmed that inclusion officially got its roots in the year 1966 when a Universal Declaration of Human Rights was set forth to guarantee compulsory education, at no cost for every child. Some years later, in 1989, 189 countries adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to safeguard the right of every child to obtain an education

devoid of discrimination of any kind. Next, at the Jomtien Conference in 1990, an initiative referred to as Education for All (EFA) was proposed by the international community, and this continued the worldwide movement towards the provision of quality elementary education for every child. Later on, in 1993, the United Nations Equalization of Opportunities Rules for Persons with Disabilities (Rule 6) affirmed equal rights to schooling to be afforded every child, youth and adult with special needs, and correspondingly stated that schooling ought to be delivered in settings that are general and integrated. This was followed by the Salamanca declaration in 1994 with a pledge to EFA, which brought the idea of inclusive practices to the forefront of the international arena.

In the year 2000, governments around the world reaffirmed commitments to the previously discussed initiatives through the EFA Dakar Framework for Action, as well as Millennium Development Goals. These were meant to guarantee that every child had access to and was able to complete free primary education by 2015, and there was a focus on marginalized communities and girls. Since the EFA initiative, governments around the world have endorsed equal opportunity in education, along with a human rights view of disability in the provision of education. Further, the signing of 159 nations to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2006 and giving of formal consent by the European Union and 150 nations, manifested a change in behaviour in the direction of implementing a fair ethos related to education for all in an inclusive setting. Most recently, in 2015, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) from the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development referenced quality of education. This goal is defined by equity and inclusion in conjunction with traditional learning outcomes. SDG4 has traded the constricted goal of access to primary education previously specified in the Millennium Development Goal 2. It recognizes quality learning opportunities for all and the need to have provisions in place to achieve this target. These developments to date have propelled the work of school administrators and classroom teachers around the world to adopt the philosophy of inclusion.

However, gaps between utopian rhetoric and harsh realities exist as to how inclusive education is being delivered in various countries around the world. Past studies have indicated that inclusive practices are being adopted by educators, but there are various degrees of practice and associated challenges identified along the way (Bergsma, 2000; Chiner & Cardona, 2013; Hay, 2003; Konza, 2008). Many educators have even voiced their doubt regarding the workability of inclusive education for producing desired results for students, although some governments continue to make laudable policy and initiative proclamations. Some believe that there appears to be a mismatch between the expressed desire for inclusion and the lack of priority for facilitating inclusive education (Anthony, 2011; Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Johnstone & Chapman, 2009). Wapling (2016) criticized the top-down approach used in many countries, which sees governments adopt initiatives like inclusive education that are in keeping with international concerns, but which does not give needed attention to how they are going to be realized at the level of schools and teachers.

Inquiries attracting increased attention from researchers around the world have focused on the attitudinal climate of teachers and school administrators towards inclusion (Ahmmed et al., 2012; Hunter-Johnson et al., 2014; Saloviita, 2018; VanWeelden & Whipple, 2014), and their practices for including all students in general education classrooms (Bezliudnyi, 2019; Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016; Boyle & Topping, 2012; Chiner & Cardona, 2013; Hazel & Allen, 2013). Based on what these researchers across many countries have highlighted, educators lament that many schools within which they are encouraged to demonstrate inclusive practice are not appropriately equipped. Descriptions of poor physical and technological accommodations, high student to teacher ratios, scarce training opportunities, limited funding, and inadequate human resources are cited in relation to constrained facilitating conditions for inclusive practice (Donohue & Bornman, 2014; Sandhu, 2017). Many of these challenges can be summarized in the issue of the provision of supports for inclusive practice.

Situating the Research Study in the Context of the Caribbean Community

While no country in the region carries the designation 'Caribbean', this geographical expression has come to be associated with the part of the western world that Premdass (1996) described as tropical lands surrounded by water and populated by a diverse polyglot of peoples. The Caribbean community has sought to follow the EFA initiative and address and respond to the diversity of learners' needs by encouraging educators to work with all children and allowing an increasingly heterogeneous population of students to be present in general education elementary and secondary schools. The term Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is used to refer to a group of twenty countries in the Caribbean region, namely Anguilla; Antigua and Barbuda; Bahamas; Barbados; Belize; Bermuda; British Virgin Islands; Cayman Islands; Dominica; Grenada; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; Montserrat; Saint Lucia; St Kitts and Nevis; St Vincent and the Grenadines; Suriname; Trinidad and Tobago; and Turks and Caicos Islands.

Characterized by several similarities, CARICOM countries have agreed to come together to improve foreign policy coordination, security, human and social development, and economic integration. English is the major language spoken in the CARICOM and also utilized are French, Dutch, Asian and African expressions. While there is diversity among the various populations in terms of culture, social and economic development, all CARICOM countries are unified in their classification as developing countries. All associated countries are also fairly small in their population and size of their geographical area. Schooling for students spans preschool (also referred to in some countries as early childhood, kindergarten, or pre-primary school) to tertiary education. With very few exceptions, almost all kids ranging from the ages of six to twelve who live in the CARICOM are afforded the opportunity to attend primary (also known in some countries as elementary) school. Although private, fee-paying schools exist in CARICOM countries, schooling at the primary level is compulsory and is generally offered free in public schools.

As a demonstration of commitment towards inclusive education, most countries in the CARICOM started by adopting the EFA initiative in their respective education policy documents (Bergsma, 2000). Over the years, they have also begun referencing inclusive education in their education policy papers. The adoption of inclusive practice has, to some extent, been an expectation of educators simply because it is seen as best practice and relates to a child's right to education. As shown in Table 1.1, countries like Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago were among the first CARICOM countries to express their commitment to the UNCRC. Of notable mention in the UNCRC is Article 23, which addresses the mandate to provide care and support for all children irrespective of their needs. Therefore, inclusive practice by educators in CARICOM schools involves providing educational opportunities for all children, and it has as its backdrop the child's rights.

Table 1.1

Caribbean Member States Commitment to Convention on the Rights of the Child

Country	Year of Signature	Year of Ratification/Accession
Antigua and Barbuda	1991	1993
Bahamas	1990	1991
Barbados	1990	1990
Dominica	1990	1991
Grenada	1990	1990
Guyana	1990	1991
Jamaica	1990	1991
St. Kitts	1990	1990
St. Lucia	1990	1993
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1993	1993
Trinidad and Tobago	1990	1991

Table 1.2 further highlights some of the various governments of CARICOM member countries' actions for inclusive education through policy and practice. Each of the fourteen countries reflected in the table has some degree of evidence that alerts their interest in inclusive education. In most cases, initiatives such as the formation of a student support services unit or division hosted in their ministry of education (MOE), or details outlined in a planning document, express commitment to inclusion and are intended to guide the way forward. However, very few of the countries have inclusive education policies in place already.

Table 1.2

CARICOM Governments Commitment to Inclusive Education as Evidenced by their Education Initiatives

Caribbean Country	Evidence Of Government Support
Anguilla	Five Year Education Development Plan 2005-2010 has a focus on inclusion ^a
Antigua and Barbuda	Inclusive Education Policy 2013 articulates commitment to inclusion ^b
Barbados	Student Support Services section of Ministry of Education established in 1997 and provides approaches to be used in endeavoring to assist with their learning difficulties ^c
	White Paper on Education Reform of 1995 places emphasis on least restrictive environment ^d
British Virgin Islands	Statement by Minister of Education and Culture that "Inclusion is a right, not a privilege for a select few" ^e
	Virgin Islands Education Act 2004 least restrictive and most enabling environment ^f
Dominica	Special Education Department within the School Operations Unit established to cater to the needs of children who are experiencing difficulties at school ^g

Grenada	Student Support Services Unit established in 2008 to offer support structures to raise the ability of mainstream teachers to serve learners with special needs ^h
Guyana	Education Strategic Plan of 2013 highlights that inclusion is a key issue and focus is on developing an inclusive education system ⁱ
Montserrat	Montserrat's Minister of Education committed to the Cochabamba Agreements: Regional Solidarity for Achieving SDG4-E2030 in Latin America and the Caribbean ^j
St. Kitts and Nevis	As part of its Child Friendly School implementation process, the Ministry of Education developed policies in 2014 related to behavior, anti-discrimination, and special education. ^k
St. Lucia	Student Support Services Unit established within the Ministry of Education, and the Education Sector Plan 2009-2014 sets out the advancement of inclusive education and the growth of support services for children with special needs ^l
St. Maarten	Student Support Services Division created and committed to advocating for the student to be in the most inclusive setting possible, and to support any form of inclusion as a philosophy within the Schools in St. Maarten ^m
Suriname	National Report on Development of Education (2008) spoke of commitment to inclusive education policy formulation ⁿ
Trinidad and Tobago	Student Support Services Unit within the Ministry of Education created in 2008 and published a draft Inclusive Education Policy of 2009 ^o
US Virgin Islands	Inclusive oriented mandate, philosophy and direction reflected in The National Curriculum Redesign Project ^p

Notes. ^a Anguilla Department of Education (2007). ^b Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Education (2013). ^c Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Barbados (2015). ^d Barbados Ministry of Education (2008). ^e Government of the Virgin Islands (2016). ^f Government of the Virgin Islands (2004). ^g Dominica Ministry of Education (2015). ^h Grenada Ministry of Education (2015). ⁱ Ministry of Education, Guyana (2015). ^j Golden Media (2018). ^k The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis (2017). ^l Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (2020). ^m Ministry of Education, Government of Sint Maarten (2015). ⁿ Global Education Monitoring Report (2015b). ^o Ministry of Education Trinidad and Tobago (2009). ^p The Virgin Islands Department of education (2007).

It might be important to consider that the nature of education in the Caribbean has historically been structured after an elitist vision of education, and while international conventions promote a desire for change, the region continues to be limited by this structure and other factors inherent to developing nations status (Carrington-Blaides & Conrad, 2017; De Lisle et al., 2017; Harry, 2020). For example, an evaluation of the approach to education in the region reveals that injustices of deep socio-economic stratification are present in the form of how schools in certain geographic areas are resourced. Schools continue to be separated by social status and privilege into high-tier or prestige schools and low-tier schools. Additionally, there is a high level of exam failure in the region which demonstrates deprivation since the schooling systems promote proving one's worth and belonging in school by keeping up with the rigorous demands of the system (Hickling-Hudson, 2015). Coates (2012) highlights these issues by commenting that the impact of British colonial rule for more than two centuries is reflected in educational systems within CARICOM states that continue to uphold academic traditions of their former colonizers. These are all ongoing challenges inherent in adapting the inclusive education global initiative to the region's specific cultural context.

It is with these considerations in mind that it should be understood that even though meeting the needs of learners in the inclusive setting in these

countries is a desire, this has not consistently been a reality. In spite of the commitments identified, it has been acknowledged that there remains ambivalence among educators in the CARICOM region about inclusive practice (Blackman et al., 2012). Reasons for this may be similar to what researchers internationally have found regarding inclusive practice since it has been noted that educators in the CARICOM also face many challenges along the way in realizing the true meaning of inclusive education (Marginson, 2016; Mizunoya et al., 2016). Overall, gaps in facilitating inclusive education take account of issues like access to, as well as the quality of, education students are receiving (Jules & Council, 2010), specifically the lack of resources and services (Artiles et al., 2006, p. 66).

In recent years, issues of inclusive practice have been found to dominate the educational landscape of regional governments and the international agencies supporting them (Armstrong et al., 2005; Jules, 2015; Lavia, 2007; UNESCO, 2015c). This has been in a bid to increase the quality of learning afforded students through the various schooling systems. Although Louisy (2004) described quality as elusive in the CARICOM region, the author drew attention to the fact that the EFA Dakar framework for Action (2000) described the provision of quality education as fulfilling basic learning requirements and improving the overall lives of students. In analyzing the CARICOM's development with respect to quality education, the Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO, 2015c, p. 24) shared that most educators still are not confidently able to address students' academic performance and equity needs, and that this must be supported in public policies and state programs. This recommendation from the report demonstrates why the need exists for inquiry into this area in the region so that further developments can be achieved.

CARICOM educators appear to be constrained in their ability to practice inclusive education by the educational structures that exist in the region. The reality is that many hurdles still need to be overcome to be able to adhere fully to international mandates that put pressure on regional governments to conform to

an inclusive education philosophy, which was imagined in the developed world after many years of research and development, and with greater financial resources (Harry, 2020; Kalyanpur, 2022). Therefore, having the necessary supports in place for educators to be able to practice inclusive education is key to improve quality education in the CARICOM. The type of educational provision, in the current conjuncture, no longer suffices for educators in schools (Jules, 2008). Currently, a full range of learning opportunities for students is limited because educators do not have what they need to be able to reach all students. Supports such as rules, policies, and accountability mechanisms which are known to bind the education system together, along with other instructional resources and financing mechanisms, are believed to be missing (World Bank, 2011).

Further, in the ethic march towards inclusion in schools in the CARICOM region, educators have been left feeling less than confident as it relates to their ability to fulfil their responsibilities in meeting students' needs due to lack of relevant structures and the lack of supports available (Booth et al., 2002; Cheminais, 2004; Collins, 2012; Pletser, 2016). Unfortunately, it is not unusual to find educators with students included for instruction, but because supports are in short supply, the educators are unprepared to meet students' impressive learning needs. For this reason, teacher resistance exists, and this resistance is attributed to not enough support in the mainstream classroom, insufficient skills, and an absence of proper planning (Armstrong et al., 2005, p. 81).

Statement of the Problem

Educators are without the facilitating conditions they need for inclusive practice and they express ambivalence about their ability (Blackman, Conrad & Brown, 2012). The problem which prompted this study is that a clear understanding of the supports which are needed by educators in schools, for them to be able to practice inclusive education confidently, is lacking. While ideally, supports have been recognized as necessary to the practice of inclusion, past research has not defined educator supports for inclusive practice. Further, most studies address student supports and few studies specifically focus on supports

needed by educators to practice inclusion. Those that do highlight educator supports have been limited to descriptions or examples of supports, but a classification system of supports which are needed by educators to take the practice of inclusion forward is missing. In CARICOM schools, while educators frequently complain of a lack of supports, there is limited knowledge of what supports these educators have now, and what supports they need to improve their confidence for inclusive practice. In response to this identified problem, this study proposed to explore what are the supports that educators deem necessary and which have an impact on their inclusive practice.

Research Questions

Creswell (2007) advised that creating research questions might be one of the most challenging parts of conducting research, and Bailey (2017, p. 42) agreed that this nerve-racking process may not be quite polished enough until the stage of fieldwork. These observations proved to be true in this research endeavour also. The following research questions served to frame and guide this study. These questions were refined during the conceptualization of the research and were further revised during the research process to articulate the study's intentions better as they related to the quest for understanding. In this investigation, there were six research questions. This follows the separate qualitative and quantitative questioning types, where questions are linked conceptually (Creswell & Clark, 2017). In this study, questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were explored in the qualitative phase. The findings from question 5 were validated in the quantitative phase, along with the answering of question 6 in that phase also.

1. What are the accessible supports for educators desirous of practising inclusive education?
2. How do educators perceive their experiences of the supports that are accessible for them to be able to facilitate inclusive education?
3. What are the desired supports for implementing inclusive education?

4. What recommendations do educators have about the provision of supports for inclusive practice?
5. What are the key supports perceived by educators to be necessary for inclusive practice in schools?
6. What is the relationship between each of the key supports and educators' inclusive practice?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this two-phase, exploratory sequential mixed-methods study was to explore participant views about the provision of supports with the intent of using this information to develop and test a model of necessary supports for educators to be able to practice inclusive education confidently. This was accomplished using a sample of educators who work in schools in the CARICOM. The first phase was a qualitative exploration of the key supports perceived to be necessary for educators' inclusive practice, in which individual and focus group interview data were collected from a sample of 10 education directors from a cluster of schools in the Caribbean Union. Since there are no existing instruments to assess the provision of supports for inclusive practice, themes from the qualitative findings were used to develop an instrument to facilitate testing a series of hypotheses that relate to educators' views about the key categories of supports necessary, and the relationship between supports and inclusive practice. Quantitative data gathering for the second phase of the research was from a larger sample group of 661 educators consisting of education directors, principals and classroom teachers from a cluster of schools in the Caribbean Union.

Objectives of the Research

In accordance with the research purpose, the following research objectives were set:

1. Use qualitative data collection to explore, identify and clarify key supports perceived to be necessary for educators' inclusive practice

2. Propose a model of key categories of supports necessary for educators' inclusive practice in schools
3. Develop a questionnaire directed to educators for validating the key categories of supports
4. Formulate hypotheses regarding the relationship between each of the key categories of supports and inclusive practice from the qualitative data analyzed
5. Use quantitative data from the administration of the questionnaire to test hypotheses concerning the relationships between the key categories of supports variables and inclusive practice

Initial Conceptual Framework Guiding the Study

According to Casanave and Li (2015), when choosing a framework for research, one must be mindful of positioning the study and making meaning of the data with themes that are more abstract than the concrete particulars of the study itself. To do this, ideas from the review of past literature were utilized. The study's initial conceptual framework aided in logical thinking and informed the creation of the questions researched in this study which helped to realize the study's objectives.

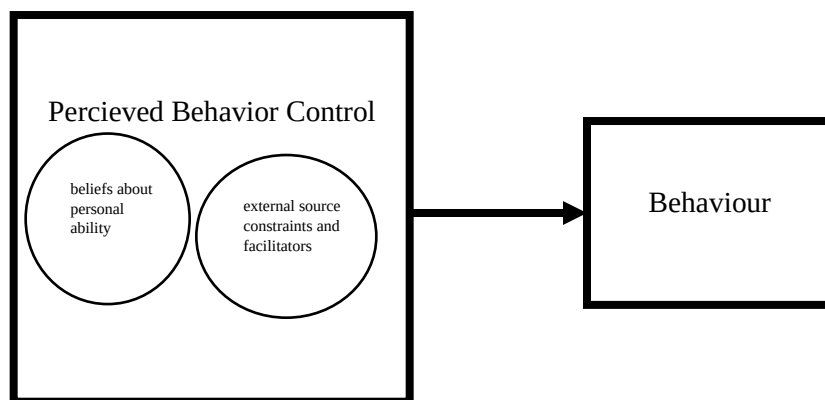
In line with the interpretative perspective, this study assumes that the behavioural achievement of inclusive practice through meeting the needs of learners depend upon the confidence and accuracy of educators' perceptions about the supports they need. Given that inclusive practice is a behaviour expected by educators, a theory of behaviour guided the development of the conceptual framework. It was the lens used within which data was initially gathered in Phase One of the study, and which influenced the hypothesized relationships tested in Phase Two of the study. The Perceived Behaviour Control determinant of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991, 2011) was believed to dovetail with the assumption in this study that educators' complaints of lack of supports for inclusive practice might impact their inclusive practice in schools. The theory is an intrapersonal one that has been established to predict behavioural intention and

behaviour. Specifically, in the past, TPB has been applied in inclusive education research with promising results, and even though some are critical towards the TPB (Sniehotta et al., 2014), a vast body of evidence points to its validity and relevance (Ajzen, 2011). There have been studies that used TPB to investigate aspects of the inclusive practice by educators, such as their attitudes towards inclusion, knowledge of inclusion, and expectations of the initiative (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014; Fournidou et al., 2011; Yan & Sin, 2014).

Explained in greater detail, as depicted in Figure 1.1 in its most simplistic form, Perceived Behavioural Control is an independent contributing factor to a behaviour. It is one of three independent contributing factors which impact on behaviour. The Perceived Behaviour Control determinant denotes the ease or difficulty in performing the act. It is decomposed into two categories. These are beliefs about personal ability, and external source constraints and facilitators. This study draws from the understanding that according to an individual's Perceived Behaviour Control, likelihood for carrying out a behaviour increases when individuals feel confident in their belief that they are capable of carrying out the action, and are not constrained by their environment (Ajzen, 2011; De Leeuw et al., 2015).

Figure 1.1.

The Relationship between Perceived Behavior Control and Behaviour

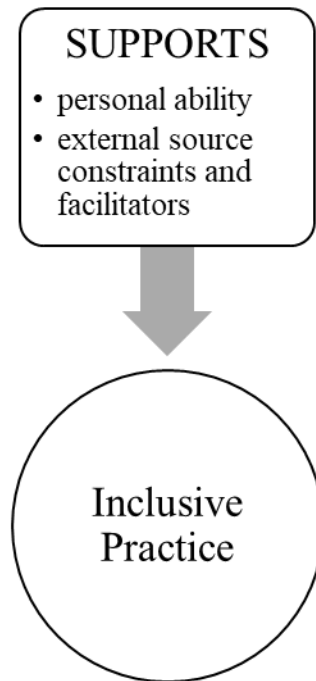


According to the TPB, willingness for completing a behaviour results from an individual having essential skills, access to opportunities, supportive environments, and available resources which can directly result in the behaviour. Perceived behavioural control points toward an individual being inclined by how problematic the behaviours seem to be, along with the belief of how effectively he/she can, or cannot, carry out the activity.

Since the literature has also suggested that relevant structures, which includes supports as discussed earlier, contribute to the ease or difficulty of carrying out inclusive practice, Figure 1.2 shows the initial conceptual framework for educator supports that was used in this study. The Perceived Behavioural Control determinant was used to represent supports. The study acknowledges that supports might relate to aspects of each educator's personal ability and the external source constraints and facilitators that exist within the educational structures. This is influenced by the decomposition of perceived behavioural control. The conceptual framework then proposes that educators' supports impact on their inclusive practice. Therefore, this study assumes that when an educator embraces strong, positive beliefs about the availability of supports which will make their inclusive practice easy, the educator will be inclined to practice inclusion, and this will directly impact their actions of meeting the varied needs of students in schools. The study will collect participant views about their awareness of supports. It is suggested that this awareness can "reflect past experiences, anticipation of upcoming circumstances, and the attitudes of the influential norms that surround the individual" (Ong et al., 2009, p. 398).

Figure 1.2.

Initial Model of Necessary Supports for Educators' Inclusive Practice



Justification for the Study

This study addresses an area of research that had not been well described within inclusive education. It is relevant to the field of inclusive education because it discloses specific knowledge necessary for moving practice in the field forward. Determining the categories of educator supports that improve educators' personal ability and facilitate their work with students is of extreme significance in the field of education today as schools strive to provide quality education and be more inclusive. While the practice of meeting the needs of all learners in schools has been identified and studied in past research, there is a lack of knowledge about the categories of facilitating conditions that influence educators' beliefs about the ease or difficulty of practising inclusive education. In past

studies, the broad topic of the practice of inclusive education by educators in schools has received attention particularly related to the function of educator attitudes and international school norms, but the function of resources and services needed by educators has not been the focus of that attention.

This study intends to add to the scarce literature on the notion of supports for inclusive practice in the context of CARICOM schools. No known research specific to this region has been done which specifies supports for educators that are accessible or desired, and no model of categories of supports has been found to exist. As such, this study has pinpointed a gap in the research and contributes to the overall knowledge base with evidence. In terms of inclusive practice, this study also has the potential to be insightful to education practitioners and CARICOM education decision-makers since it presents findings on an issue that can impede quality educational delivery. Determining what educators perceive in relation to the provision of supports is of utmost importance in the field of inclusive practice today, especially since educators are the ones who work firsthand, fulfilling the charge of meeting the diverse needs of students in schools. This study may offer a platform for supporting best practices towards the provisions that are put in place in schools for meeting the needs of educators, whose jobs it is to work with learners with an assortment of special educational needs (SEN) in general education classrooms. By assisting to bridge the gap between preparation for and the implementation of the practice of inclusion to address the needs of varied students, educators could be confident in their ability to do their jobs well.

From a methodological perspective, this study collects data from a unique group of participants. The present investigation uses a mixed-methods approach to inquiry. It gathers data on the perspectives of education directors, principals and teachers who work in schools in the CARICOM region on the areas specified for research. Past studies have popularly used qualitative or quantitative data only to study perspectives, and teachers alone have popularly been the participant group emphasized. Additionally, while empirical studies pointed to TPB factors

(attitudes, norms, and perceived behaviour control) as valuable in predicting inclusive practice, no past research was found to propose a link between any of the independent determinants of behaviour with supports for inclusive practice.

Delimitations

Arising from the researcher's conscious decision to set boundaries for the work so that the study remained manageable, this research focused solely on the perceptions of three groups of educators: education directors, principals, and classroom teachers. All of these individuals are from general education primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, although the researcher recognizes that there might be other factors that impact the educators' ability to enact inclusive practice, such as attitudes and norms as discussed in the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the researcher chose to focus this study only on educators' perceived behaviour control.

Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Next, definitions of a few of the key terms referred to in this study are presented:

- **Inclusive education** – a philosophy of education that includes diversification to such a degree that it can meet the distinct educational needs of each student. In the fullness of this approach, students who are at risk or those who are diagnosed with disabilities obtain all their instruction in the regular school setting and, where required, support services are made available to the student at the school; the learner does not go to the support service (Bergsma, 2000)
- **Inclusive practice** –actions or behaviours which educators engage in as a means of facilitating the needs of diverse learners in schools; teaching and learning that is based on the philosophy of inclusive education

- **Confident inclusive practice** – educators being certain of their abilities to plan and deliver instruction that will meet the identified needs of all students
- **Educator** - a school administrator or classroom teacher
- **Supports** –facilitating conditions, inclusive of resources and services; the provisions that are made available that eliminate the mismatch between personal competency and environmental demands (Thompson et al., 2009)
- **Educator supports** – provisions or facilitating conditions that influence the ease or difficulty of educators being able to practice inclusive education
- **Education Director** – a type of school administrator; the person who manages the affairs of a cluster of schools in a Caribbean territory and to whom principals and teachers report; this person may also serve a double role as a school principal but is charged with responsibility for facilitating the needs of those in the school environment, inspiring the development of suitable programmes for teaching and learning, and securing and managing personnel and material for the implementation of teaching and learning
- **Principal** – a type of school administrator; the leader of a school
- **Classroom teacher** – an individual in the general education setting who plans and implements instruction for diverse learners
- **Accessible supports** – provisions or facilitating conditions that are within reach for use by educators
- **Desired supports** - those provisions or facilitating conditions that educators want

- **Necessary supports** –facilitating conditions that educators have identified as important for them to be able to practice inclusion

Summary

This chapter served to provide background information for the research completed. It began by giving the context of inclusive practice and established that educators are the ones who are mainly responsible for meeting the needs of diverse learners in schools. The issue related to the lack of supports for educators for their inclusive practice was highlighted, and contextual information was given related to how this issue exists internationally and in the CARICOM region. Further, the chapter specified the research gap and identified the study's research questions, purpose, objectives, conceptual framework, justification, delimitations, and definition of terms.

Research Outline

Following the Introduction presented in Chapter 1, the sections that remain of the thesis document are organized in consecutive chapters. Ensuing in Chapter 2, a review of relevant past research connected to the area of inquiry is presented. Here, an instructional and analytical overview of the significant literature published on the study's key variables is presented, and a place where a new contribution could be made is identified. Chapter 3 gives insight into the overall technique utilized for the research. This consists of the design followed for the collection of data, an explanation of how a sample was selected, the techniques applied during data collection, how the data were analyzed, and limitations of the inquiry. In Chapter 4, the findings and results are shared with respect to each of the study's research questions. Overall, the findings and results are set out with regard to each of the six research questions. In presenting what was found based on the qualitative phase of the study, themes supported by quotations from participant interviews are shared to support the findings. Statistics are offered, along with descriptions, for the presentation of findings

from the phase of the study that was quantitative. Finally, in Chapter 5, the paper concludes with a summary of the complete research being presented, along with the main conclusions which were drawn. The findings are discussed with respect to the literature reviewed and in an attempt to provide a path for future research, recommendations are presented associated with each of the study's findings.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The process for the review of the literature for this thesis began as soon as an area of focus for the study was determined based on the researcher's interest, and the discourse continued throughout the research process. Multiple databases were used to find articles relating to this study, including UWIlInC, FINDit, Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Wiley Online Library, and Education Research Complete (EBSCO). As such, the materials for this research came predominantly from peer-reviewed journal articles and textbooks. Some of the key search terms or combinations of terms used were "inclusive education supports," "resources + inclusion," "education needs," and "facilitating conditions inclusive education." The process of searching the literature was particularly beneficial to confirm if the area of interest to the researcher was one which was needed for research, and as the study was developed and subsequently implemented, ongoing conversation with the scholarly materials helped to avoid redundancy in this study, to direct about possibilities for analyzing the data researched, and to interpret and critically evaluate the outcomes of the study. The review of literature is arranged into sections around various topics or issues related to supports that were identified during the search of past works. During the process of the literature review, consideration was given to inquiries done by researchers related to supports within the field of inclusive educational practice; research which can be used as a framework for this area of inquiry; and works whose methodology were deemed to be valuable for possible replication in this study.

Following these introductory paragraphs, this literature review chapter continues by way of giving an overview of the practice of inclusive education so that information is shared about what kinds of questions researchers have been asking in past research related to the field of interest, and how they have gone about answering them. The next section looks at definitions and examples of types of supports so that an understanding of what is meant by the term supports

will be ascertained in a section titled Conceptualizing Supports for Inclusive Education. Then, Educators' Views on Supports for Inclusive Practice is shared to provide a picture of the context in which supports are needed in schools. Next, Factors that Predict Inclusive Practice by Educators are shared. Following this, Predictors of Supports in Schools and Reasons for Lack of Supports are shared. The chapter culminates with a summary of the main points highlighted in the literature and with an identification of the gap where this current study fits.

The Practice of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education has advanced and has become well-known as a field of educational research, policy, and practice that is both an educational goal and an approach to instructional delivery. It involves being responsive to the diverse needs of learners through enhancing involvement in classrooms and reducing exclusion from regular schools through building capacity to eliminate barriers to access, presence, participation, and achievement (UNESCO, 2017). Causton-Theoharis et al. (2009) highlighted that inclusive practice involves educators being able to bring resources and services to the learner instead of moving the learner to the services. With increasing popularity since 1990, when the terminology became popular, inclusion has been the educational approach of choice for working with individuals with diagnosed disabilities and further SEN in classrooms around the world (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2010).

UNESCO (2017) affirms that countries around the world are at various levels of progress related to inclusive practice. The focus of research in each country appears to be influenced by this. Internationally, the predominant focus of prior research on inclusive education is on success stories and challenges of inclusive education that come mainly out of developed continents such as North America and Europe (Buell et al., 1999; Monsen et al., 2014; Humphrey & Symes, 2013). As submitted by Ferguson (2008), the general assumption is that developed nations have made momentous progress in inclusive education. On the contrary, research published from developing countries in the African and Asian continents, and other parts of the world, together with Latin America and the Caribbean typically focus on their issues with inclusive education (Broderick et

al., 2005; Lavia, 2007; Mortier et al., 2010). This gives the impression that progress with inclusive practices in these regions might be problematic.

There exists a considerable body of literature on the concept of inclusive education, which takes account of a range of aspects. These include discussions on the conceptualization of the philosophy of inclusion and empirical findings on what is being done for students who have been recognized as having SEN who are included in regular schools. Popularly, qualitative and quantitative inquiries attracting increased attention from researchers around the world have focused on the attitudinal climate of teachers towards inclusion (Ahmmed et al., 2012; Hunter-Johnson et al., 2014; Monsen & Frederickson, 2004; Saloviita, 2018; VanWeelden & Whipple, 2014). Additionally, of prevalent interest to researchers are those case studies that reflect best practices for effective inclusion of all learners in general education classrooms (Bezliudnyi, 2019; Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprabhan, 2016; Boyle & Topping, 2012; Chiner & Cardona, 2013; Hazel & Allen, 2013). Researchers have gone about answering the questions they posed using both qualitative and quantitative studies. In qualitative research conducted, popular methods of data collection included combinations of interviews, document review, collection of stories, and field observation. In quantitative studies, surveys have been popularly used to collect data from participants. A number of studies also employed mixed methods.

For example, within the last few years, in doctoral work pursued by Miller (2015), perceptions concerning teaching in inclusive classrooms were studied. The research highlighted that schools and teachers are increasingly being expected to meet the needs of a diverse student population. The research purpose was specified as to collect and analyze data about beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of first-time elementary level educators relating to the provision of instruction for learners with identified disabilities in general education settings. A mixed-method approach was utilized, where a three-part survey included open-ended, close-ended, and 32 Likert-type scale questions. These related to participant demographics, their overall experiences/beliefs/support, and their agreement levels specific to beliefs, preparation levels, attitudes, and familiarity

with inclusion. The participants were former students of a teacher preparation program at a regional university where they studied elementary education in the United States of America (USA). The findings put forward showed that although a high percentage of teachers believe in the philosophy of providing instruction for and including learners with SEN in general education classes, a lot of them lacked the essential familiarity with concepts and skills required to involve students in their classrooms confidently. The outcomes of this study emphasized the need for educators' belief in their ability to be improved and provided a platform for serving to improve the relationship between preparation and the implementation of effective instructional approaches to meet the SEN of diverse learners.

In another empirical study, Amr et al. (2016) utilized 87 general education teachers in Jordan as participants to better understand awareness of and attitudes they experienced toward having to include students with identified SEN. The study examined the barriers that hinder successful inclusions as perceived by teachers. Qualitative data analysis was done after data was collected using an open-ended questionnaire which covered data collection related to their awareness, experiences, attitudes and barriers toward inclusion. The outcomes of the study pointed out that teachers do not have adequate and appropriate awareness about inclusive education due to the insufficient preparation they were in receipt of through their teacher education programs. Teachers also have harmful attitudes toward inclusive practice in their classrooms attributed to a number of barriers. These hurdles encompassed the negative attitudes of the learners and school's employees toward those students with identified SEN, an underprepared school setting, inappropriate curriculum and evaluation components, and insufficient family and societal support. The study determined that unless there is a change to the arrangement of the educational system so that all necessary components to promote inclusive education are accounted for, inclusive practice would continue to be an unrealistic idea.

Both studies summarized above point to barriers related to inclusive practice, which are related to educators' supports. In the ethic march towards

facilitating inclusive practice, evidence of confident practice by educators is found through the removal of barriers (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Cheminais, 2004; Collins, 2012; Pletser, 2016). A common belief purported in the literature is that these barriers are removed when a variety of supports are available, which promote conditions that facilitate confident inclusive practices such as using DI and making use of assistive technologies (Ahmmed et al., 2012; Chiner & Cardona, 2013; Daunarummo, 2010; Monsen et al., 2014; VanWeelden & Whipple, 2014). Since the focus of this thesis is specific to one aspect of inclusive education, which is supports for educators in schools, in this chapter, a foundation for the study is provided with an examination of past publications that are relevant to a deeper understanding of what the literature says in relation to need for supports. Confident inclusive practice has been observed when teachers are sufficiently equipped with supports that allow for successful student outcomes (Agbenyega, 2007; McLeskey et al., 2014). Therefore, this is the definition used in considering this variable in the study.

Conceptualizing Supports for Inclusive Education

The study of supports as an aspect of inclusive education was established through the special education system in relation to provisions made to facilitate schooling for learners with identified SEN. The idea of supports arose from the need to provide accommodations and modifications to typical interactions in the classroom so that all students who were present could participate in learning. Seminal research by Luckasson et al. (1992) for the American Association on Mental Retardation has provided justification, based on the intensity of students' needs, for the systematic application of individualized supports in enhancing functioning for persons with intellectual and other developmental disabilities, and this work has been influential in extending the notion of supports as a basis for meeting individual needs of all students. Studies have demonstrated that supports not only benefit learners but also supports benefit educators in the school setting because they serve as educational resources for use by them (Cohen et al., 2003). In defining what supports means, Thompson et al. (2009, p. 136) further elaborated on the work of Luckasson et al. (1992) and established that supports

are the provisions that are made available that remove the disparity between personal competency and environmental demands, and that these inconsistencies are intensified when those supports are not accessible. The construct of ‘supports’ has gone by many names in the literature. Alternative nomenclature such as resources, services, provisions and accommodations have been used to indicate supports as well.

Artiles and Kozleski (2016) pointed out that from about the year 2005, researchers began shifting attention from how to provide supports for individual students only, to a more holistic approach involving how to organize schools so that teachers and school leaders are able to avail themselves of a variety of services and resources to benefit all students. In light of these more recent studies that have been maintaining the attention of researchers, it is reasoned that resources and services availability constitute supports today. A shift in emphasis related to supports provision in special education settings to supports provision in inclusive settings has taken root. It is becoming more widespread for developed countries around the world to move away from systems of regular and special education schools that operate in parallel, to an inclusive education system, and supports are still deemed necessary in these inclusive schools for reasons related to quality schooling, needs of learners and teachers, and removing barriers for all (Able et al., 2015; Dempsey et al., 2016; Hardiman et al., 2009; Marks et al., 2014; Mortier et al., 2011).

Supports as a Function of Quality Education

Supports are key components of schools that offer quality education (Luckasson et al., 1992; McLeskey et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2009). As noted earlier, supports are characteristic of effective inclusive practice. The physical settings where supports are most needed during inclusive practice are referred to as schools. At the school, the expectation is that knowledge and skill development would take place so that learners might be prepared to be functional members of society (Kuhn, 2005). In order for formal education in schools to result in quality of life for learners, there must first be quality at school. A number of researchers

agree that it is the responsibility of governments to ensure quality basic formal education for all learners (Miles & Singal, 2010; Tomasevski, 2008). Popular international human rights organization, the United Nations (UN), has also recommended that quality schools should have teachers who are well-trained, physical facilities and learning materials that are adequate, a curriculum that is relevant and dependent on the skills of learners, and an environment that is fit and safe so that learning is encouraged (Biltagy, 2012). Regardless of where the school is located geographically, these elements, which are deemed inputs, have been confirmed to improve outcomes for students (Mortier et al., 2011).

The regular education and special education systems have long been the two parallel delivery modes for schooling. Viewed from a historical standpoint, SEN provision was fashioned as a similar system to regular education so that the acquisition of knowledge and skills might result, but special education was conversely specific to students with recognizable moderate to severe disabilities (Artiles et al., 2006). According to Bergsma (2000), having separate systems afforded an expression of care for learners with identified SEN. In the regular education classroom, where typically developing learners have usually been popular, much less supports have traditionally been utilized in the provision of this care as compared to what is required in the special school classroom. In today's society, where inclusive schools are the schooling philosophy of choice for many governments, as propelled by the UN, understanding the value of supports to quality of schooling offers the opportunity for a change towards empowerment rather than a deficit approach to knowledge and skill acquisition. This is in agreement with the now preferred social model of disability rather than the outmoded medical deficit model (Arnold et al., 2014). In essence, the inclusive setting designates a school where all students receive instruction alongside each other, irrespective of differences, and where they receive appropriate instruction that meets each of the learners' individual needs through the provision of supports (Boyle et al., 2011).

Since inclusive education assumes that both the child and the supports given in the environment are important, in order to best serve the learners in schools, it has been recommended in the literature that appropriate supports must be made available (Maciver et al., 2017). Making sure that appropriate supports are made available in schools for effective inclusive practice suggests that there is a concern for ensuring that achieving excellent outcomes for all students is a priority (McLeskey et al., 2014). While there is consensus in past studies on the need for supports for learners, variation is still reflected in the literature about what supports schools have at their disposal. Furthermore, while it is clear from multiple studies that in the provision of quality schooling, the major role of supports is to help the teacher in adapting and modifying curriculum and environments to guarantee appropriate access for students (Gal et al., 2010; Grima-Farrell, 2015; Loreman, 2007), there has been less emphasis on the degree to which educators are receiving the supports needed.

Supports as a Response to Needs

A prevalent area of study in the field was the role of supports in assisting the classroom teacher in adapting and modifying curriculum and environments to ensure appropriate access for students based on their identified needs (Gal et al., 2010; Grima-Farrell, 2015; Loreman, 2007). Quite a number of studies have explored examples of supports applied in segregated, special education settings, and a profile of needed supports can be agreed upon based on classification of disability (Daniels & Hedegaard, 2011). For example, interactive visual support has been recommended for students with autism so that they may be aided with communication (Dettmer et al., 2000; Hayes et al., 2010), and sign language support has been endorsed for students who are deaf so that they can be able to communicate using a mechanism that builds on their ability to see instead of hear (Clark et al., 2016). Similarly, some studies indicate that provision of supports in the inclusive setting is also needed. Many of the same supports previously identified have been proven to be beneficial in the inclusive setting also but what makes this setting different is that provision for differences is not exclusive to disabilities alone (Able et al., 2015).

McLeskey and Waldron (2007) highlighted the differences that exist among students in classes as the basis for ensuring that supports are provided and that these supports for the individual needs are proactively and reactively available so that educators can work with them as needed. As opposed to the past where learner differences were primarily identified from the viewpoint of disabilities and the need for placement in a special education setting (Artiles et al., 2006; Lavia, 2007; Pedro & Conrad, 2006; Richmond & Smith, 1990), significant change to views about what differences mean for learning has taken place. Feedback from educators on the composition of today's regular schools reveals that learner differences are recognized among students as encompassing a multiplicity of other characteristics that put them at risk for school failure also (not just those with disabilities) and that educators are being called upon to respond to these differences in general education classrooms (Bergsma, 2000). Among students, the range of non-mutually exclusive differences that have been found to be present in the inclusive setting includes typically developing learners, atypical learners without a disability, students who are disabled, a variety of races and ethnicities, students of different gender, students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds, and demonstration of wide-ranging behaviour (Carrington-Blaides & Seunarine-Ramoutar, 2016; McLeskey & Waldron, 2007). This variety of differences beg consideration for making certain that differences become an ordinary part of classroom practice and that each student be given an equitable opportunity to achieve to their fullest potential and not be excluded from participation.

An example that demonstrates just how relevant attending to needs are in present-day regular education classrooms was shared by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD, 2018). It was conveyed that in the USA, from 1989-2010, there was a 90 percent increase in recognition of students with SEN in general education teaching spaces. Needs that adversely affected students' educational performance included speech/language impairment (21%), specific learning disability (35%), autism spectrum disorder (8%), intellectual disability (7%), other health impairments (12%), emotional disorder

(6%), multiple disabilities (2%), developmental delay (6%), orthopedic impairment (1%), and hearing impairment (1%). Interestingly, the smallest percentages of students represented physical and sensory needs that are most visibly associated with disabilities. Not attending to these types of needs would mean that these students are excluded from school.

A variety of authors have recognized that the conceptualization of inclusion is closely related to exclusion and that these two terms are differentiated in relation to student participation (Garrote et al., 2017; Hilt, 2015). Normally, inclusion is done on the basis of diversity, as highlighted above, and schools are viewed as effectively practising inclusive education when teachers are able to minimize difficulties for all students to fully participate in all aspects of teaching and learning that occur at school (Booth, 2018). However, it is instructive to note that diverse students can be in the same setting and be excluded from aspects of school life (Garrote et al., 2017; Messiou, 2017). Therefore, in this context, inclusion and exclusion may not be antonyms (Hilt, 2015). This insight is in support of the provision of supports for students so that exclusion does not occur. Supports provided for students promote desired participation. A closer look at the literature on this gave agreement with the view that there might only be some degree of inclusion occurring in various general education schools due to the availability of supports. When supports are lacking, students are inevitably excluded.

A variety of terms are associated with the word ‘supports’ in the literature specific to inclusive education and meeting identified needs. For example, in studies conducted within the last decade or so, popular reference is made to a ‘multi-tiered system of supports’ (Prasse et al., 2012), ‘school-wide positive behaviour supports’ (Walker et al., 2018), ‘peer supports’ (Carter et al., 2007), ‘visual supports’ (Foster-Cohen & Mirfin-Veitch, 2017), ‘specialized supports’ (Connors Edge et al., 2018), ‘teacher supports’ (Able et al., 2015; Giangreco, 2013; Horne et al., 2008), and ‘student supports’ (Able et al., 2015). Consistently, at the school level, the term ‘supports’ has been used to refer to the provisions made to address identified needs of either the student or educator working with

the student at school. It has been observed that these provisions are the facilitating conditions for inclusive practice based on the needs of both these groups (Florian, 2005), but the literature is replete with much more studies that emphasize how students' needs can be facilitated as compared to any other stakeholder involved in the inclusive education setting.

Explained further, the varied needs of students in each general education school environment translates to educators also requiring supports to practice inclusion since they are the ones who have to devise ways to respond appropriately to the students' needs. This has been previously researched only to a very limited extent in the literature. Hilt (2015) argued that encouraging inclusion indirectly affirms that the responsibility for making it happen belongs with educators. Other arguments also exist which do not relieve educators from this responsibility but place them alongside government and other stakeholders in education. To realize expectations, experts have been advocating for governments to invest in their educator workforce (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012), which includes developing school leaders and teachers' skillset, but also their capacity to implement reforms. The capacity for inclusion by schools and implementing agencies is determined by their staff on the one hand and by their organizational setting on the other.

Daniels and Hedegaard (2011) considered rethinking support for children and schools, and reinforced the notion of educators being directed in what takes place in schools by adopting a learner-centred approach that considers multiple methods and the child's development. This is in line with the acclaimed theoretical perspective in education which is purported by Vygotsky and which seeks to guide instruction towards attending to the student's specific needs. Dixon and Verenikina (2007) asserted that educators would need to know how to provide tools and symbolic systems that will compensate for gaps in the students' normal developmental path. Thus, these researchers' work also agrees with Daniels and Hedegaard's suggestion that to engage in a learner-centred approach effectively, teachers will need to be supported by policy and provision, so that they have

access to strategies for instruction, the ability to collaborate, and could differentiate instruction.

Another important consideration for the inclusive setting is that the supports that are required will vary in type and intensity based on needs. This is not uncommon as the real-world state of how inclusive education is enacted in numerous countries differs extensively among and within school settings. Specifically, in the Caribbean context, there are differences that exist due to localized communities and school conditions that limit generalizability. Moriah (2018) highlighted that there is an escalating number of support needs in schools in the Caribbean. Jules and Williams (2015) chronicled the development of education along with challenges that Caribbean countries have faced and noted that issues of being able to provide equitable access for all students and quality are among those that stood out. Over the years, in excess of fifty educational initiatives were identified as having taken place across the region, and significant leaps related to marginalized groups who then were afforded various education were made. However, in the Caribbean region, the research related to supports in the inclusive setting remains very limited as opposed to the many empirical studies that have been done to address this topic internationally.

Supports as a Barrier Remover

There were quite a few publications which suggested that supports served to remove barriers to inclusive education. For learners, according to Coster et al. (2013), a frequently mentioned barrier to participation in school was the physical design of schools. An example of this is stairways and other physical features, which bound a student's mobility and consequently affects the student's capacity to take part in the full range of school events. Additional barriers included a lack of necessary services such as various forms of therapy, as well as the activities that are not tailor-made to the learners' needs and interests (Brewin et al., 2008; Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009; Hemmingson & Borell, 2002). Amid these, a recurrent theme throughout the literature was that the impact of supports availability influences the degree to which inclusive practice can be done.

Examples of supports that facilitate inclusive practice have been presented as elements of frameworks, guidelines, and processes related to inclusive education. Researchers in the field who have studied the value of supports have agreed that by its very nature, supports encourage success for the inclusive education initiative, and there have been no studies found to contradict the perspective that there is a need for supports in schools that intend to be inclusive (Maciver et al., 2017).

In a dated, yet still relevant, study that investigated the forms of support preferred by teachers to help them in facilitating successful inclusive practice, Myles and Simpson (1992) recognized substantial variances between support services that were actually delivered and those that were preferred/desired. The fact that this mismatch exists indicates that not all that is needed to help students is always available, and this may deter their classroom success. In the study, the researchers found specific examples of supports needed. It was found that 78% of the educators asked for additional specialist consultation with emphasis given to instructional approaches and behaviour management, together with reduced class sizes in which to implement them. Furthermore, 55% of respondents asked for more time for planning in association with the better accessibility of paraprofessionals and some in-service programs. While this study is beneficial to alerting that the supports that are needed are not always available, the examples of supports were not identified as being comprehensively representative of the types of supports necessary for inclusive practice.

The National Council for Special Education (2011) identified an Inclusive Education Framework that includes elements of supports for inclusive education under ten thematic headings. This framework purports that when these elements are present, obstacles are no longer present for inclusive practice to occur. All of these elements represent major categories under which supports will be needed for inclusion to work. Specifically, related to Leadership and Management, the government allocated school resources, along with teacher skill deployment, are some key supports (p. 22). Under Whole-School Development Planning, having a

school plan and equitable and effective deployment of resources, funding and staffing are the identified supports (p. 24). Related to the Whole-School Environment, the supports outlined are accessible facilities, resources, equipment and strategies (p. 26). Further, in the area of Communication, the required support elements are different modes of communication, including verbal and non-verbal, signing, written and visual, along with regular update meetings for staff (p. 28). The supports needed under the theme of Pupil and Staff Well-being are pastoral care for pupils and access to appropriate continuing professional development in special education along with induction and mentoring systems for staff (p. 30). Related to Curriculum Planning for Inclusion, supports take account of differentiation of curricular processes, content, and outcomes (p. 32). Under Individualised Education Planning, whole-school policies and procedures are seen as important supports (p. 34). Additionally, the supports needed under the theme of Teaching and Learning Strategies are mechanisms where the school emboldens teachers to cultivate reflective practices and use diverse teaching methodologies and strategies (p. 36). As part of Classroom Management, protocols and rules, DI is a needed support (p. 38). Finally, related to Support for and Recognition of Learning, identification of student needs through administration and interpretation of a range of assessment materials, including standardized tests is needed (p. 42). The worth of the framework lies in its usage by principals, teachers, and other staff, and schools are encouraged to use the framework to evaluate their existing strengths and areas for improvement and development.

In previous work done by Peters (2007), which focuses on Central America, South America and the Caribbean, similar elements of supports were deemed necessary to removing barriers in an inclusive system. Peters referred to a Framework for Inclusive Education which, instead of the ten themes identified by The National Council for Special Education, consists of four condensed domains, namely inputs, processes, outcomes, and contextual factors. Firstly, inputs include sensitization and awareness training, teacher training, physical and instructional access and funding for resources. These are direct supports needed by educators and learners. Then, processes refer to the workings of what the author described

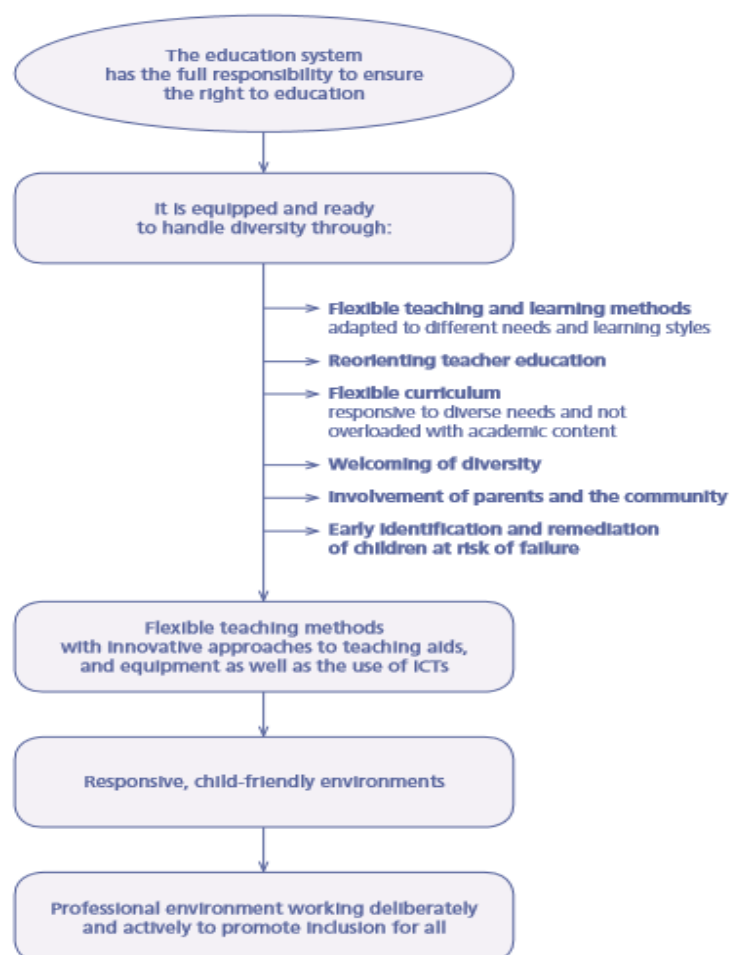
as an ‘integrated whole-school system’ that includes a vision of inclusive education, the participation and collaboration of professionals and communities, and monitoring and evaluation. Here also, the supports are school-specific. Next, outcomes were labelled as illusive or difficult to measure but relate mainly to attainment or successful school completion. This domain does not speak to supports but rather demonstrates what results are envisioned from the provision of supports. Lastly, contextual factors accounted for policy, legislation, cultural and socioeconomic conditions. Unique to this framework, this final domain speaks to whole school system supports, and these may vary based on geographic location and identified needs. Contextual factors were seen as greatly influencing the monitoring and evaluation of inclusive programmes.

Yet another voice on the supports to get rid of hurdles of enacting inclusive practice is the Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (UNESCO, 2009b). It contains guiding principles for establishing the focus on inclusion in each country, introduces the broadened idea of inclusive education and highlights the regions that need specific consideration to fortify inclusive education advancement (p. 7). Figure 2.1 demonstrates the flow of elements required for inclusive practice in schools as purported by the guidelines. Beginning at the top, the education system must honour the child’s right to an education and take responsibility for this. Next, it must be prepared for the children who are diverse through flexible teaching and learning approaches, adjusting teacher education, allowing for a flexible curriculum, demonstrating that diversity is welcomed, encouraging community and family involvement, and making sure that assessment for early intervention and remediation is available. This preparation will then result in the application of flexible teaching methods that incorporate aids, equipment and information and communication technology (ICT). The resulting environment would be a responsive, child-friendly settings, and finally, this is what will be seen as a professional, inclusive education environment. As described by UNESCO, the process represents a shift in viewpoint so that the child and their difference is no longer perceived as the problem, but instead the education system is perceived as the problem (p. 14). The elements described in

the lens include supports for both students and teachers, which collectively facilitate the inclusion process. Specifically, flexible approaches to teaching and learning, making improvements to teacher education, flexible curriculum, welcoming diversity, community and family involvement, assessment for early intervention and remediation, aids, equipment and information and communication technology are all examples of the supports that serve as the foundation for inclusive education.

Figure 2.1.

Education through the Inclusion Lens



Note. Sourced from UNESCO (2009b, p. 15).

Building on UNESCO's conceptualization of how inclusion should occur, Sunardi et al. (2011) completed a descriptive research study to evaluate the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia using a purposive sample of 186 schools. Through data collection that was both quantitative and qualitative, the study revealed findings that were presented as 'Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Schools'. Similar to some of the ideas communicated through prior frameworks and policies, the researchers found that supports were an essential facilitator of inclusion. The supports identified by Sunardi and team were varied and were categorized under headings of school management (which addresses changes in the structure of school organization), students (specific to the assessment for eligibility processes), curriculum (inclusive of changes such as adaptation and modification), instructional accommodations, and evaluation concessions.

Specifically making recommendations in relation to the Caribbean education system, Bergsma (2000) identified the need for a support services delivery model. This means that facilitation of needs would be done at school, and included here would be the pooling of trained personnel and resource teachers to assist non-special education teachers in delivering instruction, assessing and identifying struggling students and planning for their needs. Finances, policy, teacher training and curriculum reform were also included. In consideration of all the suggestions given by past researchers, it is of note to consider that in practice, the literature suggested that all of the aforementioned supports are rarely ever available in any one school setting.

Educators' Views on Supports for Inclusive Practice

There are two dominant groups that have been recognized to interact to make teaching and learning successful in the inclusive school environment. These are learners and educators. Learners are the students in the classroom, and educators are the classroom teachers and other school administrators who are assigned to schools. It has already been asserted that supports are deemed important for both groups in the inclusive settings (Able et al., 2015; Dempsey et al., 2016; Hardiman et al., 2009; Marks et al., 2014). Yet, several studies put forward that

these supports may not be readily available (Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011; Moore, 2005). On the one hand, for learners, Artiles et al. (2006) showed that in undeveloped systems where inclusive education is desired, a misnomer often exists where diverse learners might be in regular education teaching spaces but deprived of the types of supports necessary to benefit from learning experiences. On the other hand, for educators, Able et al. (2015) reported that educators also often felt overwhelmed and helpless regarding their support needs. These findings pointed to a major issue that might be hindering the struggle towards including all students in schools, which is the lack of supports that are required to get desired results (Ajodhia-Andrews & Frankel, 2010; Conrad & Brown, 2011; Maynard & Jules, 2017).

Having already highlighted how supports determine if exclusion or inclusion would occur in schools because of the needs that exist, of further value to the discussion on this in the literature is the assumption that change from an exclusionary to an inclusionary education system requires that attention be given to the facilitating conditions needed by educators who are charged with the responsibility to implement or enact initiatives in schools (Brezicha et al., 2015; Tan, 2017; Thousand & Burchard, 1990). This is in keeping with the understanding that educators are frequently charged with the responsibility to enact initiatives in schools. The literature suggests that much of the concern for inclusive education also has been laid at the feet of educators in schools (Ainscow et al., 2012; Thomson et al., 2012), with an expectation that educators work together and take responsibility for meeting learners' needs, for making educational decisions, and for being held accountable for the progress of all students (Deppeler, 2012). Educators in this context referred to school principals, education directors and general education classroom teachers. This expectation has given rise to the question of whether educators feel that they have what they need to be supported in schools at this point in time so that they might be able to achieve their responsibilities.

Although somewhat marginalized, over the years, both qualitative and quantitative studies about necessary supports for educators have been gaining the attention of researchers. There remains a growing body of literature on how supports are experienced by educators in schools. Based on findings from past research, an important question associated with students receiving the supports they need is whether teachers are being provided with the supports they first need, then to be able to pass on delivery to students. Morningstar et al. (2015) also indicated that the questions to be answered in relation to inclusive practice have moved from where to what and how to deliver instruction to students who have a variety of support needs in general education. In these observations, the practice of educators is emphasized. While the school context must be considered important in evaluating differences that currently exist in relation to educator practice, there have been a large quantity of studies from North America, Europe, Asia, Australia and Africa that share examples of the supports that may be needed, and which supports might be missing. Fewer studies from South America and the Caribbean exist. Yet, a common claim from all these regions is that the perception exists among educators working in schools that not enough skills, material resources, and individual supports are available to them (Artiles et al., 2011).

Findings from Studies with Emphasis on School Administrators

The importance of school administrators as a unique group of educators to inclusive practice was verified by some researchers, although much less attention has been given in research studies to administrators in regard to inclusive education as compared to classroom teachers (Bublitz, 2016; Kern, 2006). From the review of literature specific to empirical research with school administrators (principals and/or education directors) as participants, an understanding of the role of school administrators in respect to inclusive practice was ascertained. Among their key functions, the administrators were called upon to make instructional provisions available and a facilitating school atmosphere for learning to occur (Gathumbi et al., 2015). Since teachers most often take their cues about what is expected of them from their school's administrators, there was consensus

from past studies that administrators are the ones who need to take a proactive stance in creating inclusive environments for practising inclusive education. Yet, concerns have been expressed by administrators that they are limited in their ability to do this. Various viewpoints exist in relation to what limits them.

One prominent view held by administrators is that for inclusive education to become a reality, there must be collaborative efforts meted out as a type of support. A pro-active stance in creating an inclusive environment was viewed as difficult to maintain if others were not willing to help and to do their part. Daunarummo (2010) conducted a mixed-methods study to find out about the necessary supports for effective public high school inclusion classrooms and revealed that school administrators were of the view that, along with teachers' beliefs and attitudes about inclusion, collaboration was a key support. It was found that two main categories of supports identified were essential school personnel (such as a guidance officer, child study team, and special education teacher) and input from technocrats (for specifying the implementation of smaller classroom settings; planning time; policy documents). These were both needed forms of collaboration within the school environment specified by administrators. An example of the impetus for collaboration was revealed in the study by Poon-McBrayer and Wong (2013). The researchers conducted a qualitative study of 10 principals and found that they were of the opinion that any desire to build partnerships and carry out a shared vision for inclusive practice was resultant from their Christian and other faith-based orientations. The study found that valuing and loving every student was central to the principals' desire to seek out collaborations to make their schools inclusive. Participating principals reported that they made use of three main strategies to encourage the development of partnership and a common vision: taking time to build trusting relationships with teachers, communicating the vision clearly, and making middle level leaders feel empowered.

Another view from administrators was that there are barriers in relation to funding and resources available to them for use in the schools where they are responsible for ensuring that there is inclusive education. In a qualitative study

from Australia conducted by Graham and Spandagou (2011), 13 school principals (10 males and three females) participated in semi-structured interviews which were aimed at developing a better understanding of what inclusive education meant to them. This study was useful for its ability to share about the school context, the school's tactic for ensuring inclusive education is practiced, the processes for assessment for identification, barriers to inclusion, principals' perceptions of the success/failure, and the future projections of inclusion. Inductive thematic analysis was done on the data, and the outcomes revealed that principals conceptualized inclusive education at two levels. Firstly, at the macro level, principals viewed the school as needing to "be" inclusive but lamented on the issues that affected their school's ability to do this. These included assessment for diagnosing learners and employing aides to help out class teachers with the kids. This situation was resultant from no funds to hire persons to do these things. Secondly, at the micro-level, the principals viewed inclusion as a response to individuated student support needs. The capacity of a student to be included was perceived in relation to the level of resources allocated to them. Again, the principals expressed that resources available were limited, so this meant that some individual students could not be included.

An additional view expressed in past studies by administrators is that there appears to be supports in place for inclusion based on what governments publicize, but what is exclaimed in theory is rarely materialized. Conrad and Brown (2011) studied the perspectives of principals in Trinidad and Tobago and found that there was the belief that governments sought to appease the concerns of the members of the public who advocate for education for all by making public proclamations. The researchers found that participants viewed this strategy as a way of gaining political mileage, and while they identified that there might be a philosophical readiness for inclusive education, there was consensus that school readiness is lacking. This was further explained to be due to the fact that governments do not give the principals the resources needed for their schools.

Findings from Studies with Emphasis on Classroom Teachers

Anaby et al. (2019), covering a review of the literature which was mainly associated with findings from public primary and secondary schools (93% of participants), found that one of the most commonly identified issues found from studies that address practice for inclusion was support provided for teachers and other staff at the school (55% of the literature). The type of studies typically reviewed by Anaby and team dealt with giving support to educators in the form of mentoring, consultation, coaching, and training. The paper aimed to present data about suggested principles for establishing and providing supports, and to identify what might be considered valuable strategies for carrying out inclusion in schools. It was found that teachers are frequently assessed in terms of their capacity, knowledge, and ability to get improvement in student-related outcomes. Anaby and the other researchers criticized past studies for giving little attention to reasons why teacher-related needs and outcomes may not be sufficiently met.

In one case study example that focused on private schools, Sargeant and Berkner (2015) conducted a study in denominational Seventh-day Adventist schools using a survey and found that among teachers, there were also concerns regarding supports for inclusion. The study took into consideration educators in schools from Bermuda, Canada, and the USA and in these more developed territories, there were still worries about shortages specific to resources, training, and staffing. This was similar to undeveloped territories also. Teachers were alarmed that each year, the quantity of students with special needs in their classes was increasing and that not enough supports were being meted out to address this growing number of students in their classrooms. The study found that teachers have attitudes that are positive towards inclusion resulting from their Christian values, but two issues for executing inclusion in classrooms were identified. The first was the need for policies and resources for use by teachers in the inclusive setting, and the second was giving access to needed training to aid teachers in their success. The researcher cited Tucker (1996), who highlighted that in Christian institutions of learning in the USA, the three popularly noted explanations for not implementing inclusive practice were the accompanying

costs, the conviction that other learners miss valuable class time with their instructor, and the improper teacher training given in preparation programs. Sargeant and Berkner further highlighted that within Seventh-day Adventist schools, there is an urgent need to assess the views and attitudes of educators who work with students with mild disabilities in order to shape effective practices and policies related to inclusion so that the needs of educators, students, and students' families can be addressed.

An empirical study conducted by Hunter-Johnson et al. (2014) is one example of research that has provided evidence here in the Caribbean about supports being desirable in response to the needs that exist in schools. The researchers reported that general education classes usually consist of students with emotional disabilities, physical disabilities, mental disabilities, and learning disabilities. Additionally, it was also found that adequate interventions critical to addressing the individual needs of students were lacking. Using qualitative phenomenological methodology, data were collected using semi-structured interviews and qualitatively analyzed through open-coding for themes. A significant finding of this investigation was that the most widespread influencing factors of the teachers' negative views of inclusive practice related to supports, which the researchers described as insufficient training in special and inclusive education, and lacking the resources required for addressing the child's identified needs. An area that was not addressed in the study was why teachers felt that supports were lacking and what may have contributed to it.

As the findings show from Anaby et al. (2019), Sargeant and Berkner (2015), and Hunter-Johnson et al. (2014), respectively, the views expressed by teachers about their ability to practice inclusion included supports and these views can be considered essential to understanding how educators work in schools. Florian and Spratt (2013) asserted that any teacher who is dedicated to inclusive pedagogy needs to agree to take main responsibility for the learning of each and every child in the class (Jordan et al., 2009). In countries around the world, this desire on the part of teachers was evident from multiple past studies, but it was

also apparent that teachers had common perspectives on their knowledge about theoretical, policy and legislative issues, their ability to turn what they know into action, and their beliefs in their ability to successfully address the needs of all children (Donohue & Bornmam, 2014; Florian & Rouse, 2009). Similar findings as communicated from studies with administrators were shared from studies with teachers also. Issues related to policy, funding and collaboration were common supports that were articulated as being needed more.

Yet another study that highlighted the aforementioned issues was conducted by Carter et al. (2007). In a qualitative phenomenological study with 12 participants, the researchers shared that teachers were of the view that there was the absence of clear strategy for serving students, lack of training for them to know how to adapt instruction for students with disabilities, inadequate time for collaboration, the absence of funds for purchasing teaching materials, and a lack of opportunities to ascertain knowledge to adequately provide meaningful accommodations for learners in their classrooms. In this particular study, the CRIME Model for developing classroom supports was advocated for as it was believed to include critical supports elements for teachers of inclusive classrooms. The acronym CRIME stands for curriculum, rules, instruction, materials, and environment. Carter and others highlighted recommendations for addressing the support issues faced by teachers. Among them were regularly scheduled meetings for planning and collaboration, built-in accountability, and flexibility in teaching and learning activities.

It was apparent from the literature that although there is consensus for inclusive practice, the ongoing issues that teachers have identified over the years might mean that although teachers have popularly been in agreement with inclusive education, some have been opposed to the idea citing reasons that are external to the learners and consistent with their support needs (Able et al., 2015; Florian & Rouse, 2009). In keeping with previous findings highlighted before, one study carried out by Major et al. (2012), for which one of the aims of the research was to find out about challenges teachers faced in teaching learners with

SEN, found that some of the most prevalent issues for teachers practising inclusion are a shortage of resources (47%), trailed by a lack of familiarity with strategies and skills (41%). Past researchers have indicated that teachers were not sufficiently prepared and supported to do their job in inclusive ways for the positive practice of inclusive education. These results also correspond to other research in this area that have asserted that for many teachers, the challenges they face in schools are external to the child (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013). Given that these challenges have persisted over the years, they alert to negative outcomes that are possible for teachers in terms of their practice of inclusion. For example, Kaufhold et al. (2006) indicated that a cause related to the burnout and amount of attrition in the field of teaching was a lack of school supplies, teaching materials and resources.

Psychological Support

One main category of supports identified by teachers, which was different from what was found from studies with administrators, was the need for psychological support. DeAngelis (2012) explained that this refers to opportunities for social and emotional motivation from mentors and other colleagues during which teachers receive guidance in their classroom practice. A study which was conducted by Zinsser et al. (2016) established that teachers' abilities to engage in inclusive teaching practices are dependent in part on their own well-being, including their social and emotional competencies. Sources of psychological support have been found to come mainly from initiatives targeting professional development skill training and care that are run exclusively in some schools.

Pedagogical Support

Another key support identified by teachers was the need for pedagogical support. This refers to the resources and services that allow teaching and learning to be facilitated and was an area in the literature for which the varying types of support was quite extensive. In a study by Kilanowski-Press et al. (2010), examples of pedagogical supports were specified. The researchers used a

quantitative survey on a large sample of teachers and found that the primary supports of inclusive practice, which were determined as necessary, incorporated the use of volunteers, which allowed teachers to have the facility to be able to have students work in small groups, for teachers to be able to employ co-teaching, be able to provide one-to-one student assistance and have time for lesson planning. Further, a study by Major et al. (2012) also found that diagnostic assessment of learners is a type of pedagogical support that enables teachers to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses; plan appropriate lesson objectives and activities; select didactic tools for use in implementing learning activities; and monitor and report on the progress of the learners. Another example of pedagogical support, as shared by Horne et al. (2008), is a reduction in class size or a change in pupil-teacher ratio.

Organizational Support

Additionally, an important support identified by teachers was organizational support. This type of support included whole school resources and services. Moore (2005) highlighted that there was a need for more comprehensive organizational supports such as staff development, peer tutoring, behaviour intervention, time out spaces, Saturday sessions, mental health facilities, peer mediation, after-school programs, medication, providing paraprofessional staff, flexibility in how students are evaluated, parental care, decreased class size, allowing for duty-free planning time, assistive technology, teacher preservation initiatives, financial resources, establishment of special curricula, and summer school-extended school year. Further organizational supports also identified through other research include the need for technological solutions (software applications), architectural and infrastructural changes (physical classroom environment), and social facilitators (disability awareness education for both students and educational staff) (Donohue & Bornmam, 2014; Pivik et al., 2002; Shah et al., 2016; Werts et al., 1996; Zinsser et al., 2016). Some of these organizational supports identified do overlap with psychological and pedagogical supports, but this was because the school (i.e., the organization) holds primary responsibility for providing teacher-related support.

Training and Feedback Support

The literature suggested that attention should be given to how these identified support needs can be improved. Recent research, such as a study by Coleman et al. (2019), has recognized that it is crucial to provide teachers with training with an eye toward implementation fidelity. This can be done through increasing teacher buy-in, frequent coaching during initial phases of inclusive practice which is then later tapered off, and performance feedback. Even older studies, such as the quantitative study by Werts et al. (1996) which explored the need for and availability of supports found that improvements are needed in the areas of material assets, training, and support personnel. These studies are just a few that give insight into the discrepancy between the need for and availability of supports that should be addressed.

Factors that Predict Confident Inclusive Practice by Educators

A recurrent theme in the literature was that when educators respond in ways to meet the needs of all learners by removing barriers for all to participate and learn, this represents inclusive practice. One of the areas related to inclusive education that has been identified in the literature as requiring further investigation through research is answering the perennial question of how effectively inclusive practice is being realized (Danforth, 2016; Srivastava et al., 2015; Wapling, 2016). There is also the assertion that facilitators and barriers to inclusive practice have become a key focus in inclusive education inquiry for the past few decades, yet due to outstanding or sometimes nuanced differences in schools and territories, there remains more to be understood about what educators are facing and why (Muccio et al., 2014). Inclusive practice can be understood as a product of multiple values and processes such as the ones noted earlier in this review (Bergsma, 2000; National Council for Special Education, 2011; Peters, 2004; Sunardi et al., 2011; UNESCO, 2009b). When elements of any of these from a particular framework or process are at conflict, educators cannot remove barriers for all to participate and learn and are left incapable of meeting learners' needs. Accordingly, it was determined from the literature that the behaviour of educators in schools is guided

by the provisions of resources and services that are evident and which directly affect them in their daily work.

An example of a study that investigated how effectively inclusive practice is being realized, and which was specific to facilitators and barriers to inclusion, is the one conducted by Muccio et al. (2014). The researchers planned and conducted a mixed-methods study that included a survey of 71 participants and observation of nine classrooms so that a better understanding might be developed in relation to educator viewpoints about their own inclusive practice. The study found six main factors, the presence of which can be positive or lack thereof negative, and which can function as either facilitators or barriers to the successful practice of inclusion. These are (1) attitudes toward; (2) family involvement; (3) the environment, resources, and personnel in classrooms; (4) opportunities for professional development; (5) the teacher's knowledge, skills, and practice; and (6) the quality of the inclusive classroom. Four out of the six factors found in this study are representative of the types of supports identified to be able to meet the needs of all learners by removing barriers for all to participate and learn, as highlighted earlier in the review. Additionally, these findings by Muccio and others were in line with what researchers within the last decade have found from other studies also (Boyle & Hernandez, 2016). Attitudes toward inclusion was one of three of the most frequently reported factors that predict inclusive practice by educators from the literature. The other two popularly reported factors were social pressure and confidence in professional training. These three factors will be further elaborated upon in the following subsections.

Positive Attitude towards Inclusive Education

The first popularly reported factor which predicts inclusive practice is attitude. Armitage and Christian (2003) discussed attitude as a mental state of willingness, built from experience and exercising an influence on the person's reaction to all items and circumstances to which it is linked. Simply put, attitude is a mental state or inclination to behave in a particular way due to one's experience and temperament. Attitude development is an outcome of learning,

modelling other people, and our direct involvements with individuals and circumstances. An educator's attitude towards a behaviour such as inclusive practice and their interest to become willing partners are considered precarious success factors (Avidov-Ungar & Eshet-Alkalai, 2011).

In a foundational study by Wilczenski (1992), the varying attitudes of educators were attributed to the notion of functional issues. This referred to what students, and by extension educators, require in order to function in an inclusive class. Wilczenski affirmed that an assessment of attitudes as a variable in studies concerning the efficacy of inclusive education is warranted since there is a relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Four facets of functional issues were theorized as impacting on attitudes toward inclusive education: physical, academic, social, and behavioural accommodations. From this work, a survey called the Attitudes toward Inclusive Education Scale (ATIES) was developed to measure attitudes. It was scaled and further validated through Rasch analysis in a later study by Wilczenski (1995). Four items were included for each of the four facets of functional issues, and the scale consists of 16-statements which are scored using a Likert scale that gives the raw scores for each item. The researcher confirmed that the overall unidimensional variable of attitude of an individual based on their personal rating could be gaged relative to the possible score range of 16 (most favourable) to 96 (least favourable). Subsequent studies such as the one conducted by Moore (2005) have used the work of Wilczenski together with additional items which focus on demographic information and perceptions of support in an attempt to further understand the relationship between attitudes and supports.

While research suggested that there are generally positive attitudes held by educators towards students with diverse needs in schools, there was also notable variation in the literature regarding the attitude of educators in relation to inclusive practice (Ahmmed et al., 2012; Blackman et al., 2012; Conrad & Brown, 2011; Hunter-Johnson et al., 2014; Monsen & Frederickson, 2004; Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013; Sargeant & Berkner, 2015; VanWeelden & Whipple, 2014; Vermeulen et al., 2012). For example, in the region where this current study

was being considered, Blackman et al. (2012) found significant variances in teacher attitudes between participant teachers in Barbados and their counterparts in Trinidad, and the researchers encouraged future researchers to attempt to understand the underlying factors which influence the attitudes of Caribbean teachers concerning the inclusion of learners with SEN in mainstream settings. Keeping this in mind, the question considered during this literature review was: Why does variation exist regarding the attitude of educators in relation to inclusive practice?

It was observed that multiple researchers have focused on this area of study, and findings have pointed to a number of reasons, including the demographic background of educators, their experience with learners who had special needs and the availability of supports. For example, an examination by Chiner and Cardona (2013) of the perception of general education teachers about inclusion in primary and secondary schools in Spain confirmed that differences exist among educators, contingent on length of experience teaching, pedagogical skills, and the accessibility of resources. Similarly, in a quantitative study of 378 teachers in Bangladesh using a survey with a Likert scale, it was found that beliefs about the presence of support in schools for inclusive practices and a variety of demographic variables (for example prior success in teaching pupils with disabilities and interaction with a student with a disability) were linked with greater levels of positive attitudes of the teachers concerning inclusive education. The combined conclusions of sources, Chiner and Cardona (2013) and Ahmmed et al. (2012), seem to indicate that educators' perception of the provisions of resources and services at their disposal influenced their attitudes.

While this is not a comprehensive list, specific types of supports from several international studies which influence attitudes about inclusive practice include: training; collaboration; administrative backing; time; guidance officer; child study team; special education teacher; smaller classroom settings; planning time; legal documents; volunteers; technological solutions related to software needs; architectural changes to doors, elevators, washrooms and ramps; policy; staff development opportunities; peer tutoring; behavior intervention programs;

time out rooms; mental health facilities; peer mediation; after-school activities; medication; providing paraprofessional staff; flexibility in how students are evaluated; parental care; decreased class size; assistive technology; financial resources; special curricula; and an extended school year (Daunarummo, 2010; Donohue & Bornmam, 2014; Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010; Moore, 2005; Pivik et al., 2002; Rombo, 2006; Ryan & Gottfried, 2017; Shah et al., 2016; Werts et al., 1996).

Within the last decade, the following are some assertions that were made in the literature which point to a positive relationship between attitudes and supports. Ahmmed et al. (2012) conceptualized that supports enhanced positive attitude of educators for inclusive teaching practices. Chiner and Cardona (2013) found that educators perceived that they did not have enough skills, tangible resources, and assistance for their addressing their individual concerns to be able to practice inclusion in a responsible and meaningful way. Monsen et al. (2014) advanced that positive attitudes towards inclusion increased according to the degree of support that educators perceived that they were in receipt of. All these assertions fit together in helping to develop a picture of the value of educator perception, its influence on their attitude and might suggest one reason why inclusive practice may be lacking in schools among educators.

Social Pressure to Carry out Inclusive Education

The second popularly reported factor which predicts inclusive practice by educators is social pressure. Considering this factor from the viewpoint of Gardner (2012) and specific to the work of educators, pressure can be understood to refer to the belief that there is an imposition of increased significance and demand to respond in ways to meet the needs of all learners by removing barriers for all to participate and learn. Consistent with this understanding, Ye et al. (2019) noted that pressure reflects a frame of mind or belief that the present performance is not enough for achieving the sought after goal. The goal of inclusive practice in schools is both about appropriate instruction that meets each of the learner's individual needs (Boyle et al., 2011) and achieving excellent outcomes for all students (McLeskey et al., 2014). This calls for balance in relation to what

educators feel pressured to do and achieve in their day to day practice. In view of this, some scholars suggest that educators are facing mounting pressure to meet curriculum targets, and as such, the needs of learners are not prioritized in comparison to examination results attainment (Burton & Goodman, 2011). On the other hand, researchers also found that better outcomes in terms of examination results attainment were as a result of meeting learner needs (Kim, 2013).

There is the assumption that differences in the extent of social pressure to carry out inclusive education might be school or territory-specific based on the value that the school system administrators and the society place on inclusive education. Even with this in mind, it might be important to consider what evidence confirms the presence of social pressure for inclusive practice. The literature suggested that, noticeably, specified policies foster the belief that there is pressure for inclusive practice (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016; Barton, 2003; Kim, 2013). This evidence is also an example of supports for inclusive practice. Yet, the challenge identified in respect to this can be summarized as follows: when there are no policies, when there is no accountability in relation to holding up policies, when inputs specified in policies are not available, then the desired practice of inclusive education will not result.

Studies that reflect the current state of social pressure to carry out inclusive education continue to gain the attention of researchers. In one example, Pletser (2016) made use of a qualitative study intended to identify the climate and circumstances existing in the school for the removal of barriers to education for three learners who needed different intensities of learning support. By means of interviews conducted with the senior team of leaders, the students, their families and educators, along with observations conducted in classrooms, one of the study's findings was that there is an absence of policy frameworks to provide direction for schools, so the resulting practice is weak. The finding of that study was not very different from what was revealed by Engelbrecht et al. (2016) in a qualitative two-phase study of teachers, principals and parents that involved

observations, semi-structured one-on-one and focus group discussions, and analysis of documents for data collection. The results of the study by Engelbrecht and team showed that there is discord between what is contained in policies and what is practised, that there is a funding limitation within the school system, and that the personal interpretations about what the policy says influence inclusive practice. All of these findings further highlight that the required supports are lacking. Consequently, where evidence of pressure is limited by lack of supports, inclusive practice is steamrolled (Barton, 2013).

An example of a recent study that explains how best policy might be developed through educator input is the one conducted by Tlale and Romm (2018). The researchers shared findings from a longitudinal qualitative study involving participants from five provinces on how inclusive education might be facilitated in South Africa. The key idea from the article was that promoting systemic thinking with a vision to transform through the recognition of peoples' collective agency is important. The article provided a reflection on interactions with teachers, the management team, participants from the school's governing body, and an area officer as part of a research venture called the "The 500 Schools Project". These authors reasoned that when policy ideas shared were not seen as an imposition due to relationships being formed between technocrats and school-based educators in practice, then there is better collaboration for exclusion of students to be reduced. Based on the article, including all students in schools must be looked at from a social, societal, systemic viewpoint to consider ways of integrating inclusivity. Tlale and Romm emphasized that due to the disadvantaged backgrounds of children, a policy must encourage the curriculum to be flexible to suit the particular needs of the child. Further, the study recognized the value of the establishment of a School-Based Support Team (SBST) as a workable team that can brainstorm ideas and develop support initiatives for all students, organize and deliver training for educators, and if there are difficulties beyond its control then it could facilitate help from the MOE's district officer. The findings of the article indicated that when educators working in schools, along with interested others, come together to brainstorm ideas relating to improving their practice, they

benefit from this demonstration of attention and support for teachers and students. The information shared is valuable for its emphasis on a solutions-oriented approach to making changes to the school so as to include all children. One limitation of the article for systemic thinking and practice is that the authors have not taken into account unwillingness on the part of schools to be part of the process towards policy development for whole school change. Additionally, while the article did attempt to highlight the value of engagement and empowerment of those working in schools to bring about needed change, there was no discussion of why those changes may not be possible.

Confidence in Professional Training and Personal Skill

The third popularly reported factor which predicts inclusive practice by educators is confidence in professional training and personal skill. Other terms for this factor in the literature were self-efficacy and perceived behaviour control. This factor denoted the educator's belief about their ability to practice inclusion. When the construct of confidence was examined in the literature, consideration was given to what might influence educators' beliefs related to confidence. Again, various types of supports became evident. Student teachers who served as participants in the study highlighted the value of their education, and the results from a structural equation model developed by the researchers, Hamaan et al. (2013), indicated that efficacy is predicted both by a focus on using appropriate strategies for inclusive instruction and by collaboration with the cooperating teacher. In another study by Sharma and Nuttal (2016), education and training were also affirmed as supports which serve as key influences on whether an educator will feel confident enough to implement inclusion successfully.

In a study by Betoret (2009), it was emphasized that confidence in professional training could also be seen in a reduction in stress for the educator and that it is related to a type of support that Betoret operationalized as coping resources in the study. Coping resources referred to physical, psychological, social, or material resources, internal or external to educators, which aided the educators in overcoming their lack of confidence and achieving value outcomes

with students. The practical implications of the study were that provisions should be made for educators so that there might be more school supplies, didactic materials and competent personnel for supporting students such as psychologists, therapists, and specialist teachers. Of extreme importance also in this study was training for educators both at the personal and organizational levels to be able to increase their classroom management and pedagogical skills.

While the availability of education and training alone is high on the list of supports that influence the confidence of educators for their practice of inclusion, these alone may not be enough. Specifically, the quality of these is also important. Typically, teachers are taught to utilize DI or employ principles of universal design for learning (UDL), but research suggests that teachers may not be confident in exactly how to use these strategies (Stegemann, 2016). Research further indicated that although some educators have skills in working with diverse learner needs, many still felt that they had not been prepared well or felt as though they were not ready to manage the challenges of inclusive classrooms (Edmunds et al., 2010). Additionally, researchers have found that some educators were also of the view that prior to and while teaching in inclusion classes, they were not provided formal or informal learning opportunities to acquire strategies or otherwise continue to remain prepared for practice (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). All of these findings from the literature suggested that considerations of ongoing supports might be of value to establishing and maintaining educators' confidence for inclusive practice.

There were multiple examples of how the confidence of educators for inclusive practice has been measured in the literature. None of these has been specific to the Caribbean region, though. For example, Sharma et al. (2012) developed an instrument to quantify perceived teacher efficacy for working in inclusive settings. The survey was established using the procedure recommended by DeVellis (2003) and most recently supported by Morgado et al. (2018). This procedure for developing a survey's scale follows certain steps. Firstly, item generation was done, and it was based on findings from the literature. Secondly,

content validation was done using the Delphi approach (Shariff, 2015), where six professionals in the field were recruited to assess the scale as a useable measure, and then agreement amongst experts regarding the relevance of each item to quantify a construct was analyzed. The professionals in the field were requested to remark on the utility of each survey item which was created for evaluating teacher efficacy in executing inclusive practices through the use of a scale ranging from 1 to 5 (smallest to greatest agreement with the usefulness of question). They were furthermore asked to provide feedback on how clear each item and instructions were. A pilot test of the instrument using a small sample of participants was done in this stage. The scale's trustworthiness was determined via Cronbach's alpha value of internal consistency. The identification of those items that were very inter-correlated (0.80 or more) was done through calculating inter-correlations. A choice was correspondingly made to remove items that had a corrected item-scale association of below 0.30. Thirdly, the use of exploratory factor analysis on the initial 26 items was done to establish the factor structure of the survey. This was decided upon after initial tests were done, such as the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) value used for sampling sufficiency (compared against the recommended value of 0.60) and Barlett's sphericity test (to indicate if the data could be factor analyzed). Cronbach's alpha values were calculated to decide on the trustworthiness of the factors. After removing items that were not appropriate, the final version of the survey consisted of 18 items that were randomized to offer an interspersing of the three factors identified.

Predictors of Supports in Schools

No research was found where predictors of supports in schools were studied exclusively, but a general observation from the studies that addressed educator attitudes for inclusion, social pressure to carry out inclusion and confidence in professional training was that these three factors were likely to be highly positive and predictive of inclusive practice when supports in schools were offered. As this was realized during the review of the literature, attention was then turned to scenarios when more or fewer supports were reported to be available in schools. As more and more of the literature was reviewed, it became evident that

there might be four main factors that predict the increased availability of supports in schools. These are diagnosed special needs, effective school leadership, collaborative networks, and access to funding.

Diagnosed Special Needs

Official or formal identification of students with special needs is one factor that escalates the likelihood that increased supports might be available in schools. The purpose of identification is meant to be for follow up action in teaching and learning at school (Lindsay, 2018). As the study by Major et al. (2012) highlighted, diagnostic assessment and identification of learners with special needs are pedagogical supports that enable teachers to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses. These also allow them to plan appropriate lessons objectives and activities, select didactic tools for use in implementing learning activities, and monitor and report on the progress of the learners. While it is difficult to accurately report prevalence rates (Stegemann, 2016), there continue to be higher percentages of students who are perceived to be developing normally as opposed to students who have been diagnosed as having disabilities and other SEN in schools, even though an upsurge in diagnosis has been identified internationally (Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011).

Additionally, growing signs of dissatisfaction regarding the untrustworthiness of SEN diagnostic classifications have been reported (McLaughlin et al., 2015). This might account for some degree of hesitation as it relates to referral and identification. Additionally, the uniqueness of context with each country's own particular mix of influences that contribute toward the assessment and identification of learners with special needs has resulted in the continued contention that exists by researchers regarding current data about the population of students in inclusive settings. For example, in some countries, diagnosticians are not available, while in others, no referrals are made as a result of either the direct or indirect service delivery model that exists there (Conoley & Gutkin, 2017). These then result in a lack of evidence of special needs. In classroom practise, many teachers often suspect that students have learning

disabilities, emotional and behavioural challenges, yet once formal records do not capture diagnosed needs, the picture that is painted in the eyes of school administration and school system officials often is that special needs do not exist (Lindsay, 2018).

The study conducted by Wolery et al. (1995) supports the notion that more awareness of diagnosed students results in more supports for inclusion. Reporting on teachers' views, the researchers found that teachers reported higher levels of supports in schools when there were students with diagnosed needs, although it was significant that both special and general education teachers reported similar supports as being beneficial for both diagnosed and undiagnosed students. Able et al. (2015) found that teachers wanted to know more about the specific type of special need that they will be facing in the classroom. Teachers often felt conflicted regarding when and how to give emphasis to students' social and academic requirements within the inclusive setting, and heightened awareness of the diagnoses that exist in classrooms could aid in better instruction being meted out to students from teachers. In a study that reported on students' views, similar findings were revealed as Ochs et al. (2001) found that elementary school students reported that when they fully disclosed their diagnosis to their peer group, they received more social support from peers.

The effects of increased numbers of diagnosed students with SEN have been positive as well as negative. Viewed positively, some studies suggested that increased diagnosis impacted policy and funding. The availability of these supports further strengthened inclusive practice (McRae, 1996). Viewed negatively, some studies such as the ones conducted by Able et al. (2015) and Graham and Jahnukainen (2011) indicated that increased numbers of diagnosed students contributed to a rise in the classification of students and, in some cases, ostracism of learners. Further, the quantity of students labelled as disabled is also believed by some to impact on the achievement of non-special education learners due to the configuration of classes, the attention given by teachers, and resource availability.

Effective School Leadership

The supports that are needed for inclusive practice might also be influenced by the administration or leadership of the school, typically the school principal and/or education director. Identifying characteristics of effective school leaders was popular in the literature, and many of these characteristics highlighted how schools with effective leaders were able to get supports for their schools. There is presently a sizeable body of research showing that effective school leaders advocate for collaboration and funding, uphold policies to achieve inclusive practice, and organize school level supports for inclusion (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). Earlier in this review, it was shared that among their key functions, school leaders are called upon to make instructional materials accessible and a school environment that facilitates learning (Gathumbi et al., 2015). They are the ones responsible for leading inclusive thinking and motivating others to get on board. Summarized succinctly, Riehl (2000) determined that school leaders must attend to three general types of tasks in the inclusive setting: encouraging people to think of diversity in new ways, ensuring that the school is equipped to facilitate inclusive practices, and building links between schools and their communities.

Furthermore, when school leaders are clear on what they are about when they put mechanisms in place to support students and teachers, and when they endeavour to find solutions in collaboration with other participants to the problems that present in the inclusive setting, this appears to predict the availability of supports (Kavkler et al., 2015). The study by Carter et al. (2009) alerted readers to the fact that the absence of a clear strategy for serving students at the school was not a good sign of leadership. Zinsser et al. (2016) also found that leaders who ensured that their classroom-based educators had the capacity to engage in best practices and had the requisite social and emotional competencies were deemed to be effective leaders. Tlale and Romm (2018) also reasoned that effective school leaders are viewed as those who shared policy ideas with their staff so that it was not seen as an imposition. Alternatively, when school leaders remain intransigent about curriculum expectations for their heterogeneous group

of learners, class schedules, teacher planning time, and resource allocation, these hinder the practice of inclusion in schools.

Clifford et al. (2012) indicated that even though the work responsibilities of school leaders vary, the conditions observed at their schools offer useful feedback on if they are effective leaders or not since they directly influence school conditions. They often control school-level resources, which influence the climate of the school for inclusive practice. Based on school leaders' management practices, they can decide on what human, monetary, material and social assets are brought into their schools and in what way those assets are allocated (Leithwood et al., 2004). Sebastian et al. (2016) found that there are several diverse approaches that administrators might take to realize identified goals for school enhancement and fostering shared leadership. Preston and Barnes (2017) reported on an investigation of administrators of three secondary schools in high-poverty communities and found that effective instructional leadership practices can be realized through formal and informal partnerships with entities outside the school, with the intention of positively affecting student achievement.

In a sequence of case studies about administrative styles, Anderson et al. (2012) contrasted traditional methods of shared control (where leaders formulate programs and allocate duties to other individuals) to a method that promotes collaboration amongst staff (by way of the administrator connecting teachers, trainers, and families). Anderson's work proposed that the collaborative style was more effective for generating transformation in practice. The research works described by Anderson et al. compared leadership initiatives directed towards curriculum and instruction, however these initiatives were also applied to the desired climate of the school. For instance, an administrator who takes on a customary style to address school safety may choose to allocate particular employees to manage school discipline (counsellors, a dean, security officers, behaviour specialists), or may decide to work personally on clarifying discipline procedures, so that more reliability in enforcement occurs. In both scenarios, employees would be receivers of the school's methods for discipline. They might

compliment or complain about the method but would ultimately look at school safety as an issue that is managed by the administrator. In contrast, a leader who takes a collaborative style might bring all employees together to brainstorm strategies for dealing with student behaviour, connect employees to specialists in the area of school safety, and monitor the outcomes through progress monitoring data. In this situation, the employees exert a considerable influence on the plan and its execution as opposed to being dependent on the administrator alone.

Collaborative Networks

Collaborative networks were also identified in the literature as possibly having an impact on the availability of supports for inclusive practice. Networks refer to groups coming together to engage in actions of sharing expertise, ideas, and resources on ways in which inclusive practices might be better realized (Miles & Ahuja, 2007). Some have emphasized that supports exist when networks are present and that this network of partners with the school is able to provide both school-based and external services and resources that lend to the realization of desired outcomes in inclusive practice (Lindsay, 2018). Collaborative networks must be coordinated in a clear, purposeful, and efficiently designed manner. Further, attending to limited resources, multiple needs, and finding efficient ways for providing interdisciplinary resources and services are all vital considerations of collaborative networks.

Waitoller and Kozleski (2013) highlighted that a growing global strategy for inclusive practice is to promote partnerships. This is also referred to as ‘communities of practice’. The Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) affirmed the worth of partnerships in affording students to successfully access educational experiences. Partnerships are recognized to build educators’ capability for inclusive practice. So that schools are able to have the supports needed to meet the diverse needs of learners, a multiplicity of agencies, organizations and people should work collaboratively with schools. Yet, some, like Adelman and Taylor (1997), have long been concerned about the fragmented way in which resources and services are provided in meeting the needs of those

served in schools. To this end, there has been considerable interest in collaboration by researchers.

Research has also confirmed that schools with more internal partnerships in place thrive much more than those schools that do not have such mechanisms in place. DeAngelis (2012) explained that such mechanisms ensure that there are opportunities for social and emotional motivation from mentors and other colleagues during which educators receive guidance in their practice. In the study by Tlale and Romm (2018), there was successful collaboration internally at a school through a School-Based Support Team. In this type of collaborative team, multiple teachers, a school administrator and other associated professionals work to brainstorm ideas and improve success with difficult cases. In a similar approach, Giangreco et al. (2011) specified a structural model for the deployment of paraprofessionals when effecting inclusive practices. Paraprofessionals in this approach were allotted to classrooms and cooperatively supervised by both general and special education teachers. An outcome of this model was that the paraprofessional's presence in the classroom was not ever stigmatizing to those students with SEN who needed individualized accommodations and modifications. This type of internal collaboration allowed for students to be supported and to be as fully engaged with their classmates as possible.

Ideally, school-based or internal services and resources are desirable. Sailor (2002) indicated that a network that is based at the school would be ideal because this situation allows for the school to become a kind of comprehensive setting or one-stop-shop that seeks to provide all of the supports needed in the context of quality education. Further examples of school-based or internal services and resources, in addition to School-Based Support Teams and assigning paraprofessionals to classroom, include the presence of psychologists, special educators, pediatric counsellors, speech-language therapists, social workers and occupational therapists who deliver intervention at school (Anaby et al., 2019). However, there has been no school identified during this present literature review that served as an example of being presently able to facilitate all of these fully

school-based services and resources at once. Researchers who addressed this issue suggested that this was attributed mainly to the need for inputs such as a full-time coordinator or program director, a team of multidisciplinary professional staff, a designated space for meetings and clinic functions, and a harmonious way to link all the offered supports to the child within their learning plan (Turnbull et al., 2003).

Ainscow and Miles (2008) highlighted that this gap in inputs which denies school-based resources and services from being available, increasingly highlights the need for shared expertise and resources, as well as connecting educational improvement with wider community improvement. This approach is in keeping with what Stoker (2006) referred to as ‘public value management’, in which external partners are valued. From Stoker’s viewpoint, the provision of the needed supports for inclusive practice, which can be seen as public value, might only be realized by schools through reliance on interested parties who are willing to work together with the school. This is a time tested approach since it has been found to be the practice of educators to refer learners to these outside professionals and agencies in these formal and informal networks when they suspect that they are having difficulty coping in school (Nel et al., 2014).

External services and resources addressed in the literature indicate that this category of collaborative networks could further be delineated into ‘formal networks’ and ‘informal networks’. Formal networks relate to the school and government-based agencies that work together, and informal networks relate to the school and community and/ or school and home partnerships that exist. Often, inclusive education policies written by education ministries specify the availability of formal networks that are available to schools, but the onus remains on educators and families to reach out to them. Examples of these are health screening and diagnostic services, public school transportation, and social services grants and training through various government sponsored agencies. Examples of informal networks are those partnerships that develop from educators attending conferences and other meetings or events where networking

and relationship building between staff and others develop. Examples of these are university partnerships for research, business sponsorship of events and equipment, and professionals who offer free help as part of their community service.

Volunteer networks between the school and community members facilitate addressing the needs of more students individually in classes. In a study by Panerai et al. (2009) which was longitudinal, the success of a partner initiative known as “Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children” (TEACCH) was reported. This initiative was developed at the University of North Carolina in the 1970s and involved structured teaching. In this study by Panerai et al., it was implemented in three settings in attempts to compare the effectiveness of the educational approaches: a residential special education centre, at home, and at general education schools. The study found that the collaboration in the inclusive general education setting for the TEACCH program was extremely valuable as it resulted in the teachers benefitting from training related to how they might create an appropriate classroom environment, use clear visual cues to circumvent communication difficulties, and develop individually based learning programs with the right mix of academic and functional objectives. Additionally, strict collaboration between home and school were encouraged and resulted during the program. In another example, volunteer classroom support for teachers and students were organized, and McLinden et al. (2018) showed how teachers were supported when volunteers from the community engaged with schools in Community-Based Childcare Centres in rural Malawi. Both these examples demonstrated the benefits to be experienced from collaborative networks.

Generally, current studies have given focus to circumstances where schools have benefitted from supports based on their utilization of collaborative partnerships (Hedegaard-Soerensen et al., 2018; Murawski & Lochner, 2010). These studies suggest that alliances between schools and other stakeholders serve to diminish instances of learners being excluded and failing to meet achievement

standards in the inclusive environment. Although it was noted that there exist difficulties in interagency collaboration, evidence supports that when more collaborative techniques of working together with prospective partners are developed, it impacts on how educators view themselves and the work they do (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). Of importance to remember also is that agencies and persons with whom schools would hope to develop relationships, so that supports for inclusive practice might result, should feel encouraged to contribute to the school because they are aware that they are welcomed to do so (Haines et al., 2015).

Unfortunately, researchers indicated that inadequate collaboration might exist in some places even when resources and services are available to schools. Ainscow (2014) indicated that schools and educational systems might have a huge reservoir of assets, skills, and knowledge that stay dormant, untouched, or underused. This happens mainly when these would-be collaborators are not in one place or when external referrals or making contacts are needed. In some cases, schools may be unaware of how to establish these connections or in other cases, administrators may not be proactive enough to do so. Proactive and collaborative efforts have many positive implications for effective inclusive practice. In a paper intended to clarify and specify what makes for effective action in networks, Rincon-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) highlighted that effective networks at school enable educators to attain resources for everyday activities and ensure sustainability. It was shared that assets to support regular, effective partnerships may sometimes be difficult to attain, however, merely waiting to get external assets to be used for initiating partnerships is not the correct strategy. In spite of scarcity of assets, proactive leaders should organize a shared struggle to discover important assets to sustain inclusive practice, and this can produce a sense of shared identity and commitment in schools.

Access to Funding

Funding or access to finances is believed to be another predictor of supports in schools. According to Cohen et al. (2003), many educational supports

are conventionally conceived with reference to money or the things that having finances available can buy, such as didactic books, well-equipped buildings, and training for teachers. Donohue and Bornman (2014) stressed the importance of funding as being necessary to allow schools to include learners who are not attending school, buy assistive technologies for learners who require them, make the desired infrastructural modifications to facilitate a varied group of learners, and employ specialists so that systemic help can be given to educators. From studies where examples of any significant provision of supports could be made available to schools, researchers provided evidence that funding needed to be available (Baker, 2016; Haines et al., 2015; McLinden et al., 2018; Panerai et al., 2009; Tallman, 2013).

As it relates to collaborative efforts, the literature has observed that access to funding can be due to various internal and external sources. Generally, as an internal arrangement, governments allocate funding to public schools. In many countries, the type of expenditure on education often represents one of the largest areas of government spending (Holmlund et al., 2010). However, since government funding is usually limited and unable to meet all of the required needs, it is not the lone source of funding accessible to schools. Exogenous sources of funding are pretty prevalent also. Collaboration with other agencies often results in grants being given to address specific identified needs at the school. For example, in the research work referred to earlier by Waitoller and Kozleski (2013), the Grass Valley School District was facing budget cuts and collaboration between them and a university that was willing to partner with the school for training teachers resulted in the training support being funded and implemented at the school.

The literature advocates that there is a positive association between increased funding for schools and student outcomes. Where there was a persistent need for money so that supports could be ascertained, these schools were observed to be suppressed in their ability to practice inclusive education. In one example, Graham and Spandagou (2011) lamented that funding issues affected

the school's ability to complete assessments for diagnosing learners and employ aides to help out class teachers with the kids. In another example, Sargeant and Berkner (2015) asserted that one of the three popularly noted explanations for not enacting inclusive education were the related costs. Yet, in another example, Carter et al. (2009) also highlighted that in schools where there is a drive to compete for performance recognition and academic excellence, learners with SEN were regarded as a drain on limited resources, like funding, by school administrators.

Reasons for Lack of Supports

Some of the barriers to inclusive practice were specified for some schools and these encompassed, but were not restricted to, lack of coordination between stakeholders, lack of knowledge amongst teachers, insufficient resources, absence of training, and nonexistence of commitment by policy makers (Adelman & Taylor, 1997; Cheminais, 2004; Chireshe, 2013; Coster et al., 2013; Kavkler et al., 2015; Pletser, 2016). Advancement towards inclusive education was frequently portrayed in past studies as a matter of pinpointing and eradicating barriers to involvement in education (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). As established earlier in the review, there were many studies that highlighted lack of supports for inclusive education as one of the tensions that underlie the practice of inclusive education, and prior studies suggested that there appears to be a close relationship between supports availability and the practice of inclusive education (Norwich, 2014). However, a clear understanding of why supports for the practice of inclusive education may not be available was not found to be directly studied by researchers. Few studies even venture to volunteer reasons for lack of supports. Founded upon the review of the past research, three reasons for the lack of supports have been observed. These are an uneven distribution of human resources, budget allocation and policy deficiencies, and they are further discussed below.

Uneven Distribution of Human Resources

Loeb et al. (2010) indicated that one of the greatest variances in resources across schools is that of human capital. To a large extent, the allocation of support personnel appears to be limited in some schools due to their geographical location. This has been described as resulting from the often vast geographical spread of schools and the neighbourhoods they serve, which make it tremendously difficult to even out resources and shrink inequality (Hall & Giese, 2009). Thus, rural schools often suffer more inequities. A negative effect of this was pinpointed by Kaufhold et al. (2006), who indicated from their research that a reason for burnout and attrition rates being high among teachers was the short supply of resources. A constant battle for shared human resources largely accounts for this shortage. In a study by Berry et al. (2011), it was found that 51% of respondents to a survey indicated the school's greatest challenge as being personnel unavailability to serve at inclusive schools in the rural areas captured in the study. The researchers also confirmed the struggle with hiring new teachers and affirmed that the demands of the job in rural areas increase the threat of attrition.

On a more general level, the inadequate funding available to governments and individual schools to hire qualified personnel to fill needed job positions also results in some schools remaining in want while other schools are better served by the few personnel available through the system. To some extent, this is also related to the school's geographic location, but even more so, it might be related to how well the school is supported by collaborative networks so that funding and other resources might be ascertained. These would result in the limited deployment of staff to serve these schools. Pearce et al. (2010) completed a qualitative study in the USA comprising of conversations with 50 leaders who worked in inclusive settings. The findings suggested that the school context is an obstacle to the progress of inclusion. Although inclusive guidelines were in place, the schools under study were not sustained by ample funding and resources. This negatively impacted on the capacity for inclusion.

Budget Allocation

Financial inputs, when dispersed equitably and adequately to schools, provide a necessary underlying condition for improving student outcomes. However, Hall and Giese (2009) warned that higher funding does not mean sufficient funding or automatically results in valued improvements. As such, another reason which might account for the lack of supports in schools is that the budget allocation is not sufficient for that school's needs. Studies suggest that numerous schools carry on their operations on a budget that does not permit quality educational delivery or the providing infrastructure that is favorable to learning (Werts et al., 1996). Within education, countries have also been increasingly recognizing the ineffectiveness of several administrative structures, complex process for accessing services, and the financially impractical option of operating special schools. Due to the continued presence of some of these within the education system, school funding has been noted to be decreasing in some regions (Tallman, 2013).

Baker (2016), in a discussion of the importance of money to the functioning of schools, asserted that education provisions are costly but are positively associated with student outcomes. Some of these provisions include reduced size of classes, extra assets, early intervention activities, and more reasonable remuneration which would permit recruitment and retention of a more competent workforce. Granted, in some cases the positive outcomes are larger in some schools than others due to differences in the learners and the school's context. Overall, though, the stuff that costs money is valuable for students, and Baker asserted that there is limited proof pointing towards better economical alternatives. The identification of extensive gains in inclusive education results for students in settings that benefitted from increased funding shows that larger gains are possible in impoverished communities if increased finances are systematically directed to those schools. However, there still remains some degree of fear about the perceived overabundant funding that provisions of additional resources and services to schools would require (Kavkler et al., 2015).

Disconnect with the Needs of Students and Educators in Schools

Another reason for the lack of supports in schools might be due to challenges that exist with governments who are not intricately aware of the needs of students and educators in schools. This is evidenced through their specification of policies related to inclusive education, which either do not do much for improving current practice or do not hold schools accountable for practice in ways that are fair. Articles tended to be critical of the mismatch between seemingly comprehensive policies in some countries and the lack of priority for the implementation of inclusive education (Anthony, 2011; Johnstone & Chapman, 2009; Donohue & Bornman, 2014). Wapling (2016) also criticized the top-down approach, which saw governments embrace policies that are consistent with international agendas, but which pay little concern to the means by which they would be implemented by schools and educators. So even while prior studies suggested that to a large extent, there has been a positive change in the school system and that technocracy in the form of policy declarations have been popular, there remains administrative pressure on schools to meet the needs of learners. A recurrent issue highlighted in the literature was that there exists dissonance between ideals and action, or in other words, policy and practice. This type of support was observed as vital to removing barriers for all in inclusive settings. Artiles et al. (2006) noted that there is divergence of opinion about the degree of policy backing for inclusive practice, although it is agreed that there has been an overarching emphasis on a related goal, that is, producing knowledgeable citizens who can make contributions in a competitive international setting.

Donohue and Bornman (2014) found that firstly there appears to be an apparent lack of clarity for schools in inclusive education policy specifying clear aims for inclusion and the avenues through which they can be realized. The researchers' views were not found to be representative of all nations, however, since there were reports of countries such as Finland who have well-documented policies in place to guide inclusion. Still, there was a general sense of agreement in the literature with Donohue and Bornman's second finding that poor implementation of the policy is evident. Haug (2017) identified that there are

challenges connected to ideals and action. Commenting on the current situation related to including all students in schools and meeting their individual needs, the researcher stated that no nation has been successful in creating an education system that adheres the ideals and targets of inclusion, as defined by different international organizations. Viennet and Pont (2017) found that this might be due to coordination problems, the shortage of organizational resources, and educators' unwillingness to accept reform. Additionally, competing priorities of the school system itself reflect disconnect among priorities, resulting in support not being provided to the extent needed in various contexts (Jelas et al., 2016).

School-level barriers need to be addressed so that educators are reoriented to new ways of educating learners and are willing to do so (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). The differences that exist between and among schools in various territories should also be taken into consideration. Although both intend to be inclusive, one school may require technological and physical upgrades for improved curriculum access, whereas another school might require meeting the social needs of learners first. When governments are not aware of these needs, they often tend to generalize provisions. D'Alessio and Watkins (2009) advised that plans and practice specific to inclusion in any nation is a consequence of advances in laws, along with knowledge and ideas about teaching and learning. Since strategies for the implementation of inclusive education is country dependent and typically outlined in general and special education policy documents, there appears to be a necessity to examine concerns that exist about these strategies within these documents to completely understand how what is documented impacts upon inclusive practice at the school-level.

Some country-specific education policy papers revealed that governments often give redress to some of the educational inequities between at-risk groups by stating the subsidies and services intended to be provided (UNESCO, 2009a). In the USA, for instance, one state's policy handbook for families and professionals titled *Special Education Rights* (Disability Rights Maryland, 2016) lists supports such as the guarantee of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in the Least

Restrictive Environment (LRE) giving consideration to accommodation, staffing, class size and behavioural supports. In Canada, the Ontario Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation (Ministry of Education, 2014) lists accommodations for students with special education needs to include special instructional and assessment tools, human resources, and/or tailored equipment that aid student learning. In Trinidad and Tobago, the Inclusive Education Policy (Ministry of Education, 2009) states that accommodating varied learners, and guaranteeing quality education should be done by use of measures such as suitable curricula; proper administration; evidence-based techniques; resource utilization; partnerships with the public, and a range of services to match the variety of student needs that are met in every school. In these examples, some of these provisions are more specific than others, and some may be better suited than others to the needs of students and educators in schools. Unless schools become intricately involved in the planning process for policies, then discord between what is contained in policies and what is practised might continue to exist. There might continue to be funding limitations in the school system, and the personal interpretations of what the policy says based on the school's context might continue to vary (Engelbrecht et al., 2016).

Research Gap

In literature, the need for supports in the practice of inclusive education is taken as a given. Some examples of past works which have looked at supports include the influential introduction of the term 'supports' by Luckasson et al. (2002) in relation to students with intellectual disability (ID); seminal empirical work by Wilczenski (1992), which addressed teacher attitudes based on functional supports for students; a doctoral dissertation by Moore (2005) which looked at organizational supports for teachers; an article by Loreman (2007) which highlighted seven pillars of support for the general achievement of inclusive education; and an article by Thompson et al. (2009) where a general definition of supports in relation to individuals with ID emerged. These have all been international studies. In the Caribbean, a doctoral dissertation by Myers (2010) focused on the lack of services and resources for special-needs students. From a

review of the literature, while many studies have been observed to concentrate on supports for students with special needs, few studies exist that directly explore the supports educators need for inclusive practice.

Notably, past publications that specifically address supports for inclusive education have been limited, and educator supports have not been found to be defined. Examples of supports for educators have come to the fore from related empirical studies, but these remain descriptive and not comprehensively outlined. These examples alone tell us nothing about how the provision of supports can better be organized to facilitate inclusive practice. They reveal only clues but provide no direction of change to guide practice. Therefore, it has been noted by the researcher that there is no all-inclusive classification system of supports for educators that can guide inclusive practice. So, while new research continues to highlight the lack of supports in schools as an issue, those who are in positions to correct this challenge do not have a guideline for providing supports for educators.

The assumption put forward by this study is that a framework for educator supports is needed so that translation from supports being merely recognized as important to the supports actually being provided for educators' inclusive practice in schools can be realized (Coster et al., 2013). Educator supports is a challenge in schools in well-developed countries such as the USA and Australia, as well as in schools in developing countries such as those in the CARICOM (Crockett, 2017). Specifically, in CARICOM schools, Jules and Council (2010) recognized that the provision of supports might be strengthened by a regional framework. The researchers highlighted that a common regional framework that could serve to encourage teacher retention, as well as improve and harmonize their conditions of service, is needed within the region.

In this regard, the exploration, identification and clarification of the key categories of supports that are necessary for educators' inclusive practice in schools within the CARICOM region are what this study will look at mainly. In the CARICOM region, the supports educators currently have and what they desire is not known. Exploring these questions from the perspective of educators would

give a better understanding of the supports which educators perceive will be helpful to them so that the aim of meeting the varied educational needs of learners might be attained. D'Alessio and Watkins (2009) counselled that inclusive plans and practices in any country results from conceptions of teaching and learning. Given that teaching and learning is the responsibility of educators, what this suggests is that the views of educators regarding the provision of supports for their work with diverse students might be of value.

Theoretical Foundation: Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

In a study that was specific to the three factors that predict inclusive practice by educators identified earlier in this literature review (attitude towards inclusion, social pressure and confidence of the educator), Yan and Sin (2014) conducted quantitative research that utilized structural equation modelling. This type of analysis followed a 20–25 min survey with a four-point Likert scale design administered to 841 educators from schools in Hong Kong. This investigation aimed to address the identified shortfalls by creating a structural framework which links intention and behaviour by utilizing the concepts of TPB. It was found that educators' attitudes towards inclusive education were related to the subjective norms (social pressure experienced from key leaders to perform inclusive practices), and perceived behaviour control (their beliefs about confidence in their proficiency). These were identified to exert noteworthy predictive power on inclusive behaviour. This study did achieve its objective which was to look at the degree to which TPB could reliably predict and explain the intent to do and actual performance of inclusive practice. This study was unique in its finding as previous studies placed attitude as the strongest predictor of behaviour, but this study found subjective norm to be strongest. Perceived behaviour control was second, and attitude last.

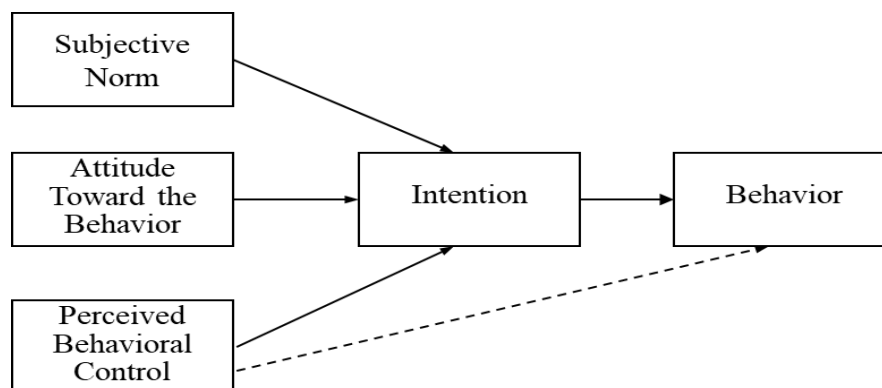
Ajzen's theory has been used frequently in the literature. The theory is an intrapersonal one that has been proven to predict behavioural intention and actions. TPB reflects an addition to the theory of reasoned action (TRA). TPB can also be considered to be persuasive, and it has received significant attention by

researchers but has not evaded criticism. One of the theory's critiques is about its sufficiency, as investigators have suggested variables which could be added to intensify its predictive strength. Amongst the proposed add-ons are affect and anticipated regret, desire and need, personal and moral customs, former behaviour, and self-identity. Nevertheless, the theory has been proven to be valid and has been embraced to investigate many forms of behaviour, such as recreational activities (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003; Hrubes et al., 2001), business and management (Hansen, 2008; Paul et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016), general education (Casper, 2007; De Leeuw et al., 2015; Salleh & Laxman, 2015), as well as inclusive education (Bebetsos et al., 2017; Freitag & Dunsmuir, 2015; Kuyini & Desai, 2007; Sharma & Jacobs, 2016).

Specifically, in the past, TPB has been applied in inclusive education research with promising results. There have been multiple studies that used TPB to investigate aspects of the inclusive practice by educators also. In addition to the study by Yan and Sin (2014), another example of a study using the TPB is the work of Kuyini and Desai (2007). These researchers carried out multiple regression analysis to test attitudes of Ghanaian teachers towards inclusive education, their views about how easy it is to carry out inclusive education (perceived behaviour control element), and principals' expectations (subjective norm element). In another study from Cyprus, the TPB was used by Fournidou et al. (2011) to explore the attitudes of physical education instructors concerning training students with physical disabilities in their classes. Further, in India, secondary school teachers' attitudes for inclusive education were studied by Bhatnagar and Das (2014) using the theory. From the literature reviewed, it was observed that there was a broad consensus of studies that emphasized educator attitude as the main area of focus for research. While the literature thus far has suggested that all three factors which are relevant to the TPB are related to supports availability, none of these prior studies has been found to have focused on supports as the main area of research.

Explained in greater detail, TPB advances three theoretically independent contributing factors to behaviour. These are: (a) attitude concerning the behaviour which indicates how favourably or unfavourably a person views the act in question; (b) subjective norm which represents the belief about social pressure experienced for performing the act; and (c) perceived behavioural control which represents how easy or difficult it is to carry out the behaviour. Control increases when individuals perceive they have more resources and confidence (Ajzen, 2011; De Leeuw et al., 2015). This final construct of the theory was the last to be added and created the shift from the TRA to the TPB. According to the theory, and as shown by the solid arrows in Figure 2.2, subjective norm, attitude, and perceived behavioural control for the performance of a behaviour can each be mediated by intention. Intentions are the total effort a person is prepared to use to achieve the goal (Ajzen, 1991). The prominence of each of these determinants of intention can differ based on the behaviour and the population. It is expected that people will perform their intended behaviors when suitable opportunities arise. Of the three contributing factors to behaviour, though, perceived behavioural control is the only factor that can bypass intention and directly result in a behaviour.

Figure 2.2
Theory of Planned Behaviour



Summary

Overall, past research and articles on inclusive practice suggested that this desired behaviour by educators may not be well supported to work effectively in general education settings. The literature suggests that this might mean that schools will be unable to keep pace with the demands for inclusive education created through international agencies like UNESCO and articulations by many country-specific governments. Researchers have increasingly sought to understand aspects of inclusive education and have identified supports for both learners and educators as an essential variable in the enactment of inclusive practice. The combined definition provided for supports in the literature is the resources and services which are provided in order to eliminate the mismatch between personal competency and environmental demands for quality education in schools (Luckasson et al., 1992; McLeskey et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2009).

The literature suggested supports are of value to inclusive practice because they are a function of quality schooling, they allow a response to the identified needs of learners and educators, and they allow for the removal of barriers with the aim of all learners being able to partake and learn in the inclusive setting. Past studies also indicate that educators, both administrators and classroom teachers, are of the view that some necessary supports are lacking. When these supports remain unavailable, they serve as barriers to involvement and learning. The role of supports was highlighted as being to assist the classroom teacher in adapting and modifying curriculum and environments to ensure appropriate access for students (Gal et al., 2010; Grima-Farrell, 2015; Loreman, 2007). From the studies that were specific to the supports required for educators in inclusive practice, the review of the literature demonstrated significant improvement in the quality of inclusive practice when supports were available in schools. Although associations between supports for students and supports for educators for practising inclusive education were reported across studies, past researchers appeared to have emphasized the significance of the need for supports from the viewpoint of students more than that of educators. Few studies were specific to

supports as reported by educators, and the large number of studies that focused on barriers to inclusive education from the perspective of educators all highlighted examples of lack of supports as a major barrier.

There was found to be a multiplicity of differences among learners in general education schools, which are expected to be delivering quality inclusive education. For inclusive practice, this variety of differences begs consideration for making certain that differences become an ordinary part of classroom practice. Each learner is given an equitable chance to achieve their maximum potential and not be excluded from participation. These differences also demand that needs be met so that quality school outcomes result. Past research has indicated that educators working in schools must respond to these needs. It was highlighted that for educators to be able to respond, supports in schools must be available for their use. In terms of educators being able to realize this behaviour of inclusive practice, the literature presented in this chapter also indicated that three factors impact educators' practice of inclusive education. These are attitudes, norms and perceived behaviour control, and it was suggested from past studies that these might all be moderated by the factor of supports. It was apparent from the literature also that although there is consensus for inclusive practice, the ongoing issues that have been identified by teachers over the years might mean that (Able et al., 2015; Rouse, 2009) although teachers have popularly been supportive of inclusion, some have been opposed to the idea also, citing reasons that are external to the learners and consistent with support needs. From the literature reviewed, it was observed that there was a broad consensus of studies that emphasized educator attitudes as the main area of focus for research related to inclusive education.

Since previous research can only be considered the first step towards a more profound understanding of how supports can lend to the accomplishment of inclusive education, this review of the literature was intended to identify and subsequently begin to attempt to address any gaps identified in the literature review. Firstly, it became evident from past studies that while researchers have

cited multiple examples of supports needed in schools, no single model that provided a formal classification of types of supports for inclusive education was found to be available in the literature that comprehensively addressed the necessary supports for schools in the Caribbean region. Different researchers simply listed examples of supports while others grouped similar supports either related to instruction or services, but not necessarily using these terms. However, the set of examples and isolated categories that emerged from various studies can guide the development of a model. Secondly, while the literature thus far has suggested that the main factors which predict inclusive practice by educators are attitudes, norms, and perceived behaviour control, no study was found to examine the relationship among these independent determinants of behaviour and supports. It was also identified that these factors were all relevant to the TPB, but no prior study used the theory to focus on supports as having an influence on any of these factors. Thirdly, although research has illuminated some possible predictors of supports in schools and reasons for lack of supports, no known study to date has examined and specified findings related to these areas of concern directly.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methodology for this research work specifies the kind of data that was gathered, where the data was collected from, and what strategies were utilized for data collection and analysis by recounting the actions used to obtain knowledge. As stated by Gill and Johnson (2010), the methodology for research puts forward why specific research actions were selected, and deemed appropriate to accomplish the research targets. The purpose of this two-phase, exploratory sequential mixed-methods study was to explore participants' views about the provision of supports with the intention of making use of this information to develop and test a model of necessary supports for educators' to be able to practice inclusive education confidently. Chapter 3 presents information on the theory of exactly how this research was undertaken, together with the assumptions held for the study, in addition to the implications of having embraced these methods (Saunders, 2007). In addition to these, trustworthiness and ethical considerations in relation to the study and participants are outlined. This information is useful so that the nature and quality of the study can be evaluated and replicated.

The Value of Various Methods of Inquiry

Carrying out research has come to be recognized as a reputable way to contribute to understanding, which in turn allows for advancement to be made on matters that face contemporary societies. By basic definition, research denotes the propagation of an idea and the testing of that idea in a systematic way so as to uncover knowledge (Stock & Stock, 1985). In reality, it is how we derive understanding about what is true based on norms and a variety of techniques used in data-gathering, description of approaches and paradigms of research (Creswell, 2013; Smith, 1983). According to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 48), the term 'research' may undertake a variety of meanings and thus be justifiably applied to numerous contexts. Given that there existed a problem related to inclusive practice for

which there was a desire to know about perceptions around supports and determine the types of supports which improve educators' personal ability and facilitate their work with students, conducting research was believed to be valuable.

Furthermore, when notions are generated, frequently, they can be verified using quantitative or qualitative information. Testing by means of quantitative methods is described by the use of statistical data with the intent of quantifying something (Patton & Cochran, 2002). Three of the most popular quantitative research purposes are to describe, compare, and attribute causality (Hittleman & Simon, 2002). The other method of testing ideas, qualitative investigation, is described by gaining knowledge about something through analyzing words, pictures, or objects (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The methods used in this approach are less structured and often include interviews and observations to guide data collection. Creswell (2013) gives guidelines that categories and themes are developed into patterns, models, or generalizations, which Stake (2005) referred to as a summary of interpretations.

Unlike quantitative research which is characterized by mathematical analysis and is post-positivist in nature, qualitative research is regarded for the use of inductive content analysis and is interpretivist in nature. In qualitative investigations, subjectivity is anticipated, whereas in quantitative investigations, objectivity is vital (Yilmaz, 2013). There have been both criticism and applause for quantitative and qualitative research respectively in the literature, and this has also led to the process of researchers mixing techniques in an attempt to grow the scope and enlarge the analytic power of their research (Sandelowski, 2001). Some of the literature also refers to this combination type approach as mixed research or integrative research rather than mixed methods research since these terms provide a broader and more inclusive perspective. Creswell (2013, p. 32) pointed out that "mixed methods research resides in the middle of the continuum because it incorporates elements of both approaches". Further, it was noted that researchers sometimes combine qualitative and quantitative methods to

incorporate the strengths of both types of research (Hittleman & Simon, 2002). By Creswell's definition, mixed methods research encompasses the collection and integration of both sets of quantitative and qualitative data in an investigation. However, such mixing is not always appropriate or feasible as it is influenced by the purpose of the study and the skills of the researcher. Table 3.1 summarizes the differences among qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods.

Table 3.1

Comparison of Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods

Typically	Qualitative methods	Quantitative methods	Mixed methods
Philosophical assumptions	Interpretivist knowledge claims	Positivist knowledge claims	Pragmatic knowledge claims
Strategies of enquiry	Phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, interviews	Surveys and experiments	Sequential concurrent and transformative
Employ these methods	Open-ended questions, emerging approaches, text or image data	Closed questions, predetermined approaches	Both open and closed emerging and predetermined questions; both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis
Use these practices of research as a researcher	Collects participant meanings. Brings personal values to the study. Studies the context or setting of participants. Validates the accuracy of findings. Makes interpretations of the data. Creates	Tests or verifies theories or explanations. Identifies explanations. Identifies variables to study. Relates variables in questions or hypotheses. Uses standards of validity and reliability. Observes and	Collects both qualitative/quantitative data. Advances a justification for mixing. Mixes the data at various stages of inquiry. Presents visual pictures of the actions in the study. Utilizes the methods of both qualitative and quantitative research.

an agenda for change of reform. Collaborates with participants	measures information numerically. Uses unbiased approaches. Employs statistical procedures.
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Note. Sourced from Creswell (2009).

Mixed Methods in the Current Study

A blend of qualitative and quantitative techniques was used in this investigation as this combination was believed to be most suitable for seeking out answers the research questions, collecting multiple views from a broader range of educators, advancing more convincing evidence, along with a more comprehensive view of the subject (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Yin, 2006). It is assumed that the use of mixed methods fortified the worth of the inquiry for several reasons. These include (1) it permitted for a more widespread series of research questions to be explored since there was no limit to a lone method; (2) the strength associated with qualitative and quantitative techniques counter balanced the flaws in each of the other; (3) more robust proof for a conclusion due to merging and confirmation of findings was likely; (4) insights and knowledge were added that could be overlooked when a single method alone is used; (5) generalizability of the outcomes is probable; and (6) it facilitated gathering comprehensive knowledge desired to advise theory and practice (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). A few of the acknowledged flaws of mixed methods take account of the difficulty for a sole researcher to perform both methods if the investigation is extensive; the investigator has to know about more than one approach and have the proficiency needed to blend them appropriately; using mixed methods might be viewed as contradicting of the norm; a number of details about the approach are still vague; and the mixing of methods can be costly and onerous

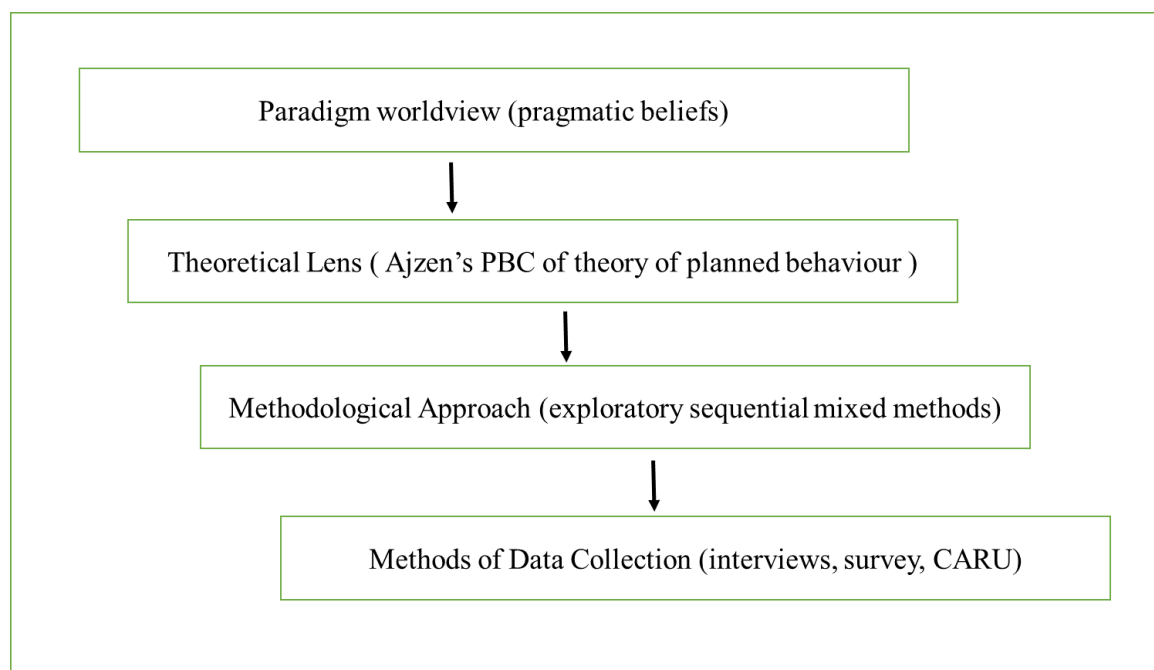
for the investigator. Nevertheless, intentional actions were taken during this research to address the possible flaws of the selected approach.

Philosophical Foundations

Crotty's (1998) conceptualization was used to position philosophy within this mixed-methods study. As demonstrated in Figure 3.1, four major elements were considered in the design of this study. These are paradigm worldview, theoretical lens, methodological approach, and methods of data collection.

Figure 3.1

Crotty's (1998) Four Levels of Developing a Research Study Applied to This Study



Worldview

Assumptions about knowledge contributed to the conceptualization of this study. Creswell and Plano-Clarke (2011) guided that several worldviews have shared elements but take dissimilar positions on what is reality (ontology), by

what means we come to know what we know (epistemology), the part of values in research (axiology), the procedures used for inquiry (methodology), and the language of research (rhetoric). It is reasoned that while some persons still pursue the paradigm argument, pinpointing the “best” worldview that offers a basis for mixed methods exploration is more suitable. As shown in Table 3.2, four core worldviews exist - postpositivism, constructivism, participatory and pragmatism. Each view offers a broad philosophical direction to guide a research study and communicates the style of the method selected, the claims made about knowledge, the link between the researcher and the data, the viewpoints conveyed in the findings, and the writing style utilized.

Table 3.2

Characteristics of the Four Main Worldviews in Research

	Worldview			
	POSTPOSITIVISM	CONSTRUCTIVISM	PARTICIPATORY	PRAGMATISM
Associated approach	quantitative research	qualitative research	qualitative research	mixed-methods research
Knowledge claims based on	determinism; reductionism; observation and measurement; theory testing	participant understanding; subjective views	political concerns; collaboration based on injustices	pluralistic methods; singular and multiple realities
Researcher relationship with data collection	Distance and impartiality	closeness	collaboration	practicality
Perspectives reflected	unbiased	biased	negotiated biases	biased and unbiased
Reporting Style	formal	informal	Advocacy and change	formal or informal or combination

Note. Sourced from Creswell (2009).

The worldview that was chosen for this present research was pragmatism due to the kinds of the research questions asked, and the understanding that pragmatism permitted for a combination of qualitative and quantitative collection of data to occur.

Ontological Assumption

Ontology enquires about what knowledge is genuinely true. In the school system, the reality is understood through experience, reasoning and research, and popularly participants' perception is the reality in the field of education (Cohen et al., 2013; Jackson, 2011). The problem which prompted this study was that the lack of supports in schools remains a popular issue among educators affecting their ability to practice inclusion. Resolutions to this problem might be distinctive to different school contexts around the world. With this understanding, this study adopted pragmatism because of its problem-centeredness, and because it recognizes that several truths can exist in actuality. Specifically, this research explores the truth that exists for educators in schools in the CARICOM who experience a lack of supports.

Epistemological Assumption

On the subject of the nature and construction of what is known, a hands-on style to the gathering of data was adopted. Consistent with pragmatism, the epistemological expectations of this investigation were based on the notion that no one method will permit the arrival at truth by itself—rather, a mixture of paradigms is most advantageous in leading to a full understanding of the phenomenon. The assumption was that what would be most effective for answering the questions this study asked would be initially to collect qualitative data so that themes related to the types of supports necessary could be established, and to follow this by constructing a survey around these themes to quantitatively gather data. As a result, a combination of closeness to contributors in conjunction with distance and neutrality were made use of at different phases of the study.

Axiological Assumption

In evaluating the part values played in the investigation, the researcher's personal involvement in the field of inclusive education may be hard to separate

from the research process. Nevertheless, the intent of the researcher was, as much as possible, to preserve self-awareness in an ongoing process and to contain biases. Specific to the qualitative data gathering, bracketing was used, and care was taken at the culmination of the research process to recognize how preconceived notions might have influenced the work.

Methodological Assumption

The research process made use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative explorations. In this mixture, educators' views were gathered using a small sample and served to construct patterns of insight represented as themes. Next, by means of a bigger sample, testing of hypotheses was carried out. A combination of inductive and deductive reasoning was used at different research stages to develop questions, seek to understand participants' perceptions, and figure out what generalizations might come out of the findings. Subsequent to the creation of the initial conceptual framework for the study, qualitative discoveries from phase one of the study led to the conceptual model that was verified in the quantitative phase two of the research.

Rhetorical Assumption

The language of this study embraces a combination of formal and informal writing styles. The structure of the work is generally formal and in accordance with American Psychological Association (APA) specifications. Agreement on definitions of variables is shared initially, and based on the discoveries from the study, definitions of variables that emerged are shared. The presentation of findings includes quotes from participants from the qualitative stage of the study, as well as statistical evidence from the quantitative stage of the study.

Theoretical Lens

A theory of behaviour was the lens used as part of the framework within which data were gathered. In this study, the theory which supported an understanding of educators' performance of inclusive practice in relation to the provision of supports was the Perceived Behaviour Control determinant of Ajzen's TPB. This theory was deemed most suitable because it dovetails with the

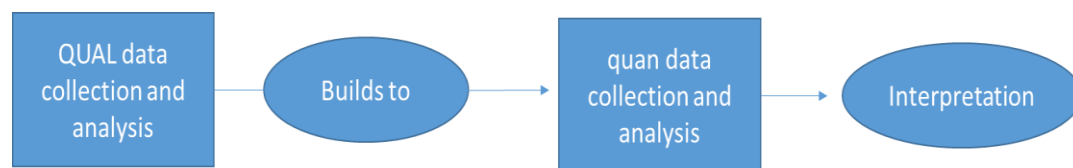
assumptions in this study that educators' complaints of lack of supports for inclusive practice might impact their inclusive behaviours in schools. As such, in conceptualizing the study, the theory was used to justify the relevance of the research and guide the generation of research questions.

Methodological Approach

The utilization of a combination of methods in this research can be labelled as emergent since the study originally started out as qualitative. However, an additional quantitative approach was deemed to be required after the study was underway because the qualitative data alone was inadequate to fully address the research problem in a meaningful way. The motive for combining approaches was for thorough investigation of the subject by verifying the initial findings. Combined methods facilitated the identification of variables, and the development and testing of a model using a survey developed from the findings of one phase. Qualitative data (QUAL) was given priority initially, and later, building on those findings, quantitative data (quan) were gathered. Specific to the priority, interaction, mixing and timing of the data in this research, the method can additionally be described as exploratory sequential (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). The design of the study refers to a structure or plan used for guiding data collection and its analysis. Figure 3.2 shows the straightforward flow of activities followed during the process of inquiry.

Figure 3.2

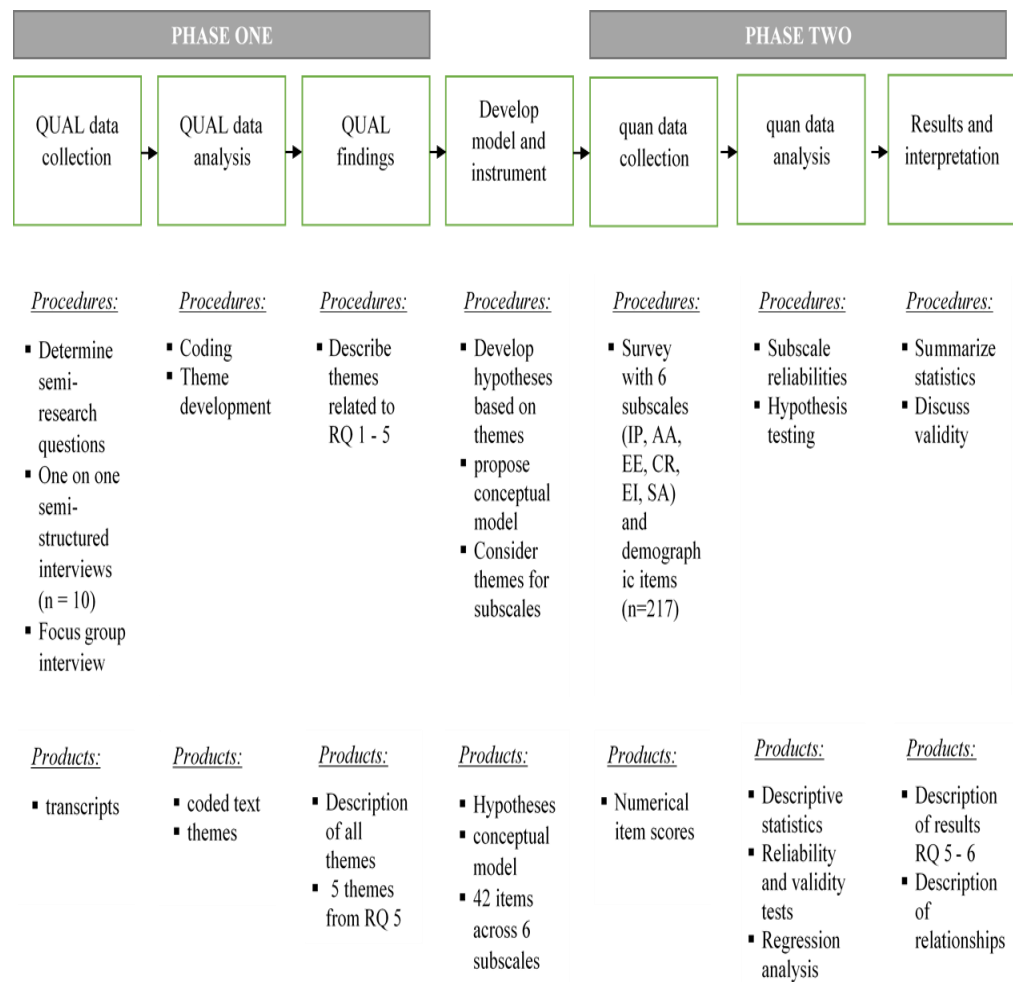
Diagram Explaining the Exploratory Sequential Design (QUAL + Quan) Used in the Study



Several strengths were identified as a result of using an exploratory sequential research design, which is supported by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011). As a major advantage, even though the design gives emphasis to the qualitative aspect, the inclusion of a quantitative component added understanding and generalizability to the research findings. Additionally, the two-phased research design was straightforward and easy to implement and report. Finally, by expanding the number of participants in the second quantitative phase of the study, an argument for the generalizability of the findings can be made. Two phases of the current study made use of different methods of collecting data at various times. The process followed is described in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3

Phases of the Study and their Associated Procedures and Products



Methods of Data Collection

Sampling Procedure and Gaining Permission

The research sample refers to the subset of the entire population from which the information gathered might be representative of the entire population studied (Cohen et al., 2013). The total population under study in this research was CARICOM educators, and based on convenience and purposeful selection established on the criteria that educators were from various schools throughout the CARICOM region, participants from the Caribbean Union Conference (CARU) were chosen for this study. In this research, the sample size for each of the phases was determined by the style of the research phase. Additionally, the minimum sample size for each phase was considered for reliability based on the kind of analysis to be performed. Since phase one was qualitative, a small sample size was appropriate. In phase two, which was quantitative, a larger sample size was targeted.

This study evolved from an interest in the topic of inclusive education and was further narrowed to address the issue identified as lack of supports for educators for inclusive practice in schools. Following the approval of the proposed topic for the study by the research supervisor, consideration was given to how best data could be collected. Given that the issue was deemed relevant to CARICOM educators based on the researcher's own experiences working with them, and on the literature, it was purposefully determined that the sample to be used for the study would need to come from varying CARICOM countries.

In August of 2016, contact was made with a senior administrative officer of the CARU, who indicated that it would not be a problem to use educators from that organization for the study since it has schools throughout the CARICOM region. This idea was followed up by researching facts about the CARU. A review of whatever literature was available about the organization was done, and consultation with other knowledgeable others was also done in order to find out about the schools within the CARU and how they fit into the delivery of education in the CARICOM and in relation to practising inclusion. These steps aided in getting to know about the accessible population. This initial inquiry led to

the understanding that schools owned and operated by the CARU functioned just as any other denominational school in the CARICOM region and were open to serving all students within a geographical area, guided by the respective country's policies and curriculum as defined by their respective MOE. Given that the criteria were met, the unique advantage of the CARU was that the organization had schools in multiple countries across the Caribbean and that educators would be accessible to the researcher. As such, the use of the educators from the CARU was a demonstration of purposive and convenience sampling for the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In December of 2016, a formal meeting with the lead Director for Education of the CARU was held, where the research interest was confirmed. This director served as the gatekeeper for the investigation. The Director was open to the prospect and enlisted the researcher to make a presentation on 'Inclusive Education and Response to Intervention' to all of the CARU's territorial education directors and principals at their annual education conference in January 2017. This allowed the researcher to interact face to face with the educators and glean information that confirmed their fitness to serve as the study's sample population.

Case of Educators in the Caribbean Union Conference (CARU)

The CARU is a denominational organization based in Trinidad that provides administrative services and resources to affiliated institutions like churches, hospitals and schools across the CARICOM region. It consists of ten territories with schools in 16 countries. One lead Director for Education oversees the administration of education within the CARU. Each territory is referred to as a conference or mission, and there is also a specific Education Director for each of these ten territories. All ten education directors report to the leading Director for Education. Each of the ten territorial directors is based in various CARICOM countries, and each is responsible for all the schools which belong to the CARU in their territory. The number of schools and educators in each territory varies. Table 3.2 shows which countries fall within which of the territories as distributed by the CARU. In total, there are 52 elementary and secondary schools that are

managed by the CARU. Principals and teachers who work in these schools uphold the denominational value of the organization, but their practice is guided by the curriculum and policies which are set forth by their country's education ministry.

Table 3.3

Territories within the CARU

Territories of the Caribbean Union Conference	Countries Within the Territories
East Caribbean Conference	- Barbados - Dominica
Grenada Conference	- Grenada
Guyana Conference	- Guyana
North Caribbean Conference	- Anguilla - British Virgin Islands - St. Maarten - Saba/St. Eustatius - United States Virgin Islands
South Caribbean Conferences	- Trinidad
St. Lucia Mission	- St. Lucia
Suriname Mission	- Suriname
Tobago Mission	- Tobago
South Leeward Mission	- Antigua & Barbuda - St. Kitts & Nevis - Montserrat
St. Vincent & Grenadines Mission	- St. Vincent & the Grenadines

The breakdown of the numbers of schools and educators per country is reflected in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4

Breakdown of School and Educators within the CARU

Territory	Countries Within the Territory	Number of Schools	Number of Education Directors	Number of Principals and Teachers
East Caribbean Conference	Barbados Dominica	6	1	68
Grenada Conference	Grenada	3	1	29
Guyana Conference	Guyana	0	1	0
North Caribbean Conference	Anguilla British Virgin Islands St. Maarten Saba/St. Eustatius US Virgin Islands	8	1	108
South Caribbean Conference	Trinidad	15	1	215
St. Lucia Mission	St. Lucia	4	1	48
Suriname Mission	Suriname	2	1	28
Tobago Mission	Tobago	5	1	41
South Leeward Mission	Antigua & Barbuda St. Kitts & Nevis Montserrat	4	1	57
St. Vincent & Grenadines Mission	St. Vincent & the Grenadines	5	1	67
TOTAL		52	10	661

For schools within the CARU, education aims to prepare individuals for worthwhile and joy-filled lives, nurturing a relationship with God, personal growth, imparting biblical values, and a desire for service in harmony with the Seventh-day Adventist mission (General Conference Policy Manual, 2003). Apart from conversion being a priority in Christian schooling, providing education as service is also very important (Knight, 2015). Schools in the territories of the CARU provide education to a diverse mix of students from the neighbourhoods where the schools are situated. In relation to how the schools' operations are financed, schools may be government-assisted or fully privatized. However, these schools function according to the same guidelines as any other public school. They adhere to the national curriculum and educational mandates as prescribed by their respective MOE, and they participate in all national school activities. Additionally, as inherent to their denominational beliefs, educators at these schools are expected to embrace diversity by cultivating inclusive environments where learners feel safe, their differences are recognized and appreciated (Douglas, 2005).

This mode of operation, where a denominational body takes charge of the management of a school but follows the government's lead for what and how students should be taught, is the norm in the Caribbean and is better understood from the context of the development of schooling in the Caribbean region. In highlighting how educational development took place in the Caribbean, Coates (2012), as cited in Popov et al. (2012, p. 347), explained that:

“During the post-emancipation period, the education of ex-slaves within the British West Indies became one of the central issues of the day. Religious groups including the Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, Methodists, Mico Charity, Presbyterians, and Wesleyans, together with financial support from the imperial government and the Negro Education Grant, drove and shaped the development of education at all levels of the British West Indian society.”

Phase One of the Study: Qualitative

In order to achieve the first two objectives identified for the study, listed as (1) to use qualitative data collection to explore, identify and clarify key supports perceived to be necessary for educators' inclusive practice, and (2) to propose a model of key types of supports necessary for educators' inclusive practice in schools, the first phase of the field exploration was qualitative in nature. This method allowed the use of open-ended questions to understand educators' viewpoints concerning the provision of supports, to gain detailed information, and to answer identified research questions. There is inherent value in qualitative research where the emphasis is on observing from the eyes of the participants and making sense of experiences in terms of the meanings individuals bring to them. Hancock and Algozzine (2016) highlighted that this emic perspective is more useful if little is known about an issue, as was the case in this study. Merriam (1998, p. 1) pointed out that qualitative type of research proposes "the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education," since it is "focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspective of those being studied". Stake (2010, p. 14) also highlighted that "When we examine the practices of teaching, nursing, and social work, we see that the characteristics of qualitative research fit nicely".

Participants and Collection of Data

At this phase of the investigation, education directors were selected as the educators to be used because they were believed to be information-rich contributors. This is because they are responsible for many schools in their territories. It was believed that they would be in touch with the identified issue related to the provision of supports for educators in schools. It was recommended that gathering qualitative data ought to permit the development of a detailed understanding of a small number of people (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). During the period that this study was carried out, there was a total of ten education directors, with collective oversight for 52 schools and 661 principals and teachers. This number of education directors in the population was ideal since Creswell (2013) guided that, because of the depth of the discussions for a case

study, the quantity of participants ought to be restricted to 10. Lincoln and Guba (1985) advised that the number of participants ought to be adequate to get to a point where data collection turns out to be redundant. Additionally, Merriam (1998) further emphasized that there is not a set number, citing that saturation was reliant on the probing questions, the data being collected, the ongoing analysis, and the resources backing the study. As such, the total population of education directors was targeted for the study. When data collected from interviews revealed no new data and, therefore, no new themes, saturation was deemed to be achieved.

Description of Participants

During this phase, the educators who participated were ten education directors from the CARU. In total, twenty in-depth individual interviews and one focus group interview were carried out with the participants, and all of these interviews were considered usable. Since anonymity was a condition of their participation, the education directors' territories were masked during data analysis, and therefore, the participant profile only includes some general information that does not identify the participants directly. Their demographic information is, however, important to understand the experience of the participants and why their perceptions were deemed valuable for providing insight into the area of inquiry for this study. There was variety among the participants in relation to gender, level of education, prior special education training, years of experience serving as an administrator, and the total number of years serving as an educator. This is summarized in Table 3.5. All participants in the study were previously exposed to training in special education either through their teacher training programmes, master's degree, or through in-service workshops. Of the ten education directors, one of them had a doctoral degree, and nine of them had master's degrees. A number of them were also presently engaged in doctoral-level work. All the education directors had in excess of ten years of teaching experience in the Caribbean school system at public and private schools, and most of them have served as education directors for more than five years.

Table 3.5*Profile of Participants in Phase One of the Study*

Characteristics	Number of participants
Gender	
Male	3
Female	7
Highest Level of Education	
Bachelors	0
Masters	9
Doctorate	1
Special Needs Training	
Yes	10
No	0
Years Serving as an Administrator	
1 - 5 years	3
6 - 10 years	7
11- 15 years	0
> 15 years	0
Total Years as an Educator	
1 - 5 years	0
6 - 10 years	0
11- 15 years	2
16- 20 years	2
> 20 years	6
CARICOM Territory Represented	
Barbados; Dominica	1
Grenada	1
Guyana	1
Anguilla; British Virgin Islands	1
Trinidad & Tobago	2
St. Lucia	1
Suriname	1
Antigua & Barbuda; St. Kitts & Nevis;	1
Montserrat	
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	1

Prior to collecting data in this phase, the researcher had to begin making contact with potential respondents. Letters of invitation to participate in the study were sent via electronic mail to each education director (see Appendix C). The letter indicated that participation was on a volunteer basis, that anonymity of respondents would be preserved at all times, that confidentiality would be maintained in relation to private information shared, and that the results of the study would be available for viewing upon request. The participants were also alerted to two ways in which to communicate with the researcher in order to have questions or concerns addressed. No known threat to the participants existed, and this was shared with them also.

Interviews were the main technique used for data gathering in this phase. An interview is a meeting at which questions are asked, and answers are provided. Individual and focus group interviews are regarded as the most popular forms of data collection related to qualitative methods, and they both utilize open-ended questioning coupled with inductive probing of responses (Guest et al., 2017). An individual interview occurs between the participant and researcher alone. The participant is free to share ideas openly in response to probing questions. In contrast, a focus group interview occurs within the context of a group of participants, and the researcher encourages the sharing of views through discussions in an open and accepting setting (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

For this study, two rounds of individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview were led with the ten education directors. All interviews were conducted in English. For the first round of interviews, a video conferencing online application called “Zoom” was used to facilitate the process. This was deemed most convenient since the participants of the study live and work in various countries across the Caribbean. For the individual follow-up interviews and the focus group, face to face meetings were conducted. This was convenient at this juncture in the study since all of the education directors had gathered at an agreed-upon location for a week-long conference.

Individual Interviews

This form of data collection is usually time-consuming and labour-intensive but is able to provide rich data (Guion et al., 2001; Knox & Burkard, 2009). In this study, one-on-one interviews allowed participants to feel comfortable volunteering in-depth information with the researcher (Guest et al., 2017; Kaplowitz & Hoehn, 2001). A protocol for interviewing the education directors served to encourage trust and useful discussions. Conversing with participants through interviews, listening attentively, and probing when necessary unveiled perceptions within the context of the inquiry (Creswell, 2013). Answers to the questions from the semi-structured interview guide and subsequent use of probes allowed for in-depth interviewing as a method to clear up misunderstandings (Seidman, 2001).

The individual interviews took place at specific times requested by the education directors based on their availability. Questions used to elicit responses from participants were informed by the literature and theoretical underpinnings of the investigation. During development of the interview protocol, the researcher identified questions that were believed to be in alignment with the research questions explored during Phase One of the study. The questions were organized following social norms of ordinary conversation and phrased so that the interview participant's perception of the area of study could be gained. To ensure content validity the questions used in the initial round of interviews were reviewed by a jury of experts who work in teaching capacities at universities in the Caribbean and have considerable experience in education and research (Naz et al., 2022). Three individuals made up this group. Expert 1 has a doctorate, specialist skills in language and linguistics, and is an experienced researcher with more than 40 peer-reviewed publications. Expert 2 has a doctorate, specialist skills in inclusive education, and actively mentors candidates completing research writing. Expert 3 has a doctorate, specialist skills in anthropology, and serves as a director for research and innovation in education. Each was provided with copies of the research questions and the interview questions and asked to review and provide the researcher with necessary feedback. They were each required to provide

feedback on the criteria of clarity, simplicity, and answerability, and could also give suggestions for improvement on any items that were beyond that scope. They were told to put themselves in place of the respondents and judge if the actual respondent may understand and be able to answer the questions. Based on their suggestions, changes were then made to the interview guide to help participants share their perspectives in the study more efficiently. The changes which were made included improving the lexicon so that appropriate words were used in the protocol to ensure the politeness of the prompting questions. Additionally, some questions were revised and phrased in a neutral tone to avoid influencing the respondents' thinking process.

The initial round of interviews was completed between June and September 2017. At this time, in addition to four questions that allowed for the collection of background information on the participants, there were nine main questions on the individual interview guide relating to the participants' experiences, their observations, and professional knowledge and practice (see Appendix D). Some prompts were also included in the guide to further probe, if necessary. Table 3.6 shows how each of the research questions from the qualitative phase was related to the relevant questions on the first individual interview protocol.

Table 3.6

Research Questions and Relevant Interview Protocol Questions

Research question	Interview Question Numbers
1. What are the accessible supports for educators desirous of practicing inclusive education?	1, 2, 3, 4
2. How do educators perceive their experiences of the supports that are accessible for them to be able to facilitate inclusive education?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9

3. What are the desired supports for implementing inclusive education?	1, 7, 8, 9
4. What recommendations do educators have about the provision of supports for inclusive practice?	1, 5, 7, 8, 9

The subsequent round of interviews worked as a follow up to confirm the preliminary findings emerging from the data and took place in November 2018 in St. Lucia. At this point, since the researcher was analyzing data on an ongoing basis, it was deemed important to do individual follow-up interviews for gaining clarification and elaboration regarding some of the findings of the study to that point. Another interview guide was developed based on areas deemed by the researcher to require clarification and elaboration. There were six questions listed (see Appendix E).

Focus Group

Further exploration of the perceptions of the participant educators and the gathering of in-depth and nuanced opinions was also done by using the group interview. This was completed in November 2018 in St. Lucia. It consisted of all ten education directors and relied on the dynamics of their collective interaction to reveal similarities and differences of opinion held among them (Guest et al., 2017; Kaplowitz & Hoehn, 2001). For the focus group interview, there were five questions listed on the interview protocol and these facilitated engagements at the start, then exploration of the topic, and exiting or bringing the focus group interview to a close at the end (see Appendix F). Probing questions were also used here for elaboration and clarification, as was necessary.

Participants were greeted upon arrival and directed to the seating area which was set up in a circular pattern to encourage maximum interaction. During the first few moments, participants were welcomed, and gratitude was expressed for their involvement. The researcher got familiar with the group and shared an overview of the research topic, reminding participants that all views were encouraged. They were told that the interview would be digitally recorded;

however, anonymity and confidentiality would be kept. A few ground rules for discussion were also outlined, for example, “I want to hear varying perspectives and would like to hear from every person. I am hopeful that what is shared will be your honest opinions. In this space, it is understood that every view shared might not be in agreement with the rest of the group. So as to demonstrate respect for all, let us speak one at a time in the group and remember that whatever is shared by participants should be kept confidential”.

A blank piece of paper and a pen were provided for each participant to write down any questions that came to mind during the interview. At the start of the interview, each participant was provided with a handout that had visual and textual representations of the findings that emerged from the study up until this point. That served as a stimulus in order to focus the discussion and as a means of verifying the perceptions that came out of the study. At the end of the interview, the key points of the discussion were summarized from the researcher’s notes, and participants were asked to confirm the accuracy of the summary by sharing any comments. Even though the interviews were digitally recorded, notes were detailed by the researcher in the margins of the interview protocol sheet during the course of the interview.

Online Data Collection in Phase One

According to Wright and Ogbueho (2014, p. 41), data collection via electronic means have gotten more popular among academic investigators and this method is viewed as being able to deliver results in an economical and time-efficient way. Given that participants of this research were located at various sites across the Caribbean, for part of Phase One of the study, it was convenient to employ an online videoconferencing tool called Zoom to aid with data collection so that unnecessary time and resources would not have to be expended. Several researchers pointed out that no noteworthy differences occur among answers to surveys and interviews gathered via telephone, paper and pencil, and the internet (Deutskens et al., 2006; Knapp & Kirk, 2003).

Some concerns existed in the literature related to technical difficulties that may present when online tools are used (Granello & Wheaton, 2003). However,

in an attempt to combat these for the first round of individual interviews, the researcher enquired of all participants, through an initial phone call, about their competence and comfort with using online technology, and they were all competent and comfortable. Additionally, when sending the email instructions to each participant on how to join the interview, the researcher was very detailed regarding the steps to follow. To ensure that participants would not forget about their scheduled interview, multiple reminders were also sent out via email. This helped to confirm also that the population targeted had access and regular experience with internet communication, and a simple and respondent-friendly design was used for communication (Saleh & Bista, 2017). Personalization of invitations using personal greetings, titles, and school addresses were also done (Joinson et al., 2007).

During each of the initial individual interviews, impression-management and successful interactions were able to take place through the use of videoconferencing, which allowed for an exchange relationship that was visible through the use of video and the researcher's own eyes so that gestures and verbal cues could be detected. All ten education directors from this purposeful sample participated in the interviews, and the Zoom platform, which was used seamlessly, facilitated benefits as Markham and Byam (2008) discussed. These benefits include a global reach, economical data collection, and simple transcribing due to the application's voice and video recording capability. Zoom is a California based video communications tool that facilitates meetings between participants around the world via priced packages ranging from free to enterprise. It is user-friendly and does not require research participants to sign up or download the application but rather just follow a given link to the virtual meeting room that was sent to them.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis involves interpreting and making sense of the data, and goes beyond summarizing and organizing the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). This portion of the inquiry proved to be one of the most challenging aspects since data analysis was time-consuming, and many variations existed in

the literature about the steps to follow so that qualitative data might be analyzed. Creswell (2007) noted that analyzing data involved preparation, organization, data reduction into themes via coding, and finally representation of findings in tables, figures, or a narrative. Since this study intended to derive themes in phase one about the necessary supports for inclusive practice, it was important to select the most appropriate technique for analyzing the data to make certain that the data was thoroughly addressed, and the conclusions ascertained could be validated. Therefore, thematic analysis was the method of choice for data analysis.

Data analysis was ongoing during Phase One of the study. During individual and focus group interviews when participants indicated that they had no new data to share and when the researcher did not have any further probing questions, this was taken as a sign that saturation was achieved (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). During data collection, certain trends and issues also became apparent. The researcher took written note of these and subsequently asked follow-up questions to assess the worth of the observations and to further probe interview data with participants.

As presented in Table 3.7, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps to carrying out thematic analysis were followed for data analysis. Through the transformative process of thematic analysis, themes were examined and recorded within data allowing for the articulated perspectives of the participants to be incorporated into a model that sought to explain the supports necessary for educators' inclusive practice (Braun & Clark, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998).

Verbatim manual transcription onto a Microsoft Word document was done for each of the recorded interviews, and also included was contextual information from the researcher's notes such as gestures, pauses and technical difficulties experienced. There was no "cleaning up" of the transcript to make it more grammatically correct or to remove hesitations since it was believed that the details may possibly be revealing. Manual transcribing was appropriate in the case of this study since there were a small number of participants. An associate checked the precision of the transcriptions alongside the recordings. This was something that

participants were made aware of in advance. Adjustments were made to typographical errors, and the transcripts were anonymized so that the participants of the study could not be recognized easily.

During this process, as reading and re-reading of these transcripts were done, the researcher began to get more familiar with the data collected from the interviews, and explicit patterns began to become evident. While reading the transcripts, memos were written down related to variations in what participants were expressing, and early hunches in relation to codes were noted. In order to conduct analysis using the NVivo 10 package, the transcribed interviews were imported into the software. Later on, as coding was taking place, while transcripts were being reread, memos were also used to note early ideas and assumptions linked to transcripts in the software. NVivo software was designed to aid in data analysis for unstructured, non-numeric data, and it allows for organization, storage and retrieval of data so researchers can work more efficiently. The usage of NVivo allowed for a greater level of functionality which was vital for working systematically with the data and making sense of it.

In the next step of the data analysis process, coding was done in NVivo. Coding refers to assigning labels to small portions of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). NVivo allows for either auto coding or manual coding. The auto coding function in NVivo is recommended by the software manufacturers for analyzing structured questionnaires so as to obtain findings consistently. The designed setup permits gathering answers to individual questions in the form of a node. The auto coding feature was not utilized since there was a relatively small data set requiring close analysis. Manual coding was preferred for use since there was also a small data set generated from semi-structured questions. Coding was done in an emergent way, but there was an intersection of theoretical assumptions, disciplinary knowledge, research knowledge and experience, and the content of the data themselves, which aided in discovering the codes from within the data. Whenever something that was possibly relevant to each research question was identified, it was coded. Data was coded at multiple nodes such as ‘systematic

problem’, ‘promised supports’ and ‘discrepancy’. The thinking behind not generating a database of nodes in advance of analysis was to remove any chance of researcher bias.

Ideas were developed throughout the coding process by coding content to other nodes and reorganizing nodes in response to what was seen emerging from the coded data. This was the stage where the researcher began to focus on broader patterns in the data (bearing research questions 1 to 4 in mind) and considered the relationships to combine nodes into overarching nodes, which would be themes. A theme summarizes key discoveries from the data with regard to the research question, and denotes meaning contained by the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Looking for themes was actively done. These stages and processes were repeated to allow for going back to redefine the themes and discover if there were any data that were omitted. After settling on themes, each one was then described with a few words, for instance “written proposals that have been put forward”, “perception that what is written and said are not the same as what actually takes place”, and “recommendation to make better use of what is already there”. Therefore, the themes were extremely useful and meaningful for understanding what was shared within the data set.

The themes derived from the thematic network analysis informed the development of a conceptual model of necessary supports for educators’ inclusive practice (discussed in Chapter Four). This model, which was further developed from the initial conceptual model for the study (discussed in Chapter One), demonstrated the types of supports (independent variables) which impacted on inclusive practice (dependent variable). According to Cohen et al. (2007), variables are often operationalized constructs in which the researcher is interested. Independent variables are measurable inputs that cause a particular outcome in part or in total; it is a stimulus that encourages a response. Dependent variables are measurable outcomes which are affected to some degree by the input, antecedent variables. It is the consequence of, effect, or response to each of the independent variables.

Table 3.7*Six Stages of Thematic Analysis Applied in this Study*

Thematic Analytical Process	Braun and Clarke Practical Application in NVivo	Strategic Objective	Iterative process throughout analysis
1. Becoming Familiar with the Data	Transcribing interview data- verbatim transcription followed by reading and re-reading all the qualitative data collected; noting down initial ideas; import data into the NVivo data management tool	Data Management (<i>Open and hierarchal coding through NVIVO</i>)	Assigning data to refined concepts to portray meaning
2. Generating initial codes	Open Coding- determining interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collecting data relevant to each code		
3. Searching for themes	Categorization of Codes – Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme	Descriptive Accounts (<i>Reordering, 'coding on' and annotating through NVIVO</i>)	Refining and distilling more abstract concepts
4. Reviewing themes	Coding on - Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis		
5. Defining and naming themes	Data Reduction - On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story [storylines] the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme		Assigning data to themes/concepts to portray meaning
6. Producing the report	Generating Analytical Memos, Testing and Validating and Synthesizing Analytical Memos- The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts,	Exploratory Accounts (<i>Extrapolating deeper meaning, drafting summary statements and analytical memos through NVIVO</i>)	Assigning meaning
			Generating themes and concepts

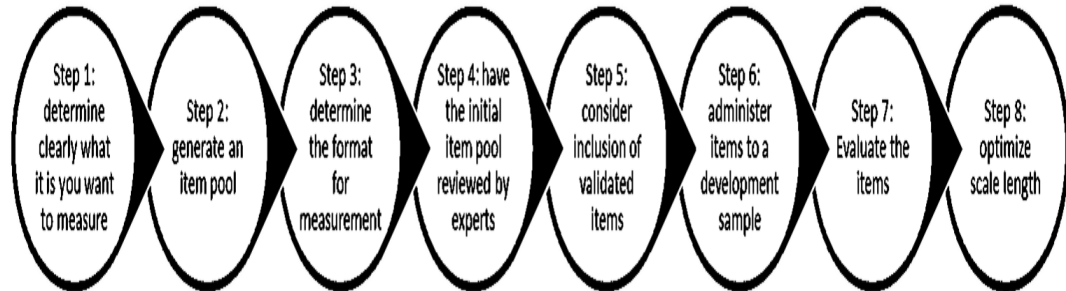
relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

Note. Sourced from Braun and Clarke (2006).

Interim Phase: Instrument Development

In this phase of the study, the research objective that was addressed was to develop a questionnaire directed at educators for validating the key types of supports. In Phase One of this research, the education directors freely expressed their views and experiences concerning very specific kinds of explorations of supports for educators' inclusive practice in schools. Research questions 1 – 4 were intended for determining this information. The researcher collected data about what supports were accessible to educators, what supports were desired, educators' current experience with supports in schools, and their recommendations. During this interim phase, the findings from research question 5 guided the construction of a survey to be used to confirm the key supports identified from Phase One of the study. Cohen et al. (2007) recommended that surveys with rating scales are great for use since they allow the gathering of data related to the extent of shared beliefs of a study's population.

Scale development was guided by the 8-step process given as the guidelines for scale development outlined by DeVellis (2003). These are shown in Figure 3.4. The development of the instrument within this measurement framework was also guided by the following criteria: 1. brevity; 2. ease of administration; 3. flexibility; 4. validity; and 5. reliability.

Figure 3.4*DeVellis (2003) Steps for Scale Development*

Firstly, a clear decision needed to be made regarding what was going to be measured. In this step, the researcher ensured that the boundaries of the phenomenon of supports were recognized so that the content of the scale remained inclusive of only the constructs that were intended to be measured. This boundary was the supports necessary for educators in schools in their inclusive practice. The key supports identified through each of the themes from Phase One of the study, along with the behaviour of interest (inclusive practice), were the variables that would be measured using a new survey.

Secondly, a pool of items was generated that will be included in the scale. The researcher sought to create a survey that used descriptions for each question related to supports variables from what was gleaned from participants who took part in the qualitative part of the study to completely understand the validity of the variables. Additionally, scale development for the inclusive practice variable was guided by the literature. The researcher chose to utilize Florian's (2014) "Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action (IPAA) Framework" to gain an understanding of inclusive practice. For each variable, the researcher listed seven questions to measure it.

Thirdly, it was determined by the researcher that a five point-Likert type classification from strongly disagree to strongly agree would be utilized. A Five-point scale was chosen as opposed to a seven-point scale since it was more easily understood by participants (Chisnall, 2005). Evidence points to a 5-point Likert scale increasing response rates by approximately 90 per cent as compared to the 7-point and 11-point scales (Hartley & MacLean, 2006). There were six additional questions on the questionnaire, which allowed demographic data to be collected.

Fourthly, the initial item pool was reviewed by six content experts so as to ensure that the items were worded appropriately and that they were adhering to the definition of the identified variables. This type of expert review was deemed necessary to ensure the construct validity of the items, and experts were intentionally chosen based on convenience and their knowledge of the field of education and skills in research and linguistics. Zamanzadeh et al. (2014) advised that although determination of a number of experts is partly arbitrary, the recommendation is for at least five people so that there is an adequate control over chance agreement. Two of the experts chosen are professionals in the field of English language arts, three are experts in the area of inclusive and special education, and one is an expert in the field of education research. This panel of experts were asked to make observations about: (1) the correctness of grammar for each of the statements; (2) representativeness of statements related to the constructs of administrative plan of action, educator efficacy mechanism, coordinated response to student functionality, ecological infrastructure, sensitization and advocacy, and inclusive education; and (3) how clear each item and instructions were stated. In addition, to address face validity and avoid misinterpretations and ambiguities which could have affected the questionnaire's objectivity and reliability, the researcher began by asking ten friends and family members who are educators to make observations about the appropriateness of the questions listed on the survey so as to ensure that the instructions given were clear and that the statements were easily read and understood. This is a strategy which Zamanzadeh and colleagues refer to as lay expert review, referring to those

similar to the intended population for the instrument. Since there is no statistical test to decide whether the questions listed on the questionnaire adequately covers or represents the variables, content validity was determined by the judgment of content and lay experts in the field (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008).

Based on the feedback received, consistent with the fifth step outlined by DeVellis, changes were made to the vocabulary and grammar, and that version was viewed as clear, concise, and highly relevant to the specific constructs that were being measured. The survey followed a design that was structured, by means of questions intended to measure respondents' agreement levels with a number of statements. At the outset, assurance was communicated about anonymity and confidentiality. Furthermore, general guidelines clearly stated that there was no correct or incorrect answer and thanked the participants in advance for their contribution. The main body of the survey design comprised of two parts. The first section gathered basic background data about the respondents using six general questions related to gender, highest level of schooling, profession and experience. The second section had questions related to each of the study's variables. A funnel approach was utilized since it was practical (Malhotra & Birks, 2003).

In the sixth step, before initializing the main survey, a pilot study was done using 42 respondents from a convenience sample. Researchers recommend a sample size between 30 and 100 participants for pilot testing, and this step allowed for reliability and validity to be established, and for the clarity of items presented to be verified (Cohen et al., 2007). The group of educators used for pilot testing was a group of educators from a variety of schools in Trinidad, and were recruited from a population of in-service educators which the researcher had access to at the University of Trinidad and Tobago. Responses were given through a Survio online link. Participants also reported back to the researcher about their experience after completing the questionnaire. Additionally, through the use of Zoom, during the time when some participants were engaged in completing the questionnaire on their web browser, some engaged in cognitive

pre-testing. By means of them sharing what came to mind while completing the survey, insights were gained about how statements were understood and responded. At the end, respondents had the opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification. The researcher also monitored if there were questions that were left incomplete and, during the discussion, asked if they experienced increased difficulty or inadequate guidelines. Completed questionnaires were analyzed using statistical analysis.

In steps seven and eight, seven questions were deleted because the pilot survey pointed out concerns with particular statements due to poor unidimensionality issues. Factorial Analysis was utilized to evaluate the validity of the constructs of administrative plan of action, educator efficacy mechanism, coordinated response to student functionality, ecological infrastructure, sensitization and advocacy, and inclusive education. Analysis of the reliability of the instrument was also determined by measuring the internal consistency using the Cronbach alpha coefficient for each variable. After checking reliability and validity of all the construct items again, the final version of the quantitative survey was settled upon for use (see Appendix H). The final instrument consisted of 47 questions. This was made up of five demographic questions and seven items for each of the independent variables (themes from research question 5) and the dependent variable (educators' inclusive practice). Florian's Inclusive Education in Action Framework (2014) guided the creation of items used to measure the dependent variable.

Phase Two of the Study: Quantitative

In order to achieve the additional objectives which were specified for the study (formulate hypotheses concerning the relationship between the key types of supports and inclusive practice from the qualitative data collected; use quantitative data from the administration of the questionnaire to test hypotheses concerning the relationships between the key types of supports variables and inclusive practice) a quantitative approach was selected by the researcher for the second stage of the field research. In the beginning of this phase of the study, five hypotheses were generated. These related to each of the independent support

variables and the dependent inclusive practice variable. These hypotheses are shared in Chapter 4 in association with the presentation of findings.

Participants and Collection of Data

The purpose of this two-phase, exploratory sequential mixed-methods study was to explore participant views about the provision of supports to use this information to develop and test a model of key supports for educators' inclusive practice with a sample of educators who work in schools in the Caribbean. In this research, the target research population was educators from the CARICOM who work in schools. Further, educators from the CARU were selected as the sample population. In Phase one of the study, education directors were purposefully selected as the participants. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) recommended that it is better to use a different sample for Phase Two of a study than was used in Phase One due to the fact that the purpose of the quantitative phase is often to generalize the findings. Additionally, it is advised that a large sample be used so that the researcher might be able to conduct statistical tests and potentially make claims about the population.

As such, in this quantitative phase or Phase Two of the study, principals and teachers from the CARU were utilized as participants. There was a total of 661 principals and teachers within the CARU. So as to ensure maximum participation, this total number of educators was intended for participation in this phase of the study. After making contact with the gatekeeper and receiving the required permission to conduct the study (see Appendix A and Appendix B), data collection for this phase began in late September 2019. Prior to gathering data at this point, the contact was established with potential respondents. Letters inviting involvement in the research were sent to potential participants via email. The letter indicated that involvement was voluntary, that anonymity would be preserved always, that all sensitive data would remain confidential, and that the contributors could ask to read the outcomes of the study. Two ways of contacting the researcher were shared with participants so that they could reach out with questions or concerns. There was no identified threat resulting from participation, and this was communicated also. The survey's link was also contained within the letter.

After two weeks of sending the request, the researcher checked the response rate and sent reminder emails to the subjects. When the quota was not

met within two months, the author asked the gatekeeper (lead Director of Education for CARU) to remind educators about participation in the survey at their end-of-year meeting. Telephone calls were also placed to schools to ensure that a quota for the sample of at least 30% was met. Fowler (2002, p. 42) specified that “There is no agreed-upon standard for a minimum acceptable response rate”. However, Dillman (2016) underscored that satisfactory rates typically range from 30% – 55%. The survey was self-administered online through Survio, and some were completed in hard copy and entered by the researcher into the database. As was highlighted earlier, several researchers specified that no noteworthy differences exist in responses gathered over telephone, the internet, and paper and pencil (Knapp & Kirk, 2003; Truell & Goss, 2002).

The process for the collection of data in this phase of the study lasted for approximately three and a half months. The researcher waited until the process of data collection was closed then to begin to analyze the data.

Online Data Collection in Phase Two

Due to the convenience of access and potential for the broad reach of the survey due to its potential to be distributed via the internet, online data gathering was the preferred choice for the quantitative collection of data. The Survio application was utilized. The sampling method allowed only certain individuals to access the survey via a specific link to Survio, so it was easy to determine the sample's response rate and representativeness (Schleyer & Forrest, 2000). Survio is an electronic survey tool that offers a user-friendly environment and is easy to work with, offering priced packages ranging from free to elite but did not require the research participants to sign up or pay. The population targeted had access and regular experience with internet communication, and a simple and respondent-friendly design was used (Dillman et al., 1999; Saleh & Bista, 2017).

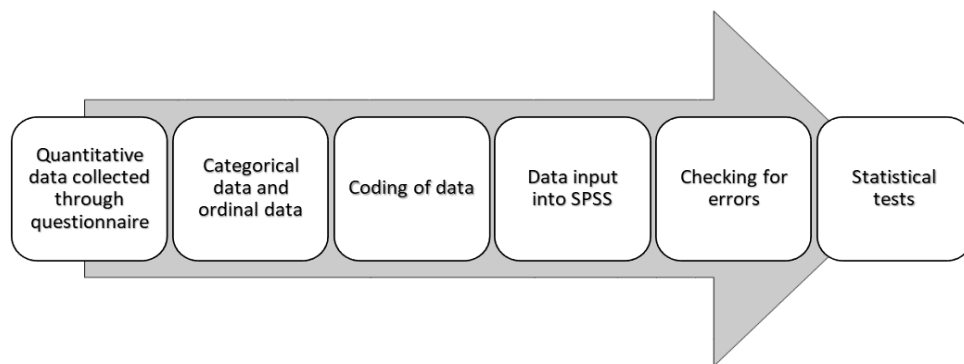
Additionally, similar to what was done in Phase One of the study, personalization of invitations using personal greetings, titles, and school addresses was done (Joinson et al., 2007).

Quantitative Data Analysis

The numerical data which were gathered were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The reason for selecting the SPSS package was because it permits the computation of all needed statistics required to interpret the data meaningfully. As a first step, data from the survey questionnaires needed to be inputted into SPSS and allotted numerical codes to match the Likert scale responses as categorical data. Next, the data was cleaned. This involved checking for logically consistent responses, that no data was missing, and that the same response number on the scale was not selected excessively. At this point, seven questionnaires from those collected were eliminated. Tests were then carried out related to research questions 5 and 6. The flowchart displayed in Figure 3.5 illustrates the process undertaken for data analysis in this study.

Figure 3.5

The Process of Quantitative Data Analysis



Using SPSS to run tests, reliability and validity were measured as a means of confirming the Phase One findings related to research question 5. The KMO test was used to ascertain the extent of sampling adequacy. Cronbach alpha statistic was used to check the internal consistency or show how closely items in the questionnaire related as a group. Factor loadings were also used to indicate the correlations of the questionnaire items with the factors or independent variables.

In order to answer research question 6, linear regression analysis was then employed to assess each individual proposed hypothesis. Since the desire was to

confirm one independent variable to one dependent variable at any given time, simple linear regression was used. This allowed for the researcher to examine the association between the respective independent variables (the identified necessary supports) and the dependent variable (educators' inclusive practice). Here, the r -value gave a suggestion of the strength and direction of the association, the R^2 value indicated the degree to which the total variation in the dependent variable could be reasoned as due to the independent variable, and the p -value reflected how good a fit the regression model is for the data or predicts the dependent variable.

Research Ethics

Ethics take into consideration those morally acceptable standards of behavior that ought to be observed (Giorgini et al., 2015). As guided by Creswell (2013), ethical contemplations are imperative when executing research; therefore, they were considered at all stages of the research. The steps followed are summarized in Table 3.7. All practical efforts were made to guarantee that contributors to the study were treated ethically, and that data were interacted with appropriately. Participation was voluntary, and that a choice existed to stop contributing at any time was made clear to participants. A reasonable amount of anonymity was also guaranteed for all participants, and no danger could result from participating.

Honesty, professionalism, confidentiality and accountability guided this study. All ethical considerations were in line with the Policy and Code on Research Ethics for the University of The West Indies, and the researcher also accomplished certification in the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative's (CITI Program) Responsible Conduct of Research (see Appendix G).

Table 3.8*Ethical Considerations Followed in this Study*

Research Process	Type of Ethical Issue	How Issue Was Addressed
Previous to conducting the study	Permission from site and participants	Identified and went through approvals; found gatekeeper and key personnel to help
Beginning the study	Disclosure of purpose of the study	Communicated with participants and shared the general purpose of the study
	Participants' choice	Shared with participants that they do not have to participate
Collecting data	Ensure that all participants get the same treatment	Avoided questions that could be seen as leading; withheld sharing personal impressions
	Respect for participants	Involved contributors as collaborators
	Collection of harmful information	Avoided releasing sensitive information
Analyzing data	Avoid relating only positive outcomes	Reported multiple perspectives; was open to reporting contrary findings
	Respect the privacy and anonymity of contributors	Transcriptions were labelled by number, instead of by name, and at the end of the study, tapes will be deleted; indicators that could lead to identification of the participants were removed or changed
Reporting, sharing, and storing data	Falsifying authorship, data, results, and conclusions	Reported honestly; used impartial language suitable for audiences of the research; followed APA guidelines; stored data on a home PC that was password protected

Summary

Presented in this chapter was a description of the philosophical foundations, procedures, the participants, and data analyses that applied to both phases of this mixed-methods research. As such, the criteria employed for partaking in the study, how individuals were enlisted, and how data was analyzed were shared. Overall, the current research has been designed to be valid, reliable, and secure against potential weaknesses. Research ethics were also taken into consideration at every phase of the investigation, and the chapter emphasized how the researcher attempted to ensure that the work adhered to the expected guidelines set forth by the University of the West Indies. In the chapter which follows, an account of the findings from the data gathering and analysis will be shared in detail.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, key findings and results of the research are presented without interpreting their meaning. The purpose of this two-phase, exploratory sequential mixed-methods study was to explore participant views about the provision of supports for educators' practice with the intention of utilizing this information to develop and test a model of necessary supports for educators to be able to practice inclusive education confidently. This was accomplished using a sample of educators who work in schools in the CARICOM. Phase One was a qualitative exploration of the key supports perceived to be necessary for educators' inclusive practice, in which individual and focus group interview data were collected from a sample of 10 education directors from a cluster of schools in the Caribbean Union. Since there are no existing instruments to assess the provision of supports for inclusive practice, in an interim phase, themes from the qualitative findings were used to develop a tool so that a series of hypotheses could be tested based on educators' views about the key categories of supports necessary, and the relationship between each of the supports and inclusive practice. Quantitative collection of data for the second phase of the investigation was from a larger sample group of 661 educators consisting of education directors, principals and classroom teachers from a cluster of schools in the Caribbean Union. The chapter is arranged based on phases of the study, and findings and results are shared associated with each of the research questions. Findings will first be shared from Phase One, which was qualitative, and then results will be shared from Phase Two, which was quantitative.

Findings from Phase One of the Study: Qualitative

The qualitative phase of the study was conducted first. In this phase, the researcher's objective was to use individual and focus group interviews to explore and identify key supports perceived to be necessary for educators' inclusive practice, and propose a model of key types of supports necessary for educators'

inclusive practice in schools. Outcomes from this phase of the investigation are shared on the basis of emergent themes, which are specific to research questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. These themes were found not only simply by summarizing the data but by interpreting and making sense of the data in the context of the study's initial conceptual framework and using a bottom-up or inductive approach that was more driven by the data itself. The themes presented for research questions 1 to 4 are focused and link to very specific kinds of explorations of supports for educators' inclusive practice. The themes presented for research question 5 are broad and sweeping constructs that link together the findings from research questions 1 to 4.

Findings Associated with Research Question 1 (RQ1)

The first research question of this investigation asked, "What are the accessible supports for educators desirous of practising inclusive education?" Interviewees discussed provisions or facilitating conditions for inclusionary practices which are within their reach that they are personally aware of and which they could readily access through their school. They shared about those resources and services they have accessed in the past, those they have heard about from others, and those documented in physical written papers or on relevant education websites. There was the emergence of four themes in relation to this particular question: Documented Plans; Collaborative Agency; Instructional Supports; and Related Services Supports. These are shown in Table 4.1, along with the sub-themes and some of the codes which led to the findings. Each of the themes represents a type of accessible support for educators who are desirous of practising inclusive education.

Table 4.1*Themes, Sub-Themes and Some Codes Associated with Research Question 1*

THEME	SUB-THEME	SOME CODES
Documented Plans	Education Policy and Papers	initiative recognize diversity education for all national programmes remedial program inclusive education policy education paper
	School Plans	listed strategies school's mission and vision school-specific situation school decision to adopt create together
Collaborative Agency	Public Partners	refer to social services national programmes coordination referral
	Private Partners	intense efforts assist volunteer raise awareness
Instructional Supports	Didactic tools	integrated use resource books numeracy manipulative
	Infrastructural provisions	ICT renovations OSHA compliant
	Professional development	workshops training additional study upgrade self
Related Services Supports	Internal Referral	related professionals remedial help
	External Referral	diagnostic assessment remedial help related professionals consultation

Theme 1 for RQ1: Documented Plans. The ‘Documented Plans’ theme was labelled as such as it was characterized by participants’ experiences of having read and heard about plans, policies and education papers that specified actions to be taken related to inclusive practice. This theme refers to written proposals that have been put forward at both the local school and national ministerial levels. Documented plans were viewed as support documents for educators as they assess, plan, monitor and evaluate student needs and use individualised teaching and learning approaches to meet their students' needs. The documented plans referred to by participants appeared to be child and family centred on educational, physical, behavioural, social and emotional needs. There were two sub-themes emerging that specified two types of documented plans which educators identified as being accessible to support their practice of inclusive education. These are Education Policy and Papers, and School Plans.

The word cloud shown in Figure 4.1 identifies some examples of what participants identified are contained in some of the documented plans. It could be observed that the participants in this phase of the study recognized that these documented plans include references to capacity building through the provision of personnel, provision of technology for use in schools, accommodations for assessment of students, and collaborations with other agencies like NGOs and health ministries. The most frequently mentioned words by participants who spoke of these examples were special, assessment, school, national, training, policy, unit, support, and centres. These words were indicative of plans for dedicated special education units which would provide support, national programs and policies, continuous professional development opportunities for school staff, and proper identification of students’ needs through assessment.

students with SEN. During the focus group interview, one participant illustrated these views:

I am heartened when I read of the plans that the Division of Education wants to adopt, and I know my colleagues might agree for their territories. They are all good and if I am being honest, they are truly needed for guiding how we could treat with some of our special students. These [documents] are often clear on addressing targets and they offer good ideas about teaching and learning adjustments which are in line with international mandates. Personally, I have been invited to talks when they were seeking to develop the Special Educational Needs Policy for us. So there was collaboration with service providers and for the most part the document is realistic and it offers practical and readily understood guidance for all those involved.

Interviewees also described other education documents that have been sent their way that serve as resources for guiding their practice. In the first round of interviews, in response to the question “Are you familiar with any of the education documents in your region that address inclusive education?” one participant shared:

I know based on the government's perspective that they are on board in terms of providing education for all students. It's something that they are talking about and a way they want to go. I do not believe we have a specific policy on it but I have seen memos on various things come to my school. Something as simple as the Early Identification Checklists that the Division of Education made available to schools is one example. These are indicators teachers can use and they address language, mathematics, pre-readiness academic skills, physical/motor development, and social/emotional development skills. So those teachers in the schools can use it to screen students' needs. I know that there is a document which is available online, the World Data on Education for [country], which specifies collaboration with NGOs such as The Christian Children's Fund and The Social Centre for meeting students' needs. It also lists the Early Identification Checklists, and states that allocation of resources and flexibility in the organization of the school day are considerations for inclusive practice.

The participants shared that the policies and other papers that are available to them influence their motivations for placing emphasis on inclusive education. In the individual interviews, in response to the question “Would you say that you place emphasis on inclusive practice from principals and teachers?” all of the participants responded in the affirmative, and some further elaborated on their familiarity with education documents in their region that addressed inclusive education. One participant stated that:

As a result of the various initiatives from those higher up there is a mandate for education for all. We try to follow in line with this and everything that we do is in line with the guidelines that come to us. We sometimes have challenges with the follow through, because as you know not everything, they specify for us is as it says, but we try to follow the plans given.

And another commented:

I always advise my teachers to do all in their power for the children. This, after all, is why we are in the business of education, and it is what Jesus would want us to do. These children are not all the same and the policy makers know this and they try to develop things for us to use to work with the children. As to what I can remember, I know that the Education Sector Paper 2014-2018 speaks to the Special Needs Unit that has now been functioning for some time. It also lists continuous professional development for the teacher, and the need for flexible school schedules. The Guidance and Welfare Unit, School Health Unit, School Welfare Programme, National Inclusion Policy, and that we have a National Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordinator are all things listed there. The document also speaks to capacity building through programs such as a Master’s program in Counseling and Trauma Sensitive Interventions that they want to start. I don’t know if they started that one yet though, but I tell teachers to make use of it. We must be inclusive because, for example, the guideline says that assessment or examination has to be administered in different formats. So, they [teachers] know this.

Many of the education directors were aware of various initiatives that have been adopted by their school districts as a direct result of education policy and

papers. They pointed out that these policies and papers recognized diversity and the principle of education for all. While few countries had inclusive education policies that were available to educators, in their accounts related to Education Policy and Papers, participants made reference to the fact that many of the CARICOM countries' official education ministry websites also documented information related to a specific division within their education ministry that provides itinerant services for students who have been referred and diagnosed with disabilities.

Table 4.2 shows a list of education policies and papers that were referred to by participants in the study, along with some specific examples of the plans they identified that the documents contained. The documents identified were not the same type for all the CARICOM countries, and some were more recent than others. Participants recalled some of the key components of education policies and papers that they perceived were akin to documented supports that are accessible by them. Twelve documents were identified by participants. These documents relate to inclusive practice in Trinidad & Tobago, Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Anguilla, Saba / St. Eustatius, St. Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, Montserrat, and St. Vincent. It was noted that only two countries in the CARICOM region (Trinidad and Tobago and Antigua and Barbuda) had inclusive education policy documents known to participants in the study. Interviewees recognized plans for inclusive practice in six countries (Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saba/St.Eustatius, St. Lucia and St. Vincent) as being accessible from compiled education reports. Education strategy papers for four counties in the region (Guyana, Anguilla, St. Kitts & Nevis, and Montserrat) were identified by participants.

Table 4.2

List of Education Policy and Papers Referred to By Participants in the Study and Examples of the Plans They Identified That the Documents Contained

Country	Document Title	Examples of Plans from Documents
Trinidad & Tobago	Inclusive Education Policy	– Student Support Services Division – National Policy on Persons with Disabilities – Continuous Professional Development opportunities for school administrators and teachers – Access to Special Schools and Individualized Education Programmes (IEPs) – Special Schools as Model Resource Centres – Dissemination of relevant information and research findings – Option to adapt the curriculum to accommodate for students' identified needs – Advocating for Access to Public Transport Facilities – Distance Education Unit – Model inclusive schools
Antigua & Barbuda	Special Educational Needs Policy	– Partnership with parents – Education Officer for Special Needs – Coordinator of Special Needs – Individualised Education Plans (IEP) and appropriate curriculum – training of current staff – Collaborating with outside agencies including the Ministry of Health, Welfare Department, Probation Department, Community Centres, Community Clinics – School Action Initiative – Request for a statutory assessment
Barbados	National Education For All 2015 Review Barbados Report	– Parent Volunteer Support Programme – Ministry of Education maintenance of high-quality school environments – Administering the Basic Skills Assessment Battery (BSAB) to all pupils

		– Schools' Positive Behaviour Management Programme (SPBMP)
Dominica	World Data on Education- Dominica	– NGOs such as The Christian Children's Fund and The Social Centre – Early Identification Checklist – Affirmative allocation of resources – Flexibility in the organization of the school day
Grenada	World Data on Education- Grenada	– Alternative adaptive strategies to sit Common Entrance Examination (CEE) – Professional development and support through Inclusive and Special Education teacher training
Guyana	Guyana Education Sector Paper 2014-2018	– Special Needs Unit – Assessment or examination administered in different formats – Continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers – Flexible school schedules – Guidance and Welfare Unit – School Health Unit – School Welfare Programme – National Inclusion Policy – National Special Educational Needs (SEN) Coordinator – Capacity building programmes such as a Master's programme in Counselling and Trauma Sensitive Interventions
Anguilla	Strategy for Education 2015-2020	– Developing a Vision for Education (DOVE) Unit – Special Schools – School Counsellors – Department of Social Development – Computer labs at all schools – Remedial Reading and ESL specialists – Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) – Public Assistance programme – Provision of school materials

Saba/St. Eustatius	World Data on Education-Netherlands	– Educational Advisory Centres – Teacher training – Local municipal authorities – Participation Council – Regional Training Centres
St. Lucia	National Education For All 2015 Review St. Lucia Report	– The National Enrichment and Learning Programme (NELP) – Training for teachers through UNICEF and in areas such as Speech Therapy, Audiology and Special Needs Assessment – Support programmes to assist needy students through school feeding, book bursaries, textbook rental, transportation subsidy – Guidance and counselling services – NGOs such as the National Community Foundation (NCF) and the St. Lucia Social Development Fund (SSDF) to provide financial assistance to needy students – Reduced Pupil/Teacher ratio – Special Needs teachers from the Blind Welfare Association – Special Education Unit – Appointment of an Education Officer for Special Education – Policy document regarding rights of persons with disabilities – Resource labs at selected schools – Enhanced learning environment of Special Schools through remedial centres and recreational facilities – Improved security at Special Education Schools
St. Kitts & Nevis	2017–2021 Education Sector Plan	– Ministry of Social Development – Upgrading institutional infrastructure and learning facilities – Teacher training – Student Support Services Unit – Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) – Special Education Curriculum – Special Education Policy – Parent Sensitization Sessions

Montserrat	Education Development Plan 2012-2020	– Technology – Teacher training – UNICEF quality of teaching review – Capacity building and CPD programmes – Coaching and mentoring framework – Assessment and tracking system that monitors ‘at risk students’ – Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) – Referral, assessment and statement of need policy and procedure
St. Vincent	St. Vincent and the Grenadines Education For All 2015 Review	– Information and Communication Technology (ICT) – Teacher training – Infrastructural development – Guidance and counselling

The participants noted that they might not be aware of all of the education policies and papers that exist, and many of them committed to doing further research on the issue as their interest was piqued as a result of the discussion that they were engaging in with the researcher. However, generally, they were aware that the various policies and papers do the following:

- a) Reaffirm commitment to the domestic and international political obligation for education. In countries where policies do not yet exist, a desire to create special education or inclusion policy was noted. Compulsory basic education was found to be the right of all children in the CARICOM territories covered in this study, and this was deemed by research participants as “*a step in the right direction*”.
- b) Improve accessibility of social services for vulnerable or at-risk students. Grants for food, transportation and school supplies, along with the ability to access health care easily, were found to be priority areas.
- c) Share public relations and communication strategy so that stakeholders can become aware of best practices, sensitization and advocacy, and so

that the respective division of education may be responsive and accountable in its governance and management.

- d) Address physical infrastructure, resources and curricular reform, along with alternative methods of assessment and teacher training for meeting the needs of learners.
- e) Communicate ideas about the status, morale and professionalism of educators. Emphasis on teacher preparation and training is prominently documented and the plan expressed is to recruit capable teachers.

School Plans. Plans conceptualized and recorded by the school's employees were also considered a type of documented support that is accessible. Participants noted that these serve as guidelines for how the needs of all students may be met and that they prompt staff to consider what additional facilitating conditions are needed at the school to be able to do this. Participants highlighted that all school-specific plans resulted from staff meetings and the work of committees. It was shared that school staff engage in the yearly revision of strategic plans for each of their schools, and these often specify ways in which members of staff can work to address the needs of all learners enrolled. This was shared in the following way by one participant in the study:

Every year my principals, teachers and other staff members have two days of professional development day ahead of the start of the new academic year. At this meeting they work on planning how they can serve all of the students and the principals then submit a formal school plan to us.

Referring to some of the items communicated in their specific school plans, all of the participants agreed that their school plans could be acknowledged for embracing the philosophy of inclusive educational practices, but to varying degrees. The plans promote the belonging and acceptance of all students. Every

education director in the study noted that each of their schools' documents specifies the school's vision and mission. Also communicated via the school's plan are activities that staff and students would be engaged in during the school year that might lead to improved outcomes to the teaching and learning experience. Some examples of these given by participants during the interviews are plans for a Talent Parade, Prayer Day, Cops and Kids Debate competition, upgrading of Science and Technology Labs, DI workshops, and utilizing instructional groupings. In some of the schools, plans also list specific strategies such as having a School-Based Team to identify and give recommendations to class teachers for students who are struggling in their classrooms. Interviewees admitted that this was not practised in all schools, though, even though it may be stated in some school plans.

Two participants in the study emphasized that their school plans often facilitate excellent outcomes for all students and that this is led at the school level by teachers and administrators. When prompted further to define what excellent outcomes referred to, both participants elaborated on the school's principal leading out in making the school environment conducive for all, and the class teacher being able to respond to the characteristics presented by the child and then facilitate the student's active engagement in classroom experiences. In response to the question "What has been your experience of practising inclusive education?" during the focus group interview, one of these participants spoke about the collaborative efforts of teachers and administrators, and their decision to adopt themes for their schools' professional development activities that emphasize working with all students. One interviewee said:

When we were planning, we always want excellent outcomes for all students and to achieve this we focus sometimes on the teachers and administrators, so they know what to do. We once decided to adopt the theme for the year to be Transformational Leadership for Excellence in Adventist Education. We included in the school plan that when our professional development day came around we would look at topics like responding when kids don't learn, transformational leadership principles, attracting and retaining students/towards a healthy enrollment, progressive discipline, how

to attract financial resources to your school, and duty of care. So, putting these in place helped us to focus on our work and how that would translate to the children and benefit them. All of them.

A number of participants shared that to some extent the school plans lead to accountability as what is written there are plans that, if not achieved, might signify that the principal and staff are not meeting their targets. Specific to the desire for one school to offer more opportunities for remedial work for students based on their school plan, one of the interviewees shared:

We chart some of the things we want to see. So at one point we had 239 students and for that population we devised a plan to get an IT room and a mathematics lab. Everyone believed that these would be beneficial to meeting the needs of the students so we wrote it down to the letter. For the IT room we wanted 25 new computers and for the Mathematics Lab we wanted 35 desktops, 4 laptops, 40 chairs, and 38 desks in that space.

In this example, these furnishings for each of the labs were then what the school worked toward.

Theme 2 for RQ1: Collaborative Agency. It was found that another accessible support for educators desirous of practising inclusive education is collaborative agency. This refers to the option to work together with individuals and groups. These may be private volunteers and/or public organizations. These collaborations result in programs and facilities which are made available to students, their families, and teachers at school. To be accessed, however, the participants noted that educators need to reach out to the volunteers and organizations. Most popularly, this is done through student referrals. Less often, making petitions for donations of expertise, time and financial resources are also done. Each of the participants shared examples of various partnerships that their schools have either entered into in the past or that they are aware of that exist for possible future collaboration in meeting the needs of students. There were two subthemes emerging here. These are public partners and private partners.

Public Partners. Participants in the study referred to government organizations that are available to work together with educators, in most cases free of charge, as public partners.

The most popular public partner, which was highlighted by all ten of the participants, was a given country's ministry or division of education. It was found that various arms within this ministry usually exist, and each is often responsible for providing a different service. In sharing about how personnel from the Pupil Referral Unit within the Department of Education responded to a referral at one of their schools, one participant said:

Those at the school know that when they suspect a child may be having difficulty they can refer. Even though our school is considered private, I remember in one case, because all schools can access services, we did the referral to the Pupil Referral Unit and the child was served.

Another participant referred to collaboration with the School Facilities arm of the education ministry as they were sharing about how their school was improved to accommodate students with physical impairments. The interviewee said:

...but the division of education, I would have to send requests for the works that are to be done, what I wanted done for the holiday, and those works were a part of it. So they did send persons in and they did fund a couple of the things...

An additional widely held view by the participants of the study of a public partner was a given country's division of social services. During the interviews, participants recognized that a common challenge facing educators in schools relates to students' social needs, i.e. students coming from impoverished backgrounds and who are unable to afford school supplies, transportation to and from school, the purchase of spectacles, etc. This, they noted, impacts on the student's academic achievement when he/she has to miss school as a result of these needs. Participants in the study shared that in these situations, families can be directed to the country's division of social services, which could provide

support through the approval of grants. The following statements reflect this type of partnership as expressed by three different participants in the study:

We asked in letters a while ago, we asked the government for a social worker in the school because the school is in an area where the mothers who have two or three jobs, fathers are not in the house all the time, some of the children, when they see their mother it is the next morning, so it is a very difficult neighbourhood where the school is for the children. We asked the government for a Social Worker because we need a person like that in our schools because the teachers can't handle it.

There was this student the teacher was complaining could not see the board and was taking down all of the notes wrong. She spoke to the parent but even though they got the eye test, couldn't afford spectacles. So because we knew that we could refer the family to social services, we did that and they ended up getting money for the spectacles.

My schools receive communication that the ministry of social development and family services has a number of grants available for families in need. I encourage my principals to disseminate this information widely at PTA [parent teacher association] meetings, so that even the children with disabilities could get grants.

Yet another public partner that was identified by all of the participants was the health ministry in the countries where their schools exist. Four of the interviewees spoke about national programs which are implemented for vision and hearing screening yearly for all students who enter into school. This allows for early intervention if special sensory needs exist. One of these participants said:

Every year for all schools on the island nurses go out to the schools to test the children for hearing and vision. We could also refer the children to go to the health centres to get the service for free.

Two participants also shared about the ability to direct parents to clinics at local hospitals where students can be assessed for attention deficit hyperactivity

disorder, autism and developmental delays. Mental health services were also referred to by a few of the participants during their interviews. In this regard, national programs are also run in some of the CARICOM countries. It was shared that educators should be able to access counselling services for students in need due to suspected emotional and behavioural disorders.

While all participants did not agree that collaborations proceed smoothly with schools and public partners, each of the participants in the study was aware of the possibility for coordinated efforts between their schools and government agencies.

Private Partners. This takes into consideration individuals, corporate agencies, NGOs, and overseas governments who are open to collaboration. All of the participants were aware that there are these kinds of agencies that are available for working with educators to be able to meet students' needs. Some are offered completely free of charge, and others are available at a small cost. Participants related that they acknowledged the value of private partners in education. A participant shared why this is necessary by saying the following:

We are always operating with limited financial and human resources.

In this regard, the participants in the study would have shared that their principals and teachers sometimes go above and beyond their roles, so they are actively on the lookout for partnership opportunities with individuals, corporate agencies, non-governmental organizations, and foreign governments.

It was recognized among the education directors who were interviewed that the ability to work with private partners needed to be sought out in some cases since the willingness and availability of the agency are not always advertised. In some cases, they expressed that they create opportunities for partnership. For example:

My principals and teachers let parents know that they are welcome to come into the school and volunteer.

This kind of private partnership is with individual parents and is dependent on the willingness and availability of parents of children attending the school, but it was considered important to supplement human resource capacity. Participants shared that some parents often volunteer for fundraising activities and chaperoning.

Another example of creating opportunities for partnership was shared in this way:

When we wanted to do the project, the principal reached out to the local businesses in the area.

This kind of partnership is with a corporate agency, and was also initiated by the school.

During interviews, the participants also shared that educators are able to respond to advertised opportunities for collaboration with private partners. Organizations such as the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the European Union (EU), the World Bank, along with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sometimes organize training events, offer grants, and technical proficiency to advance the education for all agenda. In sharing an instance of when they would have taken advantage of this kind of support from a private partner to facilitate training for their teachers, a participant said:

I can't remember who it was but someone from the school saw an advertisement for training in education for all on UNESCO's website. So at one point a few of the teachers signed up for the course and they all got their certificate of participation.

Additionally, within the denominational organization that the schools to which the education directors who participated in this study belong, one participant identified The Curriculum and Instruction Resource Center Linking Educators (CIRCLE) website, a resource for Christian educators that is owned by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, as being useful for quality curriculum and instruction ideas for meeting the needs of a learner with special needs. One participant was hopeful that supports for educators' practice of

inclusive education could be further enhanced through continued alliances with private partners. The participant expressed:

I think there are many other stakeholders who have made a contribution and would continue making a contribution like the churches and so on.

The participants in the study appeared to recognize private partners as being more accessible than public partners in some cases.

Theme 3 for RQ1: Instructional Supports. This theme refers to access to teaching materials, conducive classroom environments, and opportunities for educators to develop their instructional abilities. Elaborations from interviews led to the understanding that in many cases, these instructional supports are not intentionally given for the purpose of inclusive practice. Rather, schoolteachers and administrators seek to channel the same resources that they have either historically been receiving or that have been newly introduced to them with other educational or social purposes in mind, so as to better meet the identified needs of diverse learners that are becoming more popular in their classrooms. Based on what the participants in the study shared during the interviews, three subthemes related to this theme. These are didactic tools, infrastructural provisions, and professional development.

Didactic Tools. This subtheme refers to teaching tools. Based on what participants shared, it was found that all of their schools are provided with tools like charts, mathematics manipulatives, and textbook guides on various subject areas for teachers. There are also computer labs at schools with internet access to allow for the use of technology at some of their schools. A few of their schools even have projectors. Additionally, many educators can access resources via the internet on websites that contain worksheets, checklists, videos, and other simulated activities.

Some examples of statements made by various participants in the study which support the finding of access to didactic tools are:

We have a fairly good supply of computers so children can access the computers for IT, classwork and any other service that is needed.

To teach math they have base ten blocks and other counters, etc.

Many of the classrooms have a class library.

Some of the teachers who are good with technology use the CIRCLE website to get worksheets that they use in their lesson plans.

When I go around to observe lessons, I see teachers using interesting videos to capture the attention of the students and differentiate instruction.

Notably, there was variation identified among the education directors related to how many of these didactic tools they had at their disposal. While some schools had internet access, for example, others did not. One participant said:

The regular classroom resources you [the teacher] will try to provide from to take care of the students who are in need of, you know, special intervention.

This excerpt demonstrates that not all schools may readily be given the appropriate didactic tools but that teachers show initiative in making the best use of them to serve students' needs. Generally, however, among the participants in the study, there was an awareness that these didactic tools are common and could be accessed.

Infrastructural Provisions. It was found that some schools are outfitted with the right kinds of physical space to allow for the inclusion of all students.

Some of the school buildings have undergone an upgrade of their facilities within recent years, and others have plans in the imminent future to do so. The participants in the study shared that some of their schools have ramps to allow wheelchair access. These changes are mainly due to occupational safety and health administration (OSHA) compliance. Additionally, there is a willingness on the part of school administrators to relocate classes from upstairs of buildings to downstairs since ground floor rooms are more accessible for those with mobility issues.

In describing their own response to having a student with an identified physical impairment in one of their schools, one education director shared what was done to support instruction for that student and the straightforwardness with which it was accomplished:

So I started working on making sure that the school was OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] ready. Railings were the first thing I worked on and when she [the student] came she needed railings to get around. The other thing was doing those ramps so that wheelchairs could have gone on too. In terms of [classroom location], we had one building that had an upstairs, so the Form Fives usually would be at that upstairs, but when it was time for her to get to form Five we had to shift the Form Five down. I was in the process of finding out what is the best way for us to have an elevator going up to the second floor just for her, but the logistics was a little difficult and it would have taken a lot. Even the angle that the stairs would have had to go if we would have had to put even a ramp for her to walk, it was proving to be difficult, so what we had to do was move the entire class, which the class understood very well, and that was the only class we ever really had Form Five downstairs for.

Further elaborating on how these infrastructural changes were able to be accessed, the participant said:

I would have to send requests for the works that are to be done, what I wanted done for the holiday, and those works were a part of it. So they [the Ministry of Education] did send persons in and they did fund a couple of the things but the school board would have done their aspect, and agreed, because before anything could be done I have to take it to the school board because the school is run by a board. The process was easy because I spoke my way through.

Related to the internet and other technology, upgrades to buildings needed to be done to accommodate this. One participant explained:

They [the Division of Education] gave us computers but we didn't have place for them to be plugged in. The electrical was faulty. So we had to redo the wiring. Then to get the correct bandwidth for the internet access they had to come in and install the server and other routers around the school.

A few other participants also related similar stories demonstrating how instructional supports became available and how they made what they were offered work for their schools.

Professional Development. It was found that opportunities for training were also accessible as instructional support for educators. One of them established this by sharing:

...we do have different programs and sessions that are meant to help the teachers especially a professional development session individually, as well as different schools, to get a focus in an inclusive teaching strategy (pause) how can we better identify or implement these to help the varying learners in the classroom with different abilities.

Participants noted that their principals and teachers had opportunities to engage in yearly professional development days hosted by their local schools, their board, and their respective MOE. Educators also take it upon themselves to do further study so that they can upgrade their qualifications to better meet students' needs. For example, a participant shared:

Well, they, in [country], they have sent a few persons overseas to do some training at the master's level...

Referring to one way in which the need for professional development activities are prompted, it was highlighted that school supervisors are keen on

monitoring students' progress and that, based on their observations, they recommend training.

Theme 4 for RQ1: Related Services Support. Related services support refers to in school or out of school referrals and the opportunity to work with paraprofessionals to plan instructional responses. These are viewed as external to the educator's practice. Related services were the activities that help children with disabilities benefit from their schooling by allowing them to be accommodated through extra help in needed areas. In the study, education directors explained that schools might access: emotional/behavioural counselling for students; referral and assessment of students who are suspected of having academic, behavioural and emotional challenges; and consultations with professionals such as visiting special education instructors, clinical/educational/neuropsychological psychologists, and private speech and language pathologists who aid in providing recommendations for the classroom teacher after a child's diagnosis.

Educators utilize related services support to help their students with identified special needs to be able to benefit from instruction at school. This support stems, to a limited extent, from the respective ministries of education, and to a greater extent, from parents who have taken it upon themselves to locate and fund services privately in response to their child's identified needs. Two subthemes were noted for related services support since they reflect how this type of support is accessed. They are through internal referral and external referral.

Internal Referral. The participants pointed out that some of their schools have greater access to some resources than others. In places where specialist teachers, chaplains, and counsellors were stationed at the school, for example, classroom teachers could send students to the counsellor when the need arises. In responding to the question "What supports are provided to your schools for inclusive education?" a participant gave an example in this way:

Two SCC [territory] schools has its own school counsellors unit, right. So you have school counsellors who they will service both

the private and our assisted schools. Right, and it is called school counsellors because they are working as guidance and social workers so that is why there is a difference terminology the ministry would call them guidance officers but ours [are called] in school counsellors because our counsellors are doing guidance and social work right now. And then we have chaplains, who would, while they are doing their religious part, they would assist students and so on with, you know, the same social work and so on comes into play there.

In the example shared above, chaplains were also accessible.

Describing an in house service at one school in particular, another participant said:

There is a reading specialist at X working in the library. If students are having difficulty with reading in class, they are referred to her. Through her students are assessed in different ways like observation and test set by the reading specialist teacher. Students work in small groups with about 2-8 students with language support with 2 sessions of 40 minutes per week. Each student has an individual educational profile card used to record the student's progress.

Some schools also have functioning school-based teams. These are set up to deal with academic and behavioural issues that arise in classrooms, and a group of staff members meet together to discuss student progress. Only three education directors reported having functional teams.

External Referral. The participants of the study communicated that when teachers and principals are unable to help a student sufficiently at the school alone, they can sometimes access outside help for the student.

The extract below shows a response given by a participant during the focus group interview. The respondent was the first person to itemize the steps in the external referral process used in their schools. It was in relation to the question, “What has been your experience of implementing inclusive education?” Other respondents then followed in like manner, sharing about the process.

In our mix of schools, we pride ourselves with the commitment of transforming lives. With that being said, you can imagine that we have a higher percentage of special needs students than other schools because we also have private schools. My teachers often make use of the formal referral program. (pause) I believe that first, if a child is identified as a special needs child, they have to file a referral form that both teacher and principal fill out based on observation. This form also has a checklist segment and was created by the MOE [ministry of education] Special Needs Department. Once the child meets the requirement of the form, the parent is then called in and a recommendation is made to have them evaluated by a point person in the MOE. A formal assessment is conducted, and a report is sent back to the school.

Again, it was emphasized that in some Caribbean countries, depending on the school's location, whether in a rural or an urban area, more related services support may be available when an external referral is done compared to other areas. Speaking to this, one participant in the study shared:

In more developed territories you would have additional support like the reading specialists, speech therapists, the physical therapists and all of those...

Where a particular MOE is directly involved in the provision of related services for schools implementing inclusive education, it was shared that “*professional development sessions*” are made available to educators; that personnel from the MOE “*might probably help with diagnosis*” of students; and that “*more government schools have counsellors attached to them*”. Whilst a minority also associated free transportation to and from school and the school feeding programme as related support services for inclusive education, all agreed that support during national examinations that occur at various times in the year are related services that are granted following external referral. One interviewee said:

Concessions are given at specific times to students with special needs. I know for certain that they relate to scheduling, presentation, the setting and (pause) oh yes, response. So it's like

this...students with writing difficulties are given additional time to complete it. Prints are enlarged in the exam materials to accommodate the students who have a visual impairment. Students with a physical inability or whose handwriting is not legible, especially for examinations may have a scribe provided for them to ensure that they are not placed at a disadvantage for assessments.

Participants in the study indicated that concessions are given to students who have diagnosed disabilities for these exams. It was shared that at these times, requests for formal diagnoses are most popular because getting personnel to come and assist on the day of the exam or letting the child have an accommodation like extra time for the exam is dependent on it. In instances where getting the diagnosis is dependent upon the parents, participants in the study explained that *“it depends on if the parents can afford it”*. They also agreed that there is a prevalent denial of parents regarding diagnostic assessment through their governments since they are told there is a waiting list.

Of note was one education director highlighting the multiple related services accessible through other arms of government, which can be linked to meeting the needs of all students. However, these may not be widely known about and accessed by all. Some of these services include health screenings and counselling services; public transportation; school lunches, occupational health and safety site assessments; and social welfare grants available to families for the purchase of medication, food, and other necessities.

Findings Associated with Research Question 2 (RQ2)

This research question asked, “How do educators perceive their experiences of the supports that are accessible for them to be able to facilitate inclusive education?” This question built upon RQ1, and the findings relate to the supports that the participants in the study identified as accessible. During interviews, participants expressed both pleasure and displeasure related to various experiences that they, along with other educators, have in their school. There were

four themes that arose in relation to this specific research question. They are a mismatch between ideals and practice, ambiguity about supports, restrictive reach, and work in progress. These are shown in Table 4.3, along with the sub-themes and some of the codes which led to the findings. Each of the themes represents educators' perception of their experiences of the supports that are accessible for them to be able to facilitate inclusive education.

Table 4.3

Themes, Sub-Themes and Some Codes Associated with Research Question 2

THEME	SUB-THEME	CODES
A mismatch between ideals and practice		platform proclamation long wait time nothing done just words
Ambiguity about supports	Inconsistent availability of supports	one time sometimes limited access
	Intentionality not evident	integrated use creativity initiative school leadership
	Unaware of supports availability	vaguely worded speculation top secret
Restrictive Reach	Funding	limited funding needed upgrades not enough
	Student Functionality	diverse student needs some supports privately accessed
	School Location	itinerant services rural more developed areas bad roads distance
Work in progress		priority coordination awareness effort being made

Theme 1 for RQ2: Mismatch between ideals and practice. This theme refers to the perception held among the participants that what is written and said about supports that should be accessible for their inclusive practice are not the same as what actually takes place. Not every participant's experience of accessible supports was the same. However, they all agreed that what is espoused is not always enacted.

Furthermore, participants in the study shared that there appeared to be some disconnect between the intention of governments to embrace inclusive education and the emphasis placed on this initiative in the schools. Of the ten participants in the study, nine of them expressed that they did not sense that the education ministries in their territories were currently placing enough emphasis on inclusive education. For example, one participant in an individual interview expressed:

I'm not sure. I don't think it's a mandate but, it's something that they are talking about and a way they want to go but there has not been a formal mandate for inclusive education in [country].

Another participant said:

...there is more talk as to what can be, what should be...

An underlying belief of many of the education directors was that inclusive education does not appear to be a top priority and that various governments' alignment with it was merely a political move rather than an instructional initiative. Questioning whether the education technocrats themselves were aware of what they meant by the term inclusive education, during the focus group interview, one participant passionately commented:

I really am not sure what we are trying to prove by saying inclusive education. I mean, I know what the term means. I have studied about this in my degree, but they use the term and do they

know what it means? Is this doable? (questions asked in harsh, loud tone of voice)

At this point, other education directors joined in agreement, some responding “true” and others nodding their heads in agreement. The director further expressed:

I long for the day when someone will sit us down and explain this thing fully. We hear from here and there that certain things can be done and that this and that can happen in the school but as far as I am seeing the result is confusion. How we get the information is not practical. And then again, sometimes we cannot connect the dots because when you hear about it and then try to get it, is a different story [pause] so you give up. You don't bother with that.

Another example of a description from the interviews with one education director that also supports this finding is:

In my opinion, we are not getting what has been promised on the platforms. It's a lot of talk but this isn't translating into what my teachers are actually receiving [pause] I mean, yes, we can make an application or send in a referral but the length of time it takes. Sometimes the child graduates from the school and is still waiting. Everyone gets frustrated as a result of this. Sometimes teachers just don't bother anymore...

There were no opposing perspectives to this, and it was a popular belief shared in both individual and focus group interviews.

Theme 2 for RQ2: Ambiguity about supports. Ambiguity about supports refers to the lack of clarity in the minds of educators about what provisions they have at their disposal. Even though the education directors could identify some facilitating conditions that existed that allowed for them to practice inclusion, they doubted that the right supports existed for educators, and they were of the view that they were not very clear about all of the supports that should be accessible to them. There were three sub-themes related to this finding. These

are inconsistent availability of supports, intentionality not evident, and unaware of supports availability.

Inconsistent Availability of Supports. The participants at this stage of the investigation expressed that one of the contributors to the ambiguity about supports that exists is that there is an inconsistent availability of supports. Across all participants' references to what occurs in their schools, it was found that each of the education directors has experienced different degrees of supports in various schools.

Inconsistency is perceived to exist related to the type of school and geographic location. It was found that depending on where the school was located, the number of resources may vary and that it was perceived that this was not in relation to school size but rather in the dispatcher's favour. This results in limited access to support that should be given. One participant described it in this way:

Yet, I think those that are in the capital are considered to be a little more prestigious than those in the rural communities. And they benefit more from the supports that are given.

In describing a service that a teacher was able to access for a student in their class once, and then it stopped, one participant said:

The person [counsellor] from the unit came to the school and worked with the child on one occasion, but he did not come back again after that. We learned that he had too many children to see and our school was just too far.

Participants perceived that sometimes their schools benefitted from supports and other times they did not.

A challenge identified with this model, however, is that this service is not guaranteed because of limited staffing and so schools are made aware that it is

available on a needs basis. Talking about this issue, an interviewee in the study lamented:

...they have sent a few persons overseas to do some training at the master's level but when they come back, they work as resource persons in the Ministry of Education...

A recurrent emotion shared by participants during the interviews was a sense of frustration with the fact that even while documents listed supports, the said supports are often only available for a short space of time or to specific schools. A participant noted that one of the inclusive education policy documents reviewed mentioned that schools are entitled to:

...access to MOE support services for one-off or occasional advice on strategies or equipment...

The participant vehemently expressed that the mention of access that is “one-off” or “occasional” highlights limitations related to the accessibility of the documented supports.

Intentionality Not Evident. As the participants described the available supports, it became evident that many resources and services are redirected for use by teachers who desire to practice inclusion but that this outcome may not have been the purpose of the resource or service. Educators use their initiative and creativity to make things work so that students can be accommodated. Additionally, in some cases, the school's leadership is not always intentional in their support of inclusion.

So, while documented plans, collaborative agency, and instructional supports were identified as accessible based on what participants shared, during the interviews, as they spoke about their experiences, the participants lamented over the realization that at the government and school levels, those in charge sometimes fail to allocate supports specifically with inclusive practice in mind. One participant said:

Yes, we know we got the manipulative and with the teachers own understanding of differentiation, they utilized those for their lessons. But no one told them that the manipulatives are given for inclusive practice, you see. I feel like we need specific things. To know exactly.

Unaware Of Supports Availability. Participants shared that communications from the respective education ministries about inclusion often did not always reach them directly, and as such, the most up to date supports that are available are ambiguous. Issues related to what happens when documentation after referrals are submitted were highlighted in interviews, and a lapse in communication was noted. There are hidden resources, but they are not well known.

In general, participants were aware of conversations linked to addressing identified needs of all learners in their territories and knew of some documented plans, opportunities for collaborative agency, instructional supports, and related services support within their territory. However, they were not familiar with the most recent document or policy related to inclusive education. One education director articulated it in this way:

Many of these documents are top secret and we never see them. We simply go by what we are told, what we hear in speeches here and there...

It was found that in some cases, the documented supports for inclusive education are vaguely worded. This leaves room for speculation regarding what contingencies are needed, where funding will come from, and who is directly responsible for the provision. The findings demonstrate that a documented plan preparation is seen as necessary to many governments and these listed plans are intended to be both highly collaborative and used as a capacity-building process in strategic planning. Participants in the study expressed that words such as “may” and “can” related to the provision of supports left them skeptical regarding following through with the plans documented.

The participants expressed that though they are aware that opportunities for collaboration with internal and external agencies exist so that supports might be accessed, these are often limited or non-existent because of how vague the offer for help is.

Theme 3 for RQ2: Restrictive Reach. This theme has to do with what is currently being given being perceived as not enough. Participants were of the view that while some allocations are made, it is in no way sufficient to accomplish all that there is to be done. Three subthemes relate to the finding of restrictive reach. These are funding, student functionality, and student location.

Funding. Limited funding for inclusive practice was perceived to exist in all of the territories. The need for funding was identified as an area that requires further attention. Participants perceived that the money allocated to education by their governments is not sufficient or is not being well utilized. At the school level, they shared that there is so much to get done that whatever little funds are given by their school board, their school administrators cannot achieve all of the targets that they might set out to accomplish. This was shared in this way:

... they had a lot of technological resources, and observe I said had, because until the hurricane, well I don't know if you follow our news, but the Dutch government and various foundations supplied these things to [country name] but after the storm the school was looted, and all those things went, but they had them before. We cannot afford to buy them back.

Student Functionality. All of the participants agreed that a variety of needs exist in the classroom. Classrooms were identified as having students with varying academic, social, emotional, behavioural and physical needs, which educators are tasked with addressing at school. Participants pinpointed that these needs may have been overlooked in the past, but now, they are being identified. It was articulated by many of the contributors in the study that the supports that are available to schools for teaching and learning effectively in an inclusive setting

are inadequate. They highlighted that there is room for improvement related to what is currently being provided. The following is an example of an academic challenge that needed to be addressed for one student, but for which one education director was unable to meet the need of that student:

I remember very clearly at the high school I was teaching first form Mathematics and there was this child who just could not figure out what was happening in the class. And I just could not figure out what to do with her and I always tell teachers that I feel so guilty that I just could not help her. Because she was so far back...in her academic level... she was so far back. And I just for myself, I, sometimes I would come to class and my heart would just be drop because she was there in the class and I just could not do anything for her. And I always feel bad 'cause she was a well behaved child but just that she was so far behind. Way down at the primary school level and she was in high school. I just could not help her because she could not understand features or anything like that. So, that is one person I feel a little guilty about because she really did not get any help...

Many other participants shared similar experiences. Coming out of the narratives, areas that require further attention so that inclusive education practices can further progress were evident. In relation to social circumstances that challenge students' ability to perform at school, another participant in the study shared:

We do have quite a lot of social challenges in the school. Many of the students' parents, they are single mothers in particular. Fathers are not really engaged in terms of even visiting them. Fathers are not building relationships, the homes are not stable and mothers are to be out trying to get a day's work here and there in order to provide for the family, for the children.

For students who may have physical limitations and who may require related supports services, it was observed by another participant in the study that:

...if the child needs treatment every day, it is difficult to move the child during the school time, from the school to the centre and then so, back and forth.

Participants viewed being incapable of meeting the needs of the learners as a violation of the children's rights and saw it as unfair to educators as well that the education authorities would expect them to do a job without all that they needed for the job. The following statement generated an energetic debate among the education directors during the focus group interview:

Every child has a right to inclusive education but who's considering the teacher?

The emphasis here was that it was unrealistic to demand so much from the teacher. It was perceived that the realistic thing to do is consider the effects on both the educator and the learner.

The education directors also noted that for some students to receive some of the services they require to continue being served at school, parents sometimes opt to access those privately. This is because of the length of time it takes to access them through public channels like the ministries of education, health, and social services.

Some parents are willing to pay to have their child assessed, and honestly, this is easier and gets done faster this way.

In speaking to this issue, the education directors in the study gave examples supporting their view that what is currently available needs to be improved and that rather than just making excuses over and over again, the education authorities should seek to address known concerns related to disbursement and usage of supports. The ensuing quotes are some of the ways shared by various interviewees:

The government said they don't have enough social workers, so they can't send over to the school (sigh). Well, simply hire more! My teachers complain all the time that with all of the thing going on in society now they are not able to deal with it as they use to

before...they just aren't comfortable doing it and I can't blame them.

Describing the view that a problem may also lie with how teachers are able to utilize what is given to them, one participant said:

One school gives the teachers whatever they want in terms of manipulatives and having things for the children to use with their hands, the teachers would seek to get those on their own sometimes too, but we [education directors and school board] give assistance to the teachers to get them. I don't think teachers use it enough though. I don't think they use it sufficiently in the school so we're going to continue to focus on that. Traditionally, manipulatives are just for demonstrating at the start of the lesson but I have been telling my teachers that that is not all...engagement in many activities will also help the struggling students too but familiarity is something else. Many of them know but they so accustomed to the old ways.

In this participant's view, the teacher was not making the best use of the resource, so even though they had the support, it could not meet the needs of the student because the teacher did not have the skills required to do this.

School Location. The geographic location of the schools was believed to impact the supports that educators can access. Interviewees shared that itinerant services are offered by personnel from the arm of the MOE that relates to special education services. Several participants articulated the view that it is unfortunate that personnel belonging to these units are often based at the district education office and that they make visits to schools on a scheduled basis.

The education directors thought some countries were more advanced than others and had more supports available for their use. Being more advanced was described in terms of rural or urban location, the development of the community within which the school was located, the quality of the roads that lead to the schools, and the distance between the school and the service providers other clients.

Theme 4 for RQ2: Work in progress. Work in progress refers to the participants' description of the status of their access to supports and their ability to be successful with inclusive practice in general. A widely held view by the participants in the study is that the education system collectively has accomplished a great deal in meeting the needs of students with limited resources. It was recognized that more could be done, however, as there are multiple areas where improvements are needed. Therefore, the supports that are available for inclusive education are seen as a work in progress. Reflecting on this type of progress in relation to inclusive education practices, one participant shared:

I have not been hearing the term inclusive education but what I know is that efforts are being made to cater for special needs though we are far away from where we should be. So, by that I mean, we might have a situation where more social work persons are being employed by the ministry to serve schools but then it's done at a central point based on if there is a need. We don't have many instances as far as I am aware of persons visiting schools regularly or being in the schools so that they can assist there. We have to do better.

There was consensus that special facilities and skills were required for effective inclusion to occur. Training, resources and spaces were identified as essential. In responding to a question related to how the currently available resources are being used in schools for inclusive practice, one participant shared it using a popular expression:

...we try to make brick without straw...

This statement expressed the education director's view that schools are not receiving all they require for effective inclusive practice and are working within their means. Similarly, another participant agreed:

...but at the end of the day we don't have what it takes to meet the needs and that is the problem.

One of the participants in the study shared the insight that more could be done, expressing it in this way:

It's a difficult question because we do part of it. The persons that we do not cater for that's the lack, but I think that I would want us to develop and push more for that, in terms of our classrooms, the setup, the learning, the awareness...

Education directors perceived that more personnel needed to be hired to fill roles of special education teachers, counsellors and social workers; upkeep of resources such as information and communication technology (ICT) needed to be done regularly to ensure that it is in good working condition and could be used for teaching and learning in the classroom; the school's infrastructure should be upgraded to allow for students with physical impairments to be functional in their environment; and that teachers needed to be coached in specific ways to meet students' special needs.

Some participants in the study questioned the entire school system's preparedness for inclusive practice and noted that the currently available supports might not be utilized in the best manner. For example, one interviewee stated:

We have not yet prepared ourselves for such [inclusive practice]. So, our classrooms are not set up that way, our bathrooms are not setup that way, even the classroom itself the size and the layout those sorts of things are not yet ready to accommodate those challenges. Even somebody who is blind...a blind person who may come to the classroom, how well we would be able to deal with that person? Those challenges would require extra training and specialized interventions but the other stuff that I would have mentioned before, those that we emphasize on a lot... every year and we ask a lot for differentiation, we do a lot of work with that. We've employed a reading specialist, it's not what's fully needed, but it's a step. We have a support staff in order to support children from a distance in the classroom.

Participants also consider that more could be done on the part of the education ministries:

We never really had the level of urgency from ministry to offer help to diagnose somebody because of their limited human resources...

Other stakeholders in education were also perceived as not doing enough. This was expressed by one education director who said:

I don't think we should ever depend solely on the MOE or expect that the MOE would provide all that is necessary for inclusive education or any other aspect of education. I think there are many other stakeholders who have made a contribution and would continue making a contribution like the churches and so on.

It was evident from what was shared that matters related to inclusive education are a work in progress. Participants were of the view that all stakeholders needed to step up their efforts so that more effective practice might be seen.

Collectively, the supports which are available are viewed by the participants in this study as needing to be updated regularly in keeping with the multiplicity of special needs that are existing presently and which will exist in the near future in the schools. It was emphasized that the scope of special needs should be closely considered based on present times and that the “*regular, run off the mill supports*” alone are fatuous notions in contemporary inclusive education. As such, it was found that available supports are perceived as belonging to a process within the delivery of effective education that is dynamic and evolving. Educators recognized that what worked well one academic year may not work in another academic year, so that school leaders should be willing to facilitate updates.

Throughout the study, it was observed that the popular examples of special needs which need to be considered for supports in inclusive education were physical and cognitive disabilities. Specific to the focus group interview, however, an area that was spoken about in little detail, but which was notable was

the remark that the definition of inclusive education continues to broaden to include things like gender identity. The contributors in the study were reluctant to give their personal views on this type of special need but noted that for denominational schools, which the majority of schools in the Caribbean are, this is a problem. The issue of morality was raised in this way by one participant:

Recently there has been talk of making accommodations for those with gender identity issues as part of inclusive education. I don't really know how I feel about this because we have never had to deal with it in my schools, but I don't feel it is within the culture of the Caribbean to accept this like this.

Other participants nodded and murmured in agreement as the speaker continued:

In our church schools I know that this will be an issue. No one has spoken about it yet, but I know. Counselling and support groups will have to be established for this, more than the type they have now. It's a different kettle of fish. And our schools will need to support these children too.

This demonstrated the changing needs which require supports. Furthermore, it was suggested by one member of the study, in support of hiring personnel to work in a school system that is inclusive, that “*psychometric screening should be done*” to ensure that these persons have the right attitudes and temperament for a job that requires embracing differences.

The supports which are documented and accessible were also viewed as needing to mesh with DI appropriately. In explaining how this process should occur, one education director said:

So that the teacher will observe his or her class and see the differences, you may have a gifted child so therefore you will have to cater for that child separately cause if you do it the normal way the child may finish his work and be bored, so you have to cater for that child given him or her exercises or activities that are suited to his ability and then when you have the slow ones it's the same thing, in some cases you may have a child who is very quick a certain time to complete assignments and give the slower one

even more time or even a little less activities, less assignments so that he could cope and not get frustrated so he will learn because the objective is that student would progress, they will progress at different levels and different speeds but you know you want to see progress, you want to see them move from a D to a C and from a C to a B according to their ability, so we stress differentiated instruction.

Evidently, it was found that perceptions need to be addressed on an ongoing basis at a national level so that both educators and the general public better understand how and why inclusion is best implemented. Although all participants in the study expressed their agreement with inclusion, a seemingly opposing view came across from a lone participant who said:

Different levels are needed from what I can see. It is not wise to have everyone in the same class, this is not necessary.

There was a sense of pride amongst the research participants that they were able to take what was accessible and help the students in critical need. A participant said:

In our mix of schools we pride ourselves with the commitment of transforming lives...

Referring to what pertains after an external referral is done through related services support that can be accessed, a participant shared:

Now this is the part that the MOE drops the ball (sighing). After feedback is given there is no real help or recommendation to assist the child. The only other follow up session is to provide the child with a reader at the National Assessment sit-ins. The school along with the parent devise different strategies to assist the child with his or her learning difficulty. This however is done on a non-professional stage (gestured to show the term as inverted commas). It is basically trained teachers using love for their craft and intuition to assist these children after this. If we're lucky, they will send someone to check in and give strategies from time to time.

For extreme cases the child/children is recommended to attend another institution that caters more for them.

In summary, the results related to this sub-question revealed three sub-themes: ambiguity, work in progress and dynamic and evolving process. Related to the ambiguity sub-theme, the perceptions are that a mismatch exists between what is documented and what is available, and that governments' prioritizing of inclusive education is unclear. Clarification is desired by participants as to where exactly inclusive education stands presently on the Caribbean region governments' agenda. Work in progress as a sub-theme related to the fact that there are some supports offered in the education system to schools, but they are not adequate because students and teachers are still left wanting. It was found that perceptions may also need to be addressed since some also question if inclusive education is really worth it. Additionally, the sub-theme that the supports that are available are perceived as belonging to a dynamic and evolving process means that some of them might be outdated and that scope and strategy for delivery of inclusive education need to be further considered.

Yet, there was consensus amongst the research participants that they were familiar with the concept that schools are to utilize mechanisms of collaboration. During the focus group interview, all participants were nodding in approval while one participant was expressing their view in this way:

Yes, I agree with what my colleague said about how it is documented, so it expected of us, that we should be working together to get things done so that as they say, there are learners enacting collaborative learning strategies; teachers supporting teacher; parents assuming their rightful role as partners in the education of their children and communities supporting their local schools in meaningful ways through donations and volunteering etc.

Yet, this observation supports the stated training and professional opportunities found to be documented in the majority of education documents. A few of those

interviewed suggested that as a result of the documented supports, they have been able to make strides in their schools and through collaborations with the listed internal and external agencies, improved learning opportunities for all students have resulted.

Participants were hopeful that further tools might be provided in future. One interviewee said:

I think it's a work in progress. I think significant work has been done in the area. There are a number of workshops being called. The Ministry of Education has actually employed a special needs coordinator who is responsible for the development of inclusive education in [country].

Findings Associated with Research Question 3 (RQ3)

The third question that was asked in this study was, “What are the desired supports for implementing inclusive education?” Interviewees discussed what they believed they needed to have confidence in their personal ability to practice inclusion and feel like they are working within a system that facilitates the work they intend to do. There were three emerging themes in relation to this question in the study. These are instructional supports, personal supports, and related services supports. Two of the themes overlapped with what was found in relation to accessible supports in RQ1. The overlapping themes are instructional supports and related services supports. However, at this point, educators shared about how those supports could be improved. One of the themes here – personal supports – was not identified earlier as being an accessible support or ever experienced as support. The themes specific to RQ3 are shown in Table 4.4, along with the sub-themes and some of the codes which led to the findings. Each of the themes represents the desired support for educators implementing inclusive education.

Table 4.4*Themes, Sub-Themes and Some Codes Associated with Research Question 3*

THEME	SUB-THEME	SOME CODES
Instructional Supports	Scheduling	flexibility timetable extra time class location
	Physical infrastructure	universal design access functionality classroom arrangement
	Teaching tools	assistive technology concrete manipulatives student engagement
	In-class assistance	differentiation teacher's assistant documentation co-teaching individualized plans
Personal Supports	One-on-one coaching	clinical supervision feedback show and tell access educator specific
	Real-time guidance	buddy system school leadership knowledgeable others immediate help
	Professional development opportunities	training workshop equitable access utilized skills
Related Services Supports	School based consultants	psychologists counsellors therapists special education teachers social workers nurses
	Means of addressing socioeconomic challenges	nutritional needs transportation needs financial needs family empowerment raise awareness
	Efficient Timelines for Service Delivery	long wait time diverse student needs

Figure 4.2

information

development

classroom

multimedia

flexibility

manipulatives

wheelchair access

curriculum

scheduling

education

principal

break ramps

equipment

books

toys

smartboard

space

supervision

planning

laptop

time

assistant

willingness

bathrooms

concrete

charts

materials

railings

ICTs

school

books

classroom

communication

technologies

flexible

projector

classes

aide

professional

helper

internet

policy

timetable

Scheduling. This refers to the ability to plan when and where teaching activities would be conducted and what would be covered in a lesson. The participants pointed out that time is a major issue as it relates to working with learners who might be moving at a slower pace. A participant lamented:

In an effort to cover everything on the curriculum teachers usually have to speed along and this, unfortunately, leaves some children behind.

The perception that there is sometimes not enough time in the school day to do all that is required with children was also held among participants in the study. In the context of final year examinations that are considered very important measures of school success in many CARICOM schools, one participant, in particular, emphasized that teachers are forced in some cases to “*teach to the test*” and that schools are “*expected to meet certain performance standards*”. These were believed to be major stressors to teachers in the classroom. The participant shared that when school principals do not make accommodations for teachers to be flexible in how they plan and deliver lessons, it makes everyone uncomfortable.

In communicating their viewpoint that the same kind of structure for the delivery of all subjects during the day may not be the best approach, another participant said:

Basically, you need more time for, perhaps after formal classes, engagement with students. Remember that not all students are the same. Not all classes you get will be the same. So the teacher should be free to make a determination as to what is needed. Not the principal or the ministry give a schedule and we follow it.

Other participants agreed that it is unreasonable to expect that one classroom teacher is able to effectively work with all students in the current timeframe that they have during the day. They spoke about the many duties of the teacher and indicated that help is needed for the teacher in the classroom. Some even pointed out that school principals have quite a lot on their hands and that time

management may be an area in which these school-based individuals should have some training. Referring to how schedules should be worked out in the context of how the school day proceeds, another participant shared:

...you will need time to plan technology and manipulatives to cater for that child separately cause if you do it the normal way the child may finish his work and be bored, so you have to cater for that child giving him or her exercises or activities that are suited to his ability. And then when you have the slow ones, it's the same thing. In some cases, you may have a child who is very quick [utilizing] a certain time to complete assignments and [you may need to] give the slower one even more time or even a little less activities, less assignments so that he could cope and not get frustrated so he will learn because the objective is that student would progress. They will progress at different levels and different speeds, but you know you want to see progress, you want to see them move from a D to a C and from a C to a B according to their ability, so we need things to stress differentiated instruction.

This suggests that participants believed that working with diverse learners in classrooms requires educators to be in control of scheduling arrangements because these may need to be changed or updated based on specific needs.

Physical Infrastructure. Details related to the school building and what facilities are desired there were also identified by participants and related to instructional support. This includes the layout of the school, mobility aids like ramps and railings, and the set-up of information technology. During their interviews, the education directors spoke about universal design for buildings to allow access for those with mobility needs. Participants pointed out that many of their schools were built in a way that does not allow them to accommodate students with physical challenges right now. Others indicated that they are in the process of upgrading their school buildings and environments to allow for better functionality. In highlighting why these things are desired, one participant shared this sentiment in the following way:

...we are going to need some more space to accommodate children of various abilities. For those who are more visual learners, I guess you would need equipment, teaching aids, multimedia

projectors, computers (pause), and those kinds of hardware equipment.

The actual set-up of the learning space was another element of physical infrastructure identified by the participants. Specifically, it was shared that:

...an atmosphere in the classroom that allows children who are differently able to be able to benefit from what is taking place, to feel accepted and to, at the end of the day, leave better than when they came because you would have been able to implement strategies that will help them, help to reach them at their special level.

A few of the education directors spoke about wanting each classroom to have the type of furniture that allows for flexible seating options for students. Others added that the arrangement of furniture to allow for appropriately wide aisle space was important. It was noted that some schools had limited space to allow this to become a reality.

Teaching Tools. Another kind of instructional support desired are tools for teaching. This includes assistive technology, concrete manipulatives, and other ways of engaging students. Participants noted that these are needed for developing conceptual, procedural, declarative, and problem-solving knowledge in students during instruction.

Referring to the utilization of information and communication technologies (ICT), a participant said:

...technology can do a lot, software and hardware, whatever it takes so that students can perform well.

All of the participants spoke about the need for internet connectivity and the integration of devices such as laptops and iPads in classes. Typically, teachers would use their own devices because there were not enough ICTs available for use by all students. In cases where participants identified that there were

computers available for their use, these were often not enough or didn't have the right type of software and internet access that would allow them to utilize them appropriately. As such, the participants desired better access to these.

Another of the participants shared:

The child was not interested to catch up with the rest of the class but then when I went there, the teacher would say "Well boys and girls, we would do something, and you can read with blocks". All the children were so excited like that is what they were looking for...

This example demonstrated the participant's desire to be able to reach students at the point at their needs and the recognition that engaging instructional resources would allow for this to be possible. It also captures a similar viewpoint by a few of the education directors that all learners, those with diagnosed needs and typically developing students in classrooms, enjoy working with manipulatives and that more should be available for teachers to use with students.

Yet another participant in the study said:

You would [need to] have multisensory instruction where the teacher would appeal to the different senses, small groups possibly. You probably would have teacher aides, special needs teachers. All of these people would need didactic tools. They usually buy some out of their own pocket. There are a few things available at the schools, but they are never enough.

Participants spoke of their desire and the desires of the teachers under their charge to be able to have a variety of teaching tools for use with students in schools.

In-Class Assistance. The contributors in this phase of the study also shared that they desire help in the classroom so that they can better implement DI. It was emphasized by some that the practicality of adequately attending to large groups of diverse learners was a bit unreasonable for just one teacher in the classroom. One participant said:

For all of the children in the class it is just not practical to differentiate for every lesson because it's just one teacher there.

Agreeing with this, another participant said:

I think you are going to need also more individualized attention so that in some cases the teaching staff may have to play a part.

One participant shared the experience of having a student with a diagnosed physical disability have an aide present in the classroom to help the student with mobility. The participant indicated that this type of help was welcomed because:

...we couldn't have the time to move around with the student ourselves.

All of the participants agreed that they needed help with administrative tasks, and they expressed that classroom teachers are swamped with being time-bound to fulfil the requirements of a curriculum so that any help that they could be offered would be welcomed. Speaking about the amount of paperwork that usually goes along with their role as an educator, another participant said:

...more support within the schools...

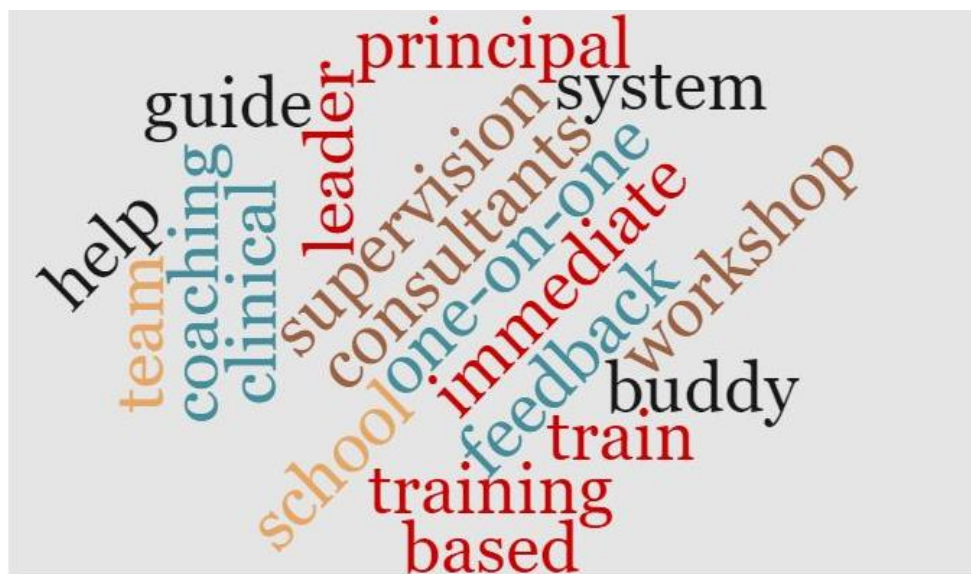
This support they highlighted could come from parent volunteers, classroom aides, on-the-job trainees, and other professionals stationed at the school like a special education teacher or another classroom teacher that can co-teach a group of students.

Theme 2 for RQ3: Personal Supports. This theme refers to the individualized attention educators described that they need, which will be specific to helping them in their instructional delivery as they go about the process of teaching students with a variety of needs in schools. Figure 4.3 shows some of the

examples of personal supports mentioned by participants during the interviews. There are three subthemes that capture the essence of what participants shared related to their desire for personal supports. These are one on one coaching, real-time guidance, and professional development opportunities.

Figure 4.3

Word Cloud Showing Examples of Personal Supports Highlighted by Participants during the Interviews



One-On-One Coaching. This describes where an experienced special educator serves to demonstrate instructional practices related to inclusive education for an assigned novice inclusive educator. The findings indicated that even the educators who held teaching experience in excess of 10 years still considered themselves to be novices as it relates to inclusive practice. All of the education directors interviewed indicated that while they knew about inclusive education to some extent, they were hardly versed in exactly how it should be done. They also said that many of their teachers felt the same way. This was expressed by one participant in the study in this way:

I buy into inclusive education but we might have to sell it to the principals, and then teachers will also have to be shown exactly how to deliver it.

Another one said:

...teachers need specific examples of how to do it (pause) coaching like, so that they can do it well.

Based on what was shared during the focus group interview when this particular approach was elaborated upon by all of the education directors, they indicated that the role of one-on-one coaching would:

...allow for educators to ask questions, and strategies for particular students with special needs would be directly modelled to them by the coaches...

Participants indicated that what is needed is expert teachers who are stationed at their schools to be able to help the general education classroom teacher to focus their teaching techniques. It was found that education directors were wary of the limited attention given to individual educators who are in the front line to successfully implement the inclusive practice. They identified the need for one-on-one guidance through scaffolding to deliver effective inclusive education.

Sharing an example of a student with a special need for whom she was unable to meet his need due to not knowing exactly what to do with him, one education director said:

Right now we have a special student in one of our schools, it is very difficult for the child. Sometime, in the classroom, I spend at the school two days teaching in the classroom and one particular moment I had to say, "Where is he?" He was gone so I had to turn to the teacher in the school and ask what is going on with this boy and she had to say. We have matters like that every day, most of the day, in the same classes, we never notice when this boy goes, and his friends know that. And sometimes he is late, and I remember that day he was late, and I asked him "Why are you

late?” and then his school bag was full with mangoes. He went to someone’s mango tree, [and] picked the mangoes! So, a child like that, what to do with him to try to include him in the education system? Because where to go with him? We should have someone who we could pass ideas by to get through these things.

The study revealed that education directors perceived that one of the reasons why coaching was necessary for educators was for them to develop efficacy in addressing special needs in the classroom environment. This was notably different from workshops and other styles of training that are offered to educators. Specifically, it is believed by participants that an opportunity to practice the theory that is shared in an environment where constructive feedback and guidance can be given is needed.

Real-Time Guidance. Participants also expressed the desire to have their teachers engage in ongoing teamwork with others who can provide immediate support on an ongoing basis. This support activity was suggested to be delivered by school leaders as well as other teachers at the school. A few of the participants spoke about implementing a system where teachers would work in teams or pairs. While some of the education directors already encourage this type of collaboration among their teachers, none of the participants could confirm if it is actively utilized by the teachers. In attempting to attribute why this may be so, it was shared:

Maybe none knows more than the other. But just being able to bounce ideas off each other I feel will be useful to them, don’t you think?

Another participant spoke of having an expert who might be able to provide responses to questions that teachers had about their inclusive practice by suggesting:

There could be a hotline or something set up, you know, so they could call and ask their questions and get immediate answers. This way they wouldn’t have to keep wondering.

This suggestion was a unique one to a single participant in the study. However, a general sense of urgency for feedback was communicated by all of the participants related to how timely help would be needed in classrooms that require working in inclusive classrooms. Participants lamented that they have often been faced in the past with the problem of having to wait too long to get a response from more knowledgeable others about issues that arise. This results in delays and sometimes not being able to even make progress at acceptable rates.

Professional Development Opportunities. To aid in the continued professional development of educators, the participants also expressed that they desired opportunities where educators could continue to learn more. One of the interviewees added to the wider discussion surrounding desired supports during the focus group interview that:

Ongoing training would be nice. We have training now, but it is not consistent. And it is not thorough enough to afford action.

The action to which the participant was referring in this example is implementing specific strategies for special needs students in an inclusive environment. In an individual interview, another participant shared:

It has to be readily available. We shouldn't have to wait for specific times once a year or every two years when training is held.

On-demand training opportunities were a popular desire among the education directors in this part of the study. Nine out of ten of them shared about this in some form or the other. Some of the topics about which they expressed a desire to learn more about were “*differentiated instruction*”, “*how to tailor a lesson plan*”, “*how to deal with challenging behaviour*”, “*ADHD*”, and “*Autism*”. It was noted that participants believed that the infrequent and sometimes decontextualized training that their teachers usually receive is not enough to allow for best practices.

Theme 3 for RQ3: Related Services Supports. This type of support for educators' inclusive practice relates to additional human resource help for the distribution of services necessary to meet students' needs. Figure 4.4 shows some of the examples of related services supports mentioned by participants during the interviews. Three subthemes further elaborate on what the desire for related services supports includes for the participants of the study.

Figure 4.4

Word Cloud Showing Examples of Related Services Supports Highlighted by Participants during the Interviews



School-Based Consultants. There is a desire for related professionals such as psychologists, counsellors, therapists, special education teachers, social workers, and nurses to be stationed at the school. There was agreement among the participants in the study that the need exists for specialized services based on

areas of exceptionality also. A recommendation related to this that was shared was that instead of having itinerant services where they are delivered only in some places, the desire of the participants is that all services are housed at every school. An education director shared:

When you have every school on the island going to one little agency for testing and evaluation, it becomes a long process which sometimes takes up to two years and that student gets no services. So I think we need to train staff and more equipment for testing and evaluation of students should be available, so that we can speed up the process of getting students tested.

The participants of the study unanimously agreed that there was a need for more personnel to be deployed to schools to aid with intervention for learners who are suspected and diagnosed as having SENs. There was no Caribbean region where participants felt that enough human resources were available. It was shared that professional consultants who are based at the school as opposed to the MOE office would be more beneficial and that timely referral and assessment of students are needed. Examples of how these were shared by participants in the study are:

I think the school needs more personnel, in terms of more professionals so that the child who may be struggling or has a special need can function. This is because one teacher in a class cannot possibly give support to everyone, so a student is going to miss out.

Someone else shared:

We asked the government for a social worker because we need a person like that in our schools because the teachers can't handle it. In the school, the teachers are nurses, they are everything.

Means of Addressing Socioeconomic Challenges. Even though it was noted that educators do have access to referring students to health and social services and that opportunities for partnerships with individuals, corporations,

local and foreign governments, and other non-governmental organizations are accessible, it was also a desire of the participants in this study to see plans enacted so that the social challenges that exist among students and their families might be mitigated.

In sharing about some of these social challenges, one participant gave the following account related to the nutritional needs of students:

At our schools, there are some students who come to school without having eaten breakfast. They come from families that are too poor to provide or where the parents leave home so early, that they children have to get themselves ready for school. So, the school lunch is expected for these students. But the need is so great that some are left out. They do not get.

Another participant highlighted the need for transportation to bring students to and from school by saying:

One school is in a rural area and the children live in the area but it still some distance away because of how the community is set up. There are no taxis, so the children have to walk. Not only is this dangerous but it results in some kids getting to school late. Can you imagine if one of them had a physical disability? What we need for all of the children is a school bus to take them to and from school. This way when rain falls, or for whatever other reason, it will not affect attendance.

Overall, it was shared by the participants that in their schools, socioeconomic challenges impact students' health, behaviour, ability to be present at school, and the school supplies that the students come prepared for class with. In the opinion of the study's participants, all of these challenges affect their own ability to do their job well. They desired family empowerment and raised awareness.

Efficient Timelines for Service Delivery. A widely held belief among the education directors is that there are very long wait times for receipt of services when referrals for special education services are made to external units. Each of

their respective division of education was believed to be short-staffed, and this, the participants noted, contributed a great deal to long waits in relation to service times. The education directors in the study indicated that they would like this to be improved. They believe that better coordination should take place and that *“assessment for getting a diagnosis for a student who is suspected of a disability should not take as long as it does”*.

As pointed out earlier in the findings above, some related services were already found to be perceived as accessible, but there are gaps in the efficiency of service delivery, so this area was perceived as requiring immediate attention.

Findings Associated with Research Question 4 (RQ4)

The fourth research question of this study asked, “What recommendations do educators have about the provision of supports for inclusive practice?” In general, interviewees proposed the best course of action that the education technocrats and decision-makers take steps to improve upon what currently exists in the various schools throughout the CARICOM region. There were three themes that arose in relation to this question in the study. These are to optimize the use of current provisions, promote increased partnerships, and improve school systems. These themes are shown in Table 4.5, along with the sub-themes and some of the codes which led to the findings. Each of the themes represents a recommendation about the provision of supports for inclusive practice by educators.

Table 4.5

Themes, Sub-Themes and Some Codes Associated with Research Question 4

THEME	SUB-THEME	SOME CODES
Optimize the Use of Current Provisions	Minimize response times for meeting identified needs	dedicated unit for special education long wait time

	Raise awareness of ways needs can be facilitated	use initiative access to grants school leadership
Promote Increased Partnerships		school leadership volunteers awareness include stakeholders
Improve School Systems	Decrease the utilization of parallel general education and special education	one-stop shop seamless system utilize technology
	Raise awareness of diversity	advocate for resources human rights
	Deemphasize success based on academic tests	assessment expectations no help

Theme 1 for RQ4: Optimize the Use of Current Provisions. This theme refers to the suggestion that better use needs to be made of resources and services which are currently available for use in schools. There are two subthemes that capture the details of what participants shared related to the optimization of the use of current provisions. These are minimized response times for meeting identified needs and raising awareness of ways needs can be facilitated.

Minimize Response Times for Meeting Identified Needs. While most countries have a dedicated unit for SEN services in their MOE, long wait times after referral was noted as being common. As such, education directors recommended that faster response times should be the goal of such units. In being able to realize this, one person suggested:

...more equipment for testing and evaluation of students should be available so that we can speed up the process of getting students tested so their needs can really be addressed.

It was also noted that various opportunities might exist for schools to work around the challenges that they typically face in being provided with supports because of limited funding. Rather than only relying on what is given directly

from their education division so as to facilitate inclusive education, one of the education directors made the following recommendation while reflecting on how he could be more proactive as an administrator:

...because funding is an issue for us, so we cannot really hire more people, we rely on volunteers. I can also pursue grant writing so I can get more support within the classroom.

Participants in the study felt that achieving maximum productivity in the allocation and use of supports required proper budgeting at the level of governments so that the various education sectors might benefit, in the first instance, from funds to be able to acquire the necessary supports, but also that budgetary control at the level of the school is needed. School administrators should have “*funds set aside*” for in-house purchasing of some resources needed for teaching and learning. It was found that this might mean that other things might get cut off the list because “*funds are always finite*”, so again, proper consideration will have to be given to this area.

Raise Awareness of Ways Needs Can Be Facilitated. The education directors were of the opinion that educators needed to be made aware of ways that they can use current provisions to facilitate inclusive education. In general, they identified that there are novel ways in which services and resources could be accessed for use and that instead of making excuses about why inclusive education is not possible, that educators could instead be shown practical approaches to making it possible.

One way is in the use of initiative. A participant shared about how her school principals use their initiative to get things done around the school in the following way:

They do not always get it from them when they put in their requests for things they need to be able to work with the children. So our principals, through the home and school association, decided that they will make requests of community members and businesses. Over the course of the last two years they have been able to get quite a few upgrades because of this. If not for being proactive in

this way they would still be waiting for many of the things that they want to be able to work with the kids.

The participant elaborated that more administrators should be made aware of how to go about making requests so that they can benefit from the kind contributions of community and business stakeholders. This, the participant noted, should be a skill that forms part of the leadership training that educators are exposed to.

A different way of raising awareness, as suggested by another participant in the study, is through better lines of communication. Speaking to schools' ability to access grants that are made available by organizations, a participant shared about a grant for upgrading schools for students with special needs offered by a telephone company called the "*Digicel Foundation*". The participant indicated that only some schools are aware of these opportunities and that advertisements should be more widespread and accessible. The recommendation here is that awareness could be increased by consistent advertisement and reminders.

I think hardly anyone knows about it. I only learned about it from a friend and I went on to their website, I don't really remember seeing any communication about this from the ministry, but there might have been an advertisement or two at some point. But you know, people forget. The focal areas funded by the Digicel Foundation is special needs and community development. Anything related to facilities for serving children with special needs, and promoting inclusion and education, you can apply for.

The study revealed that there is a need for "*more candid discussion surrounding special needs*" and that all stakeholders in education should take ownership for inclusive education to become a reality. Infuriated by the experience shared by another participant about how their education district office was unable to help a child who needed to be admitted into a school of her choice due to lack of infrastructure, one participant commented:

They're talking about something that they're not yet ready to handle.

The fact that participants did not identify inclusive education as their own initiative was also notable and pointed to the need for more discussions about the issue to be had among educators.

...train teachers not just to become classroom teachers but emphasis should be made on special education teachers. They should be part of the requirement...it's a long process, but I think that that is lacking in the teacher preparation and also in our vision...

This training was identified as another means of raising awareness about special needs.

Well I would want to recommend that the MOE who is charged with education for all in the country, be mindful when they are doing their strategic plan, to be mindful to include the stakeholders who have some experience in the area and who can make a contribution, right, because if the ministry tries to do it alone it's a very challenging area to try to bring under a control as it were.

Theme 2 for RQ4: Promote Increased Partnerships. This theme relates to encouraging more people and groups to get on board with providing assistance through resources and services to schools. The participants in the study believed that more stakeholders should become involved in the initiative. No one explicitly shared awareness that partnerships in education were the desired outcome by governments but instead gave examples of how provisions are often disconnected with each entity seemingly working in a vacuum. Participants in the study identified the church, community organizations, parents, volunteers, private businesses and other governmental agencies as having the capacity to be of assistance in the provision of supports. Examples of how this was expressed are:

... we need to work not only with the students but there is a lot that we have to do with the parents and I think that the church can help because we do have a lot of programmes...

...because funding is an issue for us so we cannot really hire more people, we rely on volunteers. I can also pursue grant writing so I can get more support within the classroom...

In reality their workload is heavy. For the most part the classrooms are huge, not the room, the population. So you know it's the reality of within which they work but you know at the same time we have to think of each child.

Theme 3 for RQ4: Improve School Systems. Participants in the study recommended that how schools are currently conceptualized and operated in the CARICOM region should be improved upon. They indicated that there should be changes made to placement options for students and a greater effort to sustain characteristics of school climate that better support inclusive education. There are three subthemes that capture the details of what participants shared. These are to decrease the utilization of parallel general education and special education, raise awareness of diversity, and deemphasize success based on academic tests.

Decrease the Utilization of Parallel General Education and Special Education. A redesign of the education system was suggested by some of the participants so that general and special education would no longer be treated separately but would be one system that is able to seamlessly meet the identified needs of all learners in an intentional and policy-driven manner. Participants identified that in the various countries in the region, special education schools are still an option that many families are directed to, especially when schools do not want to bear the burden of working with students with special needs. One participant indicated:

Well I just want to let you know that from a government standpoint, I think the government has two schools that they label special needs schools. At the primary level. So those special case children, those on wheelchair, those with learning deficits, physical challenge, those are the ones that go to the special need schools.

From the perspective of this education director, this special school option meant that the government was not serious about inclusive education. The recommendation is that there should be a one-stop-shop for the delivery of services for students, and they should not have to go to different places to access services, but the services should come to them in an inclusive setting.

As part of the redesign, emphasis on instruction and best fit based on student accommodation and teacher readiness is needed. Although education directors recognized that specialized opportunities were being made available for in-service teacher training in inclusion, they identified that the training appeared as just a formality. Additionally, national and international scholarships were limited to a select few, and upon completion of the well-intentioned training, there was no real opportunity for realization being given to teachers when they returned to successfully implement the inclusive practice. An example of this was shared in this story as was related by one education director:

I have a friend in St. Kitts who went to train in the US. She got a scholarship, and she told me just about two weeks ago that she came back. Then they sent her to a secondary school with some low achievers (pause) and she said okay, she doesn't mind, but there is nothing. She is a learning support staff member. So I imagine, being trained in the US and coming back down to the Caribbean to work in a school where you have all the dreams and ambitions to do better and there you're in your school, asked to teach a few demotivated children without resources. They still see you with your chalk and your talk, and you just have your name that you're with some special children because you went across to study. So you come back, you have the knowledge, some persons are able to create things, other persons want it more ready made for them, but it was like what she was talking. She was voicing her frustration in that she came back and the ministry is more talk than anything else because we don't even have what it takes to teach in a way that is beneficial. So that it is an expensive venture if you think about it because there is a special supply of material for those who are tactile, and you have to think of something for those who are visual, and those who have other limitations, you know, so it's difficult on the teacher and they ask "How do you get that done?" So that is another issue that has been plaguing them.

Everybody knows what they have to do but as to if there are resources to do what has to be done that is the problem.

This example showed that there is not a seamless system where students can access proper services and resources within the school system. Many of the educators spoke of the value of technology to aid in this redesign of the education system. Technological tools they proposed would “*help us reach some of the students with the software and assistive devices*”.

It was found from what was shared most popularly in this part of the investigation with education directors that the perception was that action towards making inclusive practice of utmost importance was not intentional by the respective education ministries across the Caribbean. This was shown by the fact that all of the education directors spoke about “*the main school system*” and how students with disabilities are typically taken to “*one of the special schools*”. The amelioration of the education system by conglomerating general and special education into one seamless system so that meeting the needs of all students would be intentional and policy-driven was one of the main ideas shared by participants in the study. Most blatant was the lack of policy on inclusive education, leading one participant to highlight that:

...we need policy changes that would promote it, because if you have a policy then inclusion has to be made and you will get the resources to get the work done.

The recommendation by participants is that the various education ministries in their region should determine to train all teachers to work in the inclusive setting and that this should not just be in the form of one exceptionalities or special education course.

Not only should training occur, but the placement of the trained staff at schools should also be done equitably. Some examples of how this recommendation was expressed are:

I think at least the school should have teachers who have some training in the area. I do not get the feeling that the ministry is serious about inclusion because many things are not given for the schools to do it. That is the minimum that I can envision.

...train teachers not just to become classroom teachers but emphasis should be made on special education teachers. They should be part of the requirement, it's a long process, but I think that that is lacking in the teacher preparation and also in our vision...

It was noted that the redesign of the education system should be done in consultation with all relevant stakeholders so that there should be population buy-in. The financial implications of this redesign also need to be considered. Lamenting that all considerations need to be given, a participant said:

I don't think the concept of inclusive education can happen within the structure that we have.

Redesigning the education system was viewed as a complex process, and a conclusion to improve what currently exists so that no child is excluded from schooling to maximize his/her potential was seen by participants in the study as a choice that will be reachable after proper consideration. While this recommendation for a general education improvement was the consensus, two education directors were particularly adamant that keeping special education separate might be the better choice. They indicated that this would decrease the workload of the general education teachers and make their workload manageable. Their recommendation was that teacher training and financial resources are never adequate. As such, countries should work within their means to create a system that can meet student needs within these limitations.

Raise Awareness of Diversity. Another recommendation from the participants in this study related to emphasizing the point to all educators and

society at large that classrooms are made up of very diverse students, regardless of whether a disability label exists. A participant shared:

Sometimes our perspective is limited, and this needs to change. They should talk about this more, you know. Special education, as I have learned, is not only about those who cannot walk or those who cannot learn. In every class some child requires some kind of extra attention. But we are not always able to detect this and help.

The participants suggested that advocating for resources for classrooms that can allow for best practices like “universal design for learning” and “differentiated instruction” to be used would be best. Additionally, they shared:

...some kind of awareness campaign that reminds people about human rights. It is the right of the child to an education.

Deemphasize Success Based on Academic Tests. Participants spoke about the high stakes examinations that overshadow much of what is done in their schools. One participant said:

The teachers do not have time to stop for the slower students because they have to finish the curriculum. Ours is a church school, so we are all about embracing all, and many of our teachers know that academic outcomes are not all. It's about getting the child to have a relationship with Christ. But at the end of the day, people want to see the performance of the school.

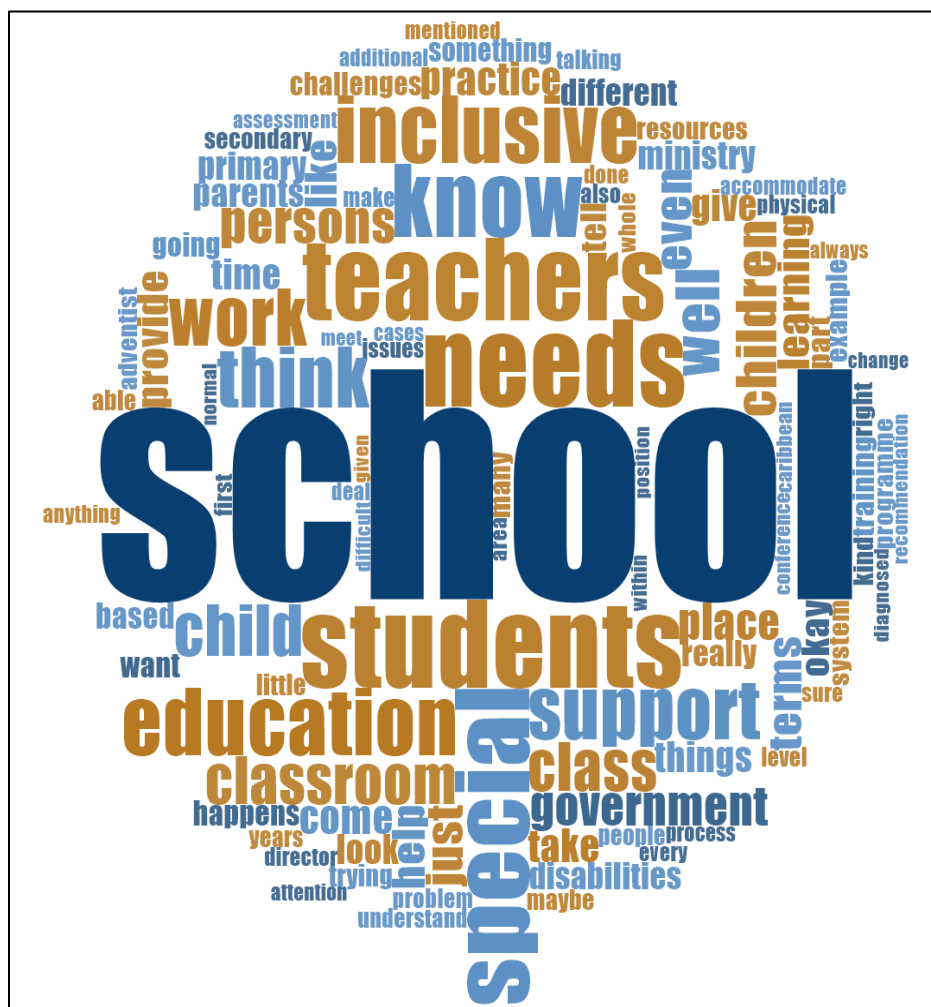
As a means of improving the school system, the recommendation was highlighted by participants that not all learners will be capable of taking the same end of schooling assessments and that alternatives should be allowed. The participants shared that expectations in relation to school outcomes should be adjusted for some and that the school's value should not be determined solely based on the assessment.

Findings Associated with Research Question 5 (RQ5)

The fifth question that this research study asked was, “What are the key supports perceived by educators to be necessary for inclusive practice in schools?” Useful to the analysis of the results for this question were the most frequent words used in the interviews. Figure 4.5 shows the 100 most frequent words based on transcripts. These pointed to the main ideas coming out of the interviews, which aided in highlighting themes related to this research question, and informed the emerging organizing themes related to this research question.

Figure 4.5

100 Most Frequent Words Based on Transcripts from Interviews in Phase 1 of the Study



These most frequent words showed that some of the most popular concepts spoken of during the interviews with the participant educators, related to facilitating improvements to the school setting, improving access to resources and services for the children and teachers, and improving the knowledge base.

Given that the themes found in relation to research questions 1 to 4 were focused and linked to very specific kinds of explorations of supports for educators' inclusive practice, the themes presented for research question 5 are broad and sweeping constructs that link together findings from research questions 1 to 4 using a thematic network. This thematic network presented in Figure 4.6 is a web-like illustration that summarizes the relationship between themes. There were five themes that emerged in relation to research question 5. These are Administrative Plan of Action, Coordinated Response to Student Functionality, Ecological Infrastructure, Educator Efficacy Mechanism, and Sensitization and Advocacy.

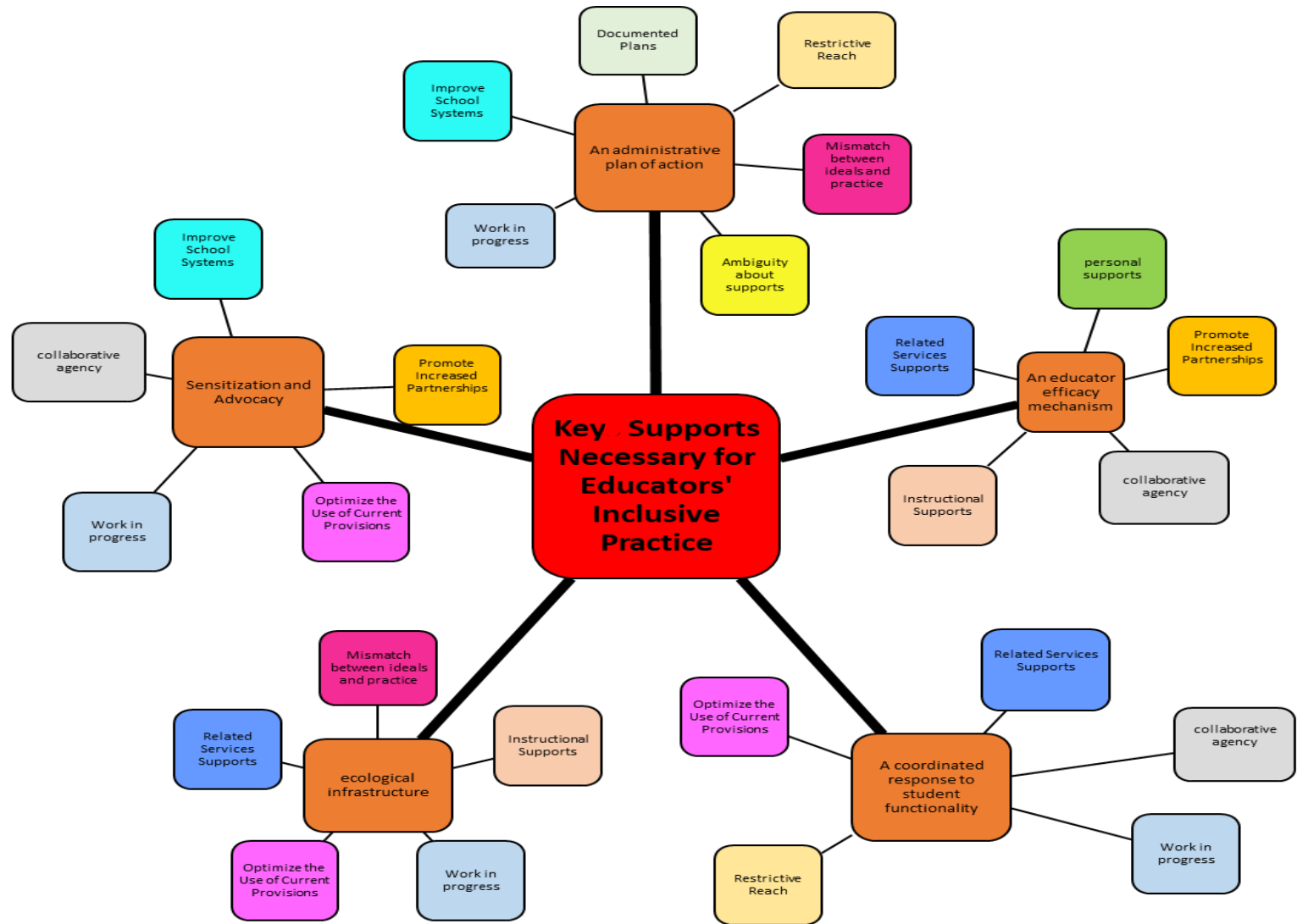
Theme 1 for RQ5: Administrative Plan of Action. This theme refers to the need for an organized series of measures to be taken at the government education department/ministry level and individual school level to achieve inclusive education. Responsibility for these organized measures is placed in the hands of school leaders like technocrats, education directors and principals. The measures include making improvements to and ensuring implementation of the documented plans that are in place for inclusive education; ensuring equitable distribution of the resources and services so that there is no longer restrictive reach; enacting proclaimed plans so that a mismatch between ideals and practice does not exist; making clear statements and raising awareness about the supports that are available, and continuing to make decisions so that progress and improvement specific to inclusive education would continue. For example, at the government education department/ministry level, participants recommended that each country should have an inclusive education policy; that the way in which education is provided education should be designed in such a way as to permit least restrictive student placement; that the curriculum must be flexible; assessment must be student

centred; and clear collaborative processes should be documented and easily accessible. At the school level, strong leadership, along with the availability of financial and human resources, were examples of what was identified as needed so that school personnel feel supported in using a student-centred approach.

Theme 2 for RQ5: Coordinated Response to Student Functionality.

This theme refers to the need for a multidisciplinary approach where education-related service professionals and social service agencies work together following one referral of a student with the primary goal of efficiently meeting the child's needs. It includes related services supports for in school and out of school referrals and the opportunity to work with paraprofessionals in planning instructional responses; collaboration among professionals and agencies; making the best use of available resources, and continuing to make decisions so that progress and improvement specific to inclusive education would continue. This theme encompasses examples such as the recommendation by participants that all agencies should work together to meet the child's needs, that response time should be kept at a minimum, and excessively complicated administrative procedures should not exist.

Theme 3 for RQ5: Ecological Infrastructure. This theme references the physical, social and temporal environments needed for the accommodation of all learners with varying needs in the school. These were related to the instructional and related services supports that should be in place at the schools for teachers to use with students; ensuring that a mismatch does not exist between what is proclaimed as ideal and what is practised in schools; making the best use of the provisions that are currently available, and continuing to make decisions so that progress and improvement specific to inclusive education would continue.

Figure 4.6*Thematic Network of Themes*

The physical environment includes space, room arrangement, equipment, and materials. The social environment includes human aspects of the environment specific to interactions with peers, adults, and staff members. The temporal environment includes the length of routines and activities, the sequence of activities, and the daily schedule. Some examples of these which were identified from the interviews are that schools should have ramps, rails and elevators so that they can be barrier-free for physical accessibility; that ICT like hardware for internet access and computer labs should be up to date; that there should be specialized spaces such as resource room, padded calming room, and sick bay; that financial budgeting each year should entail improving school facilities so students might better be served; that there should be equitable distribution of resources; that there should be flexibility related to curriculum and class schedule; and that all persons in the setting should aid in making the school a warm, welcoming environment.

Theme 4 for RQ5: Educator Efficacy Mechanism. This theme refers to an individualized coaching program that allows for educators to receive advice and feedback so that their beliefs about their own ability to teach and to exert a positive effect on all students could be strengthened. This theme incorporates access to instructional, personal and related services supports, the promotion of increased partnerships, and collaborative agency. For instance, participants in the study identified that more than having workshops at intervals, educators working in classrooms with students with identified and suspected special needs need real-time assistance so they might be able to see examples of differentiated lessons. The educator efficiency mechanism should allow for this, as well as for them to have easy access to teaching and learning strategies; have personnel available to assist with classroom management and teaching; for them to get assistance with documentation; and for someone to serve as a coach to guide their practice.

Theme 5 for RQ5: Sensitization and Advocacy. This theme refers to communication that raises public awareness about inclusive education and ensures that inherent rights for all stakeholders are honoured. It relates to improving the school system, promoting increased partnerships, optimizing the use of current provisions, relying on collaborative agency, and continuing to make decisions so that progress and improvement specific to inclusive education would continue. In their interviews, participants recommended that members of the public should develop an awareness of how important it is for children to benefit from inclusive education. They also shared that families should know about their right to have their child educated in a school of their choice. Additionally, they shared that educators should be given working conditions that match the degree of difficulty of the job. Other stakeholders should be willing to collaborate and provide help for the provision of the resources lacking in schools. All of these are examples of the communicated public awareness that is deemed necessary for educators' inclusive practice.

Interim Phase of the Study

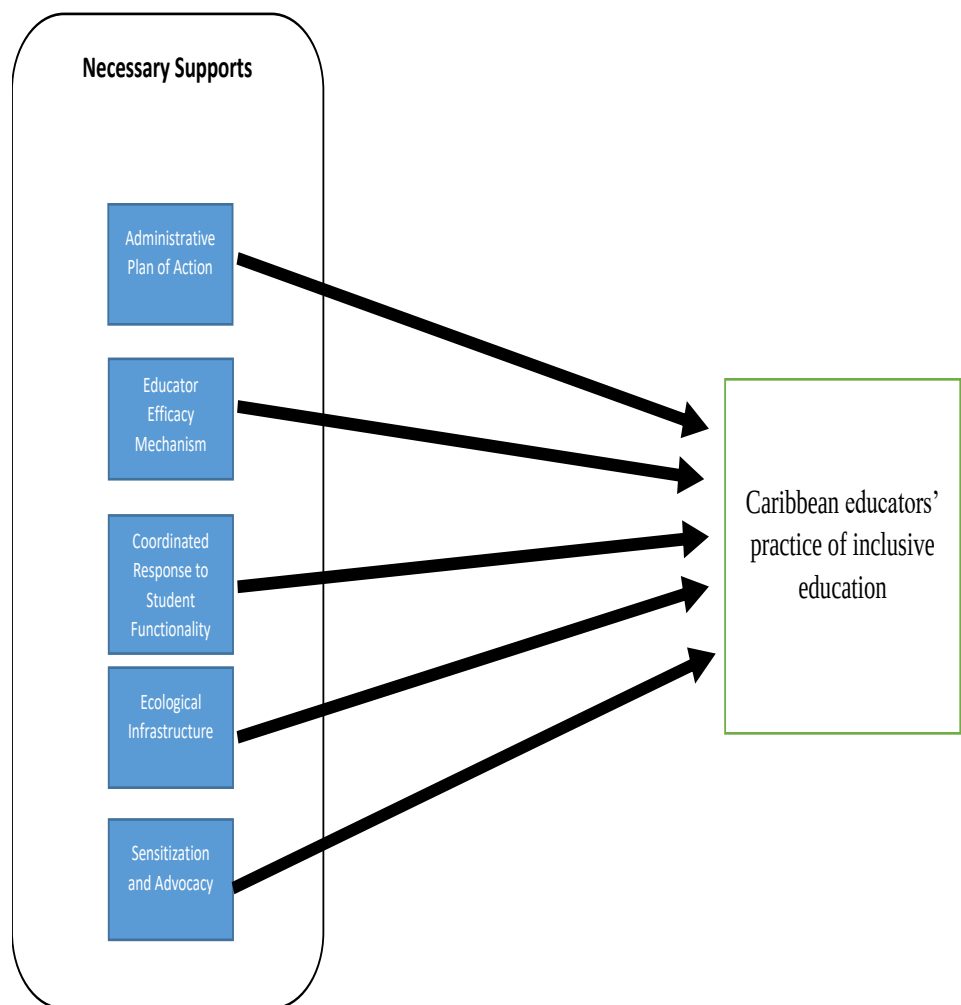
Based on what was found from Phase One, the research's conceptual model was revised, and hypotheses were generated for use in Phase Two of the investigation. During the interim phase, which is described as the time between Phase One and Phase Two, the findings from RQ5 guided the construction of a survey questionnaire to be used to confirm the key supports identified from Phase One of the study. The instrument consisted of 47 questions, inclusive of 5 demographic questions and 42 additional items related to inclusive practice, an administrative plan of action, educator efficiency mechanism, coordinated response to student functionality, ecological infrastructure, and sensitization and advocacy. There were seven questions for each variable.

Figure 4.7 shows the revised conceptual model for the study. This model shows necessary supports for educators' inclusive practice, and is an expansion of the initial model presented in Chapter 1. The conceptualization of five categories

of supports is based on what was found from themes which emerged after analysis of the data which participants shared. Therefore, coming out of the results of Phase One of the investigation, it was proposed that an administrative plan of action, an educator efficacy mechanism, a coordinated response to student functionality, ecological infrastructure, and sensitization and advocacy are the necessary for Caribbean educators' practice of inclusive education. It is believed that each of these supports impact on inclusive practice.

Figure 4.7

Model of Necessary Supports for Educators' Inclusive Practice



The five hypotheses to be assessed about each of these necessary supports for educators' inclusive practice are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Hypotheses to Be Tested During Phase 2 of the Study

Symbol	Description
H ₁	An administrative plan of action impacts on educators' inclusive practice
H ₂	An educator efficacy mechanism impacts on educators' inclusive practice
H ₃	A coordinated response to student functionality impacts on educators' inclusive practice
H ₄	The ecological infrastructure impacts on educators' inclusive practice
H ₅	Sensitization and Advocacy impacts on educators' inclusive practice

Results from Phase Two of the Study: Quantitative

Based on the administration of the survey which was developed from the findings which emerged specific to RQ5, in this phase of the study, factor analysis and linear regression exploration were carried out. The purpose of the tests conducted in this phase was to ensure that the instrument was valid and reliable, and to support or deny the hypotheses generated as an outcome of the qualitative

Phase One. The research question answered in this phase of the study was: What is the relationship between each of the key supports and educators' inclusive practice?

The Results of Uni-dimensionality and Reliability Analysis

The first set of results demonstrated that the question items corresponding to each of the concepts measured in the survey questionnaire did relate only to each of those concepts, and that the items were trustworthy. Table 4.7 shows the results of the analysis done using SPSS. The factors met the acceptable value of the KMO measure. The sampling adequacy of this study is above the satisfaction value of 0.8, as KMO ranged from 0.815 to 0.887. The table also demonstrates that each of the items influence the concepts measured in a strong way, since the Factor Loading values ranged from 0.596 to 0.834. The value of Cronbach's Alpha for each factor demonstrated a satisfaction level of 0.8 and above, ranging from 0.808 to 0.859; thus, all the measurement items demonstrated a reliability value at the satisfaction level.

Table 4.7

Reliability and Uni-Dimensionality Analysis

Items measuring the inclusive practice				
Factor Interpretation	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO
Inclusive Practice	I believe that inclusive practice would be better when I am able to engage in partnerships with others inside and outside of the school environment regularly to improve teaching and learning.	.731	.808	.839
	Meeting the needs of all learners suggests that each day learning activities for students should be differentiated based on what is taught, how it is taught and how learners are expected to	.721		

demonstrate what they have learned.	
It is acceptable that some students are not given the opportunity to participate in learning activities due to the way the school environment is set up.	.720
Flexible groupings based on students' interest and ability is an important strategy for inclusive practice.	.707
Regularly reflecting on strategies used to improve my response to the difficulties students encounter is not evidence of my inclusive practice.	.682
I believe that the language that is used by everyone in the school should express the value of each child.	.657
In a school that is practicing inclusion, the welfare of the whole child should not be the emphasis.	.612

Items measuring the Administrative Plan of Action

Factor Interpretation	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO
Administrative Plan of Action	It is not necessary to have a clear inclusive education policy from the Ministry of Education.	.834	.859	.877
	It is important to have clear guidelines related to school placement for students with special needs.	.814		
	Being able to adopt a flexible approach to the curriculum is essential for working with student with special needs in schools.	.765		

Outcomes for all students should be measured based on high stakes summative assessments.	.762
Collaborative processes for use by educators do not need to be clearly documented and easily accessible.	.718
It is necessary for school leaders to have financial and human resources to be able to encourage staff to use a student centred approach.	.683
It does not matter if the school administrator believes in the philosophy of inclusion.	.554

Items measuring the Educator Efficacy Mechanism

Factor Interpretation	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO
Educator Efficacy Mechanism	Someone who is readily available, to give me clear guidelines about how to plan for and work with students with identified special needs, is not necessary.	.817	.827	.856
	I will feel more confident about inclusion if I am assigned a coach who provides me with feedback about my planning and instruction.	.802		
	Professional development workshops that cover topics related to inclusive education are sufficient for improving my classroom practice.	.741		
	I would be more comfortable if it was possible to receive real time assistance and to see examples of differentiated lessons.	.726		

I feel adequately supported with more resources for teaching and learning than I need. .671

It is not necessary for me to get advice and feedback so that my beliefs about my own ability to teach and to exert a positive effect on all students are strengthened. .643

It is necessary to have easy access to support personnel like teaching aides, social workers, counsellors and psychologists for classroom management and teaching. .557

Items measuring the Coordinated Response to Student Functionality

Factor Interpretation	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO
	It does not matter if a process is specified to handle student referrals.	.795	.823	.815
Coordinated Response to Student Functionality	It is not necessary to have a clear inclusive education policy from the Ministry of Education.	.785		
	It is necessary to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to meeting students' needs in the inclusive classroom.	.746		
	It is important to have clear guidelines related to school placement for students with special needs.	.717		
	There is no need for collaboration to meet the needs of students in the classroom.	.682		
	In order to be able to practice inclusive education, I need to know that I can depend on other	.678		

stakeholders to provide help in areas that I cannot help the student.

I feel that students will be better served if education related service professionals and social service agencies work together following one referral of a student. .596

Items measuring the Ecological Infrastructure

Factor Interpretation	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO
Ecological Infrastructure	It is crucial that accommodations and modifications be made to the school environment for me to be able to practice inclusion.	.782	.804	.838
	Specialized spaces in the school such as a resource room for pull out sessions, a padded calming room for students who need time out and a sick bay are needed for inclusive practice.	.756		
	The financial budget for the school does not impact my ability to access resources so students might better be served.	.736		
	It is not necessary for me to have access to information and communication technologies and other assistive technologies to be able to meet the needs of all students.	.718		
	I believe that in order to practice inclusive education, schools must be barrier free structures where ramps and railways make the physical space accessible to all students.	.604		

Administrative, teaching and ancillary staff at the school should be willing to provide a warm and welcoming environment for all students.	.569
I doubt that resources are distributed equitably to schools	.579

Items measuring the Sensitization and Advocacy

Factor Interpretation	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO
Sensitization and Advocacy	An essential facilitating condition for me to practice inclusive education is that my working conditions be improved.	.773	.842	.887
	I believe that greater awareness of students' rights will influence my ability to realize inclusive education.	.767		
	I believe that more exposure to information about disability and other special needs will improve my ability to work with these types of students.	.765		
	It does not matter if everyone is sensitized to issues of diversity in the classroom.	.747		
	It is necessary to have stakeholders who are willing to provide schools with resources that are lacking.	.714		
	Many of my colleagues are not aware of what the concept of inclusive education means exactly, and this impacts my ability to practice including all students.	.679		
	When families know about their right to have their child educated in a school of their choice, I will	.569		

get more resources for teaching
and learning.

The Results of Linear Regression Analysis

This section serves the purpose of reporting the results from using linear regression analysis in SPSS to examine the relationships that exist between Administrative Plan of Action (independent variable) and Inclusive Practice (dependent variable); Educator Efficacy Mechanism (independent variable) and Inclusive Practice (dependent variable); Coordinated Response to Student Functionality (independent variable) and Inclusive Practice (dependent variable); Ecological Infrastructure (independent variable) and Inclusive Practice (dependent variable); and Sensitization and Advocacy (independent variable) and Inclusive Practice (dependent variable). Table 4.8 depicts the hypothesized relationships.

Table 4.8

Relationships to Be Tested

Hypotheses	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables
H ₁	Administrative Plan of Action	Inclusive Practice
H ₂	Educator Efficacy Mechanism	Inclusive Practice
H ₃	Coordinated Response to Student Functionality	Inclusive Practice
H ₄	Ecological Infrastructure	Inclusive Practice
H ₅	Sensitization and Advocacy	Inclusive Practice

First, the relationship between Administrative Plan of Action and Inclusive Practice (H_1) was examined. Results from the analysis of regression are shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9

Regression Analysis Results for Relationship between Administrative Plan of Action and Inclusive Practice

Variables Entered/Removed ^a				
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method	
1	AdminPOA ^b		. Enter	
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac				
b. All requested variables entered.				

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.826 ^a	.683	.680	.34521

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	35.394	1	35.394	297.008	.000 ^b
1 Residual	16.445	138	.119		
Total	51.840	139			
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac					
b. Predictors: (Constant), AdminPOA					

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.160	.180		6.437	.000
1 AdminPOA	.728	.042	.826	17.234	.000

The R value denotes the simple correlation and is 0.826, which shows a high degree of correlation. The R Square value shows how much of the total variation in inclusive practice can be explained by an Administrative Plan of Action. As shown, $R^2 = 0.683$, thus 68.3 percent of the total variation in Inclusive Practice can be explained, which is fairly large. The results also point to an Administrative Plan of Action predicting inclusive practice significantly well, $F(1, 138) = 297.008$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, the regression model was found to be a good fit for the data. The coefficients showed that an Administrative Plan of Action positively and significantly predicted inclusive practice ($\beta_1 = 0.728$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, in this study, the statistical analysis results have suggested that H_1 is supported.

Second, the relationship between Educator Efficacy Mechanism and Inclusive Practice (H_2) was examined. Results from the analysis of regression are shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

Regression Analysis Results for Relationship between Educator Efficacy Mechanism and Inclusive Practice

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	EducatorEFF ^b		. Enter
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac			
b. All requested variables entered.			

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.738 ^a	.544	.542	.45049
a. Predictors: (Constant), EducatorEFF				
b. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac				

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	52.035	1	52.035	256.408	.000 ^b
1 Residual	43.631	215	.203		
Total	95.666	216			
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac					
b. Predictors: (Constant), EducatorEFF					

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.421	.178		8.000	.000
1 EducatorEFF	.678	.042	.738	16.013	.000
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac					

As shown on the table, the R value is 0.738, and a high degree of correlation is shown. The R Square value shows how much of the total variation in inclusive practice can be explained by an Educator Efficacy Mechanism. As presented, $R^2 = 0.544$, thus 54.4 percent of the total variation in Inclusive Practice can be explained, which is fairly large. The results also point to an Educator Efficacy Mechanism predicting inclusive practice significantly well, $F(1, 215) = 256.408$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, the regression model was found to be a good fit for the data. The coefficients showed that an Educator Efficacy Mechanism positively and significantly predicted inclusive practice ($\beta_1 = 0.678$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, in this study, the statistical analysis results have suggested that H_2 is supported.

Third, the relationship between a Coordinated Response to Student Functionality and Inclusive Practice (H_3) was examined. Results from the analysis of regression are shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

Regression Analysis Results for Relationship between Coordinated Response to Student Functionality and Inclusive Practice

Variables Entered/Removed ^a					
Model	Variables Entered		Variables Removed		Method
1	CoordinatedRes ^b				. Enter
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac					
b. All requested variables entered.					

Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.748 ^a	.559	.557	.44300	
a. Predictors: (Constant), CoordinatedRes					
b. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac					

ANOVA ^a						
Model	Sum of Squares		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	53.473	1	53.473	272.483	.000 ^b
1	Residual	42.193	215	.196		
	Total	95.666	216			
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac						
b. Predictors: (Constant), CoordinatedRes						

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.268	.181	6.992	.000
	CoordinatedRes	.709	.043	.748	16.507 .000
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac					

The results from Table 4.12 show that the R value, which shows the simple correlation, is 0.748. This suggests a high degree of correlation. The R Square value shows how much of the total variation in Inclusive Practice can be explained by a Coordinated Response to Student Functionality. As shown, $R^2 = 0.559$, thus 55.9 percent of the total variation in inclusive practice can be explained, which is fairly large. The results also point to a Coordinated Response to Student Functionality predicting Inclusive Practice significantly well, $F(1, 215) = 272.483$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, the regression model was found to be a good fit for the data. The coefficients showed that a Coordinated Response to Student Functionality positively and significantly predicted Inclusive Practice ($\beta_1 = 0.709$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, in this study, the statistical analysis results have suggested that H_3 is supported.

Fourth, the relationship between Ecological Infrastructure and Inclusive Practice (H_4) was examined. Results from the analysis of regression are shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

Regression Analysis Results for Relationship between Ecological Infrastructure and Inclusive Practice

Variables Entered/Removed ^a				
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method	
1	EcologicalInfras ^b		. Enter	
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac				
b. All requested variables entered.				
Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.751 ^a	.564	.562	.44029

- a. Predictors: (Constant), EcologicalInfras
 b. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	53.988	1	53.988	278.500	.000 ^b
	Residual	41.678	215	.194		
	Total	95.666	216			

- a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac
 b. Predictors: (Constant), EcologicalInfras

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.384	.173		8.012	.000
EcologicalInfras	.687	.041	.751	16.688	.000

a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac

Here it is shown that the R value, which represents the simple correlation, is 0.751, which shows a high degree of correlation. The R Square value shows how much of the total variation in Inclusive Practice can be explained by an Ecological Infrastructure. As presented, $R^2 = 0.564$, thus 56.4 percent of the total variation in Inclusive Practice can be explained, which is fairly large. The results also point to an Ecological Infrastructure predicting Inclusive Practice significantly well, $F(1, 215) = 278.500$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, the regression model was found to be a good fit for the data. The coefficients showed that an Ecological Infrastructure positively and significantly predicted inclusive practice ($\beta_1 = 0.687$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, in this study, the statistical analysis results have suggested that H_4 is supported.

Finally, the relationship between Sensitization and Advocacy and Inclusive Practice (H₅) was examined. Results from the analysis of regression are shown in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

Regression Analysis Results for Relationship between Sensitization and Advocacy to Inclusive Practice

Variables Entered/Removed ^a					
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method		
1	Sensitization ^b		. Enter		
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac					
b. All requested variables entered.					
Model Summary ^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.874 ^a	.764	.763	.32384	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Sensitization					
b. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac					
ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	73.118	1	73.118	697.193	.000 ^b
1 Residual	22.548	215	.105		
Total	95.666	216			
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Sensitization					
Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

1	(Constant)	.827	.130	6.343	.000
	Sensitization	.811	.031	.874	26.404 .000
a. Dependent Variable: InclusivePrac					

The results from Table 4.14 show that the R value, which shows the simple correlation, is 0.874. This suggests a high degree of correlation. The R Square value shows how much of the total variation in Inclusive Practice can be explained by Sensitization and Advocacy. As shown, $R^2 = 0.764$, thus 76.4 percent of the total variation in Inclusive Practice can be explained, which is very large. The results also point to Sensitization and Advocacy predicting Inclusive Practice significantly well, $F(1, 215) = 697.193$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, the regression model was found to be a good fit for the data. The coefficients showed that Sensitization and Advocacy positively and significantly predicted Inclusive Practice ($\beta_1 = 0.811$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, in this study, the statistical analysis results have suggested that H_5 is supported.

Summary

This chapter served the purpose of presenting the findings and results following the analysis of data from interviews and a survey. Findings in the form of themes were presented from Phase One of the investigation. In this qualitative phase, five research questions were answered. The findings from research question 1 indicated that the accessible supports for educators desirous of practising inclusive education are: documented plans; collaborative agency; instructional supports; and related services supports. In answer to research question 2, it was found that educators perceive their experiences of the supports that are accessible for them to be able to facilitate inclusive education as: having a mismatch between ideals and practice; that there is ambiguity about supports; that there is restrictive reach; and as being a work in progress. In response to research question 3, it was found that the desired supports for implementing inclusive

education are: instructional supports; personal supports; and related services supports. In answer to research question 4, it was found that the recommendations that educators have about the provision of supports for inclusive practice are: that the use of current provisions is optimized; that increased partnerships are promoted; and that school systems be improved. The findings from research question 5, pointed out that the key supports perceived by educators to be necessary for inclusive practice in schools are: an administrative plan of action; an educator efficiency mechanism; a coordinated response to student functionality; an ecological infrastructure; and sensitization and advocacy. In the quantitative Phase Two of the investigation, the results for research question 6 are presented through the description of statistics. These results support the Phase One finding, confirming the types of necessary supports and their relationship with inclusive practice. A high degree of correlation between each of the five types of support and inclusive practice was found. In the final chapter which follows, the overall conclusions that were drawn from the research study will be presented, and suggestions for potential research will be shared.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This research study was conducted and analyzed with an applied focus on the supports required for inclusive education as experienced by educators in schools. It was conducted in response to the research problem, which was identified as there being limited knowledge of what supports CARICOM educators have presently for the practice of inclusive education and what supports they need to improve their confidence for inclusive practice. Supports was defined as provisions or facilitating conditions, inclusive of resources and services. The purpose of this two-phase, exploratory sequential mixed-methods research was to explore the views of the participants about the provision of supports with an intention to use the data to develop and test a model of necessary supports for educators to be able to practice inclusive education confidently. Phase One and Phase Two of the study were connected, as Phase Two was built upon Phase One. In this chapter a summarized account of the findings and results of the investigation will be shared, then these will be evaluated, the implications of these will be shared, and the limitations of these findings and results will be identified. Recommendations related to what research can be conducted in future will also be put forward, and closing statements will be shared for the study.

Summary of the Findings and Results

Specific to educators' perceptions about necessary supports for inclusive practice, the findings from Phase One of the research and results from Phase Two of the study highlighted what provisions or facilitating conditions are within reach for use by educators, those that educators want, and those that educators have identified as necessary for them to be able to practice inclusion confidently.

Accessible Supports

Accessible supports is defined as provisions or facilitating conditions that are within reach for use by educators. It was found that the supports which are currently accessible in schools for educators desirous of practising inclusive

education are documented plans, collaborative agency, instructional supports, and related services supports.

Participants in the study perceived that education policy and papers, along with individual school plans, were documented for their various territories. These documented plans often emphasized capacity building for improving inclusive education provision, leading to accountability. All of these documented written communications from their education ministries and schools were deemed valuable because they contained well thought-out ideas for working with students with special needs, served as resources for guiding educators' practice, and positively influenced their motivations for placing emphasis on inclusive education. While the term "inclusive education" was not identified as having been specified in every document across the CARICOM territories, it was identified that there was the perception among the educators in this study that plans for dedicated special education units were documented for various countries for the provision of student support, the creation of national programs and policies, continuous professional development opportunities for school staff, proper identification of students' needs through assessment, school-specific activities, and strategies to be used with students.

It was also perceived that collaborative agency exists for educators' inclusive practice through both public and private partners. Most popularly, this is done through student referrals. The public partners most popularly identified included a given country's ministry or division of education, a given country's division of social services, and the health ministry in each country. The private partners mainly included individual volunteers and organizations like the CDB, EU, UNESCO, CIRCLE, and the World Bank. Collaborations were identified as being offered completely free of charge in many cases, while a few come at a small cost.

Another accessible support was instructional supports in the form of didactic tools, infrastructural provisions, and professional development. Simultaneously, it was identified that while most instructional supports are not

intentionally given for the purpose of inclusive practice, school teachers and administrators seek to channel the same resources that they have either historically been receiving or that have been newly introduced to them, with other educational or social purposes in mind, so as to best meet the individualized needs of the diverse group of learners that are becoming more popular in their classrooms.

Related service supports were found to be accessible in the form of in-school or out of school referrals and the opportunity to work with paraprofessionals in planning instructional responses. Through either internal referrals or external referrals, the participants in this study explained that schools might access: emotional/behavioural counselling for students; referral and assessment of students who are suspected of having academic, behavioural and emotional challenges; and consultations with professionals such as visiting specialist education instructors, clinical/educational/neuropsychological psychologists, and private speech and language pathologists who aid in providing recommendations for the classroom teacher after a child's diagnosis.

Experiences of Accessible Supports

It was also found that educators perceive their experiences of the supports that are accessible for them to be able to facilitate inclusive education as there being a mismatch between ideals and practice, that there is ambiguity about supports, supports as having a restrictive reach, and as being a work in progress.

While not every participant's experience of accessible supports was the same, they all agreed that what is espoused is not always enacted. Related to documented supports that were identified as being accessible, it was found that there appeared to be some disconnect between the intention of governments to embrace inclusive education and the emphasis placed on this initiative in the schools. Even though the education directors could identify some facilitating conditions that existed that allowed for them to practice inclusion, they doubted that the right supports exist, and was of the view that they were not very clear about all of the supports that should be accessible to them.

Even though documented plans, collaborative agency, instructional supports, and related services supports were identified as accessible supports overall, participants perceived that they experienced an inconsistent availability of supports due to their type of school and geographic location, that intentionality was not evident since at the government and school level those in charge sometimes fail to allocate supports specifically with inclusive practice in mind, and that they were unaware of supports availability due to untimely communication and vague wording of offers for support.

It was found that what is currently being given as supports for educators' practice of inclusive education is perceived as not enough. Limited funding for inclusive practice was perceived to exist in all of the territories, student functionality is impeded by lack of supports, and the geographic location of the schools was believed to impact the supports that educators can access.

A widely held view by the participants in the study is that the education system collectively has accomplished a great deal in meeting the needs of students with limited resources. It was recognized that more could be done, however, as there are multiple areas where improvements are needed. There was consensus that special facilities and skills were required for effective inclusion to occur. Training, resources and spaces were identified as essential. Education directors perceived that more personnel needed to be hired to fill roles of special education teachers, counsellors and social workers. They also believed that upkeep of resources such as ICT needed to be done regularly to ensure that they were in good working condition and could be used for teaching and learning in the classroom. It was also perceived that the school's infrastructure should be upgraded to allow for students with physical impairments to be functional in their environment and that teachers needed to be coached in specific ways to meet students' special needs. Additionally, it was found that perceptions need to be addressed on an ongoing basis at a national level so that both educators and the general public better understand how and why inclusion is best implemented.

Desired Supports

The study revealed that those provisions or facilitating conditions that educators want for implementing inclusive education are instructional supports, personal supports, and related services supports. Instructional supports refer to those conditions that would facilitate educators' efforts for teaching and learning. The four different kinds of instructional supports identified through the study are scheduling, physical infrastructure, teaching tools, and in-class assistance. Personal supports refer to the individualized attention educators need, which will be specific to helping them in their instructional delivery as they go about the process of teaching students with a variety of needs in schools. One on one coaching where an experienced special educator serves to demonstrate instructional practices related to inclusive education for an assigned novice inclusive educator, real-time guidance where teachers engage in ongoing teamwork with others who can provide immediate support on an ongoing basis, and professional development opportunities were all identified as specific types of individualized attention for educators. Related services supports refer to additional human resource help for the delivery of services to meet students' needs. While some related services were perceived as accessible, there are perceived gaps in the efficiency of service delivery. School-based consultants such as psychologists, counsellors, therapists, special education teachers, social workers, and nurses are desired to be stationed at the school is one type of related services support. The enactment of plans so that the social challenges that exist among students and their families might be mitigated is another type of related services support. Additionally, efficient timelines for service delivery is desired.

Recommendations about the Provision of Supports

In order for better use to be made of resources and services, the study found that the use of current provisions should be optimized, that increased partnerships should be promoted, and that school systems should be improved, so that overall, the provision of supports for inclusive practice could be made better.

The following were recommendations shared by participants which related to optimizing the use of current provisions. Long wait times after referral was noted as being common. Therefore, it was a recommendation to minimize response times for meeting identified needs by hiring more personnel and securing more equipment for testing and evaluation of students. To also address the issue of limited funding, which affects wait times, it was recommended by participants that more connections should be established with volunteers so that free or cost-effective services might be provided. Proper budgeting at the level of governments is required so that the various education sectors might benefit from funds to be able to acquire the necessary supports, and budgetary control at the level of the school is needed. Another recommendation is to raise awareness of ways needs can be facilitated, such as through the use of initiative taken by educators to make requests so that they can benefit from the kind contributions of community and business stakeholders. It was shared that better lines of communication would make educators more aware of opportunities for getting help, such as a schools' ability to access grants for special projects. The study revealed that there is a need for more candid discussion surrounding SEN and that all stakeholders in education should take ownership for inclusive education to become a reality. Training for all stakeholders involved in education was identified as another means of raising awareness about SEN.

So as to promote increased partnerships, it was recommended that collaborations with the church, community organizations, parents, volunteers, private businesses and other government agencies all have the potential to be useful for the provision of supports, especially as it relates to funding, human resources, and educator workload.

Related to the idea of improving school systems, recommendations included decreasing the utilization of parallel general education and special education, raising awareness of diversity, and deemphasizing success based on academic tests. Participants identified that in the various countries in the region, special education schools are still an option that many families are directed to,

especially when schools do not want to bear the burden of working with learners with SEN. A recommendation is that there should be a one-stop-shop for the delivery of services for students, and they should not have to go to different places to access services, but the services should come to them in an inclusive setting. As part of the redesign, emphasis on instruction and best fit based on student accommodation and teacher readiness is needed. To raise awareness about diversity, the recommendation by participants is that the various education ministries in their region should determine to train all teachers to work in the inclusive setting and that this should not just be in the form of one exceptionalities or special education course. To tackle the issue of lack of knowledge, training and an awareness campaign should be run. It was also recommended that any redesign of the education system should be done in consultation with all relevant stakeholders so that there should be population buy-in. As a means of improving the school system, the recommendation put forward is that not all students should be made to take the same end of schooling assessments, but rather, alternatives should be allowed.

Key Supports Necessary for Inclusive Practice in Schools

There were five main types of provisions or facilitating conditions that educators have identified as necessary for them to be able to practice inclusion confidently. These are an administrative plan of action, an educator efficiency mechanism, a coordinated response to student functionality, ecological infrastructure, and sensitization and advocacy.

An administrative plan of action refers to the organized series of measures that school leaders take so as to realize the goal of inclusive education. The measures include making improvements to and ensuring implementation of the documented plans that are in place for inclusive education; ensuring equitable distribution of the resources and services so that there is no longer restrictive reach; enacting proclaimed plans so that a mismatch between ideals and practice does not exist; making clear statements and raising awareness about the supports that are

available; and continuing to make decisions so that progress and improvement specific to inclusive education would continue.

An educator efficacy mechanism refers to an individualized coaching program that allows for educators to receive advice and feedback so that their beliefs about their own ability to teach and to exert a positive effect on all students could be strengthened. This theme incorporates access to instructional, personal and related services supports, the promotion of increased partnerships, and collaborative agency.

A coordinated response to student functionality refers to the need for a multidisciplinary approach where education-related service professionals and social service agencies work together following one referral of a student with the primary goal of efficiently meeting the child's needs. It includes related services supports for in school and out of school referrals and the opportunity to work with paraprofessionals in planning instructional responses; collaboration among professionals and agencies; making the best use of available resources; and continuing to make decisions so that progress and improvement specific to inclusive education would continue.

Ecological Infrastructure refers to the physical, social and temporal environments needed for the accommodation of all learners with varying needs in the school. The physical environment includes space, room arrangement, equipment, and materials. The social environment includes human aspects of the environment specific to interactions with peers, adults, and staff members. The temporal environment includes the length of routines and activities, the sequence of activities, and the daily schedule.

Sensitization and Advocacy refers to communication that raises public awareness about inclusive education and ensuring that inherent rights for all stakeholders are honoured. It relates to improving the school system, promoting increased partnerships, optimizing the use of current provisions, relying on collaborative agency, and continuing to make decisions so that progress and improvement specific to inclusive education would continue.

Relationship between Key Supports and Educators' Inclusive Practice

It was found that a high degree of correlation between each of the five types of support and inclusive practice exists. An administrative plan of action positively and significantly impacts on educators' inclusive practice; an educator efficacy mechanism positively and significantly impacts on educators' inclusive practice; a coordinated response to student functionality positively and significantly impacts on educators' inclusive practice; the ecological infrastructure positively and significantly impacts on educators' inclusive practice; and sensitization and advocacy positively and significantly impacts on educators' inclusive practice. Therefore, the Model of Necessary Supports for Educators' Inclusive Practice was supported. The conceptual model represents five categories of supports, each of which when present independently increases the likelihood that confident inclusive practice will occur on the part of educators.

Evaluation of the Findings

It was significant that the accessible supports for educators' inclusive practice have been identified as documented plans, collaborative agency, instructional supports, and related services supports. These are informative findings that reflect multiple kinds of supports which are already available in CARICOM schools, and which confirm a previous suggestion by Armstrong et al. (2005) that efforts by Caribbean governments reflect sound planning related to an inclusive education system. While some Caribbean scholars have argued that the region's elitist education structure and incompatible examination system are features which are in direct opposition to supports for inclusive practice (Carrington-Blaides & Conrad, 2017; De Lisle et al., 2017; Harry, 2020), these supports which were identified as accessible offer evidence of improved features of the region's education system. Since knowledge about the specific types of supports educators currently have in CARICOM schools was unknown prior to this study, these findings alert to the fact that some foundational elements are already in place for inclusive education as endorsed by The National Council for Special Education's (2011) Inclusive Education Framework, UNESCO's (2009b) Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education, and Peters' (2004) Input-Process-

Outcome-Context Framework for Inclusive Education. This study's finding in relation to the accessible supports suggests that there is capacity within the Caribbean for educators to practice inclusion. In line with the recommendations of Able et al. (2015), the results demonstrate that supports are available for inclusive practice but that the persisting concern is the fragmented way in which these are provided.

The findings in relation to how accessible supports are experienced by educators were not alarming. Even though very little was found in the literature on the question of what supports are available in schools in the Caribbean region, a common claim was that the perception exists among educators working in schools that not enough material resources, skills, and personal supports are available to them (Artiles et al., 2011). Several reports by previous Caribbean researchers are compatible with the findings of this investigation that a mismatch between ideals and practice exists, that there is ambiguity about supports, that supports have a restrictive reach, and that what is currently available is a work in progress. This study's findings were consistent with reports by UNESCO (2018), who identified that countries around the world are at various levels of progress related to inclusive practice. It was found that CARICOM educators also perceived accessible supports to be available to varying degrees in many of their schools.

One interesting finding is that educators were repurposing the supports that they are given so as to try to practice inclusive education as best as they could, even though school leaders sometimes fail to allocate supports specifically with inclusive practice in mind. Kalyanpur (2022) pointed out that developed countries have had the advantages of time to develop appropriate structures that work best and increased financial resources in their implementation of inclusive education, and these factors may account for resource allocation and use in the region as a developing territory. The TPB explains this action of educators repurposing the supports that they are given through the independent determinant of intention to practice inclusive education. However, as was suggested through

this study, successful performance of inclusive behaviour by educators is not only dependent upon a favourable intention but on an adequate level of volitional control, which is, willingness that results from having the required opportunities, resources, skills and additional supportive conditions. Overall, the findings of this study were in line with numerous reports in the literature that supports that they are perceived as lacking, and what continues to be available no longer suffices for educators in schools (Carrington-Blaides & Conrad, 2017; Florian, 2014; Jules, 2008). Based on the findings, this study concurs with Conrad and Brown (2011), who identified that while there might be a philosophical readiness for inclusive education, school readiness is still lacking in some places. The facts that the educators in this study doubted that the right supports exist, and were of the view that they were not very clear about all of the supports that should be accessible to them, indicate that there are support opportunities to be capitalized upon to further inclusive practice in CARICOM schools.

The desired supports identified through this study highlight some of the barriers which exist for educators' inclusive practice. As mentioned in the literature review, evidence of confident inclusive practice by educators is found through the removal of barriers (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Cheminais, 2004; Collins, 2012; Pletser, 2016). The findings of this research are interesting because the study also found that two of the three desired supports, i.e. instructional supports and related services supports, were already accessible, but that a mismatch exists in relation to personal supports, which are lacking. It has been suggested that substantial differences between actual and preferred supports services often exist (Smith et al., 2002), but this does not appear to be the case. It was not surprising that educators identified the need for instructional and related services supports, as these are widely supported in the literature.

This study supports evidence from previous observations by international and regional researchers who identified challenges with implementing inclusive education. What was found in relation to what is accessible, how it is experienced, and what is desired was similar to the results shared by Pearce et al. (2010),

pointing to the context of the school as one of the barriers to inclusive practice because educators lamented that although inclusive plans were in place, there is limited follow-through. In line with prior studies that would have reported on examples of supports needed by educators, like actionable plans, opportunities to collaborate, psychological support for educators, and pedagogical support (Conrad & Brown, 2011; Daunarummo, 2010; DeAngelis, 2012; Hunter-Johnson et al., 2014; Kilanowski-Press et al., 2010; Zinsser et al., 2016), this study's findings that these are available, yet desired to a greater extent, indicate that supports are still lacking. The outcomes of this study fail to explain why some supports are lacking, but participants reported they feel that the resources and services that they need in inclusive practice is not a serious initiative being given due attention by school leaders, and this is similar to what was identified by Ainscow and Miles (2008) and Zinsser et al. (2016). Nevertheless, Some noteworthy findings were the perception that there is the unreasonableness of expectations for educators and that 'personal supports' are desired. A lack of clear structural arrangement from education officials to school administrators was identified, and this has resulted in very little impact on schools taking inclusive education seriously. This finding is supported by Sakiz and Woods (2015). These results about accessible supports, therefore, need to be interpreted with caution because based on how participants in the study described their experiences, it suggested that contrary to Armstrong et al. (2005), sound planning is not always evident at the school level.

The recommendations made by participants in this study about the provision of supports were very encouraging for realizing the desired behaviour of inclusive practice. Based on the fact that educators identified that the use of current provisions should be optimized, that increased partnerships should be promoted, and that school system should be improved so that overall the provision of supports for inclusive practice could be made better, it can be inferred that there is a willingness among educators to be inclusive (Ajzen, 1991). Hunter-Johnson et al. (2014), and Causton-Theoharis et al. (2009), highlighted that inclusive practice involves educators being able to bring resources and

services to the learner, rather than moving the learner to the services. The recommendations of educators found in this study can be very useful in pointing out targets for making inclusive practice possible, because what was shared are what the educators perceive as needed for their work.

The key supports necessary for inclusive practice which emerged from this study (i.e., an administrative plan of action; an educator efficacy mechanism; a coordinated response to student functionality; ecological infrastructure; and sensitization and advocacy) were distinct from any categorization of supports presented altogether in past research. They incorporate the available and desired supports identified in the study, and they combine the broad areas of psychological support, pedagogical support, organizational support, training and feedback support identified through the past literature. Bergsma (2000) identified the need for a support services delivery model in the Caribbean region, and this finding can be viewed as a step in this direction as it presents a model for supports for educators for inclusive practice.

Agbenyega (2007) and McLeskey et al. (2014) noted that confident inclusive practice had been observed when teachers were sufficiently equipped with supports that allow for successful student outcomes. This study's finding are in line with this view. Each of the five types of necessary supports which were found from the study, make the work of educators easier in relation to inclusive practice. In the conceptual model produced, each of the necessary supports are independent variables that allow for successful practice. When combined, the model suggests that inclusive practice increases when educators perceive they have an administrative plan of action, an educator efficacy mechanism, a coordinated response to student functionality, ecological infrastructure, and sensitization and advocacy (Ajzen, 2011; Choen et al., 2012; De Leeuw et al., 2015).

Implications of the Findings

This combination of findings, presented in detail in Chapter 4 and explained above, provides support for the conceptual premise that there are necessary supports for inclusive practice and that without them being in place, the practice of inclusive education by educators would continue to be limited. Some of the issues emerging from the research findings relate specifically to accessible supports, educators' perceptions of their experience of supports, the recommendations that are given by educators about supports, and the key supports identified as necessary for educators' inclusive practice.

Similar to what was found in the continent of Asia by Khan et al. (2017), this study revealed that there is a commitment to inclusion in the CARICOM region but that some components are lacking. The findings that documented supports, collaborative agency, instructional supports and related services supports are present, further support the conclusion that there is the capacity for CARICOM schools to have an inclusive education system. However, acknowledgement of the perceptions that supports given directly or indirectly is not enough to sufficiently address the identified needs of students, and that stronger partnership and intentional service delivery are required suggest that immediate steps must be taken to improve what currently exists. What 'should' be versus what 'is' available (theory versus practice) needs to be evaluated for each country, and the finding that what is available now is not monolithic, must be addressed.

Conrad and Brown (2010) noted that care for those recognized as having SEN in the Caribbean began based on the initiatives taken by voluntary groups and philanthropists, resulting in parallel systems of general and special education. Consideration of this, combined with the recommendation for partnerships for inclusive education, gives hope that there is capacity among stakeholders to improve the education system. Contrary to Lavia's (2007) conclusion that isolated and limited opportunities for students with SEN existed in Caribbean schools, the findings of this study indicates that many more opportunities might be available

now. The region's history points to the fact that the perceptions of supports and the recommendations given by participants in this study are important to the region's commitment to the desired outcome of quality education that is equitable and inclusive for every student by 2030, maintained in UNESCO's sustainable development goals and detailed in its Education 2030 Agenda.

Furthermore, in respect to the Caribbean's capacity to be inclusive, attention must be given to limit where integration and mainstreaming are still being practised so as to ensure that educators are not reverting to blurred ideas of implementation. Ye et al. (2019) noted that social pressure for inclusive education imposes the belief that the present performance is not enough for achieving the sought after goal, and it may be this pressure that forces schools in the CARICOM region to adopt a spectrum of "inclusive-like" practices which may not be utilized effectively. This is why personal supports through an educator efficacy mechanism, perceived as necessary for educators, is so important. Educators in this study revealed that some infrastructural arrangements and the decision to plan differentiated lessons are within the control of educators in schools, but if they have no idea of how to use these approaches for the benefit of all students, then they will continue in traditional approaches to instruction hoping to get different results, and then being frustrated at the failed outcomes. Agencies such as the support services unit in each country's education ministry must do more, as asserted by Villa and Thousand (1995), to emphasize planning and provision in the least restrictive environment for meeting the needs of all students.

The findings related to educators' perception of their experience of supports may help us to understand that the "carers", i.e., educators working in schools, are not sufficiently cared for. The perception exists that there is a lack of seriousness for inclusive education by those in authority and that educators' duties seem hard to perform because they do not have all of the necessary supports for inclusive practice. Fuchs (2010) advised that the unreasonableness of expectations is a reason why initiatives might fail. The identified inequalities related to access based on location and perceived need of the provisions, the fact that instructional

supports are most often provided by the education ministries/departments, and that many of the related services supports are privately paid for by parents suggests that unfair practices may exist related to the provision of supports for inclusive education. Schools must ensure that educators are provided with the necessary supports to meet the needs of all students in the inclusive classroom. Lack of such supports is a barrier to successful inclusion (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995; Vaughn et al., 1994).

Additionally, a question that might be considered that has a bearing on human rights is, “How is education in the CARICOM viewed by the international community?” The findings that accessible supports are funded in many cases by parents who seek out and obtain related supports for their children in a private capacity and that the location of schools sometimes determine the degree of access to supports give rise to questions of what might be a student’s rights as opposed to privileges in accessing quality education. Given that the movement towards inclusive education worldwide is rooted in reflections on the Rights of the Child, lack of provision of the necessary supports by those responsible within the education system may be deemed a violation of the child’s right to education.

On the subject of the quality of teaching and learning taking place, consistent with theories espoused by Rogers and Vygotsky (1978) about a social constructivist view of teaching and learning, and by Fullan (2009), who spoke about whole-school reform, this study revealed that participants perceived that their currently accessible supports were not enough for meeting the needs of students in this way. Policy papers should give redress to rights related to educational inequalities (UNESCO, 2009), but in their absence, as was determined in this study, this may not be realized. Bergsma (2000) asserted that the education system might be an expression of care and this present study’s findings call for a rethinking of how care is expressed and how quality is being measured.

Jules and Williams (2015) chronicled the development of education along with challenges that Caribbean countries have faced and noted that issues of

equitable access for all students and quality are among those that stood out. Hackett (2005) also previously identified some of the challenges facing the education systems in the English-speaking Caribbean and commented that underachievement in our schools and the trend of declining interest in studies exist. If these findings are considered in light of this study's revelation that students may not be given what they need to succeed, then it points to a need for this to be addressed. Highlighting the nature of education in the Caribbean, in lieu of necessary supports, participants shared that many of their territories still operate special schools where students are sent when the general education school is unable to care for them. CARICOM school leaders must be mindful of the fact that the presence of a dual education system averts systematic changes which are needed to make education responsive to an ever more diverse society (Geldenhuys & Wever, 2013).

The findings from educators' recommendations about the provision of supports suggest that there is an initiative among educators in some schools, where principals and teachers are seeking out and forming community partnerships, resulting in increased supports. This is in line with recommendations by Gross et al. (2015) which indicate that where schools sought out and formed community partnerships, they were able to benefit from increased supports. In the CARICOM region, where limited budgets are often a challenge, there are important implications for further building these kinds of initiatives so that inclusive education can be facilitated. Mihalic et al. (2008) and Hernandez (2016) pointed out that educators are change agents. Jules (2008) of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), in his article 'Rethinking education for the Caribbean: A radical approach', argued that what was required to improve education is a fundamental reconsidering of educational delivery because the incremental way in which it is currently being developed could no longer suffice. Educators in this study were willing to build on what they knew and were comfortable doing, so as to realize their capacity to make accommodations and modifications for learners with SEN in the inclusive setting. This willingness should be viewed as praiseworthy since capacity may not always

be based on ready-made instructional, personal, and related services supports, but on educators' creative approaches borne out of a desire to practice inclusion. For some educators who may be unwilling and who have a need for classroom practices to be dictated, this might be related to the Caribbean people's history of slavery and indentureship, so mindsets may need to be addressed.

Based on the identification of the five key supports necessary for educators' inclusive practice, one of the concerns that arise out of these findings is that some of these supports, such as an administrative plan of action, already exists to some extent, but a clear structure for use is missing. If educators are to be confident in their practice, all five of these necessary supports must be accessible. Two areas that need immediate attention are an educator efficacy mechanism and sensitization and advocacy.

This study's focus on supports for educators provides evidence of facilitating conditions or provisions that would strengthen the practice of inclusive education in schools. While no assumption was made that a relevant structure is already in place throughout the region for an inclusive education system, the study did find that many initiatives are afoot which align to varying degrees to the philosophy of inclusive education. This is positive. The understanding that even countries considered to be highly developed are still in positions where they need to implement inclusive education on a spectrum of education structures gives further validation to the strides that are being made in the region. Countries around the world utilize several models of inclusive practice, including fully inclusive unitary structures, dual/parallel systems, and multiple structures/tracks (Eurydice, 2019; Hayes & Bulat, 2017). Therefore, the fact that there is still room for improvement in the CARICOM region is reasonable. These gains to date should be celebrated considering the comparative disadvantages of time and resources to attend to educational priorities that exist.

Recommendations

The practical applications suggested here are situated in the findings of this study which reflect that what is meant by supports for educators' inclusive practice

are administrative planning, an efficacy mechanism that helps educators in their roles, coordination of multidisciplinary services for responding to the needs of students, adapting the ecological infrastructure within which school-based practitioners operate, and opportunities for sensitization and advocacy. From the outcomes of this study, the following are some recommendations for improving inclusive education practice and for additional areas of study:

1. To encourage all five types of necessary supports identified through this study to be available to educators, a checklist based on the survey instrument utilized in Phase Two of this study might be useful for itemizing factors related to each of the types of supports. This should be made available to school leaders to gauge if they are providing the facilitating conditions for educators' inclusive practice. Villa and Thousand (2016) support this kind of self-assessment for best practices related to inclusive education.
2. In order to address the discord that exists among schools and other agencies, a network of service providers for educators to collaborate with about their students should be set up, customized, publicized, and maintained. This database should be made available online also on the respective education ministry or department websites so that every interested stakeholder can benefit from the information. Tait (2020) identified that this kind of resource could be an important factor in educational outcomes for students.
3. As part of an educator efficacy mechanism, and to aid educators in rethinking their approaches, an Inclusive Education Ideas Manual should be created and shared with all in-service educators. This manual should provide suggestions based on research-based practices for instructional strategies and how accommodations and modifications might be implemented for students with SEN in the inclusive setting. What would make this a unique resource from other information of this nature that is widely available online and in other resource books is that the suggestions would be specific to the characteristics of schools in the CARICOM

region. Mitchell and Sutherland (2020) highlighted that such a resource is useful for closing the gap that exists between research and practice.

4. Greater prominence should be given to raising awareness about inclusive practices. To promote sensitization and advocacy, a fundamental course of study should be implemented for school-based professionals and paraprofessionals such as teachers, principals, guidance officers, social workers, and student aides. The course could be accessible online or in-person, and it should relate to topics such as predetermined standards associated with supporting educational outcomes, how professionalism and ethical practices can be demonstrated, ways in which to create a positive and safe learning environment, how to communicate effectively and participate in the team process, and evaluating inclusive competency. Additionally, teacher training at university should address inclusive practice for all teachers, not only special education majors and minors. This kind of course is supported by McConkey and Mariga (2011), who reported on the benefits of the creation of awareness about inclusive education among teachers, pupils and local communities.
5. To address the perceived discrepancies in the distribution and utilization of supports, leaders in the field of education should aim to encourage clearer communication about what is accessible and how these can be ascertained when needed for inclusive practice. Immediate action on clear and measurable expectations for inclusive practice should also be taken. School leaders should be the ones who model best practices for teachers. All of these suggestions could be actioned through the termly publication of a newsletter that is distributed to educators in all schools.
6. There should be the development of an electronic-mentoring (e-mentoring) or virtual coaching online application. This would contribute to an educator efficacy mechanism. Glover et al. (2019) support the utility of an online platform for coaching actions and highlight the benefits to be derived, which include the fidelity of implementation, reductions in instructional gaps, and overall achievement.

7. This research study should be replicated, using other populations to compare the results of this investigation—for example, educators from government schools in the CARICOM region.
8. Future research should seek to find out and report on why there is inconsistency in the provision of supports within and among countries in CARICOM.
9. Since a fascinating finding of this investigation was that educators were repurposing the supports that they are given so as to try to practice inclusive education as best as they could, even though school leaders sometimes fail to allocate supports specifically with inclusive practice in mind, it might also be beneficial for future research to determine what specific factors influence educators' initiative in schools.
10. So as to determine why there appears to be no sense of urgency for inclusive education in the CARICOM region, future studies can also seek to find out if governments are still committed to the philosophy of inclusive education.

Limitations

Although this study was carefully and diligently designed, the findings should be interpreted with an awareness of a few limitations. They are as follows:

1. The most notable limitation was the existence of a challenge with accessing participants since the education directors were located throughout the CARICOM region. To overcome this, electronic means of data collection were employed initially and later in the study face to face data collection proceeded. However, the availability of participants for scheduled interviews was problematic and sometimes took multiple attempts. Multiple reminders needed to be sent out to participants, and this also added to the length of time initially proposed for data collection.
2. Another limitation related to my inability to control the behaviour of the participants. Due to the complexity of human experience, it was difficult to rule out or control all the variables that would have impacted on the perceptions shared by the participants of the study during the interviews.

3. Focus-group dynamics was an additional limitation, which might have affected how participants' experiences were presented. For instance, contributors may endeavor to conform in a group or hide their genuine personal experiences so as to save face. This limitation was overcome by way of using multiple means of data collection in this study, including the use of individual interviews, in the course of which the participants could easily express their opinions devoid of required interaction with the group.
4. The case of the CARU was used because it conveniently afforded the researcher the opportunity to conduct research into the poorly understood issue under study. Even though the convenience sample utilized was deemed acceptable because it clearly targeted the audience that the researcher was desirous of studying, it was also a limitation. By reason of the denominational organization within which all of the educators worked, religious persuasion may have impacted the perceptions expressed by participants. Although this study was not fashioned with precise attention to differences in denominational beliefs, it would be of value to include a more diverse sample that comprises educators from an assortment of denominational, public and private schools all over the CARICOM region. While there is no expectation for the generalizability of this study, there is hope that conclusions may perhaps have some degree of transferability to comparable cases. The findings may inform thinking and subsequent studies with potentially generalizable results.

Self-Reflection

As the sole researcher in this study, I confess that even though this thesis was an academic requirement that I determined to complete in order to achieve my professional goals, the progression leading to completion was a unique learning experience for me which contributed to my personal growth also. At times, I felt that I was not prepared to handle the assortment of emotions that came to bear upon me. These included frustration at the wearisomeness of reading and summarizing applicable articles, helplessness in selecting appropriate research methodology, and the fear that I would be unable to fulfill the requirements of this course of

supervised independent study that and be able to produce a noteworthy and original contribution culminating in a thesis. After my initial turmoil, as my study progressed, there were many times when I felt pride and hopefulness as I collected data and began analyzing it. Through the process that I have undergone over the last seven years, my comprehension of the fact that research scholarship requires persistence and flexibility grew, and I understand now that those emotions were necessary to the process. I believe that growth has taken place in my understanding of the nature of research and appreciate that this process is cyclical, occasionally messy, that it can be frustrating and sometimes wearisome, but that overall research is vastly rewarding and even exciting. My mindset has changed from thinking that research is simply complex to the view that it is complexly simple. I now realize that there are many interconnected parts that come together through purposeful methods that make research meaningful. At the core is unearthing new information that answers the research question. The process of engaging in research has also encouraged me to consider my own professional goals in light of the contribution that I can make to the improved provision of supports for inclusive education in the CARICOM region. Overall, I am thankful for this journey, and I appreciate its merit.

Conclusion

Through exploring the perspectives of education directors, principals, and teachers within the CARU in this two-phase, exploratory sequential mixed methods study, views about the provision of accessible and desired supports were identified, and these led to the development of a model of necessary supports for educators to be able to practice inclusive education confidently. Different from the existing supports for inclusive education researchers who have explored student supports, this study explored educator supports for their inclusive practice that may represent more concrete variables for the successful enactment of inclusive education in schools. This study draws attention to the provisions or facilitating conditions that these CARICOM educators have identified as necessary for them to be able to practice inclusion confidently in schools.

Accessible supports were identified as documented plans, collaborative agency, instructional supports, and related services supports. These were significant findings that alerted to foundational elements being in place for inclusive education. Educators perceived their experiences of the supports that are accessible for them to be able to facilitate inclusive education as having a mismatch between ideals and practice, that there is ambiguity about supports, supports as having a restrictive reach, and as being a work in progress. These findings, although significant, were not alarming. The desired supports by educators were identified as instructional supports, personal supports, and related services supports. Interestingly, two of the three desired supports were already accessible, but a mismatch existed in relation to personal supports, which was lacking. Recommendations made by participants in the study were for the use of currently accessible supports to be optimized, for increased partnerships to be promoted, and for the school systems to be improved so that overall, the provision of supports for inclusive practice could be made better. These were all very encouraging for realizing the desired behaviour of inclusive practice by educators. It was found that an administrative plan of action, an educator efficacy mechanism, a coordinated response to student functionality, ecological infrastructure, and sensitization and advocacy are the five necessary supports for educators to be able to practice inclusion confidently. A high degree of correlation existed between each of the five types of support and inclusive practice, and this represented the conceptual model which resulted from the study.

The findings support the conclusion that there is the capacity for CARICOM schools to have an inclusive education system and give hope that there is capacity among stakeholders to improve the education system. Additionally, unfair practices may exist related to the provision of supports for inclusive education and these need to be addressed within the education system by considering the human rights of both the students and the educators involved. It can also be assumed that educators are using their initiative to make their practice as inclusive as possible with the supports that they have, even though there are supports that are lacking. If educators are to be confident in their practice, all five

of these necessary supports must be accessible. Two areas that need immediate attention are an educator efficacy mechanism, and sensitization and advocacy.

This inquiry adds to the body of research related to inclusive education in the CARICOM region and provides insight into areas deemed lacking by previous researchers in the field. This study focused on solutions as it provided a starting point of perceptions supports and gave recommendations for the improved provision and future research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Letter to Gatekeeper



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

ST. AUGUSTINE, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, WEST INDIES

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Telephone: (868) 662-2002 Ext. 2118/2119 Fax: (868) 662-6615 e-mail: headsoe@the.uwi.tt

29th May, 2017.

The Director for Education
Caribbean Union Conference of SDA
No. 7 Rookery Nook
Maraval
Trinidad

Dear Dr. Hilary Bowman,

I am a postgraduate student at The University of the West Indies St. Augustine campus reading for a Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree. For my dissertation, I intend to explore perceptions about what supports for inclusion are currently available in schools in the Caribbean, what further supports are required and to find out how perceptions of the supports currently received impact on attitudes toward the implementation of inclusive education. The implications of these findings concerning availability of supports and attitudes regarding inclusion are deemed valuable to advancing inclusive education in the Caribbean.

As a member of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church, I am well aware that SDA educators intentionally embrace and advocate diversity by creating environments where differences are safe, valued, recognized, and respected. Yet, schools operate within the boundaries of their country's educational mandates and resources. Since the CUC has schools in multiple islands across the Caribbean, I believe that it will serve as an ideal source for data collection to achieve my study's purpose.

I am therefore requesting permission to collect data from each of the ten education directors of your schools. With your permission, I will be distributing questionnaires and conducting interviews with participants. Participation in this study is voluntary and all information will be kept secure and confidential. All participants can request to view the results summary.

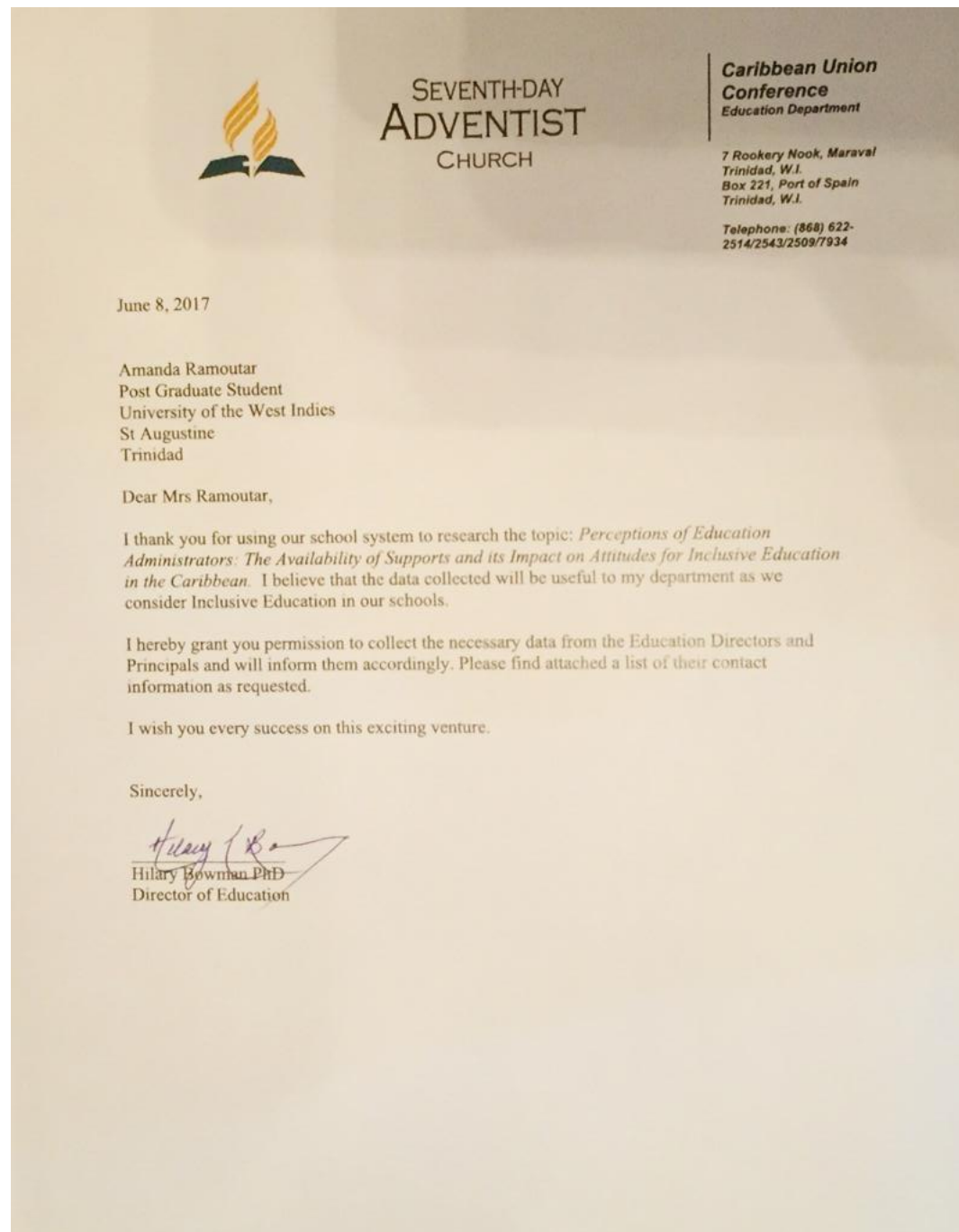
I look forward to your favourable response.

Respectfully,

Amanda Ramoutar, postgraduate student

Elna Carrington-Blaides, PhD
Research Supervisor
Coordinator/Lecturer M.Ed. Inclusive and Special Education
The University of the West Indies

Appendix B - Permission to Conduct Research



Appendix C - Sample of Letter Sent to Education Directors

29th June, 2017

Quarry Road
Morne Diablo
Penal
Trinidad W.I

Dear [REDACTED],

I am a postgraduate student at The University of the West Indies St. Augustine campus reading for a Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree. I am writing to ask for your help in a study exploring the perceptions of necessary supports for inclusion. Your responses are important in order to have complete and useful data on the project as well as contributing to the larger goal of documenting current practice and giving recommendations for the advancement of inclusive education in the Caribbean.

Data collection involves your participation in interviews. There are no anticipated risks, compensation or other direct benefits to you as a participant in this research. Please note also that I have already sourced permission from the Caribbean Union Conference of SDA to conduct this study. Every effort will be made to safeguard your identity and any information you provide will be used solely for the purpose of this research and will remain confidential. A copy of the results summary will be available upon request.

Please respond to this email indicating if you are willing to participate in this study. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (1-868) 303-4826 or at seunarine3@hotmail.com. Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Sincerely,



Amanda Ramoutar, postgraduate student
The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine

Appendix D - Individual Interview Protocol 1

Interview Protocol 1

Hello! Thank you for consenting to participate in this research on necessary supports for inclusive education. Once again the purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how inclusive education is being practiced in schools and the study aims to document and describe what are deemed necessary supports for inclusion and the actual available supports. I will define supports all the resources required for inclusive practice related to instructional, personal and related services provisions. Our interview will consist of a series of questions that will help me collect the data I need for the study. I will also be recording our interview for the purpose of accuracy of data, and I will be taking some notes. Do you have any question for me before we start the interview? Great! Let's start then. First I will collect some demographic information to help me describe the sample in the study.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- How many years have you been an education director?
 - What was your position before you became education director?
 - Have you ever taught special education students? If yes, please elaborate
 - What kind of training have you had on inclusion?
1. Would you say that you place emphasis on inclusive practice from principals and teachers?
 Prompts:
 - a. How do you define inclusion?
 - b. If you were to walk into a classroom, how would you know if inclusive practice is being done correctly?
 - c. How does your staff treat with students with identified special needs?
 - d. In order to best serve students with special needs, what do you believe would be needed?
 - e. How effective do you think the inclusion program is in your conference/mission? What would make it more effective?
 2. What supports are provided to your schools for inclusive education?
 Prompts:
 - a. Do your schools have any computers?
 - b. Is there internet access?
 - c. What type of workshops or professional development activities do teachers attend?
 - d. Can students access counselling and therapy services?
 - e. Is there a student referral system?
 3. Are you familiar with any of the education documents in your region that address inclusive education? Based on these documents, what supports should your schools be receiving?
 Prompt:
 - a. Are you aware of any other promised supports that schools should receive?
 4. Have you noticed any discrepancy between supports that you should be receiving and the ones being received?
 5. Do you think that the current resources and services are being used properly in schools?
 6. Do you view the currently available supports as being adequate for inclusive practice?
 7. What additional supports are currently needed for effective inclusion?
 Prompt:
 - a. Do you feel that the ministry of education is able to provide schools with all the materials necessary for effective inclusion practices?
 - b. What can you do to support effective inclusion practice in the classroom?
 8. Do you have any recommendations related to the provision of supports?
 9. Is there anything you'd like to add to our discussion that I may have overlooked?

Appendix E - Individual Interview Protocol 2

Follow-up Interview Protocol

Good day and thank you for agreeing to this follow up interview. Once again, the purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how inclusive education is being practiced in schools and the study aims to document and describe what are deemed necessary supports for inclusion and the actual available supports. Today, I want to ask you a few questions so that I may gain clarification and elaboration regarding some of the findings of this study thus far.

1. What do you mean when you say inclusive practice?
2. In our previous interview, you spoke about educators working within their limits. Can you elaborate on this further?
3. How do you feel about the supports that are traditionally given to schools?
4. Can you share some examples of supports (manipulatives, training, resource personnel, etc) that you have access to and/or desire in the school environment for being able to achieve excellent outcomes for all students?
5. From the last round of interviews, many participants spoke about needing close guidance/demonstration and feedback for implementing inclusive education. Can you describe how this might occur?
6. What suggestions do you have to improve the accessibility of supports for inclusive education?

Appendix F - Focus Group Interview Protocol

Question Route for Focus Group

After welcoming participants, a handout will be given to each director with the findings that emerged from the study thus far. This will serve as a stimulus in order to focus the discussion. Explain that notes will be taken and words recorded for clarification purposes only and that no connection will be made between the comments shared and the individual participant.

1. Can you share your opinions in terms of if you agree or disagree with the themes found so far in the study?
2. Related to the classification of supports derived, can you give examples for each type of support?
3. What has been your experience of implementing inclusive education?
4. Can you tell me more about how you feel about what is available and what is needed in schools?
5. What suggestions do you have to improve current practice?

Interviewer prompt examples:

- *What else can you say about that?*
- *Can someone build on that?*
- *Why?*
- *Is there anything else you would like to add?*
- *I want to make sure I understand, can you explain more?*
- *Can you give me an example?*
- *Who has a different perspective on that?*

Appendix G - Responsible Conduct of Research Certification



Completion Date 21-Nov-2018

Expiration Date 20-Nov-2022

Record ID 29455349

This is to certify that:

Amanda Ramoutar

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

RCR Basic Course (Curriculum Group)
Group 3: ST. AUGUSTINE (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of the West Indies



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w99be0082-e54f-48f0-ad76-6ffc4bc431a7-29455349

Appendix H -Necessary Supports For Inclusive Practice Survey

Directions

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study. By filling out this survey, you will help me obtain the very best results. Your responses to these questions speak about the supports you perceive as necessary for you to be able to practice inclusive education in your school. Please tick the responses conforming to your perceptions freely. There are no differentiations into correct or incorrect responses, all responses will be treated confidentially and will in no way be traceable to you.

Please tick the appropriate box or fill in the responses below.									
1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female	2. School Level: ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary	3. Job Function: ☐ Principal ☐ Teacher							
4. Number of years as an educator: ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6 - 10 ☐ 11 - 15 ☐ 16 - 20 ☐ 20 +			5. Highest Level of Qualification: ☐ Teacher's Diploma ☐ Bachelor's Degree ☐ Master's Degree ☐ PhD Degree						
1=Strongly disagree 2=Disagree 3=Uncertain 4=Agree 5=Strongly agree			1	2	3	4	5		
6. I believe that my inclusive practice should include partnerships with others inside and outside of the school environment regularly to improve teaching and learning.									
7. Meeting the needs of all learners suggests that each day learning activities for students should be differentiated based on what is taught, how it is taught and how learners are expected to demonstrate what they have learned.									
8. It is acceptable that some students are not allowed to participate in learning activities due to the way the school environment is set up.									
9. Flexible groupings based on students' interest and ability is an essential strategy for inclusive practice.									
10. Regularly reflecting on strategies used to improve my response to the difficulties students encounter is evidence of my inclusive practice.									
11. I believe that the language that is used by everyone in the school should express the value of each child.									
12. In a school that is practicing inclusion, the welfare of the whole child should not be the emphasis.									

13. It is not necessary to have a clear inclusive education policy from the Ministry of Education.					
14. It is essential to have clear guidelines related to school placement for students with special needs.					
15. Being able to adopt a flexible approach to the curriculum is essential for working with a student with special needs in schools.					
16. Outcomes for all students should be measured based on high stakes summative assessments.					
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Uncertain 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5
17. Collaborative processes for use by educators do not need to be clearly documented and easily accessible.					
18. School leaders must have financial and human resources to be able to encourage staff to use a student-centered approach.					
19. It does not matter if the school administrator believes in the philosophy of inclusion.					
20. Professional development workshops that cover topics related to inclusive education are sufficient for improving my classroom practice.					
21. Someone who is readily available to give me clear guidelines about how to plan for and work with students with identified special needs is not necessary.					
22. I will feel more confident about inclusion if I am assigned a coach who provides me with feedback about my planning and instruction.					
23. It is necessary to have easy access to support personnel like teaching aides, social workers, counselors and psychologists for classroom management and teaching.					
24. I feel adequately supported with more resources for teaching and learning than I need.					
25. I would be more comfortable if it were possible to receive real-time assistance and to see examples of differentiated lessons.					
26. I don't need to get advice and feedback so that my beliefs about my ability to teach and to exert a positive effect on all students are strengthened.					
27. There is no need for collaboration to meet the needs of students in the classroom.					
28. I feel that students will be better served if education-related service professionals and social service agencies work together following one referral of a student.					
29. Following the identification of a student's need, response time should be kept at a minimum.					
30. I feel comfortable working with complicated administrative procedures in accessing help for students in the classroom.					
31. It is necessary to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to meeting students' needs in the inclusive classroom.					
32. It does not matter if a process is specified to handle student referrals.					
33. To be able to practice inclusive education, I need to know that I can depend on other stakeholders to provide help in areas that I cannot help the student.					

34. I believe that to practice inclusive education, schools must be barrier-free structures where ramps and railways make the physical space accessible to all students.					
35. It is crucial that accommodations and modifications be made to the school environment for me to be able to practice inclusion.					
36. The financial budget for the school does not impact my ability to access resources so students might better be served.					
37. I don't need to have access to information and communication technologies and other assistive technologies to be able to meet the needs of all students.					
38. I doubt that resources are distributed equitably to schools.					
39. Administrative, teaching, and ancillary staff at the school should be willing to provide a warm and welcoming environment for all students.					
40. Specialized spaces in the school, such as a resource room for pull out sessions, a padded calming room for students who need a time out and a sickbay, are needed for inclusive practice.					
41. I believe that greater awareness of students' rights will influence my ability to realize inclusive education.					
42. An essential facilitating condition for me to practice inclusive education is that my working conditions be improved.					
43. It does not matter if everyone is sensitized to issues of diversity in the classroom.					
1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Uncertain 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree	1	2	3	4	5
44. It is necessary to have stakeholders who are willing to provide schools with resources that are lacking.					
45. When families know about their right to have their child educated in a school of their choice, I will get more resources for teaching and learning.					
46. Many of my colleagues are not aware of what the concept of inclusive education means precisely, and this impacts my ability to practice including all students.					
47. I believe that more exposure to information about disability and other special needs will improve my ability to work with these types of students.					

-End of Survey Questionnaire-