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Teaching for Equity: A Case Study of Teachers', Vice Principals', and Principals' Perspectives in Three High-Poverty Elementary Schools in Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

Elementary students in high-poverty schools have diverse learning needs. Their academic and social learning, in particular, varies between students - especially so for those students from culturally non-dominant backgrounds. In 2009, the Ontario Ministry of Education mandated that all school boards in Ontario develop and implement equity education policies, as specified in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools (2009).

This dissertation explored the implementation of Ontario's Equity Strategy in three high-poverty elementary schools within one district school board in Ontario. This exploratory case study investigated the following research questions: 1. How do teachers, vice principals, and principals in three urban, Ontario high-poverty schools support elementary students' academic and social learning? 2. How does the Ontario policy backdrop constrain and/or support the work and capacities of teachers, vice principals, and principals to advance academic and social learning? 3. How does Policy Program Memorandum 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, 2009) reflect and inform the implementation of inclusive education by teachers, vice principals, and principals?

The data gathered consisted of semi-structured interviews with principals, vice principals, and teachers, document analysis, and observations of teachers. An exploratory qualitative case study using Critical Race Theory, and Anti-Racist Framework, were adopted, supported by a modified version of constant comparative method of data analysis. There are several key findings from this study. Findings revealed that biases were difficult to dismantle, and equity policy is under realized without adequate funding. Policy needs significant re-structuring to make it more impactful in Boards across Ontario. Teachers illuminated the powerful act of sharing stories of different cultures, encouraging lessons of cultural diversity, to challenge the Euro-centric curriculum. Many teachers revealed needing additional time (to reflect and respond appropriately) to the recent changes in student demographics, due to changes in immigration. This study indicated engaging in meaningful dialogue, sharing knowledge, reflecting, and advocating awareness proved to be most effective. Finally, principals described needing equitable, not equal, distribution of resources.

Keywords: Equity, Inclusive Education, Leadership, Teachers, Vice Principals, Principals, Social Learning, Academic Learning, Policy Program Memorandum 119, Students in High-Poverty Elementary Schools, Critical Race Theory, Anti Racist Framework, Case Study.

Summary for Lay Audience

Elementary students in high-poverty schools have diverse learning needs. Their academic and social learning, in particular, varies between students - especially so for those students from diverse backgrounds. Findings revealed that biases were difficult to dismantle, and equity policy is under realized without adequate funding. Policy needs significant re-structuring to make it more meaningful in Boards across Ontario. Teachers illuminated the powerful act of sharing stories of different cultures, encouraging lessons of cultural diversity, to challenge the Euro-centric curriculum. Many teachers revealed needing additional time (to reflect and respond appropriately) to the recent changes in student demographics, due to changes in immigration. This study indicated engaging in meaningful dialogue, sharing knowledge, reflecting, and advocating awareness proved to be most effective. Finally, principals described needing equitable, not equal, distribution of resources.

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Definition of Terms

Acculturation. "The process of integration goes hand in hand with what anthropologists call 'acculturation.' Anyone who chooses Canada as his adopted country adopts a new style of life, a particular kind of existence... Acculturation is the process of adaptation to the environment in which an individual is compelled to live as he adjusts his behaviour to that of the community" (Bisoondath, 1994, p. 209).

Anti-racist multicultural education. "Those practices and policies developed at all levels of the educational system designed to promote racial, ethnic, and cultural equality of opportunity for all its members" (Tator & Henry, 1991, p. 3).

Culture. A universal phenomenon reflecting diversity, norms of behavior, and awareness of global interdependence (Link & Ramanathan, 2011). The word "culture" implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group (Gilbert, Goode, & Dunne, 2007).

Cultural Competence. Refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, immigration status, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families and communities, and protects and preserves the dignity of each (Fong & Furuto, 2001; Lum, 2011).

Culturally Responsive Curriculum. "A curriculum that accurately reflects and uses the variety of knowledge of all peoples as the basis for instruction that acknowledges and respects the diverse social backgrounds, identities and experiences of all students, and places them at the center of the learning environment" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 16).

Culturally Responsive Teaching. "Teaching that recognizes that all students learn differently, and that uses the social and cultural backgrounds and identities of the students, their prior knowledge, and their experiences and interests, to build, extend and share knowledge among students" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 16).

Differentiated Instruction. "Instructional strategy that recognizes and responds to the interests, current abilities, prior experiences, preferred learning styles, and specific learning needs of individual students while maintaining expected curriculum standards for those students" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 16).

Diversity. According to PPM No. 119 (2009), diversity refers to, "the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009b, p. 9).

Educational globalization. Implies not homogenization, instead tensions within globalization processes which are mutually concentrated and differentiate the policy agenda. Neither is it debated that globalization suggests the conceding of national sovereignty. Yet, the increasing polycentric nature of governance and henceforth policymaking is recognized (Taylor & Henry, 2000, p. 488).

Equity. Equity is defined according to its use in Ministry of Education literature and policy documents, as "a condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009c, p. 9).

Enactment. The use of the term "enactment" by Ball, Braun and Maguire (2010) emphasizes the translation, and interpretation of policy (by teachers and principals), rather than mere technical implementation. For the purpose of this study, the use of the term enactment, assumed that "policies are interpreted and translated" by an assortment of "policy actors in the school environment" instead of being only in the process of being implemented (Ball et al., 2010, p. 549).

High-Poverty School. Orfield and Lee (2005) classify schools with poor students into three categories: "low-poverty, high-poverty, and extreme-poverty schools, which are defined as 0-10% poor, 50-100% poor, and 90-100% poor", respectively (p. 18). They identify high-poverty schools as having a significant proportion of minority students, and students with limited proficiency in the English language; these schools are also struggling with teacher turnover and attracting and retaining good teachers (p. 17).

Inclusion. Process by which immigrants become participants sub-sectors of society, such as education, labor market, or political representation. Emphasizes active and conscious efforts by both public agencies and employers as well as immigrants themselves; meant to contrast with exclusion or social exclusion (Creswell, 1998).

Inclusive education. This study adopts the terminology used in Ministry of Education literature and policy documents. Equity and inclusive education aim to "understand, identify, address, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit students' prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009b, p. 6).

Integration. Integration is a broad term that is often used to define the settlement experiences and participation of immigrants in the country of adoption. "Integration may encompass numerous different dimensions: economic integration into the labour market; political (or civic) integration into the electoral process and other forms of political participation; and, social integration into the networks and spaces of civil society, from informal networks of friends and neighbours to membership in more formal organizations" (Kymlicka, 2010, p. 7).

Justice. John Rawls' (1971), "A Theory of Justice" set forward the definition which underlie a just society: "All social primary goods – liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect – are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these goods is to advantage of the least favoured" (p. 303).

Intersectionality. Intersectionality theory studies various forms of oppression, discrimination, and domination as they manifest themselves through diversity components. Intersectionality theory is reinforced by critical race theory, and social systems theory, emphasizing human behaviour in the social environments (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 39).

Multiculturalism. The concept of multiculturalism is broad that it frequently challenges the definition. It can be defined as: a demographic fact defining the co-existence of peoples from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds in a distinct society or organization; an ideological objective celebrating diversity, an assortment of policies planned to manage diversity; or a process by which ethnic and racial groups influence support to achieve their aspirations (Dewin & Leman, 2006). It is an expression that has lately received negative connotations, being viewed as a argumentative force instead of being viewed as a stage for shared benefit and co-existence. In Canada, multiculturalism commonly signifies a set of ideas and principles celebrating the nation's cultural diversity. At the policy level it indicates the "management of diversity through formal initiatives in the federal provincial and municipal domains" (Dewing & Leman, 2006, p. 1).

Newcomer. A settler in the initial years after arrival; in this thesis often used interchangeably with immigrant (Adler, 1975).

Policy. Is both text and action, words and conducts, it is what is enacted and what is intended. "Policies are constantly incomplete as far as they relay to map on the "wild confusion" of local practice. Policies are crude and simple. Practice is sophisticated, contingent, complex and unstable. Policy as practice is "created" in relation to dominance, resistance, and chaos/freedom. Thus, policy is not simple asymmetry of power. Control [or dominance] can never be totally secured, in part because of agency. It will be open to erosion and undercutting by action, embodied agency of those people who are its object" (Ball, 1994, p. 10)

Poverty. For the purposes of this study, UNICEF (2005), defines child poverty as, "Children living in poverty experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society" (p. 18).

Refugee. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (1950) defines a refugee as "a person who is forced to leave their country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (p.16).

School Readiness. Kagan (1990) identified two historical constructs associated with readiness: readiness for learning and readiness for school. Readiness for learning is the developmental stage or age when a person acquires the skills to learn material and is fluid in nature.

Social Exclusion. Social exclusion, or the "unequal access to critical resources that determine the quality of membership in society, ultimately produces and reproduces a complex of unequal outcomes" (Galabuzi, 2008, p. 236). As such it could be well-defined as the inequities in multi-dimensional outcomes that occur among individuals and through social groups built on their various access to resources, opportunities for participation, and power. Although the present discourse on social exclusion focuses largely on poverty and labour force involvement, additional dimensions of social exclusion in Canada have been

identified: economic, health, political/civic, socio-cultural and transportation (Hyman et al., in press).

      Social inclusion. The term may be theorized in relation to the processes (i.e., policies and environments) that add to observed inequities. This distinction of social inclusion in terms of developments in relation of outcomes, is steady with the growing consensus in recent literature that the investigation should include not only the consequences but the developments that produce inequities (Galabuzi, 2008; Patychuk & Hyman, 2009; Saloojee, 2001).

      System Leaders. "Staff who have responsibility for supervision and management of departmental functions, schools and families of schools. These include supervisory officers, central department supervisors, managers, and coordinators, and school administrators" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 17).

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself".

John Dewey (1916, p. 239)

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the domain of this study. An introduction of the topic

of the research is provided, including the purpose statement and guiding research questions.

Second, a brief historical overview of how multiculturalism evolved in Canada is presented.

Third, literature about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is discussed. Last, a piece

outlining Canadian demographics and racial diversity is provided, to showcase demographic

trends of immigration to the reader.

1.1 Topic

Canada is known for being a country in which diversity is an important aspect of national culture

as shown, for example, through the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (Multiculturalism &

Citizenship Canada, 1990). Members of minority groups immigrate to Canada in the hope of

seeking improved life opportunities, and rely upon Canada's reputation of racial tolerance,

religious, and linguistic freedom (Adams, 2007). According to data from the 2016 census by

Statistics Canada, 22.3% of the population belonged to visible minorities, of whom 3 in 10 were

born in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016). Canada's policies regarding ethno-cultural diversity

are aimed at building inclusive citizenship, decreasing barriers to social and economic

participation of marginalized groups, and improving Canada's financial advantage in present

globalized times (Policy Research Initiative, 2008).

A fundamental pillar of inclusive schooling is the acceptance of students' cultural

backgrounds. In elementary schools, cultural retention can be achieved by teachers reinforcing

and making connections with students' heritage, values, and traditions which ultimately is

beneficial in fostering a sense of pride and inclusion. My perspective is that, amongst other key priorities, all tiers of education must facilitate and encourage identity within culture and community, while working with "ancestral cultural knowledge retentions" (Dei, 2008, p. 346). The notion of "inclusive schooling" is informed by the idea that a school is inclusive if all students can connect with the school's social environment and culture (Dei, 2000). A more inclusive school culture is brought about by staff's commitment to change, and by encouraging a democratic discussion of current teaching values and practices (Dei, 2004).   However, to create a truly inclusive community approach to leadership: 1. teachers, 2. vice principals, and 3. principals (this study's focus), must be able to meaningfully contribute to, and benefit equitably from these values and vision. The representation of varying interest groups must be meaningful and valued. All stakeholders involved in the school community are in theory, empowered to share in the process of policy development through a variety of venues (Corson, 1996, Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Ryan, 2006; Villa & Thousand, 2000).

Effective principals often have a clear vision and successfully collaborate with teachers to create a more joint approach towards inclusion. It is little wonder that the "school improvement movement of the past 20 years has put a great emphasis on the role of leaders" (OECD, 2001, p. 32). Fifteen years ago, research on inclusion, by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), concluded that one quarter of a school's effects on student achievement can be attributed to principals (which is an important pillar of my study).

Failure by some students to acculturate often, in effect, punishes them by manner of social ostracization, feelings of subservience, and academic failure (Dei, 2008; Steele, 1992). Within the nation-state of Canada, (during the last thirty years) the equity academic discourse has shifted from a foundation located within multiculturalism, towards one rooted in individual

freedoms (Dei et. al., 2002; Karumanchery, 2005). These changes placed serious requirements on teachers, vice principals, and principals to be culturally and pedagogically knowledgeable (to address the changing immigration trends) and incorporate globalization in elementary schools (Burbules & Torres, 2000). Addressing racism, diversity, social justice, and creating a more equitable elementary school became a priority, along with creating an inclusive learning environment for all students (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Evans, 2006; Guo, 2013; Pike, 2008; Reid, Gill, & Sears, 2010). Teachers can support students by presenting multiple paradigms through curriculum and is an important aspect of culturally responsive teaching. While diversity across Canada is welcomed in discursive statements and policy, the challenges (and tensions) of integrating new Canadians remains significant (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005, 2008, 2011; Ochocka, 2006).

Writers addressing equity, equality, diversity, and social justice in education come from many different backgrounds (e.g. philosophers, sociologists, economists, politicians, governmental administrators, legal professionals, etc.). However, in the field of education, authors include educators, educational administrators, and researchers. Many of these writers may not have the distinct perspective (as I hold) of being a former teacher in an elementary school in a high-poverty elementary school setting. Reflecting on my teaching experiences in New York City, I was privileged to see first-hand the unique capabilities and needs of students. I was exposed to and personally experienced the difficult challenges that high-poverty elementary schools and teachers face in meeting the significant needs of teaching newcomers, and minority populations. Now, my South Western Ontario based study provides a more comprehensive picture of schooling for equity and equality in high-poverty elementary schools. In this thesis, I examined teachers', vice principals', and principals' perceptions of equity, leadership, and

teaching strategies for social and academic learning, as they relate to students in their classrooms and specifically, in three high-poverty elementary schools.

Government institutions, school systems, and individual schools, in effect, regulate the nature and amount of educational benefits which are available for distribution to students. By and large, school administrators, (especially principals) governmental agency administrators and politicians at the local, state, and federal levels make these decisions. Teachers are the key and direct providers of these benefits to students at the school level, and therefore are important stakeholders for this study. Typically, classroom teachers do not assist in decision making roles regarding how educational benefits and resources will be distributed throughout schools. Although teachers may be included in discussions at the school level regarding the needs of different programs and resources available to meet these needs, choices about distributing resources within schools to programs and classrooms are often made by administrators in the schools.

1.2 Research Questions

This exploratory case study posed the following questions: 1. How do teachers, vice principals and principals in three urban, Ontario high-poverty schools support elementary students' academic and social learning? 2. How does the Ontario policy backdrop constrain and/or support the work and capacities of teachers, vice principals, and principals to advance academic and social learning? 3. How does Policy Program Memorandum 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, 2009) reflect and inform the implementation of inclusive education by teachers, vice principals, and principals?

The research questions listed above acted as an anchor for this thesis. Based on the advice of my supervisors, connections were made with a former principal who was extremely

helpful in establishing networks with Ontario principals. Also, a pilot study with him was conducted as well, which proved to be very helpful in gaining knowledge into the research process. Further, motivation for the research questions derived from various experiences which began when I was an elementary school teacher. The coursework taken when I started my Master's and Doctoral program at Western inspired the research questions as well. Once I was certain about the research focus of my thesis project, I started to review the existing literature in order to understand what other researchers did in the development of their studies.

Following many discussions with my thesis supervisors, the research questions were refined and related to teachers', vice principals', and principals' viewpoints and experiences, which I postulated might have an influence on their perceptions regarding social and academic learning, equity, diversity, social justice, and policy. Ultimately, data collection and analysis were performed with the goal being to answer the three research questions listed above. The following case study will provide a richer perspective of the benefits (and potential challenges) culturally responsive teachers, vice principals, and principals encounter in their teaching and leadership practices (within three high-poverty elementary schools).

1.3   Anti-racism and Ethno-cultural Equity Policies

More than two decades ago, the Ontario Ministry of Education made significant attempts to address a disparity in student achievement between Whites, and non-White counterparts, releasing Antiracism and Ethno-cultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Development and Implementation (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993). The Ontario Ministry of Education (2009a) made amendments to the original 1993 policy and introduced a large-scale provincial strategy in 2009. That policy outlined a provincially mandated four-year framework for building

more inclusive school communities by producing more equitable learning opportunities for all students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009).

The effect of policy implementation regularly can be subject to an individual's unique interpretation and use of policy (Ball, 2012). The explanation provided by Ball, Braun and Maguire (2010) emphasized the translation and interpretation of policy (by teachers, vice principals, and principals), rather than mere technical implementation. Hence, policy may be implemented by teachers, vice principals, and principals as a sophisticated and creative process (which happens in a context) and produces beneficial (and detrimental) consequences for minority students.

Ball (1994) argues, "Any decent theory of education policy must attend to the workings of the state. But any decent theory of education policy must not be limited to the state control perspective" (p. 10). On the one hand, educational policies that are not effectively financially supported, often just remain symbolic. On the other hand, state funding for policy is necessary but not enough for effective policy implementation. School-based educators have been recognized as being legitimate professionals who make decisions on how (and how not) to implement policy (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 2003). At the level of school practice, teachers do not merely accept policy as "empty receptacles" and instead have their own agency (which I was mindful of during the interview and observation stages of my study).

Over past decades, various policies have been developed in Ontario to support equity in schooling. According to Levin (2001) education reform is a political effort emerging from specific historical and cultural contexts. Reforms happen amidst the interplay of social, economic, political, and institutional contexts. Educational reform does not take place in a vacuum. Instead, the method in which education reform programs are conceptualized,

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developed, defended (and attacked), and implemented (or not), are sensitive to context. Up until the late 1980's, scarcely any systematic attention was directed towards issues of equity and social justice in Ontario education. However, several school boards, tried to establish policies linked to race relations and multiculturalism. For example, in 1979, the Toronto Board of Education was the first school board in Canada, to create an authorized policy on race relations. By 1990, propelled by more recent policy there were about 40 boards of education in Ontario that recognized policies which dealt with subjects of race and culture (Rezai-Rashti, 1995).

In 1985, Ontario's Ministry of Education, made significant progress by creating an Advisory Committee on Race Relations (Mock & Masemann, 1989). The mandate of this Committee comprised the following objectives: 1. Promote the development of a Race and Ethno-cultural Equity Policy by all school boards in the province; 2. Assist and advise the Ministry of Education in creating guidelines for equity policy development; 3. Suggest important areas for policy development to categorize strategies which support boards in developing and implementing racial and ethno-cultural equity policies; 4. Areas like multiculturalism, race, ethno-cultural relations, and anti-racist education are a priority, and improve practices in equity policy development, and identify key areas which connect them (Ministry of Education of Ontario, 1987, p. 2).

The equity policy document (PPM 119) offers instruction on "how" to develop frameworks for anti-racism and ethnocultural equity policies, as well as guidelines on implementation. Moreover, there are continuing occurrences of racism in our society that require our continuing attention. Bullying in schools is a huge area for parents and students to address. Examples of racism, religious intolerance, homophobia and gender-based violence are ongoing concerns in our societies and, sadly, in our schools. The negative effects can cause

students to feel excluded, isolated, which often results in behavioural problems, diminished interest in school, relating to lower levels of achievement. The Ministry included additional factors of discrimination, such as "race, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, gender, and class" and how these factors "intersect to create additional barriers for some students" (p. 2). The Ministry offered directives through its equity policy, and their implementation provide discourse in addressing ten key areas: board policies, guidelines and practices; leadership; school-community partnership; curriculum; student languages; student evaluation, assessment and placement; guidance and counselling; racial and ethnocultural harassment; employment practices; and staff development (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 7).

The Ontario Ministry of Education responded to these inadequacies by mandating that school boards draft equity and inclusive education policies, as specified in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 (2009a) Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009a). "The Ministry requires each board to have in place an equity and inclusive education policy that addresses the eight areas of focus, a guideline on religious accommodation, and an implementation plan" (2009a, p. 36).

In the case of my study, this was an examination of the way the representation of gender, race, and class in Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy connects to power imbalances in Canadian society. In my interviews with my participants, I was focused on understanding: How does the Ontario policy backdrop constrain and/or support the work and capacities of teachers, vice principals, and principals to advance academic and social learning? How does Policy Program Memorandum 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, 2009a) reflect and inform the implementation of inclusive education by teachers, vice principals, and principals?

These activities and responsibilities are clearly articulated within the Framework and subsequent policy progress reports, providing school boards and provincially funded elementary and secondary schools with guidelines to assist them in their planning and delivery of programs, services, and supports for minority students in Ontario. Yet, one's individual understanding of a specific policy can be incredibly impactful on how it is enacted by those responsible for implementing it. Thus, before I could delve deeper into participants' professional practices, I needed to understand clearly "how" teachers, vice principals, and principals teaching, and leadership practices were directly informed or influenced by the policy directives outlined in the Strategy.

The key terms that define the problem and the appropriate response as suggested by the policy (so how does the policy define minority student or student-at-risk, achievement gap, how does it define exclusion, and social difference, equity, inclusion, the goals of schooling (which in some way are not being met and thus drive the need for the policy and also represent criteria for what the equity policy should achieve). Key terms reviewed and re-visited: 1. Diversity. According to PPM No. 119 (2009), diversity refers to, "the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009c, p. 9). 2. Equity. Equity is defined according to its use in Ministry of Education literature and policy documents, as "a condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009c, p. 9). 3. Inclusive education. Equity and inclusive education aim to "understand, identify, address, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit students' prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009b, p. 6).

The material supports and resources offered to implement the policy, are as follows: The policy outlines that the Ministry specifically indicated that students take coursework related to topics in Canadian and World Studies subjects, stating that students should, "Demonstrate an understanding of the rights, privileges and responsibilities of citizenship, as well as willingness to show respect, tolerance and understanding towards individuals, groups and cultures in the global community" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 24).

Policy analysis involves connecting a technical analysis of specific policies to the context within which they were developed. It is imperative to look at policy implementation; to see whether a policy is successful. However, not anticipating implementation problems when a policy reform is being enacted may lead to additional costs, and perhaps even a political backlash against the implementing organizations and policies.

Policies are most effective when they clearly spell out what organization members should do. Policies serve as a guide for actions. The words of policies are imperative, otherwise they become superficial, and meaningless. I had to consider how "realistic" the goals outlined in Ontario's Equity Strategy are, and whether this policy considered the situations and conditions in which they should be implemented. After re-reading the policy' aims, it became apparent that "implement" of policies is more "flexible" in nature than mandatory or compulsory. Although, implementation comprises mandatory foundations, such as focus goals and core objectives, the document provides no "clear" expectations for "accomplishing" successfully these directives or offer "deeper" understanding into the "specific" indicators for measuring achievement of objectives and overall implementation. My interviews with teachers, vice principals, and principals emphasized how the equity policy is "discretionary". It is true that policy documents such as this one is "intended, directly, or indirectly, to encourage inclusivity ... [but]

implementation is often left to the discretion of individual school boards or school principals, who often complain about the lack of resources to effect government policies" (Dei, 1996a, p. 170).

In this case, "equity" at the three high-poverty elementary schools are the units of analysis because it is the recognized education authority mandated with enacting the equity policy through the requirements of PPM No. 119 (2009). Although, the purpose of the equity efforts being completed at the Board level is to impact the daily actions of elementary schools by offering direction to teachers, vice principals, and principals. The effects of equity policy in elementary schools were explored through the case study of policy implementation at schools within the Board. Schools are inundated with policies, numerous of which are forced upon them while other policies are naturally constructed from within. Policy is a composite of (1) regulation and imperatives, (2) principles and (3) multi-level and collective efforts of interpretation and translation (creatively implement) Ball et al. 2011b, p. 11). Policy work is "a process… subject to 'interpretation'…in original and creative ways within institutions" (Braun et al. 2011, p. 586). Schools receive policies and then they 'do policy work', that is they construct, translate, interpret and implement policies (Braun et al. 2011). This work is messy and complex, since "actors" in various roles do this policy work (Braun et al. 2011). As a result, schools do policy work in unique ways "within the limitations and possibilities of context(s)" (Braun et al. 2011, p. 586).

Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2012) attempt to achieve in their analytic use of context to understand policy implementation is "a grounded account of the diverse variables and factors (the what), as well as the dynamics of context (the how) that outline policies and consequently relate together and posit interpretative, material and contextual dimensions of the policy process"

(p. 20). They attempt to offer a framework that can consider '… a set of objective conditions in relation to a set of subjective "interpretational" dynamics' (p. 21) and suggest four overlapping and interrelated 'contextual dimensions' (p. 21).

1.4 Purpose of this research study

My study's focus on equity and equity implementation (from background analysis of PPM 119, forty-five minutes classroom observations, to perceptions of teachers and principals) is significant, necessary, and hopefully provides an important contribution to the field of education. The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers, vice principals, and principals in three high-poverty elementary schools perceive fairness, equity, and inequity in relation to students' academic and social learning. Given that teachers are the primary distributors of educational benefits to students, we should better understand their perceptions on issues of equity in education. Numerous teachers in high-poverty elementary schools experience the challenges and problems of serving high-need elementary students with inadequate resources on an everyday basis. With the inequalities integral in several high-poverty elementary school settings, these teachers are often conscious of matters of equity and inequity in education, more so than their colleagues in more affluent settings. My exploratory case study of three high-poverty elementary schools, included background of the PPM 119 document, classroom observations, and interviews with teachers, vice principals, and principals.

I believe that it is important for teachers, vice principals, and principals in high-poverty elementary schools to develop a common understanding of practising equity in the distribution of educational benefits to students in their schools. With the limited resources and significant demands on these resources in high-poverty elementary schools, problems relating to providing an equitable education for all students present themselves daily. Conversations are essential

towards understanding both real and perceived inequities in education for students in high-poverty elementary schools, in order to be understanding of the challenges in implementation of equity policy.

1.5   Historical Overview of Canadian Multiculturalism

Canadian multiculturalism attempts to engage in a delicate balancing act between acknowledging individual identities and building of a national identity. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act has been active for nearly four decades. In recent years, the multiculturalism policy has become an important conversation within Canada, (especially in communities within South Western Ontario where my study took place). Multiculturalism encourages an innovative Canadian identity established on the idea of bringing together diverse cultures, while encouraging the vision of people simultaneously maintaining their own cultural practices. Further, this ideology sanctions people to continue connections to their countries of origin, while still embracing their Canadian identity. Examinations into Canadian identity and what it means to be Canadian have been conducted for decades. It is an identity formed by the many cultures contributing to the creating of a new nation. Canadian identity is intertwined with its colonial history and with Indigenous populations and influenced by its proximity to a major political global power nation (the United States).

1.6   United States' Melting Pot versus Canada's Mosaic

I have a unique perspective, because I have experienced both American and Canadian multiculturalism, since I have lived in both nations. To me, there are individual differences between these two neighbouring North American countries. I have seen first-hand, the unique distinction made between the Canadian "mosaic" versus the American "melting pot" philosophy.

The mosaic philosophy is based on the notion that Canada becomes stronger by having immigrants bringing in their cultural heritage for Canadians to learn. While, the melting pot is the United States, tells immigrants that regardless of their cultural background, once they are on American land, they should assimilate into American culture. Hence, Canadian identity is shaped by decades of newcomers who have emigrated from various nations around the world and call this land their home. The melting pot ideology advances a more homogenous type of country, where everyone shares a commonality.

Clearly, there are pros and cons to both ideals and tensions exist in implementing these philosophies. These two concepts are too simplistic summaries to explain Canada's and the United States' complex relationship with immigration, identity, and cultural pluralism. Canada's reaction to this growing diversity in recent immigration patterns has been reflective in its national policy of multiculturalism. However, as individuals from different ancestries categorize themselves as Canadian; it becomes difficult for Canadians to describe what defines Canadian-ness due to the assortment of this nation's historical and contemporary experiences, and provincial loyalties which have tested the outlook of the nation state.

Through the education of Indigenous people, in the English language, authors started publishing their work to meet Western literary standards. Although their work may have been "Indigenous" in its subject matter, their writing stems from the perspective of Indigenous scholars contributing in the dominant Western literary ideology, impacted by the effects of colonization. This term is what DuBois' (1903) refers to as "double-consciousness," who introduced this in, *The Souls of Black Folk,* Black scholars could create tensions for their readers, by describing the two social worlds they participated in, and double lives that resulted. DuBois describes the hyphen, the "two-ness", (e.g. an American, a Black scholar), holding "two

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thoughts", "two souls", the internal conflict of looking at the world from this unique position. This term becomes important in contemporary times, because it illuminates the complex experiences of black and Indigenous people (for example), living in an oppressed world, with the historical influences of colonialism, racism, and multiculturalism.

A 2003 study found that 85 percent of Canadians indicated multiculturalism was an important constituent of Canadian identity (Adams & Langstaff, 2007, p. 20). However, what does a fair multicultural state looks like? Craig, Burchardt, and Gordon (2008), in their book titled, "Social Justice in Public Policy: Seeking Fairness in Diverse Societies", sought to address this question. The following four points from their findings are noteworthy: 1. Multicultural state rejects the older idea that the country is a possession of a single national group. 2. As a result, a multicultural state denies any nation-building policies which assimilates or excludes members of non-dominant groups. 3. The state accepts an obligation to recognize and accommodate the history, language, and culture of non-dominant groups. 4. Multicultural state recognizes the historic injustices done to minority groups, by policies of assimilation and exclusion, and demonstrates a willingness to propose some type of reformation for them.

Multiculturalism as a philosophy was suggested in order to move away from the dated idea of tolerance as a guiding principle, and rather dynamically accommodate group difference within its society (Trudeau, 1971). This guiding philosophy has resulted in legislation in both federal and provincial government and has influenced the creation of policies like Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy (2009). Further, the Multiculturalism Act has exposed Canada to the intelligence and creativity of minority citizens throughout society. While it has its own imperfections and challenges in implementation, the policy acts as a guideline which provides an essential framework for the official advancement of social equality. In theory, the policy is

officially intended to encourage equal participation of individuals of all ancestries, in taking part in constructing Canadian society and eliminating barriers to inclusion.

1.7 Canadian Multiculturalism Act

On October 8, 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau announced Canada's first official act on multiculturalism known as Multiculturalism in a Bilingual Framework. In 1971, Prime Minister Trudeau created a multicultural policy which acknowledged the broad range of cultural identities within our country, rather than continuing to strive towards a national character based on British colonialism. Trudeau made a statement to the House of Commons in which he proclaimed that the government would implement all the commission's recommendations. Trudeau's plan appeared like a bold, positive move into the new postmodern reality of nationhood. Henceforth, Canada became the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism declared that ethnic minority groups replied unfavourably to the Royal Commission's terms of reference, which cited the "two founding races". Moreover, ethnic groups vocalized that Canada was not "bicultural" but instead "multicultural".   Historically, numerous ethnic groups were referred to as the "third force" or even the "multicultural movement".

Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau is said to have recognised the Commission's recommendations. However, arguments continue, on whether these recommendations were in favour of *multiculturalism,* or, whether Trudeau, overlooked the Commission's recommendation in favor of *bi-culturalism* when he announced his government's policy of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" in October of 1971. The stated goal of the policy was to recognise all the diversity which was prevailing in the nation (not just English and French bi-culturalism), and to pledge that every Canadian citizen be treated equally (Government of

Canada, 1988). Nevertheless, the policy was officially one of ─ multiculturalism within a

bilingual framework, which recognizes the cooperation between English and French Canadians,

while symbolically compacting French Canadian cultural differences to a problem of language

(Dewing, 2012).

Trudeau's position on multiculturalism was to support liberal democratic values. Further,

he supported diversity as a fact of Canadian nationhood and identity that must be recognized. In

Trudeau's speech to the House of Commons, he officially explains the policy position of

multiculturalism. He said:

> It was the view of the royal commission, shared by the government and, I am sure, by all
> Canadians, that there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French
> origin, another for the original peoples and yet a third for all others. For although there
> are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take
> precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all
> should be treated fairly (Pierre Trudeau, October 8, 1971).

1.8   Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

In 1982, through the Canadian constitution, multicultural policies were resolutely entrenched in

the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, pledging equal protection and benefit of the law, and

freedom from discrimination based on gender, religion and racial or ethnic origin. When the

Multiculturalism Policy was first announced in 1971, the Canadian social mosaic was largely

influenced by people of European Christian heritage. The policy gave importance to cultural

retention, cultural sharing, and was sustained by funding initiatives intended to preserve

language and culture (Fleras & Kunz, 2001).

The Charter replaced the 1960 Canadian Bill of Rights which was a federal statute. The

Charter specified the rights of Canadian citizens, and of people existing in Canada, containing

the important freedoms of conscience, religion, thought, press, and peaceful assembly.

Specifically, Section 27 of the Charter is the section concerned with multiculturalism in Canada. For example, Section 27 reads: "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians". Instead of enumerating a specific right, the section is meant to serve as a guide on fundamentals of the Charter should be understood and endorsed multiculturalism as a Canadian value.

1.9 Canadian Demographics and Racial Diversity

Canada has always been comprised of a diverse set of cultures, but current levels of diversity surpass any other periods of Canada's history. The country is marked by a significant range of linguistic, ethnic, racial and religious diversity. There are more than 200 languages spoken in Canada as either a home language or mother tongue. Most of the Canadian population list either English (56.9%) or French (21.3%) as their mother tongue, with about a fifth of the population (19.8%) listing a non-official language as their first language and 2% listing more than one language as their mother tongue. Although, 56.9% of the population list English as their mother tongue, 64.8% of the population speak English at home. While more than a fifth of the Canadian demographic speak French as a first language, French is mainly confined to the province of Quebec, with 86.5% of Francophones living there, making up 80% of the population of the province (Statistics Canada, 2011, p. 11). Today, 81.4% of Quebecers are first language francophones, roughly 95 percent of Quebecers speak French (Statistics Canada, 2016).

The 2011 census for Canada describes that one in five Canadians can be recognized as a visible minority. Visible minorities are described as any non-white, non-Aboriginal peoples, and commonly identify as belonging to the following ethnic groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese. Most visible minorities (61.3%) belong to one of the following groups: South Asian (e.g., Indian,

Pakistani, and Sri Lankan), Chinese or Black (e.g., Jamaican, Haitian). Nearly two thirds

(65.1%) of visible minorities were born outside of Canada, and the rest were born in Canada

(30.9%) or were non-permanent residents (4%) (Statistics Canada, 2013).

According to the 2016 Census, 51.5% of Toronto's population is composed of visible

minorities, compared to 49.1% in 2011, and 13.6% in 1981 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Toronto

has established ethnic neighbourhoods such as Chinatown, Little Jamaica, Korean town, Little

India, etc. Given these changes in the demographics of Canada, one would debate that

alternative views exist of what constitutes Canadian identity. Assumptions concerning identity

need to be studied so that overgeneralizations, regarding Canadian identity, can be separated

from historical fact.

1.10 Introduction of Multiculturalism Education

It is imperative to describe how the idea of multiculturalism education was introduced into the

classroom. There existed three phases with the Ontario school system's experience with equity

issues. Initially, in the 1970s, there was a recognition of a problem. Second, during the 1980s

there was a search for a solution to the problem. Third, during the implementation phase of

multicultural education, due to changing student demographics, and parental pressure for change,

the Ministry of Education reformed past policy to meet changing school needs. As a reaction to,

and in recognition of, the barriers immigrant groups and members of the lower- earning working

classes faced, multicultural programs, language courses and diversity in texts were introduced to

schools (Davidson, 2009).

In the book, *Unlikely Utopia: The Surprising Triumph of Canadian Multiculturalism,*

Adams (2007) argues that ― multiculturalism is this nation's method of connecting to immigrant

populations, not to the people "who lived in the place before Europeans colonized it" (p. 224). Multiculturalism is often mentioned as a strong Canadian belief, and adds to Canada's unique identity; does this notion of multiculturalism with immigration mean that majority group value immigration and cultural diversity brought by it? While, multiculturalism is established on the notion that the answer to solving racial prejudice is to be exposed to racial and cultural differences (Dei, 2010).

1.11 Canadian Policies Supporting Multiculturalism Impacting Schools

Pacini-Ketchabaw and Bernhard (2012) note that by the 1980s a critical discourse around multiculturalism was infiltrating government affairs with its inclusion in the 1982 Constitution Act, followed by the Multiculturalism Act in 1985, and the 1995 Employment Equity Act. However, the authors communicated that, "although multiculturalism may well have been introduced to preserve the integrity of the diverse cultures in Canada, the actual effect of the policies and interventions leads in the direction of assimilation" (p. 164). Hiring diverse bodies is one approach to address diversity needs, however it does not guarantee a promise to promote social justice by the educational institution or by the teacher(s) being hired (Dei et. al, 2002). Passive vows towards social justice ideals are often advocated by teachers and principals, it is eventually the students who endure the burden of these consequences (Dei et. al, 2002; Derman-Sparks & Brunson, 1997; Karumanchery, 2005). Better understanding and commitment are needed to assist teachers' and principals' policy efforts to respond appropriately to the needs of a culturally diverse classroom, and the structures that continue to oppress students.

1.12 Research Gap

Over the last twenty years schools as institutions have had to answer to, understand, and balance a multitude of policies, but there are very few studies that illustrate the equity policy landscape influencing teachers, vice principals, and school principals (Ball, Braun & Maguire, 2010). The rising immigration trends in Ontario demands understanding the complexities of implementing equity policy in Ontario schools. Viczko and Riveros (2015) argue that more attention is needed to understand the idiosyncratic ways in which policy discourses are implemented in schools.

In responding to this gap (McLauchlin, 2007; Friedman, 2012; Gandara, 2011; Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2011) I was mindful that achieving inclusive education across a provincial school system is truly a complex undertaking. My participants (teachers, vice principals, and principals) who, daily, are working to encourage academic and social learning in high-poverty elementary schools, hold a complex assignment with multiple tensions. Hence, my exploratory case study attempted to uncover the challenges, tensions, and dilemmas specific to the three high-poverty elementary schools that constituted the case I studied.

1.13 Significance of this Research Study

This study contributes to a growing body of work done by both practitioners and theorists on inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy and practices (Ladson-Billings, 1994). School boards across Canada and the United States have been asked to implement culturally relevant curricula, teaching, leadership, in response to changing demographics and educational inequities (Sleeter, 2001). One approach to support equitable practices for elementary schools (within Ontario) is for a researcher to examine the relevant equity policies in place and their contextualization – and their effects or lack thereof. This study specifically explored: 1. The leadership and teaching challenges, tensions, and dilemmas involved in their implementation

PPM 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy Policy); 2. How equity and inclusion can be better fostered and sustained in elementary schools; 3. The dynamics of equity policy implementation within three high-poverty elementary schools setting.

Education policies are often neither straightforward nor non-negotiable prescriptions applied into any educational context. Teachers, vice principals, and principals can support, ignore or challenge the implementation of a policy or the very policy itself, through their teaching, pedagogical practices, and leadership efforts. Teachers, vice principals, and principals can potentially benefit from the results of this study since it deeply probes into strategies to address social and academic learning.

In interviewing and observing teachers, vice principals, and principals, I sought to illuminate their unique interpretations, translations, resistances, and implementations of policy. And, the insights developed through my analysis are aimed at improved understanding and implementation of educational equity policy. I worked to understand the individual situations, obstacles, and unique circumstances of how existing policies are being implemented. Ontario schools are obligated to ensure all classrooms are equitable and inclusive. Accordingly, in order to achieve a degree of equity and inclusiveness within the elementary school setting, it is necessary to understand the attitudes, challenges, and barriers, of experienced teachers, vice principals, and principals since their practices may directly shape actions which can lead to an inequitable (and equitable) classroom environment.

My hope also is that school boards and possibly policy makers will be able to draw on this study, alongside other similarly-motivated, research to improve standards of teacher education programs in order to adequately prepare future teachers, specifically those who will teach elementary school students. In addition, using this research may prompt school boards and

policy makers alike, to create and distribute more resources for current elementary school teachers to better support, and prepare them for inclusive classrooms. Conceptions of inclusion play a significant role in how elementary school teachers discuss diversity and difference. Inclusion and equity are frequently deliberated in relation only to sexism, racism, language and culture. To create a safe environment of inclusion for students who may come from other cultures, the unique needs of immigrant students have been explored over the last few decades by a variety of scholars. However, my objective was to instil further understanding about equity policy, teaching and leadership complexities of diversity, equity and inclusion as explored in high-poverty elementary school settings.

This study builds on my Master's research thesis titled, "Encouraging Diversity and Multiculturalism in London, Ontario: A Case Study of Two Elementary Schools" (Duggal, 2014). The findings in that earlier study indicate that the teachers were open to learning more about diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusive education, but that teachers did not have enough knowledge about the subject of encouraging multiculturalism. The teachers stressed that it was important to have on-going training and professional development either through their School Board or internally at the school level. The Ministry of Education has developed a specific policy (PPM 119) to support diversity and equity issues. However, the impact of this policy did not seem to be manifested in extensive changes in teaching practices in the schools where my participants were teaching.

While writing my doctoral thesis, I was sensitive that problems of implementation of policy are immense and involve numerous obstacles – some challenges that are specific to policy implementation, and other problems that are specific to high-poverty elementary schools. Often, (internal school, external community, and home) challenges serve as a hindrance in terms of the

way policies are being put in place were proposed (Fullan, 1991). The implementation of education equity policy become more complex over time, with the growing flux of new Canadians. Hargreaves (1994), argues that disputes over change are frequently observed as political struggles, and resistance to policy is common.

1.14 Chapter summary

In this introductory chapter, the research topic was described, and my research questions were introduced. The rationale for the research study was illustrated with current literature in the field of multiculturalism, Canadian Multiculturalism Act, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Statistics are presented highlighting Canadian demographics, and how increased racial diversity. Finally, the research gap, and significance of this research study were presented.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study, specifically drawing on Critical Race Theory, and Anti-Racist Framework.

2.1 Critical Race Theory and Anti-Racist Framework

According to Maxwell (2010), no research study can be theory free. Thus, the question arises whether a researcher is mindful of the theory (or theories) one is using and whether he/she is using it appropriately or not. Giroux (2001) claims that critical theory engages the terrain of "empowerment, emancipation anticipated and hope for social transformation, particularly toward more equity and justice" (p. 198). Thus, critical theory is appropriate for my study. Critical theorists believe that truths and beliefs of dominant groups and cultures are privileged. Critical theorists argue that it is necessary to understand the lived experience of individuals who are beyond dominant groups.

A concept that can work in parallel with critical theory is constructivism, which is concerned with how "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). The term constructivism is useful for the purposes of this study to understand the "complexity of views" (during my interviews of teachers, vice principals, and principals) and therefore was a useful anchor to answer my three main research questions (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). Critical theory perspectives are concerned with "empowering human beings to transcend the constraints on them by race, and class" (Creswell, 2007, p. 27). For example, attempting to create a more inclusive elementary school environment for minority students as a precursor to a more inclusive and democratic society.

The initial groundwork of Critical Race Theory originated in the legal area on civil rights litigation in the United States. A collection of legal scholars presumed the mission of enquiring

how the law, which asserts race "neutrality", instead continues the settings of racial oppression rather than challenging those environments. Derrick A. Bell was among the first tenured African American law professors (Crenshaw et al., 1995) at Harvard University and his essay Serving Two Masters (1976) "…appropriately sets the stage for the eventual development of Critical Race Theory" (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. 2).

In his essays, Bell (1976, 1980) exposed two important inconsistencies in civil rights litigation regarding the Brown versus Board of Education decision and the due hurriedness with which states were obligated to fulfil. Bell (1976) examined how integration assisted the best interests of children of colour. Bell argues, "Now that traditional racial balance remedies are becoming increasingly difficult to achieve or maintain, there is tardy concern that racial balance may not be the relief actually desired by the victims of segregated schools" (pp. 471-472). Integrated schools were the first resolution deliberated to remedy the segregated system by the governments which funded the anti-discrimination suits. Bell claimed that the fact that no additional solutions were presented deprived children of colour their due process rights. He wrote, "this theory of school desegregation, however, fails to encompass the complexity of achieving equal educational opportunity for children to whom it so long has been denied" (p. 470).

This study was situated within an epistemological and methodological framework that uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings, 1998) and Anti-Racist Framework (Dei, 2010) as lenses through which the research problem was understood. I was drawn to CRT as a research tool. The framework resonated with me and clarified how the topic of race is necessary focus of academic discussion in schools (Dei, 2000, 2004). The growth of using Critical Race Theory started in Canada when Canadian scholars of colour (Sharene Razack, Hamini Bannerji,

Ena Dua, Bonita Lawrence, Carol Aylward, Carl James, Vidya Shaw, Sam Tecle, Awad Ibrahim, Tim Stanley, Ali Abdi, Rinaldo Walcott, and others) began to express dissatisfaction with the existing legal discourse which failed to include analysis of the role "race" and racism has played in the legal and political structures of Canadian society. While, the legal and education system in the United States and Canada contrast in many ways, the fundamental beliefs which inform how Black, minorities, and Indigenous people are positioned within them share a great deal in common.

Race is a societal creation, and racism is engrained into society, which produces an educational system like the society in which it is nested, that racializes students. Previous CRT studies indicate that despite well-intentioned antidiscrimination laws, there is still the additional need to raise consciousness of the dominant class (Bell, 1987; Crenshaw, 1988; Lawrence, et. al, 1993; Matsuda, 1996; 2005). The chart below outlines the five key points used in making connections to Ladson-Billings Critical Race Theory.

2.2 Ladson-Billings' Critical Race Theory Framework

CRITICAL RACE THEORY 5 STEP FRAMEWORK

Table 1: Key Elements of Critical Race Theory Framework

1. Racism is endemic.

2. The power of narrative.

3. Whiteness as property.

4. Challenges dominant ideology: White privilege.

5. Commitment to Social Justice.

CRT is used in this thesis as a theoretical framework to address the role of race and racism in the Canadian education system, and to define how policy can be used as a goal to disrupt institutional and structural racism. Ladson-Billings (1995), Bell (1976, 1980, 1992, 2000), and Ladson-Billings Tate (1995) presented CRT as a theoretical framework for understanding education inequity and identified racism as a permanent fixture in our society. In their study, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued that prevalent and deep-rooted racism exists in American life, and that this pervasive racism damages the educational outcomes of students of colour. According to Ladson-Billings and Tate, racism contributes to a high rate of poverty among African American families, and their children are forced by the system to live in racially segregated, low-quality urban school districts. These Critical Race scholars connect structural and institutional racism to the educational pathways of students of colour.

Racism is endemic and deeply ingrained today and sustains itself in the form of institutional and structural racism. As a theoretical framework, CRT provides a lens for understanding inequities in our education system and sets the stage for accelerated educational reform. CRT details the adverse effects of racism and addresses how institutional racism favours Whites while disadvantaging minority groups. This favouritism originates from slavery, property rights and ownership and explains how such entitlements not only endorsed the self-interest of Whites but also provided the grounds for White hegemony in education (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Ladson-Billings (2009) used the CRT framework to define a school curriculum "as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a white supremacist master script" (p. 29). There is no doubt that minority students living in high-poverty communities suffer from poor reputations and access to fewer resources, then their

White suburban counterparts. CRT's framework further demonstrates how property values, school districts, and property owners directly impact institutional and structural racism.

For the purposes of this study, I wanted to learn how participants (teachers, vice principals, and principals) attend to minority students' experiences (in three high-poverty elementary schools) who are often marginalized (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). I chose an anti-racist framework for my research because it "best reveals the system of power relations and racial minorities' differential experiences in contemporary educational settings" (Rezai-Rashti & Solomon, 2008, p. 168). In using such a framework in my work, I recognize the prevalence of systemic racism, and the necessity to aggressively combat against it; put another way, there is a huge discrepancy between claiming to be *anti*-racist and claiming to be *not* racist.

Dei (1993), a Canadian critical race theorist, defines anti-racist education as progressive, practice with the following functions: 1. Interrogates power relations in the school and within society; 2. Addresses significance of personal experience and lived realities as a foundation of knowledge; 3. Explores the viewpoints of diverse groups in society. Though, queries of diversity are predisposed to be fixated on cultural diversity and individual differences, anti-racist education, begins with the problematization of "Eurocentric, white male privilege and supremacy," and engages in the "the social inequality experienced by all non-White people of various class backgrounds and sexual orientations" (p. 6).

Dei (1996b) urges anti-racist educators to question "pathological explanations of the "family" or "home environment" being the source of the "problems" which minority youths face in the schools. Racism and racial privilege are structural and systemic. Racism is deeply embedded in educational institutions and systems, impacting individual and interpersonal interactions. Understandably, I was sensitive to existing literature which addresses the multiple

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challenges (e.g. poor nutrition, inadequate health services, high rates of illiteracy, socio-economic status, etc.) teachers, vice principals, and principals face working in high-poverty schools (Kozol, 1991, 2005, 2007; Leithwood, 2006, Levin, 2007). Teachers, vice principals, and principals who work at high poverty schools succeed due to their persistence, emotional stamina, engagement with families, and support accountability for at risk students' social and academic learning (Carter, 2000; Izumi, Coburn, & Cox, 2002)

Conceptions and practices of inclusion, exclusion, diversity, and equity are complex and ideologically-laden. Social justice supports a process which facilitates respect, care, recognition, and empathy. The goal is to create inclusive practices for students who have been historically marginalized due to the intersectionality of their race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. I used Dei's Anti-Racist Framework, in examining *how* teachers, vice principals, and principals support and constrain elementary students' social and academic learning. According to Dei, the term "inclusivity" should move beyond mere classroom presence of minorities or superficial attempts at multiculturalism. Students may feel disempowered and therefore excluded as far as actual classroom practices are concerned (e.g. teaching, sharing knowledge) (2002b). "Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone" (Dei, 1997, p. 3). Rather than devaluing or diminishing the social histories, identities, experiences, and cultural or collective knowledge that our students bring with them, we need to instead incorporate them directly into the learning process itself (Dei, 2002). The background of an educator is as relevant as that of the student in making sense of knowledge, teaching, and learning (Dei, 2010).

2.3 Dei's Anti-Racist Framework

The table below summarizes:

Table 2: Key elements of a Discursive Critical Anti-Racist Framework
1. Recognizes the social effects of race
2. Recognizes White power and White privilege.
3. Problematizes the marginalization of certain voices in society and questions the de-legitimation of the knowledge and experiences of minority groups.
4. (Re) Production of Inequalities.
5. Pathological explanations of the family or the home environment:
Adapted from (Dei, 1996)

The five tenets listed in Table 2 draw attention to the many spaces in which minority populations are absent from fully contributing in society. The framework assesses how society is organized relative to minority populations. The significance in the context of equity within education is that it is an action-oriented framework. It is a framework which demands for the total inclusion of minorities in all facets of society. Further, the framework describes that racism remains, and will continue in diverse manifestations in various social and historical contexts.

Anti-racism distinguishes the "social effects of race" despite the absence of any biological root for the concept of race (Dei, 1996, p. 27). Therefore, anti-racism recognizes the social effects of race in education in lieu of the fact that there is no biological basis for the concept of race. Social effects can be seen in various forms of institutional racism, such as using race as a political tool. For example, "some people contest the social meaning of race as part of ongoing political attempts to deny racism exists as a set of ideological and material practices which serve to differentiate and discriminate among social groups" (p. 27). Racial prejudice and racism in Canada have continued intentionally (and unintentionally) providing unjust social

privileges to some groups and placing restrictions to other groups. Further, a social effect in education is the denial of institutional racism altogether, since it is viewed as a natural occurrence. Often, teachers, and principals, are not critically analyzed for their racist practices. Instead, normative policies and procedures are routines accepted within the educational school setting.

Van Dijk (1993) noted that the race concept is presently challenged by the deracializing (lack of inclusion of race) within text and discourse. However, the prevailing social implications of race in White-dominated societies are manifested in the daily experiences of minority groups. Anti-racism discourse proposes that a total awareness of the effects of race cannot be expanded devoid of inspecting the intersections of all methods of oppression. It is vital to explore how race is intertwined with different forms of oppression. Gender, class, and sexuality strongly intersect people's lives, though the historical context remains to have an influence on the present context. Dei stated that "one cannot fully understand the full social effects of race without a comprehension of the intersections of all forms of social difference" (p. 28).

The following five principles (Dei, 1996) listed in Table 2, offer the foundation of the anti-racist framework. The five principles selected are the most pertinent to this study and offer an essential lens to study racialization and (anti)racism within the high-poverty elementary schools' context. Dei applies these principles to the Canadian school system; he drew on the anti-racist work from Britain, the United States, and Canada. Educators must comprehend that students possess racial identities and the school has not traditionally been a racially neutral site. Dei notes that there is a pedagogic requisite to confront difference, and the necessity for educators not to make assumptions that problems only originate in the home. Dei demonstrates the need to understand student issues within the complexity and totality of their circumstances.

A critical anti-racist framework is a theoretical tool for teachers, principals, staff, and parents to examine the complex issues facing racialized school and communities. It centralizes issues of race and the potential consequences of racial minority status for students - and for their interactions with teachers, and principals. While developed by Dei, the framework has been used by various social scientists and found to be a valuable analytical lens. Dei's framework is needed to allow for the exploration of the construction of meanings in human interaction, which is sensitive to the concept that racism demonstrates itself differently dependent on the unique political, historical, and social contexts (Dei, 1996). The main goal of research is to explain and analyze these various meanings.

While the existence of systemic racism in Canada is not a novel idea, I wanted to understand how oppression and racism linger (in relation to equity policies like PPM 119). Dei's and Ladson Billing's arguments regarding CRT had two primary uses for my case study: 1. Understanding how teachers "present stories about discrimination" (outlined in set curriculum and creating teachable moments), 2. Examining how teachers and principals consider including the "totality of human experiences" (Dei, 1996a, p. 55) in their pedagogical practices and leadership strategies. CRT was helpful in exploring the possibilities and limitations principals (and teachers) face in creating equitable spaces (for minority students) in relation to the mandates outlined in Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy.

Critical educational theorists such as Ladson-Billings (1998) and Bell (2009), advise that "everyday racism" is an important element of the academic social environment. Often, racism is a subtle and obscure reality for many in society. Voice and storytelling are integral components of CRT and in the knowledge(s) and experiences of people of colour (minority students) are highly valued. Counter-storytelling, a tenet of CRT, utilizes this method to highlight inequities

that may have been invisible to those employing a program, procedure, or policy (DeCuir &
Dixson, 2004). Further, under Whiteness the declaration of "colour blindness" enables only
standardises racism in society, "especially in the classroom" (Dei, 2008, p. 353). Similarly, Dei
(1996a) asserts that one of the principles of anti-racism education is to focus "on an explication
of the notion of "identity", and how identity is linked with/to schooling" (p. 31). Thobani
(2007) argues that this contradiction has remained, central to the construction of national
identity. He emphasizes that "a national identity that is formed primarily in relation to that
which it excludes remains tied to the excluded, and the excluded Other becomes the nation's
double" (p. 20).

Dei (1996a) asserts that anti-racism education "acknowledges the traditional role of the
education system in producing and reproducing not only racial but also gender, sexual and class-
based inequalities in society" (p. 34). Further, as Rezai-Rashti (1995) notes, "Anti-racist
education insists on closely studying and revealing the sites, institutions, and ways in which
racism originates" (p. 6). "Colour-blind" approaches to schooling, by not recognizing the
significance of race, sanctions White teachers and principals who discount that systemic racism
exists. The effect of colour blindness perpetuates systemic racism, where Whites are privileged,
and racial minorities continue to be oppressed. There are numerous explanations regarding why
we need to include an anti-racist education, curriculum, and leadership within school structures.
More is required, though, than a mere "existence" of these non-dominant experiences and
offering of culturally responsive pedagogy. As Kumashiro (2000) argues, "changing oppression
requires disruptive knowledge, not simply more knowledge" (p. 34). Often, for minority
students, schools are isolating spaces, where they are socialized in the context of an educational
system that is hierarchical, individualistic, classist, and competitive.

School knowledge has been socially constructed to support a hierarchy in which non-Western cultures are held subordinate to Western culture (Banks, 1991, Ministry of Education, 1993). Equity work has been done to break through the debate concerning "us" versus "them" mindset, although changes have been made slowly. However, this mentality has not been eradicated, despite good intentions made through the legislation of past policies to change attitudes. Kumashiro (2000) sharply describes that "the root of oppression does not reside solely in how individuals think about, feel towards, and treat one another, and thus, empathy cannot be the panacea. It is necessary, but not sufficient" (p. 35). Moreover, he contends that we cannot make assumptions that empathy will be shaped, students (and educators) empathize with the "Other" as an individual just like "us" – the difference between "us" and "them" is not essentially broken down (which is where the difficult work lies) (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 35).

The Ontario Ministry of Education formally acknowledged that several "existing policies, procedures, and practices in the school system are racist in their impact, if not in their intent, and they limit the opportunity of students and staff belonging" (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993). Anti-racism education interrogates the "validity" of Euro-centric knowledge. It is a pedagogy that permits students to re-define themselves. Further, it perceives the "Other" culture as having unique pasts which need to be valued and appreciated. It is based on alternative teaching methods which mandate interpretation for cultural needs of (both) minority and majority students.

Supporters of anti-racist education advocate for educating staff to be trained in the areas of interpreting and advocating for diversity, inequality, and difference. Seeing that anti-racist education is more than just the presenting a genre including diverse characters, improvements are required to the methods in which teachers use books to address themes concerning race, and

strategies that target anti-racist objectives. Attributing racism to individualized accounts of racist

incidents (or melodramas) limits the potential and possibilities of anti-racist work for social

transformation" (Dei, 2008, p. 17). The result is to empower marginalized students

(collaborating with school leaders and teachers) in the examination of a shared meaning of

humanity, co-founded on principles of equality, responsibility, and community-formation (Dei,

1996a).

Important guidelines for schools and institutions in developing antiracist education

methods and instructions typically comprise the following: 1. The idea that good teaching

mandates considering the wide-ranging viewpoints, and diverse students' knowledge. 2. The

necessity for a complete examination of school environment, identifying, and diminishing

systemic barriers. 3. The significance of strong participation, commitment from all staff in

creating (and contributing) to school culture. 4. Necessity to problematize queries of race,

culture, identity, and how it correlates to differential educational outcomes (and experiences)

(Carr & Lund, 2007). The entanglement of numerous tenets, strategies, resources, and

leadership, antiracist education, in collaboration with more critical forms of multicultural

education, it attempts to render schools and educators better equipped to deal with equity issues

in rapidly changing demographic and social conditions.

Spillane, Reiser and Reimer (2002) focus on policy interpretation in schools and

recognize all participants in the policy practice as equal except for principals. Principals are

thought of as especially influential and powerful participants (important in understanding the

challenges, tensions, and dilemmas involved in the implementation of equity policies like PPM

119). Interviews with teachers allowed for better understanding of where "policy priorities" are

and whether PPM 119 can be effectively enacted to fit into the school's "ethos", and teachers', and principals' "values" (Ball, Braun & Maguire, 2012, p. 26).

Ball et al. (2011a) emphasize that participants (e.g. teachers, vice principals, and principals) in schools (are positioned differently in relation to policy) either hold "positions of indifference or avoidance or irrelevance" (p. 625). According to Prunty (1985), in the context of policy determination, a policy analyst needed to search for establishing "procedural policy that would enable the inclusion of oppressed groups" (p. 135). These groups dominantly were the working class, the poor, ethnic and racial minorities, and women. According to the Prunty (1985), a policy analyst must be aware of the different approaches and forms of policies in a given area in order to properly research and assess the appropriateness of the policy. For example, understanding whose 'voices' and 'values' have been subordinated by the needs of a dominant few.

It is my belief that policy is invariably about change and what change is desired (Weimer & Vining, 2004). My study attempted to understand the experiences of members in majority groups, and members who hold power, privilege, and influence. Specifically, I wanted to understand the experiences of teachers, vice principals, and principals, employed in a racialized system in which privilege, oppression, and structural racism continue. In my findings chapter (Chapter 5), I interpreted in relation to policy text (PPM 119) the: 1. Perceptions of teachers', vice principals' and principals' on inclusive education, 2. Teachers', vice principals', principals' strategies on culturally responsiveness. My goal was to understand the complicated school and social conditions in which equity practices are embedded, or are emerging, from the narratives by teachers, vice principals, and principals.

By incorporating the guiding tenets offered by Van Disk (1998), policy analysis is concerned with studying written texts, to reveal the broad sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias. Hence, in this thesis, policy text PPM 119, along with teachers', vice principals' and principals' narratives were all sources of data. School policies, while intended to be impartial, are powerful devices that are essential for organizational structure (Epp & Epp, 1998). Since schools affect the social and academic learning of immigrant students, it is crucial to study policies that school organizations are required to implement. By and large, policy research deliberates the role of the analyst, policy functions, and policy origins (Bowers, 1988; Prunty, 1985).

Lincoln and Guba (1986) illuminate various realities that may be linked with an analysis of policy. Depending upon the intent of the analysis, these scholars support the view that research might be constructed to make statements about intentions of the policy, defined as behaviours by those implementing the policy, or statements which highlight the experiences of a target group that accepts the policy. In a review of educational policy, Prunty (1985) cautions policy researchers to avoid traditional approaches to an analysis by inserting an ethical framework for social justice. He declares that an analysis of educational policy overlooks the role of education which favors the privileged and the elite. Policy, overall, can be perceived "as a program or course of action adopted by an individual, group or government" (p. 134).

Policy analysis has been established as a collection of methods used to develop the design and implementation of policy (Chalip, 1995). Lincoln and Guba (1986) recognize processes that an analysis of policy may undergo. Furthermore, they contend that each of the processes might produce other perspectives depending on the analysis definition chosen for study. One definition and perspective are policy-in-experience, which would capture the knowledge of a target group's

(e.g. teachers, vice principals, and principals) encounters regarding the policy implementation. From this viewpoint, an examination would include anecdotes, experience, narratives, and the accounts of those who have been affected by the execution of the equity policy (which this study attempted to do). Historical and contemporary equity documents were studied, to deconstruct implied meanings, and ways in which programs, procedures or policies have been utilized beyond the scope of their intent (Woodside-Jiron, 2003). As Ball (2006) contends, "we do not speak a discourse, it speaks us" (p. 48). Ball's interpretation signifies that language, both written and spoken, is merely a reflection of the discourses we engage in.

Analysis is described as, a "critical" undertaking within scientific research "is the assessment of knowledge claims" (Hammersley, 2005, p. 176). In this manner, scholarly research was reviewed by me. When "critical" becomes the objective of the research, another perspective is given regarding the study and/or its intent. "Critical" research is not limited to claims of knowledge or an assessment of those claims; it is more about analyzing policies and forms of social practice (Hammersley, 2005). Language can either be applied to create hierarchies of power as in discourses of racism, for example, or to embrace diverse identities in discourses of inclusion and equity.

Prunty (1985) advises policy analysts to realize that "values, interests and power permeate the dimensions of schooling, and that, as a result, select groups and social classes benefit or suffer" (p.135). Policies aren't imperfect static entities, nor do they exist in vacuums. Seeing policy as discourse requires innovative understandings of how policy can dynamically circulate power/knowledge, and produce new constructions (Allan, 2010). Understanding policy as discourse allows for the examinations of how policy produces conditions of possibility for beliefs and actions (Allan, 2010). Policies create the conditions accessible for solutions to be

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deliberated, eventually determining the micro-levels of society. I was mindful of Allan's arguments, in which by focusing on the text within the policy, the analysis will reveal the discursive junctures where policy problems lie.

Fairclough (2003) distinguishes between various approaches which pay close attention to the linguistic features of texts—which he refers to as textually oriented discourse analyses—and those which do not. Fairclough's approach is an interdisciplinary approach to set up a kind of dialogue among disciplines and draws on "theories and techniques from a wide range of disciplines to bring together these different approaches and different levels of analysis" (Taylor, 2004, p. 435). Texts construct representations of the world, social relationships, and social identities, and there is an emphasis on highlighting how such practices and texts are ideologically shaped by relations of power, which clarified PPM 119 (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 1993, 2001a, 2001b, 2003).

2.4   Chapter Summary

In this chapter, my two theoretical framework, critical race theory and anti-racist framework are presented, which draws on American scholar Ladson-Billings, and Canadian scholar Dei.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the relevant literature relating to inclusion and equity, within the context of Canada. First, an overview of historical and current education equity policy in Ontario is presented to the reader. Second, a section on the challenges in engaging in equity work is presented. Third, the role of the teacher in using culturally relevant pedagogy is offered. Fourth, the value in studying teachers, vice principals, and principals is described. Fifth, focusing on educators, who work in high-poverty elementary schools, and their diverse teaching strategies, is explored. Sixth, the effects of poverty within the context of South Western Ontario, unique challenges educators face working in high-poverty elementary schools are highlighted. Seventh, a section on Canada's embrace of refugees (since all participants in one elementary school taught mostly Syrian students, many who experienced PTSD). Last, the importance of honouring Indigenous contributions (since participants at all three schools reported they had a high Indigenous population) is described.

3.1   Historical Overview Education Equity Policy in Ontario

More than twenty-five years ago, Henry and Tator (1991) argued that the lack of a clear theoretical framework was a significant barrier to effective education policy implementation. Further, they argued misunderstandings outlining the assumptions and goals of such education policies have often resulted, due to the variations of policy titles which use terms such as multicultural, ethnic, and/or race relations, race, and ethno cultural equity. The Ministry of Education attempted to reduce such confusion by creating a specific framework for "Antiracism and Ethno-cultural Equity" policy implementation (Ministry of Education and Training, 1993). An anti-racist perspective has provided a theoretical framework for the development of race and ethno cultural equity policy. Such policies were being established in some school boards across

Ontario from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s. Further, policies were established to provide

necessary support to school boards with policy development. Additionally, to make boards

accountable for equity work, the Ontario Ministry of Education created an Equity Unit (Rezai-

Rashti, 2003).

Mock and Masemann (1989) conducted a survey of the hundred and twenty-four Ontario

school boards and found that thirty-nine had established policies which were closely related.

Further, three boards had draft policies in the final phases of validation, and twenty-two boards

had begun the process of policy formation. In their national study of multicultural and race

relations policies, Tator and Henry (1991) noted the lack of such documents in many regions and

provinces. These authors found the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Alberta Education

Department seemed to be providing the greatest beneficial leadership for their school boards.

Tator and Henry noted a wide range of initiatives which occurred in school boards within large

urban centres such as Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto. Further, Mock and Maseman (1989)

from the findings of their study, recommended that for significant change to emerge in school

boards, it is vital for provincial governments to offer clear leadership in the area of race and

ethno cultural policy development and implementation.

One suggestion (provided by the Ontario Ministry of Education) was that Ontario's

policy development needed to establish clear guidelines for implementation. Hence, in July of

1993, a revision to the Education Act (1992) stated that Ontario school boards were authorized to

develop and implement antiracism and ethno-cultural policies. The Ministry delivered a

document outlining guidelines for policy development, and implementation (Ministry of

Education and Training, 1993). The Ministry of Education prioritized its focus on Board

leadership (focused on the roles/responsibilities of school board trustees, directors of education,

superintendents, principals, and teachers in identifying systemic inequities). In Table 3, below I draw on research literature to outline key findings of the enablers and barriers to successful policy implementation, and factors of successful policy implementation.

Table 3: Factors Affecting Implementation of Race and Ethno Cultural Equity Policy at the School Board Level

	Barriers to Successful Policy Implementation	*Facilitating Factors of Successful Policy Implementation*
Stakeholder Participation	Over-reliance on one stakeholder group for development and implementation (Mock & Masemann, 1989).	Using participatory approach when introducing changes in policy and practices (Reid & Endicott, 1992).
Goals and Planning	Absence of clearly outlined goals (Tator & Henry, 1991); Unfocused organizational objectives.	Establish clear goals for implementation (Anderson & Fullen, 1985). Setting of goals tied to measurable outcomes (Reid, Endicott & Mukherjee, 1992).
Communication	Ineffective program communication caused by ambiguous wording of policy implementation documents	Consistency of policy statements and programs in communications (Anderson & Fullen, 1985).

	(Hitner & Starr, 1985).	
Commitment	Internal resistance, perception of equity as a low priority (Mock & Maseman, 1989); Use of secondment or contractually limited race relations consultant positions (Tator & Henry, 1991); Marginalization of race and ethnic relations department within the school structure (Tator & Henry, 1991).	Strong expression of commitment to equity (Mock & Masemann, 1989); Appointment staff person (race and ethnic relations consultant) to facilitate implementation (Mock & Masemann, 1989); Strong support of race and ethno cultural relations consultant director or superintendent (Mock & Masemann, 1989); Willingness of senior official to reallocate resources towards development and implementation of policy (Mock & Masemann, 1989).
Accountability	Ambiguous roles and responsibilities (Mock & Masemann, 1989); Ambiguity in terms of timelines, anticipated outcomes (Mock	Explicit outline of responsibilities, setting of goals within specified timeframes (Rein Endicott & Mukherjee, 1992)

	& Masemann, 1989)	
Training	Insufficient training opportunities for teachers and staff (Tator & Henry, 1991)	Effective in-service and ongoing training at all levels of the system (Mock & Masemann, 1989).
Monitoring Processes and Evaluation	Ongoing evaluation deemed unnecessary (Hitner & Starr); Absence of monitoring (Tator & Henry, 1991).	Clearly established monitoring, commitment to evaluation (Reid Endicott & Mukherjee, 1992).

3.2 Overview of Current Ontario Equity Policy

The challenges of providing for the needs of a diverse population are not new topics for Ontario educators. Most Ontario schools have a diverse population and have embarked on initiatives to support equity and equality for many generations (Harper, 2007). The Ontario government has taken important steps to encourage equity within the province's classrooms (for example with PPM 119). In 1997, as a response to demographic changes in society (along with increasing concerns regarding inequities in education) the Ministry of Education developed Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy. The Ministry called for full implementation in publicly funded schools across the province over a four-year period. The revised version of PPM 119 takes into consideration a wide-range of equity factors.

Ontario's current policy, Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009) PPM: No 119 aims to "support positive learning environments so that all students feel engaged in and empowered by

what they are learning" (p. 7). The policy requires school boards and staff to develop strategies

which offer students an equitable education (where they see themselves reflected in their

learning) and reach their full potential which invariably would help students who encounter

systemic barriers. Thus, the success of the strategy is dependent at least in part on the

capabilities of school leaders to create a common understanding about equity in their school

communities, and leaders' aptitude to collaboratively create and assemble strategies for equity.

The policy maintains that diversity can flourish within Ontario schools when students are

encouraged to respectfully engage in diverse opinions and perspectives. Through the policy, the

Ministry carefully constructed its strategy to reflect human rights outlined under the Ontario

Human Rights Code, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the provincial Code of Conduct

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 13).

The Ministry states that the equity strategy would contribute to a range of broader

objectives. Increasing student achievement, public confidence in publicly funded education, and

closing gaps in student achievement are three important overarching goals. Equity is a shared

responsibility; which requires commitment from all education partners. PPM 119 aims to,

understand, identify, and eradicate the prejudices, obstacles, and power dynamics which hinder

students' opportunities for learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 11).

School boards are accountable for the bulk of efforts in assessing the efficiency of

existing policies. Boards are responsible for the delivery of the policy, and the procedures which

support students and teachers to identify and report discrimination. Boards have been required to

create policies to address some of these significant systemic inequalities amongst student

populations today (Dotzert, 1998). The creation of well-intentioned equity policy is superficial,

without effective follow through by Ontario boards. Henceforward, individual schools were

mandated by the Ministry's strategy to incorporate the board's policy and assess best classroom teaching and leadership strategies for incorporating the policy. The Ministry recognizes that it would incorporate equity and inclusive education into curriculum revisions and would ensure that teachers receive training in equity and inclusive education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 20).

According to the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Strategy guidelines document, "the plans should focus on identifying and removing any barriers to student learning in order to reduce gaps in achievement and provide a respectful and responsive school climate" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 34). In her introductory letter accompanying Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy document in 2009, then Minister of Education Kathleen Wynne wrote, "[em]bracing diversity and moving beyond tolerance to acceptance and respect will help us reach our goal of making Ontario's education system the most inclusive in the world" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 2). School boards were mandated to produce strategic multi-year plans to document their equity and inclusive education policy.

3.3   Implementation of Equity Policy

Ball and colleagues (2011b) write that schools implement policies in situations beyond their control, and policy makers assume best possible school environments for interpretations (e.g. schools are equipped with adequate resources, training, and professional development). The reorganization of education, global policy dialogues on education are grounded on market dynamic and economic rationality all had important effects for minorities, and working-class students and teachers (Ball, 1993; McNeil, 2000). In another work, Ball and colleagues (2010) argue that schools create their own understanding of policy and draw on features of unique school culture and context in the course of policy implementation.

Maguire, Braun, and Ball (2015) propose an exploration of the multifaceted ways in which educational policies are contextualized in schools. They draw on their study on policy implementation in English secondary schools (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012) to demonstrate how contextual factors such as policy type, power and positionality, space and time constraints, as well as different subjectivities, are critical for understanding the ways in which policies are translated into practices in schools. Not all policies are adopted in the same way, as each policy carries different significance for different people. They conclude by noting that "where you stand" in relations to subject department, pedagogical values, the time of the year and a range of other biographical factors such as length of service, plays powerfully into "where you sit" (Maguire, Braun, & Ball, 2014).

In a different work, Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992), established a multi-lateral frame for thinking about education reform. They define education policy as having three phases which are somewhat independent from each other (in terms of influence, text production and practice): 1. Influence is the procedure of conveying policy into being, having to do with who outlines the nature of policy; 2. Text production deals with the creation of policy as a product; 3. Education practice, while it is influenced by policy texts, similarly has a degree of autonomy from them, and form "trajectory of policy". Bowe, Ball, and Gold, provide an excellent illustration of how policy goals, often can diverge from the intentions of its promoters.

3.4 Equity Work in Schools

Goli Rezai-Rashti (2003) uses a CDA framework to explore the institutional challenges of policy, from the perspective of equity workers' experiences in their jobs. Her analysis shows equity policies introduced at the government level are implemented and practiced based on the historical specificities found at each local site. Six educators from two different school boards (3

from each board) and one from the Ministry of Education and Training involved in equity work were interviewed.

Rezai-Rashti's (2003) findings reveal that on the ground, equity and social justice does not necessarily match up with the Ministry of Education and Training's authorized policies. Mockman and Masemann (1989) findings highlighted that perception of equity was a low priority. Tator and Henry (1991) showed an absence of clearly outlined goals, and absence of monitoring in equity policy implementation. Rezai-Rashti's (2003) study offers an important understanding that school boards may interpret and implement mandated policies based on a set of complex conditions in their individual institution.

At the level of local practice, individuals in many local settings interpret such policies based upon the unique specificities of their communities. Hence, policy implementation is often complex, and equity workers have disparities in interpretation. Through Rezai-Rashti's (2003) two case studies, her main finding illuminates how the policy process is never straightforward. Anyon (1981, 1995, 1997) argues professional development, time, mentoring, resources, on-going internal and external support are challenges teachers, vice principals, and principals face in the operationalization of policy. Rezai-Rashti's findings parallel Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997), who note that a policy text should be critically interpreted and contested when needed. After all, teachers, vice principals, and principals have their own agency to implement policy, and do not blindly follow it.

3.5 Role of the Teacher in using Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

One of the key approaches advocated by educators for inclusive education is culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995). I include a synthesis on CRP given that it is considered by some to be the best approach for realizing the aims of equity and inclusive policy in the classroom setting. Ladson-Billings (1995) introduces the term 'culturally responsive pedagogy' as a pedagogy that "not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools perpetuate" (p. 469). Donald (2012a, 2012b) writes about browning the curriculum that emphasizes the complicated ways in which White supremacy and colonization manifests themselves in curriculum. Browning attempts to bring attention to interrupt the dominant narrative, by making the curriculum messy, and work towards uncovering racism, and impacts of settler colonialism.

Ladson-Billings (1997) encourages educators to use a student's culture in order to ameliorate and transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. The aim in doing so is to assist in the development of a culturally relevant "personality" that allows students to choose academic excellence yet still identify with their culture (Ladson-Billings, 1997).

Ladson-Billings (1995), Gay (2003), and Nieto (2002) use the comparison of a bridge to illustrate how teachers assist in forming bridges between students' school culture with their home cultures. In research by Childs and colleagues (2010), the authors state that "Ontario needs all of its teachers, whatever their background, to be culturally responsive and equity minded … taking responsibility as educators for equal success for all students" (p. 5). The statement offered by these scholars has a direct relevance to my exploratory case study.

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Specifically, I was interested in learning how culturally responsive teachers utilize teaching

strategies (Nieto, 2002; Cummins, 1996; Gay, 2000); in order to best support elementary

students' academic and social learning to encourage student achievement within the classroom.

A qualitative study by Druggish (2003) titled "Nourishing Roots and Inspiring Wings:

Building a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy", examines culturally responsive teaching within the

southern Appalachian, West Virginia cultural setting. This study concentrated on the

experiences of an elementary school teacher, an elementary principal, and a pre-service teacher.

In his findings, the author acknowledges specific teacher practices that encouraged culturally

responsive pedagogy (as described in the works of Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Ladson-

Billings (1994), Villegas and Lucas, (2002), and Zeichner, (1996) maintain that the tenets of

culturally responsive pedagogy are the fundamentals of successful teaching. Druggish's (2003)

findings support this claim and emphasize that "good teaching practices must be applied in

different ways to meet the needs of culturally diverse students" (p. 79). Building cultural

competence for the population he investigated appeared to be a monumental task, since very

little validation of their culture existed within the standard school curriculum. Druggish (2003)

finds that cultural competency could be addressed more effectively by providing many

opportunities for students to discover their cultural identities in respectful, non-threatening

school activities and encouraging home, family, and community to be a branch of the school's

curriculum.

In another study, Morrison, Robbins, and Rose (2008) noted there were many challenges

in implementing CRP in classrooms due to inequities (e.g. funding and lack of training).

According to Young (2010) another challenge to "implementing" CRP was how it has been

misunderstood and incorrectly practiced by educators and administrators. Young found teachers

must build cultural competence by knowing students, building relationships, and affirming

students' identities. Teachers must raise consciousness by confronting their own cultural biases,

addressing systemic roots of racism, and preparation by putting theories in practices. Teachers

must understand that racially diverse students bring cultural capital to the classroom, which are

often different from mainstream norms and worldviews.

Dei (2010) found that many black students faced economic barriers to achievement.

Students who are required to work at part-time jobs during high school and/or university had less

time to spend on schoolwork, and fewer opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.

In some cases, this can result in feelings of disengagement from the wider school community,

creating a disadvantage for students applying to certain professional schools, and prestigious

educational programs (Dei, 2010).   Dei reminds us that "the school problems experienced by the

youth cannot be understood in isolation from the material and ideological circumstances in

which the students find themselves" (p. 35). Instead of framing marginalized students as the

problem, it is important to examine the challenges and successes within schools, to offer

adequate resources and to employ inclusive, critical pedagogies in the care of all students'

development as members of society (Hytten & Adkins, 2001).

Often, it is much easier for educators to downplay the systemic and institutional aspect of

racism, and poverty, in effect, resulting in chronically blaming marginalized students. When

racial and economic injustice is taken up at the level of individuals, rather the product of the

influence of the broader cultural and social class systems, educators frequently risk recognizing

the problem as the responsibility of the student, instead of the institution or systemic oppression.

We cannot evade the effects of the social organization of power in society. It is essential for all

stakeholders to develop their understanding (which can be often be difficult and time-

consuming) and expose themselves to directions for research and education in pursuit for creating a more inclusive equitable school.

3.6   Roles of the Principal in High-Poverty Schools

Since the mid-1970s, research into school effectiveness and school improvement has recognized effective leadership as one of the significant correlates to improving schools (Bishop, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Mortimore, 1993; Townsend, 2007). In fact, effective school leadership has been established to diminish the disheartening effects of some of the precursor conditions of poverty dramatically, by acting both directly and indirectly to change those (Leithwood & Steinbach, 2002). Principals are often seen as indirectly, rather than directly adding value to students' academic learning (Leithwood & Prestine, 2002).

A principal's work is directed by an assortment of policies and regulations, few of which focus on equity issues, and several of which act as resistance to efforts to create conditions for equity (Ryan, 2003, 2006, 2012). The importance of the role of the principal in constructing the conditions for equity in schools in Ontario is critical. The success of the Equity Strategy links directly to the capability of principals, to create a shared sense of importance related to the issues of equity in their school communities. Further, the effectiveness of the strategy is dependent on the principal's ability to collaboratively create and mobilize strategies for equity. An understanding of the perceptions of principals regarding equity will be beneficial in supporting schools in their equity work and in monitoring these efforts as the Equity Strategy moves beyond the four-year implementation stage. It is important to note that this study is not intended to focus on the "impact" of the Equity Strategy on principals. Rather, the Equity Strategy is merely part of the context in which principals carry out their own equity work. Ryan and Rottman (2009)

further comment, "bureaucratic and market structures work hand in hand...to disrupt democratic efforts in schools" (p. 493).

MacBeath (2007) illustrates, "The more hierarchical the structures of the schools, the more distribution seemed to rest on a downward flow, a trickling down which might not ever reach the lowest layers of the organization" (p. 258). From his investigation, Theoharis (2007) suggests that this lack of support negatively impacts the ability of principals to lead for equity. He writes, "Meeting resistance from these sources left the principals feeling isolated, without models of how to do their social justice work, in a system not designed to support them, and working with and for people who did not share or value their social justice commitment" (p. 240). Common features of successful leadership in schools facing "challenging circumstances", including elementary schools in high-poverty communities, have been found to include the co-operation and alignment of others to shared vision and values, distributive leadership, a core belief that all children can learn and achieve irrespective of context or background, staff development, and community building (Bishop, 2006; Harris & Chapman, 2002, 2004).

A study conducted by Amerson (2014) titled, "Narrowing the Gap: Exploring the Characteristics and Practices of Urban School Principals Closing the Achievement Gap" attempted to understand how school principals are powerful influences on communities, teachers, institutions, and can transcend the effects of the past exclusionary practices in education. The aptitude of principals to comprehend their role and how they lead their schools toward increased equity is a key component of this study. Here, the researcher found constructing relationships was vitally important to the principal participants. The action of building a relationship amongst teacher and student, principal and student, or principal and teacher is a base for building a school that can create and encourage caring environments and an

effective leader who can embrace topics like race, social justice, and equity. In his analysis, Amerson (2014) established the challenges of race and doing what is right for their students. In his findings, he illustrates how the power of CRT infiltrates throughout education and it is obligated upon school leaders to act courageously. Principals saw the value in being honest with their students and connecting with them on a person level.

Another research study conducted by Leithwood, Seashore, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) establishes that amongst school-related factors over which policy makers have some control, effective leadership ranks second only to the excellence of teaching in effective student learning. Henceforth, in order to attain successful outcomes in the daily realities of high levels of student poverty, school leaders must often face important challenges, such as poor nutrition, insufficient health services, and high rates of illiteracy.

In a different study, Leithwood and Riehl (2005) identify three core practices they assert are essential for the most challenging high-poverty schools. These fundamental practices are: 1) Setting directions - by distinguishing and articulating a vision, cultivating the acceptance of group goals and generating high performance expectations for students; 2) Developing people - by contributing to intellectual stimulation, providing individualised support and serving as an appropriate role model; and finally; 3) Restructuring the organization - by strengthening school cultures, transforming organisational structures, and building collaborative processes

3.7 Effective Leadership in Challenging Schools: Research from the USA, England, and Australia

In the United States studies of leadership in effective urban elementary schools were conducted as long ago as the late 1970s (e.g., Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1997; Louis & Miles, 1990; Purkey

& Smith, 1983). The effective schools research looked at successful ''outliers'' – those high-achieving schools that largely serve low-socioeconomic student populations (like this study). Effective schools research (e.g., Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, 1997; Louis & Miles, 1990; Purkey & Smith, 1983) recognized strong, instructional leadership as the role of the principal. Instructional leaders focused all efforts on the progress of classroom practices through the making of safe, orderly, and positive school environments, a clear and focused mission, high performance expectations, student time on task, and positive home-school relations (e.g., Lezotte, 1997; Louis & Miles, 1990; Purkey & Smith, 1983).

In the United Kingdom, Harris (2002) found, "in a failing school context, immediate action is required and hence, leadership often directive and task focused while setting the vision for school improvement'' (p. 17). Direction setting by principals in challenging Australian schools was measured as a shared responsibility for distributed leadership; the principals' primary directions also usually focused on improvement of the physical school environment in addition to student behavior (Maden, 2001; Mulford & Silins, 2003).

Research has shown that effective leaders offer their teachers with both intellectual stimulation and individualized support (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). However, in challenging schools, with inadequate resources for professional development, leaders depend on their own proficiency in the practical central aspects of schooling. Principals have been labelled as ''knee-deep'' in professional development activities, often modeling effective instructional techniques in classrooms. Similarly, according to Australian researchers (Maden, 2001; Mulford & Silins, 2003), principals dynamically developed teachers in the practice of research-based intervention strategies that showed to develop academic performance of low-achieving students.

As recognized by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), there is still much to be learned about how leaders can successfully meet the educational needs of diverse student populations. The major shortcoming in much of this research, however, is that it does not identify leadership practices that are successful in improving conditions in the school and classroom suggested by this research, nor does it help unpack the skills. Specifically, the challenges to teaching, learning, and leadership are often reported as being present in high-poverty schools. Moreover, evidence that principal leadership makes a difference in student achievement, principal leadership practices in high performing, high-poverty K-5 elementary schools in Ontario provide an important resource for further research.

Research conducted by Jacobson et al. (2007) suggests that in order for schools to increase effectiveness, an instructional leader should be both visible and vigilant daily. By having a clear presence throughout the building during the day, mainly during arrival and dismissal, is crucial in constructing a safe and welcoming atmosphere. According to Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), 1. Effective leaders make it a priority to individually greet staff, students, parents, and the community. 2. Effective leaders, set a clear tone for the school that children have the right to learn and it is their teachers' duty to teach them. 3. Effective leaders visibly define rules and procedures for all staff to follow, along with defined consequences which set the tone for everyone. 4. Effective leaders create school environments which are conducive to learning, and are successful in drawing in, supporting, and retaining high quality teachers.

Bishop (2004) recognized the intensity of work and fast pace of life, in all four years as principal in a Tasmanian primary school (in a high-poverty community in Australia). Besides external pressures, she found working in extreme stress, bullying, and abuse of students and staff

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- by parents to be common. Often, the verbal abuse by students and/or parents to teachers resulted from a complete disregard of their authority. As an outcome of her experience, Bishop (2004) believed that knowledgeable, devoted hardworking teachers and principals were necessary who preserved "in the face of a work setting which was intense and often 'punctured' by the outpourings of distressed students, colleagues and/or parents" (p. 9).

3.8   Social Justice Leadership – Theory to Practice

Leadership is as much contested as the notion of social justice. Social justice leadership means concentrating on a critical consciousness of doing what is right for students but also carefully balancing solid instructional leadership and inclusive school structures needed to develop a "high performing" school (McKenzie et al., 2008). In his analysis, one of the first actions a principal must take is to recognize the mindsets and dispositions of the adults within their school. Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009) categorized the following four dominant issues about leadership and social justice. 1. Conceptualizing social justice and a new social order in leadership preparation; 2. Progress past traditional leadership preparation to leadership for social justice; 3. Moving toward critical pedagogy: leadership for liberation and commitment to social justice; and 4. Manufacturing connections between local and global research to extend leadership for social justice (p. 3). Student disconnection continues to increase. Further, conventional educational institutions inconsistently fulfill promises to equity, typically established on ideas of uniformity (Dei et. al., 1997; Karumanchery, 2005; Portelli, Shields and Vibert, 2007).

3.9   Neoliberal Pressures on Teachers and Principals

Education systems in numerous developed countries have been experiencing momentous changes. In recent decades, a neoliberal context exists in education systems and constrains

efforts for equity work. The understandings and the practices at the local level are hinged on the

complicated histories and beliefs of people existing in a specific local setting. At present, the

overall interpretation in Ontario is that the existing policies in relation to educational

reorganization have limited equity activities and the institutional tools to adequately address

equity issues. Several scholars frequently attributed this problem to the policies implemented by

the Progressive Conservative government which had political power (Dehli, 1996; Dei 2001;

Griffith, 2001; Goldstein, 1998; Majhanovich, 2002; Smith, 1998).

Dehli (1996) contended, "Current transformations in late capitalism have wide-reaching

effects in every part of the globe, but these effects are uneven and mediated locally in

unpredictable ways" (pg. 85). In the book, *Brave New Teachers: Doing Social Justice Work in*

Neo-liberal Times Solomon, et. al. (2011) explored the vital question, "Given the current climate

of schooling in Western democracies such as Canada and the top-down imposition of curriculum

standards, do teachers acquiesce to this higher authority, compromise their democratic principles

to avoid conflict and confrontation, or negotiate space to practice equity and diversity in their

pedagogy?" (p. 22). Teachers' pedagogical practices are influenced by the curriculum they are

mandated to teach and their own individual agency to modify where needed. Hence, intentional

instruction rather than solely relying on teachable moments encourage equitable teaching

practices.

Giroux (1992) cautions for educators not to be appeased by standardized curriculum

saying, "if teachers are not alert and alive to the what and how of their practice, there is a danger

that they come to be seen as simply the intervening medium through which knowledge is

transmitted to students, erasing themselves in an uncritical reproduction of received wisdom" (p.

120). In my findings section, I provided rich narratives from teachers, vice principals, and

principals to show how they daily negotiate on notions of equity, social justice, struggles and successes in creating culturally responsive classroom environments, collaboration with staff, students, and families.

Solomon and Tarc (2003), report that Canadian educational institutions "homogenize blacks and treat them all the same" (p. 17). These scholars argue that since black students' conceptualizations of their identity are "rapidly changing, fluid and diverse" (p. 17), anti-racist educators should view students as collaborators, since they "are very articulate" and adept at describing the conditions of their own being in the world" (p. 18). In addition, these academics found it beneficial to include students as an essential piece in the discussion since they are those personally affected by educational reforms.

In another study, Rezai-Rashti and Solomon (2008) deliberate on how many White teachers communicate to their students that they are "colour-blind", meaning that teachers claim to see all their students as the same, regardless of their race. Most teachers and schools are heavily invested in the academic achievement of all their students' home; they must first recognize that race continues to be a part of students' perceptions of in their academic experiences (Rhamie & Hallam, 2002). Rezai-Rashti (2003) argues, "the task ahead is to find out how these reforms are practiced at the local level and their implications for students, teachers, administrators, and for those who are actively seeking an education system based on the principles of equity and social justice" (p. 3).

Rezai-Rashti (2003) describes how "Ontario is still at the early stages of such policy reforms and perhaps it is too early to fully comprehend the social impact of such policies (p. 4). Now in 2018, reforms to the education system along with the significant cuts in the education budget have had severe impacts for all areas in education. According to Rezai-Rashti, "The new

policies over governance, funding formula, curriculum and assessment procedures are all facets of the Ontario government's education policy. These policies are adopted and initiated at the government level and they all have a short-time timetable for implementation. These policies are significantly changing the nature of teaching and learning in Ontario" (p. 4).

3.10 The Impact of Poverty

Poverty is not simply about one's low income or the incapability to meet every-day basic needs. Poverty relates to intangibles, it often can prevent people from participating in society a meaningful way. Poverty can diminish a student sense of belonging, in the school setting. Today, few would argue that the efforts of effective teachers are the center of successful schools serving students living in poverty (Jacob & Ludwig, 2009). In this study, teachers who understand working with at-risk children, living in poverty were studied to learn their perception and strategies to help children be successful. They found teaching quality, is an important factor for attaining education success for students from backgrounds characterised by inadequate financial means achieving success.

3.11 School readiness

School readiness reflects a child's ability to succeed both academically and socially in a school environment. It entails physical well-being and appropriate motor development, emotional health and a positive approach to new experiences, age-appropriate social knowledge and competence, age-appropriate language skills, and age-appropriate general knowledge and cognitive skills (Kagan et al., 1995). It is well documented that poverty decreases a child's readiness for school through aspects of health, home life, schooling and neighbourhoods. Six poverty-related factors are known to impact child development in general and school readiness.

They are: the incidence of poverty, the depth of poverty, the duration of poverty, the timing of poverty (e.g., age of child), community characteristics (e.g., concentration of poverty and crime in neighborhood, and school characteristics) and the impact poverty has on the child's social network (parents, relatives and neighbors). A child's home commonly has a strong impact on school readiness (Kagan et al., 1995).

Research by Mishra (2014) shows that teachers' pedagogy is predisposed by their biases and beliefs, and these tend to be deficit laden. Children from low-income families frequently do not attain the academic stimulation, and do not absorb the social skills essential to prepare them for school. Teachers must be cautious not to view minority and racialized students living in poverty through a deficit lens. Many families may not have the resources to prepare their children for school. Poverty is one of the single best explanations for performance differences (Roy & Raver, 2014). Although poverty does not cause low performance, factors such as physical, social, and emotional deprivations are possible correlates to both poverty and poor school outcomes (Roy & Raver, 2014). Additionally, parents' role in their children's cognitive development has a great impact on academic achievement for children of all ages. Roy and Raver (2014) illustrate how parents' behaviours by encouraging a home environment inclusive of social, educational, and play interactions and holding high expectations throughout early childhood, assists in the development of successful students.

Children are expected to have self-regulation, sustain behaviour inhibition, conform to rules, establish positive interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers, successfully carry out goal directed activities, have enough physical health, and hold basic cognitive skills in reading, math, and language (Bierman et al., 2008; Kagan, 1990). Characteristic problems are parental irregularity (regarding daily performing routines and parenting), repeated variations of

primary caregivers, absence of supervision, and poor role modelling. Often, the parents of these

children also lack support. Hence, teachers who see value in participating in early childhood

education programs might be the most critical educational advocates for students living in

poverty, as differences in access to early educational interventions compound throughout

children's lifetimes (Bhattacharya, 2010).

3.12 Effective Teaching Strategies for Students in Poverty

Stronge and Hindman (2003) establish that an effective teacher has understood tactics for

nourishing a safe, orderly, positive, and productive learning environment. Successful teachers

believe that all students can learn; therefore, they maintain high expectations for all students,

regardless of where they teach or the backgrounds of their students. These researchers determine

that effective teachers set high goals for their students, plan meaningful instruction, and create a

classroom atmosphere where students are encouraged to be successful. Feeling sorry for

students because of their home environments, and consequently lowering demands, does a

disservice to students living in poverty (Diffily & Perkins, 2002). According to Kannapel and

Clements (2009), *high expectations* are needed for teaching students living in poverty, for them

to be successful. Robinson (2007) found in a study of 400 teachers in low-income inner-city

schools, teachers who rejected a deficit view were happier with their jobs.

The goal of an effective teacher, according to Stronge and Hindman, is to "adjust

instruction so that all students in the classroom achieve, regardless of the range of student

abilities" (p. 51). Teachers of students living in poverty can attempt to make up for the lack of

resources in the home, by providing plenty of educational materials in the classroom (Parsley &

Corcoran, 2003). In other studies (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ware, 2006), teachers considered how

they used personal connections with students as an attempt to motivate them to meet teachers'

high expectations (Howard, 2002). Teachers at high-poverty elementary schools saw parents as "critical partners" in the learning process (Ragland, 2002). Haberman (1999) identifies the ability of teachers to create relationships with children living in poverty and connect with them as the key factor in high-performing schools.

Research shows that students from at-risk homes have significantly fewer words in their vocabularies than their counterparts from secure homes. Students' vocabulary capability is heavily influenced by the mother's socio-demographic characteristics, personal characteristics, vocabulary, and knowledge of child development (Bornstein, Haynes, & Painter, 1998). By the time many children start school, they will have been exposed to 5 million words. By high school, students should know about 60,000 to 100,000 words (Huttenlocher, 1998). The reality is that the income gap has widened between Canadian families leading to educational inequities. Children from low-income homes often start school behind, as shown by their school readiness.

Compared to low-income homes, Weizman and Snow (2001) found that low-income caregivers speak in shorter, more grammatically simple sentences. Typically, there is less conversation, less questions asked, and fewer explanations given. Consequently, students living in poverty experience a more limited range of language capabilities.

Teachers can try to understand the reality of families and children living in poverty, by showing respect and listening to families and young children. It is crucial for teachers to connect with families in need with community and service providers and be an advocate for them. The Best Resource Centre in Toronto (2010), recommends the following strategies: 1. Develop a genuine relationship with students, and be open-minded. 2. Recognize how hard it is to live in poverty. 3. Set realistic expectations for students and their family. 4. Recognize that just because

students are poor, does not mean they are incompetent. 5. Work towards reducing the "red tape" and barriers to service and supports (p. 59).

3.13 Ontario's Embrace of Syrian Refugees

An important characteristic that distinguishes refugees from immigrants is that refugees do not immigrate out of choice (UNHCR, 2000) and are unable to select the new country to which they are resettling (Cowart & Cowart, 2002). Waniganayake (2001) mentions that "refugees' sense of homelessness… makes the direct application of strategies that are effective with free immigrants rather awkward and inadequate" (p. 289). Second, another important contrast between refugees and immigrants is that refugees are unable to return to their country of origin if the need arises. Refugees must begin a new life in the country that accepts them. Conversely, immigrants can visit their home countries if they have the resources (Cortes, 2001).

Some children flee alone or are separated from their families as they search for safety (Stein, Comer, Gardner, & Kelleher, 1999). They lose the steadiness of family and communal practices, and their educational opportunities are interrupted. Many refugees are also poor and have scarce belongings to bring to their new life. Refugees may reside in camps for years until they obtain communication from a host country that is prepared to relocate them. Many refugee children are born in refugee camps and have never lived in their countries of origin. Further, numerous refugees do not come with sought-after skills or English proficiency (Zhou, 2001). Countless refugees come with no formal education due to problems such as lack of food and health care in refugee camps due to war.

Trauma and past violence experienced by adolescent refugees, as described above, are likely to cause many psychological problems such as depression, sleep disorders, and emotional

instability. Sutner (2002) reports that numerous refugee children are identified with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), defined as: "a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults like rape" (National Center for PTSD, 2008, p. 1). Sutner (2002) describes that signs of PTSD were still apparent in refugee children even after ten years in the United States. Approximately, 70 percent remembered stressful memories of war and their flight from their home country, and nearly 60 percent were homesick and concerned about communication complications with friends and families in their previous home nations (Stein et al., 2003).

Cummins (1994) suggests that possibly can take at least five years for E.L.L. (English Language Learner) students to grasp levels of academic English proficiency like their English-speaking counterparts. Immigrants and refugees usually reside in neighborhoods which offer affordable housing (Orfield, 1998), which are characteristically, situated in extremely separated areas where "poverty prevails" (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001, p. 130). When poverty and racial segregation are combined, educational consequences are often detrimental to student success. It is also significant to have a specialized curriculum in place so that the immigrants/refugees can flourish academically and socially.

3.14 Honouring Indigenous Contributions

Systemic racism is fundamental to colonialism. It is so entrenched in societal institutions that it is regularly revealed as the concealed barrier (de Plevitz, 2007). Individuals with power cannot grasp it and people lacking power experience it. It is so dominant that it frequently limits rightful entrance to learning, health, and crucial political representation which are essential to living a decent life. Systemic racism is a prevailing entity and one of its key supporters is

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regularly mainstream media. Often, Indigenous communities are negatively depicted in the news, on the web, and time and again they are absent completely (Burleton & Gulati, 2012). This damaging narrative of Indigenous peoples is deeply entrenched in societal institutions. Sadly, an emphasis on the deficits amongst Indigenous Nations is systemic racism shown in policies and programs which promote continuous limitations to Indigenous rights and access to rightful quality of life (Carr-Stewart, 2009; 2006).

Celebrating Indigenous contributions is challenging and lacking in representation within curriculum used in elementary schools. Moreover, educators need to recognize their own inadequate knowledge of Indigenous peoples. Hence, to respect the gifts of Indigenous peoples is to recognize the rich backgrounds and experiences of Indigenous students in school. Walker, Mishenene & Watt (2012) recognized five tenets in creating a "welcoming environment" (p. 3) for Indigenous students: 1. Traditional and linguistic built curriculum and professional development which are translucent in the actions of school staff. 2. Assimilation of Indigenous content with cross-curricular instructional opportunities where all students are shown this as essential knowledge. 3. Relations with the Indigenous community by opening school services for extra-curricular events. 4. Carrying out cultural proficiency by partaking in a diversity of Indigenous resources in the library and experiential learning applications. 5. Building important relationships between Indigenous students and their teachers which are grounded on genuineness and real-life dialogues.

3.15 Chapter Summary

Given the exploratory nature of my case study engaging the complex terrain of equity, schooling, and policy implementation, I have included an assortment of literature/past research that align or potentially align with my study. Social difference, race, poverty, CRP, leadership, etc., are all

intersecting factors in need of further scrutiny in future studies which examine inclusive education from the macros to the micro. The literature highlights the need for teachers, vice principals, and principals leading and teaching in high-poverty elementary schools to adopt a critical stance in challenging existing inequities which have manifested over many generations.

Chapter 4: Methodology

In this chapter, I describe my research process, the potential benefits and limitations of utilizing a qualitative approach and conducting an exploratory case study. I have included my methodology framework, detailed discussion of the methods, and recruitment sampling selection process. My interview schedule timeline is clearly defined, along with the research setting of my study. Finally, I include sections highlighting my data collection method, and the steps I took in the course of gaining my field data to ultimately answer the three research questions.

4.1   Qualitative Approaches

Qualitative approaches in research are comprised of disciplinary traditions grounded in different philosophical assumptions. Creswell (2007) indicated that this mixture of outlooks focuses on what is known, how it is known, and the methodological approach to be used. Thus, there is not only one valid way to conduct qualitative research. Creswell's viewpoint raises important questions regarding the epistemological and ontological nature of critical policy research; do researchers produce data on policy? Qualitative researchers seek to discover how individuals position themselves within their environments and how they derive meaning from environments using "symbols, rituals, social structures and so forth" (Berg, 2001).

Merriam (2009) notes that researchers who make use of qualitative research "... are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13). Further, Merriam draws on Patton when he articulates the richness and complexity of understanding that can be reached through qualitative research. Patton asserts:

> This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting- what it

means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting... (p. 14).

Qualitative inquiry considers reality as being individual and that social environments are subjective constructs made by distinct understandings which are typically not generalizable (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). These philosophies are embedded in constructivism. In relation to axiology, qualitative researchers believe that research is subjective to the values held by the researcher as well as by the theories and the framework that the researcher is utilizing to investigate a specific phenomenon (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). A final reason for choosing a qualitative approach to inquiry was to take advantage of "emerging methods, open-ended questions", and "analysis based on interview and document data" (Creswell, 2007, p. 17). Qualitative research, generally defined, means "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17) and alternatively, the kind of research that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the "phenomenon of interest unfold naturally" (Patton, 2002, p. 39).

4.2   Benefits of Qualitative Inquiry

Methodology refers to how a researcher will or did go about discovering knowledge and conducting one's research, and amongst other elements, is framed in terms of the research purpose and researcher positionality (Ball, 2008). I engaged in qualitative research because of its design can potentially provide excellent depictions of marginalized groups. Additionally, has potential to pay attention to marginalized groups, specifically, the "understanding of the Other" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 2). Creswell (2007) emphasizes that in qualitative inquiry "the process of research [is] flowing from philosophical assumptions, to worldviews and through a

theoretical lens" (p. 37). The choice of research design is important to establish the boundaries

of inquiry and the ultimate success of my study.

A qualitative methodology was appropriate because of its focus on building meaning

from the experiences of a small number of people (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research

methodology challenges the idea of a fixed and natural reality and instead values competing

realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). It allows for participants to describe their experiences (in

interviews) from their own perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 2002). In the instance

of this Ontario-based study, I wanted to uncover and deeply understand teachers', vice

principals', and principals' perceptions of equity, facilitating academic and social learning, the

complications they face in their work, and how they attempted to overcome some of these

obstacles.

Deep description was utilized throughout this study, which goes beyond the mere

reporting facts but attempts to uncover intentions and meaning (Denzin, 2005). I conducted

inductive analysis, where I discovered patterns, themes, and categories (Patton, 2002). Patton

(2002) recommended "thick description" will provide the foundation for qualitative analysis (p.

437); Yin (2006) argues the nature of the analysis can follow from decisions made during the

initial stages of the research design (p. 118).

4.3   Exploratory Case Study

Qualitative case study is a "study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to

understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake, 1995, p. 11). Case studies are

"an exploration of a 'bounded system' of a case or multiple case over time through detailed data

collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). To

re-iterate, this case study examined: 1. How do teachers, vice-principals, and principals in three urban, Ontario high-poverty schools support elementary students' academic and social learning? 2. How does the Ontario policy backdrop constrain and or/support the work and capacities of teachers, vice principals, principals to advance social and academic learning. 3. How does Policy Program Memorandum 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, 2009) reflect and inform the implementation of inclusive education by teachers, vice-principals, and principals?

According to Yin (2003), a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer "how", "what", and "why" questions (p. 6); (b) the researcher cannot manipulate the behaviour in the study; (c) the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions as they are relevant to the phenomenon under study. Opting to conduct case studies as opposed to a more open qualitative study helps "in refining theory, suggesting complexities for further investigation as well as helping to establish the limits of generalizability" while providing in-depth description and analysis of the issues at hand (Stake, 2005, p. 460). Yin (2004) points out the value of case study methodology for conducting a comprehensive inquiry into the structures, actors, and cultural forces which occur within specific yet complex organizational processes.

4.4 Strengths of Exploratory Case Study Method

One advantage of the exploratory case study method was it relates directly to individuals' everyday experience and facilitates an understanding of complex real-life situations. An exploratory case study was appropriate for my research study since I studied a natural environment such as an elementary school setting. Therefore, the data were time-dependent, context-dependent and inherently tied to the phenomenon itself (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As Adelman et al. (1980) notes, case studies recognize the complexity of a social truth. Further, case studies begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Insights may be directly interpreted

and used for educational policy making. As noted by Nisbet and Watt (1984): 1. The results are usually easily understood by a wide audience, since they are often written in everyday, non-professional language. 2. Immediately intelligible; speaking for themselves. 3. Provide insights to other similar cases, assisting interpretation of other similar cases. 4. Can be done by a single researcher, and do not require a full research team.

4.5   Limitations of Exploratory Case Study Method

As indicted by researcher Yin (2003), case studies have become a common research strategy. However, a common limitation of this approach is that the scope of methodology sections in articles published in journals are sometimes too limited to give the readers a detailed and accurate view of the decisions taken in the study. Case study, as a research method, has been criticized as lacking in rigour and objectivity. However, while some case studies may not offer statistics, they nonetheless may allow for a researcher to tell a story which a good method of may be creating a picture in comparison to other research methods (Yin, 2003). Further, as of 15 years ago, case study still did not have a legitimate status as a social science research strategy because it did not have well-defined and well-structured protocols, despite its increasing use and popularity with researchers (Yin, 2002). Exploratory case study methodology was best suited for this sample research study, though as with every method it is not without its drawbacks.

Critiques of the case study method also cite its lack of generalizability, and impenetrable length (Yin, 2003). Merriam reiterates the problem of a case study's length, which "may be deemed too lengthy, too detailed, or too involved for busy policymakers and educators to read and use" (Merriam, 1998, p. 33). As for generalizability, Merriam explained that "rather than applying statistical notions of generalizability to case studies, one should develop an understanding of the generalization that is congruent with the basic philosophy of qualitative

inquiry" (Merriam, 1998, p. 34). She agrees that case studies are usually not generalizable in ways that a quantitative method can be. Moreover, Merriam's statement is helpful since my case study is specific to South Western, Ontario, and cannot be generalized throughout Canada (which I became aware of when writing my findings).

4.6 Observations

Observations are a critical component of data collection in qualitative studies. During the study, on-site forty-five minutes observations of teachers in their classrooms were conducted. My approach was to first conduct interviews, to help teachers to feel comfortable by getting to know me. Once rapport was established, it became easier to request to set up a convenient time for an observation. Many teachers had questions regarding the specific research topic, and purpose I was there for (while conducting the observation). I offered a brief description to teachers regarding my study's purpose in order to ease their questions and establish trust.

Denzin (2005) explains that the process of writing using thick description is to offer as much rich detail as possible. In so doing, I was able to fill the role of participant-observer. In this role, the researcher observes, and interacts closely with participants without engaging in any activities that are at the core of the group's identity (Stake, 1995). I essentially sat in the back of the classroom and watched the interactions of the teacher and students. I took field notes to document data gathered from those observations. It involved describing a small slice of interaction, and actions (between teachers and students). It was important for me to locate and understand teachers within their individual classroom setting. Hence, it was helpful for me to understand whether what they talked about in their interviews did cohere with what I saw in the classroom settings. Creswell (1998) mentions that by using vibrant details, the reader will comprehend that the account is credible, therefore allowing them to make conclusions about the

applicability of the findings. During classroom observations, I focused on the methods and content of instruction, the level of engagement offered by teachers, and the actions of the teachers.

4.7 Interviews

Using "rich description, thoughtful sequencing, appropriate use of quotes, and contextual clarity" (Patton, 2002, p. 65), a qualitative researcher is one who can be credible, authentic, and trustworthy. Interviews allows "us to enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341) to figure out what we cannot observe, namely, "feelings, thoughts, and intentions [and] how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world" (Patton, 2002, p. 341).   Interviews allowed teachers, vice principals, and principals (in this study) to elaborate on topics, and helps the researcher gain further insight into their perceptions to answer the three research questions (outlined in chapter 1).

Interviews offer opportunities for construction of deeper understanding of an issue from the participants' perspectives and for verification of data analysis from the observational facets of the study. Semi-structured interviews utilize the same set of questions for each participant, but frame the question in an open-ended way, provide flexibility in answers within a structure that can be used by multiple perspectives (McMillan, 2004). Analysis of verbal transcripts alone may also fail to contain non-verbal and context clues which may have formed an important part of the communication process, but audio-taping and analysis of transcripts lessens the potential effects of interview bias and simplifies analysis through ease of data reduction (Cohen, et al., 2011).

Following Anyon's (2009) advice to researchers, while writing and reading simultaneously to interviews, data collection, I continuously reflected upon, and critically examined my interpretation of my theoretical frameworks against my observations. Theory helped to serve as an important guide throughout my study, right up into the final periods of writing. I engaged in fine-tuning my research theories against and within the data, through the "process of 'kneading' the theory/research/data mix" (Anyon, 2009, p. 13).

4.8   Interview Schedule/Time Line

My study began in December 2016. The interviews with teachers, vice principals, and principals occurred right before the school holidays (which was a busy time. My interviews lasted forty-five minutes, and followed the outline in my interview question guide (see Appendix). I found teachers and the principal at Rosa Parks Elementary School (a pseudonym) were highly motivated, and excited to participate. In fact, it was the principal who contacted me via email, and requested me to meet with her. My interview schedule was organized at the elementary school for the morning, afternoon, or evenings to suit participants. My schedule was created to be responsive to accommodate to the needs of my participants, and worked with their availability (Cohen, et al., 2011). I was extremely appreciative of the time teachers and the principal gave me. Two (2) teachers, and (1) principal at Rosa Parks Elementary School wanted to meet in the morning time, before school began.

4.9   Research Setting/Context

This study took place within a school Board, within Ontario. All names of schools and participants are pseudonyms). This study involved a purposive sampling of teachers, vice principals, and principals to gather data from educators working within three of Ontario's high-

poverty public elementary school settings. To clarify, my three high-poverty elementary schools were: Rosa Parks Elementary, Barack Obama Elementary, and Thurgood Marshall Elementary. Also, I did include quotes from the (1) principal at Martin Luther Elementary, since she provided rich data during our interview. She was helpful to answer my research questions and her examples were useful in supporting my themes. Unfortunately, I was not successful in recruiting any teachers, so opted not to include as a fourth school. To be clear, this is a case study of equity policy implementation, bounded by equity minded teachers located in South Western Ontario (not a case study of three high-poverty elementary schools).

The schools and number of participants selected for this study depended upon my access to teachers, vice principals, and principals in this district. During my equity analysis stage, I was mindful of how local context can make a difference in school processes and student achievement (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006). There are research implications for educators since the participants implemented individual interpretation of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, and "read policies from positions of their identities and subjectivities" (Hall, 1997).   Hence, my focus was on teachers, vice principals, and principals in three high-poverty elementary schools in this study. I was interested in learning about teachers' experiences working in challenging environments (often with limited resources).

4.10 Participant Selection

The following five (5) teachers and one (1) principal were interviewed at Rosa Parks Elementary

School (names have been altered to preserve anonymity): Victoria, Marianne, Sophia, Jasmine,

Michael, and James.

Pseudonym	Years in Education field	Gender	Grade/Role
Victoria	7 years	Female	Grade 4/Grade 5
Marianne	10 years	Female	Grade5/Grade 6
Sophia	40 years	Female	Grade 3
Jasmine	30 years	Female	Principal
Michael	18 years	Male	Grade 3
James	11 years	Male	Grade 7/Grade 8

The following one (1) principal was interviewed at Martin Luther King Elementary School

(names have been altered to preserve anonymity).

Pseudonym	Years in Education Field	Gender	Grades/Role
Lisa	24	Female	Principal

The following two (2) teachers, and two (2) vice-principals were interviewed at Barack Obama

Elementary School (names have been altered to preserve anonymity).

Pseudonym	Years in Education Field	Gender	Grades/Role
Sarah	5 years	Female	E.S.L. Teacher

Jennifer	22 years	Female	E.S.L. Teacher
John	14 years	Male	Vice-Principal
Lily	13 years	Female	Kindergarten

The following (1) principal, and seven (7) E.S.L. teachers were interviewed at Thurgood

Marshall Elementary School (names have been altered to preserve anonymity).

Pseudonym	Years in Education Field	Gender	Grades/Role
Amy	30 years	Female	Principal
Heather	15 years	Female	Vice-Principal
Abdul	19 years	Male	E.S.L. Teacher
Aliya	2 years	Female	E.S.L. Teacher
Athena	9 years	Female	E.S.L. Teacher
Danielle	16 years	Female	E.S.L. Teacher
Gwen	8 years	Female	E.S.L. Teacher
Trevor	9 years	Male	E.S.L. Teacher
Dawn	25 years	Female	E.S.L. Teacher

4.11 Data Collection

After presenting my thesis proposal to the Faculty of Education at Western University in June

2016, I immediately started my Ethics application at Western. Upon receiving ethical approval

clearance from Western University, (September 2016), and the school Board, efforts were made

to connect with the school Board's (Research and Assessment Office). Further, all materials

which were listed on the Board website for conducting research (see Appendix) were emailed in September 2016. An employee at the Board (in Research and Assessment) promptly sent an email response and mentioned that typically applications can take about 6 to 8 weeks to review. After (2) intense rounds of recommended revisions, the Board approved my study in November 2016. After receiving approval, they asked were there any specific schools for them to contact. Connections were made with a former principal while in the proposal writing stage, which had significant knowledge, and expertise in helping me identify appropriate high-poverty elementary schools to approach. He was extremely helpful in my preparation of interview questions, for teachers, vice principals, and principals. On the advice of my supervisors, I conducted a pilot study with him, in order to fine-tune my research questions. I am very thankful for the ongoing support he offered me in my study.

My contact at the Board was emailed with the list of the specific (5) high-poverty elementary schools, which serve a diverse low socio-economic population. Prior to participants being contacted by the researcher, the Board office sent an introduction of the research study. The Board office also offered tweeting out an invitation on their twitter account, which was helpful to recruit participants.

During this time period, a principal (from Rosa Parks Elementary School) emailed me, and mentioned she was extremely interested to participate in the study.   The principal advised me to come to speak at the end of the meeting at 4:30pm. Also, the principal mentioned she would send my Letter of Information to staff, prior to the staff meeting. The staff meeting was held at the school's library (at Rosa Parks Elementary School). Upon arriving at the school, teachers and staff were in a cheerful mood, and were enjoying cake. The staff was undergoing professional development by watching a video and engaged in lively discussion being facilitated

by teachers. My initial observation was that the principal was extremely well-organized, had a strong presence in the school, and at the time she was wearing a headset. She advised me there were only a few minutes to speak with staff (since they were running late). My Western protocol was followed, and my script to speak at a staff meeting to teachers was read.

That same week, another principal (at Martin Luther King Elementary School), emailed me and we set up a meeting the following week. Before the meeting, copies of The Letter of Information (to teachers and principals) were emailed to her. At the meeting, the vice-principal was also present, in which a copy (of the L.O.I.) was provided for her reference and offered one to the vice-principal as well. After conducting the interview, enquiries were made to the principal (at Martin Luther King Elementary School), if any teachers signed up for the study. She mentioned that she left the sign in sheet at the staff room, and it was report card writing time. She told me she would mention the study in the school's weekly newsletter. It is important for the reader to know, I decided to include the principal's rich data in my analysis, although I was unsuccessful to recruit any teachers.

At the same time, in the end of February, another email from a vice-principal was sent (at Barack Obama Elementary School). Promptly, the principal and I set up an appointment for the following week. He mentioned, "That the principal just started at the school and he was the best person to talk to." Upon meeting with him, he appeared extremely passionate, and dedicated. He had a great rapport with teachers at the school. After all the difficulties encountered trying to recruit another elementary school, I was deeply touched by the attention he offered in recruiting teachers. He encouraged me to explain to teachers about my study, and teachers immediately agreed to participate. I was grateful to the extent that he went out of his way for me in recruiting

teachers. My perception was that he had a great relationship with teachers, which I mentioned to him. He appeared to be a "people's person", and staff seemed very comfortable with him.

That same week, the principal at Thurgood Marshall Elementary School emailed me, who expressed being interested to meet me. We immediately set up an appointment for the following week. She wanted me to interview her vice principal as well, as she had valuable insights to offer. She gave me the emails of the five E.S.L. (English Second Language) teachers in her staff, and immediately emails were sent. We set up a convenient time for the interview later that week. The following week I arrived at Thurgood Marshall Elementary School. The principal did a thorough job informing staff about my study. I spoke at the staff meeting and left a sign in sheet with the principal for teachers who expressed interest. After a few months, I reconnected with the former principal who helped me establish these connections with principals. I gave him a thank you card, and chocolates to express my gratitude. The challenges I experienced taught me the importance of establishing good relationships in the field.

4.12 Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing throughout the study. Upon completion of each interview, I transcribed the audio-recordings to cultivate familiarity with the text, allowed for emerging patterns, and themes to emerge in the data. No computer software was used in the transcription stage. Case studies have flexible designs which allow researchers to make major changes even after they proceed from design to research. Researchers need a set of two or three sharpened issue questions (research questions) that will "help structure the observation, interviews, and document review" (Stake, 1995, p. 20). Data analysis is "the process of making sense out of the data... [which] involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning" (Merriam, 1998, p. 178).

Stake notes, "each researcher needs, through experience and reflection, to find the forms of analysis that work for him or her" (1995, p. 77).

A modified version of constant comparative method of data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 2009) was used and the initial task involved coding the transcriptions for emerging themes. The themes were based upon, but not limited to, the theoretical framework and research questions. Further, themes and patterns were sought by reviewing the transcriptions on numerous occasions. Emerging concepts were captured through colour coding of the data and clustering of the data into categories based on the commonality (from participants) in their responses. Stake (1995) defined analysis as "a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations" (p. 71). In Stake's view, "analysis essentially means taking … our impressions, our observations apart" (p. 71). Stake emphasized on researchers' impressions as the main source of data and making sense of them as the analysis. He distinguished the usage of analysis procedures "that help [researchers] draw systematically from previous knowledge and cut down on misperception," he gave precedence to intuition and impression rather than guidance of the protocol (Stake, 1995, p. 72).

4.13 Organizing the Data

The first stage in analysis was organizing the large volume of data which I collected and allocate them into appropriate files. First, (20) interviews were immediately transcribed, and were emailed to participants to ensure validity. Specifically, I interviewed (6) teachers, (3) principals, (1) vice principal, and (1) (Indigenous) vice principal. I was fortunate to obtain perspectives from (9) ESL teachers, who the majority were Muslim and spoke Arabic. I attempted to transcribe within one or two days of the interview, so the conversation remained clear and vivid (for both me, teachers, vice principals, and principals). Second, (7) hand-written field

observation notes of teachers at high-poverty elementary school were organized into a second file, including artefacts of what I "physically" saw. Third, equity policy documents were collected, printed, and organized.

I was cognizant of Patton's (2002) warning that: "I have found no way of preparing students for the sheer massive volumes of information with which they will find themselves confronted when data collection has ended" (p. 297). It is only after the large amounts of data were organized, that it will be possible to begin to read. I had to make sense of the data, in order to create an overall picture of how equity implementation is taking place at each high-poverty elementary school (in order to answer my 3 research questions). My method was to examine all the interview transcripts, analyze them, concentrate on the research questions and objectives of my study, and then put parts of the data into a sequence of narratives. My drive for writing the narratives (from teachers, vice principals, and principals) was to provide readers with a window into the data, and to highlight the experiences, views, and sentiments described by participants during the data collection phase.

Following is a step-by-step description of how data were recorded: 1. A spreadsheet was prepared with all participants' demographic data based on interviews, with the pseudonyms of both participants and schools. 2. A spreadsheet was prepared for each participant. During reviews of each participant's transcription, significant words, phrases, sentences, and ideas spoken in the narrative were entered. Comprehensive narrative accounts in the transcripts, which I found extremely valuable, were examples of a specific category or subcategory, and helpful in determining emerging themes. 3. Emerging themes were recognized.

It was an extremely elaborate (and important) process associated with categorizing and subcategorizing each participant's interview with information and making connections (which

was a time consuming and stressful). A great amount of reflection was needed after interviews were conducted (as I attempted to code the data). Pacing was needed and being attentive to the emerging categories which started to develop from one participant's interview was compared to other participants' spreadsheets, for their data to be organized. Often, I had to review transcripts several times, and try to connect key information, to other participants' spreadsheets to ensure comprehensiveness, accuracy, and reliability in data analysis and coding. 4. Reoccurring themes that perhaps could indicate an important phenomenon were searched for in both the spreadsheet data alongside the narratives from participants during the transcript readings. 5. A final spreadsheet was organized, identifying all categories and subcategories and individual participants, which was separated and organized according to schools. Individual participant spreadsheets were studied for the existence of individual category to be recognized and documented. 6. The spreadsheet data were analyzed further for recurring themes. 7. I had to re-read, review, and re-check the themes continuously.

4.14 Reading the Data

After the data were organized, it was imperative for me to get an idea of the overall picture that the data was trying to create. In describing his method in analysis, Creswell (2013) explained that in "looking over our field notes from observations, interview transcriptions, physical trace evidence, and audio and visual images, we disregarded predetermined questions so we could "see" what interviewees said" (p. 184). My goal during this critical part of analysis was to investigate and understand the data, and to categorize significant organizing ideas. I also made mental notes to jot down after interviews, if it triggered something important which other participants may have said as well. I comprehended that interpreting the data could be done only by completely submerging into the data. I read (and continuously re-read) each of my transcripts

alongside the equity policies, making notes in the sides, pencilling in my own thoughts and opinions, and making connections with the classroom observations and field notes documented in my research journal. During the interviews, teachers mentioned similar (and some distinct) perceptions that could be fit into multiple categories or subcategories. At times, those perceptions related to each other, other times they did not relate. All perceptions were placed in all categories or subcategories that applied.

Patton (2002) considers that two issues need to be deliberated in trusting the data analysis. First, is the sureness the researcher has in carrying out the work done in their analysis of the data (p. 326). Second, is the arrangement of the analysis of the data in a way that permits others to corroborate and authenticate the work (p. 326). The researcher must make decisions about the reliability of the findings and must be mindful that not all findings are equally credible (p. 343). The researcher should take into consideration evidences in the report as to disparities in credibility, which signifying that certain findings are "clear" or "strongly supported by the data," or that patterns are "weak" (p. 343).

In this study, adding to analysis of the data for coding purposes, the data were reviewed, and appropriate extracts were recognized in participants' comments. This allowed a depiction of comprehensive narrative accounts and stories of teachers', vice principals', and principals' views and perceptions to include in this research report, needed to illuminate the subcategories, categories, and themes. Enclosure of in-depth data on the frequency of teachers', vice principals', and principals' perceptions in different categories and subcategories, along with wide reporting of related comments, is needed to help the reader to better understand the data, analysis, and findings reported in this study.

4.15 Interpreting the data

Finally, it is necessary to consider how to represent the findings and conclusions of the study. According to Creswell (2013), this involves several steps: 1. Categorizing the purpose of the case study along with the method which was used; 2. Providing a wide-ranging explanation of the case and its context; 3. Providing a discussion of the emergent issues or themes that demonstrated the intricacy of the case; 4. Presenting, statements and assumption which were reached and detailed analysis.

4.16 Themes

For each category, findings are presented, including identified subcategories, along with teachers' comments to provide additional context for the reported perceptions. In addition to reporting on teachers' perceptions of equity, this section also contains teachers' perceptions of inequities in the distribution of educational benefits to students and schools. Finally, emergent themes across the data are identified and discussed.

4.17 Defining Discourse

Discourses are neither simply a product nor side-effect of social structure nor of individuals. They are embedded in that structure and are part of it, and at the same time serve to construct our identity and individual experience (Burr, 1995, p. 111). The term 'discourse' is defined and used in different ways. According to Fairclough (1993, 1995), discourse is manifested in language use or specific spoken/written statements as a form of social practice, which are ways of describing experiences from a perspective. From Ball's (1990) point of view, discourses are about "what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority" (p. 2). According to Ball (1993a) policy texts are set within discursive (and

expansive) frameworks which constrain, but never determine all the possibilities for action. In other words, a discourse allows only "selected" voices to be included. This calls for the question; for example, as Ball (1994) remarks, who are the voices that get to be heard and how do they express themselves in the policy discourse (for example, within Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy)?

In this study, I analyzed the equity "discourse" of my participants (teachers, vice principals, and principals) and how four areas of: 1. power, 2. difference, 3. language, and 4. inclusivity present in the equity discourse of PPM 119. I was interested in understanding how particular educational equity texts in Ontario potentially create and sustain ideological power relations through their depictions of diversity, equity, and social justice. Investigating texts not only offers valuable understanding into how they have been established and formed by the ideologies (past and present) which impact society, but it also illuminates on how they might form future power relations and ideologies about equity within social practices.

I began my research analysis with a brief glimpse of how various discourses have shaped, and/or continue to shape, equity and social justice education. This will preface the next sections of my research analysis (e.g., where we have been, where we are, and where we need to be going) and provide a juxtaposition between historical and contemporary educational equity discourses. It will also illuminate how certain marginalized populations have been excluded from much of contemporary education policy, curriculum and pedagogy. Governments, as leaders of public education, determine the discourses they want to shape within educational policy, culturally responsive pedagogy, and curriculum. The discourses they select establish what teachers are expected to cover, how they should cover it, and what the social and academic learning outcomes are. Such educational discourses can marginalize and/or completely

disenfranchise certain population groups, without intending to do so, or they can become a vehicle for ideological propaganda (Fairclough, 2009, p. 283), thus it will help me identify the material consequences of their policy decisions.

4.18 Trustworthiness of the Data, Credibility, Reliability and Validity

Trustworthiness ensures that research is rigorous in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The test of reliability deals with the ability of other researchers to carry out the same study and achieve similar results (Yin, 2003). The usage of the following corroboration procedures reinforced the trustworthiness and validity of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 1998), extended involvement, triangulation, explanation of researcher bias, and member checking.

"Validity refers to accuracy and trustworthiness of instruments, data, and findings in research. Nothing in research is more important than validity" (Bernard, 1995, p. 38). In qualitative research, validity refers to whether the findings of a study are true and certain— "true" in the sense that research findings correctly reveal the situation, and "certain" in the sense that research findings are supported by the evidence (Yin, 2003). I emailed (to personal email accounts, when provided) a copy of transcripts of conversations to teachers, vice principals, and principals who further strengthened validity, allowing participants to review, and make any changes/corrections when needed.

4.19 Transferability and Dependability

Transferability refers to the degree that research findings can be used in a different project; it is like external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability guarantees stability and

consistency of the data; it is like reliability in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I incorporated triangulation, member checks, and relevant participants' direct quotations, to ensure dependability.

4.20 Triangulation/Member Checks

Triangulation calls for multiple methods and sources to contribute to the credibility of findings (Patton, 2002). Stake (2000) maintains that "triangulation has been generally considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (p. 443). Data triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources of evidence in case studies, including observations, interviews and document analyses, or a combination of two or more of these techniques (Stake, 2000, 2010). Member checks were essential during my interview as outlined by Taylor and Bogdan (1998) to ensure accuracy in participant's statements. I emailed my transcripts to participants once transcription was done.

Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) identify several types of triangulation. One type is triangulation of methods, which is checking consistency and validity of findings generated by different data collection methods. Another type is triangulation of sources, which examines the consistency of information from different data sources. A third is analyst triangulation, using multiple analysts to review findings. A fourth is theory/perspective triangulation, which uses multiple theoretical perspectives to examine and interpret data. This research incorporated methods triangulation and triangulation of sources.

According to Vasconcelos' (2010) understanding of triangulation, "by triangulating information, the researcher is trying to clarify the meaning of the information gathered by reinforcing or questioning it" (p. 338). Collecting data in this study through interviews with

teachers and principals, observations of teachers, and equity policy text analysis, enabled me to establish connections between three sources of information. The evidence I gathered by analyzing the text emerged in interviews with participants and was reinforced in classroom observations. The integration of knowledge gained through a variety of sources, provided a rich narrative of teachers and principals experiences. Finally, it enabled the exploration of equity issues and limitations that were not extensively addressed, and it created opportunities for new conversations and new learning to occur.

An audit trail exists to provide a clear picture of the research steps taken from the beginning of the project. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe several categories for reporting information in an audit trail. These categories are (a) the original raw data, (b) data reduction and summaries of data, (c) data reconstruction and synthesis (including themes that arise), (d) all notes, and (e) information about instruments and any potential instrument development. I used each of these in the development of an audit trail in this research.

While I was in the field, I was able to accomplish one form of triangulation by what I saw (observations) in the teachers' classrooms, along with what I heard from the interviews (with teachers, vice principals, and principals). I also took field notes of the interaction between teachers and students, particularly focusing on the teachers' behaviour and statements. I especially paid close attention to how teachers made connections and related to all students in the classroom setting. Additionally, I took notes on what was being taught in lesson plans (related to my thesis topic of equity and inclusion). I made notes of the artefacts materials being displayed on the walls of the classrooms, and the hallways within the school building. My perception was that it was important to focus on these visible areas, since it demonstrates the school's culture

and values in the subject of equity and inclusion. I have included (in the Appendix) brief descriptions in my data collection.

Since the study was conducted in three high-poverty elementary school settings, applying these findings to other school settings should be done with caution. Likewise, the fact that the school was an elementary school may limit the recommendations that can be made to secondary schools because of the significant differences between elementary and secondary schools. I responded to the sections, incidents, visuals and representations; constructing personal observations, and notes to my research journal. From the onset of my data collection, it became obvious to me that there was an assortment of policy actors (e.g. teachers, vice principals, and principals), and directives (e.g. curriculum documents, and textbooks) which influenced Ministry of Education's goals for improving education results of minority students. My participants played an instrumental role in leading the school-based implementation of programs and initiatives to support minority students' academic and social learning.

4.21 Ethical Considerations

Of course, my ethics application for this study went through the ethical review process at Western University (first) and the School Board (second) prior to beginning any fieldwork. The ethics process required by Western University and the School Board were followed with diligence.

In qualitative research, one of the most common tools used for data collection is observation. I assured teachers, vice principals, and principals that their identities, and their school will not be revealed to the reader, and will give each participant a pseudonym (Cohen, et al., 2011). I found that this helped participants relax and establish trust. Potential limitations lay

in the researcher's ability to guarantee anonymity as participants may know some of the other

participants in the study. Often, teachers could see me in other teacher's classrooms when

conducting interviews. To guard against this, participant names were removed and any

identifying information (for example, when participants mentioned the school, past schools, and

student names) which could mitigate the chances of participants being recognized by others. I

treated participants with respect and adopted a humble and non-judgmental attitude to

participants' claims. I avoided projecting my own views, attitudes, and opinions by adopting an

unbiased non-judgmental attitude to participants as I am not the focus of the study (Cohen, et al.,

2011). Also, I found teachers and principals were generous in their attitudes to my research

request, and very prepared to talk about their experiences.

Potential benefits derived from participating included participants being afforded an

opportunity to reflect on their own views and practices. Once the audio-recordings of the

interviews were transcribed, the original or raw data was stored under lock and key in my home

office and the recordings were erased. All information was stored electronically and kept on a

password protected computer belonging to me.

4.22 Consent

I sought informed oral and written consent from each potential participant at the beginning of my

interview. Potential participants had the right to give, or not give (and then they will not be part

of the study), informed consent regarding their participation.

4.23 Positionality and Reflexivity

Positionality is a task of describing the background, experience, values, and bias of the self to

highlight the position of the researcher on a research phenomenon (Bourdieu, 1999; Prunty,

1985; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Disclosing the positionality of the researcher means dealing with "the question of who is doing policy analysis and for what purpose, and within what context" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 46). It is necessary to locate myself in my research and my experiences, as they have shaped this thesis. I moved to London, Ontario, Canada, in 2008, from New York City. My parents immigrated to the United States in 1983, from Kathmandu, Nepal, where I was born. My approach to this study has been informed by my life experiences as a South Asian female who was raised in New York. These experiences have led to a negotiation with these various identities I saw in my parents, and in myself. I applied to be an American citizen, when I was a teenager, and since arriving in the United States, have been an immigrant twice.

My parents arrived, to New York City, with a few suitcases, and the hope of attaining the American dream. I am a child of immigrants, and I am an immigrant. My parents had to negotiate and come to terms with their experiences which resulted in outcomes that were deeply connected. I have countless memories of my parents, the challenges, hardships, and achievements they experienced, making a life in a new country as new Americans, with two children. I find that these personal experiences have led me to be sensitive to the lives and the human experiences of newcomers (to Western nations like the United States). My past teaching experience showed me, the funding tensions which exist in allocating resources within public schools to achieving goals of providing a quality educational experience for all students.

As a result of my own teaching experiences, I believe a better understanding of teachers' views is critical to successfully making changes in school environments. Through my teaching experiences in New York City, I observed power imbalances and hierarchical structures that occur in education systems are important factors that hinder teachers' and principals' capacity to

implement conditions for equity. It takes strategic and dedicated leadership from vice principals and principals, to create the spaces to get equity work done, and develop an atmosphere of critical democracy in schools (and Canada).

In retrospect, the schooling I received in my childhood did not adequately incorporate the rich histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of individuals from different cultural backgrounds. My perception is many tensions exist in offering students effective educational programs and delivering culturally responsive pedagogy. I found that my lived reality was disjointed from the curricula I received. I wish I had seen more of me reflected in the curriculum, it would have been an empowering educational experience. I was drawn to investigate teachers' biases and attitudes, and unique challenges involved, in teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The implications of continuing growth in racial diversity have not been reflected into educational leadership practices, or into the foundational curriculum programming and operations of educational institutions (Dei, et al., 1997; Dantley, 1990; Ryan, 2006).

Reflexivity recognizes that researchers "are part of the social world" they are researching (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 14). Researchers bring their own distinctive biographies to their research. Qualitative inquiry is not a neutral activity. Researchers have their own values, and unique lenses to look at and interpret the world of the participants they study. Therefore, reflexivity acknowledges that researchers should recognize and disclose themselves in the research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). I disclosed to participants that I was a former teacher, who has worked in high-poverty elementary schools in New York City, (at school staff meetings and during interviews), a woman, and a person of colour (which participants themselves could clearly see) in the hope of helping to building rapport.

I found my own identity influenced participants' willingness to open to me. I also discovered that some participants were curious to know about my own personal experiences, which added rich details to our interviews. Participants had specific questions of my cultural heritage and background and enquired about my educational experiences in the United States. I found that this necessary disclosure, helped participants get to know me, and established trust to discuss sensitive topics like equity, inclusion, racism, and challenges teaching students living in poverty.

Policies are often about language (Fairclough, 2001), beliefs and values, and documenting discourses within which (equity) texts are located (Taylor, 2004). Thus, a critical researcher is not an unbiased observer; and needs to be transparent about one's position and background which in turn, can affect the interpretation and findings of the analysis. Ball et al. (2012) write, "policy is written onto bodies and produces particular subject positions" (p. 3). Thus, the researcher may "speak policy directly to practice, and join up between specialist roles and responsibilities, to make (policy) into a collective process" (p. 60).

The term epistemology describes the researcher's relationship with knowledge that he/she is discovering. Epistemology raises numerous questions which informed my study, such as: 1. How reality can be known, 2. The relationship between the knower and what is known, 3. The characteristics, the principles, plus the assumptions that guide the process of knowing and the achievement of findings, and 4. The possibility of that process being shared and repeated by others in order to assess the quality of the research and the reliability of those findings (Charmaz, 2008).

According to Stake (2005), "knowledge is socially constructed – or so we constructivists believe and through their experiential and contextual accounts, case study researchers assist

readers in the construction of knowledge" (p. 454). Stake further suggests, "Knowledge transfer remains difficult to understand," thus it is important for researchers to work with participants to understand the data collected (p. 456). My position is "the researcher decides what the case's own story is" (Stake, 2005, p. 456). Moreover, my observation is "these paradigms, define what researchers understand by knowledge and knowledge production in different ways" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 340). Knowledge of the world is interpreted by people who are partaking in that world and is not a neutral activity. One's interpretation of that world is deeply influenced by social, cultural, and economic contexts, which influences how knowledge is being perceived.

4.24 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodology approaches which guided the collection and analysis of data in this study. The case study design used interviews with teachers, vice principals, and principals, observations of teachers, and document collection. Creswell's (2013) data analysis instructed and informed the analysis of data.

Chapter 5: Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the data gathered for this study. The data for this case study was collected from 20 participants who taught in three urban high-poverty elementary schools in Ontario. The chapter presents the findings that emerged from the interviews and descriptive quotes from participants. My approach to writing the finding, was largely a presentation of participants' voices, and their stories. In hindsight, I found the participants were the best experts to illuminate the conditions and contexts they face in working towards inclusive teaching and leaders' practices in three high-poverty elementary schools. Pseudonym names are used for the participants to protect their identity, and to offer the reader an understanding of whose voices are being represented. Evidence that might identify participants has been removed. This chapter examines the themes, which emerged, the themes are organized and deliberated under headings, which come out of wide-ranging interview questions asked of teachers, vice principals, and principals in the data collection part of this study. Findings are organized according to my three research questions summarized below.

QUESTION 1:

As noted earlier the first research question was: <u>How</u> do teachers, vice-principals, and principals in three urban Ontario high-poverty schools <u>support</u> elementary students' <u>academic</u> and <u>social learning?</u>

Theme 1: Recognize prejudices/biases to encourage empathy

Vice Principal: **John** described an experience he had during Christmas time, which really "opened up his eyes" to recognize his own biases. He came from a middle-class family that did not have a lot of money. However, there was always food on the table (since his parents worked hard). He recalled back to his first-year teaching, and the school had an angel giving tree. And,

remembered how his empathy was very low. After working at that elementary school, his "whole world opened", this prompted him to be more involved. Several efforts were made to raise money for students to support learning. The first step for **John** was to recognize the unique struggles children living in poverty and realizing his own inner biases. For example, if a student did not have a toonie for an event he would pay it. **John** did not want anyone to be left out and made efforts to facilitate participation. A goal he had was ensuring no student went without in his class. He reflected how he would often purchase clothes for students and saw the struggles students faced which challenged his own middle-class viewpoints.

John stated that teachers came from "middle class backgrounds." He saw that it easy to "instill middle class values." However, the challenges for teaching students at high-poverty schools' surface because their "values are very different." He referred to memories from his own childhood. Specifically, how he sat at the dinner table nightly with his family. Though, many of the students at his school may not even have a table at home. "Middle-class teachers" should not compare their own children, to students in high-poverty elementary schools. While, their own children are excelling, students living in poverty face many different challenges. Teachers get "tunnel vision," since they are "isolated". He perceived that further efforts were needed to reach students in high-poverty schools, who are in "need (of) more empathy."

John referred to an issue at his school concerning how students were often arriving late. He recommended to teachers to not be upset. Rather, teachers should be "happy" students are here. It is important for teachers to have a "different outlook," for teaching students living in poverty. For example, he talked about how a single mother with five children arrives late (for drop-off). Instead, teachers should be happy that "she is only ten minutes late." Improvements were needed in increasing "awareness", "teacher empathy", and "understanding." He

characterized the "differences" in students' home environments to teachers at his school. While, teachers' own children have breakfast, get ready by themselves, and get on the bus. Often, for teachers' families, there is no screaming, and no one is up late at night. Teachers need to "put yourself in their shoes." Often, teachers struggle with their "personal feeling getting in the way" in doing their job.

Principal: **Jasmine** mentioned it is imperative to "recognize your own prejudices", and feelings about having an inclusive school. Efforts are made to facilitate ongoing "forthright conversations about inclusiveness" to improve social learning. She referred to an incident where a First Nations student was having a tough time. She described how unreasonable teachers were in their "fixating" on the boy's wish to wear his hat. Instead, it was "important" the student was coming to school daily. "He was happy." She questioned teachers, and wondered "what really was the problem?" Why teachers were bothered that the "First Nations student was wearing a hat?" **Jasmine** believed "more work" is needed to "confront feelings," and have "open conversations." My interviews with teachers illustrated how systemic racism is entrenched within the structure, norms, and procedures of social institutions. Further, teachers, vice principals, and principals described how White teachers' backgrounds manifests itself through instilment of middle-class values, and expectations. Their perceptions indicate how institutions are systemically racist when they overlook organizational practices, and education systems which reflect and reinforce White experiences as normative.

Jasmine noted an example where a Syrian student needed a basketball daily to go outside. The issue was "the student did not play basketball", and teachers were "upset." The student came to Canada, and "did not have many resources in her life." Hereafter, **Jasmine** reflected how, having a ball, "made her feel safe." Yet, the student's need to have a ball

disrupted several teachers' views of what proper social behaviour at a school was. Teachers were "bothered" by her need for the ball. Often, teachers questioned the purpose/reason behind it. In another example, **Jasmine** described one of the father's had six children attending the school. At the end of each school day, "he goes to each child's classroom, and hugs them." One of the staff members, questioned, "Why is he always there?" **Jasmine** would remind staff, "think about where he has come from?" Of course, he wants to "find his children", and gather them together. **Jasmine** believed more work is needed in "building, those pieces of empathy", "reflection", and "understanding prejudices." Everyone brings their "biases" into any situation. **Jasmine** reflected, "Do you feel uncomfortable sitting with someone, who just arrived from Syria?" Teachers need to grow, and reflect on what their "prejudices are?"

Teacher: **Victoria** explained how teachers' "backgrounds come into play unintentionally" when teaching students living in poverty. Some teachers, who are raised by immigrant parents, become sensitive to "the struggles." Teachers "see" (the struggles) faced by New Canadians, and "connect." However, for the teachers raised by families who are here several generations, they are "clueless." Often, "these teachers" hold a "different lens," and cannot comprehend "why Johnny comes late to school." While, it is important for teachers to understand the equity policy regarding its expectations. She suggests to "actually live" the equity policy "in an unbiased perspective" at the school to encourage academic and social learning.

Teacher: **Dawn** described how the challenge is that teachers easily jump in with "Western thinking." However, it was clear for newcomers living in apartments; they do not have many opportunities to play in the fresh air. Syrian students may not have access to a collection of sports activities. **Dawn** discovered the importance in offering soccer balls (to facilitate social

learning). Instead, of teachers enforcing "when children live in Canada, they must play hockey."

The key is to find culturally acceptable activities to encourage social learning, and "create a

positive outlet". *Principal:* **Amy** further described the importance of books being reflective of

all students. She believed that teachers have their "own biases." **Amy** recalled a teacher who

was concerned that curriculum was not sensitive (to one of her Indigenous students).

Henceforth, she took it upon herself to collect library resources (specific to F.N.M.I.), and

collaborated with the L.S.T.

Theme 2: Collaboration between school staff is necessary

Vice Principal: **John** described how the school has an "amazing school support counselor". The

"attendance counselor" has different roles which are important. He has benefited from attending

workshops, focused on teaching staff how students survive in poverty.   For example, at his

school there are inclusive education champions, who presented numerous workshops. *Teacher:*

Abdul described it can be "difficult to advocate for students without parents", and "teachers."

He saw the value in "working as a team", since his students have challenging needs.

3 Teachers: **James** found "staff is well versed", and they make efforts to create an

inclusive environment. The biggest assets are teachers who look after each other and work

together. **Sarah** has seen challenges where students from Arabic countries are not fitting in and

adjusting. She has facilitated parent meetings with a translator and teacher, to establish basic

rules like getting into a routine. She described how many Syrian students have never been in a

school before. **Aliya** offered the example of how some teachers may not be knowledgeable in

speaking to parents from Arabic backgrounds. She sees the benefits in teachers collaborating

with the S.W.I.S.S. worker, who has experience working with families from different cultures.

2 Teachers: **Victoria** described how teachers are viewed as the knowledge holder and

saw the value in utilizing staff. **Victoria** established the importance in getting access to people resources. She believed if teachers are not exposing themselves, then they are limiting themselves. **Athena** described the importance of working together with parents, families, and community. She found her attempts to reach out to families can be overwhelming. The E.S.L teacher supports the L.S.T. in teaching basic motor skills. Students are taught to put on shoes and hold a pencil. **Athena** believed that working together with staff is important.

2 Teachers: **Gwen** described how the school support counsellor can speak Arabic when a child is misbehaving. The counsellor tries to understand students' behaviour. She saw the value in the school support counsellor meeting families and running programs. **Lisa** described that overall staff is inclusive and believed more intentional planning is needed. She saw the benefits in having reminders to staff. She requests people from the Board like the learning coordinator to be part of the instructional program. She includes them in intentional conversations.

2 Teachers: **Danielle** described the value of the "S.W.I.S.S. worker", and "veteran E.S.L. teachers" who know the system. The school had a "translator" in for the whole month. The translator connected with families by creating newsletters, and phone calls to parents was a big piece. **Danielle** requested the "Muslim Community Center" to come in, and work with students. She saw value in setting up reasonable expectations in creating a "team effort with "administration", "teachers", and "support teacher." She believed that language is taught everywhere, and eventually growth will happen in students. **Marianne** described the importance to connect with other teachers. She saw the value in her experience "interacting with other staff" when she coaches. **Marianne** advocates on students' behalf. She found when students are struggling; she encourages them to talk to their teacher.

Teacher: **Jennifer** described how numerous things are occurring in the primary division, in areas of early identification. **Jennifer** described efforts to identify students' strengths, struggles, and generate ideas for improvement. Staff work together to determine student needs, through formalized team meetings. Connections are made with school staff (e.g. administration, classroom teacher, learning support teacher, special learning coordinator, and attendance counselor). Families attend transition meetings to address behavioural needs during in-depth meetings. Staff devise a plan, (e.g. whether additional support is needed through an E.A) which can be determined at the early stages. **Jennifer** discussed how the "learning support teacher" is closely involved with several students, and that is a must. She established it is crucial to have ongoing tight communication (with classroom teacher, home, and administration). The school team made efforts to discover any changes at home, and ongoing dialogue is vital.

3 Teachers: **Trevor** talked about how the school "staff is the most devoted" that he has ever worked in. He has seen the "classroom teacher and the E.S.L. team go over, and beyond." *Teacher:* **Heather** illustrated how efforts are made to encourage character development assemblies, and there are conversations on becoming more inclusive. She makes efforts to communicate with staff at monthly meetings. She believed there is a strong E.S.L. team. The S.W.I.S.S. worker works closely with families. *Teacher:* **Amy** described the value in having a strong E.S.L. team. The S.W.I.S.S. worker is the bridge between "us and the newcomer community." **Amy** reflected on whether families would feel as welcomed without the S.W.I.S.S. worker? She described the school has a lot of diverse representation from many different countries.

Vice-Principal: **Heather** described how there is ongoing support coming from the "E.S.L. team which is so strong." She had the opportunity to sit with the E.S.L. teacher for a

guided reading class and saw her passion. Relationships are "crucial" to promote advocacy, and

a collaborative environment with staff. Newcomer students have progressed in learning social

skills and formed friendships as a result of that collaboration. Staff has worked hard made to

provide a prayer space and address dietary needs. For example, at the spring flings

communication is essential, and hot dogs are Halal (since the school is inclusive of multiple

cultural and religious traditions). Plans are made to work with school staff in advance. In her

experience, the "S.W.I.S.S. worker, school support worker, and school counselor are amazing."

Theme 3: Create culturally responsive events, pedagogy, and teaching

Several teachers described the need to create culturally responsive resources, and events. Many

of these participants expressed emotions that equity work requires a temperament to confront

uncomfortable issues. These participants described the benefits from recognizing different

perspectives. *Principal:* **John** described the value in having students "read from their

experiences." He illustrated another strategy was to ensure students "see themselves" in

resources. For example, for students from Syria he recommends teachers not to read books like

Cinderella, and instead use "diversity kits." He discussed how the biggest barrier he encountered

was where to find the resources? For example, the White female character in Cinderella with

blonde hair is not a reflection of his school. He saw the value in bringing in "community

resources", and "inviting parents to celebrate in their culture."

2 *Teachers:* **Abdul** articulated how in the past he has, "brought the Imam in to talk to

school staff." Many Syrian parents are struggling with finding a job, which impacts students'

academic performance. Further, some minority students are looked at negatively due to teachers

not being knowledgeable of their cultures. Teachers must change up their practice and re-learn.

James described how lots of preparation is needed to get "in touch with people." For example, for Indigenous or Syria students, he sees value in "talking to people in their community". Several efforts made to "approach parents." He thought there is a need to further "improve programs which integrate" Syrian refugees (which he made significant efforts).

2 Teachers: **Sarah** voiced how "resources are available", and "character development kits" in the library. For example, **Sarah** read a book of a child walking through the neighborhood (saying hello to different people). She discussed an art lesson where students coloured a word in another language. The lesson was an excellent opportunity to make a collage, and "learn about other cultures." Another example, "cultural night" is an opportunity for students to "wear clothes from their culture." Families brought "food", and Sarah incorporated a "writing piece" into her lesson. Families and students were excited to participate. She created lessons newcomer students where she "split a paper in half, drew Canada", and "their country." Students were instructed to "talk about similarities and "differences." A Google drive could be used to "facilitate sharing resources." Teachers spend a great amount of time re-inventing the wheel yearly. **Aliya** articulated the value in having more professional open discussions and being open minded. She saw the importance in offering more resources to showcase equity, diversity, and help students.

Teacher: **Sophia** understood everyone does not celebrate Christmas holidays the same way. Opportunities are made to "invite parents", enjoy "traditional food", and discuss "how Christmas is celebrated differently." She emphasized the importance of giving and sharing with students. Efforts were made to not focus only on Santa. She voiced how First Nation's students, attend Pow Wow's, and enjoy drumming. She recommended to teachers to "know" their students.

Teacher: **Victoria** vocalized how incorporating story maps, brochures, and Venn diagrams to support academic learning. Diverse activities were prepared for her class, and students compared their school to others. Texts were selected based on different cultural backgrounds to expose students. **Victoria** stated finding relevant material is challenging. She described herself as an F.M.N.I. (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit) teacher champion.   She found, "it takes time to find books, and forty minutes on prep is not enough." Her school does not have enough resources. Her energy was spent to network, email other schools, or seek out library resources. She was uncertain how topics of equity were being interpreted (by teachers). **Victoria** mentioned how, "some teachers do not want to be involved" in equity work. However, she wonders, "How relevant are those Christmas activities for Syrian refugee students?" "A small percentage of teachers who are not equity-minded, have their class do a Christmas craft yearly."

Teacher: **Gwen** stated how "awareness training for staff on different cultures" was helpful. *Principal:* **Lisa** referred to staff understanding diverse needs, "family focused", and "open to professional learning." Staff attempted to meet needs of high F.M.N.I. population, through "professional learning strategies", and "community cultural organizations connections." Often, it can be overwhelming for teachers to complete the requirements listed in the equity policy. Modifications are made to the policy before moving onto the next step. "Multicultural evenings" are valuable; however, they are limited as a one-time activity. Instead, more in-class celebrations are necessary, and families must feel included. The school incorporated inclusive programming in the classroom by "building school community", "inviting parents", and "guest speakers."

Teacher: **Marianne** mentioned how students "write a poem" about themselves. Students created a Wampanoag belt, which is a cultural story-telling device. First Nations students' cultural teachings have been incorporated to fit into the curriculum. The push is towards math learning, and the Wampanoag utilized pattern making. Further, steps were taken to learn the cultural, historical First Nations tradition, history, and significance. **Marianne** found with the First Nations piece, there was a "push for collaborative inquiry." She spoke about a focus for First Nations students to identify themselves, and family members. Often, First Nations' family's perception of educational systems was not positive. Teaching opportunities to support academic learning like utilizing dream catchers are culturally significant. "Grade kits" (which are put together by learning coordinators), address literacy, diversity, inclusion for First Nations, and Metis students. "Podcasts", "news articles", "classroom twitter", "CBC Aboriginal", and "conversations" are techniques **Marianne** employed.

2 Teachers: **Jennifer** mentioned that her school as multicultural. The work was "staying true", and focused on the "different languages, and traditions." Efforts were made to promote, celebrate with a "multicultural dinner" (families bring food), and have "cultural dances." However, she reflected on how schools can always make more efforts. **Trevor** showed how the "students see themselves reflected" in "curriculum" in "read aloud." Students must see themselves, "stories and experiences" in lessons which "build on backgrounds", "connections", which "makes learning meaningful to them."

Teacher: **Dawn** discussed how "partnerships with the Boys and Girls Club", "inviting parents", have supported social learning. The club was a safe inclusive place, had "Arabic speaking teenagers", which encouraged Syrian students to branch out. **Dawn** articulated how Syrian students only know their apartment building, and school. The club opened their eyes.

Students received a warm supper, an opportunity to swim, and essential life skills. At the high school, there is a "reception center", where all students filter through. The city set up a temporary school called G.E.N.T.L.E (Guided Entry to New Teaching and Learning Experiences), which helped settle privately sponsored, and government-assisted Syrian students. "The board should open a Center; families can make an appointment and have access to an interpreter". She thought, "The center could accept all students, not just Arabic speakers."

Teacher: **Dawn** communicated how the school has one chance to make a first impression, and it must be done well. If the school board thinks inclusion and equity is important, then they should "create a reception and assessment center" (where families' stories can be heard). A center creates important links for families to share dreams for their children. Everyone has a story, which is fascinating, and beautiful. Immigrants have their voices heard, sharing stories, creating compassion, and understanding of experiences. Hence, when students are late for school (and a deeper relationship was built) than understanding is created. Trust must be built to have difficult conversations. The "S.W.I.S.S. worker" has been helpful in discussing parenting strategies.

Vice Principal: **Heather** articulated the challenge she faced communicating in a different language, and "creating curriculum which reflected students." Areas like "teaching compassion", "addressing biases", "showing empathy," and encouraging critical thinking are the focus. She thought there is a need "to reflect more of who our students are into the curriculum." *Principal:* **Amy** added that she reflects on, looking at culturally responsive curriculum for Arabic background students. She found during E.Q.A.O. teachers often bring in snacks. However, if it is the middle of EID, teachers need to be sensitive to religious accommodations.

Amy liked having a multicultural dinner*, respectful of all,* and staff must constantly "look at the multicultural calendar." Often, many teachers suggested a Christmas concert, encouraging "students to learn Canadian activities". However, **Amy** questioned, whether lessons are being done equally, as with other cultural groups. For example, the "majority of signage is in Arabic", unsupportive to families from Mexico, Russia, or Korea. However, communication with the predominant population is crucial, and takes priority. Information must be distributed regarding student's safety. Her overall goal is on the big picture and being sensitive through "celebrations." For example, she reflected how teachers have a Valentine's week center, and Halloween center. She followed her mandate*,* while, other principals at less diverse schools, diversity issues are dealt with differently. A "parent visited to tell her story", and it was beneficial to "help staff to understand." The population at her school is no longer White, and she was in the minority group. It is imperative for teachers to not only focus on lessons incorporating Christmas. "The population is changing, no need combatting diversity, students must feel included."

Several participants discussed the value in celebrating differences, building relationships, and providing students opportunities to share. Teachers emphasized the importance of students feeling their cultural heritage is safe, accepted, and valued. Participants described the need to teach students empathy and set the tone of the school to make it more student centered. Participants communicated that "strategies need to go beyond the superficial level." "Establishing an environment that is visually reflective through resources and celebrations is merely a first step." "There is value in understanding, constructing an environment which includes the lived experience of all students."

Vice-Principal: **John** highlighted the importance in, "celebrating differences" which can have a negative tone to it. The school's student population is diverse, which is a positive thing. His school is unique; efforts are made to "celebrate," and "create opportunities to share." *Teacher:* **Abdul** stressed the importance of a positive teacher building relationships with students. Students need a teacher that "believes" in them, promotes identity, and helps students be happy about themselves. Students must feel "safe" for the seven hours they attend school. Students need a place "to be happy with their language, and culture."

Teacher: **Abdul** thought it was important for teachers to learn how to "say hello in Korean, French, or in any other language." He made daily efforts to greet students and understand that are important. Teachers cannot teach until students are safe, and "mentally ready to learn." *Principal:* **Jasmine** contributed teachers set the tone. Further work needs to be done in "changing the tone of a school" to become more compassionate. She believed daily efforts, are made to touch students' lives, and guide students in the right direction.

Teacher: **James** described that it is important to ensure "everyone is treated fairly", and it is okay to "recognize differences." Encouraging, and fostering Syrian students to "share experiences" is critical. For example, setting a classroom culture where "students do not mock" one another about their past. Promoting discussions where students can engage, and "talk" about differences between Canada (and other countries). **James** "saw value in students seeing where they come from." Students express a "willingness to speak in English", and "need time to prepare." Often, **James** "supplements" lessons with more information. For example, for a "classroom reading assignment", students had a project "looking at a photo of Syria", and "create a story." Students "wrote stories" based on what they had learned. His example, expressed his exhaustion "a big diverse project lasts twenty minutes to read", and "two weeks of preparation."

"Students felt comfortable" which "allowed them to share experiences." Efforts were made in "understanding students' behaviour", resulting in discovering a "better way" to support them.

2 *Teachers:* **Sarah** added that efforts are made "so students feel their work is valued." For example, one of her students cannot answer ten questions, instead only four. However, she does not "discourage students" to feel they are completing less work. **Aliya** described how she encourages students to "talk about their culture." Discussions are valued, so "everyone shares what they do with their families." For example, "accommodations are made for her Muslim students who do not eat gelatin", to make them feel comfortable.

2 *Teachers:* **Victoria** voiced how her students are "receptive to learning" because she created a "community of trust, and acceptance." The teacher "makes the weather in the classroom", and "creates opportunities for building community." Classrooms in her building make great "efforts" to work with students, and "get results." **Athena** stated her student from Congo, who could see only with one eye. The challenges were not only academic, and instead "addressing the emotional and social concerns" the student faced. Attempts were made to make him feel included. She was "empathetic", towards his move to a new country, system, and culture. She explained how the student looked different, in comparison to others. Students who themselves are from different parts of the world, are not always empathetic. She voiced for newcomer Syrian students, "teaching visible cultural and racial differences," is a challenge. Newcomers come with trauma, and it is essential to make students "feel safe" beyond anything else. In her teaching experience, academics follow, time is first invested to "build trust."

Principal: **Lisa** supported "building relationships", and "encouraging opportunities" to "visit the school." She invited families to attend evenings like, "math nights", and "literacy evenings." Often, speaking to parents solely on academics, results in hesitation. Energies

invested in "relationship building", and "developing trust with families" is crucial. In her

experience, failure to "form healthy relationships", principals face many hurdles. Hence, time is

invested "out in the community", and "connecting with families." Time is dedicated, in "staff

meetings (to help teachers understand)," the importance of an inclusive school. Challenges exist,

in not being able to reach every parent.   **Lisa** tried, "making personal calls, working with E.S.L.

teachers and school support counselor to bridge gaps". Often, "school conversations" are

"centered on the child." She described how it is not a surprise to staff to dialogue about a student

and understand how to tolerate one another. She found more work is needed to promote positive

social interactions, build a school community, character, and belonging.

Teacher: **Danielle** spoke about the term inclusive education, which means every student

"sees themselves", in their classroom. Teachers made efforts, so "students see themselves as a

learner." Often, students came from a different cultural, economic, and academic background.

Students must feel they are important part of the classroom learning environment. She tried to

set the tone to students that the "class created this community", and they are a community. She

found that the term social justice is taking the lens of approaching a topic, based on an inequality

that is happening in society. She found her students have the power to make a significant change

and look at the world with a critical lens.

Teacher: **Marianne** voiced how she tries to encourage students to talk and give feedback.

She gave examples on how students do not feel comfortable to talk. Efforts were made for

students to understand their voice matters. Students need to be able to speak for themselves.

She talked about how students discussed how their teachers do not listen to them. *Vice-*

Principal: **Jennifer** spoke about "creating a welcoming environment", "saying hello", and

"greeting students in Arabic." **Jennifer** encouraged academic learning, by having teachers "showcase work in the main hallway."

Teacher: **Dawn** added how the curriculum had different expectations and it made a difference that "teachers care". She voiced how the "human connection motivates students to learn." In her teaching, the "caring piece is making sure students have mittens, and lunch." Teachers made efforts by asking students "how their day/weekend was?" Teachers can then focus on teaching since trust, human element, and connection is built.

Dawn vocalized her students are "from everywhere", and "her class talked about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." Many newcomers walked out of the lesson, with a "broader sense of what a global community means." She illustrated how a student from Saudi Arabia described, how his mom cannot vote, or drive. Another student discussed how she was not allowed to go to school when the Taliban came. Her mom did not allow them to leave the house, unless they dressed like boys to go to the marketplace. **Dawn** found, that the class could never have that experience in a textbook. She saw "tremendous richness, and diversity" in that conversation, and the "rich perspective students brought into the classroom."

Teacher: **Amy** mentioned how many students pray daily. Often, some families come in, and sign their kids out. Teachers become upset since students are missing lessons. Families are angry because it is unfair, those kids who attend mosque are allowed to miss school. Her work is in "facilitating understanding", and "encouraging more compassion." Creating a "safe learning environment", "students are fed", highlighting the "school cares" has a tremendous impact. Further, efforts are made to "help students feel confident," and their "program is being differentiated." Her school's goal is ensuring learning happens, and "understand students' emotions" to open them to learning.

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Teacher: **Abdul** articulated how the students in his class "want to be first". Since, "students back in their home country were the smartest, and (the) teacher's favourite," Abdul noted "that was the custom, and that was how students lined up." The students in his class "still want to be the star." He mentioned how, "everyone has equal opportunity", and "gives each student a number." Students learned it does not matter (if you are number one or twelve), "everyone gets a popsicle." He spent a lot of energy to "treat all his students the same." As a classroom teacher, **Abdul** learned how students still want to be first (that was a lesson for him). Often, other teachers at his school, "face frustrations with students", and contact him. He goes, above and beyond the role of a teacher. **Abdul's** reputation was he was known for "helping teachers," to better support students' learning challenges.

Teacher: **James** stated how he had to "learn cultural norms", to support students better. For example, with his Syrian girls, they are "not allowed to talk to boys" back home. Female students would describe "they would get hit." Initially, it was "difficult for Syrian female students, to be seated next to boys." Later, Syrian girls responded, since "they were in Canada now; they do things the Canadian way." **James** talked about, "cultural changes," he saw in Syrian girls. For example, now if boy students are around, they want to talk to them. "Students have acclimatized well", however, "it takes a lot of time and communication to understand their culture."

Teacher: **Aliya** noted for students, "Back home it was normal for fighting was their form of play." However, Syrian students are here in Canada, there is no fighting, since students can hurt someone. "Canadian school culture is different here, and students must adjust." **Gwen** contributed, "there are misunderstandings," and "teachers are not sure what is happening" with students. **Gwen** stated, "Students are shy, and out of respect they keep their heads down." "It

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could be cultural, and teachers need to understand this behaviour." Further, there are "religious customs which teachers were not keen to." For example, "students were being removed to attend mosque." She communicated with parents, that "the school wants to be respectful of your religion," and "accommodate." However, issues came up, for example, "when students washed up before prayer," the school cannot provide this. Communication with parents was needed, since parents since this behaviour can lead to injury if the water is too much.

Teacher: **Danielle** spoke about, how she witnessed, Syrians students may be more aggressive. Students needed to be more aggressive, to have their needs met. However, here in Canada "you do not have to be the first in line; you can be the last in line." Students had to learn that (aggressive) "behaviour is not needed here". She found, "writing letters to parents" to describe what students have learned, has been helpful. "Connections with home and school" is crucial for students to be successful. "Parents can access her website" where there is "information translated to Arabic." **Danielle** relayed information "that there is a multi-faith room at the school." She saw "arguments occurring even after prayer, and there are lessons to teach students."

2 *Teachers:* **Dawn** noted there are "many curriculum expectations at a diverse school" like hers. She found there are multiple entry points from students from various countries. For example, students came from the Middle East holding different experiences. However, students all enter the same grade six classrooms. Students, who have gone through the system, are mixed along with students who are entering the system. She saw that all her students do not have the same background. For example, she might have a student who comes from Korea, and has all the academics in Korean. She saw that the work is to "transfer that knowledge into English", and that is a different way of teaching for us. In another example, **Dawn** described how her

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refugee students have "missed multiple years, have huge gaps." Many of her "students do not know the norms of school." She experienced challenges in "helping students understand the behaviour piece", and the "social element of a classroom." **Trevor** added the challenge for Syria newcomer students, are around "elements of play", and "learning how to make fair choices." "Students learned from mistakes, since often students come from a need to survive." Often, students are in "fight and flight mode" which can lead them to "put their back up." **Trevor** focused on "kindergarten students knowing how to interact", and "how to play."

Principal: **Amy** made efforts in "teaching students how to get along, collaborate, and socialize." The challenges with the new Syrians, is "showing them how to eat with a fork and spoon" (instead of using their fingers). Students were "peeing on the bathroom floor." Students were taught, "this is the toilet." **Amy** had "conversations with parents", who were "peeing in the school yard." In the beginning, she encountered "cultural norms", like "Syrian mothers, never came to meetings." She found this behaviour "dispelled a lot of the beliefs", since teachers thought it would be "the women who visited the school."

Amy described earlier, "Syrian men would not look at us, or shake our hands." Now, she "gets hugs, and families trust the school." "Collaboration" with the "S.W.I.S.S. worker", around situations like hitting, has helped students deal with situations. Another example, a student threw something at his teacher, and was angry. "Many students did not understand since that is how they learned to survive in the past." "Many refugee students did not have any formal school, and this could be their first school experiences." "Many students had to learn how to sit still and learn how to interact with the teachers." However, students were able make progress very quickly. Amy spoke about, "assistance from the school support worker, and connections with the mosque was extremely helpful." "E.S.L. teachers acted as translators," (during school

meetings), and families are often grateful to be in Canada. "Families want to acclimatize and be part of the community." However, "families need help from the school staff in adjusting."

Theme 4: Language barriers

Several teachers talked about "language barriers to learning for students." For example, a helpful strategy was "grouping students with similar skills and levels". **James** mentioned "he read E.S.L. books", instructed students in the class, who are "having a hard time with new language." **Sarah** added she "allows her students to write in Arabic." Often, she will have "someone read work on their behalf." She encountered students that are not producing. For example, "one student can only read, and write in his language." She will start the learning process from there. She faced situations where she sees students in the office, and "advocates." Administrators included E.S.L. students by "grouping similar background/language acquisition."

2 Teachers: **Sophia** saw students who "followed what other kids are doing but had no English." **Athena** stated many of her Korean students know English since they take classes after school. However, for Syrian newcomers, "many students did not have opportunity to learn English". Students moved around from Turkey, Jordan, Libya, and there was so much movement. She encountered challenges in "finding activities to engage students". **Athena** attempted to "work with the classroom teacher." *Teacher:* **Gwen** illustrated, there is a need to have "language which helps include", and "create a sense of belonging." She pointed out, when students cannot participate, learning can be difficult. She saw "benefits allowing students to speak Arabic." **Gwen** tried "creating opportunities," to ensure "students are included." She perceived a need to support "families to feel included" by "writing signs in Arabic." The school "board provide interpreters" which has helped. Her strategy was, communicating to families with letters sent home, "in Arabic." Often, she "texts families in Arabic", and they love it.

Gwen perceived it is helpful for "families to know what is happening at the school." Parents are more involved in trips and activities, due to "addressing the language communication piece."

Principal: **Lisa** described challenges due to "language." Families do not feel confident due to their "level of English." Although, "interpreters are provided", parents still feel hesitant about attending meetings. Providing opportunities for "families to feel confident to visit" and learn about "school events" is vital. Specifically, there is a welcome banner displayed at the front of school (with the word welcome written in different languages).

Teacher: **Danielle** ensured "time to adjust." In one sense, teachers were at a disadvantage with the high Syrian population. Syrians students and families like to "speak with someone who knows their language." Syrians do not speak English, and often stay with their own. Generally, refugees are new, and wanted to talk with individuals from a similar place. Grade three and four teachers "integrated two classes into one" to better support students. **Danielle** described it necessary to understand Syrian's "makeup," resulting in "increased awareness for language acquisition." "Language gaps are huge" and students must know one thousand words by kindergarten. High school students must know fifteen thousand words. It can be difficult for newcomer students who came to Canada (who may be four thousand words behind). **Danielle** highlighted the benefits of "accommodation strategies" since the "population keeps changing."

Teacher: **Jennifer** voiced, "Language barriers" students come with their native language, and have difficulty learning English. The communication piece is difficult, since "families cannot speak English." Families do not speak the language, and "interpreters" are needed. "Families bring their own interpreters", however, messages are not always the same. For example, a kindergartener was hitting a lot, "it was sugar-coated" when talking to family. The

translator gave the family incorrect information. **Jennifer** shared, the "S.W.I.S.S. worker"

helped "facilitate relationships", and "messages need to be exact." In conversations with parents,

the "language piece" is critical in making information accessible.

Teacher: **Dawn** spoke about understanding students who had "language limitations" and

getting to the "root of the problem." She saw value in "Arabic speaking leaders paired with

community", "S.W.I.S.S. worker", and school "team." Often, it can "take a village to facilitate

the communication." **Dawn** ensured, "translators" are available to "assist" with difficult

discussions. **Dawn** encountered language challenges with problem solving, and utilized a

program called "Kelso's choice." She worked hard to "translate strategies", since parents are

preoccupied with surviving. Families did not have structure, consistency, routine, predictability,

and can be in a crisis state.

Principal: **Amy** detailed her involvement in the "advisory committee." She saw it was

difficult having parents attend meetings and be a part of the school. Parents enjoyed being

"involved in fundraising, volunteering for pizza and their student's class trips." However,

participation in volunteer group school was problematic. "Language" barriers surfaced, and she

questioned how welcomed parents felt. Families that moved into this area wanted to attend this

school. **Amy** believed that "parents feel a sense of community and at home."

Amy shared her favorite story, where the school had a hundred Syrian families. It was a

stressful situation for a teacher who had "five grade one students who spoke no English." She

confided how the teacher did not know how to support them. At the end of the school year, the

teacher stated she would take those "five students in her heart, after they move on."

"Administration tried so hard supporting teachers." Staff offered, "Whatever they can do to help

students." Many Syrian family's stories are not shared, since "language is a big barrier." It is

important to develop a "deeper understanding about who that child is", and to "dig deeper."

Unfortunately, at times "the school has exhausted everything, and that child is still not open."

"Mental health issues could have impacted students." The struggle for teachers is, how can "we

encourage parents" to seek help from the doctor? She found there are many challenging in

adequately addressing the needs of our population. For example, "mental health issues",

"P.T.S.D.", "students cannot write", "need translators" are all factors impacting learning.

Theme 5: Supporting social learning

Several participants articulated, how social learning, occurs through "clubs", "modeling",

"assemblies", and "character traits." Teachers brought to the classroom their personal life

experiences. Further, teachers encouraged opportunities for students to learn from each other,

make learning interactive, and fun. *Teacher:* **John** illustrated how the E.A.'s run

"social/lunch/games club", and "teach different skills." The school has a program called "Go

Girls," where students "play different games, and chat". The school used the "seven grandfather

teachings", like caring, empathy, and understanding. Teachers "review what these words means,

and what it looks like"? Often, students learned how to act based on behaviour "modelled" for

them. For example, there is student that uses the "f-word all the time and says that's how we talk

at home. So, this student came (to school) thinking that language was okay to here". **John** had

to teach students what language was appropriate at the school.

 John gave the example of how he had a parent who believed it was okay to hit back,

since her daughter was standing up. At times, he had to "encourage both families and students"

to "talk it through." *Principal:* **Jasmine** explained how she "models' inclusiveness" and has

"forthright conversations about inclusiveness." She gave students a "model" or "script", and it

becomes natural. Students "do not appreciate any type of façade" of social learning. **Jasmine**

believed that everything must set in real context. She invited speakers in, like "police officers."

It was an opportunity for students to "access different opinions", and "connect" with community.

Students are kind to each other. But, they are tough students. Her students "do not follow the

same set of rules, as a middle-class kid would." Hence, it was crucial to "appreciate where

students are coming from" and take it from there. **Jasmine** facilitated social learning experience

beyond the classroom through "field trips." She saw value in "exposing students." She noted

the "relationship with the teacher" is how social learning occurs.

 2 Teachers: **James** communicated how he has "travelled the world" and saw different

cultures.   He had the opportunities to teach in Cambodia and Taiwan. Additionally, it is good

for students to "take that knowledge in", and "be presented with different experiences." **Sarah**

described how racial slurs were being used in the junior classrooms. Teachers during "Black

History month", send the message home by "creating a teachable moment." She thought the

"after school programs" "encouraged students to be more social." Students were given a

"buddy", when they first came to the school. Students "sang songs about days", and were

encouraged to "touch", and "walk the halls" to facilitate engagement. Often, having students just

"sitting, and looking at a book" can be hard to remember. **Sarah** "travelled to every continent"

and shares her own empathy.

 2 Teachers: **Aliya** described how "clubs" like "dodge ball" and "hockey." Newcomer

students have become more confident speaking English and interacting with others. **Sophia** saw

the importance in "treating" students like "human beings," and "respected." A great deal of

"modeling" is demonstrated by teachers, to make students "feel comfortable." "First Nations

students are not forced to speak" in her classroom. Students came from different backgrounds do

not like being put on the spot and approached her more when they are ready. **Sophia** provided a

"comfortable", and "welcoming classroom." **Sophia** noted in the monthly "character trait assembly" skills are encouraged like "self-regulation", "respect", and "kindness." The school encouraged First Nation values like "wisdom", "kindness", and "love." The class "planner" outlined values to encourage students. The school "announcements" attempted to create "mindful moments." Lastly, the school social worker showed a video on how to speak to people.

Teacher: **Victoria** vocalized how her class used the "seven grandfather teachings." Terms like "wisdom", "humility", "truth", "honesty", and "respect" are reviewed. The class looked at these terms in depth. She "modelled," and reviewed "acceptable social learning." At times, students were very behind "age appropriate behaviour." For example, **Victoria** discussed situations where she "cannot help students", and "they need to interact with each other."

Teacher: **Athena** explained students were "playing well in the yard." Students learned "cultural cues" (like not to yell and calm down). Often, students "storm off" (if they cannot communicate in English), which is "challenging." Some students did not have language and expression. The school support counsellor facilitated social learning by "playing consonant bingo," completed a "craft", and "played together."

Teacher: **Athena** talked about how the counsellor formed a "reading group" and taught how to read together. Students learned not to interrupt, and it is an ongoing process. The group took care of each other and took on a leadership role. Students were better behaved, and more responsible. Teachers must be patient, and it "takes time to learn Canadian social norms." Students do not focus on the curriculum at first and will catch up. Additionally, it could take students one to two years, where there is no movement in learning for months. The classroom teacher she supported has been excited to have an "interpreter" for interview day. The interpreter talked with parents, mentioning, "Your boy smiled for the first time". "He is happy"

and it took him the whole year to adjust. She found "patience is key", and "students will come along."

2 *Teachers:* **Gwen** described how some students were afraid to bring cultural food for lunch. They were afraid others would make fun of them. **Gwen** made efforts to "eat different foods" that "look different." She tried to "model" for students to not be ashamed of their cultural food. *Principal:* **Lisa** explained how she "models" and has "conversations with other principals."   She focused on "school improvement", and how students learn. **Lisa** encouraged "supports" which are fair and promoted success. She facilitated both "small and large group interaction." The "school support counselor" extended to the rest of the population, played "cooperative games", and facilitated "mentorship."

Lisa illustrated the "learning support teacher" held "small groups" and taught students how to act appropriately.   For example, work is completed through "group games". Partnerships shaped each other's character into more socially appropriate. Moreover, "reminding", and "prompting" occurred during these activities, while building social skills. **Lisa** "modelled" for students, how to "have conversations." The school's goal is to be representative of all cultures. **Lisa** believed, "more power should be given to students" to have "more voice," since they hold knowledge.

Teacher: **Danielle** contributed how the daily "announcements" promoted awareness of different languages. **Danielle** made efforts for students to be proud of their language, and share. The school reviewed character traits monthly. For example, she described how this month the focus was on the word optimism. Grade three students presented quotes on optimism. Teachers had students in pairs and integrated everyone. Students sang their school song, and that is how the assembly started to build unity, and community. Efforts were made to model social

expectations, and work with Syrians that hold a different viewpoint. **Danielle** faced numerous challenges in her work, and it can be overwhelming. Connections with the school counselor were made; "referrals to the L.S.T., and special education teacher" were completed.

Teacher: **Marianne** facilitated connections, and "modelled" social interaction early on. For example, she does "situational teaching," when two students fight about where to sit. Flexible seating taught students to work on "negotiation", with student audience involvement. Solutions are tricky when students are self-centered and entitled. Students are taught in the real world that "nothing is all about you." They must be prepared, and flexible to work. **Marianne** taught students how to handle conflict, set goals, and self-advocate. Students must experience social interaction for themselves. Her classroom looked like a ball of chaos, loud, and busy. Students struggled with the communication piece and putting words together. She knows students can get angry and become physically aggressive. **Marianne** helped students calm down, and get to talking piece? Often, communication is a multiple step process which takes time. Further, when students do not have the basic pieces, they cannot do well academically. She found that if the social foundation is not stable, then learning cannot occur. Work has been done through "community circle", and individual check-ins (which is an importance piece for her). "Planners" are circulated, and when students need her she can better structure social goals.

Vice Principal: **Jennifer** thought teachers do a good job with connecting families in the classroom. Teachers' "close-knit interactions" with students helps in the social setting and improves communication. Her schools have a lot of "extracurricular activities". For example, "lunch," "recess," "basketball" volleyball", "after-school programs", "book/games/craft clubs" are all useful. Efforts are made in facilitating student leadership, and having representatives lead activities. For example, students led a fundraiser for the children's hospital. They did a

presentation on the funds generated, called, "Henna for Hope" which encouraged sharing the culture.

Vice Principal: **Jennifer** found students learned to "be part of community." Students are taught to be a "good global citizen, so they fit in everywhere." Her perception is social learning skills are taught at a young age. Staff gets involved; however, the same staff participates in clubs and committees. **Jennifer** created a classroom environment which encouraged students to be accepted. She "modelled" for students to be open, share, and be "proud of who they are." In my interview with **Jennifer,** she alluded to residential schooling. The legacy filtered down, "as much as people think it does not." She attended a truth, and reconciliation exhibit at the Board. An elder mentioned to her, she was a residential school survivor. Since, **Jennifer** is not letting what occurred in the past stop her. As a child, she thought her grandfather went to a boarding school. When **Jennifer** began her Master's, she asked her grandfather to participate in an interview about residential schools. **Jennifer's** grandfather would "share stories about how he would get beaten, if he spoke in Oneida, and disobeyed their roles." Her grandfather believed that "behaviour was not okay", however, "it happened because of the time." **Jennifer** brought her own "cultural history," and background which influenced her social interactions with families.

2 Teachers: **Dawn** encountered conflict occurring with her students from Arabic speaking backgrounds. Students come from a trauma background and does not the ability have "the ability to step back." **Dawn** brought in the "community" with the Muslim Community Center. The school has "Go Girls," which is an empowerment program. "The university students volunteer teaches problem solving, self-esteem, mentor, and model." In the past, "older students came in speaking Arabic", which is successful in "promoting self-esteem." The school

offered a "homework club," and connections are made with the community. **Dawn** does not want "Syrian students to be living isolated". Instead, they need to "discover, and play." **Trevor** noted the school brought in "peace makers" trained from St. Leonard's Society. Further, the "Muslim Center" paired with students, provided training on peer conflict buddies. He mentioned how buddies go on the yard, and helped students in Arabic.

Principal: **Amy** illustrated many "extracurricular" activities which involved physical education. For example, sports like "volleyball", "basketball team", and "wrestling" all included girls. She saw a lot of work is done to "break the myth," and often women are underrepresented. Girls are interested in math and science, are not held back, and advocated for themselves. Programs are offered through "arts", "dance clubs", and "Idol." Students performed their culture and participated in a "multicultural dinner." The school offered nutritional breaks like Kelso choice. The school has "character assemblies" which practiced gratitude daily. Students shared their gratitude to a friend. During recess time, the "golden rules" (are encouraged to treat each other respectfully and resolved conflict). "The school enforced progressive discipline with outlined procedures, and protocol." Safety plans addressed behavioral issues and encouraged communication with parents. Elementary school is an opportunity to make mistakes and learn strategies. **Amy** saw situations on the playground, and encouraged "the philosophy to learn now, and make mistakes."

Amy explained that the "school counselor" engaged students that had a hard time socializing. Students participated in a "games club", "volleyball", and "social skills club." Students know when they have broken a rule, "regardless if they are from Iraq or Iran", she declared. Often, teachers do not have the patience, and compassion to see from students' eyes. However, teachers "demonstrated respect, modelled respect", and have high expectations. **Amy**

had "crucial conversations" with teachers, to understand where students are coming. Efforts are made to connect with "E.S.L. teachers, and S.W.I.S.S. workers." Parents are contacted to find out about students' backgrounds. She saw value in "understanding who that child is", resulting in teachers becoming more compassionate.

Theme 6: Supporting academic learning

3 Teachers: **Abdul** voiced how he provides students with that "extra push" to support learning. He "ordered laptops" for students who are learning "delayed". Students must have a fair chance to access curriculum. However, for students who cannot write, "Google Talk" has been helpful. Students accessed curriculum through "technology supports." He provided an analogy, if "students cannot take a staircase, he figures out how to get them up somehow." **John** mentioned, difficulties teaching math to a student who has never sat in a classroom before. Students never had critical thinking skills taught to them. Further, "there is an expectation for them to hit a home run, yet they have not held a bat before."

Gwen is amazed of all the changes teachers have made, in "academic performance." Students are happy and wanted to attend school on the weekend. It is huge progress for students who have never attended school. **Gwen** understood the academic challenges parents faced. For example, families had no structure, and were running away from war zones. **Gwen** believed it has been a "long struggle", and teachers saw a big change. *Principal:* **Lisa** explained, in kindergarten, there is an "inquiry approach". Academics are addressed through "outdoor learning programs," which are hands-on with nature. She saw how students begin to understand literacy, and numeracy. *Teacher:* **Danielle** explained her students must meet curriculum demands. Teachers must "prepare students for E.Q.A.O." However, the academic challenges surface where "students are settling", "integrating", and learning to follow curriculum. She

found that if students do not write the test, it is a penalty for the school. "English is taught in context" at the school. For example, language is accessed through "songs", "visuals", and "paper and pencil activities." Many lessons "focused on Canadian traditions", like Valentine's Day. Students had questions on St. Patrick's Day, and why there are clovers? Promoting "awareness of Canadian society" is needed. Since, often "students (can) nod to be polite." However, they may not really understand the topic. **Danielle** is "realistic", and "aware of students' abilities." Tests like "E.Q.A.O., are not conducive" to where students are at, and must "provide supports."

Teacher: **Marianne** voiced how she engaged students by looking at "current event issues". For example, in October, lessons incorporated "looking at names in the media." The class looked at the Cleveland Indians, during the World Series. **Marianne** facilitated "questions," around why government controls how we name things. Students heard "things at home", "on the yard", and "the news" which was helpful to facilitate discussion. She found "ways to connect", since issues impacted students. However, the challenges are topics are not contained, within the curriculum expectation. Curriculum topics are written by government and may not be relevant. Students are "more motivated to learn", when they enjoy the topic. Students become "engaged in the activity", or "conversation" and that is when they are successful.

QUESTION 2:

As noted earlier the second research question was: <u>How</u> does the Ontario <u>policy</u> backdrop <u>constrain</u> and/or <u>support</u> the work and capacities of principals, vice principals, and teachers to <u>advance</u> <u>social</u> and <u>academic learning</u>?

Theme 1: Funding challenges

Vice Principal: **John** noted funding challenges, and how it took the school seven years to raise money to purchase a new playground. He vocalized at a more affluent school "someone might have donated it." Often, nicer schools "get what they want". The challenges working at a high-poverty school are "not easy," and obtaining resources "takes a little longer." **John** described working hard to offer students with a "good experience", and that is the "best" he can do.

 Principal: **Jasmine** vocalized the "equity struggles" in "creating financial opportunities." She has seen "when students are poor"; schools "work harder" to make equity happen. For example, offering an "after school running club", would have to be "designed for children in poverty". She considered, "who comes to pick up students at 5:30pm?" Buses would have to be arranged, and additional planning is needed to work through barriers. However, higher socio-economic school parents can afford to send children skiing. Parents at her school "cannot afford the children's museum". **Jasmine** described frustrations arranging "school trips." She perceived, "such a lack of equity," and it drives her "crazy". Her school does not have a playground, since school council cannot generate money. While, (other) schools in "more affluent neighborhoods," have so much (more) financial support. These schools have more "money in their P.T.A." (Compared to) her "entire budget for the school year", which is wrong. Her frustrations are, "kids having a (school) experience that is so fundamentally different, then the kids at this school".

Jasmine suggested more work is needed, in "addressing the funding formula." Attention needs to be spent changing how "governments deliver to high-need schools." She advised, the "government should be putting a playground" in every school yard. She revealed it should not be her job to worry about "selling chocolate bars door to door." She illustrated, in a high-needs school like hers, there is "parent community." She found that the struggle is that "the resources are not there". In another example, she explained how high-poverty schools "do not have the personal connections to the city's basketball team." Parents at more affluent schools get thousands of dollars since a student's "dad knows the coach of the city's basketball team." The financial challenges for her school are, she "nickels and dime all the time." As a school principal, she walks down the hall to "pick up all the pencils because you are going to keep them."

Jasmine was very passionate to describe the importance of Ministry ensuring "at a certain level every school is required things." She said, "That's the bare, bottom line, what is the basic" for a school to have. She highlighted, "every school should have a basic level, of what a good school looks like." A "physical plan" of what a standard school's outdoor playground looks like is needed. It is not the "principals' job, to get those resources, it is impossible." The challenges are, "at a higher need, busy school, you are busy for so many reasons." The on-going struggle was, "she does not have the time" to fill out fifty grants since her school is busier. She viewed the policy, as "lack of equity," due to lack of resources. **Jasmine** recommended that the policy and Ministry must have, a standard "outdoor plan", "classroom plan", and offer "supplies." She described, she could not "imagine going into an operating room" only to find out that the tools are not there. However, teachers "in schools like this" go into their classrooms all the time, to "find out the tools are not there." She explained, how teachers will "go and buy

resources themselves." The challenging issues that high poverty schools face daily "need to be fixed immediately."

2 Teachers: **Sophia** illustrated her experiences working at more affluent schools, "where they did not need food or clothing." She wanted "the resources" which are crucial for students at her higher need school. *Teacher:* **Marianne** revealed how policy improvements need to "build social context of education," and be sensitive to the unique challenges higher needs schools face. Policy must "look at the academic component of the curriculum," which goes unaddressed due to lack of funds. She found, what worked for her is, "teaching to the big ideas" due to lack of financial resources. She stated, "Many things that need to be covered, in a short period of time" which can be a big monetary challenge. She voiced, "In schools like ours, foundational learning pieces, structure, situation students deal with outside of school, make it so much more challenging." She made comparisons, with her own children who are at the same grade level she teaches. She reflected, her children come from a stable home that has "food on the table", "two parents that love them," and no "domestic violence." Her children are "more available to learn." They "achieve more," because of other components like being a part of a stable family. It is difficult, to "get through curriculum content", required by policy for "schools like ours" due to the lack of resources. Teachers constantly need to work at "building the foundation" with minimal financial supports.

2 Teachers: **Sophia** shared experiences working as a coach. "The equipment we have in the gym is what my child's school would throw in the garbage." She vocalized, "We don't have money to spend on other resources." Her school does not have the necessary "tools for learning." "Money gets spent to feed our students," which is the priority. She found, it is a daily "trade off" across the school system between "the have and have nots schools" (in determining

how to distribute scarce resources). She concluded, in the end, being at a high-poverty

elementary school severely "impacts our students." *Teacher:* **Dawn** contributed; it can be

difficult for students to understand "why they are not able to participate in the L.E.A.R.N.

program, which has been a big support." She found that "the funding challenge is that there are

only twelve spots, and ninety children interested." Administrators and teachers often make

"difficult choices" on which students get access to resources. **Dawn** "would have loved to put

all of them in the program." She had to ensure academically delayed students receive a "fair and

equitable" share.

Principal: **Amy** illustrated how the needs at a high-poverty school can be "both different,

and also similar". Her role was to "keeping expectations high for all students". She meets the

"hierarchical needs of high-poverty students" which is where financial funds are allocated. The

school provides "breakfast", which is a positive response. She personally saw the impact,

compared to her experiences from a real "have school." The main difference is "at a poverty

school, your impact is so obvious". She thought her work is "meaningful," and has a "blatant

effect."

Vice Principal: **John** highlighted how there is only so much "money to go around."

Ministry can send out policies however you need "money behind it." He emphasized the

"resources need to be there" along with the "funding", highlighting how the equity policy is

symbolic in its goal of excellence and equity. *Teacher:* **James** explained that things will begin

to change starting at Ministry level once "funds are made available." He stated it is always an

issue to waiting for the "opportunity for funds" to happen. He described that even if equity

comes naturally at the teacher level, "policy needs to be made official." Further, the priority is to

drive the "financial aspect" of the policy and is a holistic aspect of within education. In his

experience, it is hard to say that improvement of one equity policy by itself is significant. He learned there are so many areas which need to be addressed. For example, the financial challenges are the school has "all sorts of students with different conditions, in the building, life-threatening, but, do we have a school nurse?" He described that teachers receive some training, however face anxiety over not being able to address students' needs effectively.

2 Teachers: **Athena** highlighted the funding inequity in which some schools "got everything," and "some did not." *Teacher:* **Marianne** explained that at the Ministry level, "the cultural piece of learning" is funded specifically initiatives geared towards First Nation's, Metis, and Inuit. Also, she mentioned there lots of importance focused on the area of reconciliation, and refugee populations groups. However, her perception is that "the dollars, determine whether it's a priority." Additionally, **Athena** added that when Ministry does not mandate areas which need to be followed through than it "really doesn't get there at a process level." Further, she understood the "bureaucracy" behind the Ministry perspective since "they can only put money into so many things." The financial priority is "math across the province." **Athena** emphasized that "this needs to be made a priority" in how to "weave cultural perspective" into teaching math. While, it was important to "learn how to do this for other perspectives," and she did not "have the knowledge."

Teacher: **Athena** emphasized when directives "come from the Ministry for their priority for funding," or "comes from a Board level it needs to happen." She clarified that there are numerous "challenges around supporting the process." For example, "making sure we have enough staff to support the needs of the students in our building." She explained that for a high-poverty school like hers there are "a lot of kids with extra needs." However, the challenges are "every year we are cut back on EA's, and secretaries." The support staff is important in assisting

how "the school runs." Teachers do not have the support personnel necessary to "really be effective." She concluded that "human resources are big" not only "just looking at the financial resources."

   2 Teachers: **Trevor** highlighted the importance of Ministry seeing the collaboration part, and how funds for E.L.L., special education programs, are important to meet students' needs. *Teacher:* **Dawn** explained how "Ministry needs to understand, how important the L.E.A.R.N. program was," and the importance of a self-contained classroom. Ministry needs to see "how long it takes for Syrian students to catch up academically" to value funding this program. Syrian students would benefit from the program (even for half a day); however, there were only a few spots. The program should be more available, so more students can have access. **Dawn** saw the richness in providing students with a safe environment to be themselves, which may not happen in the traditional classroom. Syrian students "let their guards down". However, programs come "down to funding" since "it is an expensive program." She reflected on how to determine the best academic capabilities, since students access the program for three years. The program is still in the draft process at the Board. It has lots of value for students, to "have a voice, practice English, and speak freely." For example, new Korean students have different needs, and access to a different classroom is valuable. Specifically, a classroom where only "twelve kids have the academic vocabulary."

   Principal: **Amy** discussed how the school is helping students "feel they are getting the support they need to be successful." Students must "feel safe", represented, and their "curriculum needs are being met." She emphasized, while, there are "twelve E.A.'s in the building", they are only "part of the solution." Teachers are the valuable resources necessary to meet the needs of her school. However, she discussed how there are "funding challenges" when

"talking about poverty." For example, "thousands of dollars go towards food", "every teacher identifies every student that needs to be fed." An example of financial equity is, "every classroom gets a bucket filled with apples, oranges, cereals, and yogurts." **Amy** questioned, "Does Ministry give us more money?" Does "Ministry provide funding in order to provide training" when introducing policies and procedures to teachers? She described, "Canada does not look the same as it did ten years ago." However, she saw a need "to look at E.Q.A.O. results," and better understand new Canadians academically. New Canadian students were not performing equally in comparison to other students. Students who had been (at) "our school systems for longer periods of time" progressed more academically and socially. **Amy** emphasized the importance to "look at that policy" and perceives that her school "is not doing what we can."

Theme 2: Professional Development

Vice Principal: **John** mentioned a difficult experience with the fire alarm, and how it sounded like alarms students heard if there was a bomb. Many students "freaked out" and "it's something you don't think about until after". He found, a "huge barrier is understanding students' cultural context". For example, a "students' hijab got torn off" during a fight. **John** had to google the "cultural significance behind the hijab". The student was "very upset", and all he could say was, "we will work through it." **John** had to "educate himself", and it is a "big struggle for the Board." He ended up "suspending the other kid after investigating," and read more. **John** described himself as a "constant learner." He discussed, how this "situation might have been dropped" if he did not access more information. Often, "teachers do not have that background", accessing "a lot of P.D." would be helpful. He found, the professional development on "refraining your responses" about teaching about poverty, and trauma workshop valuable.

Teacher: **Sophia** perceived that, offering professional development to understand the "language" of poverty was important. Her statement alluded to culture of poverty. Her comment highlighted, knowledge that (particular) values of people living through poverty play an important role (in maintaining) their impoverished condition. Her principal has done work, and more can be done. She reflected, "It is Christmas time, it can be hard for families." It was important to have "discussions," and understand how to "deal with the kids." She reflected, "In June students do not want to leave." She found, students can be very "upset" during holidays, since "teachers are their constant at this school."

Teacher: **Abdul** described, there is "plenty of material to read," and "professionals come in". Teachers "are not aware of what happens in children's lives." The challenge is, understanding "is it poverty", "broken home," or "social emotional?" He understood, "a lot is going on, which is not only trauma," which "involves multiple layers." **Abdul** questioned, how does policy account for these variables? Teachers use the "same lesson" for twenty years and continue with "very narrow-minded" thinking which constrains academic learning. For example, he knows a teacher planned a trip to Montreal, and visited the Holocaust museum. While, "it is wonderful that they wanted to know what happened in the past", "why just visit a church?" However, he questioned, "what about visiting the mosque?" He explained, "When you have a class where the majority are Muslims, teachers need to adapt." He offered an illustration, "just like a business" teachers must "know customers," school Boards, and Ministry must know students.

Abdul saw Syrian students who "never bounced a ball", and "never played together." Students lived overseas, "had no structured play" which limited their social learning. **Abdul** said, that a teacher in Syria "on their prep with a cup of coffee saying play, here's a ball." He

recommended, "Policy does not account financially for those unique experiences." His

perception was there must be room in policy to be more sensitive to new Canadians' experiences

(which can lack exposure to basic resources and services). Now, here in Canada, "students are

expected to know team work," and "problem solve." **Abdul** must go back to teaching basic

skills. Students are taught how to "play fairly", and "deal with a tough situation." He

questioned students, "when someone trips you, do you get mad and push back?" **Abdul**

modelled "how to work and score a goal together." Students needed "constant reminders in

learning how to share and play together." He had to "start from scratch," due to their social

skills being delayed. Often, he is in a room with "twenty to thirty kids for seven hours."

Students built "stamina to read for two minutes", then "thirty minutes. He learned through "baby

steps with considerable time, and patience" this could be achieved. **Abdul** "restructured" his

teaching to meet the challenges newcomer Syrian students face.

     Principal: **Jasmine** emphasized areas of improvement like "more education with staff,"

and time for having "conversations with staff." She "worked with the Board," and brought in

"advocates." Teachers needed further education on "the Syrian war." A deeper understanding of

"what the kids had come from" is needed. *Teacher:* **James** contributed, "Board provided some

training" for "Native students in our class." However, "P.D." can be a "hit or a miss." Teachers

received "tribe training," which was "helpful to build an inclusive community." Accessing

opportunities to address "social concerns," and "interact" with other teachers is needed.

Teacher: **Sarah** found, there are "traumatized students who (have) their parent living abroad." A

student said, "we went back to look for mommy, but dad said maybe she is dead." *Teacher:*

Aliya illustrated the importance in "providing P.D. for teachers to work with students with

trauma." She thought, understanding "signs of trauma", lessons on how to "detect", and "what

to do." She knows, after teaching her Syrian students, there is a need to "better equip teachers." **Aliya** reflected that "some schools did" however, it was not "Board-wide."

Teacher: **Sophia** described how she had a Syrian boy who "spoke no English." She explained, "How his school had been blown up." **Sophia** had to come in and create a plan. She found, the key was to "not talk about war," and avoid scary topics. She found it helpful, to "include him in activities." She placed material "on his desk which is visual." Her goal was to make sure that "he felt comfortable and happy." The Board provided resources to schools to be equipped to work with academic and social challenges.

Teacher: **Victoria** emphasized the importance of the "reframing our responses" (professional development) program which she participated in. The program attempted to provide school staff with opportunities to reflect, collaborate, and learn best practices to help students in their challenging situations. The school planned to return and have "twenty percent of the staff involved." She is a "teacher champion", "teacher representative", of the "F.N.M.I. student population." She had the opportunity to attend different P.D. sessions offered through the Board.

Victoria was exposed to different experiences in understanding "difficulties that F.N.M.I. students are facing in schools." The Board is working towards creating "different collaborative inquiry projects" to improve academic learning. However, she found "problems of practice are so big," and costly to address properly. She incorporated "read-aloud", "story maps", and "lessons on residential schools." Lessons on the war in Iraq, and in Afghanistan have facilitated learning. However, **Victoria** is concerned about offending students "unintentionally." Many newcomer Syrian students encountered "post-traumatic stress." She compared those experiences

to "families who attended residential schools, where children were murdered." Often, **Victoria** found the challenges are "teachers do not know who is in their audience."

Teacher: **Athena** attended a presentation on Syria and was advised to "welcome them to your school." She attended a presentation at the Board, and a woman's story "stuck" with her. She said, the woman didn't "want to leave" Syria. However, when bombs came closer to their home she felt lost. The woman felt like she had "lost her identity." Now, this woman wanted to ensure she could "vote," and has become "Canadian." **Athena** reflected on her experiences at "G.E.N.T.L.E." (Guided Entry for New Teaching and Learning Education), and many students did not "know how to be at a school." The school support counsellor did a workshop on trauma, and offered documents containing strategies. She found many E.S.L. teachers have students from "war torn countries." She learned a great deal through the "newcomer orientation package" which was helpful to "understand."

Teacher: **Gwen** found, "teachers are aware" due to "the Syrian influx." Often, parents "struggle", with children having "behaviour issues," and trauma. She questioned, "How can we better support students?" It is a good idea to "run workshops," to assist families into understanding "the new system." *Principal:* **Lisa** suggested increasing "focused" staff learning. Principals can only pick a certain amount of staff to attend, due to financial constraints. Her job is to make everyone "on the same level of learning."

Teacher: **Marianne** described how there is, "professional development" focused on "large First Nations, Metis, Inuit, in this building." "Collaborative inquiry" attempts are beneficial towards "creating sense of community." Time and resources are spent, "bringing people in" to address "cultural teaching and learning." However, the drawback is the focus is on

"historical context of our First Nations children." Increased efforts need to facilitate social understanding of "other cultures", and "understand the refugee situation."

Teacher: **Marianne** explained, curriculum does offer opportunities to "open up with inquiry." Teachers "present a topic" during lessons they have no knowledge about. She explored topics with students, and they learn together." However, the challenge is "it's uncomfortable", and there are no "pre-packaged" lessons to use. The difficulty is it does "take a lot more effort and, time" for the teacher. She described that it affected her so deeply, the first time she heard about residential school at "cultural competency" training. Now, she cannot go back to teaching without incorporating lessons on the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Presently, there is a big focus on the "influx" of "Syrian refugees." While, years ago there were many students from "African nations". Workshops need to focus on improving cultural "understanding." She advised more work is needed in "being trauma informed" to the unique challenges specific to students impacted by trauma. Many teachers expressed, "if it is not a priority for Board, why is it a priority for me?" Workshops should concentrate on "promotion" of mental health and taking care of "spiritual" and "emotional" self. The work is looking at "strategies", "mindfulness", and "bringing understanding" to students' perspective. While, there is no "reference to this policy", the school is making it a "priority."

Teacher: **Jennifer** brought in her own background experiences. She comes from a "proud history of being First Nation's." She explained due to the residential school's trauma legacy, students do not "openly share who they are." **Jennifer** experienced forms of marginalization, which had a lasting impact. **Jennifer's** past instilled empathy, and deep understanding of experiencing inequities. She started a "group" with Arabic families, focused on "discussing mental health." She wanted the "perspectives of an Arabic family." Families have

not been "open to the school support counselor" working with their child. Overall, the conversation was really "eye-opening". Families are hesitant, since their child is "labelled for life" (with a mental health issue). Often, children "back home" are "taken," and institutionalized when given this label. She found it helpful, having an interpreter translating with families.

Principal: **Amy** thought the school counselor "brought in a lot of information." She was helpful in supporting students, who have experienced trauma. For example, the Board offered professional development training on "reframing our responses." She attended conversations about "equity", and how students are "wards of C.A.S. (Children's Aid Society)." Attempts have been made to address, "mental health," and "poverty" through policy and procedure. The "Learning for All" document is useful to meet the needs of all students. For example, every student should have a profile which teachers access to "know their learning styles." Teachers are responsible to understand students' interests, and individual histories. **Amy** found "professional development," and "more networking" opportunities is needed for teachers.

Theme 3: Time Constraints

Vice Principal: **John** described, "Teachers do not have enough time." They are too "busy", to "embed" everything required in policy, "into their classroom model." "Resources" are needed to create a safe and inclusive school. For example, the "Learning for All" document needs to be accessed. However, there is limited time available in "staff meetings." Often, teachers "just scratch the service." He wanted to be "more focused," however he was overwhelmed. **John** reflected how working at a high-poverty school is a "tough job." *Teacher:* **Abdul** described, education has become "overwhelming," since there is no longer a homogenous classroom. He taught the most diverse classrooms, there are "eight languages", and "five religions." Teachers' work is "similar to a car, and when they go over a bump there will be shocks." **Abdul** perceived

teaching as "complicated," but rewarding as well. Teachers must "stay competitive" as educators. Improvements in schools are necessary to meet the needs increased immigration brings.

Teacher: **James** mentioned there are a multitude of challenges in "balancing lessons", and "translating into three languages." The policy does not take into consideration the multitude of factors, which takes "time." Boards must offer "meaningful training" to schools. In the past, having teachers read materials, and instructed "to go do it", was unhelpful. He pulled himself out of class for half a day to "go back to madness." **James** was frustrated to receive information which could have been shared via email. He found that P.D. often is not helpful, not instructional, and wants strategies to take back to class. "Teachers are pulled in many different directions," and it is a "juggling act." **James** wanted policy strategies, which "give balance." He suggested, stopping "splitting classes" into grade seven, and grade eight classes. It is a "struggle" for teachers to "divide their lessons" into "two different curriculums." **James** provided "assessments in two different times," to meet requirements. He described how all that "planning time" could go into addressing other learning and social issues.

3 Teachers: **Sarah** noted how the classrooms are filled with students from "different cultures." It can be "hard" for teachers to "achieve balance," and meet policy mandates. She voiced the need for having more "E.S.L. teachers," at her school. **Aliya** suggested, "Stop cutting funding," if equity is important to meet students' needs. Teachers need more financial resources, in order to help "alleviate the stress on the teacher." **Sophia** vocalized how if she "didn't have the E.A., it would be difficult." She "lacks support" when a student has flare-ups, and it is unfair." She illustrated, the challenge falls on the teacher which takes "time away from the other kids."

2 Teachers: **Victoria** demonstrated, the "day gets so busy", especially when students "come with so many needs." Lack of enough "personnel" is a "huge challenge," which policy does not factor in. **Victoria** felt she must "clone herself", since time is a big challenge. She voiced her "struggle" is dealing with Johnny again, and "it is the same story." However, what she really wants to do is "push the other kids further." **Athena** illustrated how all teachers help students, and program for diverse abilities. She described, the mantra at the school is to "meet students where they are at." For example, five students are on I.E.P.'s; along with five students who are It can be "overwhelming." She noted "time" is a challenge for teachers, and "programming is huge." Additionally, when the "big wave of Syrians" arrived, students did not know how to behave. Many students had to "learn how to hold a pencil," and were "reading the book the opposite way." She mentioned, "Lining up was hard," and "students were in a bad place." Many students were crying and hanging onto railings.

3 Teachers: **Gwen** voiced, how there is a need to "recruit full-time staff support." Teachers "need more support," which policy does not account for. **Danielle** described, there is always a need for "human support", and "more people" is beneficial. The "S.W.I.S.S. worker" is important in creating parental links; however, "there is only one of her." **Marianne** articulated how the biggest "barrier" is the "time" component. It can take a lot of "front loaded time," from curriculum learning, to build that environment. She advised, providing teaching which involves the principles of equity and social justice "takes a lot of work." Further, it is work which needs to be carried over in the classroom throughout the year. She found, "things get crazy", and it can be hard to be a classroom teacher. **Marianne** is always behind her "plan of attack for the day." She showed the mess which should have been cleaned up earlier in the day. However, her attention was instead on "two students who needed quiet talk time which was more important."

Teacher: **Trevor** demonstrated how the teacher has a legal responsibility to meet individual needs. He described, he "carries a lot of guilt", and questioned "whether he modified enough?" He wondered, whether he "assessed students fairly" to meet students' needs. **Trevor** heard of great teachers who "impacted", visited families' homes, and made connections. He found there are a "burnout factor", and a challenge to "juggle everything." *Principal:* **Amy** described the "model is towards universal design", and "getting students identified early." Teachers must be skilled at differentiated instruction. She discussed a program which came out of the Board, called "Refraining Our Responses." The program focused on "kids from poverty", "learning disabilities", "P.T.S.D.", and "abusive families." **Amy** stated, "families coming from other countries do not understand the Canadian system." It can be a huge job for a teacher to "juggle", and it is their responsibility. "Teachers need to make use of their instructional coaches, and L.S.T. teachers. "Administration offers resources, and teachers are doing their best to make sure kids are safe."

Theme 4: Changes in Immigration

Teacher: **Abdul** explained "if there is a problem" for teachers, they "get threatened." Teachers may not want to be part of "the solution." Often, teachers "struggle with challenges," and "change." He perceived, people often "have a way of life," and "do not want to change." However, "society," and "life has changed", because of "immigration." Now, he saw more "diversity" reflected in the "textbooks." For example, names are "Abdullah," and "Maria", and teachers must adjust to immigration.

Abdul's own children's lives will be "different," since they are "being exposed to everything." He thought this exposure was helpful, to "adapt to the workforce." For example, he met "a boy in a small town" who was acting "nervous." The boy "put up his hand," and said,

"I am twenty-one years old" and "I saw a black person" (for the first time). **Abdul** said, "Those pockets are here" resulting in significant challenges for teachers to "change." Here, teachers mainly have only taught "homogenous population" for the last twenty-five years. **Abdul** saw teachers who taught in "country schools" go into administration.

Centered on an analysis of Statistics Canada census data, Ryan, Pollock and Antonelli (2009) established that 9.5% of Ontario's teachers (including school counsellors) in 2006 were "visible minorities" (a Statistics Canada term which Ryan et al. critique), compared to 22.8% of Ontario's population (the percentages in Toronto are higher: 18.6% of teachers and 42.4% of students). Population trends are changing due to changes in immigration. Teachers who in **Abdul's** view hold limited exposure to diverse students from language, religious, and economic differences. Placement occurred without regard to backgrounds, and experience. Teachers and administrators are forced to leave "good populations" and are "placed in a struggling school." It was an excellent idea having people "work around", which "changes the way you teach." He asked, "How do you change people's mindset," and provide "exposure?"

QUESTION 3:

As noted earlier the third research question was: How does Policy Program Memorandum 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, 2009) reflect and inform the implementation of inclusive education by teachers, vice principals, and principals?

Theme 1: Hiring for diversity

During interview questions focused on Ontario's current equity context, participants communicated that, "some improvements" have been made. However, they raised areas for improvement to improving conditions for equity in schools. *Vice Principal:* **John** questioned, whether the current teaching staff at his school "represented our students?" He emphasized, his

school had a high Native population. He looked "around this school Board, the administration is pretty White." *Principal:* **Jasmine** noted, most of population at her school Board "is homogenous". She believed, "that is where diversity needs to happen" in seeing more representation from different cultural groups. Further, **John** stressed the importance of "having different stakeholders" involved in meetings, deciding P.D., and what services to offer.

Teacher: **Abdul** expressed confidence, in having a great connection with students, since he spoke Arabic. He mentioned how lessons are structured with prompts. He can "dig deep in their thinking", due to the "cultural linguistic connection." He employs language as a "tool" and is a useful "strategy." He thought accessing a teacher from the same religious and cultural background encourages "trust." He said, *"*You see a teacher, from the same background. Look there's an Arabic speaking teacher, they see themselves in me. Maybe I can be a teacher? Maybe I could go to university? Some of these students have never gone to school. I see myself in them." **Abdul** believed he, and his students were learning together. He said, "I teach them English, they improve my Arabic."

Abdul revealed the need to address hiring practices which occur at that school board. He stressed, "Unfortunately, we have law hiring practices, which encourages top give seniority. You got two or three Jamaicans who would be perfect, to teach a Jamaican population. But, they cannot get the job because of seniority. Give people opportunity, not based on numbers. Maybe they couldn't get that job." He found that within his friend circle, teachers often had to start the beginning. Teachers may be an excellent fit for the job. But, policy needs to focus on hiring practices in "creating a fair system."

Principal: **Jasmine** made analogous comments to **Abdul,** regarding hiring practices. She referred to value in hiring a secretary from Muslim background. The secretary "has been

fabulous to have in the school." **Jasmine** noted, when parents visit the school, "they see reflection in the staff". Parents have "someone who can speak their language, which is huge." Moreover, **Jasmine** accentuated that personnel make a "big difference, in terms of feeling welcomed." She stressed an area of policy improvement, is to "have a more diverse population of employees." **Jasmine** emphasized more work is needed, in "the Education center, at the principal's office," to see more diverse representation.

 Teacher: **Heather** contributed, "We are getting towards a diverse staff. We have two Arabic speaking, E.S.L. teachers. We have French and Spanish speaking." She talked about the value of a grade one teacher who is Arabic speaking. She has "great understanding of the culture." She found teachers access her, if they have questions. She "dispels myths on different beliefs, in our Arabic and Muslim communities."

Theme 2: Curriculum changes needed

Several participants addressed issues in curriculum, and more work needed to make it reflective of community. Policies govern just about every aspect of education, and what resources (e.g. curriculum, objectives, and goals) should be taught. Moreover, curriculum has become an important vehicle driving area reform, and system change *Vice Principal:* **John** voiced, "The curriculum would have been written, by a bunch of White people, who grew up middle class. That's what they will write about. It's good they are starting to change that." Teachers must be willing to change, and reflect community, achieved by "modifying big ideas." **Abdul** added, teachers "cannot only teach out of a book." He highlighted strategies which were successful for him. For example, he "handcrafts change for next year's group, taking last's year curriculum template." He changed curriculum to better support his Syrian students and see them in the activity.

Abdul found, when students are more engaged, they are learning, leading to less behaviour problems. He stated when students pick up language when they see themselves in that lesson. **Abdul** emphasized the value in "accommodating" with "technology," and using "oral pictures." He found that this teaching strategy helpful to get students to listen and take learn words. "If students are not able to write a paragraph yet, students can start by sounding out words, and creating words." So, "maybe by next year students can try to form three or four sentences, and make sure it is structured."

Teacher: **James** emphasized finding, "ways to include everyone in the learning." He does this through "modifications", "accommodations", and conveys "instructions" to students "in a way they understand." **James** stressed, a challenge in modification was "students from low grades to high grades, both seven and eight grade curriculum, E.S.L., and multiple languages." For example, when he writes, "a grade seven and grade eight tests, he has to translate into Arabic." He explained he must be creative in the way that he makes the test. "The first section will cover grade seven, which will be a review for grade eight." He clarified, how "students might not answer all of part one, and instead will address part two questions." Teachers must keep themselves in a safe position. Often, there could be a hundred different things that teachers said they would do, which may not get addressed.

2 Teachers: **Sophia** highlighted, the curriculum, and said teachers "need to be invested, organized, know curriculum, know kids." Teachers cannot just teach, and instead saw value of "including technology." **Athena** illustrated the importance of technology; E.S.L. teachers are documenting more on IPAD's. She discovered, for her E.S.L. students, "even standing in a line, making sure, if they are modified, you can modify expectations." She found, it was okay for students who were not meeting what they wanted to achieve. Teachers must work together;

reach goals, and "having them see success." She highlighted, they "changed goals", since one student doesn't know how to put on his shoes. "He can read some words, so she advised do not worry about the academics so much, take notes. She advised the importance of being realistic, look around the spectrum, and document students. She found, that she had to advocate and explain to parents who do not know our system. She established that it is not bad to be on an I.E.P. or have a psych assessment. But, she saw how parents are scared when they hear that "tests are going to be done on their kids."

Principal: **Lisa** declared, how "the curriculum is very structured." The difficulty lies in how teachers can "integrate all of that into the curriculum." She offered the suggestion that teachers need time to reflect. Change does not occur through a one-time activity and should be built into the program. She highlighted the need for "teachers to have a deeper understanding." As a principal, she emphasized having ongoing conversations with staff, and only using activities does not become sustainable in her building.

2 *Teachers:* **Daniell**e saw, "there is a push for curriculum, to complete that responsibility." However, teachers need to be aware of their students. She found that teachers do a lot of modifications, which takes a lot of time, more time than teachers have. **Marianne** explained building into curriculum principles "underpinning equity and social justice, takes a lot of work". She found, for teachers to "carry that over in the classroom", and "it does not come as part of the curriculum." She explained, teachers often "really stretch the curriculum" in order to "make the social justice issues fit". Teachers had to "be really creative, with mapping teaching, back onto the curriculum."

Teacher: **Jennifer** mentioned, being part of "reviews of curriculum with the Ministry." She emphasized the importance in "reaching out to different groups that will be using the

curriculum" which should be part the equity process. **Jennifer**, her personal experience, and saw that there is a push for F.N.M.I. for the curriculum documents. She was part of the social studies review a few years ago. Ministry brought educators together and said, "We want it to have First Nations influence into the curriculum." She reviewed; grade three curriculum, since that is when students have First Nations experience. She suggested, an area for further develop is, "having a significant impact on history, and development in to Canada which needs to be across the Board." **Jennifer** highlighted the importance in encouraging that participation of different groups from the diverse backgrounds. She mentioned the lack of involvement from parents, and students which was a big piece. She explained her school was successful in having a student representative come to meetings. The student attends meetings like school improvement, student input, for safe schools. She saw the value in including students from the leadership group, and students' squad have great candidates.

Principal: **Amy** addressed the issue that meeting curriculum goals meant going back to the biases of the teacher. She found that the challenge lies in the teachers' ability to do it, and the area to address is how to develop their pedagogy. She noticed that teachers are often at a different spot in their experience and learning. She explained, some teachers are still learning math, some are at their beginning career. Some are ready for retirement, are at different stages. **Amy** questioned, "Where are they, in terms of their ability to be compassion? Are they just trying to get through the curriculum? Are they getting to know their students?"

Theme 3: Policy needs significant restructuring

Several participants highlighted the need to make equity policy accessible. Participants communicated the belief that progress is being made to address equity but that considerable work still needs to take place. They expressed a belief that no system can ever be equitable. Leaders

will continuously need to be attentive in applying an equity lens to school improvement policy initiatives. Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy needs to be created in a way to make it as friendly as possible. *Vice Principal:* **John** mentioned the value in creating "a leaflet, a booklet of what needs to be done." He thought that could "be something to make it accessible", and the way policy is right now "no one wants to read it." He saw the value in making policy, "accessible and easy to understand for everyone." He noted that a challenge was, "there are so many policies which we have to be aware of."

    2 Teachers: **James** mentioned, he disagreed with the amount of policy put out, and how that becomes "cumbersome." He cited that, "realistically, how can you know all the policies out there?" Teachers are constantly "bombarded by policies." He questioned whether this policy is "something that his school needs to do right now?" Can it be "put it off to the side?" *Teacher:* **Abdul** described, teachers "have lots of policy" to be aware of and this equity policy needs to be revamped to increase accessibility. **Abdul** suggested allowing for discussion for schools' actors to reflect. Collaboration and increased reflection in areas which need to be improved is best. Teachers do not have time since classrooms are diverse. Teachers could use "breaks", and "holidays" to look at the document, and policy must make allowances for discussion. **Abdul** described how the equity policy is a "waste of resources", if we do not allow teachers to read it.

    Teacher: **Abdul:** He highlighted how "PPM's in Ontario, guide teaching," and teachers often have a "professional opinion." Teachers must "follow the legislations and laws, because there is a conflict." He explained, "You have to refer to it with a parent. For report cards, I better cover it. It is insurance, look this is what it is, this is what I have done." **Abdul** found that, "policies and procedures, Ministry documents, E.S.L., that is our bread and better."

Teacher: **John** explained, that policy is happening, however "not as best as it could be." He would like to see it at the forefront all the time since that is his job. He explained, that as an educator, he must "answer to everyone." *Principal:* **Jasmine** vocalized, that policy must be re-tailored to incorporate more aspects of broader curriculum reform. Teachers "believe in an inclusive society and cherish those values as Canadians." "Policy helps us do that," and becomes important when "interacting with parents." She illuminated, "that's when you have the policy behind you, and you have something more formal." She offered the explanation that policy is how the school gets their F.M.N.I. funding, and it is an important tool. For her, at the end of the day, she advised that teachers have "embraced it as people, who can make a policy, equitable, reflective."

Jasmine illustrated how policy provided a "backbone" which is especially valuable when "parents are asking questions." In her job, she found that is "where the struggle was." She established that often, "policy causes a certain behavior." For example, if she was a principal that did not "believe in equity" than "tough luck" to her. She explained she must make equity "happen regardless" because of guidelines outlined by policy. Principals must adhere to following the policy mandates, regardless of their own personal beliefs or values.

In the case of teachers, there may be some teachers and principals, who harbor feelings and thoughts which are not geared towards equity principles. Sometimes, teachers may have tendencies to not be inclusive. The equity policy "forces" inclusivity, and makes it happen "artificially at first." In her experience as a principal, she found that after practicing equity and inclusion insincerely so many times it becomes "real." **Jasmine** identified several skills which served her role as a leader for equity. Many of the participants spoke of the importance of sharing decision making with others and being open to different ideas which can be challenging.

Jasmine offered valuable insights and found that "policies do not help at all" in facilitating equity. She explained it "does not matter what the policy says, since her school and staff do not have "access to the things they need." She explained the struggles she encounters with parents who are living in poverty often have less money and that is wrong. The policy must change to ensure that there is a bigger budget, which can better facilitate equity in a more productive manner.

Teacher: **James** claimed he had "read a lot of policies" and "Ministry documents." However, if he was asked to remember one policy like Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy specifically, his "memory might not be there." He described that it does "help to know the policies." However, the challenge is the "way policy is presented to teachers" is often "dry" that is not "retained." The equity policy needs reorganization; otherwise it becomes an ineffective document.

Teachers are already practicing values incorporating equity and inclusion, since their goal is for students "to be able to learn." Teachers want students to have "skills to work together", "be friends", and "understand each other." However, he established developing those skills is a natural force, and "happens regardless of policy telling us." **James** made a sarcastic but important comment, "Wow, if this policy did not come into being"; teachers "wouldn't know to be inclusive." He found that "teachers may not know much policy", however they use "common sense" to put equity principles into practice.

James offered, valuable policy insights that at the teaching level that teachers need to know the "spirit" of "what's there." Perhaps, the principal was not planning on working on this specific area. However, since they are getting instructions from the Ministry "to work on this, through a policy" it would be "put into action." He explained that when policy is brought up at

the school improvement team, or at a staff meeting, "it becomes a directive." For example, the school may be asked to "put up poster boards," and "lead discussions" in the classroom. He voiced, a "trickling down" which often, is not "always direct." An area for further consideration is that "one policy by itself" is not enough. The equity policy needs to be incorporated better to work alongside other existing policies. He stated that "policy is good on paper," and it is "good for public image."

James found, often there are other things which need to be addressed which would have far greater impact. He cited he loves "working with the kids." However, some of the challenges he encounters could be fixed. He clarified, by the time people get to the board level, or Ministry "they are many years out of the classroom". Teachers give different perspectives, because the superintendent or Minister is visiting. Often, teachers feel they need to "put on a good face", instead of "saying what is really happening." Teachers should be honest, since these are the people "that can help you do something." Policy input should allow for anonymity, so schools can vocalize candidly on their concerns. The challenges are "different" then what they were before. The equity policy needs to allow more space for that discussion. James described, the way the policy is current written, it has created "more walls," and paperwork to navigate through. "Policies (should) direct people through a maze," and make it easier for schools to make equity happen.

Vice Principal: Sarah cited, how when teachers face a "roadblock" than they "go back on the policy." "Policy is influential," and introduced to teachers having issues, administration then will discuss it. She found that it is "always good to have the policy." As a school principal, if she was suspending a student, she needed rules to show what (rules) student broke. Aliya noted, how teachers and administrators will be "more accountable" to policy if it is "mandated."

Principal: **Lisa** highlighted that in her experience as a principal, she has "worked with equity and diversity policy," however there is "always room to grow." She vocalized, how there are "different things we can do," and with a "different lens." She suggested, that more work needs to be done in bring more opportunities with literacy, and with numeracy.

Several participants described how an aspect of policy is being implemented through the school's diversity kit. For example, **Lisa** cited the importance in the having the kit "accessible to all staff", there is a need for "more focused conversations." She mentioned, that "when a policy and procedure come through the Ministry, it's always, inclusive and equity." The school follows their "own board policy," which they have to "bring it back to that." The "building blocks" provided by "the Ministry's policy memorandum", along with everyone's "school policy" must be accessed. She illustrated, how all these areas must "work together" and "not in isolation." She established that the key is to start with the school staff and build the relationships with the community. She emphasized, the importance in having those "intentional conversations" and allowing time for staff to "dig deeper into the memorandum." The work is in understanding how policy relates to learn and teaching, and ensuring it is implemented correctly. She advised, for "principals to have a deeper understanding" of equity issues, it takes "time, energy, commitment." However, the challenge she encounters is "how to find those connections, with the policy?"

Teacher: **Marianne** illustrated, how Ministry has great resources for E.S.L. teaching students, however she found that "there are a lot of policy memorandums." She explained, she does not "know the ins and outs of" of the equity policy. While, an awareness of the equity policy existed, teachers are not referencing them, but she does not "refer" to it often. An area for improvement is making equity policy more of a "priority." More work needs to be done in

"creating, inclusive classrooms" where all "students regardless of background, are feeling like they are part of the learning." The equity policy has not been talked about explicitly "in this manner at monthly staff meetings." Instead, there are conversations about how the school "can be inclusive," and create "more equitable learning environments" for our students. Equity work is being done "in our own way," and "not necessarily what is outlined" by the policy. However, the policy allows for "more of structure to work within." She questions if there was not an equity policy would school boards would implement "that inclusive piece." It was important that Ministry "set up a priority" for equity and inclusion to happen. "Teachers see it as a policy priority", then they know it is something which "needs to be followed through" on.

Jennifer noted that, the challenges in having too many "PPM's out there, and so, the school Board has their own taken" which is the "legal side of it." The Board focuses on protecting themselves, and lost sight of the essence of its intention. While, the policy program memorandums serve as a legal guide for schools to follow, the downside is the equity policy loses the spirit of inclusive education. Often, this can result in administration and teachers utilizing the document to cover their backs in case problems arise. Further, school boards have their own interpretation, which they make their own specific for the board. Schools have individual interpretation can often be a challenge, since "schools are so diverse." The language piece is up to "interpretation". Principals take parts from the policy that they "need," and can "benefit" from. In her work as a vice principal, she runs into families who are "well-versed," and good at "self-advocating" for their children. Parents come in and have "paperwork." She faced situations where she set the tone of these conversations, to move forward in a positive way. She tried working with families to help students become a "better global citizen."

Teacher: **Trevor** cited, how facilitating "the inclusion part", for a diverse school like the one he "works at is a good model." However, he illustrated there are many "barriers" one encounters. For example, "when students are first met at the office" he found that the administrative staff is so busy, and more work could be done in "educating non-teachers, with the policy." He questioned, how "familiar are administrators with the policy?" *Principal:* **Amy** found, the equity policy, and "understands the key aspects of being cultural." **Amy** "ensured that programming is culturally responsive." She stressed the importance in making sure teachers are meeting the needs, "get training", and have the "resources." Teachers work with the E.S.L. department; want students "to feel a part… a sense of community." She explained, that teachers' responsibility as teachers is to meet students' needs no matter what their "cultural (or) … economic backgrounds" are. Given that there is little mention of PPM 119, I found the policy does take an anti-racist approach, and I chose to focus on the narratives of teachers, vice-principals, and principals.

Training staff to use anti-racist tools is not only needed for nurturing areas like "tolerance", "inclusivity", "empathy" and "compassion", which most of my participants described. However, the deeper challenge is seeing that "deeper reflection" in course materials, and curriculum within the school environment. The case description of equity policy implementation at the three high-poverty elementary schools highlighted significant challenging factors that constrained the implementation of the equity policy being done effectively. I found that the material context at the school level was deficient in providing the adequate provision of "resources" to support policy implementation. The three high-poverty elementary schools, were often doing their best, given the scarce financial resources. The equity policy makes no demands of school boards to explicitly allocate supplementary financial resources to high-poverty

elementary schools. Although, the goals of the policy embody transformative promises, the policy as a "driver" is severely lacking the substance needed to achieve its objectives.

These obstacles were significant and limited the possibility of equity work at the school level, preventing system-wide change from taking place. Most teachers, vice principals, and principals were committed to equity and social justice work. Though, they questioned the Ministry's "commitment" to equity and described "severe constraints" of the equity policy which constrained greater social justice from taking place at their respective high poverty elementary schools. I found more work is needed to create equity minded educators who can successfully teach curriculum with anti-racist and ethnocultural elements and who can find ways of incorporating such elements into their teaching and leadership.

How well did Ontario's Equity Strategy in its articulation (along with starting assumptions and ideological bases) align with how current academic discourses anti-racist, inclusive and social justice education frame the problem and solution? The Ontario Ministry of Education responded to federal guidelines with a formulation of multicultural education that invited and celebrated difference (Harper, 1997). Students were encouraged to celebrate their own cultural identity and others through an emphasis on literature, art, food, dance, clothing, and folk rhymes (Joshee & Johnson, 2005). Dei's (1996) arguments on anti-racism education defined this approach as: an action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression. Anti-racism explicitly names the issues of race and social difference as issues of power and equity rather than as matters of cultural and ethnic variety (p. 25). Several scholars have pointed out that the values, meanings and experiences associated with diversity are continuously being discussed, shifting across time

and space and "educational policies and programs have reflected these changes" (Joshee, 2004, p. 127)

Steered by my research questions, I was enthusiastic to learn how Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy was implemented by policy actors (teachers, vice principals, and principals) throughout the participating three elementary high-poverty elementary schools. However, I found that the Equity policy had very little material effects in schools. Directed by the theoretical foundations supporting my research, I now focus on my analysis and joining of my qualitative data from the position that equity policy is not simply a stationary written text. While, it is imperative for policy to be clear and concise for schools to follow, it is naïve to perceive that policy is wrapped neatly into a succession of simple achievable goals, principles, and performance measures outlined by Ontario's Ministry of Education. While, clarity in equity policy is essential, policy is profoundly "complex", continuously needing development and improvements for it to be successful in responding to today's rapidly changing immigration trends.

From this position, policy is more than an implementation of Ministry of Education's proposed goals and objectives. Rather, I attempted this research, and more specifically, my analysis, by being attentive to the "complexities" and "challenges" in which high-poverty elementary schools "do" policy. I started to see how educational policies, discourses, teaching, and leadership practices around enacting equity in education, in relation to social and academic learning, are enacted differently. Further, these interpretations are understood by the assortment of actors from the Ministry, Board, and local school level (at the three high-poverty elementary schools), all through their own individual interpretations of a specific equity policy.

Continuing this position, policy implementation comprises an array of policy actors with differences in knowledge, powers, and commitments that work on policy in ways that can simultaneously produce productive and destructive effects. Hence, although equity and inclusive education being recognized by the Ministry as a key priority (since 1993), I sought to better understand "how" teachers, vice principals, and principals were bringing about these policy initiatives at their respective high-poverty elementary schools. My interviews with teachers allowed for deeper understanding in "how" did Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy uphold its position as a priority across schools since the Strategy was introduced in 2009? What key indicators of success have been accomplished so far? What effects (if any) do Ministry policies have on teachers, vice principals, and principals?

I initiated my analysis of the data by critically examining the complex landscape, actors, developments, and effects of policy implementation. Additionally, in my literature review, I described how multiculturalism, diversity, equity, were addressed broadly in Canadian government. Further, my readings of the Multiculturalism Act, prompted me to be in a better position to observe the landscape around the agenda in which Equity Strategy articulated. I had to read beyond its overt language, to instead deeply understanding how participants implemented, how they "translated" the Strategy into their actual "material" day to day teaching and leadership practices. I started to question what actors do to "negotiate" policy to fit into the policy priorities and significant challenges at their respective high-poverty elementary schools. I began to critically address and reflect on, the specific problems to which this equity policy represents an intervention or solution?

I found the equity policy does not make noteworthy realistic transformative measures for school Boards in Ontario, or Ministry of Education. The policy does not distribute monetary

resources to high-poverty schools and fails to deliver the pertinent budgetary backing to implement its well-intentioned equity goals. Given the chronic financial constraints, the implementation of equity system-wide is largely dependent on the existing resources of individual elementary schools (widening the financial gap between the have and have not schools). The funding formula must be addressed specifically to meet the distinctive needs of high-poverty schools (e.g. students arriving to school hungry, unable to engage fully in learning). While, the policy acted as a mandate guiding schools in facilitating inclusion, and equity, it lacks in facilitating appropriate curriculum reform (dismantling the Euro-centric curriculum). In addition, more attention needs to be spent to facilitate time/resources for engagement and dialogue in professional development school-wide.

Although Ministry provided teacher and community awareness about poverty issues (e.g. Reframing your responses training), supplementary professional development is needed to expand library resources, human resources, access to field trips, school activities; to improve engagement ensuring long-term student success. While, access to early intervention programs (e.g. early preparation in math, literacy, language is necessary), more can be done to improve school services students and families receive. Further training is necessary to expand provisions to support parental engagement, for Indigenous, and racially/religiously diverse communities (that are rapidly changing due to increased immigration trends).

The document sought to examine equity and inclusion through the lens of appreciating diversity, concentrating on pedagogical praxis and addressing structural racism barriers/biases. The Ministry launched the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, to better support human rights goals as outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, the directive fundamentally failed to address the systemic barriers to

significantly reform educational structures, which disproportionately impact students attending high-poverty schools. Fairclough (2001) proposes focusing on a social problem (either the practice itself or its representation). The social problem that I examined here is race, and class imbalances in three Canadian high-poverty elementary schools, particularly the way Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, addresses (or does not address) these societal power imbalances.

Fairclough (2001) described recognizing hindrances to the social problem being addressed and identifying factors which keeps the problem intact. This comprises of two parts: an examination of the context within which the problem occurs, and an analysis of the language used. Examination of the variety of possibilities available and the selections made PPM 119 text (what has been selected and what has been left out) – the connecting of words or images in texts. By including the narratives of teachers', vice principals', and principals', my study highlighted what areas of improvement are needed, challenges and tensions involved, within the implementation of equity policy. Next, the language of the text is examined by moving through the text at many levels – whole text language organization, clauses, and words – to conclude the means in which the text employs representations of the world, social relations, social identities, and cultural values.

I studied mandates in the 2009 Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, and compared them to the narratives of teachers', vice principals', and principals'. My participants assisted me in weaving a complicated and personal story of their daily teaching and leadership experiences at the school level. I highlighted how equity (and inequities) effect students in three high-poverty elementary schools (based on teachers', vice principals', and principals' perceptions). Equity cannot take place in seclusion, collaboration and involvement of all stakeholders in decision making, and reform is wanted. True educational transformation occurs when addressing all

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levels of policy, practice, and administration, through collective commitment to facilitate equity, which continues to be a work in progress.

In summary, question three attempted to understand how the equity policy reflected and informed the implementation of inclusive education. The connection between PPM 119 and the three themes noted above (1. Hiring for diversity, 2. Curriculum changes, 3. Policy needs restructuring) all indicate areas in which policy has been informative and reflected, and parts where improvements are necessary. Although I specifically sought out to find out how the equity policy was informing teachers' practices, and understanding the connection, it became evident that it was not being used very much. While, teachers were not able to explicitly discuss the content of the policy, they were acquainted with the "spirit" of its overarching main agenda. Teachers had their own unique interpretations, and some benefitted from the policy in their interactions with families. In my findings, I tried to include as many phrases, and quotes from teachers to provide the reader with an insider perspective and capture how participants spoke about equity. By using teachers' colloquial expressions, the reader gets a feel/sense of the teachers' perspectives. Ultimately, I found that teachers were not significantly engaged with PPM 119.

Vice principals and principals, in contrast, showed more awareness of the equity policy (demonstrated in the findings section). Principals' narratives illustrated how policy became relevant and acted like a "backbone" to facilitate accountability. Additionally, this section highlighted how teachers perceived a multiplicity of policy and competing interests and trends; they felt equity policy should better support schools to navigate through the "equity maze". While, it became clear that teachers embraced the values of equity, it was very much still a work in progress, climbing through many challenges and tensions. Finally, this section illuminated

how no policy is flawless, and Ministry documents acted as a formalized mandate. Teachers

voiced that they would still be engaging in equity work, regardless of what the policy mandated.

However, these notions are problematic, since Boards put PPM 119 in place due to the lack of

enough equity work by teachers in the larger context of (im)migration. Evidently, this policy

needs to be made more emphasized and more accountable. Key tensions arose in the areas of

hiring for diversity, and insufficient financial resources.

Chapter 6: Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss my findings in this exploratory case study, in relation to Dei's Anti-Racist Framework, and Ladson-Billing's Critical Race Theory. Connections with theory to the themes which emerged from my data are presented, that arose from my three high poverty elementary schools (Rosa Parks Elementary School, Harriet Tubman Elementary School, and Martin Luther King Elementary School), as they related to answering my three research questions. Again, the purpose of this study was to examine how teachers, vice principals, and principals in three high-poverty elementary schools perceive fairness, equity, and inequity in relation to students' academic and social learning.

6.1 Analytical Approach: Dei's Anti-Racist 5-Step Framework

1. <u>Culture of Whiteness and White privilege recognized:</u> White power, essentially White male power, and White privilege, are the foundations for authority, and control which are challenged within the anti-racist framework. Some White people underestimate Whiteness, and the privilege of White skin. An anti-racist analysis of White privilege and power comprises the historical developments of enslavement, colonization and falsification of non-European people. White privilege re-enforces power struggle dynamics within different groups. Further, an anti-racist analysis focuses on prevailing power, and societal systems which re-produces a system of power which benefits White people. An anti-racist framework differentiates the relative nature of power and distinguishes that people of colour can have access to power. Nevertheless, the framework defines how this access is controlled, and allowed only within the boundaries of a White-led society.

It became obvious (through my classroom observations, and interviews) that curriculum utilized by teachers, was Euro-centric heavy, and racial diversification found within pedagogical practices was generally inserted through teacher's individual agency, which did not seem overly influenced by the presence of PPM 119. As Henry, Tator, Mattis and Rees (2000) state, "The perspectives of novelists, and poets who reflect the history and experiences of non-Western cultures are generally ignored… in the Euro-centric curriculum" (p. 234). The absence of significant minority representation in curriculum paints an unrealistic picture for students by focusing primarily on the lives (and experiences) of White characters. Most of my teacher participants did their best to modify the curriculum (e.g. by accessing scarce resources through the library). However, resources were often insufficient, and extremely time-consuming to seek out. Teachers mere presentation of limited materials which were Euro-centric heavy resulted in large pockets of Canadian student population not being adequately represented.

Several teachers conveyed recognition of the culture of Whiteness, which surrounded their teaching experiences. These teachers described the Whiteness encountered through the Euro-centric heavy curriculum they were mandated to teach. Whiteness here relates to the normativity of racism, which contributes to privileging White people above people of colour as an accepted norm. Teachers, vice principals, and principals spoke about the richness of experiences acquired working within international context. The term Whiteness was used to define the social norm (standard) operating within Canadian society. While, this practice not only rejects students of colour access to equality (within the context of Canadian schools) it prioritizes White students learning over students of colour. Several teachers passionately described meaningful efforts to challenge Whiteness, by not viewing immigrant students as "empty vessels" and employed story-telling. By not engaging in a deficit model, teachers made

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efforts to raise racial consciousness amongst students and families (by employing strategies like story-telling). Further, significant efforts, to advance leadership and teaching practices can potentially contribute to improved academic and social learning outcomes.

Some teachers viewed the need to "value," and "interrupt" the dominant discourse which made minority students' experiences invisible. A handful of teachers were adept in recognizing and articulating the dynamics of Whiteness. These teachers were nurturing and attempted to create safe spaces to encourage academic and social learning for all. A few teachers were aware of the power, and effects of race on students. They attempted to align themselves with minority students and be an ally to students of colour. Some teachers described overlooking important relationships which manifested re-production of Whiteness in the classroom. Additionally, teachers were "conscious" of the resistance showed by the culture of Whiteness at their respective schools. Teachers described how there was a necessity to stop placing the burden of change, solely on people of colour. In the past, people of colour have been the victims of oppression, and were also relied upon to educate others. Some teachers articulated limited strategies held towards challenging the presence of Whiteness perpetuated within this school board, and thereby offer resistance. Hence, Whiteness is about the relationship of dominance between Whites, and people of colour. Opportunities to participate in meaningful, on-going, and quality professional development were viewed as an asset.

I highlighted perspectives from teachers, vice principals, and principals who participated in my study. The most difficult barrier rests with the looming reticence of White teachers recognizing their role in relation to the racialized "Other". I was sensitive to these hurdles during my interviews, and observations with participants. In my study, I discovered that many educators did understand the importance of students maintaining their racial and cultural

identities. Teachers wanted to learn and improve existing strategies on how to connect with the "Other". Consequently, playing an integral part in the schooling process, especially to student populations such as Indigenous and Syrian refugees (the minority population groups my participants taught). From a provincially-shaped curricula backdrop, teachers arbitrate what is taught, how it is taught, by offering social learning cues (e.g. modelling) to students, thereby possessing a tremendous influence in creation of inclusive/non-inclusive spaces within the classroom community.

Teachers attempted to explore their own experiences encountering racism, however described not focused on specific critical incidences enough. Here, it is insufficient for educators to be merely aware that Whiteness existed, and ways it manifests at respective schools. While teachers viewed their (own) individual White racial position as an asset to the school, and students they taught often, they described their positionality blinded them to the significant effects of power and privilege within school structures. Several teachers described how they were socialized within a White dominant culture, which impacted their racial identity, and perceptions of themselves and others. Teachers struggled with "how" Whiteness operated within their individual classroom/school. Consequently, teachers wanted further essential strategies in the application of theory to practice challenging Whiteness. Several teachers questioned what actions and behaviours they exhibited, "intentionally and unintentionally" to perpetuate and battle structural racism. They desired to challenge the equity discourse, beyond a superficial level, and interrupt Whiteness by acknowledging privilege and racial differences.

Teachers engaged in reflective processes, which focused on learning and growth, as an approach to transform interactions. Teachers attempted to disrupt racist activities (through counter-narratives). Teachers, vice principals, and principals did not want to deny agency to

students of colour, by implying they were "solely" victims of oppression. Put a different way, educators acknowledged the impact of race on White teachers and students, and their own relationships to people of colour. Others found it exhausting to challenge the discourse of Whiteness in many mainstream classrooms/school settings. The "status quo" continues in maintaining power differences amongst minority students living in poverty, resulting in meaningful equity work being an "ongoing" process.

By differentiating the curriculum, providing accommodations to students, and telling stories about their life experiences, teachers attempted to challenge the Euro-centric curriculum. Teachers made some efforts to boost students' academic and social learning. They provided students a more comprehensive outlook that did not only emphasize Euro-centric perspectives, and instead facilitated a global perspective. Many White teachers discussed having to model desired social Canadian behaviour and norms. However, I was fortunate to have engaged with a few teachers and vice principals, who were from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Moreover, these racialized teachers tried to demonstrate to students that racial minorities could succeed within the Ontario educational system. Also, this school Board was equipped in understanding the importance in bringing teachers (along with other school staff) from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. One high-poverty elementary school staff reflected the diversity of students in this community (which was a rare occurrence within this predominately White school Board). Further, teachers were "hand selected", and chosen to teach at this high-poverty elementary school, primarily due to their ability to speak Arabic (highlighting how representation as well as multilingual competence, and even religion matters).

Teachers who are members of racialized minority groups act as vital role models for all students (especially racialized minority students, whose histories often go unnoticed). I saw how

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racial, and religious representation in staff impacts students in a significant way. I observed how teachers of colour were equity-responsive, and sensitive in employing culturally responsive teaching strategies benefiting all students. Racialized minority teachers described how they attempted to show students, they can aspire to become a teacher, doctor, engineer and lawyer. Additionally, Arabic speaking ESL teachers who are Muslim perceived they were an example to Syrian refugee students.

Minority teachers described how they were viewed by their students as people of colour who achieved success within the Canadian educational system. Moreover, they declared how they facilitated mentorship, and dialogue, resulting in increased understanding of non-White teachers racialized experiences. Intentional conversations were sought out by the White teacher, with the person of colour, with the goal of learning about racialized experiences. Typically, the White teacher approached the racialized teacher in an open manner, attempting to build on existing knowledge. Henceforth, these relationships facilitated a platform where deliberate conversations and opportunities, were available to explore another culture. Additionally, I was privileged to speak with an Indigenous vice-principal, who described connecting deeply with Indigenous students (and families) due to common language, cultural heritage, and childhood experiences living in poverty. She described her interactions connecting with families living in poverty, made her sensitive to the challenges the Indigenous community faces. Highlighting how Indigenous educators are important carriers of valuable race-based experiences, involving intergenerational racism K-12 Indigenous students encountered within provincial schools. Therefore, an anti-racist analysis confirms how insider knowledge is beneficial to document, facilitate dialogue, and decolonize racist ideologies which preserve Whiteness.

Several racialized teachers described (and reflected) in detail on their "individual" school experiences. Further, they encountered critical incidences of racism which "deeply" affected their lives (both professionally and personally). During the incident, a reflective element occurred, in which there was an increased awareness that something significant occurred. Often, these experiences were "re-played", and "re-examined", conclusions were drawn out which impacted future perceptions and actions. Stories must be valued and preserved "collectively" within Ontario K-12 schools, by those who hold institutional power.

I was fortunate to hear personal histories, which I saw, in one case, still impacted many participants today. In addition, they deliberated how they were able to work through difficult issues, and conflicts. Efforts were made by principals to facilitate dialogue between staff, in the hopes of promoting meaningful change in equity and inclusive education. Finally, they described how social and professional positions challenged unspoken classroom/school norms. However, many teachers reflected on how their own actions might reproduce inequities with minority students. Also, the findings suggest that White teachers need meaningful experiences/interactions with people of colour, opportunities for reflection, and ongoing dialogue. Teachers, vice principals, and principals, described how Ontario needs "all" of its teachers to be culturally responsive, and equity minded working toward equal success of all students.

In the findings chapter (Chapter 5), I presented strategies that teachers, vice principals and principals used to break challenge or supplement the Euro-centric curriculum. Educators described how they offered perspectives to challenge the deficit narratives to which students were exposed to. *Teachers identified that the curriculum did not "effectively" address issues of race and ethnicity, particularly to their Syrian and Indigenous student populations.* Many

teachers, vice principals, and principals described how there was a big "struggle" in seeking out relevant resources which is time-consuming. Teachers found a "lack" of available resources to be one of the greatest barriers, which prevailed in assisting educators to recognize their own role, and individual "biases".

As Ladson-Billings (2012) laid emphasis on deconstructing, "laws, ordinance, and polices that work to re-inscribe racism and deny people their full rights (p. 45). *Biases were described as difficult to "dismantle", and equity policy is unfeasible without adequate financial funding.* Many educators described being "guilty" in their devaluation (of the histories) of the racialized "Other" at times (unconsciously and consciously). *Teachers described wanting to learn more through increased professional development.* Several White teachers described not being accustomed to questioning themselves about their race, or normalized assumptions. Teachers' White racial identity was the societal norm, and symbolic of the characteristics of privileged Canadian society. In conclusion, White teachers must have access to both "meaningful" and "deliberate" on-going dialogue during staff training, where their assumptions about race, racism, and their own White racial privilege are unearthed and challenged.

Many teachers spoke about how there is a denial to understand the powerful effects of intersectionality on race, class, and gender functions within classroom/school structures. *However, teachers mentioned the practice of storytelling with E.S.L. Syrian refugee students, and value in sharing experiences to combat intersectionality.* Several teachers discovered storytelling to be a beneficial strategy in "challenging" complex issues which arise related to culture and diversity. Lastly, teachers, vice principals, and principals, were sensitive to unique cultural, social, and political contexts which impacts students' academic and social learning outcomes.

2. <u>Problematizes the marginalization of certain voices in society:</u> The third tenet of anti-racism highlights the difficulties marginalization has on specific groups in society, challenges the de-legitimation of knowledge, and experiences of minority groups. It contends that knowledge is socially constructed, questions what is "defined" as knowledge, power attached to it, negating and devaluing the experiences of subordinated groups. Dei stated, "To speak about power in the anti-racism discourse is to speak also about the social construction of knowledge" (p. 30).

Anti-racism proclaims that an all-inclusive interpretation, and valuing of human experiences, paired with social, cultural, political, and spiritual aspects, is warranted. In addition, an appreciation of the self and forming connections to others is vital. Change begins "inside" the individual and is an important aspect of critical healing. Anti-racism recognizes the complex educational needs to face challenges of diversity in society, beginning by valuing the unique experiences of "all" members of society, particularly minority groups. As Dei mentioned, "This is possible if educators can create spaces for alternative and oppositional knowledges to flourish in schools" (p. 30). In creating equitable elementary schools, diverse viewpoints, experiences, and outlooks "everyone" should not only be "heard" but valued. It does not mean that power, and social differences are discounted or devalued. Rather, the cultural and religious differences new immigrants bring become assets sanctioning minority groups to inform the majority.

Within the rubric of multiculturalism, teachers employed the rhetoric of "cultural empowerment," encouraging lessons of "cultural diversity" as the solution to racial problems in the school. Rather than confronting racist structures and ideologies, multiculturalism works through the "celebration" of difference. *Thus, there is a marked shift in emphasizing racial*

dominance, and instead towards on-going "understanding" of the rich culture heritage of the "Other". Teachers proposed addressing notions of "cultural difference" serve as an excuse to blame marginalized students lack of academic and social learning abilities in the classroom.

3. (Re)Production of Inequalities: Anti-racism theory emphasizes that the difficulties of minorities cannot be separate from the physical environments in which minorities are in. Dei (1996a) contended the public education system has "historically served the material, political, and ideological interests of the state and those of industrial capital" (p. 34). Students of colour are often assigned to social categories that are in line with low-paying, low-socioeconomic jobs based on their "education". The present economic system has severe implications for racial minorities, women, and students living in poverty. The entire process is designed to look like the natural order of education based upon intelligence, hard work, and discipline resulting in academic achievement and subsequent job success.

Teachers described how their students experience the strains and stresses of family breakdown, abuse, trauma, poverty, living in shelters, and homelessness. Further, teachers spoke about how the minority communities they taught in were inadvertently or systematically blocked from having equitable access to civil opportunities, and resources (e.g. suitable housing, employment, healthcare, civic engagement, democratic participation and due process) which are normally available to most members of society and are essential to social integration.

In the current competitive and individualistic society in which we live, for example, the Syrian refugee groups, and Indigenous students living in poverty were often seen as a burden, resulting in even harsher policies and treatment. This result in inequalities amongst minority students, as they negotiate the process of schooling, becomes constituted in the idea of student

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"success" or "failure" (Henry, Tator, Mattis & Rees, 2000, p. 34). One of the prevalent claims teachers questioned was that Canada supports a colour-blind meritocracy, which symbolic policies like Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy do not illustrate. Ultimately, the disparity in the education of minorities living in poverty, results in different social and academic learning outcomes then rationalized as "meritocracy". Teachers, vice principals, and principals described how not "all" students are believed to begin at the same place, those with advantages are viewed as having it, because of their hard work/talents. For example, principals described how students living in poverty must work harder to contribute to families' economic viability and have many stressors which impact academic and social learning. Principals were very astute in understanding that equal opportunity rejects the existence of cultural and institutional power, and as a result refutes the need to re-distribute power (Henry, Tator, Mattis & Rees, 2000).

Fleras and Elliott (2003) describe how systematic racism, and institutional policies with the unintentional effect of re-producing inequality, flourished in segregationist and assimilationist policies of the past. Nonetheless, principals described how "overt" discrimination is neither culturally nor legally warranted within Canada today. Put it another way, few organizations would admit to implementing equity policies designed to disadvantage racially marginalized populations. *However, principals described how institutional racism continues "covertly" in systemically perpetuating inequality, and with and/without directed intent.* Principals were aware that systemic racism develops despite well-intentioned equity policies.

Legislation is sometimes founded on "faulty" assumptions that failed to accord with the realities of marginalized populations (Fleras & Elliott, 2003). Principals described how racism perseveres because of these assumptions, even if the results are unintended. Even if the actors (e.g. teachers, vice principals, principals) within the institution (e.g. high-poverty schools) do not

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adopt "overt" prejudices towards the "Other", the institutional norms and assumptions "still" perpetuate racism. While, systemic racism is hardly identified by those who advantage from it (Fleras & Elliott, 2003), teachers, vice principals, and principals recognized and challenge it. *Systemic racism continues beyond societies' everyday consciousness, camouflaged by universal standards, taken-for-granted as normal, and the creation of policies like Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, cleverly obscure as equality.* While, government may have good intentions with PPM 119, unfortunately I found the policy is largely symbolic. Whereas, it is not colour-blind, there is a lack of accountability, consequences, and resources behind it. It effectively takes an anti-racist approach, and I began to question how the policy promotes equity and excellence. The benefits of the policy are that it provides needed leverage through formalized legislation to protect (and recognize) the rights of all students, attempting to hold schools accountable.

Consequently, several teachers, vice principals, and principals described how the Indigenous community (not the school) was construed as needing change, which many spoke about. Numerous teachers situated the Indigenous culture of poverty as "conflicting," creating difficult hurdles in academic and social learning. Many teachers perceived Indigenous families living in poverty, as "failing" to properly equip students. Henceforth, school staff's role was to provide basic resources (e.g. food, clothes, etc.) essential towards achieving success. Teachers, vice principals, and principals mentioned how the narratives of Indigenous students' challenging home life, "reduced" the role of the school. Consequently, "re-producing" poverty, and continuing the cycles of abuse for several generations. Here, teachers described "how" Indigenous families questioned the value of education, due to their own legacy of negative school experiences. Teachers described having to counter negative past struggles and made

significant efforts to create more open conversations with families. Teachers, vice principals, and principals often had to "illustrate" the importance of homework, following rules, attending school, and listening. *Teachers emphasized attitudes of "how" racial inequalities, and difficulties in achieving social and academic learning, "emerged" from culturally deprived homes.*

Principals were not 'colour blind', rather cognizant of the mythology of meritocracy and the cycles of disadvantage racialized minorities face. Principals were aware of the racial issues and tensions occurring at their elementary school. However, no participants voiced that the best way to end discrimination is to treat everyone as equally as possible, regardless of their race, religion, culture, or ethnicity. Numerous principals vocalized how minoritized students (particularly ones living in poverty) encountered difficulties due to race, and class. Access to equal opportunity arose, and principals spoke of urging teachers to examine their own racial, cultural, and religious biases. Finally, principals found they attempted to embrace difficult conversations to address racial differences and challenges. Quite a few teachers described the benefits of fostering relationships, and alliances with other teachers. They saw value in recognizing, teaching, and learning about individual differences. Teachers advocated for multiculturalism, which is an ideology that acknowledges and highlights racial and cultural differences. They seemed unafraid to discuss how certain ethnic groups at their respective elementary school suffered as a result of racial conflicts. This study illustrated to me, that combatting systemic racism, and advocating for system-wide change is a difficult task, however change begins with education.

4. Pathological explanations of the family or the home environment: Dei (1996) notes the

    final principle of anti-racism "questions pathological explanations of the family or the

home environment" as answers as to why some youth experience problems (p. 35). It

suggests that "such explanations divert attention away from a critical analysis of the

institutional structures within which the delivery of social services takes place" (p. 35).

Dei questions whether, family environments are really that dysfunctional as to be the sole

cause of their children's academic failure. Attributing contributory explanations for

failure to individuals avoids critically examining how institutions contribute to producing

and maintaining racism.

As Dei (1996a) pointed out, "in order to justify the status quo, conventional modes of

thought tend to mystify and/or reify social reality by attributing causal priority for failure to

factors with the victims themselves" (p. 35). Some teachers were aware that blaming the victim

only serves to reinforce racial stereotypes and maintain denial of racist educational structures.

"Denying and/or shifting responsibility for school failures avoids a critical interrogation of what

happens in schools and why, how students experience schools and why, and how this experience

affects their learning outcomes and/or conventional definitions of school "success" and failure"

(p. 35). *In accord, teachers, vice principals, and principals described a need to further examine*

their institutions, and "how" they contribute to re-producing and maintaining racism in schools.

Teachers defined how marginalization results from consequences of "cultural failure," on the

part of marginalized communities aligning with existing literature (Larocque, 1991). Therefore,

the marginalized "Other" is conceived as failing to adequately adapt to traditional cultural

values, attain social learning, and appropriately fit into Canadian society. However, teachers,

vice principals, and principals spoke about their students wanting to "assimilate", and teachers

having to "model" social learning. However, students did not want to "abandon" traditional

culture. Some White teachers mentioned their colleagues saw students' culture as a "deficit".

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Several teachers, vice principals, and principals described how they made connections with families, bringing in the rich cultural heritage into their classroom (through sharing diversity events).

Teachers, vice principals, and principals were very "sensitive" to challenges of families struggling with poverty. They designated how often parents had various addictions (e.g. drugs, and alcohol), which had a strong influence on their students. Often, teachers described how families living in crisis affected their children, leading to "unmet" developmental needs, emotional distress, and violent behaviors. Other teachers described how students witnessed violence, trauma, poverty, lived in shelters/refugee camps in the past, and were unable to provide basic physical care. Accordingly, it became difficult for newly-arrived immigrant families to provide adequate emotional support, and safe environment. Educators described the settlement process in Canada as taking time.

Several teachers, vice principals, and principals commented how multiple factors (noted in above paragraph), led to students having difficulties in acting appropriately, and playing with other children. *Some teachers described providing access to well-being (included good physical health, feelings of happiness, satisfaction, and successful social functioning).* They described how well-being was improved by joining community programs (e.g. The Boys and Girls Club). Teachers described witnessing a positive change, and saw improvements in students having access to early, reliable, nurturing relationships with supportive caregivers and thriving immigrant youth.

Many teachers, vice principals, and principals described the racial differences which exist in school district funding. Additionally, a disproportionate restriction (in the level, quality, availability of financial, material, and human resources) to low-income, underserved, and

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racially divided communities. CRT frames inequality in high-poverty school funding, through the lens of institutional and structural racism. Ladson- Billings (2009) argued that Harris' (1993) property function regarding education is the most "powerful determinant of academic advantage" (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 32) in relation to funding because it represents the convergence of Whiteness as property, and educational inequality. Framing education inequality in CRT terms addresses White privilege, entitlements, legacy, economic gaps and unequal policies. CRT, and several teachers in this study, advocated that students should be acknowledged for their strengths. *Teachers described using a strengths-based perspective, which allows for student understanding and more effective student-teacher engagement in learning (Yosso, 2005).*

CRT "refutes dominant ideology and White privilege while validating and focusing on the experiences of people of colour" (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). Consequently, teachers expressed tensions in pathological and structural explanations of challenges living in poverty face. For example, factors such as lack of access to basic life necessities like food, water, clothing, and poor living standards. Teachers also encountered challenges in not viewing students with a deficit lens. They voiced familial explanations attributed to generational cycles of poverty in the lower class. Students of colour, and low socio-economic backgrounds are at a disadvantage when teachers have low expectations for them. Several teachers alluded to middle class advantages at "have" schools. For example, students have computers at home, two-parent working parents living above the poverty line, access to adequate housing, health care, and community resources. Improvements need to be made towards asset-based thinking, building up students, and strengthening relationships through peer mentorships. The goal is to encourage a philosophy of viewing marginalized students as resourceful and resilient in the face of adversity.

CRT, as a theoretical framework, allows teachers, vice principals, and principals a way of understanding about how to reduce marginalization of minority groups by recognizing and promoting accomplishments, and demonstrating students' significant contributions. But, such teachings can move beyond history courses to transcend the curriculum. For example, storytelling that includes strengths and contributions of "all" races, showcase children's pictures, and videos of diverse groups of children playing together. *Teachers described the powerful act of sharing stories of different cultures during (for example show-and-tell) illustrates students learning about race and ethnicity, and ultimately eliminates negative and stereotypic attitudes about cultures different from their own.*

6.2   Analytical Approach: Ladson-Billings' Critical Race Theory

Here, I explain the main tenets of CRT and how they are tools for analysis for teachers', vice principals', and principals' interactions with minority students and their families. The tenets of CRT assisted in my interpretation of the capacities of teachers, vice principals, and principals to advance social and academic learning to challenge colour blindness, White privilege, and racism. I employed these five tenets, to inform theory, research, pedagogy, leadership, curriculum and policy, within the context of this study.

> 1. Racism is endemic. First, CRT maintains that racism is "normal, not aberrant in American society" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2000, p. 16). CRT asserts how racism is a permanent component of Canadian life. A liberal ideology looks at racism as abnormal occurrences that can be eliminated one-by-one. Institutions are value-free, and those abnormal racist occurrences can be cut out of them, leaving intact the fair and just institution. CRT, by contrast, states that the actual configurations of institutions involve

racism. Rules, categories, and definitions broadly favour Whites over people from other racial groups. Therefore, what becomes important for CRT is to critique colour-blind assumptions as they fail to recognize this racial component of institutions.

Many teachers and principals of this study learned about racism and racial privilege over time, through reflection, access to professional development, and mentoring from other teachers. Several teachers discussed how they were successful in influencing students' social and academic learning environments within their communities of practice. Teachers developed strategies to "model" increased racial awareness, empathy, tolerance, and promote equity. Teachers described how they brought their own experiences traveling and working globally into their classrooms. However, many participants explained how work is needed in challenging one's own biases and assumptions when interacting with the "Other". The implications for all educators are to learn from the critical incidents that surfaced to guide that process. Teachers expressed wanting to engage in professional learning, to discuss privilege. Teachers emphasized the need to dialogue with people of colour, and engage in meaningful, but challenging discussions about race, racism, and racial privilege, and engage in thoughtful, sustained critical reflection.

2. <u>The power of narrative.</u> The second main tenet in CRT is narrative or counter story (Delgado and Stefanic, 2001; Solórzano and Delgado Bernal, 2001). As history is a tool that has been used by Whites to maintain privilege, traditional accounts of history have left out the voices of the marginalized. Therefore, CRT uses narratives from these groups (looking to the bottom) to challenge the assumed "neutrality" and race less-ness of those accounts, thus historicizing institutions and highlighting the voices of people of colour. For example, these narratives can be expressed through storytelling, sharing of family

histories, and sharing of biographies. These narratives are meant to challenge what is represented through institutions through, for example, television programs, articles, and mass media. Further, there is a "recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of colour" (Matsuda et al., 1993, p. 6) used to counteract the stories of the dominant group. Additionally, "the voice of people of colour is required for a complete analysis of the educational system" (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995, p. 58).

Many teachers described they needed time (to reflect and respond) to the recent changes in student demographics due to the changes in immigration. Further, teachers were critical observers, were open, and eager to making improvements in their teaching. They reflected not only on their own behaviour, but on the "power" their behaviour had on students in their classrooms. Teachers described honestly about how they began to comprehend their privilege, and behaviour. They engaged their critical lens to their practices through deep reflection. Several teachers candidly described how they had minimal experience with people of colour as they grew up. They described that it was only until they attended University, did they come into "contact" with diverse populations.

Engaging in meaningful dialogue to gain, share knowledge, and awareness proved to be most effective. Several teachers described how they benefitted from "collaborating" and engaging in deep dialogue with teachers of colour who served in a mentoring capacity. These mentors (were from Arabic speaking backgrounds) spoke of their racialized experiences. They described to great length how they were deeply affected and impacted by our racist educational systems. Teachers, vice principals and principals described how they were engaging in "some" social justice work. They were empowering racialized teachers who were themselves marginalized and were put into positions of power leading for change. Engaging in activities

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which increased compassion appeared to be a necessary component to facilitate growth and disrupt the status quo. The act of thinking and "valuing" each other's circumstances and histories was the way in which (both) students and teachers learned empathy. Teachers, vice principals, and principals discussed how "stories", helped increase awareness, and cultural competency to facilitate deeper understanding in staff, and students.

> 3. <u>Whiteness as property.</u> Whiteness has a property value (in terms of rights), with the core characteristic of "…the status quo as a neutral baseline…masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination" (Harris, 1993, p. 1715). One of these privileges and benefits of property is the absolute right to exclude accompanied by entitlements of power. Examination of "the curriculum" as property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001) indicates how minority students are at a disadvantage compared to their White counterparts. Since, a "good" curriculum delivers the needed instructional tools that are favourable to reaching academic and social learning goals (both in and out of the classroom).

Ontario curriculum lacked (adequate) recognition of (individual) differences, resulted to minority students lacking access to appropriate pedagogical supports. Further, if racialized students are not well represented in the curriculum, it can lead to students feeling their individual experiences, unique histories, and perspectives are off the topic, and not as important as their White counterparts.

The students at the high-poverty elementary schools often are labelled "at risk" (by social structures), the implicit comparison being made is to an unspoken yet normative category of Whiteness. Hence, minority students whose language and cultural traditions, strayed from those of the dominant White culture were thought to be inferior. As one teacher eloquently expressed,

the work is not to see Syrian refugees as "empty vessels", rather, they need to view students as bringing in unique histories and experiences which should be appreciated. Another teacher described how, the Board should create a center, where immigrant stories can be recorded, shared, and appreciated in the community. *In the spirit of CRT, it is powerful for teachers to understand the rich histories, and shared experiences of their students. Hence, principals described seeing value in laying groundwork to exchange knowledge facilitating racial justice/equality.* Finally, high-poverty elementary schools attempted to facilitate opportunities to assist families, and school staff to collaborate (together) to understand students' unique backgrounds.

4. <u>Challenges dominant ideology: White privilege.</u> Critical Race theory refutes the claim that educational institutions towards meritocracy, colour blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. Educational institutions use these "claims" as a camouflage for self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in our society.

As noted earlier, this exploratory case study examined the social and academic teaching practices and challenges, as experienced by participants who were predominantly White, middle class, and female. I had the privilege of interviewing several teachers, who were inclusive education "champions," and advocates in promoting more racially awareness in schools. *They described their work in facilitating workshops, in which attempts were made to dismantle and address systemic racism, and White privilege at their schools.* Narratives from teachers, vice principals, and principals illustrated some "consciousness" to differential treatment of students of colour. However, teachers and principals did not deny the "presence" of racism in decisions White teachers and principals made, in their interactions with minority student groups. They indicated it was difficult to "tackle" racism. Teachers described how students lacked the

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language to properly engage in in-depth conversations about race and racism. Further, they created teachable moments, and presented diverse literature to their class as strategy to facilitate dialogue and engage in cultural understanding.

None of the teachers claimed to be colour blind and instead saw the conversation about race and racism as relevant. Some teachers attempted to challenge meritocracy, by not blaming students' failures due to their own efforts and were understanding of other factors. Some teachers described that their colleagues "may not want anything to do" with diversity and equity issues. They described how it was "more work" on the teacher to find resources and modify their teaching to accommodate all students. Other teachers challenged the discourse of meritocracy, by being "sympathetic," and had "empathy" for larger racial and cultural injustice, social histories, and recent immigrant students encountered.

Teachers attempted to dismantle racism, by "recognizing" the broad range of differing experiences students' brought with them to the classroom. They were sensitive in understanding the individual struggles and successes, and worked towards fairness, even if they were not the originators in causing that unfairness. Some teachers tried to create a classroom of community, through fun games, which encouraged connecting with other students. While, other teachers adhered to the tenets of meritocracy, by believing that with hard work, determination, and dedication anyone could accomplish anything. These specific teachers "minimized" the narratives, and histories minority students' exhibited. Additionally, a few teachers mentioned that students could pull themselves out of poverty, with hard work. They were "unsympathetic" to the complicated history in which minority immigrant students were born into. They rationalized success and failure, as being entirely dependent on an individual student's own choices and decisions.

Teachers, vice principals, and principals, described challenging circumstances and encounters with students and families, in our interviews, which "enabled their growth and understanding". For example, a vice principal mentioned, having to "read" about the significance of the hijab, when a girl came crying to the office when it was torn off by another student. Due to a move towards greater "accountability", this vice principal found himself in a position of having to react to a difficult circumstance. He mentioned he "lacked the preparation" (he received at the school Board) needed to appropriately respond to this difficult situation. Moreover, he had to rely on his conflict resolution skills when handing this critical racial incident. In another example, White teachers sought help from Arabic speaking teachers to "understand" Syrian students and families' cultural norms and practices. Dismantling inequality involved "building" rich relationships which were "unhindered" by unequal power dynamics. Some teachers felt they had an "ethical and moral responsibility" to share information and placed "high expectations" on themselves to be equity minded. Therefore, participants sought out a person of colour to ask questions or reflect on a critical racial/religious incident. However, in our interviews, teachers mentioned while being engaged in conversations with students' difficult topics focusing on race would re-surface, again and again. Hence, addressing one's White privilege was difficult, as teachers had to confront their own individual racial prejudices/biases. Due to social positioning of accessing their White privilege, White teachers saw how it greatly impacted their flexibility, and ease in navigating through the world.

Race continued to matter, and we are far from being a *post-race* society. Students were born into a society whose foundations were fundamentally racist. Teachers, vice principals, and principals described how as students grow, they struggle to mirror the dominant race-based attitudes and practices which exist around them. Hence, the discussion would turn into a critical

incident for learning to (both) the teacher and students unintentionally. For example, many students coming from war torn environments experienced a great amount of trauma. While, teachers did not "plan" to discuss these sensitive topics in their class, students would themselves bring up experiences in their lessons. Teachers, vice principals, and principals approached these difficult topics with great sensitivity, and made efforts to facilitate appropriate dialogue, and create a safe space for students.

5. <u>Commitment to Social Justice.</u> Critical Race Theory is a framework committed to a social justice agenda. It offers a transformative response to end all forms of subordination in society shown through racial, gender and class-based oppression. CRT challenges the way race and racism impacts educational structures. CRT is a social justice project that works towards liberating the school system and can be used as a template to guide and challenge social inequality. CRT demands becoming increased critical awareness of whose knowledge counts (and whose knowledge is discounted).

Most of this study's participants were committed to social justice, since they sought out employment opportunities to teach and lead within populations groups who were marginalized and living in poverty. Teachers described wanting to take part in professional development relating to "intercultural awareness" and "anti-racism education" to learn how student diversity influences academic and social learning outcomes. Some teachers were able to participate in professional development workshops, and even attempted to train each other, yet they found it was not enough. Anti-racist education specifically and deliberately focuses on racism as a systemic problem. Teachers attempted to create pedagogical approaches which reconstructed curriculum and the school environments. Some teachers described how they "inserted" content to make education culturally and politically relevant to all students. However, several teachers

articulated how their life experiences and pre-existing knowledge provided an "insufficient" foundation. They struggle with the deployment of critical pedagogies needed to confront the reproduction of educational inequalities based on class, racialization and gender.

Many teachers, vice principals, and principals described the widening gap between the "haves" and "have nots" schools, and the obvious disparity of resources for social services, in high-poverty elementary schools. Numerous teachers, vice principals, and principals described how privileged parents in "have" schools, could demand the best resources and access to the highest quality educational experiences. Further, they articulated how parents who have children in high-poverty elementary schools, could not assert the demands for their children, because of many reasons (e.g. language, class, lack of cultural and social understanding). Most teachers and principals described how their high-poverty elementary schools had poor, working class, immigrant and minority students, that were "chronically" significantly under-funded. They described how this involved lack of enrichment opportunities, lack of quality physical education equipment, and inadequate resources offered in their school library.

According to teachers', vice principals', and principals' examination of their schools, they needed equitable, not equal, distribution of resources. Further, this brings about the question, how useful and effective is the equity policy, if it is lacking in providing the necessary funding to be successful? My conversations with teachers and principals showed me that policy is "superficial" in high-poverty schools and is flawed. How is the policy sensitive to the committed and hard-working leaders and teachers' financial needs, who are giving everything they have to the students they serve? Policy needs to determine and include the actual costs of valuable resources needed. Resources which are essential to offer all students a meaningful educational opportunity, grounded on efficient and cost-effective goals.

Education institutions, reflecting society, are an excellent example of a system of oppression. Teachers had difficulties addressing the root causes of oppression and focused on challenging personal strategies and not systemic bias and stereotypes. Oppression occurred in many different social settings, which (both White, and people of colour) teachers described as "overt," and "covert". For many minority students, White teachers can be internalized as more "White authority," and can set the tone of how their world-view is created. Most teachers, vice principals, and principals had awareness of how their schools struggled with addressing equity and equality. Often, disconnected in identity and experience between White and minority Canadians is deeply connected to a multitude of challenges (e.g. poverty, and inequity) which can impact their interaction within dominant groups. Further, they described awareness to many systemic factors which contributed to an equal (and unequal) playing field for high-poverty elementary schools. Leadership is not neutral. To conclude, all principals took a strong position of leading for social justice, as they were deliberate social justice advocates.

Principals made significant efforts to examine the power imbalances which continued to benefit and privilege certain groups at their schools. They wanted teachers to be responsible, and ethical in addressing and disrupting oppressive conditions specific to their high-poverty schools. Principals engaged in their own critical reflection and were responsible in interrogating their own leadership and capacity for social justice. Furthermore, they attempted to engage in empowering teachers and staff, to address their own individual biases.

Most principals and vice principals described the historical context of equity issues in Ontario, and how that impacted present times. *Further, principals described how they did not see everyone as equal. They noted that the playing field is not neutral, which impacts all students.* As well, they found that discrimination based on race, sex, class, ethnicity, and religion

continues to manifest itself despite what sometimes is, in effect, a symbolic equity policy.

Change has difficult tensions because of the lack of resources, and poor preparation of teachers

in dealing with equity issues effectively to facilitate social and academic learning.   Principals

described lack of enough equity programming, lack of hiring and retention in minority teachers

and staff, and accountability which create unequal education structures. Lastly, principals and

vice principals showed how creating socially just schools is complex, multilayered, and even

contradictory, however they all knew the work they were engaging in was meaningful.

Chapter 7: Conclusions, Implications for Research, Policy, Practice, and Recommendations

In this final chapter, I provide a summary of the key points of the study, discuss the implications of my findings, and offer suggestions for future research. The chapter continues with a discussion of limitations of the study, proposed areas that may be considered for future research, and implications for practice in school districts. Lastly, I attend to strengths of this study and conclude by providing recommendations for how this research study can inform future research and action at the school - and board levels.

My desire for social justice is both intuitive and values-driven. In my commitment to public education, I wanted to find improved methods to navigate through the "system" and learn how to create more equitable environments for public groups. In this thesis, I have worked to communicate the understandings of my participants, the triumphs and challenges they faced working at high-poverty elementary schools. Further, I have attempted to examine the pedagogies that they have constructed as attuned to their environments. I offered a grounded account of equity implementation from the perspective of teachers, vice principals, and principals. Delgado (1995b) explains that "narrative habits, patterns of seeing, shape what we see and that to which we aspire" (p. 66).

The findings of this study have implications for educators and teacher education to teach (and lead) in today's culturally, racially and ethnically diverse classrooms. I found many teachers, vice principals, and principals, learned about racism and racial privilege over time, through reflection, access to professional development, and mentoring from other teachers. Many teachers described they needed time (to reflect and respond) to the recent changes in student demographics due to the changes in immigration. Many teachers, vice principals, and

principals, described the widening gap between the "have" and "have not's" schools, and the obvious disparity of resources for social services in high-poverty elementary schools. Principals described how they did not see everyone as equal. They noted that the playing field is not neutral, which impacts all students.

Findings revealed that biases were difficult to dismantle, and equity policy is under realized without adequate funding. Policy needs significant re-structuring to make it more impactful in Boards across Ontario. I agree with Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, and Henry (1997) who view educational policy as a key way to understand and intervene in larger social, economic, political, and cultural change. I focused my study on teachers, vice principals, and principals and attempted to understand their work in equity and social justice, within an equity policy context. It is my belief that equity policies like PPM 119 (2009), should be reviewed and updated continuously.

7.1   Implications for Policy

This study has shed light on tensions that characterize the development and implementation of education policy, one of which is, the tension between school boards and schools. The policy approach mandated by PPM No. 119 (2009) required the creation of board-wide policies on equity and inclusion. Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy failed to account for the diversities and histories amongst the three high-poverty elementary schools in a district in SouthWestern Ontario, as they related to the diverse languages, religions, cultures, ethnicities, race, and socio-economic status.

The policy's approach for achieving equity in Ontario's education system presumed a degree of "uniformity" in schools through a given district, (and are not sensitive to the unique

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challenges of a high-poverty elementary school) an assumption that appears to fundamentally challenge the ideological foundation of equity which is embedded in PPM No. 119 (2009). The poorest school districts do not receive funding to address their students' increased needs. The funding disparity is mainly the result of the dependence on property taxes as a primary source of funding.

According to PPM No. 119 (2009), school board policies on equity and inclusion were required to include a focus on eight areas, including school-community relations, inclusive curriculum and assessment practices, and school climate. These three areas of focus communicate directly to daily activities within a school, where the diversities amidst different schools (within one board) may not essentially be reflected in board-wide equity policies. An equity education policy created by leaders at the district level cannot reflect the identities, values, and experiences of all teachers, vice principals, and principals across a given school board. Critical to this dialogue are principals and their individual commitment to social justice. This study has illustrated that, for Ontario's Equity and Inclusive education strategy to achieve equitable access and outcomes for all students, it must recognize the social construction of difference, race, and its influence on social and academic learning .

It is consequently recommended that the procedure of policy development be more "inclusive" of viewpoints from different actors at the school level, not merely include voices from the district or Ministry level. While, a few teachers and principals vocalized participating in "train the trainer" workshops, they were limited, costly, and time consuming. The values, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of teachers, vice principals, and principals, need to be made more evident during the implementation stage of policy development. Principals in my study had a commitment to a vision of equity, and faced significant multipart challenges making their

jobs increasingly complicated. Principals had a specific set of capacities regarding their knowledge, skills, values and dispositions, plus expertise, which assisted them to recognize both the assets and challenges their communities faced. It is crucial that the understandings and recommendations expressed by these two groups of educators impact the stages of agenda-setting, policy formulation, and school-based decision-making. Additionally, working in high-poverty elementary schools presents its own distinctive complex challenges and tensions. This study uncovered numerous barriers encountered by educators which impeded their work in the area of equity. Participants acknowledged that significant structural changes connected to funding, professional development and, resources were all areas for further needed improvement.

I found that teachers, vice principals, and principals, must be offered more agency to affect the development and implementation of school-based equity education policies, curricula, and professional development programs which take into consideration the varied ranges of experiences of students in a school. School-based equity policy must be reflective of the rich diversities experienced at the school level, which entails increased involvement (from Ministry, local government, school staff, parents, students, and community members) during the process of policy development. Educational institutions must safeguard the different needs of all their students. It would be helpful to start the development of socially justice teaching in Teacher Education programs training pre-service teachers. The three high-poverty elementary schools in my study, did not pay close attention to recommendations (set forward by Board and Ministry) to practically incorporate equity into programming, practices, and policy (since these policies were unhelpful without adequate resources).

Teachers faced many obstacles working in an environment where they were committed to equity work. Principals were equity minded, acted as "brokers" and were driven towards

understanding the unique history, and culture of their school communities. Many principals attempted to facilitate complex conversations with school staff, to encourage diverse ideas, dialogue, and accountability. Principals vocalized the difficulties in challenging (conscious and unconscious) biases and internal assumptions, shifting mindsets to combat the existing status quo. Principals voiced strategies such as: 1. Promoting self-awareness to recognize, assess, and challenge one's biases, and 2. Facilitating dialogue, and opportunities to interact and engage with socially and economically dissimilar groups in a safe space. However, difficult tensions lead to hindrances in inclusive practices from the equity policy being implemented effectively. It became clear to me that the teachers who were interviewed for this study materialized as a self-selected, hopeful group teaching for social justice. While, they expressed important obstacles faced in their equity work, strategies were established to better support students, work collaboratively with staff, and improve strategies to facilitate improved academic and social learning.

School staff worked together towards organizational planning to create objectives, strategies, measure current practices, and make improvements. My interviews illuminated how the equity policy maintains a hierarchical character, which involves the dominant groups in society. As a society, we demonstrate different positions within institutional power structures; we need to counter these narratives. Moreover, there is a need to discover new strategies to better navigate through the complex educational system and thrive at working through our surroundings to facilitate the work that is required to achieve greater equity in education.

This study illustrated how there is a need to re-examine the uses and effects of equity policies on an on-going basis. Policies should be regularly reviewed and updated. Further dialogue is needed between researchers and government to ensure that existing political agenda

and processes are being incorporated into the needs and expectations of all stakeholders involved. Research has shown that policy analysis has had relatively little influence on policy making circles and their procedures (Stewart, 2009; Taylor, et. al., 2007; Weiss, 1983). My findings suggest that for equity policy to truly be impactful, and be a trigger to any change, it needs advocacy, ongoing collaboration, commitment, transparency, funding, professional development, and accountability from passionate diverse stakeholders.

Despite recommendations that the community be engaged in the process of policy development, the Ministry dictates how this process looks, and how accountability is achieved. Further, the Ministry mandates and gives certain individuals at the school board level the power to oversee developing and implementing equity and inclusive education policies. Lastly, the Ministry must improve its governance strategies in safeguarding that its equity directives through policies are being realized through applicable programming, curriculum, access to training, enough resources and accountability mechanisms within the school boards and schools in Ontario. My study revealed how we need greater accountability by school Boards, and Ministry, and the distribution of appropriate of resources on equity initiatives.

My study indicated that a diverse group of stakeholders is needed; minority students and parents were rarely represented in these groups due partly to limited language and lack of time (vocalized by principals). The process of developing education policy in Ontario (like PPM 119) should be a more inclusive process where the identities, values, beliefs, and experiences of the broader community, and, minority students, are also reflected. I started to question why certain groups were seemingly intentionally, being left out. Perhaps it was due to their lack of access and low cultural capital in navigating a complex political system. The question that remains to be answered is, can a centralized, hierarchical process of policymaking result in a more

comprehensive demonstration of equity, diversity, and social justice within Ontario's education system?

7.2   Implications for Practice

My study highlights the lack of "explicit" strategies through equity policy by practicing teachers, vice principals, and principals to incorporate equity principles and inclusive education into Ontario high-poverty elementary schools. Even though the Ministry of Education has developed a specific equity policy to support diversity and equity issues, the "impact" of this policy did not appear to be manifested in widespread changes in practice at the three high-poverty schools where my participants were teaching. From my research findings, I have several recommendations about how to be more "strategic" about equity education in schools with a high level of diversity.

Teachers are the central authority in the classroom, holding substantial implications for how we "understand" social and academic learning. Further efforts through increased and meaningful professional development are needed to recognize, improve opportunities, "change mindsets", and build a more inclusive school environment. The perpetuation and entrenchment of a culture of Whiteness in this school board, and broadly within Ontario society can at times be overwhelming to challenge. However, it is important to remember that we must nonetheless begin to work for change, and through my interviews and observations, I saw how valuable and needed equity work is. Clearly, more dialogue within staff, and partnerships within schools, is needed to shed further light into complexities of equity policy. Participants welcomed open dialogue, and occasions to share ideas to encourage opportunities for growth, and challenge their existing views working towards making improvements. Teachers described the importance of accessing diversity kits, community resources, engagement with families, and facilitating

culturally responsive training/dialogue. Building a community of trust and acceptance was valuable towards pushing for collaborative inquiry to better facilitate academic and social learning. Principals mentioned that addressing diversity and equity challenges is sensitive, and it is difficult work to combat resistance and challenge existing attitudes.

Teachers need to be familiarized with a broader "definition" of equity and employ strategies of cultural competency. They need to be provided with frameworks that address a more critical approach to multicultural education and anti-oppressive education (Dei, 1997) which PPM 119, has not adequately addressed or supported. It is important for faculties of education and policy makers to realize the challenges in addressing this issue; there is significantly more work to be done. By educating teachers about inclusive and social justice best practices, compared to educating them "only" on methods of tolerance and empathy practices, we start the process of dismantling the culture of Whiteness which is perpetuated and, deeply embedded in SouthWestern Ontario's school system. Further, it is the responsibility of principals to safeguard that commitments to equity are accounted for and have been supported with proper resources. Poverty creates difficult working and learning conditions for teachers, principals, and students, to achieve the work needed for broader (and meaningful) equity and social justice education to occur.

7.3   Implications for Further Research

Ideas for several future research projects developed from this study and each of them would be valuable. The current study employed qualitative interviews with teachers, vice principals, principals who self-identify as leaders and practitioners for equity and social justice. It would be valuable to perform the same type of interviews with different stakeholders in educational settings. One pillar of qualitative study could also be conducted with superintendents. The drive

of this research study has been to understand the ground-level effects of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education policy. I sought to understand, what concepts underpin the equity and inclusive education policy? I wanted to learn whose views did Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy represent or exclude, and how the backdrop/context in Ontario constrained and supported the work of teachers and principals? However, now at the end of this thesis, I have a series of more questions which have emerged from my findings.

Whereas PPM No. 119 (2009) included definitions, concepts, and goals that were consistent with the achievement of equity in Ontario's education system, the "manner" in which this policy directive can be "translated" and "sustained" into effective equity education policy statements at district school boards across Ontario must be further explored. PPM No. 119 (2009) instructed that district school boards were mandated to develop and implement equity and inclusive education policies. There is a need to explore the "degree" to which school boards have developed and implemented equity and inclusive education policy. Further research is needed to explore the full cycle of development and implementation of equity and inclusive education policies in school boards across Ontario. It is necessary to be aware of the incomplete results achieved through PPM No. 119 (1993).   The procedure and devices of accountability enacted through PPM No. 119 (2009) must be considered and measured to safeguard that district school boards are "accountable" to the mandates expressed in PPM No. 119 (2009).

The key findings of this research study should be taken into consideration for future research. Several participants in the current study questioned the Ministry of Education's "commitment" in allocating resources to teachers, vice principals, and principals. Participants described the Ministry's perceived lack of value in engaging in equity efforts, future studies could potentially provide awareness into their understanding and motivations. Teachers

described being bombarded with dozens of policies, and tensions arose in prioritizing which policy warranted priority. Given that this study explored how teachers, vice principals, and principals facilitated academic and social learning in their respective school, and the challenges they faced. It was alarming to hear principals were not sensing "urgency" by Ministry, for implementing equity work, concentrating on academic and social learning for marginalized students in the three high-poverty elementary schools.

In relation to social and academic learning, an important implication found that creating a social network where school staff can collaborate (e.g. S.W.I.S.S. worker, attendance counselor, school support counselor, and E.S.L. team) are imperative. When teachers collaborate, the interest, backgrounds, and strengths of each teachers can contribute to students' learning. However, teachers described challenges in accessing resources, time for enough preparation in lesson planning, and curriculum needing significant reform. Further, teachers can draw support from each other, and facilitates teachers to feel more effective. To be most effective, good communication between teachers is crucial to ensure that students are getting the time, attention, and instruction needed. Parents play an important role in a student's education, particularly in the elementary school years. When teachers and parents collaborate, it can strengthen skills and abilities learned in school and practiced at home.

Students encounter numerous challenges outside of school (e.g. families in upheaval, divorce, challenges living in poverty, parents holding multiple jobs, and lack of time). A meaningful relationship between home and school supports families to act as partners in student's learning. For many minoritized students, there can be a disconnect between the elementary and their home environment. This study showed the value of teachers addresses their own biases, and assumptions of student's distinct culture. My recommendations are that given

eradicating biases and prejudices is difficult, holding intentional conversations is nonetheless a needed starting point. Being an effective educator that disrupts and combats addressing racial differences, means broadening one's own perspective and enhancing one's teaching and leadership skills.

Moving forward, schools, Boards, and Faculty of Education teacher education and graduate programs, need to facilitate improved opportunities to bridge the gap in understanding student's racial and ethnic stereotypes. Conversations are crucial to examine how pre-conceived ideas can impact relationships and learning. Further, teachers knowing their students' parents aids them to understand the home environment, the economic, and various cultural influences which impacts students' behaviour and learning. Facilitating opportunities for families to participate in school events, fundraising, and volunteer events all were found to be effective. Communication (e.g. facilitated through parent meetings, newsletters, emails, translators, signage displayed in school lobby, etc.) was discovered as necessary to encourage student's academic and social learning.

An important theme which emerged throughout this study was the lack of connection between Ministry equity policy and school-based practice. While, practice showed to be framed by policy guidelines, there was difficulty is addressing appropriate changes needed, because it was primarily context based. If a equity policy only works for a subsection of the education system or in a model of circumstances, then this is relevant information that should be considered in the policy making process. Here, PPM 119 (2009) equity policy attempted to guide how practice is achieved, it does not automatically prescribe what occurs in the classroom. Further research is needed to explore the implementation of equity and inclusive education policies that have been established to facilitate awareness in the district school board level.

It is imperative to understand the relationship between the creation of school board policies, their implementation in schools across a given district, and the effects of these policies on the practice of equity and social justice in high-poverty elementary school classrooms. Further research is necessary to gauge the impact of Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy in creating truly equitable educational practices in Ontario schools and classrooms including the voices of students. Once the process of implementation has been studied, a thorough review of PPM No. 119 (2009) should be conducted. Policy must allow for increased empowerment to elementary schools, since decisions regarding practice will facilitate improved awareness towards meeting the individual students' learning needs. Subsequently, this equity policy sanctions and guides expectations, though acting in an imperfect system, the policy provides a vision from the district to schools of what is wanted.

Further research is necessary to illuminate effectiveness of the intended and unintended consequences of equity and inclusive education policy in Ontario. At this moment, a policy analysis of PPM No. 119 (2009) will offer not only a portrayal of equity and inclusive education policy development, but recommendations for policy development that may advise the course of education policymaking in Ontario. Broadly speaking, this goal can be accomplished through additional qualitative studies concentrated on the perceptions, strategies, and practices, of policy makers and implementers including Ministry authorities, school board officials, education administrators, and teachers as well as the groups affected by equity education policy, with students and parents.

It would be a fascinating study to select some schools which are identified for their focus on addressing diversity, equity, and social justice. A collection of people occupying various roles could be interviewed using a similar interview script. For example, the interviews could

comprise of parents and students. The data would offer different perspectives and could be triangulated to find shared and conflicting viewpoints. Furthermore, more research is wanted in multicultural education to comprehend the fragile relationship between policy and practice, and in what way the philosophies of equity, social justice, and inclusion are entrenched in PPM No. 119 (2009) which can be successfully (or unsuccessfully) interpreted into practice.

It is consequently suggested that multicultural education be redesigned so "all students are empowered (through the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values) to participate with confidence as informed citizens" (Ghosh, 2002, p. 15). It became apparent that teachers promoted culturally responsive teaching, where engaging students' prior knowledge/experiences, was valuable to make learning related and effective for students. Several E.S.L. teachers voiced seeing the strengths new Canadian students brought into the classroom and promoted creating increased opportunities to incorporate such experiences in daily practices, lessons, and curriculum. Also, teachers invested time to create a classroom environment of mutual respect, care, safety, and trust amongst students.

Teachers described seeing cultural differences as assets, and attempted (to the best of their abilities, and resources) to create a classroom community where all students are valued. Finally, teachers, vice principals, and principals who volunteered to participate in this study were strong advocates of social justice ideologies. While, teaching and leadership strategies can always be improved upon (with further professional development opportunities) noteworthy efforts were being made. Of course, it is important to repeat that as self-selected, my participants are more likely on the exemplary side of teaching and leading for equity.

Teachers served as change agents, mentors, allies, and inclusive education champions, who struggled to combat difficult power imbalances in the classroom (based on race, culture,

ethnicity, and class). However, more work needs to be in Ontario to incorporate the inclusion of culture in school curricula to create spaces where there is respect for diverse cultures. All students deserve opportunities to have access to their own unique racial and ethnic history. Students must feel empowered, safe, and that their experiences are valuable. This study showed embracing student's cultures and creating opportunities to embed lessons in curriculum enriches the school experience, resulting in improved academic and social learning. However, there are many challenges in high-poverty elementary schools (e.g. time constraints, lack of parental involvement, language barriers, insufficient resources, lack of funding, etc.) involved in the modification of academic curriculum to encourage inclusion, to improve academic and social learning.

The reform of multicultural education within Ontario must comprise meaningful changes which can be achieved through policy change, but unavoidably starts with a more inclusive method to policy development facilitated mainly by teachers. The transformed practice of multicultural education must embrace a redefinition of all areas of education together with curriculum, assessment and evaluation, teacher student relationships, administrative concerns, and the politics of education to reflect the views, beliefs, and experiences of those who have traditionally and historically been marginalized in Ontario's education system. Redefining multicultural education fundamentally contains a reconceptualization of multicultural education as an act of empowerment, "conceptualized from within, that is, from within the suggestions of students, parents and school staff" (Ghosh, 2002, p. 69).

Some additional paths for future research may be to more deeply examine the explanations of why and how; elementary teachers and principals prioritize teaching and leading for equity and social justice. Further, this path would clarify the role that teacher education and

professional development can take. Interviewing a variety of teachers, vice principals, and principals, including people of colour, who enthusiastically teach and lead for equity, social justice, and inclusion. Participants' narratives could be compared and observed for similarities and differences; to attribute towards a more knowledgeable method to achieving equity and social justice education in elementary schools. A parallel study of teachers, vice principals, and principals employed in remote, rural areas, might give insights into the barrier's teachers, vice principals, and principals face in addressing equity and inclusion. It may not be as straightforward for teachers and principals to address the academic and social learning needs in their daily practice and uncover the challenges they face.

7.4   Limitations

Normally in research studies, there are limitations that are imperative to note. Several limitations of this study exist. First, one of the limitations in conducting qualitative research is that the researcher's own biases and understandings can influence the data selected for analysis. It was important to be cognizant of these effects of bias during the organization of data and following up with analysis sections. Second, the location of the schools covered a narrow geographic area within Ontario. However, it is crucial to mention these limitations do not detract significantly from the meaning derived from the participants' experiences and insights which are provided into the pedagogical and leadership implications of this study.

7.5   Implications for Future Practice

Several implications for future practice can be identified based on the results of this study. It should be noted that the data have been drawn from qualitative interviews with 20 teachers, vice principals, and principals within a single district within SouthWestern Ontario. The data are not

intended to be generalized to all teachers, vice principals, and principals in Ontario, and other provinces within Canada. Rather, they give insight into some of the thoughts and considerations of individuals who self-define as leaders and teachers for equity, diversity, and social justice. The data illuminate the challenges that teachers and principals have encountered, specific strategies and supports they have found helpful in moving forward with equity and social justice efforts.

It is hoped that some of these reflections will be a helpful contribution to the challenging work that teachers, vice principals, and principals undertake in their schools when working to establish equitable environments for all students. My study illuminated the challenges (and successes) that participants have encountered, and the strategies and supports they found helpful in moving forward with equity efforts. It is hoped that these reflections will be a helpful contribution to the challenging work that teachers, vice principals, and principals undertake in their schools when working to establish more equitable and socially just environments.

For change to occur in advancing equity in schools, further training and learning is necessary to build a broader understanding of equity. This professional learning must go beyond surface level learning and recognize the impact of power and privilege on the school experiences of marginalized groups. Equity and social justice learning should be fused into all pre-service education so that beginning teachers starting their teaching careers have understanding and exposure to the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy. I was fortunate to work as a teaching assistant in a Bachelor of Education course at a Faculty of Education. I saw the benefit in introducing equity driven conversations to teacher candidates early on. Given the difficult environment of teaching and leading for equity and social justice, beginning principals would

profit from developing a critical awareness of equity and social justice issues. Further, there needs to be sharing of strategies for creating equitable conditions with school staff.

Besides school districts support, further Ministry supports are needed. The Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy would benefit from some changes. One revision would be to mandate the careful collection of demographic and achievement data for marginalized groups. Although the 1993 PPM 119 was short of extensive data backing, inequalities for marginalized students have been analyzed and documented in the last twenty-five years by an assortment of educational scholars and researchers (Apple, 1993; Ball 1993; Dei, 2001; Dehli, 1996; Whitty; 2001). School boards must proceed carefully in accumulating data based on the achievements of marginalized groups. These types of data will be significant, so the results can be ascertained over time. The discourse around education policies associated to equity are insufficient in tackling difficult subjects like prejudice, discrimination, social inequality, and responding to student diversity in Ontario schools. In future research projects, I want to challenge conventional policy-making models, and methods of policy analysis. I find there is a need to improve on policy development and analysis entrenched in social democracy. The final goal is to create an education system which is equitable; however, this study showed me, one core challenge begins with the creation, resourcing, and implementation of policy.

In this pursuit, I wished to investigate how teachers, vice principals, and principals in three urban, South Western Ontario high-poverty schools support elementary students' academic and social learning. Teachers, vice principals, and principals are not passive agents. Investigating the challenges, limitations, and successes teachers, vice principals, and principals faced against the education system provided insights into the complexities involved in teaching at a high-poverty elementary school. These insights in turn can be useful for informing equity

pedagogy by other school teachers and leaders. This study surfaced how disadvantages are perpetuated by the school system, and how acts of resistance can be constructed as a foundation upon which to build an equitable and socially just education system.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

As the study comes to an end, I would like to highlight a few final thoughts. Validation and support for teachers, vice principals, and principals committed to equity and social justice warrants more attention. It takes considerable time, energy, determination, resources, funding for educators to dialogue together and combat existing systemic inequities. This study showed how there is presently insufficient time, professional development, and supports in the daily school schedule to offer opportunities to participate in professional discussion and engage on equity topics in a meaningful way. School staff should be provided the time, "meaningful" and "quality" resources, and professional development. It is naïve to expect that equity and social justice work can be accomplished easily. Time, and resources need to be appropriately allocated throughout school districts in Ontario, and more broadly, in Canada, with the clear expectation that school staff participate in equity and social justice agenda as they relate and respond to the *unique* population needs of their school, which seem under-the-radar of the existing equity policy approach.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions for Teachers

Western Education

Project Title: Teaching for Equity – A Case Study of Teachers', Vice Principals', and Principals' Perspectives in Three High-Poverty Elementary Schools in Ontario, Canada

Principal Investigators: Dr. Pam Bishop, Faculty of Education, Western University,

Dr. Paul Tarc, Faculty of Education, Western University

Co-Investigator: Abbey Duggal, Faculty of Education, Western University

Background information

1. Please describe your history into becoming a teacher. What motivated you to become a teacher? What values are important to you – that guide your work as a teacher?

2. Please describe your class (e.g. classroom make-up, size, students' cultural backgrounds, students' academic levels, socio-economic backgrounds). How culturally diverse is your class?

During/Instructional Practice

3a. To the best of your knowledge, can you please explain what inclusive education means to you? Can you explain what equity means to you? Can you explain what social justice means to you?

3b. Do you think you need support with establishing or further building an inclusive class environment? How has the school supported you to facilitate creating an inclusive class (e.g. resources, professional development, etc.)?

3c. What do you perceive are the challenges involved to better support students in the areas of providing an inclusive education? What are the challenges in providing teaching that is underpinned by equity and social justice principles? Can you please provide examples?

3d. Can you provide examples of when you have been successful in supporting students in the areas of inclusive education, equity, and social justice?

4. How do teachers at your school understand any need to provide an inclusive education? How do teachers at your school teach in ways that are equitable and social just?

5a. Students' social learning – learning to play well together, learning to be a good team player, to share, and so on – is also shaped by many circumstances and contexts. How do you provide for the social learning needs of students from different backgrounds? What are the challenges involved?

5b. Students' academic learning needs are shaped by many circumstances and contexts. How do you provide for students' academic learning in the classroom? What are the challenges involved?

6a. Can you describe a lesson where you engaged students' culture and experiences to support academic learning? What were the challenges involved?

6b. What recommendations do you have for teachers to overcome those challenges?

6c. What recommendations or feedback do you have for the School Board to overcome those challenges?

6d. What recommendations or feedback do you have for the Ministry of Education to overcome those challenges?

Post/Beliefs & Attitudes

7. What particular (if any) inclusive education, equity and social justice texts/documents/policies do you take into consideration in your teaching?

8a. Are you familiar with/have you read Policy Program Memorandum No. 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy)?

8b. Can you explain this policy?

8c. Is this policy relevant to you?

8d. Is this a policy your school is working with?

9. From your experience, how do you think this policy is being interpreted (or not being interpreted) by teachers at your school? How does it constrain and/or support the work and capacities of teachers to advance social and academic learning?

10a. How do policies like Policy Program Memorandum 119 potentially influence (or do not) concepts like inclusive education, equity, social justice?

10b. What challenges have you faced with this policy?

10c. What improvements could be made to this policy?

13. Finally, is there anything further that you would like to add or share?

Appendix 2: Interview Questions for Principals

Project Title: Teaching for Equity – A Case Study of Teachers', Vice Principals', and Principals' Perspectives in Three High-Poverty Elementary Schools in Ontario, Canada

Principal Investigators: Dr. Pam Bishop, Faculty of Education, Western University,

Dr. Paul Tarc, Faculty of Education, Western University

Co-Investigator: Abbey Duggal, Faculty of Education, Western University

Pre & Background Information

1. Can you please give me a brief overview of your background and motivation regarding becoming a school principal?

2. Would you please describe this school? (For example, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, the community, demographics, teaching staff, etc.).

During/Leadership Practice

3a. As a school leader, how do you encourage a school environment (for staff and parents) which inspires a commitment to having an inclusive school? What are/or have been the challenges involved in becoming an inclusive school? How do you advocate on behalf of your students (e.g. advocate to other teachers to help them understand the needs or strengths of a student)?

3b. How do you promote and enact principles of equity? What have been the challenges involved?

4a. Students' academic learning needs are shaped by many circumstances and contexts. How does this school help progress students' academic learning in the classroom? How does this school help progress students' academic learning beyond the classroom (e.g. school grounds, school field trips, etc.)?

4b. What challenges do you (and school staff) face in providing educational opportunities that ultimately enhance the academic learning of students?

5a. Students' social learning – learning to play well together, learning to be a good team player, to share, and so on – is also shaped by many circumstances and contexts. How does this school help progress students' social learning? How does this school help progress students' social learning in the classroom? How does this school help progress students' social learning beyond the classroom?

5b. What does the term social learning signify to you? What challenges do you (and school staff) face in providing educational opportunities in this area?

6. How do teachers at your school foster respect for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds? What teaching strategies can you suggest which can be used to better assist students?

7a. Are you familiar with Policy Program Memorandum 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy)? Can you please explain the key elements in this policy?

7b. Why do you think the Ministry of Education created this policy?

8a. How relevant is this equity policy for your own leadership of the school?

8b. How does Policy Program Memorandum 119 reflect the equity and diversity needs of your school?

9a. How aware is your staff of PPM 119? What resources are available at the School, at the School Board, with implementing this policy?

9b. What have been the challenges for you in implementing this policy?

9c. What do you perceive are the challenges for teachers in following the procedures outlined in this policy?

9d. How is Policy Program Memorandum 119 achieving its purposes?

10a. To what extent do Ministry of Education policies help facilitate the area of inclusion?

10b. To what extent do Ministry of Education policies help facilitate the area of diversity?

10c. To what extent do Ministry of Education policies help facilitate the area equity?

11. Finally, can you please provide some suggestions for improvement for PPM 119?

Appendix 3– Letter of Information to Teachers

Project Title: Teaching for Equity – A Case Study of Teachers', Vice Principals', and Principals' Perspectives in Three High-Poverty Elementary Schools in Ontario, Canada

Principal Investigators: Dr. Pam Bishop, Faculty of Education, Western University, Dr. Paul Tarc, Faculty of Education, Western University

Co-Investigator: Abbey Duggal, Faculty of Education, Western University

<center>LETTER OF INFORMATION</center>

Dear Teachers,

My name is Abbey Duggal from the Faculty of Education at Western University, London, Ontario, Canada. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in a research study.

What is the study's purpose?
I would like to invite you to participate in this study and take part in an interview. The overall purpose of this study is to gather credible data so as to respond to 3 research questions in my study, which are: 1. How do teachers, vice principals, and principals in three urban, Ontario high-poverty elementary schools support students' academic and social learning? 2. How does the Ontario policy backdrop constrain and/or support the work and capacities of teachers, vice principals, and principals to advance social and academic learning? 3. How does Policy Program

Memorandum 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, 2009) reflect and inform the enactment of inclusive education by teachers, vice principals, and principals?

The purpose of my research will be to understand three London elementary schools, along with the perceptions and practices of teachers, vice principals, and principals. Further, the purpose is to understand the enactment of equity policy, and how policies are being interpreted by teachers, vice principals, and principals. This study aims to explore what teaching and leadership strategies can be used to support diverse students' learning process within the classroom setting. If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions related to social and academic learning.

The purpose of my data gathering will be to gain perspective on what teachers and school principals perceive contributes to the achievement gap. Further, to understand what are the leadership and teaching challenges, tensions and dilemmas teachers, vice principals, and principals face in relation to Policy Program Memorandum 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009)? This policy had a goal of constructing an equitable and inclusive education plan for all students. The document focused on diversity, promoting inclusive education, recognizing and removing discriminatory biases, and obstacles which may restrict students' learning and growth.

How long will you be in the study?
The (1) interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place. It is anticipated that the entire task should last approximately about 60 minutes. With your permission, the session will be audio taped so that I can accurately analyze the data. If I am unable to audio record the interview, I will not conduct the interview. I will email you a copy of the transcripts to ensure validity and reliability of what we discussed. Emails will be encrypted to ensure confidentiality. You can amend any of the transcripts or add further comments if you wish to. Please note, both

direct quotes and paraphrased information provided during the study may be used, however, will not be attributed from you personally.

What are the study's procedures?

With your permission, I would like to please request to have (1) classroom observation (for about 45 minutes). During that time in the classroom, I will not be talking to anyone, just observing. I am simply attempting to understand how you support (and the challenges involved in relation to) academic and social learning. Also, I will observe artefacts such as posters, awards, and memorabilia on corridor walls, near the front offices, and in classrooms document perusal, that are curriculum and policy documents which is an important aspect of my research focus.

What are the risks/harms of participating in this study?

There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participating in this study (for both participation in observation and interview). If at any time in our interview, you feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions, please let me know. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to and can stop the interview at any time. Please be aware of obligations that I may have for reporting information to outside agencies (e.g. information about abuse of minors to CAS, or other such information) that may arise in this study.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

The results of these research findings have the potential to illuminate the teaching and leadership approaches in the areas of academic and social learning.

Are participants compensated in this study?

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

How will participant's information be kept confidential?

In accordance with Western University policy, all participation is confidential. Your participation will be kept confidential in the following ways:

(1) Study information will be kept in a locked filed cabinet in my home office.

(2) The results of the study may be published but your identity and your school's identity will not be revealed. In order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, I will be using pseudonyms. If the results are published, your name will not be used. Further, there will be no negative repercussions from your employer as your information will be kept confidential.

(3) After 5 years, all paper documents will be shredded. All electronic documents will be destroyed by deleting them from my laptop, and by physically destroying backup memory sticks that had been stored in the locked cabinet in my home office. All audio recordings will be physically destroyed as well.

(4) Personal information (name, school, and email address) will be collected for the purpose of arranging interviews and returning transcripts for your review. These personal details will be recorded in a schedule of interviews on a calendar which will be stored independently from any personal or work-related calendars and will stored electronically in an encrypted file on my laptop. You will only be identified on field notes and transcriptions by pseudonym. A master list cross referencing names with the pseudonyms will be stored separately, in an encrypted file on a memory stick stored in a locked cabinet in my home office. Scanned copies of the original signed consent forms will also be stored in an encrypted file on a memory stick, stored in a locked cabinet in my home office.

(5) Representatives of The University of Western Ontario's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Can participants choose to leave the study?

Participation is voluntary and taking part in the study is entirely your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to, and there will be no penalty. All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. Please note that participation (or lack thereof) in this study will not affect your professional standing.

Whom do participants contact for study related questions?

I am happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at or the Principal Investigator, Dr. Pam Bishop, and Dr. Paul Tarc if you have study related questions or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this research study with me. This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Please refer to the consent form, which all participants are required to complete and sign.

Appendix 4 - Letter of Information to Principal

Project Title: Teaching for Equity – A Case Study of Teachers', Vice Principals, and Principals' Perspectives in Three High-Poverty Elementary Schools in Ontario, Canada

Principal Investigators: Dr. Pam Bishop, Faculty of Education, Western University Dr. Paul Tarc, Faculty of Education, Western University

Co-Investigator: Abbey Duggal, Faculty of Education, Western University

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Dear Principal,

My name is Abbey Duggal from the Faculty of Education at Western University, London, Ontario, Canada. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in a research study.

What is the study's purpose?
I would like to invite you to participate in this study and take part in an interview. The overall purpose of this study is to gather credible data to respond to 3 research questions in my study, which are: 1. How do teachers, vice principals, and principals in three urban, Ontario high-poverty elementary schools support students' academic and social learning? 2. How does the Ontario policy backdrop constrain and/or support the work and capacities of teachers, vice principals, and principals to advance social and academic learning? 3. How does Policy Program

Memorandum 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, 2009) reflect and inform the enactment of inclusive education by teachers, vice principals, and principals?

The purpose of my research will be to understand three London elementary schools, along with the perceptions and practices of teachers, vice principals, and principals. Further, the purpose is to understand the enactment of equity policy, and how policies are being interpreted by teachers, vice principals, and principals. This study aims to explore what teaching and leadership strategies can be used to support diverse students' learning process within the classroom setting. If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions related to social and academic learning.

The purpose of my data gathering will be to gain perspective on what teachers and school principals perceive contributes to the achievement gap. Further, to understand what are the leadership and teaching challenges, tensions and dilemmas teachers, vice principals, and principals face in relation to Policy Program Memorandum 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009)?   This policy had a goal of constructing an equitable and inclusive education plan for all students. The document focused on diversity, promoting inclusive education, recognizing and removing discriminatory biases, and obstacles which may restrict students' learning and growth.

How long will you be in the study?
The (1) interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place. It is anticipated that the entire interview should last approximately about 60 minutes. With your permission, the session will be audio taped so that I can accurately analyze the data. If I am unable to audio record the interview, I will not conduct the interview. I will email you a copy of the transcripts to ensure validity and reliability of what we discussed. Emails will be encrypted to ensure confidentiality. You can amend any of the transcripts or add further comments if you wish to.

Please note, both direct quotes and paraphrased information provided during the study may be used, however, will not be attributed from you personally.

What are the study's procedures?

I am requesting to observe artefacts such as posters, awards, and memorabilia on corridor walls, near the front offices, and in classrooms (document perusal, that are linked to relevant curriculum and policy documents which is an important aspect of my research focus). In doing the observation, I am simply attempting to understand any artefacts that symbolize how you support (and the challenges involved in relation to) academic and social learning. Also, I am requesting (1) classroom observation of teachers (for about 45 minutes). Along with, (1) interview with teachers, which will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place. It is anticipated that the entire task should last approximately about 60 minutes.

What are the risks/harms of participating in this study?

There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. If at any time in our interview, you feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions, please let me know. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to and can stop the interview at any time. Please be aware of obligations that I may have for reporting information to outside agencies (e.g., information about abuse of minors to CAS, or other such information) that may arise in this study.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

The results of these research findings have the potential to illuminate the teaching and leadership approaches in the subjects of academic and social learning.

Are participants compensated in this study?

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

How will participant's information be kept confidential?

In accordance with Western University policy, all participation is confidential. Your participation will be kept confidential in the following ways:

(1) Study information will be kept in a locked filed cabinet in my home office.

(2) The results of the study may be published but your identity and your school's identity will not be revealed. In order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, I will be using pseudonyms. If the results are published, your name will not be used. Further, there will be no negative repercussions your employer as all information will be kept confidential.

(3) After 5 years, all paper documents will be shredded. All electronic documents will be destroyed by deleting them from my laptop, and by physically destroying backup memory sticks that had been stored in the locked cabinet in my home office. All audio recordings will be physically destroyed as well.

(4) Personal information (name, school, and email address) will be collected for the purpose of arranging interviews and returning transcripts for your review. These personal details will be recorded in a schedule of interviews on a calendar which will be stored independently from any personal or work-related calendars and will stored electronically in an encrypted file on my laptop. You will only be identified on field notes and transcriptions by pseudonym. A master list cross referencing names with the pseudonyms will be stored separately, in an encrypted file on a memory stick stored in a locked cabinet in my home office. Scanned copies of the original signed consent forms will also be stored in an encrypted file on a memory stick, stored in a locked cabinet in my home office.

(5) Representatives of The University of Western Ontario's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Can participants choose to leave the study?

Participation is voluntary and taking part in the study is entirely your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to, and there will be no penalty whatever you choose. All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will immediately be removed and destroyed from our database. Please note that participation (or lack thereof) in this study will not affect your professional standing.

Whom do participants contact for study related questions?

I am happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at or the Principal Investigator, Dr. Pam Bishop, and Dr. Paul Tarc if you have study related questions or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this research study with me. This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Please refer to the consent form, which all participants are required to complete and sign.

Appendix 5 - Consent Form

Project Title: Teaching for Equity – A Case Study of Teachers', Vice Principals, and Principals' Perspectives in Three High-Poverty Elementary Schools in Ontario, Canada

Principal Investigators: Dr. Pam Bishop, Faculty of Education, Western University; Dr. Paul Tarc, Faculty of Education, Western University

Co-Investigator: Abbey Duggal, Faculty of Education, Western University

If at any time you have further questions, or problems, in relation to this study, you may contact me or the Principal Investigators, Dr. Pam Bishop and Dr. Paul Tarc.

I have read and understood the Letter of Information for this study. I will sign both copies of the consent form and keep one for my records, while the other is for the researcher's records. I am aware of any obligations for reporting information to outside agencies (e.g., information about abuse of minors to CAS, or other such information) that may arise in this study.

I agree to participate in this research project. By my signature, I acknowledge that this study has been fully explained to me. I have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to those questions. I do not waive any legal rights by signing this consent form.

Further, by checking the following boxes, I give permission to use direct de-identified quotes. I understand that by not giving consent, only paraphrased information can be utilized.

☐
Yes

☐
No

Name of Participant   _____   Signature of Participant _____

Date   _____

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

Thank you,

Abbey Duggal   _____   Date _____

Appendix 6: School Profiles

I offer the following description of school and community demographic data to create a rich picture of the three high-poverty elementary school neighborhoods that students of these teachers', vice principals', and principals' experience.

Martin Luther King Elementary School

Martin Luther King Elementary School is in a part of an urban city in South Western Ontario. In 2006, the neighborhood was home to 19,250 permanent residents. There are about 7,585 households with a home ownership rate of 60.0 percent, and an average individual income of $37,190. The western side of the neighborhood is characterized by a concentration of rental high rises, low cost condominiums, and entry level detached housing. The central part of the area has more ranches on large lots and looks like many of the other mature developed middle-class neighborhoods in the city. The average sale home price was $211,543 (Statistics Canada, 2011).

At Martin Luther King Elementary School, there are eighteen (18) kindergarten through grade eight teachers, three (3) developmental education teachers, two (2) learning support teachers, one physical education teacher, four (4) French teachers, one librarian, three (3) educational assistants, two (2) administrative assistants, one principal and one vice principal. At the time of the research study, the principal had worked at the school for four years (Interview with School Principal).

The School Council's mission statement is located at the front by the school office which states,

"It is dedicated to enhancing the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth of each child. Our primary mission is to support, communicate with, represent, and encourage the involvement of parents in the education of their children. Working collaboratively, we will help

foster effective partnerships among students, parents, staff, members, and community. We are committed to creating excellence together" (Field Note).

It provided a clear statement of goals for the school, described clearly the schools' day-to-day activities and the school's commitment to the community.

The code of behaviour is: Respect through Caring, Communicating and Co-operating

At Martin Luther King Elementary School, we attach great importance to the spirit and meaning of the word RESPECT. We believe that all students should have equal access and rights to a quality education. We also believe that all students share common responsibilities for their own behaviour and work habits, with the collaboration and guidance of parents, guardians and teachers. Our school community has the common purpose of assisting all learners to have a foundation for learning and success in our changing society (School website, December 14, 2016).

I would like to note that, I was unfortunately only able to interview the principal, from Martin Luther Elementary School, for my study. Regrettably, despite numerous recruitment attempts, I was not able to find any teachers to participate at this school. However, I made the decision to include the principal's interview in my data collection. I found our conversation highlighted important themes, which was relevant and valuable in answering my three research questions. I made the choice, to include the school profile, for the reader, to gain background information about the school. While, I included four school profiles, this was a case study examining the implementation of equity policy (PPM 119) at three high-poverty elementary schools (as I needed both teachers and principals, to meet my study's requirements).

Rosa Parks Elementary School

Rosa Parks Elementary School is in another part of town in the same urban city. It is home to 13,455 residents, or 5.3 percent of London's total population. There are about 3,320 census families, 47 percent of the 6,930 households are homeowners, and an average individual income of $37,919. The area is a mix of high-rise condominium and rentals, townhouses and fully detached homes at several different price points. The 2011 average sale home price was $229,465 (Statistics Canada, 2011).

At Rosa Parks Elementary School, there are twenty-four (24) kindergarten to grade eight teachers, three (3) learning support teachers, one (1) English second language teachers, one (1) French teacher, nine (9) educational assistants, one librarian, one (1) music teacher, one (1) day custodian, three (3) evening custodians, one music teacher, one (1) secretary, one (1) administrative assistant (for evenings), one (1) principal and one (1) vice principal. At the time of the study, the principal had worked at the school for two years (Interview with School Principal).

At Rosa Parks Elementary School, its code of conduct is to: "promote responsibility, respect, civility and academic excellence in a safe learning and teaching environment. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable and accepted. All students, parents/guardians, teachers and staff members have the right to be safe, and to feel safe in their community. With this right comes the responsibility to contribute to a positive school climate" (School website, December 14, 2016). "Our code applies to students, parents, guardians, staff, volunteers and any individual visiting our school. It applies whether these individuals are on school property, on school buses or at school-authorized events or activities" (School website, December 14, 2016).

Highlights of the school: "A dedicated staff offer a wide variety of activities for students. Under the direction of our music teacher, we have a band, choir and music program. Our coaches provide students with the opportunities to participate on soccer, cross-country, volleyball, basketball, track and field and softball school teams. Our Eco-Team has worked hard to earn the distinction for Rosa Parks of being a 'gold' eco-school. We support many community activities such as the Terry Fox Run and food drive and Toonie Tuesday. We highlight a social skill each month as part of our character education program" (School website, December 14, 2016). School spirit: "Rosa Parks strive to do their best! We are proud of the academic efforts of all our students as they work on their learning goals and support community projects. Rosa Parks participates in many School Spirit Days throughout the year - often to raise funds for important charities in our community. Some of the organizations we support during our school spirit days are: The School Board Education Foundation, Salt Haven, and Terry Fox" (School website, December 14, 2016).

Barack Obama Elementary School

Barack Obama Elementary School is in another part of an urban city in South Western Ontario. It is home to 9, 575 residents, or 7 percent of London's total population. 56 percent of the 4, 825 households are homeowners, and half of the households have an annual total income of over $40, 157 (Statistics Canada, 2011).

At Barack Obama Elementary School, there are thirty (30) kindergarten through grade eight teachers, (1) teacher-librarian, three (3) learning support teachers, two (2) music teachers, (1) physical education teacher, two (2) ESL teachers, (1) speech and language pathologist, (1) instructional coach, fourteen (14) educational assistants, (1) school support counsellor, three (3)

secretaries, four (4) custodians, two (2) vice principals, and (1) principal. At the time, the vice

principal had worked at the school for 2 years (Interview with Vice Principal).

The Code of Conduct at Barack Obama Elementary School is:

"a school that promotes responsibility, respect, civility and academic excellence in a safe
learning and teaching environment. A positive school climate exists when all members of the
school community feel safe, comfortable, and are accepted. All students, parents/guardians,
teachers and staff members have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their school community.
With this right comes the responsibility to contribute to a positive school climate" (School
website, April 1, 2017). "Code of Conduct is based on the premise that each individual in the
school is responsible for his/her own behaviour and that progressive discipline is a shared
responsibility of school staff, as well as parents and guardians. The Barack Obama Code of
Conduct includes the provincial standards of behaviour. It specifies mandatory consequences for
student actions that do not comply with these standards. The standards of behaviour apply not
only to students, but also to all school members, i.e. individuals involved in the school system --
teachers, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, community members-- whether they are on school
property, on school buses or at school-authorized events or activities, or in other circumstances
that could have an impact on the school climate" (School website, April 1, 2017).

"Responsible citizenship involves appropriate participation in the civic life of the school
community. Active and engaged citizens are aware of their rights, but more importantly, they
accept responsibility for protecting their rights and the rights of others. In the process of
becoming good citizens, students are expected to learn the importance of adhering to the rules
and regulations, which have been adopted for the benefit of all individuals. We expect our
students to take responsibility for themselves and for their actions" (School website, April 1,
2017).

Thurgood Marshall Elementary School

Thurgood Marshall Elementary School is in a part of an urban city in South Western Ontario. In

2006, the neighborhood was home to 11, 510 people. There are about 7, 040 households with a

home ownership rate of 26 percent, and an average individual income of $34,417. The western

side of the neighborhood is characterized by a concentration of rental high rises, low cost

condominiums, and town homes. This area offers various food markers, pharmacy stores,

restaurants, and parks. Also, major highways and the public transit system is easily accessible.

At Thurgood Marshall Elementary School, there are thirty-five (35) kindergarten through

grade eight teachers, three (3) developmental education teachers, two (2) learning support

teachers, two (2) music teachers, one physical education teacher, two (2) French teachers, six (6)

English second language teachers, two (2) librarian, six (6) early childhood educator, five (5)

noon hour supervisor, twelve (12) educational assistants, two (2) administrative assistants, one

school support counsellor, two (2) custodians, one principal and one vice principal (School

website, March 18, 2017). At the time of the research study, the principal had worked at the

school for four years (Interview with School Principal).

At Thurgood Marshall Elementary School, its code of conduct states, "A school is a place

that promotes responsibility, respect and academic excellence in a safe learning environment.

Thurgood Marshall follows the Ontario Human Rights Code, as: "a provincial law that gives

everybody equal rights and opportunities without discrimination in specific social areas such as

jobs, housing, services, facilities, and contracts or agreements. The goal is to prevent

discrimination and harassment because of race, ancestry, place or origin, colour, ethnic origin,

citizenship, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family status, receipt

of public assistance (in accommodation only), record of offences (in employment only), gender

identity or gender expression" (Field observation).

Students have the right to "a quality education, be treated with respect and dignity be

physically, verbally and emotionally safe feel comfortable approaching a school staff member

with any concern." Teachers and school staff have a right to "help students work to their full

potential and develop their self-worth, communicate regularly and meaningfully with parents or

guardians, maintain consistent standards of behaviour for all students, demonstrate respect for all

students, staff and parents or guardians" (School website, April 1, 2017). Principals have the

right to, "take a leadership role in the daily operation of the school, commit to academic

excellence and a safe teaching and learning environment, hold everyone accountable for their

behaviour and actions, and communicate with all members of their school community" (School

website, April 1, 2017).

The standards of behaviours for school rules are as follows, "In a safe and positive learning environment, school members, treat others with respect and avoid threatening, profane or abusive language, will not tolerate racial, ethnic, religious, sexual or unkind comments, avoid physical or verbal aggression, bullying, discrimination and harassment, keep hands and feet off others and their property, do not throw objects that may be potentially harmful (e.g. rocks or snowballs), play in designated areas, are not in possession of weapons, illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, lighters or matches, and dress appropriately" (School website, April 1, 2017).

The school has the following ideas for conflict resolution: "With a small problem, walk away, count to ten or use any two of the Kelso's Choice strategies (a conflict management choice program taught to our students). After trying two Kelso's Choices, ask the yard supervisor or another adult staff member for help. This program helps teach students how to solve "small" problems on their own. "Small" problems include conflicts that cause "small" feelings of annoyance, embarrassment, boredom, etc. "BIG problems" always need to be taken to an adult. These are situations that are scary, dangerous, illegal, etc. Kelso has nine choices to solve "small problems." They include: Go to another game, talk it out, Share and take turns, walk away, ignore it, Apologize, make a deal, tell them to stop, and Wait and cool off" (School website, April 1, 2017).

Appendix 7: Organizational Chart of Methods Used in My Study

Method	Purpose	Target	Procedures for Data Collection	Data Content
Classroom observation – Field Notes	Record situations, as they happen	Activities, teacher behaviours, conversations and interactions	Written Notes	Depiction of physical settings, acts, activities, interaction patterns, meanings, beliefs, and emotions
Semi Structured Interviews	In-depth information on selected topics, personal histories, cultural knowledge and beliefs, description of practices	Teachers, Vice Principals, and Principals	In-depth	Answers to open-ended questions
Critical Reflections	To get the researcher's	Representative of the emergent	Written immediately	Depiction of physical settings,

	perspective on what happened that surprised them, if she saw any patterns emerging across the data gathered.	patterns or missing patterns.	after field observation and interviews respectively.	activities, patterns, meanings, beliefs, and emotions.

Appendix 8: Summary Chart of Themes with Supportive Quotes from Teachers, Vice Principals, and Principals

Question 1: How do teachers, vice-principals, and principals in three urban, Ontario high-poverty schools support elementary students' academic and social learning?

Theme 1: Recognize prejudice/biases to encourage empathy
Vice Principal: John recognized the struggles children living in poverty face and realized biases. increase "awareness", "teacher empathy", "understanding", and facilitate participation in events.
Principal: Jasmine stated, "recognize your own prejudices", engage in "forthright conversations" "confront feelings", and encourage students to "feel safe".
Teacher: Victoria described teachers' backgrounds come into play unintentionally and hold a "different lens". Teachers must "see" (the struggles), and "connect".
Teacher: Dawn stated teachers should be careful not to jump in with their "Western thinking", allow students to have "soccer balls". The key is to find culturally acceptable activities.
Principal: Amy found resources reflective of all students, since curriculum was not sensitive.

Theme 2: Collaboration between school staff is necessary
Vice Principal: John talked the "school support counsellor," "attendance counsellor", and inclusive education champions present workshops, and share knowledge.
Teacher: Abdul saw value "working as a team".
Teacher: James found the biggest assets are teachers working together.
Teacher: Sarah facilitated meetings with parents, translator, and teachers to learn school rules.
Teacher: Aliya described some teachers may not be knowledgeable in speaking to parents from Arabic backgrounds and collaborates with a S.W.I.S.S. worker who works with different cultures.
Teacher: Victoria established the importance in getting access to people resources.
Teacher: Athena cited the importance of working together with parents, families, and community.
Teacher: Gwen described the school support counsellor helpful interacting with families.
Teacher: Lisa requested people from the Board (e.g. learning coordinator to be part of the instructional program) and included them in intentional conversations.
Teacher: Danielle saw the value of the "S.W.I.S.S. worker", "veteran E.S.L. teachers," "translator" creating newsletters, and phone calls to parents, and the "Muslim Community Center".
Teacher: Marianne identified the value of "interacting with other staff," to advocate on students' behalf when students are struggling.
Teacher: Jennifer said staff (e.g. administration, classroom teacher, learning support teacher, special learning coordinator, and attendance counselor) worked together to determine student need.
Teacher: Trevor noted the "classroom teacher and the E.S.L. team go over, and beyond".
Teacher: Heather cited a strong E.S.L. team, and the S.W.I.S.S. worker worked closely.
Teacher: Amy saw the E.S.L. team, and the S.W.I.S.S. worker is the bridge.
Vice Principal: Heather stated relationships are "crucial" to promote advocacy, and a collaborative environment with staff. Newcomer students have progressed in learning social skills and formed friendships as a result of that collaboration.

Theme 3: Create culturally responsive events, pedagogy, and teaching
Principal: John illustrated ensuring students "see themselves", and use "diversity kits".
Teacher: Abdul "brought the Imam in to talk to school staff" to educate staff and re-learn.
Teacher: James discussed value in "talking to people in their community".
Teacher: Sarah voiced how "resources are available", "character development kits", "cultural night," "food", incorporated a "writing piece", and a Google drive to "facilitate sharing resources".
Teacher: Sophia emphasized teachers to "know" their students (cultural/language backgrounds).
Teacher: Victoria incorporated story maps, brochures, Venn diagrams, activities, and texts.
Teacher: Gwen stated how "awareness training for staff" was helpful.
Principal: Lisa referred to "family focused", "professional learning", "community cultural organizations connections", "building school community", "inviting parents", and "guest speakers".
Teacher: Marianne mentioned poems, Wampanoag belt (which is a cultural story-telling device), "grade kits," "Podcasts", "news articles", "classroom twitter", "CBC Aboriginal", and "conversations".
Teacher: Jennifer celebrated with a "multicultural dinner," and "cultural dances".
Teacher: Trevor said lessons "build on backgrounds" making "learning meaningful".
Teacher: Dawn discussed "the Boys and Girls Club", "parents", "Arabic speaking teenagers", and "S.W.I.S.S. worker." The "Board should open a Center", created important links for immigrant families.
Principal: Amy stated, staff "looks at the multicultural calendar".
Vice-Principal: John highlighted the importance "celebrating differences".
Teacher: Abdul advised teachers promote identity, and help students feel "safe".
Teacher: James "supplements" lessons, "reading assignment", and "stories".
Teacher: Aliya described how she encouraged students to "talk about their culture".
Teacher: Victoria created opportunities for students to be "receptive to learning".

Teacher: Athena described the challenges were not only academic, and instead "addressing the emotional and social concerns". She was "empathetic", towards students who move to a new country.
Principal: Lisa supported "building relationships", "encouraging opportunities," "personal calls, working with E.S.L. teachers and school support counselor to bridge gaps".
Teacher: Danielle tried to set the tone to students that the "class created this community".
Teacher: Marianne made efforts for students to understand their voice (speak for themselves).
Principal: Jennifer spoke about "creating a welcoming environment", "greeting students in Arabic", and showcasing "work in the main hallway".
Teacher: Dawn voiced the "human connection", discussing the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms," stories, and students got a "broader sense of what a global community means".
Teacher: Amy's worked at "facilitating understanding", "encouraging more compassion", a "safe learning environment", "help students feel confident," and their "program is being differentiated".
Teacher: Abdul mentioned "helping teachers," support students' learning challenges.
Teacher: James talked about "cultural changes," he saw in Syrian girls. "Students have acclimatized well", however, "it takes a lot of time and communication to understand their culture".
Teacher: Dawn stated students had to learn that (aggressive) "behaviour is not needed here".
Principal: Amy described refugee students did not have formal schooling, made progress with, assistance from the support worker, connections with the mosque, and "E.S.L. teachers".

Theme 4: Language Barriers
Teacher: James instructed students in the class, who are "having a hard time with new language".
Teacher: Athena stated for Syrian newcomers, "many students did not have opportunity to learn English".
Teacher: Gwen tried "creating opportunities," ensuring "students are included". The "Board provided interpreters," and her strategy was communicating to families with letters sent home, "in Arabic".

Principal: Lisa described families not feeling confident (attending meetings) due to their "level of English", although "interpreters are provided".
Teacher: Danielle cited families like to "speak with someone who knows their language". Refugees are new and wanted to talk with individuals from a similar place, since "language gaps are huge".
Teacher: Jennifer voiced the "interpreters" are needed, the "S.W.I.S.S. worker" helped "facilitate relationships", and the "language piece" is critical in making information accessible.
Teacher: Dawn noted "Arabic speaking leaders paired with community", and "S.W.I.S.S. worker". It can "take a village to facilitate communication," translators" "assist" with difficult discussions.
Principal: Amy discussed many Syrian family's stories are not shared since "language is a big barrier." It is important to develop a "deeper understanding about who that child is", and to "dig deeper".

Theme 5: Supporting social learning
Teacher: John illustrated the E.A.'s run "social/lunch/games club", and "teach skills." The school has a program called "Go Girls," "games, and chat". The "seven grandfather teachings", like caring, empathy, and understanding are employed, and "modelled" behaviour.
Principal: Jasmine "models' inclusiveness," and has "forthright conversations about inclusiveness". "Police officers" are invited, students "access different opinions", "connect" with community, and "exposing students". The "relationship with the teacher" is how social learning occurs.
Teachers: James "travelled the world," saw different cultures, taught in Cambodia and Taiwan. It is good for students to "take that knowledge in", "be presented with different experiences".
Teacher: Sarah described racial slurs being used during "Black History month", the message home by "creating a teachable moment", "after school programs" "encouraged students to be more social" and given a "buddy" when they arrived. Students "sang songs".
Teacher: Aliya described "clubs" like "dodge ball" and "hockey." Newcomer students have become more confident speaking English and interacting with others.

Teacher: Sophia models, provided a "comfortable", "welcoming classroom," and noted the monthly "character trait assembly" skills are encouraged like "self-regulation", "respect", and "kindness".
Teacher: Victoria vocalized how her class used the "seven grandfather teachings," "modelled," and reviewed "acceptable social learning".
Teacher: Athena explained students playing in the yard," learned "cultural cues", school support counsellor played consonant bingo," "crafts", "played together," and "reading group".
Teacher: Gwen described how some students were afraid to bring cultural food for lunch, afraid others would make fun of them. She made efforts to "eat foods" that "look different".
Principal: Lisa focused on "school improvement", "supports," "small and large group interaction," "school support counselor," "cooperative games", facilitated "mentorship," and held "groups".
Teacher: Danielle noted "announcements" promoted awareness of different languages, reviewed character traits, sang the school song, assembly-built community, and model social expectations.
Teacher: Marianne facilitated connections, "modelled" social interaction, does "situational teaching" handling conflict, set goals, self-advocate, and experience social interaction.
Vice Principal: Jennifer said students learned to "be part of (a) community, taught to be a "good global citizen, so they fit in everywhere," participate in clubs, and teachers "modelled" for students.
Teacher: Dawn does not want "Syrian students to be living isolated," "discover, and play".
Teacher: Trevor noted "peace makers" trained from St. Leonard's, the "Muslim Center" paired students, provided peer conflict training. "Buddies go on the yard, helped students in Arabic".
Principal: Amy illustrated "extracurricular" activities (e.g. "arts", "dance clubs," "Idol," "volleyball", "basketball", "wrestling" included girls, and a "multicultural dinner" are all offered.

Theme 6: Supporting academic learning
Teachers: Abdul "ordered laptops", "Google Talk", accessed curriculum through "technology".
Principal: Lisa utilized an "inquiry approach", "outdoor learning," and hands-on with nature".
Teacher: Danielle explained academic challenges surface where "students are settling", "integrating", and learning to follow curriculum. "English is taught in context," through "songs", and "visuals".
Teacher: Marianne encouraged "questions," students heard "things", "on the yard", "the news" to facilitate discussion. Curriculum topics are written by government (may not be relevant).

Question 2: How does the Ontario policy backdrop constrain and/or support the work and capacities of principals, vice principals, and teachers to advance social and academic learning?

Theme 1: Funding challenges
Vice Principal: John noted funding challenges (e.g. how it took the school seven years to raise money to purchase a new playground). He vocalized at a more affluent school "someone might have donated it" (obtaining resources "takes longer").
Principal: Jasmine vocalized the "equity struggles" "creating financial opportunities," more work is needed "addressing the funding formula". She has seen "when students are poor"; schools "work harder" (e.g. offering an "after school running club" "designed for children in poverty".
Teacher: Sophia illustrated her experiences working at more affluent schools, "where they did not need food or clothing." "The resources" are crucial for students at her higher needs school.
Teacher: Marianne revealed how policy improvements must "build social context of education." (e.g. "the academic component of the curriculum," which goes unaddressed due to lack of funds.
Teacher: Sophia shared experiences as a coach. "The equipment we have in the gym is what my child's school would throw." She vocalized, no "money to spend on other resources." Her school does not have the necessary "tools for learning." "Money gets spent to feed our students," which is the priority.

Teacher: Dawn found "the funding challenge" hard. Administrators and teachers often make "difficult choices" on which students get access to resources.
Principal: Amy illustrated how she met the "hierarchical needs of high-poverty students" which is where financial funds are allocated.
Vice Principal: John highlighted how there is only so much "money to go around." Ministry can send out policies, but need "money behind it," "resources need to be there" along with the "funding".
Teacher: James explained that things will begin to change starting at Ministry level once "funds are made available." He stated it is always an issue to waiting for the "opportunity for funds" to happen.
Teacher: Athena highlighted the funding inequity in which some schools "got everything," and "some did not".
Teacher: Marianne explained "the dollars, determine whether it's a priority".
Teacher: Athena understood the "bureaucracy" behind the Ministry perspective since "they can only put money into so many things".
Teacher: Dawn explained how "Ministry needs to understand, how important the L.E.A.R.N. program was," Syrian students "let their guards down", programs come "down to funding" since".
Teacher: Trevor highlighted the importance of Ministry seeing the collaboration part, and how funds for E.L.L., special education programs, are important to meet students' needs.
Principal: Amy discussed how there are "funding challenges" when "talking about poverty". (e.g. "thousands of dollars go towards food"). She questioned, "Does Ministry give more money?".

Theme 2: Professional Development
Vice Principal: John mentioned a difficult experience with the fire alarm, and it sounded if there was a bomb. He found, a "huge barrier is understanding students' cultural context".
Teacher: Sophia perceived, offering professional development to understand the "language" of poverty. It was important to have "discussions," and understand how to "deal with the kids".

Teacher: Abdul described, there is "plenty of material to read," and "professionals come in". Teachers "are not aware of what happens in children's lives".
Principal: Jasmine emphasized areas of improvement like "more education with staff," and time for having "conversations with staff." She "worked with the Board," and brought in "advocates".
Teacher: Sarah found, there are "traumatized students who (have) their parent living abroad". A student said, "we went back to look for mommy, but dad said maybe she is dead".
Teacher: Aliya illustrated "providing P.D. for teachers to work with students with trauma" is needed. Lessons on how to "detect", and "what to do," "some schools did", it was not "Board-wide".
Teacher: Victoria emphasized the importance of the "reframing our responses" (professional development), which provided school staff opportunities to learn best practices to help students.
Teacher: Athena attended a presentation on Syria and was advised to "welcome them to your school." She attended a presentation at the Board, and a woman's story "stuck" with her.
Teacher: Gwen found, "teachers are aware" due to "the Syrian influx". Often, parents "struggle".
Principal: Lisa suggested increasing "focused" staff learning.
Teacher: Marianne described how there is, "professional development" focused on "large First Nations, Metis, Inuit". "Collaborative inquiry" is beneficial towards "creating sense of community". Time and resources are spent, "bringing people in" to address "cultural teaching and learning".
Teacher: Jennifer originates from a "proud history of being First Nation's," and due to the residential school's trauma legacy, students do not "openly share who they are." She experienced marginalization, which gave understanding of experiencing inequities (e.g. started a "group" with families.
Principal: Amy said the school counselor "brought in information," helpful in supporting students, who experienced trauma. The Board offered training on "reframing our responses", and "more networking" opportunities is needed for teachers.

Theme 3: Time Constraints
Vice Principal: John described, "Teachers do not have enough time" to "embed" everything required in policy, "into their classroom model." "Resources" are needed, however, there is limited time.
Teacher: Abdul described, education has become "overwhelming," teaching is "complicated," but rewarding. Teachers must "stay competitive", which requires improvements and time.
Teacher: James mentioned there are a multitude of challenges in "balancing lessons", "translating into three languages." The policy does not consider the factors, which takes "time".
Teacher: Sarah noted classrooms are filled with students from "different cultures." It can be "hard" for teachers to "achieve (time) balance," and meet policy mandates.
Aliya suggested, "Stop cutting funding," if equity is important to meet students' needs. Teachers "need more resources", in order to help "alleviate the stress on the teacher".
Teacher: Sophia vocalized if she "didn't have the E.A., it would be difficult," "lacks support".
Teacher: Victoria demonstrated, the "day gets so busy" when students "come with so many needs". Lack of enough "personnel" is a "huge challenge," which policy does not factor in.
Teacher: Athena illustrated it can be "overwhelming". She noted "time" is a challenge for teachers, and "programming is huge".
Teacher: Gwen voiced recruiting "full-time staff support", which policy does not account for.
Teacher: Danielle described, a need for "human support", and "more people" is beneficial. The "S.W.I.S.S. worker" is important in creating parental links; however, "there is only one of her".
Teacher: Marianne articulated how the biggest "barrier" is the "time" component. It can take a lot of "front loaded time," from curriculum learning, to build that environment.
Teacher: Trevor heard of great teachers who "impacted", visited families' homes, and made connections. He found a "burnout factor", and a challenge to "juggle everything".
Amy stated, "families coming from other countries do not understand the Canadian system." It can be a huge job for a teacher to "juggle".

Theme 4: Changes in Immigration
Teacher: Abdul talked about "society," and "life has changed" due to "immigration." He saw "diversity" reflected in the "textbooks." exposure was helpful, to "adapt to the workforce." "Working around", "changes the way you teach" helpful to "change people's mindset," and provide "exposure".

Question 3: How does Policy Program Memorandum 119 (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy, 2009) reflect and inform the implementation of inclusive education by teachers, vice principals, and principals?

Theme 1: Hiring for diversity
Vice Principal: John questioned, whether the current teaching staff at his school represented students? He looked "around this school Board, the administration is pretty White".
Principal: Jasmine noted, most of population at her school Board "is homogenous". She believed, "that is where diversity needs to happen" in seeing more representation from different cultural groups.
Teacher: Abdul expressed confidence, in having a great connection with students, since he spoke Arabic. He can "dig deep", due to the "cultural linguistic connection, and employs language as a "tool".
Teacher: Jasmine noted, when parents visit the school, "they see reflection in the staff", "someone who can speak their language, which is huge." Moreover, stressed an area of policy improvement, is to "have a more diverse population of employees" (e.g. more work is needed, in "the Education center, at the principal's office," to see more diverse representation).
Teacher: Heather contributed, "getting towards a diverse staff," two Arabic speaking, E.S.L. teachers, and French and Spanish speaking. She talked about the value of a grade one teacher who speaks, and "dispels myths on different beliefs, in our Arabic and Muslim communities".

Theme 2: Curriculum changes needed
Vice Principal: John voiced, "The curriculum would have been written, by a bunch of White people, who grew up middle class. That's what they will write about. It's good they are starting to change that." Teachers must be willing to change, and reflect community, achieved by "modifying big ideas".
Teacher: Abdul changed curriculum to better support Syrian students and see them engaged.
Teacher: James emphasized a challenge in modification was "students from low grades to high grades, both seven and eight grade curriculum, E.S.L., and multiple languages".
Teacher: Sophia highlighted teachers "need to be invested, organized, know curriculum, know kids." Teachers cannot just teach, and instead saw value of "including technology".
Teacher: Athena illustrated teachers must work together; reach goals, and "having them see success." She "changed goals", and being realistic, look around the spectrum, and document students.
Principal: Lisa declared "curriculum is very structured". The difficulty lies in how teachers "integrate all of that into the curriculum" and change does not occur through a one-time activity.
Teacher: Danielle saw, "there is a push for curriculum, to complete that responsibility." Teachers do a lot of modifications, which takes a lot of time, more time than teachers have.
Teacher: Marianne explained building into curriculum principles "underpinning equity and social justice, takes a lot of work". Teachers "really stretch the curriculum," and "be really creative, with mapping teaching, back onto the curriculum".
Teacher: Jennifer mentioned, being part of "reviews of curriculum with the Ministry" "to have First Nations influence into the curriculum" and encouraged participation from diverse backgrounds.

Theme 3: Policy needs significant restructuring
Vice Principal: John mentioned the value in creating "a leaflet" "to make it accessible", and easy to understand for everyone".
Teacher: James pointed out "realistically, how can you know all the policies out there?" Teachers are

constantly "bombarded by policies".
Teacher: Abdul mentioned teachers this equity policy needs to be revamped to increase accessibility. The equity policy is a "waste of resources", if we do not allow teachers to read it. "PPM's in Ontario, guide teaching," and teachers often have a "professional opinion".
Teacher: John explained, that policy is happening, however "not as best as it could be." He would like to see it at the forefront all the time since that is his job.
Principal: Jasmine vocalized, the policy must be re-tailored to incorporate more aspects of broader curriculum reform. Teachers "believe in an inclusive society and cherish those values as Canadians." "Policy helps us do that," and becomes important when "interacting with parents." She illuminated, "that's when you have the policy behind you, and you have something more formal".
Teacher: James found that in his experience he has "read a lot of policies" and "Ministry documents." The challenge is the "way policy is presented to teachers" is often "dry" that is not "retained." The equity policy needs reorganization; otherwise it becomes an ineffective document.
Vice Principal: Sarah cited how when teachers face a "roadblock" than they "go back on the policy." "Policy is influential," and introduced to teachers having issues, administration then will discuss it. She found, if she was suspending a student, she needed rules to show what (rules) student broke.
Teacher: Aliya noted teachers will be "more accountable" to policy if it is "mandated".
Principal: Lisa highlighted the importance in the having the kit "accessible to all staff", and "more focused conversations".
Vice Principal: Sarah cited when teachers face a "roadblock" than they "go back on the policy."   "Policy is influential," and introduced to teachers having issues, administration then will discuss it.
Teacher: Aliya noted teachers will be "more accountable" to policy if it is "mandated".
Teacher: Marianne illustrated an area for improvement is making the equity policy more of a "priority." The equity policy has not been talked about explicitly, instead, there are conversations to "be inclusive," and create "more equitable learning environments".

Teacher: Trevor cited administrative staff is so busy, and more work could be done in "educating non-teachers, with the policy." He questioned, how "familiar are administrators with the policy"?
Principal: Amy found the equity policy "understands the key aspects of being cultural," and "ensured that programming is culturally responsive." She stressed the importance in making sure teachers are meeting the needs, "get training", and have the "resources".

Appendix 9: Ethics Approval

Western Research

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Pamela Bishop
Department & Institution: Education, Western University

NMREB File Number: 108215
Study Title: Enacting Equity Policy: A Case Study of Teachers' and Principals' Perspectives in Two Urban High-Poverty Schools in Ontario

NMREB Initial Approval Date: September 24, 2016
NMREB Expiry Date: September 24, 2017

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol	Received September 22, 2016	
Recruitment Items	Email Script	2016/09/22
Recruitment Items	Verbal Script to Teachers at Staff Meeting	2016/08/20
Letter of Information & Consent	Principals	2016/08/20
Letter of Information & Consent	Teachers	2016/08/20
Instruments	Interview Questions for Principals - Received June 28, 2016	
Instruments	Interview Questions for Teachers - Received June 28, 2016	

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Appendix 10: Curriculum Vitae

ABHILASHA DUGGAL

EDUCATION

Doctorate of Philosophy, Faculty of Education: Critical Policy, Equity, Leadership

Western University, London, Ontario, Canada   2020

Dissertation: Teaching for Equity: A Case Study of Teachers', Vice Principals', and Principals' Perspectives in Three High-Poverty Elementary Schools in Ontario, Canada

Master of Education, Faculty of Education: Critical Policy, Equity, Leadership

Western University, London, Ontario, Canada   2014

Thesis: Encouraging Diversity and Multiculturalism in London, Ontario: A Case Study of Two Elementary Schools.

Diploma in Paralegal Studies, School of Professional and Continuing Studies

New York University, New York, New York   2005

Master of Arts, Faculty of Political Science: Public Policy

University at Stony Brook, Stony Brook, New York, United States   2003

Bachelor of Arts, Faculty of Social Sciences: Psychology, Sociology

University at Stony Brook, Stony Brook, New York, United States   2001

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

Western University, London, Ontario, Canada, Teaching Assistant, Research Assistant

2014-2019

PUBLICATIONS

Riveros, G., Myers, P., & Duggal, A. (2018). Identities in transition: Investigating the encounters of Colombian mothers with Canadian schools, *Journal of Latinos and Education*, DOI: 10.1080/15348431.2018.1478297

Duggal, A. (2017). Book review: The newcomer student: An educator's guide to aid transitions: Louise H. Kreuzer (ed). *International Review of Education 63*(5). DOI: 10.1007/s11159-017-9650-5

Duggal, A. (2015). Book Chapter Review: *Building democracy in education on diversity*. By Majhanovich, S. & Malet, R. (Eds.) Boston, MA. Sense Publishers.