Inclusion and Policy Enactment in Teacher Education: A Focus on Pre-service Teacher Preparation for the Inclusive Classroom

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education

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Abstract

Preparing pre-service teachers to enact inclusive teaching practices in the inclusive classroom has become a concern for national and international educational organizations. Adding to these concerns, research on inclusive education policy enactment in teacher education programs, particularly in a continuously growing and recognized diverse society such as Ontario, Canada, is scarce. In order to provide insight to address these issues, this study aimed to examine the enactment of the policy document titled *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* (OME, 2014) in one Ontario teacher education program. In particular, the study focused on exploring the interpretations and the practices of those involved in preparing pre-service teachers for the inclusive classroom including teacher educators, associate teachers, and program coordinators. The meaning making of pre-service teachers towards inclusion and their future practices in the classroom are also examined. By conducting this exploration, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the preparation of teachers for the inclusive classroom in Ontario. The theoretical framework adopted in this single qualitative case study was informed by the theory of New Institutionalism and the notion of policy enactment. The methods used included semi-structured interviews and review of teacher education and inclusive education policy documents. The analysis revealed the existence of different institutional logics among the study participants towards inclusion and pre-service teacher preparation. These logics were related to the institutional settings within which these participants were situated including norms, rules, beliefs, and regulations, as well as their own experiences in their wider social and cultural contexts. Some key recommendations that emanate from this study include, an extension of the practicum for pre-service teachers to spend more time in the classroom and a review of associate teachers’ criteria for supervision. In addition, the study recommends a review of the teacher education program’s curriculum, including its key assignments, course content, and organizational structure. These changes could offer pre-service teachers more in-depth understanding and engagement about the issues that pertain to the practice of inclusive teaching in schools. The findings and
recommendations of this study aim to support the preparation of pre-service teachers for inclusion and seek to help in the development of future teacher education programs situated in similar contexts.

Keywords

Teacher education, inclusive education, pre-service teachers, policy, enactment, New-Institutionalism, case study.
Summary for Lay Audience

Preparing pre-service teachers to practice inclusive teaching in the classroom has become a concern for national and international educational organizations. Adding to these concerns, research on inclusive education policy interpretation and practice in teacher education programs, particularly in a continuously growing and recognized diverse society such as Ontario, Canada, is scarce. In order to provide insight to address these issues, this study aimed to examine the adoption of the policy document titled *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* (OME, 2014) in one Ontario teacher education program. In particular, the study focused on exploring the interpretations and the practices of those involved in preparing pre-service teachers for the inclusive classroom including teacher educators, associate teachers, and program coordinators. The meaning making of pre-service teachers towards inclusion and their future practices in the classroom are also examined. By conducting this exploration, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the preparation of teachers for the inclusive classroom in Ontario. The methods used included semi-structured interviews and review of teacher education and inclusive education policy documents. The analysis revealed the existence of different logics among the study participants towards inclusion and pre-service teacher preparation. These logics were related to the settings within which these participants were situated including norms, rules, beliefs, and regulations, as well as their own experiences in their wider social and cultural contexts. Some key recommendations that emanate from this study include, an extension of the practicum for pre-service teachers to spend more time in the classroom and a review of teachers who supervise and mentor teacher candidates in schools. In addition, the study recommends a review of the teacher education program’s curriculum, including its key assignments, course content, and organizational structure. These changes could offer pre-service teachers more in-depth understanding and engagement about the issues that pertain to the practice of inclusive teaching in schools.
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All praise is due to Almighty God (May He be glorified and exalted) who gave me the strength and health to complete this work and I ask him to make me and the outcomes of this study a source of benefit for all humankind.

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

With the continuous recognition of today’s classroom diversity, preparing future teachers for the inclusive classroom has become a priority of national and international education policies (Forlin, 2010). Insufficient training for inclusive teaching (Forlin, Loreman, Sharma, & Earle, 2009; Florian, Young, & Rouse, 2010) has led recently graduated teachers to face instructional challenges accommodating students’ individual learning needs, contributing to the perpetuation of unjust practices in schools (López-Torrijo & Mengual-Andrés, 2015; Subban & Mahlo, 2016). Such a barrier can ultimately prevent the inclusion of students who have been historically marginalized on the basis of their abilities, their linguistic, creed, cultural, religious, ethnic, gender, or socio-economic backgrounds, as well as their immigration status (Mitchell, 2017).

1.1 Research Context

Inclusive education is the educational approach through which all children learn together in the same classroom regardless of their race, gender, religion, individual learning needs, socio-economic level, and cultural backgrounds (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994). Following this premise, preparing pre-service teachers for inclusive education would benefit all students in schools as they will be supported to “see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honored, and all individuals are respected” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 4). Pre-service teacher preparation, in particular, has been positioned as a key component in education reform. Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage (2005) argued that a change in teacher education is needed. For them:

To meet the expectations they now face, teachers need a new kind of preparation—one that enables them to go beyond ‘covering the curriculum’ to actually enable learning for students who learn in very different ways. Programs
that prepare teachers need to consider the demands of today’s schools in concert with the growing knowledge base about learning and teaching if they are to support teachers in meeting these expectations. (p. 2)

Recently, a US study by Walker (2016) concluded that the education movement towards inclusion must stress the need to understand how pre-service teachers are being prepared for inclusive practices, “before they enter the workforce, as well as the types of professional development they receive throughout their career” (p. 2). In Canada, a study by Specht et al. (2016) across Faculties of Education in different provinces found that, “given the importance of attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence for the success of practicing teachers” (p. 2), it is imperative to understand how teacher education programs prepare pre-service teachers for the inclusive classroom. Internationally speaking, Forlin (2010b) noted that a reconsideration of teacher training practices and a review of teacher education programs are significant priorities in making future teachers ready to respond to diverse learners in the classroom. Consequently, understanding how teacher education programs prepare future teachers for inclusive practices is vital for supporting a growing and diverse student population.

As a response to the continuous call to recognize students’ diverse learning needs in the classroom, the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) issued a revised version of the Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (OME, 2009). The new version entitled Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation (OME, 2014) continued its goal of ensuring that all students in Ontario schools are welcomed and encouraged to thrive in an advanced learning environment where care, inclusion, support, respect, and students’ well-being are highly valued (OME, 2014). Throughout this study, this revised version will be referred to as the EIE (OME, 2014).

Another response to the rise of students’ diversity in the education system was offered by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), following a study (OCT, 2013) about teachers’ qualifications and the career path of certified teachers who had graduated in the last ten years. The OCT requested all Ontario’s Faculties of Education to extend their teacher
education program from two to four terms (OCT, 2013). Launched in September 2015, the new program known as the Enhanced Teacher Education Program (ETEP) went into effect in all Ontario’s Faculties of Education (OCT, 2013). The ETEP was sought to improve the instructional skills of Ontario’s future teachers and provide them with more practical experiences in the field so they can better support students’ individual learning needs and respond to the increasing diversity of Ontario classrooms (OCT, 2013). To further understand pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom, this research examined how policy actors in one faculty of education in Ontario, understand and incorporate the principles of the EIE (OME, 2014) into their institutional practices, including pre-service instruction, practicum, and program development to support pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

The faculty of education where this study was conducted is located in a mid-size city in Southwestern Ontario. It offers professional and research-intensive master’s and doctoral programs. In addition, the faculty regularly hosts education-related seminars, lectures, events, and community activities and it is also the place for one of the prominent teacher education programs in the region. The teacher education program prepares Ontario future teachers for different areas in education such as early childhood, mathematics, psychology, technology, and mental health to mention a few. The organizational structure of the program includes course work in the university classroom, in-school practical experience, community-based field experience, and various professional learning opportunities and workshops.

1.2 Research Problem

The movement towards advancing inclusive education in Ontario and the creation of a more inclusive-oriented society is reflected in the EIE (OME, 2014) and in other inclusion-related policies. In particular, the EIE document was issued with the aim to enhance the learning experience of all learners in Ontario’s inclusive classrooms. Further, the change that the OCT has made in relation to Ontario’s teacher education program has stressed the necessity to advance the knowledge of future teachers about inclusive education and its associated practices (OCT, 2013).
In response to the change in Ontario teacher education, the faculty of education where this study was conducted made modifications to its program’s design and structure. Keeping in mind that newly graduated teachers continue to experience instructional challenges in the inclusive classroom (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008; Loreman, 2010; McCrimmon, 2015; Rioux, 2007; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008), it became urgent and timely to examine how this faculty of education has incorporated the principles of the revised inclusion-related policy, namely the EIE (OME, 2014) into its restructured teacher education program. This examination aims to reveal the challenges and opportunities of incorporating principles and policies on inclusive education in a pre-service program in Ontario.

1.3 Research Questions

In conducting this study, particular attention was devoted to the ways the different actors involved in one teacher education program interpret inclusive education, how these actors relate it to the teacher preparation requirements, and how they translate its policy principles into practices. For the purpose of this research, the participants will be referred to as policy actors. Policy actors are the individuals “involved in making meaning of and constructing responses to policy through the processes of interpretation and translation” (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011, p. 625). They are the teacher educators, program coordinators, pre-service teachers, and associate teachers who supervise pre-service teachers during practicum. By exploring the policy actors’ interpretations and practices related to inclusive education, the study intended to answer the following questions:

1) How do pre-service teachers from a pre-service program in Ontario make sense of inclusive education after their preparation for the teaching practice?

2) How is the EIE (OME, 2014) document translated into the practices of teacher educators and associate teachers as they prepare pre-service teachers for inclusion?
3) How do the pre-service program coordinators understand inclusion in teacher education, particularly regarding the preparation of pre-service teachers for the inclusive classroom?

1.4 Researcher’s Positionality

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) noted that the position of the researcher “in the group or area being studied is relevant to all approaches of qualitative methodology” and he or she “plays such a direct and intimate role in both data collection and analysis” (p. 55). I am a former high school teacher in a multicultural, international, and inclusive classroom setting, outside of my home country. During my teaching experience, I came to realize that people, particularly teachers, whom I have met, have different views and beliefs about teaching and learning which had influenced the ways they engage with students of diverse backgrounds and accommodate these students’ learning needs. Those teachers, including me, have also come from different social and cultural backgrounds, as well as different teaching and learning experiences.

At the personal level, I view myself as a lifelong learner who constructs knowledge by interacting with those who exist in my social world. For me, all learners, regardless of their background, have the right to be educated in an environment that ensures their safety and values the differences that exist among them. As an educator, I know how influential I am in my classroom and what impact I can have on my students’ learning experience. For that reason, I hold myself accountable for their learning and believe that I should always be reflective, enrich my knowledge, and acquire new skills that support my teaching career. The teaching career is continuously evolving in response to societal changes, technological advancement, as well as the significant rise of teaching and learning expectations.

After relocating to Canada from a Middle Eastern and multicultural country, I developed interests in pursuing doctoral studies in the field of teacher education and inclusive education to further understand inclusion and diversity in the Canadian context. I aimed to understand how pre-service teachers are being prepared to practice in the inclusive
classroom. To do so, I chose a qualitative methodology approach. This methodology is “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that helps us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena” (Merriam, 1998, p. 5) in a particular context. For qualitative researchers, an understanding of the context is substantial in reflecting on the data collected and in making sense of what people say.

Being a researcher of teacher education for inclusive education, an internationally-trained Ontario certified teacher, and a minority immigrant parent of three children, two of whom attend the school system in Ontario, I feel that I genuinely connect with this research. I highly value the significance of developing inclusive-oriented teachers and care about the extent to which my children’s cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds are recognized and respected by their educators. I also believe that the ways inclusion is conceptualized by individuals can ultimately inform the ways they put it into practice. Therefore, understanding how pre-service teachers are being prepared to enact inclusive teaching practices is a particular concern for me at both the parental and the academic levels.

My aim in this study was to examine how policy actors involved in one Ontario teacher education program conceptualize the principles of the policy document titled *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* (OME, 2014), and incorporate these principles into their practices to support pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom. I believe that, as humans, our practices, thoughts, interpretations, and reflections are shaped by the culture, the social, and the historical contexts we live in. Reflexivity has been defined by Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) as “a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the process of research itself” (p. 124). Consequently, I acknowledge that my identity as a minority parent and a former educator has taken part in this research. However, I have been continuously reflective on my subjective biases throughout the study particularly during data collection and data analysis and in making sense of what was said about pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.
1.5 Overview of the Conceptual Framework

Since the study revolves around the analysis of how policy actors interpret and translate policies of inclusive education and teacher education, *Neo-Institutionalism theory* (NI) (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) and the notion of policy enactment (Braun, Maguire, & Ball, 2010) were deployed to guide this study. Meyer and Rowan (2006) argue that NI emphasizes how individuals in organizations, such as the policy actors in this study, create meanings under institutional settings “through language and other symbolic representations” (p. 6). Thus, NI becomes helpful to conceptualize how these individuals express their understanding of issues that relate to teacher education and inclusive education policies within certain institutional frameworks and guidelines. Adding to this perspective, the notion of *policy enactment*, namely, the translation of policy ideas into contextualized practices (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012), was helpful in informing this research as it attends to the ways policies shape and get shaped by context-informed practices.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study will enrich the literature on inclusive education policy enactment with an original analysis of the institutional practices of policy actors in a pre-service teacher preparation program. Further, the study sheds light on how existing inclusion-related policies and practices within the examined teacher education program contribute to the development of future teachers who value diversity and difference. From an organizational perspective, this study is anticipated to help policy actors in similar institutions to better understand the enactment of inclusion-related policies in teacher education as well as their outcomes. Hence, policy actors, especially teacher educators and associate teachers, will further recognize their role in interpreting and translating education policies associated with inclusive education and teacher education.

Undoubtedly, exploring the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) in one faculty of education using multiple data sources allows policy decision makers as well as practitioners to “make sense in new ways” (Patton, 2002, p. 432) of how inclusion-related
policies are interpreted and translated in teacher education programs. The rich
information offered through this qualitative single case study will help illuminating how
the principles of inclusive education and the EIE document are incorporated into the
practices of the policy actors. The findings of this study will assist in designing future
teacher education programs that are more inclusive-oriented and relevant to the
contextual, institutional, and organizational structures of Ontario schools. In turn, this
study has the potential of informing more sophisticated inclusion-oriented curricula in
Ontario teacher education. Moreover, the findings will help to reduce the challenges that
newly graduated teachers experience in the inclusive classroom and contribute to their
retention in the field. Last but not least, this study is viewed as one step forward towards
more equitable education for all students in Ontario’s inclusive classrooms.

1.7 Glossary

Differentiated Instruction (DI): It is conceptualized as “any 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” (Council of Ontario Directors of

Diversity: The presence of a wide range of social characteristics within a group,
organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, age,
ancestry, colour, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, language,
physical and intellectual ability, race, religion or faith, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-

Equity (in education): A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of
all students, families and staff regardless of social and cultural backgrounds, social
identities, or personal life circumstances. Equitable treatment of students means removing
discriminatory barriers to teaching and learning, and to ensuring proportionate levels of
support to those who need it the most, in order to improve student achievement and well-
being and to close achievement gaps. Equitable treatment is not the same as equal treatment (CODE, 2014, p. 16).

**Inclusive Education:** Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of, and respect for, students of all social and cultural backgrounds, social identities, or personal life circumstances. Through inclusive education, students see themselves reflected in their total learning environment in positive empowering ways. Each student is given fair and equal consideration in the school’s priorities and plans, and has equal opportunity to participate in all school activities, and to contribute to the learning environment (CODE, 2014, p. 17).

**Individual Education Plan (IEP):** An IEP is an official document that identifies the strengths and needs of exceptional learners and lists the instructional and assessment strategies that have been identified as beneficial for them as well as the various educational goals to be achieved (Hutchinson, 2017).

**Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** A theoretical framework that guides the design of environments, materials, and instruction, to ensure that all students can access and learn from the curriculum (Specht, 2013, p. 18).

1.8 Summary

This chapter has outlined the blueprint of the study. It articulated the research problem, its context, and the overall procedure used to examine the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) in one Ontario teacher education program. This chapter has also highlighted why the perspectives of Neo-Institutional theory (NI) (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) complemented by the notion of policy enactment (Braun, Maguire, & Ball, 2010) were used as a conceptual framework for this research. Since the need was to obtain an in-depth understanding of pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom, the use of such framework appeared to be significant. Further details on this framework will be discussed in chapter three.
In relation to the methodology, this chapter has offered a brief and initial overview of the approach used. It showed that the use of a qualitative single case study approach, focused on diverse data sources, offers an in-depth understanding of the enactment of the EIE document in one faculty of education. Also, the chapter has shed light on my positionality and the ways I genuinely connect with this research.
Chapter 2

2 Literature Review

This study aimed to examine policy enactment in teacher education with a focus on pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive teaching practices. In particular, the study focused on how the policy actors in one Ontario teacher education program understand inclusive education and enact the principles of the EIE (OME, 2014) into their practices. To situate the study in the relevant literature, this chapter starts with a review of national and international studies that examined policy issues in schools around inclusive education. Further, it provides an overview of teacher education and inclusive education in Ontario and offers a thorough review of studies on pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom in Ontario and elsewhere. In addition, the chapter reviews research on the practices, views, and beliefs of the actors involved in pre-service teacher education, with special emphasis on teaching for inclusion.

The policy context in this study describes the principles of inclusive education in Ontario, the related policies issued by the Ontario Ministry of Education and their relevance to pre-service teacher education. Also, the development of Ontario’s ETEP and the institutional role of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) are described.

2.1 Overview

The literature explored Canadian and international research conducted in the areas of teacher education for inclusion, inclusive education policies, and program development in teacher education. By conducting an extensive review of the above-mentioned literature, I found that studies of teacher education for inclusive education have mainly focused on pre-service teachers’ skills required for the inclusive classroom (Forlin, 2010b; McCray & McHatton, 2011; Rose & Garner, 2010; Wang & Fitch, 2010) while other studies have focused on their attitudes and beliefs (Loreman, 2010; Shade & Stewart, 2001; Sharma, 2010; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008; Specht et al., 2016; Sharma & Sokal, 2015) towards inclusive education. In addition, research on policy enactment and inclusive
education was found to be mostly situated in schools. The call to further engage in research on pre-service teacher preparation programs concerning inclusive education was evident in multiple studies (Ainscow, 2007; Rosenberg & Walther-Thomas, 2014; Specht et al., 2016; Spooner, Algozzine, Wood, & Hicks, 2010). Hence, the need for further understanding of how inclusion-related policies are enacted in teacher education.

Advancing the inclusive education approach and teacher preparation for inclusion appeared to rest upon the creation of more inclusive curricula (Benner & Judge, 2000; Rouse, 2010), and a robust collaboration (Ainscow, 2007; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Harvey, Yssel, Bauserman, & Merbler, 2010; Keefe, Rossi, de Valenzuela, & Howarth, 2000) amongst different education partners who are involved in teacher education. Some studies examined the knowledge of teacher educators about inclusion and how it relates to the lack of pre-service teacher preparation (Forlin & Nguyet, 2010; Ghosh & Tarrow, 1993). Those studies urged teacher educators themselves to engage in more professional development that focuses on the best practices adopted in the inclusive classroom.

In addition, the literature has signaled other reasons that render most of the established practices that relate to pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion insufficient. These reasons included lack of experience among pre-service teachers about inclusion, limited resources for inclusion in schools, as well as the prevailing teacher education curricular designs. Thus, a critical examination of the views and meaning making practices associated with pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom was deemed needed. The review of the literature showed that limited budgeting for teacher education programs is one of the influential factors that make inclusive education practice a challenging task to perform (Miles & Ahuja, 2007; Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), 2013; Slee, 2010).

2.2 Inclusive Education, Policies, and Practices

In spite of the existence of a large body of research on inclusive education policies (Bourke, 2010; Johnstone & Chapman, 2009; Kelly, Devitt, O'Keffee, & Donovan, 2014; Peters, 2007), limited knowledge exists on how such policies are incorporated into
practices (Ahmmed & Mullick, 2014; Forlin, 2010a; Naicker, 2007; Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013). According to Cochran-Smith and Fries (2011), the inclusive education policy construct continues to be subject to multiple meanings and interpretations and different interests.

2.3 The Role of Context in Policy Practice and Policy Analysis

Challenges associated with inclusive education policy practice are evident in the literature (Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit, & van Deventer, 2016; Hamdan, Anuar, & Khan, 2016; Mosia, 2014; Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014). After examining many education policies, Werts and Brewer (2015) found that the aims of these policies are not usually in line with what teachers believe and the motivations and capacities they have. Addressing the significance of context, Heimans (2014) claims that contextual factors are rarely considered in education policy research. Giving priority to context can help us to understand how “policies are taken up, variously inflected, translated and interpreted” (Heimans, 2014, p. 308).

According to Singh, Heimans, and Glasswell (2014), ‘context’ is an analytic construct that allows policy researchers to realize how policies are translated into practices in schools. Werts and Brewer (2015) state that education policies do not anticipate any democratic engagement at the place where they are practiced, but they tend to marginalize “the perspectives and experiences of those living out the policy” (p. 224), the policy actors. This potential for marginalization highlights the need to reconsider how the relations between policies and the social, cultural, and organizational contexts inform policy outcomes. Hence, the significance of policy enactment, which emphasizes the relationships between context and policy practices.

For Vekeman, Devos, and Tuytens (2015), policy makers do not often recognize the multiple interpretations and concerns of those who are carrying out a policy. They argue that what makes policy practice more difficult is the existence of multiple interpretations, even within the same organization or institution. Thus, the translation of a given policy into practices may not fulfill the objectives initially set by the policy.
2.4 National and International Challenges in Enacting Inclusive Education in Schools

The inclusive education movement has been and continues to be recognized as a leading force towards the advancement of education policy and practice (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010). According to UNESCO (2003), inclusive education is the approach “that looks into how to transform education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners. This approach aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem” (p. 7). Relatedly, the *Salamanca Statement* entitled *Education For All* (EFA) has called upon educational institutions to consider inclusive education as a matter of law and human rights issue that ensures the right to education for all individuals (UNESCO, 1994). Alborno (2017) contends that the challenges of practicing inclusive education in schools relate to “the gap between policy and guidelines on one hand, and the attitudes, understanding and practices of stakeholders (administrators, teachers, students, and parents) on the other” (p. 32). Therefore, it is best to offer venues for policy actors to interpret policy according to their situated context and within the institutional framework of the policy (Vekeman, Devos, & Tuytens, 2015).

For instance, Naicker (2007) noted that the enactment of inclusive education policies in South African schools remains problematic due to long-held beliefs that have fostered exclusion for years. Addressing the significance of context, he claimed that in South Africa, inclusive education policy did not develop in line with the pedagogical revolution and got “stuck at a political level since it ignored epistemological issues in the training of educationists” (p. 2). Naicker’s (2007) study highlights the disparity between the inclusive education policy agenda and the professional development strategies in schools.

In a competitive learning environment in Korea where academic achievement is of high concern among parents, Kim (2013) noted that it is very challenging to enact an inclusive education approach as students are under pressure due to their parents’ high expectations. To successfully enact such policies, Kim (2013) believes that collaboration is needed
because “insufficient understanding and inactive participation from principals” (p. 81) constitute a barrier for the practice of inclusion.

Kelly, Devitt, O’Keffee, and Donovan (2014) argue that Irish legislation and educational policies do facilitate inclusion by offering guidelines; however, the ways in which such policies are being incorporated into practices remain subject to the multiple interpretations of actors in schools. They found that students with special education needs (SEN) continue to move from the mainstream schools to special schools due to an inadequate school environment that fosters exclusion rather than inclusion. At the school level, Kelly et al. (2014) believe that the enactment of inclusive education has to overcome many obstacles including lack of teacher training, inadequate educational assessment of students with SEN, and incompatible curriculum and resources.

According to Forlin (2010a), the complex factors that obstruct a significant adoption of inclusion at schools in Hong Kong include lack of teachers’ autonomy and lack of inclusion experience, fixed curricula, and high working demands. To overcome these challenges, the external control on students’ achievement, such as testing requirements, should be minimized to allow classroom teachers to develop their inclusive skills and monitor their students’ academic progress (Forlin, 2010a). In a study that examined the meaning of inclusion among pre-service teachers, Specht (2016a) found that the adoption of inclusive practices occurs when teachers are “comfortable with the use of appropriate pedagogy and when they believe that all students can learn and should be included in heterogeneous classrooms” (p. 894). She adds that developing the capacity of pre-service teachers as well as their competency for inclusive practices is challenging (Specht, 2016a).

Poon-McBrayer and Wong (2013) argue that translating the inclusive education policy into practices in Hong Kong continues to be challenging due to lack of relevant resources for teachers and shared collaboration. For them, context-relevant policies “together with systemic changes, values building, personnel training, and resources are among the core components to succeed in this [inclusive education] reform and ensure that no child is left behind” (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013, p. 1524).
Alternatively, in Queensland, Australia, Bourke (2010) noted that the inclusive education policy models are being introduced in the school system without a significant attention to the ways they impact both teachers and students. Although many initiatives towards inclusive education have been offered, Bourke (2010) believed that school structures and strategies continue to reflect an exclusive practice and teachers continue to feel confused and frustrated about the term ‘inclusion’. Given the fact that professional development for teachers is necessary, using it to exclusively reinforce professional standards has placed further pressure on practicing teachers interested in developing inclusive education strategies (Bourke, 2010).

These research studies on inclusive education policy arguably reflect the idea that inclusive education remains a contested and subject-to-debate concept in academic and policymaking circles all over the world. In Canada, a published report about inclusive education by the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (2008) identified the inclusion approach as a challenging one to enact. According to the report, it takes a serious contribution from all of those concerned about inclusion to eliminate the barriers to students’ success. It is true that the ultimate aim of education policies is to ensure they are translated into practices; however, the enactment phase continues to be complex and actors face challenges in interpreting and assessing mandated policy objectives (Johnstone & Chapman, 2009).

2.5 Critical Perspectives on the Concept of ‘Inclusion’

The literature identifies different critical perspectives on the concept of inclusive education. These perspectives illuminate the extent to which ‘inclusion’ continues to hold the status ‘in progress’ (Danforth & Naraian, 2015, p. 72), in other terms, an approach whose aspects and practicality are continuously interrogated in different educational policy contexts. According to Danforth and Naraian (2015), “as the research and practical basis for inclusive education developed over the ensuing decades, the field of special education continued to bear the primary responsibility for building the intellectual and practical foundation for the new field of inclusion” (p. 70). In the US, the development of inclusive education in the last thirty years was based on how special education can
address the needs of students identified with learning disabilities in the general classroom (Danforth & Naraian, 2015).

For Kavale and Forness (2000), the discussion around inclusion issues becomes more complex as the inclusive education philosophy changes its focus on supporting students with disabilities to the education of all learners, and consequently, to general education. They contend that “the focus must not simply be on access to general education, but rather the assurance that when inclusion is deemed appropriate, it is implemented with proper attitudes, accommodations, and adaptations” (p. 287). Moreover, Kavale and Forness (2000) found that it is irrelevant to promote inclusion as a promising educational approach without a critical attention to, and an evaluation of, the ways it is practiced.

Inclusion for Lindsay (2003) “is championed as a means to remove barriers, improve outcomes and remove discrimination. Inclusion is, however, a complex and contested concept and its manifestations in practice are many and various” (p. 3). For him, due to the ambiguity of the concept, it becomes important to establish specific policies that address inclusion and its principles from an evidence-based approach, and in turn, evaluate the enactment of these policies and how they are modified (Lindsay, 2003).

2.6 Inclusive Education in Ontario

As noted above, the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) aimed to promote access for all learners to quality and equitable education. Correspondingly, the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) addressed the existing societal challenges in relation to inclusion by noting that:

Canadians embrace multiculturalism, human rights and diversity as fundamental values. However, there are ongoing incidents of discrimination in our society that require our continuing attention. Bullying, hate propaganda and cyberbullying are major concerns for parents and students. Racism, religious intolerance, homophobia and gender-based violence are still evident in our communities and, unfortunately, in our schools. This can lead to students feeling rejected, excluded and isolated at school, which may result in behaviour problems in the classroom,
decreased interest in school, lower levels of achievement and higher dropout rates. (OME, n.d., p. 1)

Inclusive education policy in Ontario is based on a fundamental principle that “every student has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or other factors” (OME, 2014a, p. 8). Relatedly, the OME aims to move forward towards recognizing diversity in society in ways that fulfill the goal of developing an equitable education system (OME, 2014).

On the ground, the adoption of inclusive education in the province has been represented in the release of many policy initiatives, including but not limited to, Policy/Program Memoranda (PPM) No.119 “Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools”; PPM No.108 “Opening or closing exercises in public elementary and secondary schools”; and PPM No.112 “Education about Religion in the Public Elementary and Secondary Schools” (OME, 2014). Further, Ontario Ministry of Education’s interest on inclusive education is reflected in the following statement:

> Ontario is committed to the success and well-being of every student and child. Learners in the province’s education system will develop the knowledge, skills and characteristics that will lead them to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens. (OME, 2014a, p. 1)

In its report *Ontario’s Well-Being Strategy for Education* (OME, 2016), the Ministry of Education contends that one of the means to achieve excellence in education is through promoting students’ well-being and by building their skills and knowledge (OME, 2016). The OME highlights the different initiatives adopted by schools and communities in Ontario and acknowledges the need for continuous collaboration and commitment from all education partners (OME, 2016).
Public education is the cornerstone of democratic inclusive societies (OME, 2009). The OME has indicated that an inclusive education approach would address the needs of Indigenous students, recent immigrants, students with special needs, and those who come from low income families (OME, n. d.). In order to provide an inclusive and equitable school environment, the OME has noted that schools and their respective boards need to ensure that all school community members, particularly students, are feeling safe and accepted in an environment that values diversity and expresses a shared commitment to the development of a just society (OME, n. d.).

2.7 The Development of Inclusive Education Policy in Ontario

Bill 13, namely the Accepting Schools Act, which amends the Education Act, came into force on September 1, 2012. The Act which is one part of the Comprehensive Action Plan set by the Ontario government to ensure the existence of safe schools in the province, expected “all school boards to provide safe, inclusive, and accepting learning environments in which every student can succeed” (OME, n. d., p. 1). Moreover, the Act built upon the principles of inclusion and equity that are embedded in the 2009 version of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (OME, 2009). Further reviews of the 2009 version led to the development of the new version titled Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation, released in 2014.

The EIE (OME, 2014) was put forward to provide a framework for school boards and their respective schools to foster inclusive and equitable education practices (OME, 2014). This new strategy represented an extension of the Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (OME, 2014a) that aims to fulfill three major purposes: a) closing the gaps in students’ academic achievement, b) advancing students’ learning in an inclusive environment, and c) promoting confidence among school community members, particularly parents, towards public education (OME, 2014).

The 2014 strategy maintains that inclusive education is the approach that helps school personnel, particularly teachers, to “understand, identify, address, and eliminate the
biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit students’ prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society” (OME, 2014, p. 6). It is worth noting that the development of the new strategy is a practical reflection on previous studies conducted in the areas of inclusive education and education policy research (Ainscow, 2012; Ainscow, Dyson, & Booth, 2000; Mitler, 2000).

In 2017 and building on previous policies that aimed to support inclusive education, as well as students’ academic achievement and well-being, the Ontario Ministry of Education released a new inclusion-related document titled *Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan*. The plan focused on four areas including 1) school and classroom practices, 2) leadership, governance, and human resource practices, 3) data collection, integration and reporting, and 4) organizational culture change (OME, 2017, p. 13). According to the OME, the objectives of the plan will be achieved through actions that seek to “identify and eliminate embedded systemic barriers and discriminatory institutional and instructional practices that negatively impact the achievement and well-being of students and lead to inequitable outcomes” (OME, 2017, p. 10). Concerning school and classroom practices, the plan states that “students must also experience teaching and learning that is reflective of their needs and of who they are” (OME, 2017, p. 16), and that classrooms need to enable promising learning conditions for all students.

In practice, while the Ontario Ministry of Education continues to offer school boards and their schools, “direction, support and guidance” (OME, n.d., p. 2), the 2014 strategy calls for:

1. Each school to create and support a positive safe school climate that fosters and promotes equity, inclusive education, and diversity.

2. Each school board to develop and implement an equity and inclusive education policy and religious accommodation guidelines for the board and its schools.
3. Equity and Inclusive Education Implementation Networks to share effective practices and resources and to promote and participate in collaborative learning opportunities.

4. Education and community partners to support school and board efforts by providing resources and professional learning opportunities. (OME, n.d., p. 2)

Inclusivity in practice and equity have been viewed as critical elements in education which necessitates all stakeholders’ leadership and commitment to meet the dynamic nature of schools and Ontario communities (OME, 2014). In other words, by recognizing students’ diversity, inclusive education becomes the driving force for inclusive teaching, assessment, and the practices of all education partners (OME, 2014).

Despite the fact that the EIE (OME, 2014) was initially developed to promote inclusive practices among in-service teachers and in schools at large, its embodiment into the practices of those in teacher education seems to be significant. Nevertheless, no studies have yet addressed the incorporation of the strategy’s initiatives within teacher preparation programs’ practices in Ontario’s Faculties of Education. Thus, teacher education becomes one of the venues to investigate the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) with a focus on how pre-service teachers are being prepared for inclusive teaching practices.

2.8 Teacher Education in Ontario

In general, any individual who seeks to practice teaching in Ontario publicly-funded schools must be certified by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). With respect to the Ontario Labour Mobility Act (2009), teachers who have been certified to teach in other Canadian jurisdictions, are eligible to teach in Ontario after they submit the necessary documentation to the OCT (OCT, n.d.). The OCT was established in 1997 as the second provincial self-regulatory body for the teaching profession after British Columbia. The Ontario teacher certification requires that candidates had obtained a postsecondary degree and a Bachelor of Education degree from one of the 13 accredited faculties of education.
In the province, or from other Canadian or international university programs that are acceptable by the College (Petrarca & Kitchen, 2017a).

In line with other jurisdictions in Canada, all previous Ontario governments have put a significant focus on education as a policy priority with “the most recent years witnessing a steadily growing interest in teaching and teacher education policy” (OCT, 2006, p. 9). According to the OCT, future teachers need to be diversity-oriented, responsive to their students’ various needs in the classroom, and to obtain the needed skills to perform differentiated instruction and assessments to all learners (OCT, 2006). The OCT developed a policy document entitled *The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* (OCT, n.d.) as a tool that guides certified teachers’ practices in the field. This document reflects the inclusive education approach as it emphasizes the four main aspects that certified and practicing teachers in Ontario are expected to uphold. These aspects comprise:

1- *Care*: The ethical standard of *Care* includes compassion, acceptance, interest and insight for developing students' potential. Members express their commitment to students' wellbeing and learning through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice.

2- *Respect*: Intrinsic to the ethical standard of *Respect* are trust and fair-mindedness. Members honour human dignity, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, they model respect for spiritual and cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment.

3- *Trust*: The ethical standard of *Trust* embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians, families and the public are based on trust.

4- *Integrity*: Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of *Integrity*. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity
in their professional commitments and responsibilities. (OCT, *The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession*, n.d., p. 1)

Undoubtedly, these aspects call upon preparing teachers who express open-mindedness, tolerance, and a sense of inclusivity: teachers who can positively respond to today students’ needs in the inclusive classroom and provide a safe learning environment for all pupils.

Relatedly, the OCT addresses the aspirations and goals of teaching by conveying a vision of professionally-guided practices. These practices are depicted in a set of institutional standards, which include:

1- *Commitment to Students and Student Learning*: Members are dedicated in their care and commitment to students. They treat students equitably and with respect and are sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning. Members facilitate the development of students as contributing citizens of Canadian society.

2- *Professional Knowledge*: Members strive to be current in their professional knowledge and recognize its relationship to practice. They understand and reflect on student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum, ethics, educational research and related policies and legislation to inform professional judgment in practice.

3- *Professional Practice*: Members apply professional knowledge and experience to promote student learning. They use appropriate pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, resources and technology in planning for and responding to the needs of individual students and learning communities. Members refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue and reflection. (OCT, *The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*, n.d., p. 1)
2.9 The Enhanced Teacher Education Program

After the OCT got appointed as the governing body for the teaching profession in 1997, it became entrusted with developing the qualifications for the teaching practice, licensing qualified teachers, accrediting teacher education programs, and for establishing the ethical and professional standards for the teaching profession in the province (Salvatori, Ragunathan, & Tallo, 2017).

In its 2006 report Preparing Teachers for Tomorrow, one of the recommendations of the OCT was to extend the teacher education program from two to four terms (OCT, 2006). This recommendation was “based on research of newly certified teachers in the past ten years and an extensive review of teacher qualifications” (OCT, 2013, p. 1). Seven years later, in June 2013 and having the OCT as a lead partner, the OME announced its plan to extend the teacher education program, now in effect, and called the Ontario Enhanced Teacher Education Program (ETEP) (OCT, 2013). In Sep 2015 and after the Ministry has gone through consultations with various stakeholders in the education field, mainly the OCT, all Ontario’s faculties of education launched the ETEP.

Besides its aim to control the oversupply of teachers in Ontario, the ETEP has a “greater focus on students’ mental health and well-being, parent engagement and communication, and special education among other core elements, greater attention to diversity in Ontario classrooms and knowledge of the Ontario context, and greater understanding about how to teach with technology” (OCT, 2013, p. 1). According to Salvatori et al. (2017), regulation 347/02 indicates that the ETEP intends to offer pre-service teachers further understanding of Ontario curriculum and the provincial policy documents associated with their study areas. These areas include issues of equity as well as strategies for planning, design, assessment, and evaluation.

In response to the ETEP, faculties of education in Ontario have been required by the OCT to further enrich their teacher education programs with more content that relates to curriculum, pedagogy, instructional strategies, as well as to the context of teaching including the social, legal, and diversity perspectives (OCT, 2016). Consequently,
understanding how such modifications impact pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive practices appears to be significant.

Institutionally speaking, Petrarca and Kitchen (2017a) remind us that the OCT does not direct faculties of education on how they should structure their programs, however the faculties enjoy self-autonomy in constructing them in ways that comply with the OCT’s accreditation requirements and the institutional guidelines. The structure of the ETEP including the courses offered and the practicum design are upon the discretion of the faculties of education and in response to their situated contexts (Petrarca & Kitchen, 2017). These contexts may include the organizational, financial, instructional capacities, and the local needs of each program.

Although there were funding cuts and that admissions to teacher education were cut in half, yet teacher education programs represented by faculty and staff still worked collectively within a limited timeline to develop various programs that seek to respond to the reformed K-12 settings in Ontario (Kitchen & Petrarca, 2017). The outcome of this collective work in each faculty of education was the development of programs that “underscored the importance of research, equity for all students, theory-practice connections, evidence-based pedagogy and field work” (Petrarca & Kitchen, 2017, p. x) as well as the value of establishing robust relationships and partnerships between schools and universities.

The general structure of the four-term program has been described in the OCT document titled *Registration Guide Requirements for Becoming a Teacher of General Education in Ontario Including Multi-Session Programs* (OCT, n.d.) as follows:

The program includes 10 per cent focused on education foundations (i.e. the history, philosophy and psychology of education), 20 per cent focused on teaching methods suitable for two teaching qualifications in Ontario (i.e. how to teach students in particular grades or subjects), 20 per cent in practice teaching – a minimum of 80 days of practice teaching supervised by the program provider, and 50 per cent in any other areas of education to support methodology coursework, such as classroom management, how to
use research data and new technology, supporting students with special learning needs and those from diverse communities (OCT, n.d., p. 1).

In terms of research, since the new program’s commencement, the literature on teacher education in Ontario did not have studies that have examined the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) in teacher education and how the meaning making practices of actors including pre-service teachers, teacher educators, program coordinators, and associate teachers contribute to the preparation of future teachers for the inclusive classroom.

The following sections offer a thorough review of Canadian and international research on teacher education for inclusion, as well as research on curriculum, program development, and collaboration in teacher education.

2.10 Canadian and International Research: Teacher Education for Inclusion

Teacher education plays a crucial role in developing teachers’ knowledge and capacity to practice inclusion in today’s classrooms. Given the inclusivity challenges that exist in schools and the overwhelming workloads that in-service teachers continue to report, understanding how teacher education programs prepare teachers who are responsive to students’ diverse needs is significant (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005). Rioux (2007) noted that the progress of the Canadian inclusive education is evident as it continues to advance and promote an equitable education for all learners. In her view, such a growth requires new teaching standards to be in place to better support future teachers (Rioux, 2007).

In a study about inclusive teaching practices with Alberta pre-service teachers, Loreman (2010) found that pre-service teachers had concerns about how to successfully practice in the inclusive classroom and accommodate students’ learning needs, yet those concerns have not always been addressed by teacher education programs. Relatedly, Forlin (2010) believed that teacher education programs are now required to incorporate inclusive-oriented values and practices in their curricula that allow future teachers to positively
respond to students' learning diversity and contribute to opposing marginalization and stigmatization.

In the same vein, Loreman (2010) claimed that future practitioners in the inclusive classroom have essential needs. These needs include understanding inclusion and respecting students’ diversity, collaborating with parents and colleagues to develop inclusive instructional methods and assessments, seeking a continuous professional development by consulting education research and using a reflective practice, as well as developing abilities that foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment in the classroom (Loreman, 2010).

2.11 The Inclusivity Construct in Teacher Education and the Role of Teacher Educators

In his study about promoting inclusivity in teacher education, DeLuca (2012) found that multiple interpretations of this construct exist in teacher education programs, a fact that results in multimodal learning and teaching experiences in relation to inclusive education. He argues that future research must engage “with the complexities of promoting inclusivity as a multi-dimensional construct and the necessity of a coherent and explicit framework for inclusivity to guide pre-service programming” (DeLuca, 2012, p. 566).

Reflecting on classroom diversity and the need for an advanced inclusive teaching practice, Rosenberg and Walther-Thomas (2014) noted that teachers’ preparation to practice in multifaceted and diverse school environments must be examined to understand how teachers can enact inclusive practices in diverse classrooms.

Recognizing the international push towards inclusive education and the critical role of teachers in fostering an inclusive classroom environment, Fullan (2001) contends that improvement in education does not exist until issues of teacher education, such as pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion, are taken seriously. According to Darling-Hammond (2006), teachers’ capacities constitute a significant contributor to children’s learning. For her, teacher education program designs should enable prospective teachers to learn about the “social and cultural contexts, and teaching, and be able to enact these
understandings in complex classrooms serving increasingly diverse students” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 302). To ensure that all students have access to qualified teachers, organizations such as faculties of education, must respond to all students’ needs by adopting evidence-based teacher preparation practices (Hardman, 2009).

The adoption of any changes in teacher education programs, according to an early study by Ghosh and Tarrow (1993), must recognize the significant role of teacher educators. They believed that nothing could be achieved “without efforts focused on those who teach the teacher” (p. 81). For instance, one of this study’s aims was to examine how teacher educators and associate teachers incorporate the principles of the EIE (OME, 2014) into their practices in ways that support pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion.

2.12 The Practicum Component in Teacher Education and the Impact of Resources in Schools

Offering a practical experience for pre-service teachers in unfamiliar contexts is crucial for developing their inclusive-oriented practices (Rusznyak & Walton, 2017). Rogers-Adkinson and Fridley (2016) found that “the development of pedagogical skills in the interactive aspects of teaching is left almost entirely to field experiences, the component of professional education over which we have little control” (p. 541). Unfamiliar contexts help pre-service teachers to develop the ability to express a culturally-responsive and context-informed pedagogy and to reflect on their own beliefs towards students’ diversity (Rusznyak & Walton, 2017). Therefore, teacher education programs need to provide suitable practicum placements for pre-service teachers’ where their skills, beliefs, and attitudes towards inclusion are fostered. These placements need to help future teachers to develop their capacity to engage in a student-teacher relationship that seeks to promote students’ learning (Rogers-Adkinson & Fridley, 2016).

The practicum placement for Rusznyak and Walton (2017) is a venue where pre-service teachers learn how to embrace inclusion or perhaps defer to practices that marginalize some learners in schools. Rusznyak and Walton (2017) examined the importance of
associate teachers’ role in supervising pre-service teachers during their practicum and modeling inclusive-oriented practices. For them, it is highly important for pre-service teachers to learn from “teachers who are committed to principles of inclusion, and who model inclusive pedagogies with diverse students” (p. 468).

Earlier, Spooner et al. (2010) found that teacher education needs to resonate in investigations that seek to advance inclusive-oriented practices. In their view, pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion is a “fundamental strategy for improving our schools and, hence, the quality of life of the children who attend them” (p. 50). The growing inclusive teaching demands as noted by McCray and McHatton (2011) and the emphasis on students’ outcomes influence future teachers’ interests in inclusive education. They argue that although inclusive skills and dispositions are significant, future teachers continue to feel poorly prepared towards how to invest the knowledge they have gained and navigate inclusion resources. The practical experiences in which pre-service teachers are engaged with, need to be exemplars that present the teaching profession as the practice of enabling rather than disabling (Rusznyak & Walton, 2017).

Politically, Opertti and Brady (2011) argued that education reform towards inclusion is a complex and contested process as it is not based on teacher education alone but also require a significant support through legislation and policy initiatives. With the introduction of the ETEP in Ontario, as stated earlier, the number of teacher candidates admitted to teacher education programs has been reduced by half, along with less funding per each candidate admitted (OCUFA, 2013). Such changes were believed to disadvantage the learning of pre-service teachers and threaten the quality of teacher education (OCUFA, 2013) and in turn, the quality of inclusive teaching practices at schools.

From an international perspective, Slee (2010) believes that appropriate funding for inclusive education approaches and services contributes to the construction of inclusive curricula and pedagogies that can support the education of all learners. In the same vein, Miles and Ahuja (2007) noted that a review of the literature about the education systems reflects a struggle in coping with teachers who are poorly trained along with insufficient
budgets for inclusive education resources. Thus, it was substantial to understand how pre-service teachers are being prepared, in light of the limited resources available (e.g. material, instructional, and financial), to practice inclusion and accommodate students’ individual learning needs.

2.13 Fostering Pre-service Teacher Preparation for Inclusion through Multi-pedagogical Approaches

With the development of more inclusive education policies worldwide, Forlin (2010b) concluded that teacher education needs to provide future teachers with inclusive skills and pedagogies. These elements are fundamental for enhancing teachers’ competency and capability to address the needs of all learners in the Canadian classroom (McCrimmon, 2015). For Specht (2013), “teachers who meet the diverse needs of their students are more likely to have children and youth in their classrooms who perceive school, themselves, and each other favourably” (p. 18). In collaboration with the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, BC, Canada, Crocker and Dibbon (2008) noted that Canadian teachers are expected to express new competencies that include a capacity to teach diverse students, as well as a capacity for collaboration, research work, and the use of technology in the inclusive classroom.

One of the pedagogical approaches used by Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2011) was the development of a pre-designed inclusive lesson-planning template as a tool to be used by pre-service teachers during practicum. Their study revealed that over 80% of pre-service teachers found the template helpful for the process of their progressive learning and in understanding the variety of instructional techniques. Examining pedagogical collaboration, Wang and Fitch (2010) investigated the co-teaching element in teacher education. They found that “although both inclusion and collaboration models have been in practice for two decades, few currently employed teachers have received specific training” in co-teaching (p. 113). Co-teaching is a supportive approach through which two teachers work collaboratively in the same classroom sharing instruction, planning, and management of classroom activities (Wang & Fitch, 2010). Relatedly, Zagona, Kurth, and MacFarland (2017) noted that teacher education programs need to provide
pre-service teachers with opportunities to learn about strategies for co-instruction as a key for success in the inclusive classroom.

In Italy, Bartolo (2010) studied the impact of an e-learning module on developing collaborative practices among prospective teachers. His study showed that the module has offered pre-service teachers a chance to engage in a socially-constructed learning through collaboration and reflective practice, which are two significantly important tools for the success of today’s teachers. In an international study that included Canada, Sharma, Forlin, and Loreman (2008) found that teacher education programs must invest in all means to ensure that prospective teachers are ready to interact with all learners. In Canada, DeLuca (2012) noted that research on teacher education for inclusion shows that both the infusion approach and the separate approach in teacher education can have a positive impact on pre-service teachers’ learning about inclusion. Inclusion in the former tends to be embedded in all courses while it is encompassed within selected courses in the latter (DeLuca, 2012).

2.14 Pre-service Teachers’ Attitudes towards Inclusion-related Practices

Diversity is evidenced in the multiple social, ethnic, racial, linguistic, sexual, gender identities, and levels of ability that exist in Ontario classrooms. Across Canada, most of the studies that have examined teacher education for inclusion have mainly focused on pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special learning needs, rather than towards the inclusion of students who express multiple identities (Ryan, 2009; Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2008).

In their study, Sharma and Sokal (2015) found that research on ways that influence prospective teachers’ attitudes towards inclusive practices is scarce. In particular, Sharma and Sokal (2015) examined pre-service teachers’ reflections on two stand-alone courses that relate to beliefs, concerns, and efficacy for teaching in the inclusive classroom in one Australian and one Canadian university. They found that pre-service teachers in the Canadian university had fewer concerns about inclusion, particularly the inclusion of
students with Special Education Needs (SEN). Pedagogy and content, Sharma et al. (2008) argue, are two significant factors in teacher education programs that can affect prospective teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion.

In the US, the study of Shade and Stewart (2001) referred successful inclusion in the classroom to the ways teacher education programs influence prospective teachers’ attitudes. Fostering positive attitudes towards inclusion for Sharma (2010) requires significant training that can help pre-service teachers to develop inclusive practices and beliefs. In Northern Ireland, Lambe and Bones (2006) examined pre-service teachers’ perspectives towards practicing inclusion in the classroom. The latter believed that successful inclusion depends on class size, time management, the availability of classroom assistants, and adequate training for pre-service teachers (Lambe & Bones, 2006). In Ontario, Ryan (2009) investigated pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion. He found that although pre-service teachers felt ready to practice inclusion, they were concerned about the teaching demands, time constraints, support, and resources that impact, in the pre-service teachers’ view, effective inclusive practices (Ryan, 2009).

2.15 Curriculum Change and Program Development in Teacher Education

For Darling-Hammond (2006), teacher education research needs to examine ways that help in the development of teacher education programs that represent coherence in their aims, curriculum structure, and field-based experiences. Developing these programs allows pre-service teachers to overcome their challenges in making “sense of disparate, unconnected experiences” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 306).

Opertti and Brady (2011) believe that inclusion reform requires teacher education curricula that would foster a re-conceptualization of inclusive attitudes, negotiate identities, and reframe the mindsets of those involved in teacher education. They argue that a significant role of teacher education lies in influencing “teachers’ attitudes, roles, and competencies, especially in addressing the historical, cultural, pedagogical and political aspects of education and schooling as well as providing new ideas to facilitate
teaching” (p. 466). Moreover, Rose and Garner (2010) assert that more emphasis on diversity and difference should be integrated into teacher education curricula given inclusion remains a crucial means for education reform and the development of many societies.

Specht (2016a) found that pre-service teachers had doubts “in their own ability, in the concept of inclusion, and whether or not all students are capable of being included” (p. 895). In her view, the integration of different inclusion-related instructional approaches and strategies such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in teacher education curricula can promote pre-service teachers’ understanding of the right to inclusion of all learners (Specht, 2016a). UDL is a “theoretical framework that guides the design of environments, materials, and instruction, to ensure that all students can access and learn from the curriculum” (Specht, 2013, p. 18).

2.16 Inclusive Pedagogy in Teacher Education

Rusznyak and Walton (2017) view inclusive pedagogy as the central piece of inclusive education that enables learning and achievement for all students and allows them to feel more engaged. Inclusive pedagogy requires three shifts in how future teachers think about their practice and about their students (Rusznyak & Walton, 2017).

Firstly, teachers should shift away from being concerned about ‘individuals with additional needs’, towards thinking about supporting ‘learning to all’. Secondly, teachers need to shift away from deficit thinking about student ability towards a belief that all children have the ability to learn and make progress. Thirdly, teachers need to perceive difficulties in learning as a professional challenge rather than a problem located within particular students, and develop new ways of working with others to address these challenges. (Rusznyak & Walton, 2017, p. 466)

In Ghana, Singal et al. (2015) found that establishing an inclusive education system has failed because of the absence of inclusive pedagogical support, poor transportation system, school costs, and the absence of well-trained teachers. Other factors for
Ametepee and Anastasiou (2015) include the ambiguity of inclusive education policies, and the inadequate student-centered strategies such as co-teaching and peer-assisted strategies. Perhaps, one way to improve pre-service teachers’ inclusive skills is offering them training on the use of inclusive pedagogical practices. Such practices include UDL which helps in developing accessible lesson plans for all learners in the inclusive classroom (McGhie & Sung, 2013). According to Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2011), achieving UDL happens through the use of “flexible curricular materials and activities that provide alternatives for students with differing abilities” (p. 744).

Kim (2011) contends that pre-service teachers need to learn how to modify instruction and how to collaborate with their colleagues while sharing knowledge about pedagogical approaches (Kim, 2011). Rayner and Allen (2013) conducted a study about the benefits of using online video-recorded interviews to bridge theory with practice in a teacher education course around inclusive education. In their study, 83% of pre-service teachers have reported an improvement in their understanding of the course and how the interview strategy has helped them to connect theory and practice. Clearly, the practicality of inclusion in terms of teaching and learning remains critical compared to the policy concerns and the philosophical considerations (Tait & Purdie, 2000).

Rouse (2010) reminds us that although many policies on inclusive education do exist in many countries, “achieving inclusion is a daunting task and dealing with differences and diversity continues to be one of the biggest problems faced by school today” (p. 48). Such a problem, Rouse (2010) argues, is due to insufficient inclusive teacher preparation and the absence of inclusive curricula and teaching strategies at schools. In the same vein, Florian, Young, and Rouse (2010) claim that preparing pre-service teachers for inclusive practices did not receive enough attention in research. Therefore, to support students’ diverse needs in schools, it is imperative to examine how teacher education programs integrate inclusive education into their programmatic curricula.

Forlin and Nguyet (2010) claim that teacher education curricula continue to be “much focused on academic objectives rather than on a children’s needs perspective” (p. 34). For them, the prevailing curricula may serve as a limiting factor for successful inclusive
practices in the classroom. In Canada, Goodnough, Falkenberg, and MacDonald (2016) found that the continuous change in the K-12 settings influences the structure of teacher education programs and the pedagogies adopted, a fact that shapes future teachers’ practices in the inclusive classroom. They tell us that due to the teaching challenges that future teachers will eventually face, teacher education program’s personnel need to visualize the content and pedagogy of teacher education from a more practical point of view (Goodnough et al., 2016).

2.17 Developing Inclusion-oriented Teacher Education Programs

Benner and Judge (2000) developed an alternative teacher education program in their faculty to help in improving pre-service teachers’ capacity for inclusion. They noted that teacher educators who were involved in developing the program needed to rethink their beliefs and redefine their roles and responsibilities towards the teaching profession (Benner & Judge, 2000). Integrating the inclusion concept in the different courses in teacher education programs can ultimately support pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom. Such integration, Rouse (2010) argues, bridges the gap between theory and practice, and reinforces action research about children’s learning.

Four areas of knowledge and skills pre-service teachers must be prepared for according to Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage (2005). These are, “the development of pedagogical content knowledge of the subject areas to be taught; knowledge of how to teach diverse learners; knowledge of assessment; and an understanding of how to manage classroom activities” (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005, p. 36). They contend that in terms of policy, any institutional change must seek to improve the organizational context where that change takes place. For the purpose of this study, the context can be the teacher education program’s design, including the practical and the theoretical components.

Consequently, pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom would require teacher education programs to have “structural or systemic strategies, widely communicated policy, flexible curriculum, and the provision of quality materials,
ongoing teacher training and support for teachers” (Rioux, 2007, p. 113). Pre-service teachers’ support, through exemplary field-based experiences, is crucial as they allow pre-service teachers to better conceptualize the process of teaching and learning. Studies have shown that teacher education programs that expose prospective teachers to diverse learners contribute to enhancing their attitudes towards inclusion (Chambers & Forlin, 2010; Forlin, 2010a).

2.18 Inclusion and Collaborative Practices in Teacher Education

According to Forlin (2010), the inclusive policy initiative titled Education For All (EFA) (UNESCO, 1994) has been developed to guide, help, and support educational institutions worldwide in promoting inclusive education. However, Forlin (2010) argues that less attention is paid for how teachers can respond to all students’ learning needs. EFA is an international agreement that called all education partners and stakeholders to take a role in developing strategies that ensure all children have access to an inclusive and equitable education (Forlin, 2010).

In practicing inclusion, Koay (2014) declares that “the commitment on the part of society at large, and the school community, in particular, the head teachers/principals, classroom teachers, parents and the multidisciplinary team to include every student is crucial” (p. 1030). Thus, it becomes important to examine and understand how current practices in teacher education are performed in light of the EIE (OME, 2014) document and the program’s situated context.

Collaboration in teacher education programs plays a key role in pre-service teacher preparation (Petrarca & Kitchen, 2017b). Smith, Frey, and Tollefson (2003) found that, traditionally, teacher education programs did not emphasize the significance of collaboration and planning among professionals in the education field. They argue that pre-service teachers need to learn how to collaborate and take role in decision-making processes, so they become more capable of developing inclusive learning environments in their classrooms (Smith et al., 2003). At the institutional level, collaboration is represented in the institutional guidelines of the OCT.
The OCT requires teacher education programs to designate a liaison person who would communicate with the schools where pre-service teachers complete their program’s practicum component (Petrarca & Kitchen, 2017b). Sobel, Iceman-Sands and Basile (2007) argue that these programs need “to ensure they are doing all they can to prepare teachers for the challenges present in today’s inclusive schools” (p. 260).

In the US, Keefe et al. (2000) noted that examining how future teachers can “work with populations that historically have not been part of the dialogue surrounding general school reform initiatives” (p. 73) is vital. They argued that the shift towards inclusive education requires an active collaboration between all stakeholders including teacher educators, associate teachers, and administrators in schools and universities. Relatedly, Forlin and Chambers (2011) noted that due to the critical role of teachers in children’s learning, universities and school systems should continue to collaborate and construct informed and competent teachers who can accommodate the diverse learners in the inclusive classroom.

The need to examine collaboration practices in teacher preparation programs was also highlighted in the study of Harvey, Yssel, Bauserman, and Merbler (2010). Harvey et al. (2010) believed that collaboration with associate teachers and other professionals in the community assists prospective teachers in developing their inclusive teaching practices and problem-solving skills. Collaboration helps future teachers to modify curriculum, adopt specific strategies that meet the needs of all learners, and to have positive attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion (Forlin, 2010). Thus, developing inclusive practices among future teachers involves creating opportunities for collaboration in teacher education.

In their study about collaboration, Nevin, Thousand, and Villa (2009) found that “changes to both the legal requirements and to student demographics point to the need for increased collaborative planning and teaching among school personnel who are attempting to comply with legal mandates” (p. 569). In their view, preparing inclusive-oriented teachers requires teacher educators from a variety of disciplines to come together and share their knowledge and expertise.
2.19 Summary

This review of the literature has emphasized the need to examine how prospective teachers are being prepared for the inclusive classroom (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005; Forlin, 2010; Specht, 2013). The review showed various strategies (Bartolo, 2010; DeLuca, 2012; Rayner & Allen, 2013; Zagona et al., 2017) that are sought to better support pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion and signaled the critical role that teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Specht 2016a; Walker, 2016) play in this regard.

The literature highlighted the need for more inclusive-oriented curricula (Forlin, 2010b; Rouse, 2010; McCrimmon, 2015; Specht 2016a) in teacher education to foster pre-service teachers’ capacity to accommodate and positively respond to students’ learning diversity. In addition, this review addressed studies that examined how the beliefs and attitudes of different actors inform practices in relation to inclusive education. In turn, understanding the institutional practices of teacher educators, associate teachers, pre-service teachers, and teacher education coordinators towards teacher preparation for inclusion is key to better conceptualize inclusion and policy enactment in teacher education. Therefore, examining how these actors, under institutional settings and within a particular context, come together and share their expertise and knowledge about pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive practice is undoubtedly significant to explore.

Finally, the review of the literature revealed a dearth of research on the incorporation of inclusive education policies into the practices of policy actors in teacher education programs. Thus, it becomes crucial to understand how policy actors make sense of the EIE (OME, 2014) policy document, its principles, and reflect on their institutional practices towards supporting future teachers’ preparation for the inclusive classroom.
Chapter 3

3 Theoretical Framework

Drawing from Neo-Institutionalism theory (NI), also known as New-Institutionalism (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) and the perspectives of Stephen J. Ball and his colleagues towards policy enactment (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012; Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011; Braun, Maguire, & Ball, 2010; Maguire, Braun, & Ball, 2015), this study examined the conceptualization of inclusive education and the practices associated with the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) policy document in one Ontario teacher education program. In particular, the study investigated how the program’s teacher educators, coordinators, and associate teachers incorporated the principles of the policy document *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* (OME, 2014) into their practices, in ways that support pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom. The theoretical framework has also been used to analyze how pre-service teachers conceptualized inclusion through their practicum experiences in schools and in the university classrooms, and how they view themselves enacting inclusion principles during their future practice.

3.1 Rationale for Using New-Institutionalism Theory and the Notion of Policy Enactment

By adopting NI and the notion of policy enactment as a theoretical framework, the study sheds light on the institutional logics around the practice of inclusive education in teacher education as well as the meaning-making practices of policy actors towards pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

According to Bridwell-Mitchell and Sherer (2017), every institution, such as the Faculty of Education in this study, “is associated with specific beliefs, values, norms, and practices; this is to say, institutional logics” (p. 225). Institutional logics, for Thornton and Ocasio (1999), are “socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules” (p. 804) that are derived from larger societal
institutions such as religions, families, and cultures. NI theory, rooted in organizational studies, examines how beliefs, norms, and rules shape the meaning-making practices of actors within organizations, and how actors’ practices contribute to a persistence or change of institutions (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1995).

While NI focuses on how institutions influence actors’ meaning-making practices and vice versa, policy enactment focuses on how these actors, in a particular context such as the teacher education program in this study, interpret policies and translate them into their practices (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012). The context, for the purpose of this study, can be defined as the social, cultural, and organizational structure of the examined teacher education program. Hence, policy enactment becomes the lens through which researchers can understand how the contextual complexities of the educational institutions influence policy interpretation and policy outcomes (Heimans, 2012). In this study, NI and policy enactment were used to characterize and analyze the meaning-making practices of teacher educators, program coordinators, pre-service teachers, and associate teachers in relation to pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

The following sections show how NI and policy enactment complement each other and collectively constitute an original and innovative analytical framework to use in education policy research.

3.2 The Relation between NI and Policy Enactment

In this chapter, I argue that NI and policy enactment constitute a robust analytical lens for this study. On the one hand, NI acknowledges that the institutional practices of policy actors are subject not only to the logics of institutions (Friedland & Alford, 1991), but also to their meanings, prior experiences, and their agency which is a key connecting factor between NI and policy enactment (Ball, 2015). As noted above, policy enactment (Ball et. al, 2012) attends to the contextual dimensions that shape how policy actors make sense of policies and incorporate them into their practices.

New-Institutionalism theory, according to Meyer and Rowan (2006), offers a significant contribution to policy analysis research in many academic fields such as sociology,
economics, political science, as well as organizational studies. They argue that the context within which policy actors are situated influences their meaning-making practices (Meyer & Rowan, 2006). Attending to the institutional context appears to be significant in examining how a given policy is interpreted and practiced, hence the pivotal role given to policy enactment in this study. What follows is a more detailed elaboration on the elements of this theoretical framework, including NI theory (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991), its notion of ‘institutional logics’ (Friedland & Alford, 1991), and policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012).

![Figure 1. Interrelation between NI and Policy Enactment](image)

3.3 NI Theory, Organizational Change, and Policy Analysis

According to Schmidt (2010), NI theory is a theoretical approach that examines the dynamics of an organizational change by focusing on the meaning-making practices of actors inside institutions. An organizational change in this study can be exemplified by the recent extension of the Ontario teacher education program from two to four terms (OCT, 2013). Radaelli, Dente, and Dossi (2012) contend that the rules, norms, and belief systems of institutions inform the practices of policy actors within them and play a
relevant role in the policy process. They noted that policy actors need to reflect on “how
the existing institutional framework affects their field of intervention, readjusting their
strategies and their tactics accordingly” (Radaelli et al., p. 547). Merging policy analysis
and institutional analysis for Radaelli et al. (2012), is a promising approach towards
conceptualizing the relation between institutions and the practices of the different actors.

3.4 What Are Institutions?

A complex definition for institution has been given by March and Olsen (2006). For
them, the institution is:

A relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in
structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of
turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and
expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances. (March &
Olsen, 2006, p. 3).

In a more simplified way, Schmidt (2010) defined institutions as norms and rules that are
constructed based on the dominant society and culture, while Jepperson (1991) viewed
them as a ruling system or a socially-constructed program that reproduces the norm.

Immergut (1998) maintained that scholars of New-Institutionalism have not offered and
agreed upon one general definition for institutions, neither they followed a standard
methodology. She argues that attending to the institutional practices of policy actors
without the meanings they make about institutions is not enough to explain political and
social phenomena (Immergut, 1998). For Scott (2014), the practices of institutional actors
result from shared definitions of particular local situations and actions, and the actors’
own meaning-making.

It is worth noting here that the old institutionalism continued to focus on the
organizational structures including norms and routines’ procedures until the emergence of
NI, when the focus got shifted to the meaning-making practices of actors inside
institutions (Powell, 2007). Indeed, the old institutionalism (Abrutyn & Turner, 2011;
Selznick, 1957, 1996) examined issues of impact, opposing values, as well as the individual organizational structures and power (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Scott & Meyer, 1994). In contrast NI emphasizes the concepts of legitimacy, actors’ agency, meaning-making systems and the regulation processes (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

3.5 Institutions and the Organizational Practices

Powell (2007) claims that “the core idea that organizations are deeply embedded in social and political environments” (p. 1), suggests that the practices of actors are either reflections or responses to certain beliefs, norms, and rules that exist in the wider society. Understanding how these practices inform pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive education in a faculty of education is a fundamental element in this study.

From a sociological standpoint, Sehring (2009) believes that the aim of NI is to investigate how institutional rules and principles impact the anticipations, views, and orientations of social actors to better conceptualize their contextualized practices. For her, NI describes how policies may control and constrain the objectives of social actors, which in turn influence policy outcomes (Sehring, 2009). In the same vein, Powell and Colyvas (2008) contend that the “institutional forces shape individuals’ interests and desires” and frame “the possibilities for action and influencing” (p. 277). They mean that prevailing norms and rules such as those associated with inclusive education and teacher education have their share in informing the practices of policy actors.

March and Olsen (2006) claimed that the performance of policy actors often takes place in response to institutional rules and normative practices that are socially constructed and publicly accepted. They add that an organizational action is also subject to the actors’ capabilities and the available material and professional resources (March & Olsen, 2006). In researching an organizational change, March and Olsen (2006) remind us that we must focus on “how the dynamics of change can be understood in terms of the organizational interaction and collisions among competing institutional structures, norms, rules, identities, and practices” (p. 14) that relate to the phenomenon under study. Practices become institutionalized as they embody a set of values in the form of objectives and
goals and seek to preserve these values. Institutionalization happens when certain practices end up viewed as norms and deemed acceptable by a group of dominant actors (Palmer, Biggart, & Dick, 2008).

3.6 The Institutionalization of Practices

NI theory can be conceptualized as the study of how actors’ practices in organizations are institutionalized. The notion of ‘institution’ elicits the idea of constrained and framed practices for those who work inside institutions (Bidwell, 2006). However, I argue that these practices are also influenced by the individuals’ experiences, beliefs, and their agency. For DiMaggio and Powell (1991), institutions set specific criteria, namely rules, norms, and values that may constrain people’s preferences and choices. For Zucker (1991), a norm is not institutionalized until it becomes internalized. She defined ‘institutionalization’ as:

The process by which individual actors transmit what is socially defined as real, and at the same time, at any point in the process, the meaning of an act can be defined as more or less a taken-for-granted part of this social reality. (Zucker, 1991, p. 85)

3.7 The Institutional Logics in Educational Organizations

According to McPherson and Sauder (2013), it is imperative to understand how policy actors in organizations interpret and enact institutional logics. As a concept, ‘institutional logics’ has been developed by Friedland and Alford (1991) who viewed society as a mélange of multiple logics, each comprising “a set of material practices and symbolic constructions” (p. 248). For Bridwell-Mitchell and Sherer (2017), ‘institutional logics’ constitute “cultural belief systems that connote specific rules and practices in different social situations” (p. 223). For the purpose of this study, these logics may relate to how inclusive education and future teachers’ capacity to practice inclusion are conceptualized and reflected upon in one Ontario teacher education program. Through the notion of institutional logics, this study posits the existence of different meanings and practices among the policy actors in the program.
Greenwood et al. (2011), tell us that in organizations, such as Faculties of Education, the actions performed by actors and the different meanings they make are shaped by the existing institutional logics. Therefore, it was crucial for this study to understand how these institutional logics played a role in the ways pre-service teachers conceptualized inclusion and their future teaching practices in the inclusive classroom, and how teacher educators, program coordinators, and the associate teachers made sense of the EIE (OME, 2014) policy document and incorporated its principles into their practices. Currie and Spyridonidis (2016) believe that the “institutional logics may be less straightforward and more ambiguous and contested than policymakers assume” (p. 80). That is, the assumption that organizations tend to engage in similar practices in relation to policies (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) is an unwarranted one, as the enactment of policies is subject to the actors’ situated context. In other words, enactment is framed by institutional logics. Scott (2001) highlights the relation between institutions and enactment:

> Individuals do construct and continuously negotiate social reality in everyday life, but they do so within the context of wider, pre-existing cultural systems: symbolic frameworks perceived to be both objective and external, that provide orientation and guidance. (p. 41)

The notion of ‘institutional logic’ (Friedland & Alford, 1991) becomes a bridge that may connect institutions with the meaning-making practices of policy actors. An example of institutional logic was given by Bridwell-Mitchell and Sherer (2017). For them, “just as the broader cultural context provides policymakers with logics for the formulation of reforms, the broader cultural context provides teachers with logics” for the enactment of that reform (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017, p. 224). Another example was offered by Spillane (1999) who examined the enactment of a mathematics policy by school teachers and found that the enactment was influenced by: 1) how teachers interpreted the policy and 2) the extent to which the policy’s messages matched teachers’ understanding of their own practices.
3.8 Policy Actors and the Institutional Logics

Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) contend that the process of policy interpretation depends on the individuals’ “rich knowledge base of understandings, beliefs, and attitudes” and on their broader social contexts (p. 391). Moreover, Bridwell-Mitchell and Sherer (2017) maintain that the ways policy actors interpret their practices may mirror some institutional principles or rules that may pertain for instance to future teachers’ responsibilities towards the inclusion of all learners. In their view, policy actors depending on their experiences, beliefs, and meanings, “may invoke logics in different ways” (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017, p. 226). Situating this discussion in the context of this study, it could be said that, the institutional logics of the program’s policy actors towards inclusive education and pre-service teacher preparation influence how they translate the principles of the EIE into their practices.

3.9 Doing Research from an Institutional Approach

Powell and Colyvas (2008) noted that an institutional analysis research would involve examining the interpretation and the translation of rules and norms by individual actors as well as how meaning is constructed. They assert that a Neo-Institutional approach does not only examine the local organizational structure as the case with the old institutionalism but extends to interrogate how actors in organizations perceive “themselves in social relations and interpret their context” (p. 277). Further, Lawrence (2008) highlights the need to recognize how actors enacting routine practices are being subject to the power and control of institutions. Lawrence (2008)’s view supports this study’s argument for combining both policy enactment and NI in a theoretical framework. Such combination of NI and enactment becomes crucial to understand the processes by which the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) in a teacher education program intersects with institutional rules and principles associated with inclusive education and teacher education.
3.10 New-Institutionalism and the Practice Turn

Institutions have been defined in many studies including March and Olsen (2006), Schmidt (2010), Jepperson (1991), and Scott (2001, 2014) among others. Lecours (2005) found that the debate on the existence of any difference between NI and the old institutionalism has led to a confusion about the particular aims of the former. The old institutionalism was viewed as narrow and descriptive in nature due to its exclusive focus on the formal structure of institutions rather than on the practices, the meaning making, and agency of actors within these institutions (Lecours, 2005).

Due to the practice turn (Orlikowski, 2000; Schatzki et al., 2001; Schatzki, 2012), the focus of old institutionalism moved from the explanation of what institutions are in formal terms and how they influence action, to the emphasis on the practices of institutional actors and their influence on institutions (Lecours, 2005). This shift created what is called today New-Institutionalism (NI) (Meyer & Rowan, 2006). Nicolini, Gherardi, and Yanow (2003) defined practice as what people “say, imagine, conceive, and produce, and think while attempting to carry out [their] activities” (p. 7). Practice for Schatzki (2012), is “an open-ended, spatially-temporally dispersed nexus of doings and sayings” (p. 2). Relatedly, Makkonen, Olkkonen, and Halinen (2012) claimed that the practice-based research approach seeks to examine the ways actors in organizations interpret their practices according to their particular social and physical contexts.

The practice-based theory approach seems to highlight a move from “units to context, from attributes to connections, [and] from causes to events” (Abbott, 1995, p. 93). La Rocca, Hoholm, and Mørk (2017) contend that the practice theory attends to what actors in organizations actually do. For them, this theory “focuses on processes, sociomateriality, actual practices, and how the practices are related in time and space” (La Rocca et al., p. 188). The practice turn becomes a useful lens to analyze the practices of individuals and how these practices inform and get informed by the structures and the systems that surround them (Schatzki et al., 2001).
3.11 Perspectives of NI on the Relation between Institutions and Actors’ Practices

A significant argument in the NI theory is that while actors’ practices and meaning making can shape institutions, the latter can also “shape the perceptions of actors, and through this mechanism, leads to behavior that favors the reproduction of institutions” (Lecours, 2005, p. 17). That is, social institutions maintain the prevailing dominant norms and beliefs in society and tend to restrict, to some extent, the actors’ agencies and the possibilities for organizational change.

NI rejects two perspectives on the relation between institutions and the practices performed by institutional actors. The first perspective is that institutions are restriction-free instruments manipulated and adjusted by the actors to serve their interests. NI responds to this perspective by noting that actors exercise their agency within institutions, and that the agents’ capacity for practice and change is central to understanding the nature of organizations. The second perspective is that institutions are neutral, fixed, and unchangeable and thus they do not conform to contextual change (Lecours, 2005). NI rejects this perspective by further acknowledging the creative nature of the practices of actors, their meaning-making capacities and their influence on institutions, which are all discounted in the old institutionalism. Consequently, institutions are seen as changeable and responsive to new contexts. With these two responses, NI offers perspectives to policy analysts, organizational theorists, and researchers to investigate the interplay between institutional structures and the actors’ capacity for change through intentional action.

3.12 Practical Examples on the Use of NI Theory in Education Policy Research

Hillier (2014) studied Ontario teachers’ responses to new policy and curriculum initiatives regarding religious inclusion in the school system using NI theory. Considering the strong relationship between schools and their environments (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), she found that teachers do in fact contribute to a change in policy and curriculum due to
1) institutional pressures including testing and teachers’ accountability, and 2) teachers’ own initiatives to enhance their practice to support learners (Hillier, 2014).

Further, Hillier (2014) believed that since institutional policy and the actual practice in the classroom are loosely coupled (Meyer & Rowan, 1978), teachers were able “to incorporate policy initiatives in a way that fits with their own beliefs about teaching, what religious inclusion means, and their interpretation of what will benefit their students” (p. 44). Consequently, NI was relevant in describing how institutional policies may or may not make significant changes in the classroom and how teachers incorporate new policy ideas in ways that make sense to them (Hillier, 2014). In the US, Coburn (2004) used NI to study the relationship between institutional changes for classroom reading instruction and teachers’ practices. Her study concluded that the institutional call to enact certain changes for reading instruction in the classroom was evident; however, these changes were framed by the teachers’ pre-existing beliefs and experiences and how they made sense of the call for change (Coburn, 2004).

What becomes evident is that the institutional context, namely the various social, cultural, and historical structures of organizations can inform the meaning-making practices of policy actors in these organizations, hence the need for the enactment perspective. Policy enactment complements NI theory by highlighting the significance of the context within which the institutional structures and the policy actors’ agency for change influence each other.

3.13 Policy Enactment

Ball (1994) theorizes policies as “representations, which are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways (via actors, interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context)” (p. 16). According to Rizvi and Lingard (2010), policy refers to a text or even a process during which the authority of institutions is exercised. However, the translation of policies within organizations, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) claim, is never straightforward as it is subject to contextual and
previously existing practices and arrangements. For this study, it was imperative to understand how the meaning making practices of the policy actors towards the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) was related to the situated context of the teacher education program.

Policy enactment according to Maguire, Braun, and Ball (2015) is “a process of social, cultural, and emotional construction and interpretation – and not all of these processes are reported or interrogated in outcomes-driven studies of policy implementation” (p. 486). That is, the enactment of policies, such as those of teacher education and inclusive education, is subject to the policy actors’ social and cultural beliefs and the meanings they make in a particular context. Relatedly, Koyama (2015) views policy enactment as the ways people’s practices, their shared beliefs, values, and imaginations can collectively inform how policies are translated into contextualized practices. From this perspective, policy enactment becomes a complex network of context-sensitive practices that are continually reconstituted (Heimans, 2012).

Based on the premise that policy enactment is not only about written texts but also about how different actors represent, interpret, and translate policy (Mulcahy, 2015; Sin, 2014), the voice of policy actors on the enactment of the EIE in one Ontario teacher education program becomes crucial to understanding the policy translation into practices.

3.14 The Role of Policy Actors

Policy enactment requires us to understand that policy is not a simple transfer of text into action but multiple forms of meaning making informed by several policy actors in schools (Braun, Maguire, & Ball, 2010). Maguire et al. (2015) found that many countries have emphasized the importance of policy work in areas such as teacher education with the overall aim of promoting students’ academic achievement. For them, it is important to examine educational leaders’ perspectives towards policy work as they may be aware of the broader context, and they have higher margin for decision-making and interpretation (Maguire et al., 2015). Few studies have examined the perspectives of policy actors in schools and other institutions towards policy enactment (Maguire et al., 2015).
Consequently, speaking with the policy actors who are involved in one teacher education program was helpful for me to understand how they incorporated the principles of the EIE (OME, 2014) into their practices to support pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

3.15 The Translation of Policy Text into Practice

For Viczko and Riveros (2015), understanding how policy informs practice allows us to understand “the realities for those affected by policies and [to] conceptualiz[e] the ways in which things might be differently performed” (p. 480). They argue that the analysis of policy processes should avoid portraying schools as organizations without a wider social context, a key principle in policy enactment research. Similarly, in researching policy enactment and policy outcomes in higher education, Sin (2014a) suggests the need to consider two important factors: the policy process itself, including the making and the enactment of it, as well as the policy actors.

Different policy actors perform different set of actions based on their own beliefs, prior experiences, meanings, and agency. In turn, the variation of practices and meanings fosters the actors’ understanding of how a given policy is translated into practice. For Sin (2014), the policy actors and the context are important factors in the process of negotiating, constructing, and enacting policy. She contends that the beliefs of policy actors regarding a particular policy relate to the policy’s contextual circumstances. Such a relation tends to impact the enactment of the policy and the policy outcomes (Sin, 2014).

To recall, future teachers need to adhere to the standards of ethical and professional practice and obtain the skills needed to respond to students’ learning diversity in the inclusive classroom (OCT, 2013). For this reason, it was crucial for this study to understand how the policy actors in one teacher education program create meanings about inclusion and perform practices that negotiate or perhaps change the existing logics about future teachers’ preparation for the inclusive classroom. Thus, policy makers and researchers need to be aware of the contested relation between the institutional logics and the meaning-making practices of policy actors inside institutions.
3.16 Summary

In researching the enactment of an inclusion-related policy, namely the EIE (OME, 2014) in a teacher education program, the theory of New-Institutionalism (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012) was found to be promising as it illuminated the context within which policy actors have performed their meaning-making practices around inclusion and pre-service teacher education. Further, the theoretical framework suggested that policy actors’ practices “are not only attributed to individual agencies, but also to institutional constraints, organisational premises, and traditions” (Jensen, Kjærgaard, & Svejvig, 2009, p. 344). Moreover, these constraints, premises, and traditions, as part of the institutional context, enhanced my understanding of how teacher educators, program coordinators, and associate teachers made sense of the EIE and incorporated its principles into their practices to support pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion, and how pre-service teachers understood the principles of inclusion and its related practices towards their preparation for inclusive teaching.

From the perspective of policy enactment, this chapter suggested that enacting the EIE in one teacher education program is subject to the interplay of policy actors’ meaning-making practices and the various institutional structures within which these actors are situated. I conclude that exploring how policy actors situate themselves in relation to the processes of schooling, student development, and particularly in relation to the teacher education program, is significant for understanding the complexities of policy enactment (Ball, 2015). I believe that research on teacher education and inclusive education using the above-described theoretical framework is a helpful way to bridge theory and practice and to acknowledge the necessity for policy researchers and policy makers to further realize how context may shape the practices and the meaning making of individuals in educational organizations.
Chapter 4

4 Methodology

The purpose of this research was to examine how the principles of an inclusion-related policy document titled the *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* (OME, 2014) are interpreted and translated into the practices of teacher educators, program coordinators, and associate teachers in one Ontario teacher education program. In addition to exploring the perspectives of these actors, this research examined how pre-service teachers made sense of inclusion, its principles, and how they perceived their preparation to enact inclusive teaching during their future practice. The study builds on multiple data sources including OME’s policy documents (OME, 2009, 2014, 2014a), semi-structured interviews with four different groups of participants, namely, pre-service teachers, teacher educators, program coordinators, and associate teachers, all of whom are involved in the teacher education program, as well as researcher’s reflections. The rationale for using all these sources was to achieve an in-depth understanding of the meanings, views, and the practices of these participants in relation to pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive education.

This research is an exploratory, qualitative, single case study (Yin, 2014). In this chapter, I discuss the case study methodological approach, study design and rationale, the methods used in data collection, and analysis, as well as the procedures followed to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, I discuss the procedures followed in recruiting the study participants and in obtaining the ethical approval from the participant university and school boards. Since the associate teachers interviewed for this study work for school boards, ethical approval from these boards was obtained.

4.1 Qualitative Research Design and Rationale

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the main instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). In doing so, the qualitative researcher attends to
social/organizational processes and meaning making, and she/he tends to be descriptive in nature. In this type of research, the focus is “on discovery, insights, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied [which] offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education” (Merriam, 1998, p. 1).

For Patton (2002), a qualitative research design is helpful when the researcher seeks to understand the meanings or the interpretations that people make in their natural context towards a social phenomenon, such as pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom. These interpretations are not the ones that people make about themselves but also about the social systems they live in (Patton, 2015). These systems include economic, religious, historical, family, social, and organizational systems. Patton (2015) adds that “qualitative inquiry documents the stuff that happens among real people in the real world in their own words, from their own perspectives, and within their own contexts” (p. 12). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative inquiry is the means through which the researcher examines social phenomena in their natural settings.

Creswell (2013) maintains that qualitative research is used when the researcher seeks to address “the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 44). A qualitative-oriented research was helpful for this study in examining the ways teacher educators, associate teachers, and program coordinators in the teacher education program incorporated the principles of the EIE document into their practices in ways that informed pre-service teachers’ preparation for the inclusive classroom. This research approach was also helpful in understanding how pre-service teachers conceptualized inclusion and their future teaching practices in schools. For Creswell (2013), a mutual collaboration between the researcher and the participant in qualitative research allows the latter to play a key role in shaping “the themes or abstractions” (p. 45) of the research. Using a qualitative case study approach (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009), this study was sought to offer an in-depth understanding of pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive education in a teacher education program.
4.2 The Usefulness of Case Study Methodology in Qualitative Studies

Case study methodology has been defined by Robson (2002) as the “strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence” (p. 178). For Yin (2014), this methodology is a suitable method of inquiry “in situations where (1) the main research questions are “how” and “why” questions, (2) a researcher has little or no control over behavioral events, and (3) the focus of study is a contemporary phenomenon” (p. 2).

Analyzing the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) in one Ontario teacher education program was relevant since the program was relatively new at the time when this study commenced. The exhaustive literature search conducted for this study revealed that no studies have examined how inclusive education-related policies are incorporated into the practices of the new program’s policy actors in Ontario’s faculties of education. Thus, the study is exploratory in nature because no previous research has been conducted on this topic. The study aims to offer themes for further investigation and to illustrate the challenges and promises associated with pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom from the perspectives of key policy actors. For Yin (2014), a case study inquiry relies on different forms of data that need to converge in a way that reflects triangulation. For him, case study research “is a form of inquiry that does not depend solely on ethnographic or participant-observer data” (Yin, 2014, p. 21). Ethnography and participant observation are two forms of data collection methods that require spending long periods of time in the field along with details about the observations conducted (Yin, 2014).

According to Baxter and Jack (2008), “rigorous qualitative case studies afford researchers opportunities to explore or describe a phenomenon in context using a variety of data sources” (p. 544). For them, the use of different data sources in case study methodology allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon under study through different lenses, a fact that illuminates the different aspects of the examined case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Further, Baxter and Jack (2008) contend that the case study researcher needs to select a
case study type that is based on the overall aim of the research. Earlier, Yin (2003) classified case studies as 1) explanatory: those that answer questions that aim to explain the links between a program and its effects, 2) exploratory: those that explore the situations in which a phenomenon has no clear or single set of outcomes, and 3) descriptive: those that describe a phenomenon and its real-life context (Yin, 2003).

According to Day Ashley (2012), “what may constitute a ‘case’ for empirical research is wide ranging: it may be an individual, such as a teacher or student; an institution, such as a school; an event, project or programme within an institution; it may be a policy or other types of system” (p. 102) that is situated in a particular context. She contends that using a case study approach helps in exploring a less-known-about phenomenon. For this reason, a single, exploratory, qualitative case study was appropriate to examine the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) in one Ontario teacher education program.

4.3 Choosing the Case Study Research Design

For Stake (2005), a researcher needs to choose a case that is accessible and allows for meaningful learning. Research design for Yin (2014) can be defined as “the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions” (p. 28). Yin (2003) differentiates between holistic and embedded, as well as between single and multiple-case designs. A holistic single case study design pertains to the study of one case in only one particular context whereas an embedded single case study design includes one case within which 2 or more units of analysis are embedded. Multiple case study design includes the comparison of many cases that are situated in different contexts, with each context containing one or more units of analysis (Yin, 2014). In addition to identifying the case and the type of case study to use (exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive), Yin (2003) asserts that a case study researcher needs to identify whether a single or multiple case study design is more appropriate to better understand the phenomenon under study and whether he or she is looking into one or more contexts. Based on Yin’s (2014) categorization and description of case study, this study adopted a holistic, exploratory, qualitative single-case design.
Yin (2014) describes five different rationales for using single-case designs. For him, a single-case study design is appropriate when the case is either unusual, critical, common, longitudinal, or revelatory (Yin, 2014). A single case “can represent a significant contribution to knowledge and theory building by confirming, challenging, or extending the theory” proposed in the study (Yin, 2014, p. 51). Based on Yin’s (2014) classification, the case being explored in this study is viewed as a common case. In a common case, “the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation—again because of the lessons it might provide about the social processes related to some theoretical interest” (Yin, 2014, p. 52). This theoretical interest is exemplified in this study by the focus on the influence that institutions may have on the interpretations and the meaning making practices of policy actors towards pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion.

4.4 Identifying the Unit of Analysis

Baxter and Jack (2008) inform us that the researcher, while considering the research questions, needs to identify ‘the case’ that he or she is exploring. While this step may appear to be simple, determining the (case) unit of analysis can be challenging even for experienced researchers. Miles and Huberman (1994) define the case as, “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is, in effect, your unit of analysis” (p. 25). Based on this study’s research questions, the unit of analysis is the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) policy document in a pre-service teacher education program. This enactment entails the different interpretations and practices of the program’s policy actors in relation to the preparation of future teachers for the inclusive classroom. Following the identification of the unit of analysis, Baxter and Jack (2008) believe that the case study researcher needs to set boundaries for the case to avoid exploring too many objectives that some may be beyond the scope of the case. For them, “the establishment of boundaries in a qualitative case study design is similar to the development of inclusion and exclusion criteria for sample selection in a quantitative study” (p. 547). Thus, the case explored in this study is bounded by its context, namely a pre-service program in one faculty of education in Southwestern Ontario.
4.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Case Study Approach

Day Ashley (2012) believes that the case study approach offers the researcher a chance to “intensively investigate the case in-depth, to probe, drill down, and get at its complexity” (p. 102). This opportunity depends on multiple data sources to support the achievement of profound insights about the explored phenomenon. However, the case under study may evolve over the course of the research and by studying it, we aim to particularize not to generalize (Stake, 2005). Thus, I sought to understand the case itself rather than to compare it with other cases keeping in mind the existence of subjective biases and the possibility of missing opportunities such as missing a significant knowledge that unselected participants would have offered about the case (Merriam, 1998). One of the strengths of the qualitative case study is that it “does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p. 28). Using a case study approach, in Merriam’s (1998) view, helps in understanding processes, programs, and problems which in turn “affect and perhaps even improve practice” (p. 41) such as how pre-service teachers are being prepared to enact inclusive teaching practices in the classroom.

4.6 Relevance to Policy Making and Change

According to Stake (2005), case study approach may serve as “a disciplined force in setting public policy and in reflecting on human experience” (p. 460). That is, by recognizing and addressing the experiences of the policy actors involved in the case, this methodological approach advances the transformation of policies and structures, which in turn can enhance institutional practice. Further, Stake (2005) adds that an individual case approach allows for drawing implications that may be informative for other cases. With a case study approach, the study offered an example of a context-informed policy practice that will support and help advancing practices in other teacher education programs, particularly those situated in similar contexts.

4.7 Participants and Sampling Technique

The study participants included 12 pre-service teachers, 6 teacher educators, 5 associate teachers from two school boards in Southwestern Ontario, and 4 teacher education
program coordinators. Merriam (1998) noted that in qualitative research, sample selection is usually “purposeful and small as opposed to the larger, more random sampling of quantitative research” (p. 8). Random or probability sampling is a process in which all participants have an equal probability to be selected; in contrast, non-probability sampling does not require equal probability. In non-probability sampling, participants are selected based on the significant knowledge they have about the topic or focus of the study, particularly if the aim of the study is not generalizing the study’s results, but to explore the phenomenon in depth (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Given the purpose of this study, non-probability sampling was the most appropriate technique to use in conducting this research. A non-probability sampling includes convenience and purposive sampling (Patton, 2002). Merriam (1998) noted that “purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insights and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61).

Convenience sampling for Etikan et al. (2016) is used when the researcher has easy access to the participants; however, a significant disadvantage of this technique is that the researcher may select participants who do not inform the research problem risking the collection of quality data. They add that choosing a sampling technique “depends on the type, nature, and purpose of the study” (p. 1). For the purpose of this research, using a purposive sampling technique in selecting the study participants was crucial (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).
Table 1

Participants’ Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant group</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>ERPE* range (in years)</th>
<th>Racial Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-service teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21-35</td>
<td>0-12</td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher educators</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40-55</td>
<td>15-30</td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate teachers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38-50</td>
<td>14-25</td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program coordinators</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45-60</td>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*ERPE = Education-Related Professional Experience.

The sample of the pre-service teachers included 7 women and 5 men. They had different academic backgrounds such as linguistics, political science, public administration, and Kinesiology. Their ERPE included teaching in international contexts. The sample of the teacher educators consisted of 3 women and 3 men. Their education backgrounds included educational psychology, special education, as well as curriculum and linguistic diversity studies. The ERPE of teacher educators included pre-service teaching and teaching in the public education system. For the associate teachers, the participants were five women. Their academic background included education, kinesiology, psychology, and health sciences while their ERPE included teaching in the public education system. The sample of the program coordinators included four women with academic backgrounds in curriculum, psychology, and language education with an ERPE in schooling, pre-service teaching, and administration.

It is worth noting here that purposive sampling has many forms including stakeholder, maximum variation, extreme or deviant, typical case, paradigmatic case, critical case, and
criterion sampling (Palys, 2008). To examine the institutional practices of different policy actors involved in the teacher education program, I found criterion sampling to be appropriate.

In criterion purposive sampling method, “individuals are selected based on the assumption that they possess knowledge and experience with the phenomenon of interest” (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 539). Patton (1990) adds that “information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling” (p. 169).

The criteria for selecting the four groups of participants who took part in this study was as follows: (1) Pre-service teachers: Participants must be in their second year of the teacher education program. I chose this group due to the fact that they possess more theoretical (university classroom) and practical (practicum) experiences than those who were attending their first year in the program. (2) Teacher educators: Must be instructors in the teacher education program in areas relevant to inclusion. (3) Associate teachers working for the school boards: These teachers supervise and mentor student teachers in their practicum. (4) Teacher education coordinators: Those who were involved in the development of the teacher education program curriculum in the faculty where the study was completed.

4.8 Data Sources

A case study researcher depends on multiple data sources to better understand the case under investigation (Yin, 2014). For this proposed research, sources included 1) verbatim transcripts of the semi-structured interviews that were completed with the four groups of participants, 2) researcher’s reflections after each interview, and 3) education policy documents that are publicly available from the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario College of Teachers’ websites.
4.9 Semi-structured Interviews

These were conducted with the study participants including teacher educators, associate teachers, teacher education program coordinators, and the pre-service teachers. Some of the topics that were discussed included:

**Teacher Educators and Associate Teachers**

Questions for these two groups addressed the concept of inclusive education and whether related policies and the Ministry’s vision towards inclusion were incorporated into their classroom activities, course designs (for teacher educators), collaboration, and teaching strategies. Other questions included those that relate to feedback and communication between pre-service teachers and associate teachers. All these questions have illuminated how prospective teachers were being prepared for the inclusive classroom (See Appendices E & F).

**Program Coordinators**

This group of participants was asked about issues related to inclusive education development in Ontario, the role of the teacher education program in promoting inclusion, the organizational structure of the program and the educational strategies adopted to support pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom. Other topics included issues around collaboration between the program and the schools regarding the practicum and the professional development of pre-service teachers towards inclusive education (See Appendix G).

**Pre-service Teachers**

The participants in this group were engaged with questions about their conceptualization of inclusive education based on their preparation program, their views on the skills that inclusive teachers should have, and their understanding of the inclusive teaching practice in light of the existing policies and the teaching demands in Ontario classrooms (See Appendix H).
4.10 The Ministry of Education’s Policy Documents

The documents reviewed and analyzed included *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* (OME, 2014) and *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* (OME, 2014a). These policies contained important topics and notions related to the study, such as inclusive education, policy guidelines, policy practice, students’ diversity, frameworks for inclusive practice, and students’ learning needs, all of which have assisted in the conceptualization of inclusive education and the fundamental skills that future teachers need to fulfill in response to the inclusive teaching demands, and in turn contribute to all students’ learning.

4.11 Data Analysis and Procedure

For Patton (2002), data analysis through a case study approach follows a particular pattern in which the researcher collects, organizes, and analyzes the data in ways that help in the construction of a systematic and in-depth understanding of the case. Data collection, its organization and analysis, was driven by the research questions, the scholarly literature, the theoretical framework adopted, and the continuous reflection of the researcher throughout the study. The challenge of analyzing the vast amount of qualitative data collected was in making sense of it, identifying and organizing it into different patterns, and in communicating relevant findings (Patton, 2002).

A content analysis that is thematic and deductive (Patton, 2002) has been deployed to develop themes, patterns, and codes from all data sources including the transcripts of the interviews, the policy documents, and the researcher’s reflections, all of which have served the subsequent analysis and interpretation. Bowen (2009) defines content analysis as “the process of organizing information into categories related to the central questions of the research” (p. 32).

Data analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) of the interview transcripts has been done in two stages. First, a case analysis for each participant group, and second, a cross-case analysis technique (Patton, 2002) across the different groups of participants. A case
analysis for each of the four participant groups included multiple reviews of the answers provided for each interview question in that case.

These reviews were helpful in identifying patterns in the participants’ responses which led to the creation of different codes and categories relevant to the phenomenon under study. For example, analyzing the case of the pre-service teachers revealed the following codes: ‘Definition of inclusive education’, ‘Characteristics of the inclusive teacher’, ‘Inclusive teaching in schools’, ‘Collaborative practice’, ‘Reference to challenges in the program’s curriculum’, ‘Reference to practicum’, ‘Beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion of all learners’, and ‘Learning about inclusion in the program’.

Following the completion of the first stage of data analysis, I moved to the second stage and conducted a cross-case analysis for the four participant groups. This stage was helpful in the sense that it allowed me to analyze the perspectives of the various groups towards the main purpose of the study. I looked at similarities and differences in the codes created and was able to uncover themes that were pertinent to this research. The emerging themes resonated with the examined literature and highlighted different issues associated with pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

This two-stage technique has helped in the interpretation of the data collected. During my data analysis, I kept on going back and forth between the categories, the codes and the themes created in order to develop a collective report that would represent consistency, relevance, and convergence of the data (Bowen, 2009).

4.12 Document Analysis

Document analysis for Bowen (2009) is a process that includes both “content analysis and thematic analysis” (p. 32), that help in the conceptualization of the data collected from other sources such as interviews. In particular, content analysis helps in creating categories related to the research question while thematic analysis entails recognizing patterns within the data collected to create themes (Bowen, 2009).
For Yin (1994), document analysis is a significant tool in qualitative case studies in which the researcher seeks thorough understanding of a phenomenon, program, or an event. For Merriam (1988), “documents of all types can help the researcher, uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem” (p. 118). The analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews, the researcher’s reflections, and the documents selected from the OME and OCT websites was helpful for me in constructing a context-informed representation that illustrated pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom in one Ontario teacher education program.

4.13 Ethics and Establishing Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness of data analysis, a researcher needs to adopt a respondent validation and triangulation techniques (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), ensuring credibility as a significant criterion for trustworthiness is a common concern for both the respondents and those who are expected to benefit from the research. They contend that the researcher must have the findings “approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). Such an approval means conducting member checking to ensure the credibility of the researcher’s interpretations and the conclusions made. Member checking is a way that provides more insights and further clarifications around the phenomenon being studied or investigated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.14 Member Checking and Triangulation

I sent the interview transcripts and analysis to my study participants for review and asked them to suggest any changes they found necessary. In this regard, Homan (1991) noted that the study participants might wish “to control data that relate to them” and to ensure their concerns are “represented in the most acceptable light” (p. 127). Further, as a researcher, I needed to build that sense of trust with my respondents by demonstrating that their confidentiality, anonymity, and their interests were honored (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Triangulation of the data is viewed as a strategy that improves the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Data triangulation refers to the use of multiple sources of data to support overlapping interpretations and conclusions. In this study, the sources of data included the semi-structured interviews conducted with four different groups of participants, document analysis of the EIE (OME, 2014) and Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (OME, 2014a), as well as my reflections as a researcher and a former educator. These data sources have been examined simultaneously to corroborate the themes that emerged during the analysis. In addition, reflexive practice allows the researcher to continuously reflect on “what is happening during the research process in terms of one’s values and interests” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 327). Therefore, researcher’s reflexivity constitutes a supportive element that can help in establishing trustworthiness for the study results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.15 Ethical Considerations

According to the second edition of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2, 2014), also known as TCPS2, “ethical principles and guidelines play an important role in advancing the pursuit of knowledge while protecting and respecting research participants” (p. 5). For Creswell (2009), the anticipation of possible ethical issues occurs at different steps of the research. These include the research problem development stage, researcher-participant communications, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as well as during reporting the study’s findings. Also, an ethical concern that relates to the research problem development lies in the question whether this research is simply a curiosity of the researcher or a project that seeks to help other individuals (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). I made every effort to follow the guidelines of the TCPS2 in completing the different tasks related to each stage of this research. I have sought to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the study participants by assigning them alphanumerical codes.
4.16 Recruitment Procedure

Examining the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) will undoubtedly benefit future teachers practicing in the inclusive classroom, as well as those involved in teacher education program designs and policy making. While communicating the purpose of the study, I invested every effort to ensure the transparency of all research procedures in order for the participants to be aware of the nature of this research and have the chance to ask related questions.

As noted in the TCPS2, data collection requires an informed and voluntary consent to be obtained from the study participants. The Letter of Information and Consent (LoIC) form (Appendix D) that was sent to the study participants contained information about the purpose of the study, the selection procedures, the description of the benefits for the participants, the level of involvement in the study, the anticipated risks, the procedures to assure participants’ confidentiality, their right for a voluntary withdrawal at any time during the research, the organization sponsoring the study, as well as the researcher’s contact information.

Shortly after the receipt of the ethics approval from Western University’s ethics research board (Appendix A), I applied to obtain the ethics approval from the two school boards that took part in my research. To recruit pre-service teachers, I sent an email to the teacher education office manager in the participating university who in turn emailed the pre-service teachers who were attending their second year in the program, as outlined in the selection criteria. The pre-service teachers were provided with the LoIC form and were instructed through that form to communicate with the principal investigator or the co-investigator if they were interested in the research, 12 of them responded.

The interviews with the pre-service teachers took place in-person or virtually via teleconference. For teacher educators and coordinators, I sent individual invitation emails, as their contact information were publicly available on the faculty of education’s website of the participating university. These emails included the LoIC form. Six teacher
educators and four coordinators responded and expressed interest to participate in the study through a teleconference interview or in-person.

Upon the receipt of the ethics approval from the school boards (Appendices B & C), I had the chance to follow up with the school principals who received a notice about my research through the research office of their respective board. The school principals in turn forwarded my invitation to their Associate Teachers (AT) who were involved in the teacher education program included in this study. Later, I communicated with the ATs who expressed interest in the study, then I conducted interviews with them via teleconference or in-person. Time and place for conducting the in-person or online interviews were left at the discretion of the participants.

I securely stored the data collected from the participants in separate files on my password-enabled personal computer where only I, had access to it. To avoid data loss due to any computer-related accidental damage, I kept a hard copy of the data in my personal locker at my financial institution. Following to the ethical protocol, when five years from the time of data collection have passed, I will destroy the data saved in both of the above-mentioned locations.

4.17 Summary
This chapter discussed the methodological approach adopted to address the research questions and problem, followed by the procedures to recruit the study participants. It offered a rationale for using a single qualitative case study design in conducting the study and provided an elaboration on the multiple ethical dimensions that a researcher should maintain at all stages of a given research. Further, the chapter highlighted how trustworthiness was established to ensure the credibility of the findings. In reporting the findings, which will be discussed in more detail shortly in the following chapter, I followed Sarantakos’ (2013) guidelines to provide a final report that seeks to avoid misrepresentation, and instead seeks to embody honesty and accuracy regarding the study results.
Chapter 5

5 Findings

It was a challenging task to distinguish between relevant versus non-relevant data given the nature of the research as a single exploratory, qualitative case study (Yin, 2014) with semi-structured open-ended interview questions. In addition, my subjectivity, and my positionality as an internationally-trained educator of diverse students within inclusive classroom settings have influenced my interpretation of the data. However, data triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) and my reflexivity as a researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were helpful in establishing credibility and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the study results. To recall, this study aimed to understand the enactment of the policy document titled *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* (OME, 2014), in one Ontario teacher education program with a particular focus on how pre-service teachers are being prepared for inclusive teaching practices. As of September 2015, an institutional change of Ontario teacher education program took place by extending the latter from two to four terms in all Ontario’s Faculties of Education. The program is now called the Ontario *Enhanced Teacher Education Program ETEP* (OCT, 2013).

The theoretical lens adopted consisted of Neo-Institutionalism theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) and the notion of policy enactment (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012). This theoretical framework was useful in conceptualizing the institutional logics of the program’s policy actors regarding the principles of the EIE (OME, 2014) and how these logics influenced the actors’ meaning-making practices towards pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

5.1 Overview

Given the purpose of this study, non-probability sampling was the most appropriate technique to use in collecting the data for this research. In order to achieve an in-depth understanding of how the EIE is enacted in the teacher education program, document
analysis for inclusive education-related policies was conducted and a total of 27 semi-structured interviews with different policy actors were completed. The related policies reviewed and analyzed included *Equity and inclusive education in Ontario schools: Guidelines for policy development and implementation: realizing the promise of diversity* (*OME, 2014*); and *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* (*OME, 2014a*). Documents from the Ontario College of Teachers such as *The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* (*OCT, n.d.*); *Preparing teachers for tomorrow* (*OCT, 2006*); and *The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* (*OCT, n.d.*) were also reviewed.

The study participants included 12 pre-service teachers, 6 teacher educators, and 4 program coordinators from one Ontario teacher education program as well as 5 associate teachers from 2 school boards in Southwestern Ontario. The findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews with the four participant groups are presented in this chapter as four collective reports. Each report pertains to the various interpretations, comments, and views provided by each participant group. Each participant group had somewhat different set of questions that reflected their roles in the program. See appendices C, D, E, and F for more details.

The interviews for all groups included questions that addressed the participants’ academic and professional background, their roles and responsibilities, and their overall understandings of the concepts of inclusion and its practices. Given the large amount of data collected, I needed to find a systematic way to manage the data, so I could analyze it and make sense of it. Therefore, I examined the data collected from each participant group separately and then compared the findings. The interviews for each participant group included 13-15 questions. To better analyze each data set, I combined all answers given for each question in a separate document and ended up with 13-15 documents for each participant group. This procedure helped me to quickly identify thematic categories that reflected the study’s research questions.

By conducting multiple readings for the data collected and engaging myself in a continuous reflection, I was able to create a summary of answers with relevant quotes for
each question within each data set. Next, I collected the summaries of answers for all questions in each data set and formulated a collective report. Having four data sets, I developed a total of four collective reports. Each report comprised a set of themes that resonated with the literature review and responded to the study’s objectives. It is worth noting here that this deductive analysis procedure (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) allowed me to eliminate data that I deemed irrelevant to the study’s purpose.

The following sections will shed light on the reports created. They illuminate what the study participants reported in relation to their meaning-making practices concerning inclusive education, its policies, and pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom. To ensure the anonymity and the confidentiality of the study participants, I replaced their names with alphanumerical codes (e.g. PT1 for pre-service teacher 1, TE1 for teacher educator 1, AT1 for associate teacher 1, and PC1 for program coordinator 1).

5.2 Pre-service Teachers

A total of 12 second-year pre-service teachers (PTs) from the 2017 and 2018 cohorts of the examined teacher education program participated in this study. PTs were asked about their familiarity with the EIE (OME, 2014) through their program, how it could be incorporated into their prospective practice in schools, and how they make sense of teaching and learning about inclusive education. Additional questions included the role of the program’s components (e.g. university classroom instruction and practicum at schools) in preparing them to practice inclusion, and the challenges they believe future practitioners may encounter in the inclusive classroom.

Defining the Inclusive Teacher

To be an inclusive teacher, PTs believed that you need to be flexible, proactive, observant, respectful, as well as a “quick thinker with foresight capacity” (PT6). One PT said, “my first thought is ‘awareness’. Being aware of inclusivity is a major key to define someone as an inclusive teacher. The second key is to actually practice it” (PT2). PTs indicated that inclusive teachers tend to demonstrate flexibility in lesson planning and use different instructional strategies such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to support
diverse learners. To recall, UDL is a “theoretical framework that guides the design of environments, materials, and instruction, to ensure that all students can access and learn from the curriculum” (Specht, 2013, p. 18). For PTs, although inclusive teachers cannot anticipate all students’ needs, they seek to create different opportunities and organize various activities that help all learners to achieve in the classroom.

**Conceptualizing the Means for Successful Inclusive Teaching Practices**

PTs had consensus about the meaning of inclusive education and that the school system, through its members, needs to express practices that reflect equity and acceptance for all learners. For PTs, all learners regardless of their various cultural and religious background, learning ability, socio-economic level or immigration status, have the right to learn and be respected. “Inclusive education means to include people from diverse backgrounds regardless of their ethnicity or any intellectual challenges they have” (PT2); “Inclusive education to me means that everyone has a role to play as education is important for everyone” (PT6); “Kids of all abilities, backgrounds, races, and religions must be included in the classroom” (PT3); “Inclusive education is a system that was meant to include all students regardless of their specialties” (PT5).

PTs noted that collaboration is a key for successful inclusive teaching practices as teachers need to be working together to ensure that all students are being supported and their needs are being met. Reflecting one of the principles of the EIE (OME, 2014) policy document, PT11 said, “every student matter and every student needs to be included, no matter where they are coming from or what issues they might be dealing with”.

According to PTs, a promising inclusive teaching practice happens when teachers are responsive and capable of using Differentiated Instruction (DI) and managing their classrooms. DI is “any 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” (Council of Ontario Directors of Education, 2014, p. 15). Classroom management was found to be crucial for PTs who said that managing diverse students’ learning needs is a concern in light of the amount of paperwork practicing teachers are
required to do. Paperwork included communication letters to parents, report cards, students’ progress reports, ongoing learning assessments, internal communication with the administration, and the like.

Organizational practices in schools such as making education more accessible for students with learning disabilities, building on students’ different cultures, and constructing supportive learning environments in the classroom, are practices that can surely empower inclusion, reported the PTs. The EIE (OME, 2014) as put by PT6 is “a two-way street that was meant to help, include, and benefit everyone”.

PTs believed that the Educational Assistants (EAs) constitute a contributing factor towards successful enactment of inclusion in schools. Referring to the significant role of EAs, PT4 said, “One person can only do so much and supporting all learners in the classroom can’t be done alone, it has to be teamwork, otherwise teachers become frustrated and get burned out”. Calling upon school boards and the Ministry of Education to further support inclusive practices, PT5 claimed, “We are learning about all the support that we will have, while in the real world, the funding is not always there” to hire more EAs in schools. Funding to get more resources, PTs believed, is a real challenge in schools because “even the smallest request done by teachers may take a year or so to be approved” (PT9) which impacts how well they can support all learners.

PTs noted that the practices of teacher educators in the program were very significant and informative in ways that helped them to understand the basic principles of inclusion and to know about inclusion resources. “We have a special education and inclusion class during which inclusion is often referenced and our instructors made us aware of inclusion before we go into practicum” (PT11); “Inclusion has been mentioned in different classes and referred to it in different projects and portfolio pieces” (PT12).

Highlighting the ethical and professional standards of the teaching profession, PTs claimed that for a successful inclusive practice to be in place, teachers must be proactive while maintaining an inclusive mindset that all students matter. Theoretically, inclusive education for PT7, needs to be central to all courses and teacher educators have to
introduce pre-service teachers to the different existing teaching strategies that inform inclusion.

Individuals’ beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion as well as the inclusion discourses in educational organizations collectively affect the development of one’s inclusive teaching practices. “Up to a point, I am worried about some of the teachers going out there, I would not want them teaching my kids knowing how but you know we have to keep personal thoughts aside I suppose” (PT3); “I would like the word ‘inclusivity’ to be more circulated throughout teachers’ college. I think that once we start talking about it and share our ideas, it becomes very second nature (PT7). For some PTs, to develop their capacity to practice inclusion, they need to go on practicum with the intention to learn and understand how inclusion is performed at schools.

**Inclusion in Teacher Education and Pre-service Teachers’ Future Professional Practice**

When asked about their knowledge of the policy document EIE (OME, 2014), most PTs believed that they are less aware of it and the teacher education program did not completely laid it out in all of its courses. “I don’t think I am as familiar with it as I should be at this point being a second-year student” (PT4); “I would say that I have likely heard of it, probably should have read it, do I know it by heart? Absolutely not” (PT3); “I probably don’t know the specifics of it” (PT9). PTs added that the courses that have mainly addressed the policy are those that related to inclusive education, special education, and social foundations. However, they expressed an understanding of the overall institutional guidelines of the policy.

According to PT4, there is more about school contexts, practices, and how to organize inclusive activities that we need to know about as pre-service teachers. “We are just scratching the surface in this program due to time constraints and the number of courses we have to take” (PT4). Adding to this claim, PT6 said, “I just know that in schools, students with exceptional needs have someone to come in and evaluate them to come up with a plan” but not much about how to go about that plan in practice.
PTs noted that enacting inclusion during their future practices in schools can take different forms. These forms according to PTs include creating welcoming classroom environments, giving students choices to express their learning, and developing small learning groups in the classroom. They added that all school members need to collaborate to support inclusion and its institutional aims such as maintaining the well-being and respect for all learners and advancing their academic achievement. PT8 said, “As a future teacher, I will need to have some predetermined choices about the learning process that would respond to the diversity of learners in my classroom”. Furthermore, PT12 believed that:

You need to make sure that inclusion is reflected in how you design your lesson or classroom material, you also need to make sure that your students are aware of the diversity that exists in the classroom and that as a class we accept everyone, and we don’t judge differences but celebrate them.

Additionally, PTs noted that including all learners in the classroom needs to be reflected in all educators’ practices and meaning making about inclusion.

During their experience in the teacher education program, PTs realized that inclusion is much-needed as a whole-school approach and expressed their interest in more inclusion experiences within diverse classroom settings. To support pre-service teacher preparation for a promising inclusive teaching, PT3 recommended the program to provide its pre-service teachers with more in-depth discussions that pertain to the religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity that constitutes today’s Ontario schools and communities.

**Institutional Constraints and the PT’s Professional Development for Inclusion**

The inclusive practices in Ontario classrooms are less reflected in the structure of the teacher education program according to many PTs. Relatedly, PTs believed that the number of assignments required for each course prevents critical and deep discussions about inclusive teaching practices in schools. “Everyone is doing an assignment after an assignment and when you finish these assignments, there are other assignments waiting for you so how can we dig deeper in those meaningful conversations as groups?” (PT4);
“It was more focused on the administrative side of it. It was like these are all the things that the child may have, here are the things and what IEP [Individual Educational Plan] looks like” (PT6); “I know that inclusion is addressed in the program, but I am not sure if it is at the forefront of everybody’s mind” (PT11).

PTs believed that teacher preparation for inclusion “does not happen at the university classroom but at the practicum” (PT10). Referring to inclusion, PT6 maintained that, “you don’t really realize how it works until you are in the practicum itself. The practicum I think is the big thing for preparing people”. PTs wished their teacher education program’s courses could have offered them more examples about inclusive practices and how to attend to inclusion-related problems in schools. “Discussion is one thing you know but actually seeing it is another” (PT2); “We don’t want to read a book about inclusion but to have meaningful discussions and talking about solutions to problems” (PT4); “I think that they talked about how important it is to create an inclusive classroom so the idea is there but I think what is lacking is the implementation part, they don’t always give you practical examples” (PT7).

About the theoretical knowledge that supports their preparation for inclusion, PTs reported that collaboration, differentiated instruction, and how to use technology as an inclusive tool were among the main concepts that their teacher education program has emphasized. PT10 said, the program “helped me to realize my weaknesses and strengths and what skills I need as a teacher”. Additional institutional constraints according to many PTs included a lack of emphasis on the different assessment strategies that they can use in relation to inclusion besides having less chances to practice those strategies while on practicum.

PTs appreciated learning about many pedagogical theories and how to use online resources to support their future practice in the inclusive classroom. The online resources that PTs referred to included publicly available policy documents that pertain to inclusion from the OME website such as Realizing the promise of diversity: Ontario’s equity and inclusive education strategy (OME, 2009), and Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (OME, 2014a), as well as teaching practice-related documents.
from the OCT website such as *The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* (OCT, n.d). In addition, the university’s library website offered them a chance to access research that relates to the current issues of teaching, learning, and inclusive education.

At the professional level, PTs reported that their Associate Teachers (ATs) in schools have modeled various practices and strategies that represented the principles of the examined policy. These included setting up a particular classroom routine to support all learners, using UDL, and collaborating with other teachers in the school by sharing various inclusion-oriented instructional strategies and resources. Inclusion as a collaborative practice that is shared between the various educational institutions is evident in the following quote:

> To put this inclusion into practice, you have to think a little bit differently and converse with others to enforce it. I think it is going to involve talking with other people in schools, in different boards, hearing different strategies, and just trying them. (PT7)

PTs believed that a successful practicum experience is subject to two factors: the role of the AT who supervises a pre-service teacher in the school, and the school context. For many PTs, the AT is a very influential person from whom future teachers gain “a huge amount of experience” (PT3); “Without that experience, without the associate teacher, I don’t think I would be ready” (PT4); “We gain the skills pretty much from watching our associate teachers” (PT1). PTs noted that securing practicum in different school contexts would allow them to better understand the different strategies of teaching and learning that relate to inclusion, and how to support diverse learners in different classroom environments.

According to PT4, having direct contact with students in schools is a key for how-to-do inclusion. “I feel like I am more and more aware of inclusion while on practicum because I am with the students” (PT11). PTs reported that the ATs who modeled inclusive teaching practices helped them to develop their confidence towards their capacity to enact inclusion in different classroom contexts. In addition, PTs urged their program to offer
pre-service teachers more training on the different exceptionalities that exist in Ontario classrooms.

The Institutional Logics of Inclusion and Future Teachers’ Practices

PTs reported that their teacher education program has made them aware of students’ diversity and their learning needs. PT3 said, “I think they are definitely trying to send a message that you need to learn to be inclusive and that everyone needs to be allowed into the classroom”. For PT8, “The program allowed me to think in different ways like thinking whether an assessment for one student can be turned into a one that includes everybody”. The institutional logics of inclusion and its relation to PTs’ beliefs and future practices is represented in the following quotes:

The program has reinforced my beliefs about inclusion and went further. I see myself more liberal and progressive but overtime even that standpoint continues to evolve. Before, I would treat my students in the same way but now I will build on their diversity and culture and incorporate that into my classroom activities.

(PT9)

It is the idea that you understand and consider the students’ age, situation, and mental capacity and not to expect too many things from a child who may not be able to do or meet your high expectations. The idea in the program is that you need to adjust yourself according to your students’ needs. (PT6)

Emphasizing the inclusive education approach, PTs believed that teacher education programs play a crucial role in developing an equitable inclusive society. Referring to the inclusivity construct in teacher education PT7 said, “They do pull it to the front of your thought, they talk about it, but they don’t always give you all the tools and opportunities to put it into practice”. According to PT6, inclusion becomes beneficial when teachers are aware of the social, cultural, and learning diversity that exists in their classrooms. Further, PTs added that their program encourages future teachers to be reflective practitioners who acknowledge students’ diverse backgrounds and learning needs, and in turn develop responsive instructional strategies that support all learners.
Promoting Inclusion: Recommendations for Future Teacher Education Program Designs

PTs offered recommendations that support future teacher education programming. For them, more practical experiences in inclusive settings are needed so candidates can further engage with students of diverse needs and learn more about the assessment strategies enacted in schools.

*In my practicum, I was in a special education classroom, so I dealt with hearing impaired students, disabled students and students of color. All of these things helped me to sharpen my skills for inclusivity and made me a better teacher.*

(PT2)

The idea to rethink the academic structure of the teacher education program, is reflected in the following quotes. “*We need to think about our priorities; inclusivity must be a priority, and I don’t think it is right now; that what scares some of the pre-service teachers; they don’t feel they are prepared*” (PT4); *Teachers who haven’t experienced inclusion during their practicum might have a hard time identifying students’ needs and the tools or strategies that could help in doing inclusion during their future practice* (PT7).

Other recommendations that PTs made at the end of their interviews included the necessity for pre-service teachers admitted to the program, to have some prior inclusion-related experiences and for the program’s curriculum to include more topics about standardized testing.

5.3 Teacher Educators

Six Teacher Educators (TEs) from one Ontario teacher education program took part in this study and reflected on their views and practices in teacher education in regard to pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

Inclusion from the Perspectives of Teacher Educators
In defining inclusive education, TEs believed that it is all about including every student in the classroom and ensuring that teachers, parents, support staff, and administrators are working collaboratively towards this aim. For TE4, an “effective instructor is someone who will be doing everything possible to ensure that all students can achieve”. TEs emphasized that the contemporary understandings around inclusion need to move beyond acknowledging only those with special learning needs to include those who come from diverse backgrounds. According to TE6, inclusion “moves the concept of differentiated instruction and universal design for learning into the work of all teachers”.

Inclusive education for TEs is meant to grant access for every learner in every classroom as well as to promote respect among individuals wherever they are towards diversity of culture, language, and disability. Further, TEs believed that inclusive education warrants a quality educational experience for all learners that would advance their academic achievement while maintaining their overall well-being.

All students have the right to high quality public education and our education system must do everything that is reasonable. Maybe even beyond a bit reasonable, to ensure that all students, regardless of their demographic profile, will learn and achieve at high academic expectations. (TE4)

Inclusion in TE5’s view, “has to be taught as a vision, it’s not like turning on a switch but rather a way to make pre-service teachers aware of the inclusion challenges”. For TE2, “All students belong, we take them all and we teach them all. There should be nothing holding any student back from receiving full support in any building at any time”.

Given their various experiences within the teacher education program and the education field at large, TEs argued that although different understandings around inclusion may exist among educators, they all tend to share similar values and beliefs about the need to engage, empower, and support every learner in the school. TE4 said, “I am pretty confident that none of my colleagues are going to define inclusion as the way I define it and that speaks to the differences in where we are in terms of the intellectual traditions”.

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Relatedly TE2 noted, “We share what we believe it is, but we certainly go out of it in different ways”.

**Inclusion and the Practices of Teacher Educators**

Reflecting on their inclusion-related practices in the examined teacher education program, TEs aimed to develop inclusion-related dispositions among pre-service teachers through reflective practice activities. “We need to provide teachers with the philosophy that they can do it and that it only works if they buy into it and do it and that is the hard component” (TE1). The role of teacher educators according to TE1 is to teach the candidates about “the best practices that can help in decreasing the learning barriers for students at schools and how to give these students the opportunities they need to express their knowledge in different ways”. Further, the study showed that TEs engage pre-service teachers in debates and negotiations about how to utilize lesson planning processes and differentiated instruction in accommodating the learning needs of diverse students at schools. TE6 explained that his plan is to help pre-service teachers “develop certain dispositions about teaching and learning that interrogate the instruction, the assessment, and the classroom environment, and how to meet the strengths, needs, and interests of all learners”.

The use of case studies to support teacher preparation for inclusion constituted another tool that TEs have reported about their teaching practices. According to some TEs, the use of case studies allows pre-service teachers to learn about various inclusion-related scenarios and practices that exist in schools along with the different assessment techniques to be used in the inclusive classroom.

Modeling is one of the best practices to prepare teachers for inclusive education as it shows them different ways of teaching and learning and how to support a variety of learners (TE3). Referring to the modeling technique, TE4 said, “When I run a lecture or session, it is always run in an inclusive manner”. Modeling, debates and discussions, and the use of case studies were viewed by TEs as foundational instructional strategies that would assist pre-service teachers in developing the knowledge they need to practice
inclusion. Highlighting a collaborative approach for learning and teaching about inclusion, TE6 explained:

*I try to do large group discussions about readings and offer an overview of exceptionalities followed by an overview of intervention and strategies, and then we apply that by doing a small group project. I ask the candidates to take what they have learned about the inclusive strategies and apply it while adapting a lesson to meet the needs of two exceptional learners.*

Other strategies that TEs reported that would promote inclusive mindsets among pre-service teachers included showing videos about diversity and students’ needs, addressing violence-related practices in schools towards inclusion, as well as inviting members of the school community including teachers, parents, and school principals to the university classrooms to share their experiences with inclusion.

**Teacher Educators and the Enactment of the Examined Policy**

The EIE (OME, 2014) according to the TEs is a useful guide and a significant policy reference for one’s professional practices. However, TE4 explained, “*I have never fully read that document and if I have read it, it has not been related to my teaching*”. TE4 believed that his teaching practices are inclusive by nature and following a particular document is unneeded. In turn, TE6 argued that once a better conceptualization of diversity and inclusion is in place, the inclusive education approach will be “*the business of everyone*”. Referring to the enactment of inclusion in teacher education TE1 said, “*It is about getting pre-service teachers to think and to actively engage in talking with each other about their experiences because really at the end of the day they want to be each other’s support systems and resources*”. TE5 contended that being aware of the changing provincial legislations in relation to inclusive education is an institutional responsibility as these changes can impact pre-service teacher preparation to practice inclusion.

TE4 explained that teacher educators’ institutional role towards inclusion is to ensure that pre-service teachers are aware of the inclusion-related policies as well as of their legal, professional, and ethical responsibilities towards all learners in the classroom.
Most TEs noted that the guidelines of the EIE policy document should be translated into practices formally and informally. TEs believed that the principles of inclusion and its policies are usually incorporated into the course materials and classroom discussions around teaching and learning. Creating links between the values and principles of inclusion and thinking of how these can be translated into practices is a significant task for TEs in teacher education. According to TE2, it is important for pre-service teachers to learn how to examine and make use of the policy document during their lesson planning and the activities they developed so they are more aware of the aims and purposes of inclusion in schools.

Fostering the practicality of inclusion, TE6 said, “It is time to move from a pedagogy of reflection to a pedagogy of enactment”, highlighting the necessity to bridge the existing gap between inclusion as theory and inclusion as practice to support pre-service teacher preparation. Reflecting the relation between institutions and policy enactment, TE4 explained, “We are guided by the education act and the other legal frameworks that have meanings on how we approach our teaching”. For TE6, the inclusion-related documents that have been issued by the OME such as Achieving Excellence (OME, 2014a) and Equity and Inclusive Education: Going Deeper (CODE, 2014), help pre-service teachers to identify what is expected from them as future practitioners, and realize that including all learners in the classroom is an institutional requirement in Ontario schools.

The enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) in the teacher education program was represented in the ways TEs used different teaching approaches that support pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion. These approaches included offering rich feedback following assessments, conceptualizing how to problem solve with diverse learners, small groups discussions, and an ongoing reflection on theory and practice.

From an inclusive point of view, TE1 suggested that addressing inclusion in teacher education should not include understanding the strengths and needs of students in schools only but also those of pre-service teachers. TE1 added that we as educators need to assess pre-service teachers’ capacity for inclusion, their past experiences, and overall understanding of the purpose of schooling. In this regard, TE5 said:
I start with them in the fall about what they think about this theory of inclusion and their own personal experiences. Some come from addicted families, some have been discriminated against then they get finally tuned and aware of these issues in schools.

**Programmatic Constraints in Teacher Education**

The curricular structure of the program and the type of courses it offers, TEs explained, increase pre-service teachers’ awareness about their own identities as future practitioners in the classroom. For the field-based experiences, TEs emphasized that the practicum lends pre-service teachers a chance for a hands-on understanding of the existing challenges of disadvantaged students in schools. However, TE2 believed that the contemporary philosophies of teaching and learning around inclusion need to be an integral part of the current pedagogy and practices enacted in teacher education.

Reflecting a programmatic constraint in the program, TE6 said, “I think we need to move into a pedagogy of practice and come with placements and opportunities to connect” theoretical knowledge with the classroom practice.

**Pre-service Teachers are Less Aware of Inclusion**

TEs believed that many pre-service teachers are not aware of inclusion and its crucial impact on the academic and social development of diverse learners, a situation that renders their preparation for inclusive practices a challenge. In this regard, TE1 claimed, “They often didn’t experience the wrong problems going through schools and so they don’t necessarily recognize that an approach that works for a quarter of the students and has worked for them, won’t work for the whole class”.

For TE2, “These people are very bright, had great success in schools, and they surrounded themselves with very like-minded people. They didn’t notice special needs people in their classes”. Further, TE2 said, “When we put them in a regular classroom or a practicum, they are like wholly smoke there is an ADHD”. Relatedly, TE5 believed that:
Candidates may have only met very few people from different social and cultural backgrounds, so it may be kind of having limited experiences. The other challenge is their own personal bias. You know, they may not even be aware of the influences of their own socialization, their friends, their families, and their networks.

Moreover, TEs highlighted the prevailing biases and negative attitudes towards inclusion among some ATs in schools, “One of the biggest challenges I found is when I go on a practicum and see Associate teachers who don’t get it and do not include students and it really does shape these candidates’ attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion” (TE3); “When these candidates go to a K-12 context, they see practices that are not always approaching the ideal” (TE6). TEs noted that ATs can significantly influence pre-service teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion and its associated practices in schools.

To overcome the negative experiences in schools among pre-service teachers and advance their preparation for inclusion, TE4 suggested open conversations in teacher education. These conversations for TE4, could be a way to encourage pre-service teachers to reflect on their emerging teaching philosophies and how these philosophies align with the existing institutional, ethical, and professional guidelines that relate to inclusive education. Some pre-service teachers according to the TEs tend to make quick attributions to students’ behavior in schools and diminish the effectiveness of professional development for inclusion. However, TEs reported that they aim to overcome such barriers through regular talks and conversations around inclusion.” We talk about what inclusion means and we engage in healthy debates about that” (TE4). In the same vein, TE6 considered inclusion as a systematic practice that needs continuous support, not just an isolated practice that one tries to perform. In his view, a structural challenge that negatively impact pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion is the lack of connection between what is taught in the university classrooms and the actual practices in schools (TE6).

Calling for more collaboration between schools and teacher education TE6 said, “Without meaningful engaged partnerships, it continues to be two worlds and students will always
say: I learned everything in my practicum and most of what I learned in university was interesting but not helpful”. For future teachers to attain an inclusive practice, they need to accept the idea that all learners need to learn and achieve, and to hold strong beliefs that inclusion works by consulting the most evidence-based practices in terms of instruction and assessment (TE4).

**Organizational Change in Teacher Education Curricula and Practices**

Advancing a curriculum change in teacher education is a promising step towards supporting pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion. For TE2, setting up pre-service teachers for success in the inclusive classroom means rethinking inclusion in teacher education curricula and the necessity for teacher educators to model inclusive-oriented instructional, assessment, and communication strategies. Relatedly, TE1 argues, “We really need to be thinking about what just good teaching practice is because that’s really what drives students’ success”. More connections between the different elements of the program need to be established (TE6). Consequently, pre-service teachers will be able to “see the coherence in these elements and how they interplay” (TE6) in light of the existing inclusive policies, and to develop a better conceptualization of their future practices in the classroom.

Further, TEs reported that ‘time’ constitutes a limiting factor for deep discussions about inclusion. “You know it is hard as you try to engage with them in only ten weeks” (TE3); “We get them for 18 hours, it is a very brief amount of time to talk about inclusion and special education” (TE1); “It’s only a half-course, .25 credit, so it’s only nine weeks long that involves a number of reading and assignments related to inclusion” (TE5). Relatedly, at the school level, TEs added that in-service teachers also experience challenges that pertain to time and inclusive education-related resources.

TEs maintained that the use of differentiated instruction is promoted in teacher education curricular activities due to its relevance in supporting diverse learners’ needs. Further, the findings showed that the realities and the challenges of today’s classrooms need to be the cornerstone of teacher education curricula and the daily conversations that pre-service teachers engage with. A curriculum change in teacher education was viewed by TEs as
collaborative work that may include more emphasis in the program’s courses on research-based studies that relate to inclusion and its practices in schools.

Moreover, TEs noted that a change in teacher education may also highlight the practicum component. The practicum allows pre-service teachers to realize how teaching looks and feels like, solidify their teaching philosophy, and to structure their pedagogical practices towards inclusion. Referring to the practicum TE5 said, “It will be good to get sort of promising practices from the field about what works because pre-service teachers want tools; they want to know what works, what makes a difference, and what they can say and do”. Relatedly, based on her pre-service teachers’ feedback towards their practicum experience, TE3 concluded that the process of selecting the associate teachers in schools seems to be overlooked. Although many pre-service teachers had a good experience in practicum, this was not the case for some of them.

When I suggest to the candidates, why didn’t you talk to your advisor at the faculty? They say: Well, because then it is my word against that person’s word and then they don’t support us and when we wanted to get out of the placement, our mouth was shut. (TE3)

According to TE4, teaching pre-service teachers how to give feedback to students in the classroom and how to assess learning, needs to be emphasized in teacher education curricula. In his view, “We assume that people know how to provide good feedback, and this is a big assumption”. Further, TE4 suggested that curriculum change in teacher education requires us as teacher educators to work on developing the capacity of our candidates to design inclusive lesson plans and teaching strategies that reflect all students’ needs.

5.4 Associate Teachers

Five Associate Teachers (ATs) from 2 school boards in Ontario participated in this study. Their professional experience in the school system and in teacher education contributed to my understanding of the role of practicum in preparing pre-service teachers for the teaching profession and for inclusive teaching.
Conceptualizing Inclusion and the Identity of the Inclusion-oriented Teacher

All ATs acknowledged the right for all children to learn together in the inclusive classroom, have their different social and learning needs met, as well as to feel accepted in a classroom community that values diversity. Inclusion is incorporated in the institutional policy and practice of the school board where AT2 works. She said, “We are 100% inclusive in our board, so it doesn’t matter who or what the needs are, all students are integrated into the regular classroom and inclusion is put into all classroom activities” (AT2). Further, ATs believed that inclusion happens when teachers do all what they can to include all children in the learning process.

Conceptualizing the identity of the inclusive teacher, ATs viewed the inclusive teacher as flexible, patient, and a lifelong learner who is equipped with collaborative, communication, and organizational skills. For AT3, “An inclusive teacher needs to be very socially aware of what is going on with the kids, reflective on how they react to situations, and how they respond to struggles”. At the practice level, in ATs’ view, an inclusive teacher needs to understand how to differentiate instruction and to realize the difference between accommodation and modification of learning. Representing an inclusive teaching attitude, AT5 believed that it does not matter how good an inclusive teacher is in Math, what matters is that every student feels included.

The Institutional Practices of Associate Teachers and their Awareness of the EIE Document

The mentorship of ATs in teacher education is vital. To support future teachers, ATs were found to engage the candidates in co-planning and co-teaching, self-reflection, and ask them to take part in marking students’ assessments. Further, ATs provide pre-service teachers with an ongoing guidance and constructive feedback on teaching-related matters, and model how to teach diverse learners in the inclusive classroom. Reflecting on her institutional role in the program, AT4 said, “I feel like I am like a guide for them to watch”. Modeling an inclusive practice is very significant for ATs as a way that supports pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom. AT5 described her practice in the following quote:
It is a lot of work to take on a student teacher, if you don’t feel that it is not a lot of work then you are probably not doing your job right. You sit down with them during your prep time and lunchtime and talk to them on how we do this and that and you need to be a role model for them as well.

Regarding promoting pre-service teachers’ positive attitudes towards inclusion, AT3 said, “If they say something that does not sound inclusive, I make a point of saying it because some people have grown up with different views on different racial groups”. Inclusion for AT3 means to also acknowledge the diversity that exists in our educational institutions. She said:

There should be an appreciation of all diversity in terms of religions, economic standards, and family life. We need to just give pre-service teachers the perspective that kids are the product of their families and that it feels good when you know more about your kids and have that connection with them. Any child who is more confident will do better.

The EIE policy document *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* (OME, 2014), was developed by the Ontario Ministry of Education based on the belief that inclusion is “central to creating a cohesive society and a strong economy that will secure Ontario’s future prosperity” (OME, 2009, p. 5). In addition, the policy states that every school board in Ontario “is expected to embed the principles of equity and inclusive education in all its policies and practices and to integrate an equity and inclusive education focus into its way of doing business and all operations of its schools” (OME, 2014, p. 18), however, the analysis revealed that there was a lack of awareness about the policy’s content and principles among the ATs.

For instance, AT1 said, “I honestly don’t know enough about the policy, but I make sure that I meet every learner’s needs and I don’t really feel I need a document to do that, it is just something that I do”. The use of differentiated instruction in the classroom is a regular practice for AT2 who believed that every learner needs a different form of
support. Further she said, “I know about equity and inclusion and I try to make sure that all my students are getting what they need” (AT2). Similarly, AT5 added that she is not fully aware of the policy’s details, however, her practice is inclusive in the sense that she aims to meet the needs of all her students.

Most ATs valued the importance of inclusion and in taking students’ individual learning needs into consideration. As put by AT5, “I may not be aware of all the stuff that relate to inclusion, but I know that I try my best to ensure my students are included”. The ATs’ practices reflected the principles of the policy document based on their own conceptualization of inclusion, and their prior teaching experiences.

The relationship between the meaning-making practices towards inclusion and the role of institutions is reflected in the view of AT3. She said, “I follow my own practice about including everybody and my mindset has been molded from being in schools and through the professional development I have received over the years”. For AT3, the influence of the school board on how she practices inclusion has been significant.

**ATs’ Expectations Concerning Pre-service Teachers’ Readiness to Enact Inclusion**

ATs noted that teacher education programs need to further engage pre-service teachers with inclusion-related issues. “Pre-service teachers need to understand that one test may not fit for everybody. If there is an activity, how can we make this work for everybody” (AT5). According to the ATs, teacher education programs help pre-service teachers to know what is expected from them before they enter the profession and learn about how inclusion is enacted in Ontario schools. Addressing teacher education curricula, AT3 suggested that, “if you are in teachers’ college, you need to have a cultural class that provides you with a basic understanding of the various cultures that exist in the classroom, so you are not ignorant”. Relatedly, ATs noted that future practitioners need to be aware of the social and learning diversity in today’s classrooms and how to adopt the necessary instructional strategies that ensure a meaningful learning experience for all learners.
As they complete their final practicum, ATs argued, pre-service teachers must have developed certain inclusion-related practices, namely a capacity to design inclusive lesson plans and use differentiated instructional strategies. AT5 said, “I expect them to show me their lesson and some ideas on how they are going to make sure that Johnny over here, who is not doing well, will follow along this lesson”. For AT4, before they start their practicum placements, pre-service teachers need to know how to transform theoretical learning into professional practices.

**Associate Teachers and the Organizational Change in Teacher Education**

ATs believed that the practicum guide needs to be reviewed in order to become a more useful tool for pre-service teachers. According to AT2, “If the practicum handbook includes what questions pre-service teachers need to ask while on practicum, then their professional experience will be more beneficial and informative”. ATs argued that since the teacher education program is keen on developing future teachers’ capacity to support all learners in the classroom, the selection criteria of ATs must be re-considered and more advanced collaboration between the program and schools needs to take place. Relatedly, AT5 said, “I think that the program people need to frequently visit pre-service teachers during practicum, as it used to be, to see if the candidates are in a good place or not and how well they are doing”.

In terms of the program’s structure, ATs called for a longer practicum that would offer pre-service teachers more time in class to better understand students’ needs. In the same vein AT2 said:

> Our work in the month of June is very important so there are many things that pre-service teachers need to know about and do later in their actual practice, it is crazy, they need to know how to adapt to that, and I know that they have two alternative placements, get rid of these placements and keep the candidates more in schools.

Collaboration between the program and the school board was also suggested by AT4. She urged the teacher education program to offer pre-service teachers a chance “to meet with
the special education team from the school board to communicate about inclusion and diverse students”. In her view, this collaborative practice can advance pre-service teachers’ understanding of the existing student diversity in Ontario classrooms, the challenges, as well as any concerns and responsibilities that they need to be aware of as future professional practitioners (AT4).

5.5 Program Coordinators

Four program coordinators (PCs) participated in this study. Their views and practices in relation to program development and collaboration to support pre-service teacher preparation were helpful in developing a comprehensive understanding of their role in teacher education.

Inclusion and Teacher Education: The Perspectives of Program Coordinators

PCs expressed a consensus on the significance of inclusive education and the need for its values to be part of future teachers’ practices in schools. According to PC2, the inclusion approach encourages future teachers to acquire the knowledge about the relevant pedagogies and practices that support all learners. Inclusive education for PC1 comprises the recognition of “human diversity in all of its facets, understanding the linguistic and cultural diversity, and how people learn”. She adds that, by the end of the program, the hope is that pre-service teachers have developed inclusive teaching skills and proactive attitudes towards diversity and got a shift in their logics about exceptional learners from ‘students at risk’ to ‘students at promise’ (PC1).

PCs were found to be keen on negotiating the beliefs that exist among pre-service teachers towards inclusion. In this regard PC4 said, “We aim to disrupt their thinking until they start to recognize that we need to actually do things differently for different people”. Moreover, PC3 noted that the use of case studies in teacher education courses is another way to get pre-service teachers think about inclusion and students’ needs. Case studies, PC3 argued, are helpful in the sense that they bring a practical example to the pre-service classroom.

Inclusion and the Institutional Practices of PCs in Teacher Education
The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) governs the teaching profession in the province and follows an accreditation process in qualifying eligible teacher education programs. In the view of PC1, the principles of inclusive education and the OCT’s inclusion-related requirements are embedded in the practices of the teacher educators in the program. In relation to policy enactment, PC4 noted that when new policies are issued by the OCT or the Ministry of Education, they are shared by the teacher education office with PCs who in turn revise their courses’ outlines and their teaching practices accordingly.

PCs were aware of the EIE (OME, 2014) policy document and the necessity to equip future teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to practice inclusion in Ontario schools. Reflecting on an institutional practice, PC1 explained, “I am responsible to ensure that my students learn about all the laws that apply to them as members of OCT, and about all Ministry’s curriculum documents and policies”. For PC1, all PCs need to bring in inclusion-related issues that pertain to their different domains of teaching and research which in turn support future teachers’ practices.

Ongoing communication and collaboration, PC2 added, are common practices that teacher educators in the program perform, keeping the content of teacher education curricula in relation to inclusion in particular up to date. PCs noted that they always try to seek additional resources and model inclusive teaching practices that support pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

PC4 said that she offers her pre-service teachers several choices to express their learning of the course materials. “It is my belief that if we don’t model good practice and articulate why we are doing what we are doing, then pre-service teachers won’t leave our program with sound ideas about inclusion” (PC4). Describing her collaborative practice, PC1 noted that she regularly works with her team of instructors to ensure that pre-service teachers are developing the knowledge about the cultural and linguistic diversity that exist in today’s classrooms. She said, “We frame our language and literacy teaching in the B.Ed. program from the outset by considering the social and cultural diversity of all children in schools, not only those for whom English is their first language”.

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PC1 provides her pre-service teachers with the necessary tools, resources, theories, and knowledge they need to “develop particular dispositions towards all children with whom they will be working”.

According to PC2, having compulsory courses that relate to inclusive education in the program reflects the significance of diversity and inclusive education for the program. PC4 added that the institutional emphasis on inclusive education has shifted the language and the discourses around inclusion in teacher education. However, PC4 argued that for inclusive education to be a reality in teacher education, “it has to be embedded in the design of all courses otherwise it’s a vision that remains at the level of rhetoric”. In contrast, PC3 believed that all courses in the teacher education program celebrate the inclusivity concept and emphasize the importance for all learners in schools to feel welcomed and valued.

The Role of the Program’s Resources in Supporting Pre-service Teacher Preparation for Inclusion

PCs noted that different types of resources are available in the teacher education program to support pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion. The library system, according to PC1, allows pre-service teachers to access many academic journals and research studies that pertain to their preparation as future professionals, and for inclusive education in particular. Moreover, PC2 believed that the technological resources and the quality of instructors constitute the program’s main assets. Nonetheless, the pre-service teachers themselves were seen by PCs as a significant resource due to their professional and academic diversity.

PCs reported that communication and collaboration between the teacher education program and schools are highly important. In this regard, PC3 said, “The connection between the program and the school used to be a positive resource; one specific person used to look after the candidates while on practicum, and that has been gone now”, wishing to have that connection back.

The Organizational Structure of the Teacher Education Program and its Challenges
PCs have repeatedly addressed the high quality of course work in teacher education in relation to inclusion. They added that the non-classroom practicum component of the program offers pre-service teachers a chance to engage with cultural and social diversity in the surrounding communities. In our teacher education program, PC2 explained, “All instructors value inclusion, as many of them have been teachers themselves and some continue to teach in the school system”. Nevertheless, PC4 argued that educators at the university and at the school, both need to be inclusive-oriented with a relevant professional development, so they can actually model an inclusive practice in their classrooms.

Upon returning from their practicum, PC4 said, “We see that their [pre-service teachers] eyes are open, and they start talking about individual students and understanding what this inclusion is all about”. Further, PC4 indicated that, while pre-service teachers are not yet well prepared to teach in indigenous teaching settings, the program has “been bringing more Indigenous ways of knowing, experience, and expertise to the university classrooms”. Contributing to pre-service teachers’ learning about inclusion, PC2 added, the teacher education program ensures hiring highly qualified instructors who possess the necessary knowledge and qualifications.

Challenges in the teacher education program as noted by PCs included lack of time for pre-service teachers to deeply engage with any course material due to the heavy course loads in each stream, and the practicum design, all of which can impact how well pre-service teachers are being prepared for a highly demanding profession.

The study found that elementary pre-service teachers who are expecting to teach French and/or teach in Catholic schools in particular, face a big challenge in teacher education, as they are required to take a higher number of courses. Those who are taking extra courses, according to PC1, struggle to focus on and to fully understand the contents in these extra courses. This, for PC1, is due to the amount of extra time needed for an in-depth engagement with the content, as well as the number of required assignments. In her view, “It would be fantastic if we could have some common strategies or even better synthesis across all these different courses”. In relation to the practicum and its role in
supporting pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom, PC2 said, “As instructed by the OCT, we cannot place our candidates in a practicum with an AT who has special qualifications”, because OCT prefers pre-service teachers to practice with a generalist; an institutional guideline that she does not feel happy about. In PC2’s view, placing the candidates with ATs who are qualified in Special Education would enrich their understanding of inclusion as well as their future practices in the inclusive classroom.

**Recommendations for an Organizational Change in the Teacher Education Program**

PCs who participated in this study offered some recommendations that would render pre-service teacher preparation, particularly for inclusive education, a less challenging task. PC3 believed that more and shorter practicum blocks are helpful. In her view, frequent visits between university classrooms and practicum placements would create more space for constructive feedback that would benefit both pre-service teachers and teacher educators. Such a collaboration, PC4 argued, can be “part of what feeds and nourishes our thinking and our understanding about what is happening with our candidates in schools”. Relatedly, PC1 recommended the teacher education program to initiate a collaboration between pre-service teachers and the graduates of the faculty’s professional programs. For her, it would be an opportunity for pre-service teachers to benefit from cutting-edge projects that inform their future professional practice.

According to PC1, to support pre-service teachers’ knowledge about inclusion, teacher education needs to have a space “for the kinds of complicated and potentially very difficult conversations that happen around issues of inclusion”. Other recommendations included the integration of the program’s elementary courses to allow pre-service teachers to dig deeper into their learning. Also, a revision for practicum placements’ criteria was recommended. In this regard, PC1 said, “It would be great if we can identify places that are doing inclusion in fantastic ways, places that offer great models for the pre-service teachers to experience”. Last but not least, teacher education programs,
according to the PCs, need to further connect theory and practice and engage pre-service teachers in more inclusion-related discussions.

5.6 Summary

This chapter offered four reports that reflected the views, beliefs, and practices of the policy actors involved in the teacher education program towards pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

It showed that the pre-service teachers (PTs) are keen on developing their professional capacities for inclusive teaching in their future practices in schools, supporting all learners. However, PTs noted that developing their knowledge and practical skills for inclusion are associated with issues that relate to the structure of the teacher education program. Some of these issues according to the PTs include a reconsideration of teacher education curricula and the practicum. In particular, PTs recommended providing more space in the curriculum for more in-depth discussions about inclusion in schools and its related practices (assessment, UDL, DI). As for the practicum, PTs viewed it as the venue where they can translate their theoretical knowledge into practice, learn how inclusion looks like in schools, and how to enact inclusive teaching. Therefore, they recommended the teacher education program to place future candidates with inclusion-oriented and experienced associate teachers in schools that represent student diversity. Institutional issues such as funding for more classroom resources and for hiring more EAs are among the factors that contribute to successful inclusive teaching as reported by the PTs.

Teacher educators (TEs) believed inclusion to be the tool that grants access to all learners and maintains their overall well-being and academic achievement in schools. The enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) was represented by the different strategies that TEs have used. They promoted inclusive dispositions among pre-service teachers by depending on modeling inclusive practices in the university classroom, engaging the candidates in discussions about the use of DI and UDL in schools, and by talking about the ethical and professional responsibilities of teachers in the inclusive classroom.
TEs noted that these candidates are less experienced with inclusion and that the lack of time in the program is a limiting factor for more discussions about this educational approach. Thus, they recommended more open and critical conversations to take place in the university classroom about inclusive education in schools. More emphasis on collaboration among teacher educators in the program, collaboration between the program and schools, as well as more university teaching on how to offer feedback to students in schools were also suggested by TEs.

The findings showed that ATs who supervise pre-service teachers during practicum, are role models for the candidates. ATs engaged them in different practices and collaboration activities and showed them how to include students who have different learning needs. However, ATs believed that to practice inclusive teaching, pre-service teachers need to know more about accommodations and modifications in the inclusive classroom, the social and cultural diversity in schools, learning theories, and how to design inclusive-oriented lesson plans. ATs were less aware about the EIE document (OME, 2014), however, their practices were based on prior experiences with diverse learners and an overall understanding of inclusive education in schools. Review of the selection criteria of ATs and extending the practicum were among the recommendations that ATs offered.

The report of the program coordinators (PCs) has shed light on their various views and practices in relation to pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom. Awareness about the EIE document (OME, 2014), its principles, and significance in teacher education, were all acknowledged by the PCs. Developing inclusive mindsets among pre-service teachers and awareness about their obligations towards all learners were found crucial in teacher education for these PCs. PCs claimed that the program courses are always reviewed in relation to inclusion and its related policies. Access to technology and research-related materials as well as having inclusive-oriented instructors in the program constitute a significant support for pre-service teachers according to the PCs. However, lack of time and a high number of courses in the program, as noted by the PCs, are serious obstacles for pre-service teachers’ in-depth learning and preparation for inclusive teaching in schools. Integrating some of the elementary courses and establishing
collaboration between the teacher education program and the graduate programs in the faculty of education were recommended by the PCs.
Chapter 6

6 Discussion

Some researchers have warned that inclusion, as a professional practice, has the risk of discounting the role of politics, denying the complexities of teachers and schools’ agency when issues of equality, access, and participation arise (Danforth & Naraian, 2015).

The charge to prepare teachers for inclusive education requires straddling commitments to the learning of students both with and without disabilities and their families, as well as to the learning of teachers in schools. This process may, we suggest, require diverse theoretical commitments that can, collectively, transform our understandings of inclusive practice. We are, therefore, imagining a new conversation among educational researchers and teacher educators about the collection of ideas, of research and theory, that might serve as useful, fruitful intellectual and practical support for the future development and improvement of inclusive education. (Danforth & Naraian, 2015, p. 71)

Lindsay (2003) maintains that “inclusion is the policy framework. What is at issue is the interpretation and implementation of inclusion in practice” (p. 10). Relatedly, Danforth and Naraian (2015) believe that inclusion is a practice that is embedded in the complex political aspects of education. Therefore, they suggest that instead of conceptualizing inclusion as an outcome to be attained, it may be viewed “as a process that is always ongoing, continual, and by extension, unfinished” (p. 72). Such a process needs to maintain an understanding that schooling is a practice that supports the learning and well-being of all individuals involved and contributes to building democratic societies (Danforth & Naraian, 2015). Moreover, Danforth and Naraian (2015) remind us that inclusion “must address and respond creatively to the structures, attitudes, and practices” (p. 73) that express exclusion in schools and society at large.

In this chapter I discuss the six emerging themes that combine all study findings and provide a concluding summary. The themes will elaborate on the findings of the study in light of the literature examined, as well as the theoretical framework. Moreover, the
discussion seeks to offer a new analytical perspective, informed by New-Institutionalism and policy enactment (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012; Braun, Maguire, & Ball, 2010; DiMaggio, & Powell, 1991), that would inform further research in teacher education and inclusive education policy.

Acknowledging the impact of institutions on the various practices of policy actors and their meaning making, this discussion chapter identifies and elaborates on the following themes: 1) The Meaning of Inclusive Education: An Institutional Perspective, 2) The Practice of Inclusion: An Interplay between Institutional Structures and Actors’ Agency, 3) The Logics of Inclusion: Issues around Views, Beliefs, and Practices, 4) Inclusive Practices in Teacher Education: Challenges and Needs, 5) Re-imagining the Practicum in Teacher Education, and 6) Advancing Inclusion-oriented Curricula and Collaborative Practices in Teacher Education. Further, it is concluded that: 1) the teacher education program would benefit from a review of the practicum criteria, 2) the structure and content of the program’s curricula could be revised to reflect a more holistic approach to inclusive education, acknowledging the growing diversity in Ontario classrooms, and 3) the need for a review of the current requirements in terms of resources for inclusive education at the practicum and during instruction at the university classroom.

6.1 Overview

The analysis presented in this chapter aims to inform policy research on teacher education for inclusion and seeks to offer evidence to support future organizational change initiatives in teacher education.

After reporting the study findings in chapter 5, it was crucial to further discuss these findings with a particular focus on the meaning-making practices of policy actors in teacher education. The goal was to have an in-depth understanding from the policy enactment and New-Institutional theoretical perspectives on how pre-service teachers are being prepared to practice inclusion in the classroom and what kind of challenges this preparation entails. To recall, the policy actors who took part in this study included: 12 pre-service teachers from two consecutive cohorts: 2017 and 2018, who were attending
their second year of the teacher education program, 6 teacher educators, and 4 coordinators from one teacher education program, as well as 5 associate teachers from one Public/Catholic and one Public school board in Southwestern Ontario.

The following sections highlight the role of institutions in the enactment of inclusive education, and discuss the different findings, highlighting the emerging themes. The discussion of the themes is informed by a reflection based on the literature and the NI and policy enactment perspectives.

6.2 The Role of Institutions in the Enactment of Inclusive Education

As identified in the literature (Alborno, 2017; Johnstone & Chapman, 2009; Vekeman, Devos, & Tuytens, 2015) and exemplified in the voices of the study participants, the enactment of inclusive education remains complex and contextually situated. Therefore, the practice of inclusion in schools should not be viewed as the mere responsibility of teachers and their preparation programs but rather a collective responsibility that extends to include other education-related institutions (Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Keefe et al., 2000; Nevin, Thousand, & Villa, 2009). Based on the study findings, it can be argued that there are institutional constraints (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) that come along with the possibilities for action in inclusive classrooms. The processes of funding for more Educational Assistants and material resources continue to be interrogated in the literature (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013; Slee, 2010; Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014) as well as among the policy actors involved in teacher education.

For a promising inclusive practice among novice and experienced teachers alike, it is significantly relevant to acknowledge the role that the governing educational institutions play in supporting the objectives of inclusion and its principles in schools. The Ministry of Education, the Ontario College of Teachers, and teacher federations are relevantly positioned actors in the enactment of education-related policies. The role of these institutions may lie in ensuring more professional development towards inclusion among practitioners in the education field, establishing advanced platforms for inclusion-related
resources that support inclusion in schools, and in interrogating the current status of inclusive teaching practice in Ontario schools, as well as the systematic and structural challenges that this practice entails.

6.3 The Meaning of Inclusive Education: An Institutional Perspective

By looking at how the participants assign meanings to inclusive education in their context of practice, it becomes evident that their interpretations underlie particular institutional logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991) towards inclusion, its policies, and the related practices. Thornton and Ocasio (1999) define institutional logics as "the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality" (p. 804). These logics are not only derived from the policy actors’ local context such as schools or the university classroom, but also from their interactions within other social institutions such as families, culture, and religion (Bridwell-Mitchell & Sherer, 2017). According to Bridwell-Mitchell and Sherer (2017), “the sets of beliefs and practices infused into the formulation of different reforms are institutional logics” (p. 223). With respect to this study, these sets of beliefs and practices may relate to inclusive education whereas the formulation of reforms may be exemplified by the development of inclusive education policies.

While the study participants highlighted the value of inclusion and the right to education for all learners (Ainscow, 2007; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Harvey, Yssel, Bauserman, & Merbler, 2010), the literature on inclusive education policy practice in schools showed that inclusion remains problematic and contextually-situated (Hamdan, Anuar, & Khan, 2016; Mosia, 2014). This reflects the idea that the translation of policy principles into practices is more complex than what policy makers assume.

The institutional logics of inclusion are evidenced by the interpretations that pre-service teachers have made in relation to their preparation in the program and are constituted by the understandings of inclusion among associate teachers, teacher educators, and program
coordinators. The fact that the interpretations of policies depend not only on the actors’ experiences in their local context but also on their interactions in wider societal institutions suggests the existence of competing logics among policy actors towards inclusive education and its policy principles – A phenomenon that denotes an institutional complexity (Greenwood et al., 2011). Examples of these competing logics could be seen in 1) how pre-service teachers compared their theoretical knowledge about inclusion in the university classroom with their experiences working with the ATs during practicum, and 2) the different meanings that teacher educators made about inclusion and the strategies they use during their instruction to advance pre-service teachers’ learning about inclusion.

Looking through the lens of NI, the interpretations that the study participants have made about inclusive education, appear to be informed by their underlying logics towards inclusion. Evidenced in the examples above, the program’s teacher educators, coordinators, and the associate teachers, all have expressed various beliefs and practices that illuminated the institutional logics of the teacher education program in relation to inclusive education. Teaching about how to assess learning for diverse students, addressing the linguistic diversity in Ontario classrooms, and asking pre-service teachers to reflect on a continuum of beliefs towards inclusion, all reflect institutional logics. These logics were structured around the beliefs that inclusion is 1) a significant educational approach in today’s classrooms that would support all learners, and 2) a practice that requires robust collaboration and the existence of positive mindsets that value the differences among all learners.

In order to consolidate the institutional logics around inclusion, the above-mentioned actors reported additional specific practices that were sought to support pre-service teachers’ preparation for inclusive teaching. Such practices included co-teaching during practicum, examining case studies in the university classroom about exceptional learners and encouraging group activities that are focused on how to create supportive learning environments, ongoing emphasis on the ethical and professional standards of the teaching profession, as well as seeking to create spaces and time for more critical discussions.
about inclusion. Other practices included modeling inclusive teaching through the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach which was evidenced by 1) how teacher educators encourage pre-service teachers to use multimodal approaches to express their learning, and 2) teaching pre-service teachers on how to develop tailored assessment strategies.

The practices described by the participants suggest that the actors involved in the teacher education program have strong beliefs towards inclusive education. Some of these beliefs include the need for all students to feel supported regardless of their different backgrounds, and that teachers build on students’ individual strengths and diversity to advance learning. These beliefs are evidenced by the interpretations that pre-service teachers have offered in relation to their experiences in the university classroom.

All study participants indicated that inclusive practices, whether in schools or in the teacher education program, both entail challenges. These challenges, according to the participants, are associated with 1) the existence of competing values towards inclusion among practitioners in schools and teacher education, 2) lack of research-informed learning assessment strategies in schools, 3) lack of time, 4) high course loads in the teacher education program, and 5) the increasing working demands in schools. Some of the competing values evidenced in the participants’ narratives include, 1) the idea that practitioners in teacher education would define inclusion in different ways due to differences in their academic and social backgrounds, 2) the different understandings about how inclusion should be practiced, 3) the perceived gap between the theoretical approaches to inclusion and the everyday realities of the classroom, and 4) the belief that inclusion is a practice that is circumscribed to specific professionals. The evidence of these conflicts could be shown in the recommendations offered by some teacher educators, such as the need for UDL to become the common framework used by all teachers and that practitioners in teacher education need to move from a pedagogy of reflection to a pedagogy of enactment. Shifting to a pedagogy of enactment indicates that the program could engage teacher educators in more practical experiences around inclusion to complement their ongoing reflections towards inclusive education.
The participants expressed a concern over the lack of research-informed learning assessment strategies in schools. For them, some of the consequences of this lack include promoting teaching practices that support exclusion rather than inclusion, as well as frustrations and burnout among practicing teachers. Thus, they recommended further emphasis, in teacher education, on how to assess learning of diverse students in schools.

Another key concern expressed by the pre-service teachers relates to the high course loads in the teacher education program. According to their responses, the amount of assignments and required readings results in superficial discussions and learning about inclusion. Finally, the pre-service teachers referred to the increasing working demands in schools as an additional challenge to enacting inclusive teaching practices. In their view, some of these demands include parent-teacher communication, progress reports, and working with a high number of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in the classroom.

These findings resonate with those of previous studies on inclusive education policy enactment. For example, Vorapanya and Dunlap (2014) noted that lack of funding for screening and assessment strategies impacted how teachers can enact inclusive teaching and support exceptional learners. Werts and Brewer (2015) indicated that education policies tend to disregard the multiple interpretations that policy actors make about policy and what capacities for enactment they have, based on their local context.

With the aforementioned challenges in the enactment of inclusive education in schools and teacher education, it seems difficult that the program would be able to satisfy the objectives set within inclusion-related policies, such as the EIE (OME, 2014) and Realizing the promise of diversity: Ontario’s equity and inclusive education strategy (OME, 2009). Recall that some of these objectives include fostering inclusive and equitable education practices in schools, as well as positioning inclusive education as the driving tool for teaching and assessment in Ontario schools.

Based on the analysis of the data, it could be concluded that some of the reasons why it would be difficult for the program to achieve the goals set in inclusion-related policies include the lack of prior experience with inclusion among pre-service teachers, and the
lack of time in the program for in-depth discussions about inclusive teaching. Based on the reported challenges, it could be argued that there is a disconnect between what policies read and their translation into contextualized practices. Indeed, this disconnect is evidenced in the different meanings that pre-service teachers made about the practice of inclusive teaching in schools, and how the school context continues to shape policy actors’ interpretations of policies, and consequently policy outcomes.

Based on these findings, the teacher education program may need to consider how this disconnect could impact future teachers’ preparation for the inclusive classroom. Perhaps, advancing further collaboration for inclusive education between the program and the local school boards may help to further inform shared understandings of inclusive education and its practices. In addition, future policy making that relates to inclusive education may need to recognize the existence of different logics among policy actors.

6.4 The Practice of Inclusion: An Interplay between Institutional Structures and Actors’ Agency

According to the participants, inclusion should be viewed as a holistic educational approach that includes realizing the substantial role of all actors involved in the process of schooling, and the adoption of inclusive pedagogies and assessment strategies that support all learners. Some of the practices that represent inclusive education in schools, as noted by the study participants, include the use of UDL and Differentiated Instruction (DI), providing the necessary special education services for exceptional learners, and teachers sharing instructional strategies that reflect inclusion.

The participants believed, however, that these inclusive practices are framed by the educational institutions, including their rules and regulations, structures, and context, as well as the interpretations of policy actors. This framing could be evidenced in 1) the challenges of including all learners as reported by pre-service teachers, 2) the lack of resources for inclusion in schools, 3) the lack of experience among some practicing teachers, and 4) the amount of administrative duties that currently practicing teachers are required to do.
Preparing pre-service teachers to enact inclusive teaching would entail emphasizing, through the teacher education program curriculum, the constraints and the possibilities for future teachers’ agency in practicing inclusive teaching. Some of these constraints and possibilities include the existence of different beliefs and attitudes among practitioners towards the principles of inclusion, a fact that would undermine the collaborative practices that support the purposes of inclusion. Also, teacher preparation for inclusive teaching entails a recognition of the situated context of schools in terms of their administrative support, and their social and cultural environment.

The analysis of the participants’ responses revealed that at the school level, the practice of inclusion is influenced by other institutional constraints, such as the lack of Educational Assistants (EAs) and the limited professional development opportunities on inclusive teaching. As evidenced in the literature (Miles & Ahuja, 2007; OCUFA, 2013; Slee, 2010), these issues could be some of the reasons that can diminish the quality of inclusive practices in schools and in turn increase the gap of academic achievement among learners.

The cuts for Ontario teacher education programs are believed to disadvantage pre-service teachers and threaten the quality of education provided by these programs (OCUFA, 2013). Some of these cuts include a reduction of 33% of funding per each teacher candidate admitted to teacher education in Ontario as well as reducing by half the number of teacher candidates accepted into Ontario teacher education programs (OCUFA, 2013). The impact of these cuts could be evidenced in the challenges of the teacher education program in hiring more instructors as one coordinator reported in this study. The analysis suggests that such institutional constraints would limit the possibilities of the program to offer meaningful learning experiences for pre-service teachers. Moreover, these constraints may also limit pre-service teachers’ access to the necessary resources, such as professional development workshops that would support their preparation for inclusive teaching, as well as access to academic research that pertain to teaching and learning.

Along with the growing teaching demands and the increasing number of exceptional learners in today’s classrooms, as reported by many pre-service teachers, EAs become an
invaluable resource of support. The participants reported that some of the practices that involve EAs in schools include co-planning classroom activities with the classroom teacher, as well as offering one-on-one support for students identified with exceptionalities. From the participants’ perspectives, EAs’ practices are essential to the achievement of the goals of inclusive education because they provide specific support in terms of teaching and learning, easing off some of the responsibilities of the classroom teacher towards diverse learners. In addition, EAs help classroom teachers to meet the different social and behavioural expectations that are set within exceptional learners’ IEPs.

6.5 The Logics of Inclusion: Issues around Views, Beliefs, and Practices

Some of the practices reported by teacher educators and program coordinators to support future teachers for inclusion include: 1) discussing the means for creating supportive learning environments in the classroom, 2) emphasizing the principles of UDL, and, 3) inviting parents, teachers, and administrators to share their experiences with inclusion. However, while the pre-service teachers said that these practices are indeed helpful for developing their particular understandings about inclusion, they also noted that the school context may dictate the extent to which one can practice inclusive teaching. For example, the pre-service teachers said that there seems to be opposing values towards inclusion among some of the Associate Teachers (ATs) who appeared to lack experience with inclusion. This opposition of values could be evidenced in what one teacher educator claimed, based on her visits to the practicum, that some ATs do not value inclusion and do not engage in inclusive educational practices with all their students. For her, this negative modeling can significantly impact pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion.

In addition to the opposing values espoused by some Associate Teachers, the pre-service teachers reported some inconsistencies in the values and beliefs of the school towards inclusion. The pre-service teachers reported that some schools fall short on making
education more accessible for students with learning disabilities, as teachers in some schools may need to wait up to a year to receive inclusion-related materials.

During the practicum, the teacher education program and the schools are two different but interdependent contexts that would ultimately inform the practice of future teachers towards inclusion. The existence of the aforementioned differences between these two contexts highlights a theory-practice gap that the teacher education program could further interrogate. Perhaps an examination for how future teachers’ agency in schools is contextually-situated could help to alleviate this problem. Indeed, such an examination would provide important insights that would contribute to the development of more practice-informed teacher education curricula. This would result in teachers who are aware of the complexities of inclusive teaching in schools.

Reflecting on the participants’ interpretations, it becomes evident that there are different institutional logics towards inclusion in the teacher education program and schools. The teacher education program, through the various courses it offers, seeks ways to negotiate and challenge the mindsets of pre-service teachers towards inclusion. These include, as the study participants reported, providing pre-service teachers with theoretical tools that may help them to enact inclusive teaching. In contrast, practitioners in schools, based on the views of pre-service teachers and teacher educators, express different views and assumptions towards diverse learners, and experience different kinds of challenges during their practice.

This analysis supports the idea that the different social, cultural, and professional experiences that student teachers are exposed to, contribute to the construction of particular logics among them towards inclusion and its enactment. Further, the analysis suggests that the teacher education program may need to further engage pre-service teachers in discussions that seek to deconstruct and critically negotiate the discourses and practices around inclusive education in different contexts and how these contexts inform the enactment of inclusive education policies. This would help pre-service teachers to avoid internalizing (Zucker, 1991) a simplistic and normalized view of inclusion as a
decontextualized, straightforward process that is likewise enacted across all educational organizations.

The analysis of the findings reflected a more complex idea about the practice of inclusion than what the EIE (OME, 2014) and other inclusion policy documents portray. The EIE presents a normative view about inclusion as the driving force for teaching, assessment, and student success. In addition, the EIE is formulated upon the assumption that inclusive education is one of the main factors that will help in reducing the academic achievement gaps in Ontario. In contrast, the findings illuminated a complex view of inclusion among the study participants, particularly the pre-service teachers and the associate teachers.

The analysis highlights that this complex view is related to the challenges that impact the actors’ agency towards inclusion in schools, such as lack of EAs in the inclusive classrooms, the growing number of students identified with exceptionalities, as well as testing requirements and learning assessment strategies. However, it should be noted that the EIE (OME, 2014) indicates that inclusion is not just a set of values and beliefs, but rather a process that examines the practices of policy actors and interrogates the educational systems that may impose some structural constraints on the learning of disadvantaged individuals in schools.

With the acknowledgment of these issues around the practice of inclusive teaching, the policy actors in the teacher education program could recognize the institutional barriers to exercise their agency in their context of practice. This recognition would help them develop inclusion-oriented meaning-making practices that may bring about change for inclusive education in schools. Some of these meaning-making practices could include exploring how future teachers cope with limited resources in schools, as well as engaging pre-service teachers with further research on inclusive teaching and assessment strategies that are relevant to Ontario classrooms’ context. Moreover, advanced investigations about the categories of exceptionalities may help pre-service teachers to have a better understanding of how to support diverse learners. Teacher education programs can become a central force that contributes to strengthening the goals of inclusion, which in turn has the potential to enhance students’ experiences in Ontario classrooms.
6.6 Inclusive Practices in Teacher Education: Challenges and Needs

Both contexts, the university classroom and the practicum in schools, influence the meaning making about inclusion among pre-service teachers who in turn develop particular logics towards their capacities for inclusive teaching. The development of these logics, according to pre-service teachers, take place through 1) discussing instructional issues about exceptional learners, 2) ongoing reflections towards inclusion, 3) interacting with diverse students in schools, as well as 4) collaborating with the associate teachers, during practicum, in lesson planning and instruction. Moreover, these contexts created a framework through which the pre-service teachers were able to see the institutional challenges associated with inclusive teaching in schools. Some of these challenges as identified in this study included 1) the high number of IEPs that teachers in schools need to deal with, and 2) the complexities around resources and assessment strategies for exceptional learners. To recall, IEPs are official documents that identify the strengths and needs of exceptional learners and list the instructional and assessment strategies that have been identified as beneficial for them as well as the various educational goals to be achieved (Hutchinson, 2017).

While the inclusive classroom may include students with different exceptionalities who may be in need for special education services (technological devices, tailored and standard assessment tools, and specialized learning support teachers), having limited resources in schools impacts the possibility for offering these services and in turn the enactment of promising inclusive teaching among current and future practitioners. These findings confirm the conclusions of similar studies, such as Kelly et al., (2014), Kim (2013), and Naicker (2007), who indicated that the enactment of inclusive education in schools is far more complex than what policy makers and governing institutions assume. These issues call upon the teacher education program to further engage pre-service teachers with the IEPs, including discussions on how to modify and accommodate classroom instruction and assessments. This may alleviate some of the complexities of future teachers’ practices in the inclusive classroom.
The enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) in the university classroom was evident in the various practices reported. These included the modeling of inclusive practices, such as offering pre-service teachers choices to express their learning and engaging them in small and large group activities, engaging pre-service teachers in learning about the exceptionalities they will find in schools, and requiring them to identify and reflect on the connections between inclusive practice and the ethical and professional standards of the teaching profession in Ontario. According to the teacher educators and program coordinators, enacting such practices will allow future teachers to develop more complex and nuanced understandings about inclusion, and to challenge their biases towards diverse learners. The emphasis in the teacher education program on the different aspects of inclusion, as revealed in this study, represents an institutional commitment on the part of the program towards improving inclusive education in schools through the preparation of future teachers.

Challenging the underlying philosophies and beliefs about inclusion among pre-service teachers is one of the practices that teacher educators reported as significant, due to the lack of experience with inclusion among the former. This confirms the findings of previous studies that examined the beliefs and attitudes of pre-service teachers towards inclusion (Loreman, 2010; Specht, 2016) and found them concerned about their capacity to practice inclusion and to accommodate diverse learners’ needs. Perhaps, the teacher education program may need to consider, as one associate teacher suggested, offering pre-service teachers more time in practicum where they can further interact with diverse learners and learn more about their different characteristics and needs.

Based on their practicum experience, the pre-service teachers recognized the role of the associate teachers in the development of their attitudes towards inclusion. According to the PTs, some of the associate teachers have a lack of experience with inclusive education practices. They suggested that the program could offer in-service teachers, given their central role in the program’s practicum component, more professional development opportunities that are geared towards how to engage and support diverse learners. This suggestion resonates with an earlier study that emphasized the importance
of supporting in-service teachers with ongoing professional learning that focuses on inclusion (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). This professional learning may focus on inclusive pedagogies, inclusive education policy enactment in schools, and how to create supportive learning environments. In the same vein, Naraian, Ferguson, and Thomas (2012) argue that developing the capacity of in-service teachers to practice inclusion needs to go “beyond improved curricular practices to rethinking student ability and achievement” (p. 723). Moreover, a recent study by Woodcock and Hardy (2017) called for providing in-service teachers (some of whom act as associate teachers in teacher education programs) with formal (traditional workshops) and informal professional learning (learning with and from colleagues in the field) to improve their inclusive teaching.

Although the program’s educators and coordinators were keen on challenging the mindsets of pre-service teachers towards inclusion, some program-related constraints were impacting their practice in this regard. These constraints include the limited number of hours assigned to each course in the program and the high number of courses that pre-service teachers are dealing with. These factors, according to those participant groups, limit their capacity to engage pre-service teachers in complex and difficult conversations that pertain to race, ability, religion, gender, and sexual identities in Ontario schools. While these issues are crucial for inclusion and its enactment in schools by experienced and novice teachers alike, an organizational change in the program’s curriculum structure to advance the discussions of these topics may be relevant.

A key practice of the teacher educators consisted of emphasizing the pre-service teachers’ professional responsibility in enhancing the inclusion of diverse learners. This practice supports the work of previous research studies (Bourke, 2010; Kim, 2013) that claimed the need for future teachers to be made aware, during their teacher education programs, of the institutionalized practices (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) at schools that sometimes express exclusion rather than inclusion.

From the perspective of NI and policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991), the practices reported by teacher educators and program coordinators reflect their
interpretations of the existing inclusion-related policies, particularly the EIE (OME, 2014) document. Their interpretations mirror the institutional logics of the program that inclusion must drive the various instructional and assessment practices of future teachers. Thus, ensuring that the principles of inclusion are embedded in the program and modeled by all instructors is certainly substantial for helping future teachers enact inclusive teaching in schools and in negotiating the logics of inclusion.

6.7 Re-imagining the Practicum in Teacher Education

The literature on practicum and pre-service teachers’ experiences have emphasized the relationship between schools’ professional context and the learning experiences of pre-service teachers (see Rogers-Adkinson & Fridley, 2016; Rusznyak & Walton, 2017; and Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008). The practicum allows pre-service teachers to experience the various processes enacted in the inclusive classroom, and in turn, to construct new logics about inclusion and their future practices. Hence, the practicum becomes an important context where future teachers connect with, and advance their learning about diverse students, and learn how to meet their needs.

Moving from the university classroom to engage in practical experiences in schools constitutes a lived experience of policy enactment. That is, during practicum, pre-service teachers are offered a chance to translate the theoretical knowledge they have acquired about inclusive education and its policy principles, into context-informed practices (Ball et al., 2012). These practices may pertain to the different instructional strategies, observations, and other inclusion-based collaborative practices they engage with while working with their associate teachers (ATs) in schools. To recall, ATs are those who supervise pre-service teachers during practicum.

Looking through the lens of NI and enactment, the interpretations that ATs made about inclusion-related policies seem to be infused by their beliefs and practices, namely the institutional logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991) that they have gained from their wider social contexts. The argument is that ATs’ role is crucial (Rusznyak & Walton, 2017; Sharma, 2010) for how pre-service teachers perceive inclusion and its practices during
practicum. Based on this premise, the teacher education program must ensure that pre-service teachers are practicing with experienced ATs who have supportive views and practices towards inclusive education.

It was beyond the scope of this study to examine the institutional frameworks that influence the selection of ATs in schools, however, some teacher educators and pre-service teachers, based on their experiences, suggested the program to be keen on practicum placements’ criteria and to consider extending the practicum. Evident in the current study, some pre-service teachers had the chance to practice in different school contexts with experienced ATs while others did not have these opportunities. Extending the practicum or reconsidering its structure, as suggested by one program coordinator, has the potential to offer pre-service teachers more engagement time with students in schools to develop their inclusion-related professional capacities. Certainly, this opportunity will contribute to the enactment of a more informed inclusive teaching by future practitioners and facilitate their transition from the teacher education program to the profession.

6.8 Advancing Inclusion-oriented Curricula and Collaborative Practices in Teacher Education

Several studies have addressed the significance of adopting inclusive-oriented pedagogies in teacher education (Florian, 2012; Forlin, 2010b; Rouse, 2010; Rusznyak & Walton, 2017). An inclusive pedagogical approach, as defined by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), is attending:

to individual differences between learners while actively avoiding the marginalisation of some learners and/or the continued exclusion of particular groups, for example, ethnic minority students, those from culturally diverse backgrounds, non-native language speakers, students with additional needs, and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds who may be disadvantaged by poverty. (p. 334)

Conforming to the above-mentioned studies, the analysis revealed that the teacher education program seeks to engage pre-service teachers with various learning activities
around inclusion that would develop their capacities to successfully enact inclusive practices in schools. This approach reflects one of the means through which the program promotes the objectives of inclusive education and translates its principles into practices.

The analysis of the findings signaled the existence of some concerns among the study participants regarding how the program’s organizational structure and curricular content could further support pre-service teachers’ preparation for inclusion. One teacher educator viewed the necessity for the curriculum to emphasize the issues around assessment and feedback strategies in inclusive classrooms. Moreover, one program coordinator believed that conducting more practicum visits is helpful to further understand any challenges experienced by pre-service teachers and learn about the various instructional practices enacted by currently practicing teachers. Implications of these visits could illuminate the underlying logics that guide the practices of associate teachers and in turn could engage pre-service teachers in more-informed discussions about inclusion and its practices in schools.

In terms of collaboration, the analysis revealed that curricular discussions among the different instructors contributes to building the program’s coherence in relation to inclusion. These findings conform to previous studies (Ainscow, 2012; Ainscow, Dyson, & Booth, 2000; Mitller, 2000) that conceptualized inclusion as an institutional approach that guides the work of all of those involved in students’ learning.

While there is evidence of adopting the principles of the EIE (OME, 2014) in the pre-service program, more could be done on integrating these principles into all program’s courses. This would constitute a relevant response to previous studies that viewed teacher education curricula as less inclusion-oriented and more focused on academic objectives (See Forlin & Nguyet, 2010, and Goodnough et al., 2016). Relatedly, pre-service teachers were found concerned about the high number of reading and writing assignments they were required to complete, and the existence of courses with similar content. The amount of time required to complete multiple assignments with overlapping content, as reported by the pre-service teachers, restricted them from having in-depth discussions about inclusion, its practices, and the related challenges in the classroom.
The issues expressed by pre-service teachers could inform future changes to the curriculum in the examined teacher education program. For instance, those involved in the program’s curricular development may reflect on the ways that would help pre-service teachers feel more supported towards enriching their knowledge and skills about inclusive teaching.

6.9 Summary

By looking at the different themes that emerged during the discussion of the study’s findings, it becomes evident that there are different institutional logics that inform the enactment of the principles of the EIE (OME, 2014) in the teacher education program. The situated context of the study participants whether in schools or in the teacher education program, along with their experiences in their wider social environments, constituted the platform for their meaning making about inclusive education. Furthermore, the various accounts that the participants offered reflected how the program’s context including the practicum and the university classroom, is a key element that shapes policy enactment.

The analysis revealed that the enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) in the examined teacher education program happens through various practices such as 1) the instructional strategies that challenge the mindsets of pre-service teachers towards inclusion, 2) the modeling of inclusive teaching, 3) the engagement of pre-service teachers in discussions about the various exceptionalities and student diversity in the classroom, and 4) the different forms of collaboration that take place, at the university classroom and during practicum. However, translating the EIE (OME, 2014) into these different practices entail challenges associated with 1) the lack of experience with inclusion among pre-service teachers and some associate teachers, 2) the structure of the program’s curriculum including the courses offered and the practicum, and 3) the availability of inclusion-related resources for schools such as EAs, updated assessment tools, and technology devices.
A review of teacher education curricula was suggested with a particular focus on reconsidering the number of courses and the assignments required in each course. Also, the findings suggest the need to engage pre-service teachers in a deeper review of inclusive pedagogies and integrating the courses that appear to have similar content. Finally, associate teachers and pre-service teachers alike suggested extending the duration of the practicum in order for the latter to solidify in practice their understanding of student diversity, as well as the challenges and the opportunities of enacting inclusive practices. This suggestion highlights the extent to which these participants viewed inclusive education policy enactment as a complex process that exclusively depends on its situated context.

The use of policy enactment in this study offered an understanding of how the principles of *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* (OME, 2014) are translated into the various professional practices in teacher education as exemplified in the voices of the participants. Moreover, the theory of New-Institutionalism constituted a robust and novel perspective to understand the enactment of inclusive education policy principles in teacher education. It showed how policy interpretation is shaped by underlying sets of beliefs and practices among the different actors, as well as by the different constraints and the possibilities for action that exist in the educational institutions. Further, NI signaled how this complex interaction between the different logics and contexts inform policy enactment and policy outcomes.

The study findings have the potential to inform other teacher education programs that are aspiring for an organizational change to further support their pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive teaching. Moreover, these findings may serve as a starting point to further develop programmatic curricula and practicum experiences that are inclusion-driven, taking into consideration the continuous evolution of students’ demographics in the K-12 settings. Furthermore, this study could inform future policy making processes as it highlights the necessity for considering the different logics that exist among policy actors and how these logics may, at some point, contradict or expand policy objectives.
Chapter 7

7 Conclusion

This chapter offers an overview of the study’s findings, its limitations, and revisits the research questions. Further, it acknowledges the implications of the study by highlighting what themes and areas would need further examination in future research that is intended to support pre-service teacher preparation for inclusive teaching in Canada and elsewhere. The recommendations offered aim to advance an organizational change in teacher education programming in relation to inclusion and by extension to improve the experiences of all learners in the inclusive classroom.

7.1 Overview of the Study’s Findings

This study sought to understand how the EIE (OME, 2014) policy document is interpreted and translated into the practices of teacher educators, associate teachers in schools, and teacher education program coordinators in ways that support pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom. Also, the study examined how the pre-service teachers in the teacher education program conceptualized the principles of the EIE and its related practices in schools towards their preparation for inclusive teaching. The study employed New-Institutionalism and policy enactment theories as the theoretical framework to guide the analysis, discussion, and reporting of the findings.

By adopting this theoretical framework, the study offered a new perspective towards understanding how this teacher education program prepares pre-service teachers for inclusion, shedding light on the relationship between institutional policies, rules, structures, agency, and the practices of the individuals involved. The pre-service teachers who participated in the study expressed their aspirations and concerns regarding the present and the future of teacher education for inclusive teaching practices in schools.

This study contributes to research and academic literature on teacher education for inclusive education by bringing forward the voice of associate teachers, teacher
educators, and program coordinators on pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom. Most studies reviewed for this research seem to focus on the perspectives of pre-service teachers towards their preparation for inclusion, disregarding the significant roles that others play in teacher education.

By listening to the various interpretations of the above-mentioned policy actors about pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of how the EIE (OME, 2014) is being enacted in one particular teacher education program in Ontario. While many inclusive education policy studies have explored the enactment of inclusive education in schools (Alborno, 2017; Bourke, 2010; Forlin 2010a; Johnstone & Chapman, 2009; Kelly et al., 2014), there is a dearth of research that looks at how inclusive education-related policies are conceptualized and enacted in teacher education, hence the contribution of this study.

The pre-service teachers (PTs) and the associate teachers (ATs) recommended the teacher education program to consider extending the practicum duration and to place pre-service teachers in more diverse school settings. These recommendations were based on the ATs’ view of inclusion and its challenges as well as PTs’ interest in spending more time with students of diverse learning needs. Moreover, PTs noted that their practical experiences allowed them to contextualize the practical and structural challenges associated with the enactment of inclusion in schools. These challenges included having a limited number of Educational Assistants in the classrooms, and the perceived need to keep up-to-date with the assessment tools required to promote the learning experiences of all students, particularly those with exceptionalities.

Although there is a substantial body of research on pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion, the literature review revealed that there was a lack of focus on how TEs practice inclusion in the university classroom. For that reason, the current study has offered TEs in the examined program a chance to reflect on their institutional and professional roles in preparing future teachers for inclusive education.
TEs were found keen on creating particular mindsets towards inclusion among pre-service teachers. Moreover, TEs claimed facing challenges in negotiating pre-service teachers’ assumptions about exceptional learners in the classroom. Therefore, they sought to overcome these challenges by modeling evidence-based teaching practices that would help pre-service teachers develop their conceptualization of inclusion and understand the various instructional and organizational means that support diverse learners in the classroom. In relation to the structure of the teacher education program, TEs recommended a review of how ATs are selected, integrating inclusion in all courses of the teacher education program, and establishing more collaboration among the program’s teacher educators.

Associate teachers play a crucial role in the preparation of future teachers through hands-on experiences. Their interpretations and further enactment of the EIE (OME, 2014) document through their various educational practices in schools revealed that their practice is a combination of shared institutional beliefs about inclusion, and prior professional experience in the school system, particularly, with students with exceptionalities. The findings of this study resonated with previous studies (Rioux, 2007; Rusznyak & Walton, 2017) that called upon engaging ATs in schools with more professional learning opportunities that are focused on the policies and practices of inclusive education.

Reflecting on the teacher education program, ATs suggested 1) an extended practicum, 2) increased preparation in the university classroom about IEPs, 3) deeper examination of learning theories and assessment strategies, and 4) further engagement in questions and discussions about cultures, ethnicities, and religions to enrich the knowledge of future teachers towards all facets of inclusion. Such knowledge, according to the ATs, would help future teachers to enact more informed inclusion-oriented pedagogies in their future classrooms.

As part of the inclusive education approach adopted by the teacher education program, the interviewed program coordinators (PCs), expressed the necessity to have more space to discuss in more depth some critical and pressing issues in education, such as religious
diversity, gender identity, and sexual identity in schools. In addition, modeling inclusive practices by the program’s various instructors was seen as a contribution to the professional development of the candidates and their attitudes towards inclusion. Other recommendations that PCs offered included combining elementary courses that are similar in focus and content, and a review of pre-service teachers’ placement criteria.

7.2 Limitations of the Study

As this study was conducted in only one teacher education program, its results may not be generalized to other programs that may have contextual differences including, but not limited to the organizational, structural, social, and cultural contexts. Nonetheless, “based on contemporary understandings of learning, teaching and teacher education” (Kitchen & Sharma, 2017, p. 71), the findings may be transferable and helpful in fostering innovation and improvement in teacher education programs that are situated in similar contexts.

The researcher’s unintentional subjective biases and the fact that he has been the only instrument for analysis may be perceived as another limitation for this study. However, the use of triangulation and member checking techniques were beneficial in reducing the impact of these limitations. Furthermore, the study’s findings were informed by specific groups of participants who have been purposefully selected.

The pre-service teachers’ sample for this study were only those completing their second year in the program or those who have recently graduated from the program. The reason for this selection was that they have additional academic and practical experiences than their peers who are attending their first year in the program. Teacher educators were selected based on their role in the program and their experiences in the areas of inclusive education and teacher education. The associate teachers included in the sample were those who supervised and mentored the pre-service teachers during practicum in schools, whereas the program coordinators selected were those involved in developing the program’s curriculum.

Although there are multiple advantages of using a purposeful sampling technique, this method could present a limitation: in purposeful sampling, the researcher has the
potential to be guided by her/his subjective biases in selecting the study participants (Palinkas et al., 2015). Also, one of the limitations of this research was in the number of participants within each group as they may not be actually representative of the larger population. However, the rich information about pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom that the selected study participants have offered, supported by the literature of previous studies, helped in the development of a concise, reflective, credible, confirmable, and informative case study report, a task that was undoubtedly significant to be completed.

7.3 Revisiting the Study’s Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

1) How do pre-service teachers from a pre-service program in Ontario make sense of inclusive education after their preparation for the teaching practice?

2) How is the EIE (OME, 2014) document translated into the practices of teacher educators and associate teachers as they prepare pre-service teachers for inclusion?

3) How do the pre-service program coordinators understand inclusion in teacher education, particularly regarding the preparation of pre-service teachers for the inclusive classroom?

Now, I turn to describe how each question has been answered.

1) How do pre-service teachers from a preservice program in Ontario make sense of inclusive education after their preparation for the teaching practice?

Twelve PTs from 2 different cohorts participated in 45-60 minutes semi-structured interviews, during which their responses to the interview questions were recorded. The questions probed the PTs’ views towards inclusion, its related practices and the challenges of inclusive teaching in schools. In addition, PTs were asked to reflect on the practicum component of the program, the program’s courses, and on how these informed their preparation for their future teaching practice. After completing the transcription
process of the interviews, the transcripts were shared with the participants to allow them to reflect on, or to edit what they said during the interview. This member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) technique was helpful in ensuring the transparency of the data and credibility of the findings at a later stage. Similar steps were taken with the other study participants, namely, the teacher educators, the associate teachers, and the program coordinators.

Data analysis included an ongoing reflection on the study findings and the main research question, creating codes and themes that aimed to project coherence and connectivity. Further, I argue that the emerging themes in this study are credible due to the resonance of the findings with previous studies conducted in the areas of teacher education and inclusive education.

Concerning their understanding of inclusive education, all PTs expressed supportive beliefs that all students, regardless of their backgrounds and learning needs, should be included in the inclusive classroom. PTs’ institutional logics about the practice of inclusion in schools have been informed by their practicum and their university classroom experiences. The practicum played a key role in developing PTs’ meaning making about how inclusive education and its principles are enacted in schools. In addition, PTs were also keen on the necessity for teacher education programs to engage them in more critical discussions about issues of inclusive education.

PTs said that part of their understanding of inclusive teaching practices is based on collaborative practice activities they performed during practicum with the ATs and at the university classroom with other pre-service teachers. They believed that the enactment of inclusive education in schools is a shared responsibility that extends to involve teacher education programs. For PTs, the teacher education program can further enhance their meaning making about inclusion and its practices by emphasizing the processes of modifications and accommodations required in the inclusive classroom to support exceptional learners.
PTs had a common understanding that successful inclusive teaching is a practice that requires teamwork in schools and the availability of instructional resources and Educational Assistants (EAs) to support the learning needs of diverse learners. Moreover, in relation to the organizational structure of the program, PTs’ responses showed that a more successful teaching practice in the inclusive classroom is associated with rethinking the criteria of practicum placements and finding new strategic means that deepen the understanding of pre-service teachers about inclusion.

PTs linked their future capacity to teach in the inclusive classroom not only to their preparation program but also to the situated context of schools, meaning students’ diversity, as well as the associate teachers. In this regard, PTs said that their preparation for inclusive teaching practices can be advanced by interacting with more diverse learners and through practicing with experienced associate teachers who have supportive attitudes and beliefs about inclusive education.

2) How is the EIE (OME, 2014) document translated into the practices of teacher educators and associate teachers as they prepare pre-service teachers for inclusion?

To answer this research question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 teacher educators (TEs) and 5 associate teachers (ATs). The interview questions aimed to identify how these policy actors made sense of the EIE policy document, how they conceptualized their role in developing inclusive teaching practices in pre-service teachers, and what practices they perform to prepare pre-service teachers for inclusion. Both TEs and ATs expressed shared institutional beliefs about inclusion. For them, inclusion calls upon all school community members, not only teachers, to play their role in supporting all learners. TEs believed that inclusion is more than values and belief systems but rather a concept that interrogates institutional systems that may impose certain constraints on the learning processes of disadvantaged students.

The different practices that ATs and TEs performed in the teacher education program reflected keenness on enacting inclusive teaching. Modeling inclusive teaching practices for TEs and ATs tend to develop positive dispositions among pre-service teachers.
towards inclusion. Some of the practices that TEs and ATs have performed included engaging pre-service teachers in examining cases studies about exceptional learners, critical discussions about students’ diversity, modeling inclusive pedagogies and assessment strategies, co-teaching, as well as discussing how to create safe, supportive, and inclusive classroom environments.

The enactment of these practices according to TEs and ATs were not free of challenges. Challenges included the different underlying philosophies about inclusion among pre-service teachers, having limited number of hours for each course in the program, less time to engage pre-service teachers with deep discussions around inclusion, lack of experience about inclusion and IEPs among pre-service teachers, as well as how to differentiate assessment for diverse learners. To overcome these challenges, TEs and ATs offered similar recommendations concerning the practicum settings in particular. TEs and ATs believed that a longer practicum in diverse school settings and more careful selection of associate teachers may offer a significant experience for pre-service teachers in relation to inclusive teaching practices in the classroom. TEs recommended more collaboration in the teacher education program about course designs and content to further improve the program’s coherence in relation to inclusive education.

3) How do the pre-service program coordinators understand inclusion in teacher education, particularly regarding the preparation of pre-service teachers for the inclusive classroom?

To answer this question, I interviewed 4 coordinators from the examined teacher education program. The interview questions aimed to explore the program coordinators (PCs)’ views towards inclusion and their institutional role in supporting pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom in light of the existing policies on inclusive education in Ontario schools.

The analysis of the interview data revealed that the institutional practices of these PCs included developing course outlines and content that reflect the principles of inclusive education in Ontario and how to support students of diverse needs. Moreover, PCs’
institutional practices included ensuring that pre-service teachers, via the different program courses, are being made aware of their ethical and professional responsibilities as future teachers. PCs were also involved in teaching courses on urban education, special education, social justice, and curriculum studies.

The interviews with the PCs demonstrated the existence of supportive institutional beliefs about inclusive education in teacher education. This can be exemplified by how PCs recognized inclusion as the promising platform that supports all learners in schools and their experiences. Such a recognition, for PCs, is at the core of the EIE (OME, 2014) policy document and other inclusion-related policies. PCs’ understanding of inclusion was found based on both their professional experience in teacher education, and on institutional guidelines embedded in policy documents issued by the OME and the OCT.

PCs believed that inclusion in teacher education is meant to negotiate the mindsets of pre-service teachers towards the inclusion of all learners. This is by creating more spaces for “complicated and very difficult conversations” (PC1) that relate, for example, to sexual identities, religions, and gender identities in schools. In addition, PCs were keen in their practices on ensuring that pre-service teachers are aware of some exclusion practices in schools in relation to teaching and the learning assessment strategies. Moreover, PCs explained that the way the educators in the program model inclusive teaching, is an important factor that supports pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

Based on their understanding of inclusive education in Ontario schools and the aims of the province towards teacher education, PCs offered recommendations for the teacher education program that advance the knowledge of future teachers for the inclusive classroom. These recommendations included integrating courses that are similar in content and in learning objectives.

7.4 Implications of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

The significance of the study’s findings lies in proposing an organizational change in teacher education by rethinking of how more-informed inclusive teaching in schools can
be advanced through teacher preparation programs. A change can be exemplified by expanding the study findings through a review of teacher education policy, particularly regarding the practicum. A more detailed examination of the practicum experience would help identify how pre-service teachers benefit from their practical experiences in schools. Regarding the teacher education curriculum, the views of the policy actors suggest reconsidering the number of hours assigned to each course and the possibility for integrating courses that have similar content. Moreover, allocating more time to discuss in more depth issues of gender, sexuality, and religions in schools will further enrich the knowledge of future teachers about Ontario’s growing diverse communities.

Future research on pre-service teacher preparation for inclusion may examine the extent to which issues of power and socio-cultural privileges among pre-service teachers may influence the enactment of inclusion policy principles in schools. Other research may examine the dynamics of transition from the teacher education program to in-service teaching. Also, comparative case studies between different teacher education programs in Ontario and across different Canadian provinces could offer new perspectives on program development in teacher education and provide further insights on how to support future teachers for inclusive teaching practices.

At the international level, future research may attend to global perspectives on teacher education for inclusion with a focus on the similarities and differences of inclusion policy contexts and how these contexts shape policy practices and outcomes.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Western’s Ethics Approval

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board
NMREB Amendment Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Augusto Riveros Barrera
Department & Institution: Education, Western University

NMREB File Number: 109187
Study Title: The adoption of the Ontario enhanced teacher education program in a faculty of education: A focus on teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom

NMREB Revision Approval Date: August 16, 2017
NMREB Expiry Date: May 01, 2018

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

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<th>Document Name</th>
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<td>Letter of Information &amp; Consent</td>
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The Western University Non-Medical Science Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the amendment to the above named study, as of the NMREB Amendment 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 B: School Board 1’s Ethics Approval

RESEARCH COMMITTEE
Notice of Approval

December 6, 2017

Dear Dr. Riveros Barrera and Ayman Massouti,

This notice confirms that the Project Number: 2017_005 External Research Review Committee has approved your project. Your study has been assigned Project Number: 2017_005. Please be sure to include your research project number when communicating with Committee members. Thank you for submitting valid Criminal Record Checks with vulnerable sector screening for the researcher(s) entering sites and/or collecting data from students and employees prior to commencing your study. Information about the study has been sent to school principals to share with their staff and those who are interested in participating are asked to contact you directly.

Project Number: 2017_005
Title of Project: The adoption of the Ontario enhanced teacher education program in a faculty of education: A focus on teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom
Approved on: November 29, 2017
Expiry Date: June 30, 2018

Principal Investigator(s) / Student Researcher(s): Ayman Massouti
Date Valid Criminal Record Check Received by: October 16, 2017

Once your project is complete, please forward a copy of the results to the External Research Review Committee. If you have any further questions regarding this research approval, please email

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Appendix C: School Board 2’s Ethics Approval

From: [Redacted]
Sent: June 21, 2017 8:36:51 AM
To: Ayman Massouti
Subject: Ethics Application

Hi Ayman:

I am pleased to inform you that your research request has been reviewed and approved by the Research Advisory Committee. Please let me know how you want to proceed with next steps.

Thanks

[Redacted]

Research and Evaluation Officer
Appendix D: Letter of Information and Consent form

Letter of Information and Consent form

Project Title

Inclusion and policy enactment in teacher education: A focus on pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

Document Title

Letter of Information and Consent

Principal Investigator

Dr. Augusto Riveros Barrera, PhD, Education.

Western University

Co-Investigator

Ayman Massouti, PhD Candidate, Education

Western University

Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in this research study about Ontario teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

Why is this study being done?
With the continuous recognition of today’s classroom diversity, preparing teachers for inclusive education continues to be a priority of national and international educational organizations. This study aims to understand how the new Ontario two-year teacher education program is being implemented in one faculty of education towards preparing teachers to practice in an inclusive teaching environment. Particular attention is devoted to the ways different actors involved in the program, interpret inclusive education policies, relate them to the teacher preparation requirements, and translate them into their practices. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1) How do pre-service teachers from a pre-service program in Ontario make sense of inclusive education after their preparation for the teaching practice?

2) How is the EIE (OME, 2014) document translated into the practices of teacher educators and associate teachers as they prepare pre-service teachers for inclusion?

3) How do the pre-service program coordinators understand inclusion in teacher education, particularly regarding the preparation of pre-service teachers for the inclusive classroom?

**How long will you be in this study?**

You will be required to attend only one interview in person (or via Skype if you live outside London Ontario) for up to 60 minutes and respond to a follow-up email that requires 30 to 40 minutes from your time to offer a feedback (if any) on the analyzed data collected from you at the time of the interview.

**What are the study procedures?**

If you agree to participate you will be asked to attend an interview that will take up to 60 minutes to complete. In order to participate in this study, you must agree to be audio-recorded. The in-person interview will take place at a convenient location for you in London, Ontario and at a time that you mutually agree upon with the researcher. An interview via Skype is an option if you live outside London, Ontario. The interview (face-
to-face or via Skype) will be audio-recorded only. No video-recording. Four to Six weeks after the interview, you will be sent a follow-up email that will require your attention for 30 to 40 minutes. The follow-up email will request feedback (if any) from you on the analyzed data collected from you at the time of the interview.

**What are the risks and harms of participating in this study?**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. However, you can stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any time should you experience discomfort or fatigue.

**What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

The possible benefits to you may be a further understanding of your role as an associate teacher whose knowledge and experience influence teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom in Ontario or elsewhere where inclusive education is implemented. You will also benefit from reflecting on the inclusive education approach and its related policies in Ontario towards the education of all learners. The possible benefits to society may be a further understanding of how teacher education programs prepare teachers for the inclusive classroom and how policies of inclusive education in Ontario are reflected upon and put into practice by those involved in teacher education.

**Can participants choose to leave the study?**

If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to request withdrawal of information collected about you. If you wish to have your information removed please let the researcher know.

**How will participants’ information be kept confidential?**

All participants’ names that will be used to communicate with them during the study process will be removed from the data collected at the interviews and get replaced with pseudonyms to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Data
collected will be stored in paper and electronically. Only the Principal Investigator and the Co-Investigator will have access to the data collected.

Data collected that contains identifiable information such as the Signed Letter of Information and Consent forms will be kept in a locked bag while they are in transit from the study site with the Co-Investigator. Audio Recordings collected at the interviews will be kept securely in the Co-Investigator’s encrypted hard-drive following the guidelines of the ethics policy document TCPS2. After transcribing the audio recordings, the transcripts will be stored securely in separate files in the Co-investigator’s hard-drive. A hard copy (paper copy) of these transcripts will be stored in the Co-investigator’s personal locker at his financial institution. All transcripts (digital and paper copy) will be given pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

Five years following data collection, the digital data including the audio files and the electronic format of the transcripts stored on the encrypted hard-drive will be deleted using a PC’s file deletion software such as CCleaner. Paper data, such as the signed letters of information and consent forms, and the interview transcripts will be destroyed using an electric paper shredder.

Please note that representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to the study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. In addition, although all information collected during this study will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside the study, we may need to report data collected if required by law. The Co-Investigator will keep any personal information about you, particularly, the Singed Letter of Information and Consent Form in a locked bag for five years separate from you study file that includes the audio recording and the transcripts. Also, if the results of the study are published, your name will not be used and you will be provided with a copy of the study’s report.

**Are participants compensated to be in this study?**
If you agree to participate in the study, you will be offered an incentive in the form of a Tim Hortons card with $10 value as a thank you gift for participating in the research. (Please note that this incentive is optional and it is up to you to opt-in or opt-out). If you withdraw from the study after the interview and do not wish to reply to the follow-up email, you will still be provided with the incentive and no prorating will take place.

**What are the rights of participants?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to be in this study. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will have no effect on your employment status and academic standing. We will give you new information that is learned during the study that might affect your decision to stay in the study. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

**Whom do participants contact for questions?**

If you have any questions about this research study, please contact:

**Principal Investigator:**

Augusto Riveros Barrera, Ph. D.

Assistant Professor

Faculty of Education, Western University

**Co-Investigator:**

Ayman Massouti, Ph. D. Candidate

Faculty of Education, Western University
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 (519) 661-3036, email: ethics@uwo.ca.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.
Consent Form

Project Title

Inclusion and policy enactment in teacher education: A focus on pre-service teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom.

Document Title

Letter of Information and Consent

Principal Investigator

Dr. Augusto Riveros Barrera, PhD, Education.

Western University

Co-Investigator

Ayman Massouti, PhD Candidate, Education

Western University

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research

☐ YES ☐ NO

I agree to be audio-recorded in this research

☐ YES ☐ NO
Appendix E: Interview Questions: Teacher Educators

1. Can you please tell me about your professional and academic background?

2. How long have you been involved in the teacher education program?

3. What is your understanding of inclusive education?

4. How do you view your role in the program towards teacher preparation for inclusive education?

5. Do you believe that all instructors in the teacher education program share the same understanding of inclusive education? Please elaborate.

6. To what extent the EIE policy document inform your teaching practice in the teacher education program?

7. How this framework, in your opinion, can be incorporated into the teacher education program to support teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom?

8. What kind of strategies you believe are significant to advance teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom?

9. What challenges are there that relate to educating teachers for inclusion?

10. How do you address those challenges during your instruction in the classroom?

11. Does the EIE policy document help you address some of those challenges? If so, how?

12. How decisions about curriculum change in teacher education are made to further support teacher preparation for a promising inclusive practice?

13. Are there any other issues that we have not discussed that you think can inform and support teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom?
Appendix F: Interview Questions: Associate Teachers

1. Can you please tell me about your professional background and how you became an associate teacher?

2. How long have you been in the position of an associate teacher for the teacher education program?

3. What are your responsibilities in the teacher education program?

4. What do you know about the EIE policy document currently implemented in Ontario public schools?

5. What other regulations, frameworks or initiatives that relate to inclusive education do you follow in your teaching practice?

6. What is your understanding of inclusive education?

7. What knowledge and skills you think an inclusive teacher must have?

8. How, in your opinion, the EIE policy document can support teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom?

9. What are your expectations for pre-service teachers regarding inclusive education?

10. What do you know about how the teacher education program prepares teachers for the inclusive classroom?

11. How well you think that pre-service teachers are ready to practice inclusion in the classroom? Please elaborate.

12. How do you communicate with and provide feedback to the teacher education program regarding the pre-service teachers you supervise?
13. What kind of strategies do you use with the pre-service teachers to prepare
them for an inclusive teaching career?

14. How do you address issues and concerns of inclusive education while working
with the pre-service teachers?

15. Are there any other issues that we have not discussed that you think can
inform and support teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom?
Appendix G: Interview Questions: Program Coordinators

1. Can you please tell me about your professional and academic background?

2. How long have you been involved in the teacher education program?

3. What are your responsibilities in the program?

4. How do you understand your role in the teacher education program regarding developing teachers’ knowledge about inclusion and their capacity to practice inclusive education?

5. How do you understand inclusive education and its significance in teacher education?

6. How do you think the EIE policy document is being put into practice at the teacher education level?

7. In what ways, do you think the teacher education program in this faculty contributes to teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom in Ontario?

8. What organizational strategies do you follow to support teacher preparation for an inclusive teaching practice?

9. In your opinion, what are the challenges in the teacher education program that can impact how well teachers can be prepared for an inclusive teaching practice?

10. To what extent do you think the faculty’s teacher education curriculum reflects the EIE’s principles and its related guidelines?

11. In what ways, do you think the faculty’s teacher education program different resources help or influence teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom?
12. Is there any additional support offered to the teacher candidates, so they can be better prepared to practice in the inclusive classroom?

13. If you were given the chance, what organizational changes would you make to the faculty’s teacher education program to better support teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom?

14. Are there any other issues that we have not discussed that you think can inform and support teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom?
Appendix H: Interview Questions: Pre-service Teachers

1. Can you please tell me about your academic and professional background?

2. How do you understand inclusive education?

3. How do pre-service teachers obtain the skills needed for a successful practice in the inclusive classroom?

4. Are you familiar with the EIE policy document and its related guidelines implemented in the public schools?

5. If so, how did you learn about it?

6. In your opinion, how this strategy can be put into practice in the inclusive classroom?

7. Do you think that the inclusive teaching in Ontario classrooms has been sufficiently addressed in your teacher preparation program? Why or why not?

8. How do you define an inclusive teacher?

9. What skills and knowledge about inclusion you believe the teacher education program has offered you to successfully practice in the inclusive classroom?

10. What challenges, in your opinion, affect teachers’ readiness to practice in the inclusive classroom?

11. How is the practicum preparing you to respond to students’ diversity in the inclusive classroom?

12. How does the teacher education program influence your beliefs about inclusion and the inclusive practices in the classroom?

13. Are there any other issues that we have not discussed that you think can inform and support teacher preparation for the inclusive classroom?
Curriculum Vitae

Ayman Massouti

Education

Doctor of Philosophy in Education Studies, Critical Policy, Equity and Leadership Studies, The University of Western Ontario, Canada, September 2015 - Present.

Master of Arts in Education Studies (transferred from MA to PhD), The University of Western Ontario, Canada, April 2015.

Master of Sciences in Special Education, Abu Dhabi University, United Arab Emirates, June 2013.

Bachelor of Sciences in Biochemistry, Lebanese University, Tripoli, Lebanon, Sep 2003.

Certifications

Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), Registration# 651955.

Western Certificate in University Teaching and Learning, The University of Western Ontario, Teaching Support Centre, June 2015.

Publications

Book reviews


Articles in referred journals


**Presentations at referred conferences**


• Massouti, A. (2017, May). *The role of context in studying the enactment of the Ontario enhanced teacher education program*. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CCGSE session), Toronto, ON.