

AN ABSTRACT IN THE DISSERTATION OF

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Students with educational disabilities are placed into a variety of settings to receive their education. The percentage of students with disabilities being placed in general education classrooms varies across the State of New Hampshire. Educational placement of students appears to be related to the availability of resources and the local district's practice in regard to inclusion rather than being based upon student specific needs (McLeskey, Henry, & Axelrod, 1999). New Hampshire public school principals were recruited to participate in this multilevel mixed methods study. Differences in responses based on principals' geographic or demographic variables were non-significant according to data analysis. Responses indicate that

principal attitude toward inclusion is less positive when considering the inclusion of students with disabilities whose behavior or need for support might disrupt the learning of students without disabilities. Implications for practice include community education on the benefits of inclusion for all students and increased professional development specific to inclusion that focuses on practices that would support the inclusion of students whose disabilities manifest in a manner that could disrupt the learning of others.

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Principal Attitude and Definition of Inclusion:
The Impact on Student Placement in New Hampshire

By

Christine R. Boston

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of
Plymouth State University, Lamson Learning Commons. My signature below
authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Students with educational disabilities are placed into a variety of settings to receive their education. These settings range from a fully inclusive placement in a general education classroom in a public school to fully segregated placements in specialized private schools. For the purposes of this study, full inclusion is defined as all content being delivered in the general education classroom with typical peers, no instruction given in a 1:1 setting away from the group, and micro exclusion is defined as students being removed from the general education setting to receive some instruction. Full exclusion or segregation is defined as students who are removed from the public general education setting fully and receive all instruction in separate in district or private special education schools with no exposure to typical peers (Bentley, 2008; Griffiths, 2015). The United States Department of Education measures placement in three distinct categories; Category A: student is educated inside the regular class 80% or more of the day, Category B: inside the regular class less than 40% of the day, and Category C: educated in separate schools, residential facilities, or homebound/hospital placements. (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Educational placement of students appears to be related to the availability of resources and the local district's practice regarding inclusion rather than being based upon student specific needs. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) data shows that across the United States, students with the same educational profile are more likely to be placed in restrictive or separate programs based on geographical location rather than the category of disability (McLeskey, Henry, & Axlerod, 1999). A

recent (2015) study by Kleinert et al. (2015) noted that across all states, less than three percent of students taking alternate assessments (standardized assessments for students with significant cognitive disabilities) are primarily placed in general education classrooms and only 4.3 percent of these students are placed in resource rooms with the remaining students being educated in separate schools or fully segregated settings. The U.S. Department of Education's 37th Annual Report to Congress (2015) cites the percentage of students with disabilities being placed in regular education settings for more than 80 percent of their school day as occurring in a range from 36 percent (Hawaii) to 83 percent (Alabama). Students with disabilities being educated in separate schools also occurs in a significant range, 0.1 percent in West Virginia to 12.1 percent in Washington DC. Such wide variation between states suggests that placement is driven by something other than student needs.

Inclusion of students with disabilities is mandated both through federal law via the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) and state rules such as the New Hampshire Rules for Students with Disabilities (NH Rules for the Education of Children with Disabilities, 2014). The regulations require that students with disabilities be educated in their least restrictive environment (LRE) with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible.

Research supports that inclusive education with non-disabled students receiving instruction alongside their disabled peers increasing approximately twenty percent over the past ten years. (OSEP, 2005; OSEP, 2015). A review of data from reports prepared by OSEP showed that between 1988 and 1995 public schools increased the number of students included in general education classrooms, in

particular those students identified with learning disabilities (McLeskey et al.,1999).

Studies have been conducted to review outcomes for disabled students educated in general education classrooms and speak to the success of inclusive education for students with disabilities (Buysse, Davis-Goldman, & Skinner, 2002; Kearns, Kleinert, Clayton, Burdge, & Williams, 1998; Fisher & Meyer, 2002;). This includes a 1995 study by Banerji & Dailey which noted inclusion was “at least as effective as the resource model” (p. 513). Sailor and McCart (2014) make the argument that special education in schools is often segregated from general education classrooms and removes students from the general curriculum. Sailor and McCart (2014) also note that special education teachers have less contact with college and career ready standards when they are removed from the general education settings, which further lowers student access and achievement. Students with disabilities achieving at higher rates when in the general education setting was supported by a 2013 study of students with disabilities which found that for each hour in the general education setting students achieved an increase of ½ of a point in reading and .37 in mathematics on standardized assessments (Cosier, Causton-Theoharis, & Theoharis, 2013).

In the area of social competence, Fisher and Meyer (2002) found that student outcomes in inclusive groups were as good or somewhat better than student outcomes in self-contained group particularly in areas of social competence. Research has also shown that there is a positive relationship between expressive communication and a student being placed in an inclusive classroom setting and that inclusive settings allow students with disabilities access to teachers with content area expertise that would

unavailable in segregated settings. For example, a 2004 study in New South Wales looked specifically at engagement and communicative interactions with students identified with profound and multiple disabilities (PMD) (Foreman, Arthur-Kelly, Pascoe, & Smyth-King, 2004). The study found that students with PMD enrolled in general education classrooms were 20 percent more likely to exhibit awake-active-alert behaviors than their similar peers enrolled in special education classrooms. Additionally, students with PMD enrolled in general education classrooms demonstrated increased communicative interactions (49% as opposed to 27% in special classrooms) and the instances of no communication were significantly lower when students with PMD were educated in general education classrooms. This finding has been echoed in more recent research (Kleinert et al., 2015). Students also report favorably regarding inclusive settings for all students. A 2015 qualitative study found both typical and students with disabilities reported favorably about inclusive schools and the students all described a sense of belonging and highly positive school culture (Shogren et al., 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Inclusion is difficult to define. The concept is multifaceted and includes social justice or philosophical underpinnings as well as instructional, academic, and legal considerations. Because of the different layers a simple definition of inclusion is not possible and this creates confusion among practitioners and communities as to what truly makes an environment inclusive. A recent review of the literature determined that there are three distinct categories in which inclusion is defined and viewed as a construct. The first is as an educational placement or geographic location in which

students are educated. Educational placements for students in public preschool and K-12 schools range from all students being educated within the regular education classroom to very separate “co-located” programs which consist of separate classrooms or schools located within public schools (Griffiths, 2015). The second category is that inclusive education also falls within the realm of social justice and has a social equity construct that is inherent within the concept of inclusion (Shyman, 2015). Third is the construct of instructional inclusion. Lessons and instructional strategies must be designed to support a variety of learners attending the same class (Banerji & Dailey, 1995).

A recent article noted that there appears to be a phenomenon within the field of education of misapplying the term inclusion to settings not meeting the definition of inclusion (Cologon, 2015). While many districts promote that inclusive environments are available, it is difficult to determine if the model available in each district implements the three-pronged approach to inclusion (i.e., placement, instructional methodology and social acceptance) or if the placements available are geared to one area only. If district and building leadership is unaware of the multi-pronged inclusion construct, there is a high likelihood that the leader will be unable to clearly articulate and support inclusion to their teachers and staff. The result being limited opportunity for students of different learning abilities.

Purpose of Study

The benefits of inclusion reach beyond the classroom years. A recent survey conducted by Harris Poll, on behalf of the Special Olympic International World Games, demonstrated the impact of knowing a person with disabilities once outside of

the public K-12 school system (The Shriver Report Project, 2015). Findings and conclusions in the study showed a non-disabled person's acceptance of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities increased when the typical person was directly exposed to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (The Shriver Report Snapshot, 2015). This suggests that inclusion results not only in expanded opportunity while in school, but expanded employment opportunity due to positive attitudes toward persons with disabilities once out of school.

Inclusive practices in school appear to promote inclusive practices in the community. Respondents to the Special Olympics International World Games Harris Poll who reported they did not know anyone with an intellectual or developmental disability were more likely to respond that children with intellectual disabilities should not be educated with typical children, that adults with intellectual disabilities should not be allowed to vote, and one in five reported that they would not be comfortable hiring someone with a disability (The Shriver Report Snapshot, 2015).

If building leaders do not fully understand inclusion and cannot articulate a clear vision of true inclusion to their protégés (teachers) then the inclusive practices of a building and district become open for misinterpretation and practices will become less inclusive. Additionally, support for teachers including students with significant disabilities in regular education classrooms are potentially reduced if a leader's vision of inclusion is a vision of micro-exclusion, meaning students with disabilities attend specials (art, library, music) with typical peers and are segregated or pulled out for academic core classes such as language arts, reading, science and math. Research points to the positive outcomes for students with and without disabilities receiving

core instruction in an inclusive setting that do not occur when a student is segregated (Kearns et al., 1998; Foreman et al., 2004).

Placement outside of the general education setting (segregation or micro exclusion) results in a lack of exposure to the general educational curriculum. For students with intellectual and developmental disabilities this can lead to Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals of reduced rigor resulting in less connection to grade level standards. The reduction in rigor and lack of direct connection to general education standards and concepts mean that globally exceptional students have a ceiling placed on their outcomes at an early age. When students are placed outside of the general education classroom a decreased exposure to typical peers occurs. The decreased exposure to typical (non-disabled peers) leads to a lower incidence of friendships with typical peers and a lack of generalization of skills to a regular environment. This is due to students learning and practicing new skill in isolation not being able to generalize that skill to other settings (Sapon-Shevin, 2003). Buysse et al. (2002) conducted a study which looked at the impact of placement on friendships in 333 preschool students. The study found that children with disabilities enrolled in child care programs had significantly more reported friends than their peers enrolled in specialized programs. According to the New Jersey Research on Inclusive Education typical peers also serve as optimal models for appropriate behavior and communication (NJICE, 2014) .

Research Question

We know that inclusion has positive impacts on social, communication, and academic development for students with disabilities. We also know that school

principals have multiple definitions of inclusion and their definition becomes the operational definition of inclusion for a given school impacting the placements available to students with disabilities.

A study of school leaders needed to be done to determine school principal's definitions of inclusion and the impact of the leader's definition on student placement at a building level. A determination of the level of correlation between student placement and leader definition was needed to facilitate further expansion of inclusive practices in public schools. It was expected that a building leader's (principal) operational definition of inclusion would become the definition for the teachers of that building thus impacting large numbers of students.

Research Question

What is the relationship between the principal's definition of and attitude toward inclusion and the rate of placement for students with disabilities outside of the general education classroom?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Researchers made great strides in understanding inclusion in the last twenty-five years. It was clear the field of education needed a greater understanding of school principal impact on inclusive practices, however a great deal was known about inclusion as a construct. For the purposes of this study, a school leader was defined as the principal of public elementary, middle, or secondary schools in New Hampshire. This review identified key areas of competency required for school leaders to successfully implement inclusive practices within public schools and included research regarding leader attitude of inclusion for students with disabilities.

Inclusion had many meanings in the field of education. Most often, educators used the term inclusion to refer to the percentage of time a student with disabilities was educated in general education classrooms with non-disabled peers (Griffiths, 2015; Miller, 1996). Another major domain of inclusion was the social relationships between disabled and non-disabled students with non-disabled students viewing disabled students as peers and friends (Miller, 1996; Nilholm & Alm, 2010; Simpican, Leader, Kosciulek, & Leahy, 2015).

In this chapter, the author presents the literature relevant to this study. This review specifically addressed the following areas of public school leadership and inclusion: a) brief history of inclusion, b) definition of inclusion, c) inclusion as placement, d) inclusion as instructional methodology, e) inclusion as social justice, f)

benefit of inclusion for students with disabilities, and g) school principal impact on inclusion.

This literature review focused on inclusion within public school districts in the United States. Searching a combination of the keywords principal, inclusive, and education in Academic Search Premier between the years 1903-2015 yielded 25 potential studies. Databases included in this search were Academic Search Premier, ERIC, PsycArticles, PsycINFO, Social Sciences Full Text, SocINDEX, and Teacher Reference Center. A second search using all databases available and the keywords principal, inclusion, and public school between the years 2000 and 2016 yielded 155 results. Additionally, I conferred with my dissertation chair and other scholars in the field to ensure that the review of literature was comprehensive and inclusive of all pertinent available studies. Abstracts were reviewed and specific studies were selected that either specifically mentioned or referenced leader attitude or impact toward inclusion in the abstract and studies needed to have been conducted in a public school to be relevant to provide a definition of inclusion. A total of 24 abstracts specifically mentioned a leader attitude towards inclusion in the abstract and only nine were empirical studies conducted within a public-school system.

Brief History of Inclusion

Inclusion of students with disabilities was mandated in the United States and New Hampshire through federal law via the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), and state rules such as the New Hampshire Rules for Students with Disabilities (NH Rules for the Education of Children with Disabilities, 2014). The regulations required that students with disabilities be educated in their least restrictive

environment (LRE) with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible.

Inclusion as a construct of placement had its inception in a legal case dating back to 1971. The Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) filed a landmark class action lawsuit, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971), on behalf of mentally retarded students who were either receiving no education or an education excluded from typical (non-disabled) students in private school settings due to their identification as mentally retarded. In its decision, the court noted that the students had been denied equal access without a hearing and had therefore been denied their constitutional rights to due process. This case not only established a student's right to an education but also was the inception of the *Mills v. Board of Education District of Columbia* (1972) case which expanded on the PARC decision to include not only students with mental retardation but all students with disabilities.

Mills v. Board of Education District of Columbia (1972) and *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971) established the right of students with disabilities to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) through Public Law 94-142 which was created in 1975. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 USC §1400 et seq) which established that students have a right to be educated in the least restrictive environment (IDEA, 2004) furthered the idea by legislating that students with disabilities be educated alongside their typical peers "to the maximum extent appropriate" (34 C.F.R. §300.550 (b) (1)).

Definition of Inclusion

While the legislation did not specifically define the term inclusion, Anderson and Boyle (2015) noted that existing policies defined inclusion as the actual physical

location or placement where the child with a disability received services or alternatively an accounting of the percentage of time a student spent with typical peers in the general education setting.

The United States was not the only country concerned with the education of students with disabilities in inclusive environments. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) affirmed the rights of disabled students to be educated with typical peers on several occasions. In 1990, UNESCO held a world conference on education for all in Jomtien, Thailand and in 1994, 117 governments and international organizations convened in Salamanca, Spain to discuss and reaffirm the right of an education to all individuals, resulting in the Salamanca Statement. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) specifically stated that all students had the right to an education in regular schools with the accommodations necessary. The literature also reflected country's differing views on the definition and scope of inclusive practice. Australia's definition of inclusion had expanded from the initial definition being only about students with disabilities to being about a high-quality education for all students (Anderson & Boyle, 2015). The literature described inclusion broadly as being a philosophical stance that supported and advocated for full participation by students with disabilities in school and community (Banerji & Dailey, 1995). This was accomplished by including three distinct components in defining inclusion: placement, instructional methodology, and social justice (Shyman, 2015).

The components Shyman (2015) identified appeared widely in the literature. Themes emerged from studies that supported inclusion as a three-pronged definition: placement, instructional methodology and social acceptance (Koster, Nakken, & Pilj,

2009; Miller, 1996; Nilholm, & Alm, 2010; Ryndak, Jackson, & Billingsley, 2000; Stockall, & Gartin, 2002; Walker, & Webb, 1998).

Regarding inclusion as a placement decision, inclusion was defined as the actual physical location or placement where the child with a disability received services. Alternatively, an accounting of the percentage of time a student spent with typical peers in the general education setting was used as a definition of placement (Bentley, 2008). Legislatively, inclusion was referenced softly in laws and rules. IDEA (2004) stated that students with disabilities would be “educated to the maximum extent appropriate” (34 C.F.R. §300.550 (b) (1)) with students who did not have disabilities and that students with disabilities would only be educated or receive services separate from their peers without disabilities “when the child’s disability is so severe that the curriculum and instruction of the general education classroom cannot be adapted to achieve satisfactory results” (34 C.F.R. §300.550 (b) (2)).

Placement rates identified in IDEA (2004) are monitored and reported annually to OSEP as well as to Congress. Districts and schools are monitored in four distinct categories of placement: 1) students with disabilities who receive special education supports and services in a separate classroom less than 21 percent of the school day 2) students with disabilities who are educated outside of the general education classroom from 21 to 60 percent of the school day, 3) students with disabilities who attend a special class for more than 60 percent of the school day, and 4) students who receive special education instruction and services in a separate school. In the United States, inclusive placement is largely a definition of time away from general education

classrooms rather than a matter of social and instructional belonging (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

There was wide agreement in the literature that social acceptance and peer relations were important components of inclusion (Koster et al., 2009; Ryndak et al., 2000; Stockall & Gartin, 2002) and noted that the student with disabilities' experiences and feelings regarding peer relationships and belonging were important to the definition of inclusion. Nilholm and Alm (2010) determined that classrooms should not be labeled inclusive unless there was data collected from students regarding the experiences of students with disabilities in the setting that supported social and academic inclusion and noted "belonging, membership, and acceptance" (p. 250) of students with disabilities were mandatory to the definition of inclusion.

Inclusion as Placement

Literature suggested that the shift from inclusion as placement to inclusion as a model of social justice occurred in the 1990s to articulate elements of full inclusion that were not spoken to through geographic placement in a regular education classroom (Odom, Buysse, & Soukakou, 2011). Studies also showed that operationally inclusion was defined as the placement students identified as having educational disabilities and placing them in classrooms alongside typical peers. When interviewed about students identified with high functioning autism spectrum disorders, participants assigned importance to the variable of time the student spent in a general education classroom to determine if a child was included (Sansosti & Sansosti, 2012). Artiles, Harris-Murri, and Rostenberg (2006) noted that placement in the regular

education classroom did not automatically create equity in access or participation as a full classroom community member.

The rate of placement of students within a general education classroom varies significantly across the United States. The Office of Special Education Programs provides data annually regarding the placement rates of students with disabilities alongside their typical peers. The most recent report, the 37th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2015), showed that students with disabilities were educated in general education settings for 80 % or more of the day at a rate of 62.1 %. This placement data varied widely across the United States with New Hampshire reporting placement rates of 72.8 percent in the general education setting and two percent of students with disabilities receiving none of their instruction alongside typical peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Students with low incidence or severe disabilities appeared to be most likely to be educated in separate settings, and while overall the inclusion rate has increased, the inclusion rates for low incidence or severe disabilities remain disproportionately low (Kurth, Morningstar, & Kozleski, 2014; Sailor & McCart, 2014). Data showed that students with disabilities identified as Deaf-Blindness or Multiple Disabilities were most likely to be educated in separate environments away from typical peers. Even when educated in public schools, students identified as Deaf-blind or Multiply Disabled were educated outside of the general education classroom for 34.9% and 46.2% respectively (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Kleinert et al. (2015) conducted a recent study and determined states across the United States did not interpret the least restrictive environment similarly for students with significant intellectual disabilities and that students with intellectual disabilities were much less likely to be educated for most of the students' school day in a general education classroom. Additionally, while there was some evidence that the severity of disability informed educational placement, there were differences at a state level that could not be directly attributed to student needs. For example, across all states, there was a less than three percent rate of students taking alternate assessments being primarily placed in general education classrooms while only 4.3% were placed in resource rooms. There also appeared to be a negative correlation between the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and increasingly inclusive settings (Kleinert et al., 2015).

Inclusion as Instructional Methodology

One consideration in inclusive instructional design reflected in the literature involved multiple methods of communication (Kearns et al., 1998), which required multiple ways for students to access content. Morningstar, Shogren, Lee, and Born (2015) found that across schools, instructional supports for inclusive education included: Universal Design for Learning (UDL), embedded classroom behavioral supports, adaptations and modifications to curriculum content, and teachers planning in a way that provided multiple ways to access instructional content (at least two instances per 38 minutes of observation time over 65 classrooms). In 2005, a study conducted by Titone found that teachers who were successful with inclusion had developed a level of self-efficacy that allowed the participant to believe in competence

to teach all children. Titone (2005) posited teachers must be able to determine when curriculum was not engaging or working for students and that skill was often not present in general education teachers. Participants also spoke to a need for time to collaborate on instruction by identifying that adaptations of curriculum should not be done in isolation but in collaboration with the rest of the educational community (Titone, 2005).

McLesky, Waldron, and Redd (2014) identified themes that emerged from a case study of an elementary school and determined that successful inclusive schools included instructional quality assurance to meet the needs of all students and the provision of high quality instruction in general education classrooms. Teachers in the study noted that students in separate programs or classrooms were not subject to instructional pacing or pushed academically (McLesky, Waldron, & Redd, 2014).

Riehl (2000) found a need for instructional methods to create necessary organizational structures that facilitated inclusion in schools; project based learning, smaller schools, smaller class sizes, and innovative teaching practices that increased collaboration among staff. Riehl also noted that school principals had influence over inclusive instructional methodology indirectly by supporting teachers to establish goals, locating resources and changing organizational structures (Riehl, 2000). This influence was particularly important, as teachers did not receive adequate training in pre-service programs regarding inclusion practices. In 2013, Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, and Hudson conducted a study of 109 elementary education teacher prep programs. They found a minimal allocation of coursework relating to inclusion practices in teacher preparation programs. While it was widely recognized that teachers should

have knowledge regarding disability characteristics, differentiating instruction to meet diverse learners, effective classroom management, and collaboration skills, only 7 credit hours on the average were devoted to coursework related to these categories (Allday, Neilsen-Gatti, & Hudson, 2013).

Inclusion as Social Justice

Inclusion is based on the belief that education is a fundamental human right and all students should be educated in schools in their communities (UNESCO, 1994; UNESCO, 2001). Existing literature identified a social model of disability was needed to avoid trying to fit students into schools with curriculum, teachers and instruction that was ill suited to exceptional students (Sakiz & Woods, 2015). Research identified that the use of the word inclusion started in the early 1990s and was spurred by a shift in belief that inclusion went beyond geographic placement and included social components such as membership in a classroom or peer group, community, and society (Odom et al., 2011). Simplican et al., (2015) defined social inclusion as ‘interaction between two major life domains: interpersonal relationships and community participation’ (p.18). Inclusion also has a legal basis as well as being rooted in best practices and ethically and morally sound (Van Dyke & Stallings, 1995).

A study conducted by Sansosti & Sansosti in 2012 found that educators in inclusive settings noted typical peers needed to recognize the disabled student as their peer and classmate to define a placement as inclusive. Classmates had a specific impact on students with disabilities and therefore had a unique responsibility for creating democracy and for making classroom culture more inclusive than their

predecessors (Sansosti & Sansosti, 2012). Inclusive communities recognized diversity and did not exclude, but sought to include and discuss diversity and evolution to culture and climate and schools were uniquely situated to practice and encourage diversity among students (Calabrese and Barton, 1994; Sapon-Shevin, 2011).

The literature also spoke to resource allocation as a concern of equity and fairness among teachers and administrators. Historical special education models, separate or co-located programs, facilitated a separate and unequal system of education for exceptional students. Determinations regarding placement of exceptional students was fundamentally linked to rights and ethics due to the long reaching impact of segregation and inclusion (UNESCO, 1994; UNESCO, 2001; VanDyke & Stallings, 1995). Literature spoke to differing views of inclusion as a social justice construct (Artiles et al, 2006). Artiles et al. (2006) noted differences included an individual or community perspective, as well as differences in how resources should be distributed: merit or needs based. Schools as organizations were generally based on merit with success or failure attributed to the individual student (Wiebe-Berry, 2008). A paradigm shift in thinking to a community view where resource allocation was assigned to benefit the entire school rather than a select few promoted a socially just inclusive environment (Artiles et al., 2006). In a caring school, it was acceptable to implement a need based system of distributive justice. Those with more need would receive a higher allocation at a level where the entire school experienced benefit.

This method of resource allocation ultimately provided students with disabilities the support they needed while ensuring that students with disabilities were

only as special as necessary (Artiles et al., 2006; DeMatthews, 2015). Wiebe-Berry studied teacher concern regarding fairness in 2008. Findings appeared to point to teachers new to the field having a general negative view towards inclusion. Wiebe-Berry (2008) proposed employing a system that stretched teachers' definitions of fairness to include needs-based fairness to facilitate a broader definition and increased positive belief of inclusion. Existing policies reinforced the notion that students with disabilities must earn placement to least restrictive settings by making progress on performance rather than being afforded equal access to inclusive settings as typical peers (Ryndak et al., 2014). Teachers' believed that accommodations and modifications for exceptional students provided an unfair advantage. Additionally, the study determined that teachers who felt positively toward inclusion were generally less worried about the concept of fairness in an inclusive classroom (Wiebe-Berry, 2008).

Administrators played a key role in the leadership of an inclusive socially just school. A case study conducted by DeMatthews in 2015 identified the definition of inclusion as inherently political, as there was a direct link to how resources in a school or district were distributed as well as how a district or community valued diversity and equity. The study attributed social justice leadership to leader understanding about the inequities that existed within the system. Social justice leadership transcended a traditional management model and sought to distribute resources in such a way that all students got what they needed (DeMatthews, 2015). As such, leaders needed to be prepared to take an active political/advocacy role in addition to their role as managers and instructional leaders (Shyman, 2015).

A review of the literature demonstrated that schools were, in part, a creation of collective meaning and values by those who worked within the physical plant of the building and simply changing the physical structure would not change the inclusive practices of a building. Rather, a principal had to change the collective meaning and values of the individuals who worked within the building. Principals could do several things to influence meaning within an organization. Daily attention to meaning reflection during management meetings, organizational celebrations, routines, and the facilitation of community discussion were opportunities to shift meaning and increase influence that would create the changes in values required for new inclusive practices to be sustainable (Riehl, 2000).

Benefits of Inclusion

Research demonstrated that inclusive programming was as effective or more effective than traditional pull out or separate programming for students with disabilities, particularly those students with mild disabilities (Artiles et al., 2006; Fisher & Meyer, 2002). The literature spoke directly to students with disabilities being historically underserved in separate programs away from typical peers that resulted in low accountability for learning goals and diminished access to general curriculum (Kearns et al., 1998).

A 1995 study found three distinct themes among students with specific learning disabilities being educated in inclusive environments. Students did not stand out or appear different than typical students, demonstrated improved self-esteem and academic gain, and formed a community of learners that was supportive and allowed them to learn from one another (Banerji & Dailey, 1995; Cosier et al., 2013).

One specific positive outcome was the social progress made for students with disabilities. Research showed that segregation did not improve outcomes for exceptional students and that there were positive social and community implications for all students, typical and exceptional, educated in an inclusive program. (Artiles et al., 2006; Buysse et al., 2002; Fisher & Meyer, 2002). A 1991 study by Salisbury found that segregated programs and integrated programs were still less desirable than full inclusion due to a perceived lack of classroom membership by educators and typical students. This was due to the perception that exceptional students were being permitted to participate rather than entitled to classroom participation and membership.

More recent studies have shown that students with disabilities had more meaningful social relationships with classmates when treated similarly to typical students (Kozleski, Yu, Satter, Francis, and Haines, 2015) and schools identified a link between inclusion and increased educational outcomes for all students, but particularly for students with disabilities, as the inclusion increased access to general curriculum (Kearns et al., 1998). Studies also determined that inclusive practices contributed positively to typical students' attitudes and beliefs about exceptional peers and these experiences provided an opportunity to create positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities which had an impact later in life (Odom et al., 2011; Shyman, 2015). This opportunity extended as early as preschool programming. A 2002 quantitative study to determine the impact of setting on friendship development determined exceptional preschool students in inclusive settings had similar numbers of friends as their typical peers (Buysse et al., 2002).

Principal Impact on Inclusion

Limited information regarding to principal attitude regarding inclusive programming in public schools was available in the existing literature. Yan and Sin (2015) noted principal attitude and belief was underrepresented in existing studies. Within the existing literature, themes emerged about leader impact and competence. Themes included; principal definition of inclusion, principal attitudes and beliefs, political influence, resource allocation, hiring and support for teacher efficacy including professional development.

Principal definition of inclusion. As discussed earlier, inclusion had multiple meanings that emerged in three distinct constructs; social justice, placement, and instructional methodology or pedagogy. Kozleski et al. (2015) determined that school principals defined and implemented inclusion in different ways and this difference was generally reflective of the principals' personal beliefs regarding inclusion. This was important as principals with an inaccurate or limited definition of inclusion were positioned to influence a wide range of stakeholders in a potentially negative way toward inclusive programming. Principals often did not recognize how they influenced buildings and programming making it hard to control for personal bias and philosophies (Riehl, 2000).

Brotherson, Sheriff, Milburn and Shertz (2001) sought to determine principal needs regarding inclusive early childhood programs and found that principals failed to identify peer relationships and friendships as a key inclusion outcome. Principals also deemed several issues outside of their locus of control. A lack of resources, funding, and lack of common planning time were specified by the principals as problematic

though none of the principals in the study discussed actively attempted to schedule to provide common planning time among staff. Principals tended to see these things as something outside of their influence. A related study specific to social justice leadership echoed those findings and determined the principals' understanding of IDEA and how IDEA implementation could be influenced by a variety of forces was an essential skill needed by school principals. (DeMatthews, 2015).

Principal influence and attitude. The building principal was situated to influence a wide range of stakeholders both within the school and in the broader community. Programs were impacted by principal commitment to inclusion and the value practitioners believe inclusion brought to educational programming. This included school culture as including all students, particularly traditionally underserved populations (Salisbury, 1991). A 1999 study conducted by Cook, Semmel, and Gerber found principal attitude toward inclusion was highly influential upon building specific interpretation of policy and implementation as well as day to day operational contexts.

Positive leader attitude towards inclusion may lead to a leader being more open to educating students with disabilities in general education programs (Urton, Wilbert, & Henneman, 2014). Additionally, research determined that principals who believed autistic children could be included were more likely to recommend greater inclusion in the general education environment (Horrocks, White, & Roberts, 2008; Van Dyke & Stallings, 1995).

Inclusive program implementation required the principal to recognize and harness political and social justice influence to address inequities in policies, programs and access that impacted traditionally underserved individuals with a disability

(Artiles et al., 2006). In 2004 Marshall and Ward looked at key persons in positions of influence at national organizations such as the American Association of Secondary School Principals (AASSP), National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to determine policy maker perception of social justice needs. Respondents acknowledged that social justice issues in schools need to be addressed but also identified specific barriers to administrators working on issues of social justice (Marshall & Ward, 2004). These barriers included policy, the controversy surrounding such issues, and the lack of preparation for administrators as social justice leaders (Marshall & Ward, 2004).

Research specific to the principal role in creating inclusive schools found principals were not immediately thought of as the leader of social changes needed in institutions and often were in the position of maintaining a socially unjust status quo under the guise of tolerance (Brotherson, et al., 2001). Schools were focused on compliance rather than the work of shifting paradigms (Riehl, 2000) and the work of shifting the paradigm came with conflict as the focus shifted from maintaining the status quo to social change.

Theoharis (2010) conducted a study specific to principal advancement of social justice in schools. Principals gave feedback specific to skills required by a principal for equity promotion (Theoharis, 2010). Theoharis (2010) also identified that in social justice several skills on the part of the principal were required; breaking the silence, believing equity was possible, inclusion being a necessity for all students, staff development as a tool to increase equity, trusting and empowering staff, and “a sense of never being satisfied” (p.367) on the part of the principal became emerging themes

of principal competency in this study. Principals identified resistance to social justice initiatives as coming from the school and the community as being a large obstruction requiring much of their mental energy (Theoharis, 2010).

Principal resource allocation. Principal attitude and belief had a direct impact on how fiscal and human resources were allocated in a school (Brotherson, et al., 2001; Odom et al., 2001; Cook et al., 1999). Participants in a 2001 study regarding the needs of early childhood inclusive programs, identified principals were charged with resource allocation, training, and creating a building culture that was positive toward inclusion (Brotherson et al., 2001). Principals commonly believed inclusive programs were more expensive than separate or co-located programs though an analysis of cost demonstrated that inclusive programs were generally at the same cost or lower cost than their segregated counterparts (Odom et al., 2011). Cook et al. (1999) determined principals demonstrated a low commitment to protecting resources (human and fiscal) when educating students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Principals who did not truly understand inclusion made inappropriate reductions or reallocated resources as they viewed inclusion to reduce fiscal expenditures for students with disabilities.

According to DeMatthews (2015) schools that sought to become inclusive must allocate resources and embrace values and equity that supported the larger community to collaborate in the removal of procedures and structural systems that marginalize diverse students. Wiebe-Berry (2008) noted the notion of fairness and the distribution rules of an organization. Principals of schools typically assigned the allocation of resources. Two areas of further inquiry that appeared in the research were the distribution rules a leader subscribed to and how distribution of resources was

provided via policy or protocol for a school. This was suspected to have an impact on the resourcing (human or provisioning) to an inclusive program.

Principal support for pro-inclusion scheduling. The resource of collaborative time emerged as a construct important to the success of inclusive programming. Sakiz and Woods (2015) found that inclusion depended upon the conditions that existed in a specific school. In one study (Fritz & Miller, 1995) essential to inclusive programming was the principal supporting teachers in collaboration. The support of the principal included scheduling and common planning time between regular and special education staff. Banerji and Dailey (1995) had similar findings and noted that a critical component of inclusive programming was collaborative teaching. A decade later (Titone, 2005) study participants responded that collaboration and teaming were important component to inclusive schools and that principals could support them by creating schedules, spaces, and cultures that supported time for practitioners to collaborate and talk.

Principal development of self-efficacy in teachers. Principals also had influence over the hiring and retention of new staff, teacher attitude, efficacy, and professional development (Urton et al.,2014). Studies determined that educator beliefs and attitude had a direct impact on implementing inclusive programs (Salisbury, 1991; Sakiz & Woods, 2015; Urton et al. 2014). Educators who were not supportive of inclusive programming negatively impacted implementation in their classroom (Wiebe-Berry, 2008).

Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, and Malone (2006) determined that educators who felt strongly that they could manage instructional tasks as well as organizational

and social interactions created increased morale for the entire building. This sense of self-efficacy was particularly important to the success of inclusive programming. Chu (2013) found that teachers with high personal efficacy appeared to have an internal locus of control and saw themselves as capable of reaching classroom/instructional goals. Teachers with an external locus of control had lower confidence in their ability and felt students are less likely to be impacted by another teacher. Ruth Berry conducted extensive research in teacher attitude and inclusive programming. Berry (2010) identified that teachers who did not agree with or have positive attitudes towards inclusion would demonstrate that negative attitude to students in the classroom. Berry (2010) recommended teachers participate in exclusion experiences to increase skills, self-efficacy and ultimately positive attitude toward inclusion as well as schools identifying available resources and instructional practices that were effective for all students. In studies specific to the principal role in creating an inclusive school, hiring and retaining of quality staff were identified both as a need (Brotherson et al., 2001) and a specific skill set held by the principal that positively impacted inclusive programming and inclusive philosophy within a school (Riehl, 2000).

In several studies (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Davern et al., 1997; Kozleski et al., 2015) teachers noted that when principals were involved in classroom activities as well as district wide activities, teachers felt supported and empowered to try and work with inclusive programming. There was an overall sense that teachers and leaders were in the endeavor together (Kozleski et al., 2015). Teachers in a study conducted by Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) identified that principals were

integral in providing support and professional development to teachers and that the provision of that support positively influenced teacher attitude about inclusion. Studies also determined that in successful inclusive settings, principals gave clear and consistent messages to staff regarding the expectations of accommodations for all students and principals provided teachers an opportunity to participate in the change process (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Brotherson et al., 2001; Calabrese & Barton, 1994; Davern et al., 1997; Kozleski et al., 2015; Riehl, 2000).

Principal support for collaboration between staff. Collaboration across staff was a key component of successful inclusion programs. Titone (2005) noted that collaboration was an essential component of enhancing teacher inclusive practice. This collaboration was especially important between regular and special education teachers sharing responsibility for the education of students with disabilities. Study participants reported that a stance of inquiry on the part of the teacher facilitated moving beyond the fear of what might not work when working with students with disabilities (Titone, 2005). Principals in this study noted that support for teachers to redefine roles in the classroom was important to student success and participants cited that teachers needed to be willing to have discourse openly (Titone, 2005). School principals were identified as a key component in supporting the necessary collaborative dialogue (Titone, 2005).

Creating capacity at a community level. Banerji and Dailey (1995) identified family and community involvement as a critical component to inclusive programming in a school. Kozleski et al., (2015) found in successful inclusive programs, principals thoughtfully and intentionally developed relationships with not only their staff, but

also the district and larger community to build capacity for inclusive programming. Riehl (2000) determined effective principals recognize community and school connectedness and work to develop and leverage those relationships and principals should develop services that are integrated within a school community and should monitor these organizational relationships to ensure integrated service delivery models.

Conclusion

The placement of students with disabilities varied widely across the United States as did the definition of inclusion. While research supported a multi-pronged definition and the increased inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings, it was clear that the rate of inclusion was slower for students with moderate to severe disabilities.

Multiple issues impacted the placement and inclusion of students with disabilities including resource allocation, teacher preparation, community support, and leadership. The school principal could influence all the aforementioned categories and the principal's definition of inclusion became the default definition for a school. Thus, it was important to understand the relationship between principal definition and the placement of students with disabilities in and outside of general education classrooms.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between school principals' definition of and attitude towards inclusion and the placement of students with disabilities in general education settings. This study specifically sought to answer the following research question: What is the relationship between the principal's definition of and attitude toward inclusion and the rate of placement for students with disabilities outside of the general education classroom?

To answer the question, this study employed mixed methods. A multilevel mixed methods design was used (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). First a quantitative study of principal definition and inclusion practice data was conducted at a whole state level. An adapted version of The Principals Attitude Toward Inclusive Education (PATIE; Bailey, 2004.) survey collected data on principal attitude and definition of inclusion as well as demographic data. At the same time, an analysis of cumulative placement rate data in New Hampshire was conducted to determine the rate of student placement with disabilities in each geographic region of New Hampshire. Relative high and low placement rates were identified for five geographic regions of New Hampshire: North Country, South West, South Central, South East, and the Lakes Region. Next, qualitative interviews at a district level with select principals representing the high and low placement rates for each of the five regions were undertaken to validate findings and explore areas of further research identified in the descriptive statistics analysis of survey data (Bailey, 2004). Interview questions explored principals' attitudes and definitions and how inclusion was implemented in

their specific schools. Priority emphasis was given to qualitative data as the interviews provided in-depth information that explained and elaborated upon the quantitative findings (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007).

Mixed methods are a preferred methodology when the qualitative data can be enhanced using quantitative data to answer research questions (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). As this study sought to determine the relationship between principal definition of inclusion and placement rates for students with disabilities using quantitative data to identify participants for in-depth interviews was useful. The mixed methods approach offered a more complete understanding of the area of research. The use of mixed methods compensated for weaknesses in quantitative data in terms of context and setting as well as allowing the results to be generalized to a larger group (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007).

Specifically, this study utilized what Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) referred to as a multilevel mixed design to respond to the hierarchical nature of principals, school districts, and state education agencies. An explanatory approach was used to explain results in-depth from a quantitative perspective and to lend voice to the participants who comprise the quantitative data (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Qualitative data from the interviews provided deeper information regarding principals' thinking and approach to placement of students with disabilities and how principals reflected on their own ideas about inclusion and the education of people with disabilities. This research question related to the how (How do principals define inclusion?) and what (What impact does this definition have on placement of students with disabilities?)

which made a multi strand sequential design optimal to respond to the research questions.

Replication Study

The first phase of data collection was a replication study of the initial validation of the PATIE (Bailey, 2004). The initial development and validation of this 30-item attitudinal scale was conducted in Australia in 2004 (Bailey, 2004). The development of the scale stemmed from increasing parent and educator emphasis on inclusive education for students. The initial validation study yielded 644 responses and ultimately five factors: teacher workload and management, inclusion benefits and level of disability, learning challenges in inclusive education, excluded students, and professional training (Bailey, 2004).

Instrumentation. The PATIE (Bailey, 2004) has been used in numerous studies since its validation and the survey contains 30 items that utilize Likert responses on a scale from one through five or strongly disagree to strongly agree. The PATIE was adapted by adding an additional five survey questions, developed by the researcher, which were specifically designed to determine participant definition of inclusive education. Survey questions were developed through a comprehensive literature review and were categorized in five strands: social relationships, monitoring inclusive practices, pedagogy, hiring, and social justice leadership. Participants were also asked to identify the geographic region of the state in which their school is located (North Country, South West, South East, South Central, and Lakes Region) based on the breakdown of the geographic areas delineated by the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE, n.d.). The survey was administered via Qualtrics

software and informed consent information was embedded within the survey with an affirmative response required to continue with survey administration. The survey administration window was open from November 8, 2016 through December 6, 2016.

Participants. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants as it allowed for the identification of participants specific to the research questions. There was one population for this study: public school principals serving elementary, middle, and high schools in New Hampshire. Survey distribution targeted 422 participants identified using the New Hampshire Department of Education Public Schools Directory, and focused on demographic data such as the age and education level of the participant as well as attitudes and values regarding inclusive education in public schools.

The NHDOE maintains a list of all public-school principals in New Hampshire as well as contact information. Each principal assigned to a K-12 public school (n=422) in New Hampshire was contacted by email with a letter explaining the study and inviting the principal to participate in the quantitative survey. The letter also included contact information for the researcher regarding questions about the study. All participants were assured that participation was voluntary and all responses and collected data would be secured in a secure database to ensure confidentiality. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Analysis. Quantitative data was summarized and presented through descriptive statistics including correlations and a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to demonstrate areas of significance and strength between variables (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Data was also validated through descriptive statistics reports in

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS; IBM Corp., 2016). Data was reviewed for missing items and responses and Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the remaining items in the data set to determine the level of inter-item consistency. A confirmatory factor analysis was run to determine if the five factors in the initial validation study (Bailey, 2004) were present in the data obtained from the New Hampshire public school principals.

Cumulative Placement Rate Study

An analysis of cumulative placement rate data in New Hampshire was conducted to determine the rate of student placement with disabilities in each geographic region of New Hampshire. Relative high and low placement rates for students placed at least 80% in general education classrooms were identified for five geographic regions of New Hampshire: North Country, South West, South Central, South East, and the Lakes Region.

Instrumentation. OSEP in Washington D.C. annually collects data identifying the rate of students with disabilities being educated in general education settings alongside non-disabled peers. The rate of placement in the general education setting for students with disabilities was determined through data collected by NHDOE and reported on school district data profiles annually. This data was reported in three categories: those students with disabilities being educated for 80% or more of their day alongside non-disabled peers; those students with disabilities being educated in regular education settings less than 40% of their day; and those students with disabilities who were placed in separate schools, hospital or home-bound settings. The

most recent New Hampshire School District Data Profiles from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015 were utilized for this study.

Participants. Participants included all public-school districts in New Hampshire (n=97).

Analysis. The rate of placement in the general education setting for students with disabilities was determined through data collected by the NHDOE and reported on school district data profiles annually. Specifically, the percentage of students with disabilities educated in general education classrooms for 80% of the day or more and the percentage of students educated less than 40% of their day in a general education setting were identified. The relative high and low percentage of inclusion was identified for five geographic regions of New Hampshire: North Country, South Central, South West, South East, and the Lakes Region. Participants' in the first phase were asked to identify the geographic area in which their school was located during the survey administration so that the survey responses could be compared to the placement rate data for each county and region. An analysis of the cumulative placement rates for each public-school district in New Hampshire was conducted with those districts demonstrating high and low placement rates; being selected, resulting in seven semi-structured interviews.

Qualitative Interviews

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) noted that quantitative questionnaires combined with qualitative interviews are complementary strategies that compensate for inherent weaknesses. The qualitative data was obtained through focused interviews with selected participants.

Instrumentation and participant selection. Based on responses during the analysis of the cumulative placement rate data, ten public school sites were selected across the New Hampshire to represent five geographic regions (North Country, Lakes Region, South Central, South East, South West). Seven public school principals participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews based upon relative high and low percentage of inclusive placement for each geographic region. Questions in the interview phase allowed for in-depth discussion and follow-up questions. Interview questions were developed through a comprehensive literature review and were categorized into five strands: social relationships, monitoring inclusive practices, pedagogy, hiring, and social justice leadership (see Appendix C for interview guide).

Participants were provided a form (Appendix D) to provide informed consent and provisions regarding privacy of information were included in the consent form. Interviews were conducted at the convenience (i.e., time and location) of the participant and moved through a continuum of unstructured to structured approach. An unstructured format was initially used to develop rapport with the participant, the interview then progressed through a general interview guide, and finally the interview concluded after a semi-structured open-ended question approach to address portions of the research questions not already addressed (Teddlie & Teddlie, 2009).

Questions asked during the semi-structured interview related to the five emerging themes from the literature review and include demographics, distributive justice, social relationships, monitoring inclusive practices, craft, and social justice leadership. This qualitative phase explored placement rates and principal definition

and attitude toward inclusion at seven public schools in different geographic areas of New Hampshire and built upon and explained initial quantitative results.

During the interview process, text data including interviews was recorded. Audio and interview transcriptions were secured in a password-protected file on the researcher's personal computer. Recordings were later transcribed and analyzed for emerging themes (Patton, 2015).

Analysis. Data obtained through the qualitative interview strand was iterative using procedures of theme development. The thematic analysis used in vivo coding and a hand coding process to note in vivo codes and record broader themes. Transcripts were analyzed in four stages applying the constant comparative approach to develop a theory regarding principal definition and inclusive placements. In the first stage, incidents were compared against each other to determine the appropriate category. The second phase integrated categories, phase three delimited theories by reducing the larger list of themes to a smaller set of themes and finally smaller set of categories relating to principal definition and impact on placement of student disabilities emerged (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

This data was then reviewed with the PATIE data to determine the relationship between positive principal attitude, principal definition, and inclusive practice on a regional level in New Hampshire. Specifically, PATIE responses were compared to interview responses to determine areas of consistency and disagreement as well as to capture emerging themes relating to the principal definition and attitude toward inclusion. Item and interview question responses were also combined and reviewed for

response agreement or disagreement with the three-pronged definition (social justice, pedagogy, placement) that emerged from the review of the literature.

Data Management and Analysis

In sequential designs the first database of information serves to “inform the next strand of the design” (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007, p.135). In this case, as the qualitative interview phase followed the quantitative survey and analysis of cumulative placement rate data. Data from the first quantitative phase were analyzed and reviewed for statistical similarity, difference, and extreme (outlier) cases. Quantitative data were summarized and presented through descriptive statistics including correlations to demonstrate areas of significance and strength between variables (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This data was used to inform questions and areas of further research that needed to be addressed during the qualitative interviews.

Data obtained through the qualitative interview strand were analyzed using iterative procedures of theme development. The thematic analysis used in vivo coding and a hand coding process to note in vivo codes and record broader themes. Transcripts were analyzed in four stages applying the constant comparative approach to develop a theory regarding principal definition and inclusive placements. In the first stage, incidents were compared against each other to determine the appropriate category. The second phase integrated categories, phase three delimited theories by reducing the larger list of themes to a smaller set of themes and finally a smaller set of categories relating to principal definition and impact on placement of student disabilities emerged (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Validity

The use of the PATIE in conjunction with the interviews allowed for triangulation and validation of the data obtained in both the quantitative and qualitative phases (Bailey, 2004). Additionally, data were validated through the multiple sources of data in each phase across the geographic regions of New Hampshire. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) data quality can be assessed a variety of ways. For the purposes of this study, data were assessed by checking for researcher effects and triangulating the data. Additionally, data were analyzed for outliers, extreme cases, and negative evidence. Representativeness of participants was ensured through sampling a large number of participants (n=422) and reviewing placement rate data for negative or extreme cases (Miles et al., 2014). The survey was distributed to 422 NH public school principals, resulting in a total of 89 responses for a response rate of 21%.

Researcher Bias

As a special education administrator and inclusion practitioner, I strongly believe that inclusive practices benefit students with exceptionalities as well as neuro-typical students and that students with severe disabilities are disproportionately removed from general education classroom settings due to a lack of teacher and administrator experience with inclusive education. It was important for me to keep these biases in mind as I conducted the study to avoid preemptively determining themes and codes.

Patton (2015) identified the concept of “empathic neutrality” (Patton, 2015, p. 57) as a place where the researcher is appropriately engaged but not too involved with

the subject or in a place where objectivity is lost. It allows the researcher to build rapport and trust while maintaining an objective stance with conscious knowledge on the part of the researcher of personal bias. As a researcher, I participated in what Patton (2015) refers to as reflexivity to support my owning of my own perspective and bias as it related to the research questions in this study. This triangulated inquiry included researcher cognition regarding participant perspective, researcher perspective and the perspective of the reader and audience of the study (Patton, 2015).

During data collection and analysis, I focused on asking open-ended questions, and reviewed the emerging data in an open and reflective manner. I also maintained field logs during this study. After each interview, I recorded notes and observations making sure to separate my own judgments from the actual data of the interview. This allowed me to use journal notes to help track the evolution of the process through observable reflections that assist me in ensuring that I did not preemptively make decisions or determinations regarding emerging data. The use of field notes after each interview supported me in reflecting on my own experiences and thoughts after each interview. Whenever possible, I also engaged in dialogue with my advisor regarding the interviews to purposely examine my own bias and how this might impact the results of the study.

Triangulation

Inferences and findings in this study were made stronger through the mixed methods tradition. Miles et al. (2014) identified four methods of triangulation: data source, method, researcher, and data type. Triangulation of the data was accomplished through two of these methods; method and data type.

Qualitative data gathered from interviews was compared with quantitative data obtained from the survey and analysis of cumulative placement data to determine areas of consistency and inconsistency. Areas of inconsistency or non-representativeness were analyzed to determine explanations for the differences. Specifically, interview responses regarding placement of students with disabilities was compared to cumulative placement rate data to compare the actual level of inclusion to the principals' report of the inclusion rate.

The use of methods triangulation allowed me to compare survey responses to interview responses for consistency and validity. This permitted me to look for areas of difference and similarity among principals regarding attitude and definition of inclusion. Multiple sources across the state of New Hampshire also allowed for source triangulation across survey and interview findings by highlighting areas of agreement and disagreement in the data (Miles et al., 2014). Key questions in the survey were asked during the interviews and data was reviewed for responses that were different or unexpected as well as those responses that were inconsistent with survey responses.

Summary

The goal of this study was to develop a better understanding of the impact of principal attitude and definition of inclusion on student placement in New Hampshire public schools. The mixed methods methodology allowed me to generate data across a broad group of participants (n=422) while also allowing a deeper understanding of principal attitude and definition impact on student placement through structured interviews on a smaller scale.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between school principals' definition of and attitude towards inclusion and the placement of students with disabilities in general education settings. This study specifically sought to answer the following research question: What is the relationship between the principal's definition of and attitude toward inclusion and the rate of placement for students with disabilities outside of the general education classroom?

To answer the question, this study employed mixed methods. A multi-level mixed methods design was used (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). First a quantitative study of principal definition and inclusion practice was conducted at a state level using a 35-item affective scale (30 items from the PATIE and five items developed by the researcher). The scale collected data on principal attitude and definition of inclusion as well as demographic data. Simultaneously, an analysis of cumulative placement rate data in New Hampshire was conducted to determine the rate of student placement with disabilities in each geographic region of New Hampshire. Relative high and low placement rates were identified for the five geographic regions of New Hampshire: North Country, South West, South Central, South East, and the Lakes Region. Next, qualitative interviews at a district level with select principals representing the high and low placement rates for each of the five regions were undertaken to validate survey findings and explore areas of further research identified in the descriptive statistics analysis of the PATIE data. Interview questions explored principals' attitude, definition of, and how inclusion was implemented in their specific schools.

Replication Study

Phase one was a replication study of the initial validation of the PATIE (Bailey, 2004). The development of the scale stemmed from increasing parent and educator emphasis on inclusive education for students. The initial validation study conducted by Bailey in 2004 yielded 644 responses and ultimately five factors.

Instrumentation. Participants were asked to address questions through the PATIE (Bailey, 2004). Additional survey questions developed by the researcher specifically for this study were asked to determine participant understanding of inclusive education. Survey questions were developed through a comprehensive literature review and were categorized in 5 strands: social relationships, monitoring inclusive practices, pedagogy, hiring, and social justice leadership. Participants were also asked to identify the geographic region of the state in which their school is located (North Country, South West, South East, South Central, and Lakes Region) based on the breakdown of the geographic areas delineated by the New Hampshire Department of Education.

Participants. This study sought to explore public school principals' attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure the participants fit this characteristic. There was one population for this study: public school principals serving elementary, middle and high schools in New Hampshire. Survey distribution targeted 422 participants identified by the New Hampshire Department of Education Public Schools Directory, demographic data such as the age and education level of the participant, as well as attitudes and values regarding inclusive education in public schools were collected.

Analysis. Quantitative data was summarized and presented through descriptive and inferential statistics including correlations to demonstrate areas of significance and strength between variables (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p.258). Data was also validated through descriptive statistics reports in SPSS (IBM Corp., 2016). Data was reviewed for missing items and responses and Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for the remaining items in the data set to determine the level of inter-item consistency. A confirmatory factor analysis was run to determine if the five factors in the initial validation study (Bailey, 2004) were present in the data obtained from the New Hampshire public school principals.

The process of data analysis for the PATIE mirrored the process used by Bailey (2004) in his initial validation study in Australia in 2004. The initial data validation was to run descriptive statistics reports from SPSS (IBM Corp., 2016). Prior to this, all values for negatively worded items were recoded with higher scores indicating a more positive response to the item. As with the 2004 study by Bailey, 17 items were worded negatively, with the strongly agree response oriented to a negative attitude of inclusion by the participant. While negatively worded items can be confusing to children, the participation sample in this survey administration only included adult participants negating any concern about understanding.

Demographic Statistics

Sample size. The available population was 422 New Hampshire public school principals. Through the recruitment process described in Chapter 3, sample size resulted in 89 participants contributing useable data for survey responses, resulting in a response rate of 21 percent.

Demographics

Type of school. Participants were asked to identify the grade range of the school that they were assigned as a principal at the time of the study. Of the 89 participants, 78 provided this information. As seen in Table 4.1, just over 50% of participants were assigned in an elementary school setting.

Table 4.1.

School Assignments of Participants

Type of school	N	%
Elementary	45	50.6
Middle School	12	13.5
High School	4	4.5
K-8	12	13.5
Other	5	5.6
Total	78	87.7

Note. Total percentage may not equal 100 % due to non-response

Region in which school is located. Participants were asked to identify the region of NH in which their school is located. Of the 89 participants, 78 provided this information (see Table 4.2 below) with the largest number of responses coming from the South-East region.

Table 4.2.

Location of School

Location of School	N	%
Lakes Region	12	13.5
North Country	12	13.5
South Central	13	14.6
South East	25	28.1
South West	16	18
Did not respond	11	12.4
Total	89	100.0

Note. Regions determined by NH Department of Education

Participant Age. Participants were asked to identify their age. Of the 89 participants, 72 provided this information (see Table 4.3 below). It is worth noting that 50% of the sample is below 49 years of age. Mean age was 49.44 years (SD = 11.63 years).

Table 4.3.

Age of Participant

Age of Participant	%
<30	3.4
31-49	37.1
>50	40.4
No Age Reported	19.1
Total	100.0

Gender. Participants were asked to identify their gender. Of the 89 participants, 78 provided this information (see Table 4.4 below). The participants were generally equally represented by gender in this study.

Table 4.4.

Gender of Participant

Gender	N	%
Female	41	46.1
Male	36	40.4
Prefer not to answer	1	1.1
Total	89	100.0

Completed years teaching experience. Participants were asked to identify their years of teaching experience. Of the 89 participants, 76 provided this information

(see Table 4.5 below). A majority of principals had over 11 years of teaching experience.

Table 4.5.

Years Teaching Experience

Years of Teaching Experience	N	%
Did not respond	13	14.6
0-10	13	14.6
11-20	27	30.3
21+	36	40.4
Total	89	100.0

Completed years as a principal. Participants were asked to identify the number of years' experience as a principal. Of the 89 participants, 76 provided this information (see Table 4.6 below). When reviewing the data, 20 out of 76 participants responded with data that suggested they had combined years of teaching experience with years as a principal. For example, when reviewing and including data regarding the age of the participant, 20 responses were mathematically impossible. The question was worded as "completed years as a principal", however, many appear to have misinterpreted the request. For example, one participant's reported age was 45, with 22 years' experience as a teacher and 15 years' experience as a principal and another reported their age as 49 years with 17 years' teaching experience and 13 years' experience as a principal. An explanation for this is likely the combination of teaching and principal experience. Due to this issue, this item will not be included in any statistical analysis.

Table 4.6.

Completed Years as Principal

Years as Principal	N	%
0-10	48	53.8
11-20	23	25.7
21+	5	5.6
Did Not Respond	13	14.6
Total	89	99.7

Full time equivalent teachers. Participants were asked to identify the number of full time teachers in their school. Of the 89 participants, 77 provided this information (see Table 4.7 below). The majority of respondents had 16-45 teachers in their schools.

Table 4.7.

Number of Full Time Teachers

Number of full time teachers	N	%
1-15	19	21.3
16-30	21	23.6
31-45	24	27.0
45+	13	14.6
Did not respond	12	13.5
Total	89	100.0

Note: Information in this table is based on full-time equivalent positions

Enrollment. Participants were asked to identify the number of students enrolled in their school. Of the 89 participants, 75 provided this information (see Table 4.8 below) with 75.3 percent of participants reporting enrollment of under 600 students.

Table 4.8.

Student Enrollment

Student Enrollment	N	%
<200	22	24.7
201-400	25	28.1
401-600	20	22.5
>601	8	9
Did not respond	14	15.7
Total	89	100.0

Note: Responses are grouped in five ranges based on participant responses

Principal experience with students with disabilities. Participants were asked to identify if they had experience, as a principal, with on the average one or more special education students in each classroom at their school. Of the 89 participants, 77 replied (see Table 4.9 below) indicating that 85.4 percent of the sample had experience with students with disabilities in each classroom.

Table 4.9.

Students with Disabilities in Classroom

Student with disabilities in each classroom	N	%
No	1	1.1
Yes	76	85.4
Did not respond	12	13.5
Total	89	100.0

School has special education department. Participants were asked to identify if their school had a special education department. Of the 89 participants, 78 provided this information (see Table 4.10 below). 79.8 percent of the participants noted the existence of a special education department at their assigned school.

Table 4.10.

Special Education Department

Special Education Department	N	%
No	7	7.9
Yes	71	79.8
Did not respond	11	12.4
Total	89	100.0

Number of special educators in school. Participants were asked to identify the number of special education teachers at their school. Of the 89 participants, 71 participants provided this information (see Table 4.11 below) with just over half of the responses indicating 5 or fewer special education teachers in a school.

Table 4.11.

Number of Special Education Teachers

Number of Special Ed Teachers	N	%
0-5	45	50.6
5+	26	29.2
Did not respond	18	20.2
Total	89	100.0

MANOVA

A multivariate analysis was run comparing the demographic information to responses on the PATIE. There was no statistical significance at a .05 level for responses to the PATIE or additional items added by the researcher. Demographic

items included as part of the MANOVA were gender, age, enrollment, geographic location of school, years as a teacher, and number of full time teachers in the school.

Affective Scale Statistics

When reviewing the data, 96 participants began the survey, seven respondents included no data or responses to survey questions resulting in a loss of 240 potential responses to the PATIE items. Another eight respondents answered some but not all of the survey questions, accounting for an additional loss of 120 potential responses. This accounted for a total of 360 missing responses out of a total of 2,280 potential responses. To increase the reliability of the data set, any survey with no responses was deleted from the data set resulting in seven respondents being deleted. All missing data for the PATIE & Boston items were replaced with the mean values for those items. This resulted in 156 replaced items. This provided a complete data set of 89 respondents over the 30 items. Cronbach's Alpha was run for the complete data set of 30 items for the PATIE resulting in inter-item consistency of .878, a satisfactory measure for an affective scale (Gable & Wolf, 1993).

Item Means and Standard Deviations

Next, data was reviewed to identify low and high item means and small standard deviations. The average of all item means was 3.90 with the lowest being 2.05 and the highest being 4.80. As in the initial study, the five lowest mean scores were for questions 13, 17, 20, 23, and 30 with question 30 being the lowest mean for the data set. The five highest mean scores were similar to the initial study (Bailey, 2004) with one exception. Questions 2, 4, 9, 19 and 27 had the highest mean scores in New Hampshire, while Bailey's initial validation showed the highest mean scores on

questions 2, 4, 9, 26, 27. The exception in the New Hampshire PATIE administration was a .02 difference in mean score between question 19 and question 26. As with the initial PATIE administration in 2004, the two lowest mean scores were associated with questions regarding funding and resources.

As with the initial administration (Bailey, 2004), a total of six items were eliminated from the PATIE results with items 7, 8, 14, 22, 23 and 30 being deleted (see Table 4.12 below). The items were removed from the initial administration (Bailey, 2004) after it was determined that the items spoke to obvious concerns of principals and did not offer any insight into the attitude of the principals.

Table 4.12

PATIE Item Mean Scores

	Item	Mean (SD)
P1	Regular teachers are not trained adequately to cope with the students with disabilities.	2.94 (1.06)
P2	Students with physical disabilities (wrist crutches/wheelchairs) create too many movement problems to permit inclusion.	4.74 (0.46)
P3	Including students with special needs creates few additional problems for teachers' class management.	3.34 (0.99)
P4	Students who cannot read normal print size should not be included in regular classrooms.	4.80 (0.71)
P5	Because special schools are better resourced to cater for special needs students, these students should stay in special schools.	4.54 (0.81)
P6	Students who are continually aggressive towards their fellow students should not be included in regular classrooms.	2.91 (0.99)
P9	Students with mild disabilities should be included in regular classrooms.	4.77 (0.66)
P10	Students with special needs will take up too much of the teacher aides' time.	4.40 (0.74)
P11	Regardless of whether the parents of regular students object to inclusion, the practice should be supported.	4.36 (0.68)
P12	Special needs students belong in special schools where all their needs can be met.	4.41(0.66)

P13	Teacher aides are trained adequately to cope with students with special needs.	2.54 (1.02)
P15	Students with disabilities benefit academically from inclusion.	4.45 (0.71)
P16	Regular students will be disadvantaged by having special needs children in their classroom	4.34 (0.66)
P17	Students who are continually aggressive towards school staff should not be included in regular classrooms.	2.78 (0.94)
P18	Special needs students whose achievement levels in basic skills are significantly lower than their age classmates should not be included in regular classrooms.	4.23 (0.66)
P19	Students who have to communicate in a special way (e.g., communication boards/signing) should not be included in regular classrooms.	4.56 (0.47)
P20	Regular school principals are trained adequately to cope with the students with disabilities.	2.72 (1.00)
P21	Including students with special needs is unfair to regular teachers who already have a heavy work load.	4.30 (0.59)
P24	Students with severe disabilities should be included in regular classrooms.	3.88 (0.74)
P25	Students with moderate disabilities should be included in regular classrooms.	4.41 (0.65)
P26	Students with disabilities benefit socially from inclusion.	4.54 (0.54)

P27	Regular students benefit socially from inclusion.	4.58 (0.51)
P28	Students with special needs will take up too much of the teachers' time.	4.01 (0.66)
P29	Students with severe speech difficulties should not be included in regular classrooms.	4.40 (0.61)

Reliability Analysis

With this new scale of 24 items Cronbach's alpha (α) was calculated to be at .846, lower than the full data set of 30 items but a satisfactory measure of inter-item consistency.

Factor Analysis

Factor loadings. The initial factor analysis method was the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation. This model allows a large amount of data to be reduced to a smaller number of dimensions (See Table 4.13 below).

Table 4.13

Factor Loadings P24

Item	Inclusion Benefits	Teacher Workload	Learning Challenges	Professional Training	Excluded Students
P1	.229	-.121	.080	.650	-.091
P2	.340	.094	.649	.269	-.227
P3	-.023	.471	.045	-.009	.213
P4	-.084	.416	.671	-.231	-.134
P5	.137	.102	.784	.129	.298
P6	.300	-.179	.125	.132	.785
P9	.313	.139	.755	-.119	-.050
P10	.174	.559	.205	.192	.045
P11	.670	.153	.194	-.165	.208
P12	.316	.127	.429	.245	.291
P13	-.087	.204	-.169	.691	.005

P15	.469	.121	.299	.116	-.051
P16	.395	.530	.075	.253	.100
P17	-.009	.260	-.116	-.136	.824
P18	.366	.653	.004	-.202	.069
P19	.423	.556	.183	-.082	-.084
P20	-.044	.080	.152	.769	.080
P21	.512	.397	.156	.135	.186
P24	.640	.165	.080	.023	.217
P25	.530	.321	.179	.101	.157
P26	.831	.259	.103	-.009	-.070
P27	.896	.199	.102	.097	-.046
P28	.271	.598	.085	.155	-.044
P29	.255	.627	.206	.021	-.143

Note: Bold font indicates high factor loading for that item

Factor loadings were similar to the Bailey study in 2004, however there were some differences generally between the factors of Teacher Workload and Learning Challenges (see Table 4.14 below). For example, items 18 and 19 of this replication study loaded heavily (0.653 and 0.556) on the subscale of teacher workload and management while in the Bailey study (2004) the items loaded on the learning challenges in inclusive education factor. When reviewing the questions, which were rooted in the concept of level of disability, it is likely that principals were interpreting the question to mean the level of preparation and support a student might need in a general education classroom. Therefore, the items were both mathematically and

conceptually appropriate to remain in the teacher workload and management factor. Another key difference was that item 3 loaded in the factor of Teacher Workload (0.47) while in the initial administration item 3 loaded in Implementation Issues. The item addressed disabilities and impact on teacher classroom management and therefore the decision was made to agree with the PCA and leave item 3 to the factor regarding Teacher Workload and Management.

Table 4.14.

No.	Factor Title	N. Items	Items Included	Variance	Alpha
1	Inclusion Benefits and Level of Disability	7	11, 15, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27	10.29	3.20
2	Teacher Workload and Management	7	3, 10, 16, 18, 19, 28, 29	9.65	3.10
3	Learning Challenges in Inclusive Education	5	2, 4, 5, 9, 12	5.83	2.41
4	Professional Training	3	1, 13, 20	5.22	2.28
5	Excluded Students	2	6, 17	2.86	1.69

PCA, Five-factor Solution of Attitudes Toward Inclusion

Note: Rotation method Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Additional Questions

Five additional questions developed specifically by the researcher for this study were asked to determine participant understanding of inclusive education. Survey questions were developed through a comprehensive literature review and were categorized in five strands: social relationships, monitoring inclusive practices, pedagogy, hiring, and social justice leadership. Out of 89 participants, 78 responded to these questions. Cronbach's Alpha was run and resulted in a lower rate of inter-item consistency than the PATIE results ($\alpha = 0.673$). Due to the independent nature of the responses to each additional item no attempt at a factor analysis was made with this data set. It is noteworthy that when responding to the additional items, participants tended to respond to items either from a neutral or positive designation on the Likert scale (see Table 4.15 below).

Table 4.15.

Boston Items

	Item	Mean (SD)
B1	Social Acceptance and peer relationships are important aspects of inclusion.	4.63 (0.48)
B2	Teachers in my building participate in experiences designed in the area of inclusion to increase skills in the area of inclusive instruction.	3.41 (0.94)
B3	Inclusive practice and instructional methodology are monitored and included in teacher evaluations in my building.	3.38 (0.92)
B4	School schedules allow for collaboration and planning by multi-disciplinary teams (special education, general education teachers) for inclusive practice.	3.24 (1.05)
B5	When hiring, all prospective teachers are asked questions regarding inclusive practice and experience working with students with disabilities in regular education classrooms.	3.92 (0.95)

When the 24 remaining items of the PATIE were included with the five additional questions Cronbach's Alpha was determined to be .839. A factor analysis was run with an initial nine factors identified. Then data was forced into five factors (see Table 4.16 below). While the factors are the same as the 24-item scale, the alpha scores for the individual factors are much higher suggesting that the inter-item reliability is much stronger than with the 24-item scale factors particularly in the subscales for Inclusion Benefit and Teacher Efficacy and Management.

Table 4.16.

PATIE 24 and Boston Factor Analysis

Factor	Factor Title	N.Items	Items Included	Variance	Alpha
1	Inclusion Benefit and Implementation issues	11	11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27, B1	19.82	.864
2	Teacher efficacy, workload and Management	8	3, 10, 22, 28, B2, B3, B4, B5	18.37	.749
3	Learning Challenges in Inclusive Education	4	4, 5, 9, 29	4.29	.715
4	Professional Training	3	1, 13, 20	3.85	.282
5	Excluded Students	4	2, 6, 17	2.96	.438

Note: PCA, Rotation Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Cumulative Placement Rate Analysis

An analysis of cumulative placement rate data in New Hampshire was conducted to determine the rate of student placement with disabilities in each geographic region of New Hampshire. Relative high and low placement rates for students placed at least 80% in general education classrooms was identified for five geographic regions of New Hampshire: North Country, South West, South Central, South East, and the Lakes Region.

Instrumentation. OSEP annually collects data identifying the rate of students with disabilities being educated in general education settings alongside non-disabled peers. The rate of placement in the general education setting for students with disabilities was determined through data collected by the New Hampshire Department of Education and reported on school district data profiles annually. This data was reported in three categories: those students with disabilities being educated for 80% or more of their day alongside non-disabled peers; those students with disabilities being educated in regular education settings less than 40% of their day; and those students with disabilities who were placed in separate schools, hospitals, or home-bound settings. The most recent New Hampshire School District Data Profiles from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015 were used for this study.

Participants. Participants included all public-school districts in New Hampshire (n=97). To be included a district had to appear on the New Hampshire Department of Education list of public school districts in New Hampshire and have reported data to the Department of Education for students with disabilities.

Analysis. The rate of placement in the general education setting for students with disabilities was determined through data collected by NHDOE and reported on school district data profiles annually. Specifically, the percentage of students with disabilities educated in general education classrooms for 80% of the day or more, and the percentage of students educated less than 40% of their day in a general education setting were identified. The relative high and low percentage of inclusion was identified for five geographic regions of New Hampshire: North Country, South Central, South West, South East and the Lakes Region. Participants' in the PATIE replication study were asked to identify the geographic area in which their school was located during the survey administration so that the survey responses could be compared to the placement rate data for each county and region. An analysis of the cumulative placement rates for each public-school district in New Hampshire was conducted with those districts demonstrating high and low placement rates, being selected resulting in ten semi-structured interviews (see Table 4.17 below). The South East area of New Hampshire reflected the highest percentage of students with disabilities being placed in the general education classroom for 80 percent or more of the school day at a rate of 78.74 percent. The South West region had the lowest percentage of students with disabilities placed within the general education classroom at 73.08 percent and the South West also had the highest percentage of students with disabilities placed in the general education classroom for less than 40 percent of the school day or in separate or homebound settings (8.67 < 40% and 3.29 separate or homebound).

Table 4.17

Cumulative Placement Rates by Region

Region	Total N. IDEA	Average CPR >80%	Average CPR <40%	Sep or Homebound
Lakes	3972	78.48	5.18	1.74
North	1409	76.25	5.33	2.75
South Central	10148	73.26	6.89	2.59
South East	4997	78.74	5.11	1.93
South West	5036	73.08	8.67	3.29

Note: CPR = Cumulative Placement Rate in Gen Ed Setting. Bold black font indicates reported relative high rate of inclusion and bold red font indicate reported relative high rate of exclusion.

Interviews

Instrumentation. Based on responses during the analysis of the cumulative placement rate data, ten public school sites were selected across the New Hampshire to represent five geographic regions (North Country, Lakes Region, South Central, South East, South West). Ultimately, seven public school principals participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews based upon relative high and low percentage of inclusive placement for each geographic region. Interviews with principals from all regions were obtained but interviews from South Central representing the relative low level of inclusion and from the Lakes and South West regions representing the relative high level of inclusion were not able to be obtained. Questions in the interview phase allowed for in-depth discussion and follow up questions. Interview questions were

developed through a comprehensive literature review and were categorized in five categories: social relationships, teacher efficacy, monitoring inclusive practices, hiring, and social justice leadership (See Appendix C for interview guide).

Six interviews were conducted via phone and a seventh interview was conducted in person. Interviews followed an interview guide (Appendix C) and the interview concluded after a semi-structured open-ended question approach to address portions of the research questions not already addressed (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Questions asked during the semi-structured interview related to the emerging themes from the literature review and include demographics, distributive justice, social relationships, teacher efficacy, monitoring inclusive practices, craft, and social justice leadership. This qualitative phase explored placement rates and principal definition and attitude toward inclusion at seven public schools in different geographic areas of New Hampshire and built upon and enhanced the qualitative results by providing detail about barriers to inclusion, culture and climate, existing inclusive practices, and the impact they had on inclusion as principals.

Analysis. Data obtained through the qualitative interview strand was analyzed through an iterative process using procedures of theme development. NVIVO software (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2017) was used during the coding process to identify nodes. Transcripts were analyzed in four stages applying the constant comparative approach to develop a theory regarding principal definition and inclusive placements. In the first stage, in vivo coding was used to prepare for more detailed coding and thematic analysis (Saldana, 2016). The second phase integrated nodes into categories

where appropriate. Phase three delimited theories by reducing the larger list of themes to a smaller set of themes and finally a theory was developed (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009).

Demographics of survey participants

All interviews were assigned case classifications in NVIVO (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2017) that aligned with the demographic data collected in the PATIE administration. These classifications included gender, geographic location of school, years as a principal, and an item designating if the district represented the relative high or low inclusion percentage in the Cumulative Placement Rate (CPR) data for that geographic area.

Seven principals agreed to interview. Of the seven, four participants were male and three were female. Three participants had 0-3 years' experience as a principal, three participants had 4-10 years' experience, and one principal had over ten years' experience as a principal. Four interviews were conducted with principals from districts with relatively low rates of students being included in general education classrooms for 80% or more of their day, and three had relatively high rates of inclusion in the general education classroom for 80% or more of the school day. Four principals identified their age as being 49 years or younger and three identified as 50 years or older (see Table 4.18 below). Interviews obtained covered the five regions of the state and were a reasonable distribution of relative high and relative low school districts.

Table 4.18

Demographic Data of Interview Participants

Category		Number of Participants
Gender	Male	4
	Female	3
Age in Years	49 or Under	4
	50 or older	3
Geographic Location	Lakes Region	1
	South Central	1
	South East	2
	South West	1
	North Country	2
Years as Principal	0-3	3
	4-10	3
	10+	1
High or Low percentage	Low	4
	High	3

Note: Responses to age and years as principal displayed in ranges based upon participant responses

This data was then compared with the PATIE data to determine the relationship between positive principal attitude, principal definition and inclusive practice on a regional level in New Hampshire. Specifically, PATIE responses were compared to interview responses to determine areas of consistency and disagreement

as well as to capture emerging themes relating to the principal definition and attitude toward inclusion. Item and interview question responses were also combined and reviewed for response agreement or disagreement with the three-pronged definition (i.e., social justice, pedagogy, placement) that emerged from the review of the literature.

In vivo coding

Initial in vivo coding led to the emergence of 70 nodes. A node is a reference to a specific theme and in vivo coding is the process of identifying nodes or codes using “a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record” (Saldana, 2016, pp. 105). Of the initial 70 nodes, 8 accounted for 126 of the coding references or 47% of all coding references (see Table 4.19 below).

Table 4.19

Initial in vivo coding

Node	Number of Coding References	%
Culture and Climate	31	0.246
Resistance to Inclusion	18	0.142
Dialogue	18	0.142
Differentiation	15	0.119
Coaching new staff	12	0.095
Placement of students	11	0.087
Creative and flexible with resources	11	0.087
Collaboration time in schedule	10	0.079
Total	126	100

Nodes were then reviewed and organized into clusters that suggested categories of belonging. From that process 10 categories emerged (see Table 4.20 below).

Table 4.20

Emerging Categories

Category	Number of Nodes	Number of Coding References
Barriers to Inclusion	7	36
Examples of Inclusive Practice	6	28
Fairness Equates to Resources	4	18
Inclusion as Pedagogy	9	45
Inclusion as SpEd Responsibility	2	5
Culture and Climate	5	57
Not Within Principal Control	6	14
Inclusion Not Reflected in PD	5	14
Principal Support and Influence	7	39
Within the Principal's Control	15	46
Total	66	302

The 10 categories were then reviewed for internal consistency and mutual exclusivity to further limit categories. From this process, the category of Principal

Support and Influence was combined with the category of With the Principal's Control. Similarly, the category of Barriers to Inclusion and Inclusion Not Reflected in Professional Development were combined leaving 8 remaining categories (see Table 4.21 below).

Table 4.21

Coding Limiting.

Category	Number of Nodes	Number of Coding References
Barriers to Inclusion	13	50
Examples of Inclusion	6	28
Fairness=Resources	4	18
Inclusion as Pedagogy	9	45
Inclusion as SpEd Responsibility	2	5
Culture and Climate	5	57
Not Within Principal Control	6	14
Within Principal Control	21	85
Total	66	302

The remaining 8 categories were then reviewed a third and final time to further limit categories. From this final review, the remaining 8 categories were combined for a total of four overarching themes. Merging of categories included Fairness Equates to Resource Access and Culture and Climate; Inclusion as Special Education Responsibility and Barriers to Inclusion; Examples of Inclusion and Inclusion as

Pedagogy; Not Within Principal Control and Within Principal Control (see Table 4.22. below).

Table 4.22

Coding Merging of Categories.

Category	Number of Nodes	Number of Coding Ref.
Culture and Climate	9	75
Barriers to Inclusion	13	55
Inclusive Practice	15	73
Principal Impact and Influence	27	99
Total	66	302

Theme 1. Culture and Climate

Participants spoke often about the climate and culture within their building supporting inclusive practices and impacting how resources were allocated. Of note was the notion of “fairness” that was consistent across participants, geographic areas, and level of inclusivity in a district. All participants equated “fair” with resource allocation at a building level. Four of the seven participants spoke directly to this and identified fairness as all students having an “equal opportunity to resources in the building”, while six participants also referenced that “fair isn’t always equal” indicating that sometimes fair meant that additional resources went to individual students to allow them access to classrooms. There was a general acknowledgement that students with educational disabilities would require a higher level of resource to achieve the same or similar level of access as typical peers to curriculum and school programs.

Participants also spoke to culture and climate both as a support for inclusive programming and as an area of challenge. Principals in districts where the cumulative placement rate was relatively high talked about celebrating differences, faculty working together, and veteran staff setting the expectation for inclusion in new staff. “I think because of the amount of veteran staff I have here, it’s in their comfort zone” with one principal noting, “ they are surrounded by colleagues that are doing inclusion and we don’t really talk about whether they have the philosophy or not, I mean they have to have the philosophy or they are not going to survive”.

Principals also spoke to a culture of collaborative decision making and teacher leadership. This was consistent regardless of the level of inclusion in their buildings and districts. One principal working in a district with a relatively high level of inclusion noted that he was working toward this but most teachers wanted to be given directions and that only four or five felt comfortable with collaborative decision making. Another in a district with a relatively low rate of inclusion had a staff that expected collaborative decision making and continual feedback. Principals noted that for collaborative decision making regarding inclusion to work, there was the need to create trust between principals and teachers and this meant not only principals giving constructive feedback to teachers, but also principals receiving constructive feedback from teachers “I’ve got to build the trust and I’ve got to build the sense that your ideas aren’t going to be just blown off”. Another noted “I think we have a culture very much of feedback, whether it’d be my feedback to them, their feedback to me, it’s a constant conversation of what’s going on in their classrooms and how they want to make it better and how I think they can make it better. That’s definitely a part of our culture”.

All principals spoke to this feedback and dialogue occurring in a face to face situation when asked about how to give staff critical feedback regarding inclusion one principal noted “I try to communicate as much as possible, face-to-face, as opposed to just through email. When I need to go to a team meeting, I make up effort to get there and have those discussions. I think the answer to your question is really through face-to-face collaboration”.

Theme 2. Barriers to Inclusion

Principals also identified several common barriers or challenges when including students with disabilities in general education classrooms. These concerns centered around three key areas: professional development; behavior and safety; and inclusion as a special education responsibility.

Professional development. None of the principals interviewed spoke to professional development in their school specific to inclusion, even when prompted. Most principals noted that they did use a professional learning community approach to professional development and being open to bringing in speakers and facilitators who had a background in inclusion but districts had yet to do so. Some smaller districts identified the costs of bringing in school or district wide professional development would be prohibitive so teachers chose which workshops outside of the district to attend on their own. Other principals cited collective bargaining agreements that allowed teachers to choose their own professional development opportunities. One principal noted that they didn’t see students as different and didn’t think to categorize professional development that way, and took care to make sure other staff knew that

was the expectation “ I don’t say let’s have a PD day on inclusive education, I’ll have a stern conversation with my fifth-grade teacher who comes in to me and says,

Oh, if I don’t count my special ed students in my individual NWEA growth goal, I made my goal.’ I would sit her down and I will say, ‘Stop. These are all your students.’ I will have that conversation. Then I’m very aware that somebody is categorizing them.

One principal spoke to resistance of new initiatives so the principal made sure to offer inclusion information in a way that was less threatening to staff.

For me, my best...is to let things roll during staff meetings and let people get recognized among themselves. I’ll say something about someone. ‘Hey, you might want to check this out’. I don’t make a huge deal because I don’t want to appear as though that’s the only way that you can be successful.

Behavior and safety. Another barrier to inclusion appeared to be negative behavior on the part of the student being included and demands from other parents of children without disabilities to remove the child. Two principals spoke directly to this issue “they don’t want their child get hurt and especially if the child has explosive behavior. We have one right now that finally this week, this week it finally came to a head that she is not coming back to school on Tuesday”, and another noted that opportunities for friends and peers were dictated by student behavior, “It’s a safety issue. They can’t move beyond that area. That’s just it”. Behavior and the approval of other parents appeared to dictate the level of inclusion. “The biggest one right now, the biggest argument is probably with parents and it is usually centered around behavior...and its why is it that...that child shouldn’t be here at school...they don’t

belong here”. One principal expressed frustration with staff and parent pressure to remove behaviorally challenging students.

Would it be much easier to move the screaming developmental toddler who's in a first-grade body out of the room, sometimes? Of course, it would be easier, but who is that good for? No, I mean, really that's good for whoever is being bothered by the screaming at that time. Then, that's it.

Inclusion as a special education responsibility. Principals also spoke to inclusion as being a special education responsibility and students with significant needs as requiring a paraprofessional or another adult to participate in the general education environment. Examples of students working with paraprofessionals in the general education environment were discussed as inclusive though the student was not oriented to peers or general education staff in the room “When they're having morning meetings, that student is sitting in morning meeting with his para, and doing everything, part of the activities. During math, that student is sitting at a table with the para and they're doing math activities at a toddler level”.

Theme 3. Positive Aspects of Inclusion

In their interviews, principals identified that all students have needs and students being together allows for friendships and peer relationships to naturally occur. When principals were asked what initiatives, or supports were in place to help students with disabilities form peer relationships all but one spoke to students being in classrooms with regular education peers facilitated the development of friendships and no special action was needed on the part of staff or faculty. A principal from a district with a high rate of inclusion reported commented “a lot of kids already have those

friendships and interactions just innately. We don't really have to work behind the scenes to set that up". Principals from districts reporting lower rates of inclusion commented similarly regarding friendships "Right now, we really don't have any situations where we have to go out of our way to socialize students because everybody is in the classroom with everybody else". Only one principal from a district where reported inclusion was lower identified behavioral challenges as being impactful to friendships and peer relationships

"We have a whole a number of kids that have behavioral challenges in our building. Those students might be on a behavioral plan, needs a little more intense counseling. We do a lot of friendship groups or they might have some services with the guidance counselor with opportunities to bring friends".

Principals in K-8 settings spoke to students not separating themselves and, unless a disability was significant, students not noticing the disability in a social setting. Principals also spoke to students living in poverty as a group that benefited from inclusive practices and supporting student needs in the classroom.

When asked to give examples of inclusive practices, principals most often responded from an instructional lens naming strategies such as Response to Intervention, responsive classroom, co-teaching, and differentiation. This included identifying inclusion as a placement issue and focusing on the amount of time a student spent in the general education classroom. No principal discussed a social justice or quality of time in the classroom when giving examples of inclusive practices.

Theme 4. Principal Impact and Influence

The theme that contained the largest number of references during interviews was Principal Impact and Influence. Within that category there were distinct issues that principals deemed either within or outside of their locus of control.

Issues that principals saw as outside of their control included budgeting at a district level, standardized assessments, and entitlement grant resources such as Title I. Issues principals saw as within their control or influence included coaching new staff for inclusive practices, mentoring staff, teachers providing leadership within the building, and providing time for teachers to collaborate in the building schedule.

While a question regarding principal advocacy was asked, no principal identified that they engaged in advocacy work or activities for students with disabilities in their districts beyond what was required as part of their work day.

Factors and Themes

There were similarities in the factors obtained from the quantitative analysis and the themes that emerged from the quantitative analysis. The factor of Inclusion Benefit and Implementation Issues had the broadest range of items loading on that factor (11) and the theme of Barriers to Inclusion also had a largest number of coding references (36) when organizing for categories. Additionally, the factor of Excluded Students had PATIE items specific to behavior (6,17) loading heavily. Within both theme and factors, behavior appeared to have a significant impact on principal response both in the PATIE administration and in the qualitative interviews. All mean scores on the PATIE that represented a response of “disagree” had to do with training and the level of student aggression. When reviewing the PATIE for high mean

responses indicating “agree” or “strongly agree” it was noted that responses of a 4.5 or higher were attributed to questions regarding the inclusion of students with physical or mild disabilities. Mean scores indicating an overall neutral response were reported for items regarding the inclusion of students with severe disabilities or inclusion and classroom management issues.

Principal Definition and Attitude Toward Inclusion

While no distinct differences were noted in participant responses when analyzing the quantitative or qualitative data for geographic or demographic impact, the three elements of inclusion that emerged from the literature review; social justice, placement, and instructional methodology (Brotherson et al., 2001; Kosleski et al. 2015) PATIE responses and interview responses were analyzed to determine if the three constructs of inclusion (pedagogy, placement, and social justice) existed or were not represented within PATIE responses and interview responses.

Social Justice. Items on the PATIE speaking to social justice included P11, P15, P16, P26, P27 with an additional item added by the researcher B1 (see *Table 4.23* below).

Table 4.23.

Social Justice Affective Scale Items

	Item	Mean (SD)
P11	Regardless of whether the parents of regular students object to	4.36 (0.68)
	inclusion, the practice should be supported	
P15	Students with disabilities benefit academically from inclusion	4.45 (0.71)
P16	Regular students will be disadvantaged by having special needs	4.34 (0.66)
	children in their classroom	
P26	Students with disabilities benefit socially from inclusion	4.54 (0.54)
P27	Regular students benefit socially from inclusion	4.58 (0.51)
B1	Social Acceptance and peer relationships are important aspects of inclusion	4.63 (0.46)

Note. PATIE and Boston items relating to social justice

Interview questions relating to social justice included questions about resource distribution, fairness, and friendships for students with disabilities. While principals responded positively to items suggesting that all students would benefit from inclusion and that social relationships were important, during interviews principals were unable to cite specific examples of how friendships between students with disabilities and typical students were facilitated instead stating those things happened naturally for students who were included. When looking at items that spoke to the severity of disability and inclusion both on the PATIE and during interviews, principals also identified the behavior of a student as being an indicator of lesser inclusive placements and fewer opportunities to participate in typical friendships due to safety concerns.

Inclusion as Placement. Items on the affective scale that referred to placement and severity of disability included P4, P5, P6, P9, P12, P24, P25, P29 (See Table 4.24 below).

Table 4.24.

Placement Affective Scale Items

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
P4	Students who cannot read normal print size should not be included in regular classrooms.	4.80 (0.71)
P5	Because special schools are better resourced to cater for special needs students, these students should stay in special schools.	4.54 (0.81)
P6	Students who are continually aggressive towards their fellow students should not be included in regular classrooms.	2.91 (0.99)
P9	Students with mild disabilities should be included in regular classrooms.	4.77 (0.66)
P12	Special needs students belong in special schools where all their needs can be met.	4.41 (0.66)
P24	Students with severe disabilities should be included in regular classrooms.	3.88 (0.74)
P25	Students with moderate disabilities should be included in regular classrooms.	4.41 (0.65)
P29	Students with severe speech difficulties should not be included in regular classrooms.	4.40 (0.61)

Note: PATIE and Boston items relating to placement

PATIE responses indicated that the more severe the disability the less positive principals were regarding their response. Responses to items regarding inclusion of students with print or mild disabilities garnered responses of 4.8 and 4.7 respectively, however items regarding the inclusion of students with severe or behavior disabilities saw lower responses of 3.8 and 2.9. During interviews, principals responded to questions about inclusive practice by speaking to the level of disability in terms of the

resources needed. Four out of seven principals noted that the more severe the level of disability or the higher the intensity of an intervention, the more segregated placements for students became. This often resulted in conditional inclusion or the requirement that another adult be in the classroom when the student was present in the general education setting. This resulted in the participation of students with significant disabilities in general education settings being contingent or conditional upon another adult accompanying them to the classroom.

Instructional Methodology. Items on the affective scale relating to instruction and methodology included P1, P3, P10, P13, P20, P28, B2, B3, and B4 (see Table 4.25. below).

Table 4.25.

Affective Scale Items Instruction

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
P1	Regular teachers are not trained adequately to cope with the students with disabilities	2.94 (1.06)
P3	Including students with special needs creates few additional problems for teachers' class management	3.34 (0.99)
P10	Students with special needs will take up too much of the teacher aides' time.	4.40 (0.74)
P13	Teacher aides are trained adequately to cope with students with special needs	2.54 (1.02)
P20	Regular school principals are trained adequately to cope with the students with disabilities.	2.72 (1.00)
P28	Students with special needs will take up too much of the teachers' time.	4.01 (0.66)
B2	Teachers in my building participate in experiences designed in the area of inclusion to increase skills in the area of inclusive instruction.	3.41 (0.94)

B3	Inclusive practice and instructional methodology are monitored and included in teacher evaluations in my building.	3.38 (0.92)
B4	School schedules allow for collaboration and planning by multi-disciplinary teams (special education, general education teachers) for inclusive practice	3.24 (1.05)

Note: PATIE and Boston items relating to instructional practice

Affective item mean scores in this category were among the lowest on the scale. Lack of training was also noted during interviews. Principals were asked specific questions regarding the monitoring of inclusive practice, collaboration time, and to provide examples of inclusive practices in their buildings. While PATIE responses indicated that principals were neutral or agreeing with the statement “teachers in my building participate in experiences designed in the area of inclusion...” no principal interviewed was able to cite specific professional development in the area of inclusion in their buildings. Some noted that teachers could opt to attend trainings outside of the district on inclusion if they desired.

When interviewed, principals were asked to cite specific examples of inclusive practice most often the responses included comments about Response to Intervention (RTI), differentiation, co-teaching, or integration speaking to specific instructional strategies or activities to include students with mild to moderate disabilities but not directly related to including all students with disabilities in regular education classrooms.

Cumulative Placement Rate and Principal Responses

Interview responses regarding placement of students with disabilities were compared to cumulative placement rate data to compare the actual level of inclusion to the principal report of the inclusion rate. During interviews, principals tended to over

report the level of inclusion at their school and speak of their school as being inclusive regardless of the level of inclusion reported on cumulative placement rate reports.

Principals spoke of inclusion for students who attended their schools but seemed to be less aware of students with disabilities who were not attending public schools but lived in the community.

Validity

The use of the PATIE in conjunction with the interviews allowed for triangulation and validation of the data obtained in both the quantitative and qualitative phases (Bailey, 2004). Additionally, data was validated through the multiple sources of data in each phase across the geographic regions of New Hampshire. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) data quality can be assessed a variety of ways. For the purposes of this study, data was assessed by checking for researcher effects, and triangulating the data.

Triangulation

Qualitative data gathered from interviews was compared with quantitative data obtained from the survey and analysis of cumulative placement data to determine areas of consistency and inconsistency. Areas of inconsistency or non-representativeness were analyzed to determine explanations for the differences. Specifically, interview responses regarding placement of students with disabilities was compared to cumulative placement rate data to compare the actual level of inclusion to the principal report of the inclusion rate.

Methods triangulation allowed comparison between survey responses and interview responses for consistency and validity. Multiple sources across the state of

New Hampshire also allowed for source triangulation across survey and interview findings by highlighting areas of agreement and disagreement in the data (Miles et al., 2014). Because the qualitative interviews followed the quantitative replication study and cumulative placement rate analysis questions in the interviews were asked that could clarify and validate inconsistent responses between the replication and interview studies.

Summary

The goal of this study was to develop a better understanding of the impact of principal attitude and definition of inclusion on student placement in New Hampshire public schools. The mixed methods methodology allowed me to generate data across a broad group of participants (n=422) while also allowing a deeper understanding of principal attitude and definition impact on student placement through structured interviews on a smaller scale.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of principal definition and attitude towards inclusion on the placement of students with educational disabilities in New Hampshire. To respond to the research question, three studies were undertaken; a.) administration of an affective instrument to NH school principals, a replication of the PATIE administration in 2004 (Bailey, 2004), b.) a review of cumulative placement rate data in NH, and c.) interviews with selected principals from districts with relative high and low rates of inclusion in the five geographic areas of NH.

Conclusions

The findings in the replication of the PATIE administration from 2004 did not differ greatly, demonstrating reliability of the instrument across populations. Factor loadings were similar however some items loaded more heavily on the factor of teacher workload for this study while they had loaded on implementation issues in 2004. When reviewing the questions that loaded differently, it was noted that the questions were rooted in the concept of level of disability. Therefore, it is likely that principals were interpreting the question to mean the level of preparation and support a student might need in a general education classroom.

MANOVA data showed that responses to the PATIE did not differ when considering the geographic area, size of the school, or demographics of the respondent. Principals appeared to have similar attitudes and definitions of inclusion

regardless of demographics or geographic location. When considering the differences in placement rates across the state this suggests that something other than principal attitude or definition is impacting placements for students with educational disabilities.

Principals tended to respond less positively to items on the PATIE that addressed the inclusion of significantly disabled students or students whose behavior impacted the safety or learning of others. Behavior and safety along with a lack of professional development specific to including students with disabilities in general education classrooms appears to have had more of an impact on the placement of students with disabilities than the principal's attitude or definition. This was reflective of the literature which identified that students with significant or low incidence disabilities were more likely to be educated in separate settings outside of the general education classroom (Kurth, et al. 2014; Sailor & McCart, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Reflective of the Cologon study in 2015, results in this study noted that there appears to be a phenomenon within the field of education of misapplying the term inclusion to settings not meeting the definition of inclusion. All principals interviewed identified their school as being 'inclusive' and cited examples of differentiation and geographic inclusion but none of the principals could speak to the social justice aspect or specific inclusive practices beyond placement and instructional strategies.

Principals tended to define inclusion as the amount of time a student with disabilities spends in the general education environment. This single construct definition is consistent with the policy and legislation in place regarding inclusion (Anderson & Boyle, 2015; Bentley, 2008). However, principals did not seem to

recognize the definition of inclusion as a three-pronged definition: placement, instructional methodology, and social acceptance (Koster et al. 2009; Miller, 1996; Nilholm, & Alm, 2010; Ryndak et al., 2000; Stockall, & Gartin, 2002; Walker & Webb, 1998). Interview responses regarding pedagogy and planning did not reflect specific professional development or collaboration regarding inclusive pedagogical practices. Even when prompted principals' could not provide examples of how peer relationships and social justice/advocacy were incorporated into schools or programs. Principals responded to questions about placement with examples of students being removed from general education classrooms for part of the day, citing these incidents as examples of inclusion. The assumption on the part of the principal appeared to be that if a student with disabilities was present in the general education environment, they were being fully included (Artiles et al., 2006; Odom et al., 2011).

Similar to the De Matthews study in 2015, principals also deemed several issues outside of their locus of control. A lack of resources, funding, and lack of common planning time were specified by the principal as problematic. Principals tended to see these things as something outside of their influence. Specifically, principals saw budgets and resource allocation including common planning time as something that was not within their control. During interviews, principals cited budget constraints as a barrier to providing professional development around inclusive practices. This was coupled with principals reporting that inclusion was a special education responsibility rather than a district or all student initiative. This lack of control coupled with principals not recognizing their ability to advocate for students

with disabilities from a social justice perspective has the potential to be a negative impact on inclusive practices in public schools (Brotherson et al, 2001).

Implications

Results of this study support the need for professional development among principals in including students with disabilities, particularly the social justice aspect of inclusion. Another area that requires support both for principals and teachers, is the inclusion of students with significant disabilities, particularly those disabilities that manifest in student behavior that could be disruptive to other's learning in the general education classroom.

Principals spoke to pressure from parents and the community to exclude students with disabilities that were behavioral or manifested in disruption to typical students' learning. Community education regarding the benefits of inclusion for both students with disabilities and typical students would promote greater understanding and likely lessen the parent pressure to remove students with disabilities from general education settings.

Principals need support in recognizing and identifying the students with disabilities who live in the community but do not attend public schools. These students generally were not known to principals' making them unlikely to program or allocate resources in a way that supported fuller inclusion in the general education setting.

Opportunities to educate principals in community engagement and collaborative culture building around inclusive practices should be created at a state and district level. Educating principals in the work of community engagement around inclusion would support budgeting, program development, and parental understanding

of the value of inclusive practice to all students. While the literature identified that principals could create capacity at a building and community level (Banerji & Dailey, 1995; Kozleski et al., 2015; Riehl, 2000) respondents in this study did not seek out or participate in opportunities to engage in this work. No principal discussed social justice or quality of time in the classroom when giving examples of inclusive practices. Even when specifically asked, principals did not offer examples of where they participated in advocacy or community building around inclusion and students with disabilities.

Limitations

The survey administration during this study experienced several limitations. The number of responding principals was relatively small (n=89) and reflected only 21 percent of the available public school principals in New Hampshire. Interviews with principals were difficult to obtain, and only 7 principals out of the intended 10 principals submitting to the interview process.

The wording of the demographic item aimed at collecting data on the years of experience as a principal appeared to be confusing to respondents and as such the data could not be used in any statistical analysis. More specific information about the training and years of experience a principal had obtained would be beneficial when considering the impact of experience on the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings.

The survey utilized a 5 point Likert scale with a median response of “neutral”. This resulted in many items having a mean score oriented to the neutral position. In

future administrations consideration for using only a four-point scale, forcing respondents to orient to “agree” or “disagree” would provide more useful information.

CPR data was also a limitation in this study. The data relies on school districts accurately identifying the amount of time a student with disabilities spends in the general education and special education settings. This is done through a specific time tracking mechanism in the New Hampshire Special Education Information System (NHSEIS). The time tracking only records the amount of time in the general or special education setting that was agreed upon at the time the IEP was developed and accepted by the parent. For many districts the rate of reported inclusion was likely different than the rate of inclusion occurring particularly for those students whose behavior resulted in disciplinary and safety removals from general education settings.

Respondents also may have responded to survey and interview questions in the manner that the respondent perceived to be socially desirable. Social Desirability Bias (SDB) is a phenomenon that causes participants to over report socially desirable behavior and under report less desirable or negative behavior (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). This bias could have resulted in more positive responses to inclusion than principals actually believe, however Dillman, Smyth and Christian (2014) noted that paper or online surveys are less likely to be impacted by the SDB.

Suggestions for Future Research

Suggestions for future research include replicating this study over a larger group of participants to allow for generalization of the data. This study could also be replicated in states with different geographical or demographic challenges. It is also recommended that specific methods be used to control for SDB and that observations

in specific schools with reported high and low rates of inclusion be used to validate the quantitative data of CPR and survey responses.

Even with these limitations, this study should provide increased evidence for the need of additional professional development of educators, added information provided to the public detailing the benefits of inclusive classrooms, and supports the utilization of the PATIE in future research studies.

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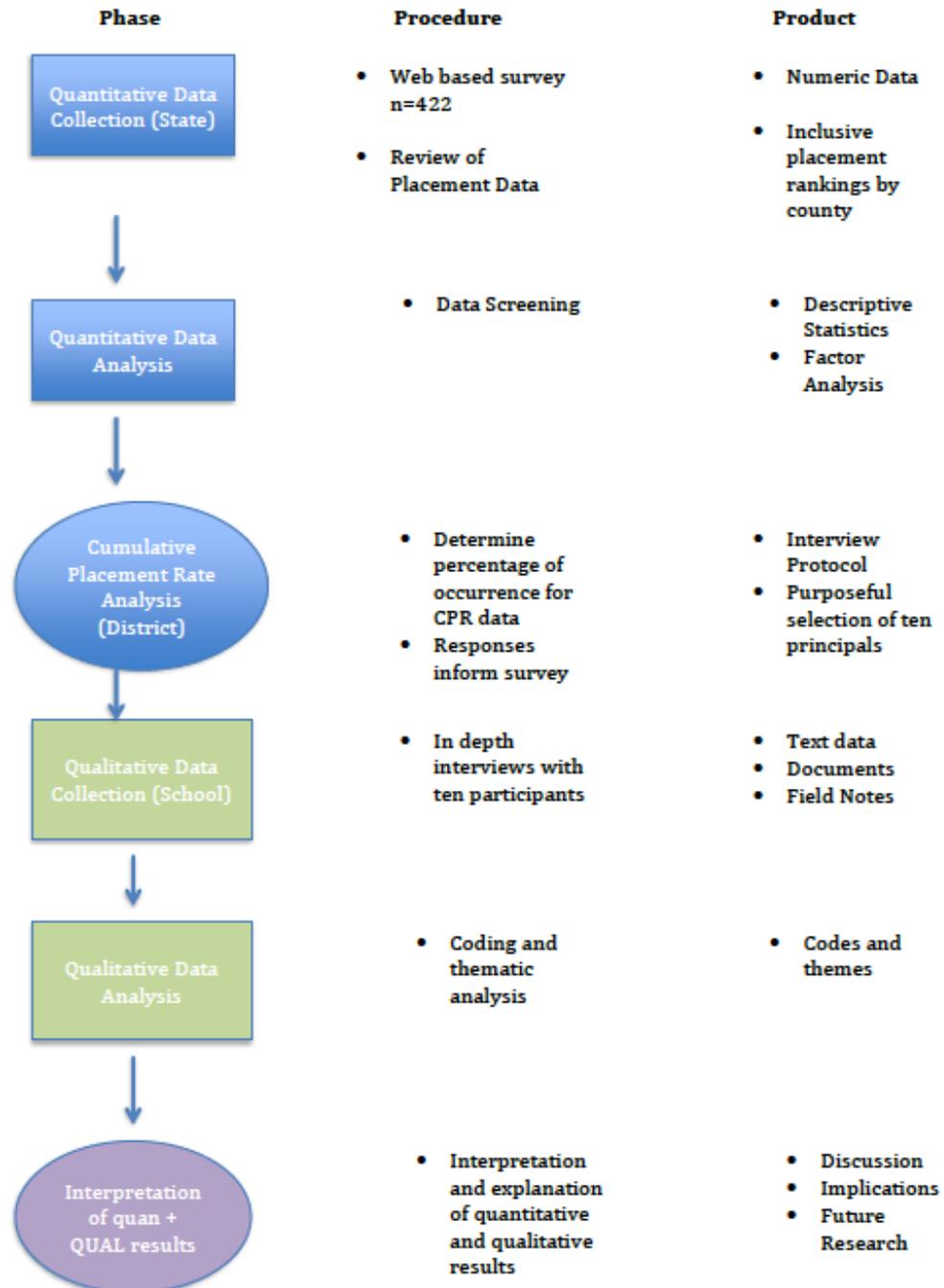
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Appendix A- Diagram of Study



Appendix B- PATIE Inventory

For the purpose of this study, inclusion refers to the process of placing students with disabilities and special needs in classrooms with children who do not have such disabilities or needs. Inclusion also implies the provision of support to the classroom teacher by a specialist. Inclusion requires the child to be in a “regular” classroom with peers of the same age, with the included children receiving appropriate instruction from the classroom teacher and included students having access to all the services and opportunities that the “regular” students receive. Please note that in this scale we use the expressions “special needs students” and “regular” students for reasons of space and simplicity only.

When considering THE PRACTICE OF INCLUSION, to what extent do you agree with the statements below?

Please complete all items by selecting one of the 5 descriptors for EACH of the 36 items.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
P1.Regular teachers are not trained adequately to cope with the students with disabilities					
P2.Students with physical disabilities (wrist crutches/wheelchairs) create too many movement problems to permit inclusion					

P3.Including students with special needs creates few additional problems for teachers' class management					
P4. Students who cannot read normal print size should not be included in regular classrooms					
P5.Because special schools are better resourced to cater for special needs students, these students should stay in special schools					
P6.Students who are continually aggressive towards their fellow students should not be included in regular classrooms					
P7 .Lack of access to other professionals (e.g., occupational and speech therapists) makes inclusion difficult					
P8.Regular students benefit academically from inclusion					
P9.Students with mild disabilities should be included in regular classrooms					
P10.Students with special needs will take up too much of					

the teacher aides' time					
P11.Regardless of whether the parents of regular students object to inclusion, the practice should be supported					
P12.Special needs students belong in special schools where all their needs can be met.					
P13.Teacher aides are trained adequately to cope with students with special needs					
P14.Students with disabilities will disrupt other students' learning so we should resist inclusion					
P15.Students with disabilities benefit academically from inclusion					
P16.Regular students will be disadvantaged by having special needs children in their classroom					
P17.Students who are continually aggressive towards school staff should not be included in regular classrooms					

P18.Special needs students whose achievement levels in basic skills are significantly lower than their age classmates should not be included in regular classrooms					
P19.Students who have to communicate in a special way (e.g.,communication boards/signing) should not be included in regular classrooms					
P20.Regular school principals are trained adequately to cope with the students with disabilities					
P21.Including students with special needs is unfair to regular teachers who already have a heavy work load					
P22.The policy of inclusion is fine in theory but does not work in practice					
P23.Schools have sufficient teaching resources to cope with inclusion					
P24.Students with severe disabilities should be included in regular classrooms					

P25.Students with moderate disabilities should be included in regular classrooms					
P26. Students with disabilities benefit socially from inclusion					
P27. Regular students benefit socially from inclusion					
P28. Students with special needs will take up too much of the teachers' time					
P29 Students with severe speech difficulties should not be included in regular classrooms					
P30 There is sufficient funding to permit effective inclusion					
B1.Social acceptance and peer relationships are important aspects of inclusion					
B2.Teachers in my building participate in experiences designed in the area of inclusion to increase skills in the area of inclusive instruction.					

B3.Inclusive practice and instructional methodology are monitored and included in teacher evaluations in my building					
B4.School schedules allow for collaboration and planning by multi-disciplinary teams (special education teachers, general education teachers) for inclusive practice					
B5.When hiring, all prospective teachers are asked questions regarding inclusive practice and experience working with students with disabilities in general education classrooms					

Appendix C- Interview Guide

Demographics

Age

Gender

Metro/Rural/Urban

Grade levels

Major field of study

Distributive Justice

In what way are resources distributed in your school/district.

Characteristics of recipients?

Equal benefits to all regardless of characteristics of individuals

How do you define fairness?

Social Relationships

How do your programs develop typical/exceptional friendships and socialization

Teacher efficacy

How do you support teachers to be less apprehensive about fairness issues when working with students in inclusive programs?

How are teachers' supported and encouraged to share and receive critical feedback regarding practices?

What model does professional development follow regarding inclusive educational practices? Sit and get? I do, you do, we do?

Monitoring inclusive practices

In what ways do you support and model teachers using effective instructional accommodations in their classrooms?

Evaluations?

Leader knowledgeable about strategies?

How is teacher planning for neuro-diversity reflected in evaluation and planning documentation?

Craft

What are some examples of inclusive pedagogy in action? How would teachers articulate these practices? Supportive? useful?

In what ways is discourse or democratic dialogue promoted among staff?

Provide examples of how you support collaboration among staff.

Hiring

How do you ensure the people you hire are up for the challenge of meeting the needs of diverse learners?

How do you support new teachers in developing or maintaining an inclusive philosophy?

Social Justice Leadership

Describe where you engage in advocacy work

Appendix D- Informed Consent Documents

INFORMATION SHEET

Inclusion in New Hampshire Public Education: The impact of leader definition on student placement

Survey Participation

INVESTIGATOR(S) NAME: Christine R. Boston

STUDY TITLE: Inclusion in New Hampshire Public Education: The impact of leader definition on student placement

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to determine and understand the impact of public school principals' definition of inclusion on the placement of students with disabilities.

I am being asked to be a participant in the study because I am a public school principal in New Hampshire.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

I am being asked to participate in an online survey regarding principal attitude and definition of inclusion for students with disabilities.

The amount of time required to participate in the study is 30 minutes and participation in the study will require access to a computer.

There are no anticipated costs associated with being in study.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

As a participant in this study, there are no known risks. The researcher will not be able to link my responses to me and no records will link the information I provide back to you.

BENEFITS

There may be no direct benefits of participating in this study; however, the knowledge received may be of value to educators and students by understanding what impact principal definition of inclusion has on the placement of students with disabilities in inclusive settings

I may choose to participate or not. Additionally, I may choose to withdraw at any time. If I choose to withdraw after beginning the survey I can select an option to exit and no survey data will be saved or collected.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES

The alternative would be to not participate in the survey.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All documents and information pertaining to this research study will be kept confidential in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. I understand that data generated by the study may be reviewed by Plymouth State University's Institutional Review Board, which is the committee responsible for ensuring my welfare and rights as a research participant, to assure proper conduct of the study and compliance with university regulations. If any presentations or publication result from this research, I will not be identified by name.

The information collected during my participation in this study will be kept until the completion of the dissertation and then will be destroyed.

My confidentiality will be also protected through data storage on a password-protected computer in a locked office only accessible to the researcher.

TERMINATION OF PARTICIPATION

I may choose to withdraw from this study at any time and for any reason. If I choose to drop out of the study, I will contact the investigator and my research records will be destroyed. If this is an anonymous survey, research records cannot be destroyed following submission of the survey.

COMPENSATION

I will not receive payment for being in this study. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There will be no cost to me for participating in this research.

INJURY COMPENSATION

Neither Plymouth State University nor any government or other agency funding this research project will provide special services, free care, or compensation for any injuries resulting from this research. I understand that treatment for such injuries will be at my expense and/or paid through my medical plan.

QUESTIONS

All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction and if I have further questions about this study, I may contact Christine R. Boston, at 603-609-5173 or crboston@plymouth.edu. If I have any questions about the rights of research participants, I may call the Chairperson of the Plymouth State University's Institutional Review Board at 603-535-3221 (Valid until July 31, 2018).

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to me. I am free to withdraw or refuse consent, or to discontinue my participation in this study at anytime without penalty or consequence.

I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this research study. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form.

By clicking the « next » button below, you are indicating your consent to complete the survey.

Thank -you.

Christine R. Boston

Plymouth State University Ed.D. Candidate

Learning, Leadership, and Community

7 Shannon Drive

Nottingham, NH 03290

(603) 609-5173

crboston@plymouth.edu

Plymouth State University's IRB has approved the solicitation of participants for the study until August 23, 2017.

INFORMATION SHEET

Semi-Structured Interview

Inclusion in New Hampshire Public Education: The impact of leader definition on student placement

INVESTIGATOR(S) NAME: Christine R. Boston

STUDY TITLE: Inclusion in New Hampshire Public Education: The impact of leader definition on student placement

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to determine and understand the impact of public school principals' definition of inclusion on the placement of students with disabilities.

I am being asked to be a participant in the study because I am a public school principal in New Hampshire.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

I am being asked to participate in semi-structured interview regarding principal attitude and definition of inclusion for students with disabilities.

The amount of time required to participate in the study is 60-90 minutes and there are no known costs to me as a result of participation in the study.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

As a participant in this study, there are no known risks.

BENEFITS

There may be no direct benefits of participating in this study; however, the knowledge received may be of value to educators and students by understanding what impact principal definition of inclusion has on the placement of students with disabilities in inclusive settings

I may choose to participate or not. Additionally, I may choose to withdraw at any time. If I choose to withdraw after beginning the interview simply leave the interview and all responses will be destroyed.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES

The alternative would be to not participate in the interview.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All documents and information pertaining to this research study will be kept confidential in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. I understand that data generated by the study may be reviewed by Plymouth State University's Institutional Review Board, which is the committee responsible for ensuring my welfare and rights as a research participant, to assure proper conduct of the study and compliance with university regulations. If any presentations or publication result from this research, I will not be identified by name.

The information collected during my participation in this study will be kept until the completion of the dissertation and then will be destroyed.

My confidentiality will be also protected through data storage on a password-protected computer in a locked office only accessible to the researcher.

TERMINATION OF PARTICIPATION

I may choose to withdraw from this study at any time and for any reason. If I choose to drop out of the study, I will contact the investigator and my research records will be destroyed. If this is an anonymous survey, research records cannot be destroyed following submission of the survey.

COMPENSATION

I will not receive payment for being in this study. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. There will be no cost to me for participating in this research.

INJURY COMPENSATION

Neither Plymouth State University nor any government or other agency funding this research project will provide special services, free care, or compensation for any injuries resulting from this research. I understand that treatment for such injuries will be at my expense and/or paid through my medical plan.

QUESTIONS

All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction and if I have further questions about this study, I may contact Christine R. Boston, at 603-609-5173 or crboston@plymouth.edu. If I have any questions about the rights of research participants, I may call the Chairperson of the Plymouth State University's Institutional Review Board at 603-535-3221 (Valid until July 31, 2018).

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to me. I am free to withdraw or refuse consent, or to discontinue my participation in this study at anytime without penalty or consequence.

I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this research study. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form.

Thank-you.

Christine R. Boston
Plymouth State University Ed.D. Candidate
Learning, Leadership, and Community
7 Shannon Drive
Nottingham, NH 03290
(603) 609-5173
crboston@plymouth.edu

Signatures:

Participant's Name (Print)

Participant's Signature

Date

I, the undersigned, certify that to the best of my knowledge, the subject signing this consent form has had the study fully and carefully explained by me and have been given an opportunity to ask any questions regarding the nature, risks, and benefits of participation in this research study.

Christine R. Boston

Investigator's Name (Print)

Investigator's Signature

Date

Plymouth State University's IRB has approved the solicitation of participants for the study until August 23, 2017.