The Case of Context:

A Pragmatic, Mixed-Methods Study of

Inclusive Education's Imagined and

Context-specific learners in New South

Wales Australia

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By

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Abstract

While the idea of inclusion in education is noble and good, the theorization and pragmatics of its enactment are problematic for learning and teaching in specific locations and situations.

Research literature has reflected the aspirational, pragmatic and inquiry focus of inclusive education research over the decades. While having contributed to understanding the notion of context as inextricably related to the implementation of inclusive education, the research literature is not agreed on the theorization or specifics of the notion of context, nor on its complexity. This thesis reports on a case study that investigated the case of context in which inclusion is enacted in Australia's compulsory years of formal schooling.

In the enactment of inclusive education, this study's theoretical framework established that the case of context is complex (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1999), consisting of multivariable and multidimensional factors which emerge from studying a range of specific locations and situations. These factors of the case of context were conceptualized as: i) consisting of imagined and actual learners, curriculum, capabilities, and conceptual worlds, and ii) co-occurring in the processes and procedures of formal schooling.

Methodologically, a convergent mixed-methods research design was implemented to address three research questions: (1) How is the learner imagined?; (2) What other markers of context characterize the learner?; (3) What does this imply for inclusive education in the context of formal schooling? (Fetters, Curry & Creswell, 2013). This design used parallel document and demographic data analysis, and subsequent merging and theme-by-theme integration of findings.

Results were found to be divergent, providing alternative understandings of learner, curriculum and formal schooling in the enactment of inclusive education. Interpretation provided insights into educational advantage, learner access to communication field and flow, learner presence and performance in formal schooling, and the possibility of diverse conceptual worlds involved in formal schooling. In its contribution to the field, the thesis provides a nuanced, interrogative way of challenging disparate world views and understandings of inclusive education held by academics, parents, and educational practitioners. Its alternative insights theorize a new analytic framework to address aspirational and pragmatic understandings of the enactment of inclusive education.

Declaration of Authorship and Originality

I, the undersigned author, declare that all of the research and discussion presented in this thesis is original work performed by the author. No content of this thesis has been submitted or considered either in whole or in part, at any tertiary institute or university for a degree or any other category of award. I also declare that any material presented in this thesis performed by another person or institute has been referenced and listed in the reference section.

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Julie A. Hollitt   Date

Publications & Conference Presentations: Relevant to thesis content

Hollitt, J. (2012). Practitioners, learning difference and regional and remote inclusive education settings: A pro-active analysis of the research and policy literature. Paper session, 42nd Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) APERA Conference, Sydney, Australia.

Hollitt, J. (2015). Where the wild things are: Sustaining practice in the loneliest place. In K. Trimmer, A. L. Black & S. Riddle, Editors. *Mainstreams, margins and the Spaces In-between: New possibilities for education research*, pp. 66–80, London: Routledge.

Hollitt, J. & Harreveld, B. (2018). An alternative reading of inclusive education: Context-specific and curriculum-likely learners. Paper session, *Inclusion and exclusion: Resources for educational research?,* ECER EERA Conference, Bolzano, Italy.

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Copyright Statement

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Table of Acronyms and Initialisms

AARE	Australian Association for Research in Education
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AEDI	Australian Early Development Index
BOCSAR	Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
CA	Capability Approach
CBD	Central Business District
DOTE	Dropping Off the Edge
EERA	European Educational Research Association
ECER	European Conference on Educational Research
FT	Full Time
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HSC	Higher School Certificate
MET	Meadowbank Education Trust (Brethren School)
MKO	More Knowledgeable Other
MMR	Mixed-Methods Research
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy
NMS	National Minimum Standard
NSW	New South Wales
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PT	Part Time
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

A Thesis in Three Parts

This thesis is presented in three parts. Part I lays the foundations for the investigation of the case study of the enactment of inclusive education, outlining the problem to be addressed by the thesis and the inclusive education literature review. Also included are the theoretical perspectives and research approach underpinning the case study. Part II reports the findings of the document analysis investigating the characteristics of the imagined learner and of the demographic analysis investigating the context-specific learner from outside-of-the-box locations. The final part, Part III, discusses the implications of these understandings in relation to the practice of inclusive education, and the possibilities for future research.

Part I

The initial part of the thesis, Part I, consists of four chapters including the introduction, the literature review of inclusive education, an account of theoretical perspectives, and the research method approach. The introduction (Chapter 1) outlines the problem posed by context to the enactment of inclusive education. The literature review (Chapter 2) summarizes different treatments of the conceptualization of inclusive education, especially in relation to the learner, formal schooling and curriculum. The chapter, *Theoretical Perspectives* (Chapter 3), uses several theorists to explore and define key terms used by this research, including the notions of learner and context, conceptual development, formal schooling, curriculum, and capabilities. The final chapter of Part I (Chapter 4), explains the mixed-methods research design, and the rationale for and defence of its use.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Prelude

Early in my career as a teacher, I met Rita. She caught me by surprise. She was in my class for six weeks, as she had come to town for a family funeral. She was 12 years old, and her reading and writing was like that of a 6-year old. It was my first year of teaching, and I was lost, overwhelmed by what I did not know and could not do for this learner.

When I walked past Rita and her work, I would feel shame as I could see that no matter what we did in class, she was struggling, and I felt as though I was contributing to that struggle. She was alone in her differences and, while I could walk past her desk and see her struggle, I was at sea, unable to get anywhere near what she needed from me.

I checked with the support teacher and, sure enough, Rita was not known to have any identifiable reasons why she was so far behind the other learners and, because she was only there for six weeks, there seemed to be no curiosity about such reasons. In my encounter with her, the realm of what Rita knew remains, to this day, very unknown to me. As for what I knew, at the time of meeting Rita, there is no way of ascertaining whether or not that ever became familiar to Rita. Rita's normal was not my normal, and my normal was not Rita's normal.

As a physical presence, Rita was included in the space of the classroom, but her context-specific learning was likely not included, and perhaps had a long history of not being included. Her academic skill deficits were measurable in the classroom, but the knowledge she did bring was not. Rita was *in* the classroom, but *not in* the curriculum or lesson plan or daily teacher practice of a rookie teacher. She was in the intention of inclusion, but not the practice.

After six weeks, Rita went back to her actual home, and her desk was removed from the classroom. There has always been a 'Rita-like' space in the spaces in which I have learnt and taught ever since.

1.1 The Problem for Formal Schooling which Intends to be Inclusive

Inclusive education—in its many understandings (to be explored in Chapter 2)—has the intention of focusing on all learners, *including learners* who carry diversity in culture, religion,

ability, gender, sexual orientation, language and thinking processes. In the words of Artiles and Kozleski (2016, p. 3), who write on the 'promises and trajectories' of inclusive education in the USA, the challenge of inclusive education has been "to design and implement educational systems that would be responsive to the characteristics, needs, and interests of students that represent the widest spectrum of human variability". In practical terms in classrooms and schools, however, the scope and degree of inclusive education seems to draw lines between who is *eligible* for inclusion and who is not, who meets categorical definitions of difference, and who will be situated in a mainstream classroom and who will not (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). As Singal (2005) notes in her research mapping of inclusive education in India, it can appear to be inclusive of categories rather than of the learner and their context.

It has been argued by researchers (Barton, 1997; Slee & Weiner, 2011; Slee, 2012), that inclusive education has a politically constituted tendency to use the conceptualization and mechanisms of exclusion to achieve its intention of inclusion: in practice, inclusive education appears to be a different creature to the aspiration of social inclusion (Slee, 2006b). Early in inclusive education research, Barton (1997) identified the imperatives of education in practice as political in nature, involving "choices, prioritizations and the allocation of human and material resources" (p. 231). Education that intends to be inclusive can include some visible elements of the learners in the classroom, while leaving other elements of the learners out. Resource allocation and use (e.g., the desk and the teacher in the mainstream classroom) may be the planning and decision-making markers of inclusion, but what of the beliefs and values of curriculum and pedagogy in relation to the beliefs and values of learner context and knowledge? Resources are the most easily and obviously planned in relation to what a learner does not have (i.e., in relation to clearly defined learner deficits) and in order to better support their full participation. Alternatively, a learner's desire and need to participate in formal schooling might be better served and included if the planning and decision-making began with what the learner does have (i.e., pre-existing knowledge and experience from a context that is different to the expectations of the teacher and the teacher's knowledge and tools).

Formal schooling that is intended to be inclusive has a problem: it can have the physical appearance of social inclusion but perhaps not the practice of multidimensional social inclusion (which Barton (1997, p. 234) identified as the "how, where and why, and with what consequences, we educate *all* pupils"). The problem for formal schooling that wishes to be inclusive is a relational problem between *learner* context and the *learning* context of formal schooling. Context is the dimension of inclusive education that carries the uneasy conflict

between its intention and its contextual practice because, in the words of Slee and Weiner (2011), " … context confuses and unsettles our explanatory frames" (p. 95). As such, the importance of context to this thesis will be further developed in Chapter 3 where it is theorized in detail, and in Chapters 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 where it is the driving force of the secondary data collection and analysis.

1.1.1 Curiosity about the Context-Specific Learner

As a young adult learning to teach, I was taught to assume that the learner is learning something even though it may not be the formal learning that is intended, or something I am able to measure. The teacher will not always definitively know what any learner knows or is learning. Learners do not always learn as they are expected to. Learners do not always progress in learning at the rate expected by the processes of formal schooling. My early career experience with Rita (from the Prelude) brought me face to face with the lack of knowledge I, as a practitioner, had of a school-aged learner who did not meet the expectations of formal schooling, but who had known and learnt for all of her 12 years. Rita's knowledge and learning were 'outside-of-the-box' for me—her context and my context were markedly different. Rita was outside of my experience as a person, and as a teacher.

Across all of the locations in which I have worked in different roles as an educational practitioner, individual learners who presented a mismatch between learning and expectations of learning have always made me curious. What has been even more curious to me were entire schools where much of the learner population presented a mismatch between their actual learning and the expectations of learning. I became practised in thinking of such schools as outside-of-the-box. The learners seemed capable, but the overall results on national testing for reading and numeracy indicated otherwise.

Educational practitioners' curiosity about what learners already know prior to their day in a school setting, and what other they are building while they are witnessing and participating in formal schooling, is by no means a new phenomenon (Avis, 1995; Morgan & Slade, 1998; Henson, 2003; Chronaki, 2005; Bahou, 2016). Well known in research also, is the emotional disturbance caused in the educational practitioner who is tasked with planning for and working with the learner whose knowledge and learning is contrary to the expectations of the teacher, the school, the educational authority or the curriculum (Palmer, 1998; Tanaka, 2015).

It is not defensible to claim that curiosity and emotional disturbance in the educational practitioner (or in the educational community) arises because the learner belongs to a certain category such as deficit, disability or disadvantage (cf Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2008;

Talaska, Fiske & Chaiken, 2008) or (in Australia, at least) because the learner is from the category known as 'rural and remote': that this learner's deficits in basic academic skills testing results are due to the disadvantage of distance (Roberts, 2017). Neither is it defensible to claim that in outside-of-the-box schools the deficit lies with the educational instruction and, therefore, with all of the teachers who plan and deliver formal education within those schools.

When considering inclusive education for all learners, a better starting point may be to consider that which they all have in common, rather than considering what some of the learners do not have (i.e., deficit, dis/ability, dis/advantage). The element common to all learners is that of context: although any learner's context may be highly particular to themselves, the fact that they have context is one of the few shared common denominators across all individuals. It is not, of course, that all learners share the same context, but that they each live and learn in their context. In some specific instances (from my experience with outside-of-the-box schools[1]), the learners also shared a common context of a town or a specific geographical area or suburb. This thesis proposes that the context of the learner has to be better known in order to better understand what the context-specific learner knows, does not know, and is separately and independently learning to that which they are expected to learn in formal schooling. In this way, an outside-of-the-box school is understood to be representative of its location, and school-aged learners from these locations together make up an outside-of-the-box learner population. What may be known about an outside-of-the-box context (i.e., school, location, population) may indicate contextual markers that help characterize the context-specific learners from these contexts.

For the researcher of this thesis, outside-of-the-box locations and populations, and the schools situated there, have become especially interesting in that, having so many learners that are not performing as expected while still seeming capable, they are contexts that may be assumed to have aspects that are common to most (if not all) learners attending these schools. In this sense, these schools are considered outside-of-the-box. These schools enable the curious mind to investigate and better understand the learner and their knowledge and learning specific to that context. They enable the curious to get closer to the aspects of context learning and knowledge that are not congruent with the assumptions of

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[1] Other researchers have used synonyms for 'outside-of-the-box' in relation to schools, contexts and learners in the field of inclusive education. By way of example, Slee (2011) refers to 'irregular' schools in his research on exclusion, schooling and inclusive education, while Artiles and Dyson (2005) write of 'different cultural contexts' (p. 5).

the learner and their knowledge that are inherent in the processes and delivery of formal schooling.

1.1.2 The Problem: The Known and the Unknown

The problem for inclusive education is that, while the idea of inclusion in education is noble and good, the pragmatics of its enactment are problematic for learning and teaching within contexts.

Thus, in its efforts to be inclusive in both name and practice, education carries an inherent problem. Inclusion in education foregrounds exclusion in education: to be included one has first to be understood as outside of some expectation or established measure (Slee & Allan, 2001; Graham & Slee, 2008) and, as Hardy and Woodcock (2014) write, such expectations and measures are determined according to discourses of difference, diversity and deficit.

Practice is about acting in context (Schön, 1983; Crossley, 2010) and, in educational practice, inclusion is practiced with reference to a context of policy, diverse persons, systems, situations, locations and research which is often problematic to its respective stakeholders (Slee, 2001b), including the learner. This thesis addresses the problem that various contexts present to the practice of inclusion in education by pursuing an understanding of education that is inclusive of both the curriculum-imagined learner and the context-specific learner.

For either teacher or learner, what is known is that which is familiar, customary, and perfunctory in any situational or location context, and that which is unknown is so because it has not yet been experienced, lived or learnt in a context. The following chapters explore the pre-existing and documented known of learner contexts from specific locations that cause discomfort to the educational practitioner who has lived and worked in those settings. In this way, the thesis explores the uncomfortable problem of inclusive education for the practitioner who may be tripped up in their inclusive intent by the learner from specific contexts who does not meet expectations.

This thesis seeks to better understand the norm, and that which is normal, in contexts in which formal schooling occurs, and in the context-specific learner grappling with the relationship between their valued pre-existing knowledge and learning (the known) and the knowledge and learning valued by formal schooling (at least some of which is unknown).

For educational practitioners, normal is not as predictable as the language of formal schooling (e.g., the language and conceptualizations of the learner in the Australian

Curriculum) might imagine it to be. The apparent differences of a learner (e.g., that they have below expected literacy skills) are easily ascertained by observation or data trawling. However, the easily observed, easily measured differences of a learner do not necessarily convey the gossamer of unique context-specific differences which determine the power of the capability differences between the knowledge-ready consumer of expected learning and the context-specific learner caught out of their familiar context with ill-adapted capabilities.

1.1.3 Justification: The Emergence of Knowledge through Reconsidering Context

Knowledge about the learner's pre-existing knowledge is assumed to emerge from considering the learner conceptualized in the process of formal schooling (say, through the curriculum) with the actual learner situated in a context-specific classroom (say, a learner from a specific context such as Lithgow, New South Wales (NSW)). This thesis mirrors a pathway that practitioner curiosity may take about any learner who is included in formal schooling but who does not readily fulfil the expectations of formal schooling. It allows a predisposition in the practitioner to think about the learner less as subject and more as participant in education, thus allowing the learner who does not meet expectations to be conceptualized as a context-specific learner, who bears knowledge, thinking and other capabilities that may well be distinctively other than that knowledge and thinking which is valued in formal schooling. In the process and programming of formal schooling, that which is foundational and elemental to the context-specific learner might be mistakenly conceptualized as an absence of knowledge, thinking and capabilities. This is not to say that that which is foundational and elemental to the learner (and perceived by the processes of formal schooling as an absence of knowledge, thinking and capabilities) is either valid or valuable, however, there is no way of knowing without finding a way to know, which is fundamental to the work of this thesis.

1.2 Aim of this Research

The problem for inclusive education is that while the idea of inclusion in education is noble and good, the pragmatics of its enactment are problematic for learning and teaching within contexts. The enactment of inclusive education in Australia is presaged and guided by a national curriculum which is a framework document, mandated for all schools across all jurisdictions, and from which school-specific curricula are developed and against which all those curricula are evaluated. Within the framework of this national curriculum, inclusive education is authorized approved, endorsed and therefore enacted.

This study aims to investigate the case of context as *the* arena in which inclusion's enactment is problematic due to the tension between expectations of the learner and the actuality of the learner in formal schooling. Table 1.1 below summarizes this thesis in relation to the problem it addresses, the aim it intended to achieve, and the research questions and objectives by which it was guided. This table also indicates the chapters of the thesis which address the relevant research questions and objectives.

1.2.1 The Research Questions (RQs)

Three research questions were formulated to examine the problem of the aspirations of inclusive education and the pragmatics of its enactment. Table 1.1 below presents the purposefully generative research questions, objectives through which they were deployed, and relevant chapters through which they were explored. Research Question 1 (RQ1) starts the investigation with examination of a national curriculum framework document that is mandated for all schools in the compulsory years of formal schooling through which inclusive education is endorsed and sanctioned. Research Question 2 (RQ2) then extends the investigation to other markers of context (as represented through demographic data sets from six locations, culminating in Research Question 3 (RQ3) which explores the implications for inclusive education in the context of formal schooling in Australia.

Table 1.1 The Thesis 'Road Map': A Summary of the Problem, Aim, Research Questions, Objectives and Relevant Chapters

Research Questions (RQ's)	Objectives	Relevant Chapters of Thesis Addressing RQs & Objectives
Problem: That while the idea of inclusion is noble and good, the pragmatics of its enactment are problematic for learning and teaching in context.		
Aim: To investigate a case study of context in which inclusion is enacted in education.		
RQ1: How is the learner imagined?	(a) Identified and justified the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum And Reporting Authority, 2016b) as the formal schooling document common to all Australian schools and a norm of formal schooling.	Chapters 2, 5
	(b) Analyzed and justified the choice of a section of the Australian Curriculum (*General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum*, ACARA 2013/2014, pp. 1–18) that described the learner as imagined in the Australian Curriculum.	Chapters 3, 5
RQ2:	(c) Selected six locations known to the researcher and justified through a	Chapters 2, 4

Problem: That while the idea of inclusion is noble and good, the pragmatics of its enactment are problematic for learning and teaching in context.		
Aim: To investigate a case study of context in which inclusion is enacted in education.		
What other markers of context characterize the learner?	review of the contextual and conceptual literature. (d) Identified and analyzed thematically demographic data available in the public domain that related to each of the locations in which the context-specific learner could be imagined.	Chapters 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9
RQ3: What does this imply for inclusive education in the context of formal schooling?	(e) Established congruence/incongruence between the learner imagined in the curriculum and the context-specific learner by merging themes from parallel data analysis.	Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

1.3 Scope and Limitations

This research is a case study conducted in a pragmatic vein of investigation, analysis and interpretation. It is a study that intends to arrive at another understanding of the learner, curriculum and formal schooling in the enactment of inclusive education to those understandings already available in the research literature.

The scope of this study is framed by the problem as outlined in *1.1.2 The Problem: The Known and the Unknown*. This framing has understood the enactment of inclusive education in Australia as being executed through the implementation of the national curriculum and involving learners from specific contexts in formal schooling.

The justification for this study (as indicated in *1.1.3 The Emergence of Knowledge Through Reconsidering Context*) lies in the experience of the researcher with learners in very specific contexts. The researcher's experience had taught her to be curious about that which context-specific learners know that might not be the identical knowledge of the learner imagined in formal schooling, the curriculum or the practice of inclusive education. The researcher was interested in identifying a way of knowing context-specific learners that might be of use to other practitioners in a variety of situations and contexts.

The research questions (see *1.2.1 The Research Questions*) provided the broad scope and bounds of investigation implemented in this thesis. The objectives linked with the research questions (as indicated in *Table 1.1*) signalled the specific selection and limitations applied to the document and demographic data sources used, and also signalled the specific merging of understandings from the thematic analysis of the data.

This research was purposefully limited to: a specific section of the Australian Curriculum that described the general capabilities of the learner; six specific locations in New South Wales, Australia (i.e., Brewarrina, Cobar, Condobolin, Lake Munmorah, Lithgow and Ulladulla); and three specific practitioners each of whom were familiar with at least one of the research locations. These research elements were chosen with a view to making the most of a counter-balance between official and publicly documented knowledge, informal knowledge including awareness of what is not yet known, and official and unofficial language.

As this Australian-situated research investigated the concepts of normal or expected learning, the imagined learner, and the actual learner in specific contexts, a comparative norm document was required that was relevant to all of the educational settings and all of the learners in those settings. This norm document had to reflect the reality that, regardless of the orientation of each school (each of the location schools included both government and non-government schools), it was nonetheless a norm document that could be assumed to be used by all settings. The most obvious norm document was the *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b) as it guides and directs educational delivery across all formal schooling settings in Australia. The *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2013/2014) is the section of the Australian Curriculum that was selected as the text which comprehensively exemplifies the official language and conceptualizations concerning the expectations of the imagined learner. A sampling approach was used with this text and will be described in further detail in Chapter 4, *Research Approach*. This use of the norm document represented one of the objective elements of this research.

The researcher chose research locations that were known to her from an in situ experiential perspective, having spent time in each of the locations and working in at least one of the location's schools over a period of time. The research locations had to be outside-of-the-box locations in that the researcher had experienced them as locations that posed challenges to her pre-existing knowledge and skills as a practitioner in inclusive education. This represented the experiential element of this research.

The practitioner participants used for the purposes of member-checking the understandings emerging from the thematic analysis were required to be known by the researcher over a period of time in order that the Bakhtinian conversation (see Chapter 3 of this thesis) could be as close to a dialogue between equals, using both official and unofficial language in their interaction with each other about the context-specific learner. This was the validity element of this research, based on experiential factors, and used to confirm or disconfirm the themes which the analysis of the official data of the Australian Curriculum and demographics provided.

This study was not meant to provide conclusive findings in a purely positivist sense, nor interpretations in a purely constructivist sense. It sought to increase understanding of the learner imagined in the curriculum and of the context-specific learner in the enactment of inclusive education using a pragmatic paradigm (using a mixed-methods design). As a research study, it was limited to the use of secondary data readily available in the public domain: data that may be equitably understood and used by any member of the public to apprehend an approximation of the reality of the imagined and the context-specific learner. The specific limitations of using secondary data are more specifically addressed in Chapter 4. The secondary data was subjected to content analysis and interpretation, and then checked against member knowledge to ascertain the trustworthiness of the secondary data analysis. Primary data (such as data collected from context-specific learners or their teachers) was not usedas, at this stage of research, it was considered that it would introduce a subjectivity that was pre-emptive of groundwork research not yet done. This research had first to establish a foundational and objective understanding of the learner as imagined in the curriculum and the context-specific learner as indicated in already-existing data.

The collection of secondary data was time limited, including data from the public domain that reported context-specific demographics between 2012 and 2016[2]. Populations and public documentation change over time and, as far as possible, this time limitation was determined so as to strengthen the comparability of context factors over a consistent period of time for each location and the learners from each location. This was the other objective element of this research.

Regardless of the elements of this research that were able to be controlled to some extent, other elements remained outside of the control of the researcher. The populations of the locations and their schools changed over the 2012 to 2016 time period, some reporting of already-existing data was removed from the web-based data for reasons based on the science of statistics (e.g., the town population was considered too small), and the expert members used for member-checking did not share identical experiences in relation to locations or learners.

This study did not include all existing inclusive education literature as this body of literature is enormous and was not all relevant to the bounds of context considered for the purposes of

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[2] This time frame was chosen for three reasons: firstly to obtain a picture over time (i.e., over five years) of influences and factors on specific location rather than a snapshot, secondly to keep the data collection consistent across locations, and thirdly to finalize the point at which data collection stopped for the convenience of conducting the analysis and interpretation of a specifically delineated data set in adequate time for thesis completion.

this investigation. The choice of the key theoretical perspectives to which this study was limited (i.e. Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Bourdieu and Sen) did not include all possible nor previously utilized theoretical perspectives associated with the field of inclusive educationby other researchers. The methodological approach using a mixed-methods design, while not necessarily the approach favoured or used by other inclusive education researchers, excluded the use of other possible methods and techniques that might otherwise have been utilized. More specific attention to the scope and limitations of the literature review (see Chapter 2), theoretical perspectives (see Chapter 3), and methodological approach (see Chapter 4) are dealt with in the relevant chapters that follow.

Absences of knowledgein the literature and practice of inclusive education have sharpened the focus of this research. These absences have been treated as valuable to the research in that they mark grounds for better understanding the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education. The absences are also valuable as indicators of where future conversations are required in developing a truer understanding of education that includes the context-specific learner equitably with the learner imagined in the curriculum.

1.4 Overview of Thesis

This thesis consists of 10 chapters presented in three parts. Part I lays the foundations for the investigation of the learner as imagined and context-specific. Part II reports the understandings of the imagined learner and the context-specific learner from outside-of-the-box schools drawn from content analysis of data and checked against the understanding of expert practitioners in inclusive education. The final part, Part III, discusses the implications of these understandings in relation to inclusive education, and the possibilities for future research.

The initial part of the thesis, Part I, consists of the introduction, the literature review, the theoretical perspectives and the methodological approach of this research. Chapter 2 explores existing literature of inclusive education, and Chapter 3 outlines theorization about the context-specific learner, and capabilities of human beings. These chapters foreground the need for an alternative conceptualization of the learner in the enactment of inclusive education. The final chapter of Part I, Chapter 4, takes the reader on a tour of what methods of investigation were used, and the rationale and defence for the use of these methods. As such, Chapter 4 outlines an approach that practitioners might take in pursuing their curiosity about the discomfort of not knowing how to proceed with the context-specific learner who is not the curriculum-imagined learner.

The second part of the thesis, Part II, presents and interprets the understandings that have emerged from this research. In particular, Part II incorporates: the content analysis of the Australian Curriculum (2016), yielding the profile of the curriculum-imagined learner; and, the four major themes typifying the context-specific learner from 'outside-of-the-box' locations. So as to ease the reader into the intensity of the chapters dealing with the curriculum-imagined learner (Chapter 5) and the major themes of the context-specific learner (Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9), all of the Chapters of Part II are introduced by a Preface which foregrounds the findings contained in the next five chapters. Chapter 5 discusses the curriculum-imagined learner. Each of the subsequent four chapters (Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9) establishes its own major theme as they have been interpreted from the research process: Chapter 6 discusses *Stacked Disadvantage*, Chapter 7 discusses *Social Geographic Isolation*, Chapter 8 discusses *Fading*, while Chapter 9 discusses *Conceptual Poverty*.

Part III of this thesis consists of the final chapter (which provides an account of the meaning of this research to practice and to future research), the list of relevant references used throughout the thesis, and the supporting appendices. Chapter 10 of Part III brings the preceding chapters to a conclusion, outlining the implications of the findings and the value of this research approach to future investigations into the context-specific learner and their connection to an inclusive education.

Altogether, the chapters mirror the process of dialogue between formal knowledge (in the form of official data from research literature, formal documentation and demographics as related to the learner, the curriculum and formal schooling) and informal knowledge (of the discomforted practitioner with experience in 'outside-of-the-box' contexts) as the practitioner embarks on the conceptualization of inclusion of the curriculum-imagined *and* context-specific learner in formal schooling. The chapters thus mirror a Bakhtinian dialogue, in that they pursue better understanding through the interaction of language forms (i.e., the interaction of officially documented language with informal language) driven by practitioner curiosity about the learner who learns differently to that which is expected (Bakhtin, 1994, 2004).

Finally, the dialogic process undertaken by this research and the ensuing thesis chapters has required one further note.

Counterintuitively perhaps, the voices that contribute to the dialogue attended to by this research have not included the actual voices or narratives of the learner or the practitioner currently situated in the outside-of-the-box locations. There was good reason for this. The researcher wanted a focused but dispassionate and objective voice acting as a

counterbalance and check to her affectively weighted experience and identification of outside-of-the-box locations and their context-specific learners. She not only wanted this, but needed it to check and fine-tune what she interpreted her pre-research, in situ experience to mean. At this first stage of researching this area, the voices of the learners and practitioners would likely have acted to reinforce the researcher's emotional disturbance and, further, have acted as supporting struts to the researcher interpretation of proscribed learner ability in formal schooling. In other words, it would have simply reiterated her pre-research interpretation of learner difficulties for learners from outside-of-the-box locations. The researcher wanted to deliberately resist this seductive and notionally logical choice of dialogical method, and to proceed within a more post positivist frame of research, searching for what is probably true rather than that which is simply (and really) experienced as true by the subject. So, the voices of the learners and practitioners from such settings is likely a follow-on research project to this one, exploring the experience of reality of outside-of-the-box locations *after* establishing the likely accuracy of that reality on learners participating in formal schooling.

That one of the contributing voices to the dialogue of this research is the voice of already-existing data (here considered a formal, official language expression about the formative context of the learner) rather than primary data from situated learners and practitioners may be a unique contribution to researching true understanding of the learner, the curriculum and formal schooling in the enactment of inclusive education.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This research was interested in the field of inclusive education as it pertained to its enactment in specific elements of context. In this chapter, 'context' is understood as a generalized notion of the social settings *where* inclusive education is enacted, and this understanding is reflected in the research literature here reviewed. It is understood as both *learner* and *learning* context.

Of particular interest to this literature review were the use and relationship of the terms and concepts of curriculum, learner and formal schooling in the inclusive education research literature, as these were taken to be the specific elements of context bounded by this study. It is important to acknowledge that, as this research and thesis developed, the concept of context became increasingly troublesome, and then increasingly complex. The 'troublesome' elements of context are discussed later in this chapter (under 2.4.2 *Contextual variation*), while the complexity of the conceptualization of context is dealt with in detail in Chapter 3.

Figure 2.1 below provides a diagrammatic representation of the specific areas of interest to this research and, therefore, of interest to the literature review for this thesis.
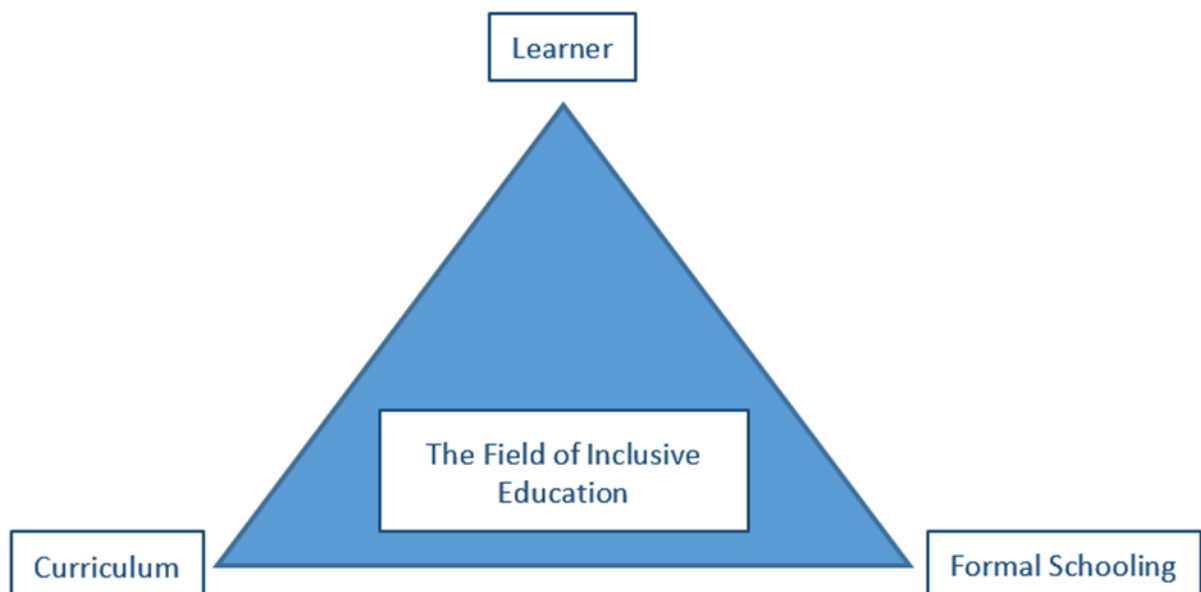
Figure 2-1 Research areas of relevance to the thesis

The research literature encompassing the technical, theoretical, and conceptual knowledge of inclusion in education is extensive. Specifically searching under *SU Subject Terms* only, (with the time limitation of 1990 to 2018), the search term 'inclusion in education' was applied to relevant electronic databases[3] held by EBSCOHost database. This search elicited over 5,800 results. This vast body of research literature was refined to literature written in English.

There was a range of inclusive education research that was considered out-of-scope for this literature review. Literature that addressed inclusive education in relation to teacher education, pedagogical practices at the local and particular levels, specific or general reasonable adjustments and adaptations, curriculum interpretations, or the perceptions, views, beliefs or attitudes of practitioners, parents or learners was generally excluded (with two exceptions retained for illustrative purposes). These latter-mentioned examples of inclusive education literature were not considered as they were deemed outside of the bounds of the specific focus of inclusive education and context interests of this study.

Other deliberate exclusions were articles from magazines and news sources: though interesting, these were not useful as resources for this thesis. After this, only peer reviewed research literature was retained to increase the validity of the claims and concepts used therein. Finally, the research literature was further refined to include items which demonstrated a specific research focus on inclusive education (approximately 1,760 research items), curriculum and inclusive education (fewer than 20 research items), or the learner, context and inclusive education (approximately 200 research items), or any combination of these three elements. Further to this, research was included on the basis of references listed in the reference lists of the abovementioned selected research literature, while other literature (such as literature from the United Nations, and literature from the *International Journal of Inclusive Education*) was researched due its historical significance in the uptake of inclusive education on a national and international scale.

This first topic in this chapter is an historical account of the foundations of inclusive education research literature. This is followed by a functional analysis of themes and understandings contained therein using a form of systematic and workable grouping into three research literature categories (aspirational, pragmatic and inquiry). The chapter concludes with conceptualizations of learner, curriculum and formal schooling evidenced in

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[3] Relevant databases were Education Research Complete, Academic Search Complete, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), ERIC, PsycARTICLES, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycINFO, SocINDEX with Full Text, Teacher Reference Center, Academic Search Ultimate, Humanities Source Ultimate, Sociology Source Ultimate, eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost)

the literature of inclusive education, and a summary of that which is included and that which is excluded in this extensive literature.

2.2 An Account of the Historical Foundation of Inclusive Education

The post-World War II emergence of the United Nations (UN) saw an international, inter-governmental body committed to cooperatively re-developing the countries battered by the war, and to strengthening developing nations as a preventative measure in relation to conflict between and within nations, and so that possible future wars might be averted. Among other international bodies and resolutions of the UN emerged the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with its first constitution ratified in late 1945. In this constitution, the member nations documented their belief in:

> … full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, … to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives. (UNESCO, 1945, 2014, p. 5)

The abovementioned 'education for all' phrase was likely not the beginning of the conceptualization of inclusivity in education, however, its initial use (UNESCO, 1945, 2014) pre-dated other early literature (Bank-Mikkelson, 1969; Nirje, 1970; Wolfensberger, 1972; UNESCO 1990; Warnock, 1975) which contributed a formative role to the conceptualization of inclusive education research and literature. As Slee (2006b) notes, there were dissatisfied rumblings about the segregation of people with disability being documented in the 1980s (Galloway, 1982; Oliver, 1983; Tomlinson, 1981, 1982), which pre-dated the actual use of the term 'inclusive' (in relation to 'regular schools') that emerged from the UNESCO World Conference on Special Education, Spain and its *Salamanca Statement* (UNESCO, 1994, p. ix).

In its evolution, the conceptualization of inclusive education has likely built over time from numerous theoretical positions and networks of dialogue, gradually formalised via global gatherings of scholars of sociology, education and culture, governmental ministers of education and political lobby groups. The subsequent philosophical understanding of inclusive education practice (Cigman, 2007; Warnock, 1991), and the actual implementation of inclusive education on-the-ground in specific regions, locations, schools, classrooms and playgrounds (Slee & Cook, 1993a; Urwick & Elliott, 2010), has long been contested.

Florian Kiuppis, a researcher in the theories, concepts and methods of inclusive education, writes of the historical transnational association of the principle of inclusion with disability (Kiuppis, 2014), the language of which can be quite muddled in the related literature concerning this association (Slee, 2004). Kiuppis's (2014) analysis outlines the transnational history of inclusion in education from the UNESCO post-war international aspiration of 'education for all' (UNESCO 1945, 2014) and its World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand (UNESCO, 1990), as being until recently quite separate from the history of education for learners with disability. Commitment to the latter emerged from the UNESCO World Conference on Special Education, held in Salamanca, Spain, and was expressed most significantly through the *Salamanca Statement* (UNESCO, 1994). In this analysis, Kiuppis (2014) has documented the conceptual changes that have occurred "from traditional special (needs) education to inclusive education" (p. 746) over 20 years of evolution in the UNESCO documentation, thus connecting the historical transnational foundations of inclusive education with the current globalized intentions for inclusive education (Kiuppis & Peters, 2014). The internationalization of inclusive education on the world stage has been furthered in more recent years through the burgeoning establishment of global education reform and the development of national curriculum with the express intention of preparing local citizens for global marketization (Barton, 1997; Lingard, 2007; Graham & Slee, 2008; Slee & Weiner, 2011).

2.3 Analytic Categories of an Extensive Literature

Both the historical and epistemological provenance of inclusive education are contested, so it is no surprise that contestation continues in current research about conceptualizations of inclusive education and its target population— all learners or only those learners with disability. In Kiuppis' (2014) words, "a debate reflected both in the literature and in the wider public about the target population of inclusive education … persists until today" (p. 747). Subsequently, inclusive education research is characterized by epistemological confusion, demonstrating a range of inclusive education positions (Slee & Allan, 2001). The diversity of these inclusive education positions contribute to the paradox of inclusive education policy and practice: where inclusion can involve practices of delimitation, categorization and exclusion (Slee & Allan, 2001; Wendelborg & Tøssebro, 2010). In the words of Slee and Allan (2001), "To those entering the field (of inclusive education) … the attention to positioning must seem bewildering, if not ironic, for a field describing itself as inclusive" (p. 142).

As the research representing the inspiration, conceptualization and implementation of inclusive education is extensive and nascent with 'fracture and fragmentation' (Slee & Allan,

2001), attempts to systematize and synthesize it as a related body of work is challenging and challengeable. For analytic purposes in this thesis, three analytic categories of knowledge about inclusive education were constructed. Each category provides a lens into the complexities of conceptualizing the field of inclusive education through its formalisation in schooling, the curriculum on offer, and the learners who are to be included. It is important to stress, at this point, the delineations of categories of research literature explicated by this researcher by no means summarize the theoretical positions of the respective authors, nor proscribe the extent of the authors' research or thinking to what is a functional category. They are aimed at identifying the common ground of that which the literature addresses rather than that which the authors may ascribe to as an understanding of inclusive education. Each piece of literature used in this review is treated as a stand-alone piece and cannot be taken to reflect the complexity of theorization that its authors engage in across their published works. Limitations of this approach are acknowledged (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). First, all categorizations run the risk of insufficient nuance and generality in their representations of often complex ideas, aims, questions, and research purposes reflected in the different types of literature. Second, categorizations can mask the complexity inherent in the diverse methodologies which can contribute to a perceived lack of rigour, in/accuracies, and even bias. Third the data to be negotiated are varied in type, amount, and manner/s of representation.

With the limitations acknowledged, it is essential for the reader to understand that these functional categories have been constructed for the purposes of this research only, to better enable a systematic analysis of a research literature that uses diverse epistemological positions to think about learners. Table A.1 *Summary of Analytic Markers and Literature of Inclusive Education* (found in Appendix A) summarizes the categorization of inclusive education literature of relevance to this thesis.

As can be observed in Table A.1 (Appendix A), the knowledge categories of inclusive education (aspirational, pragmatic and inquiry) and the interest foci (learner, curriculum and formal schooling) of this thesis have been used as the analytic markers guiding the literature review. As analytic markers, they have enabled a synthesized dialogue between the disparate inclusive education research literature. This synthesized dialogue has been summarized in Table 2.1 (below), and will be explained in more detail throughout this chapter.

Table 2.1 Summary of learner, curriculum and formal schooling conceptualizations indicated by inclusive education research categories

Analytic Categories	Conceptualizations		
	Learner	**Curriculum**	**Formal Schooling**
Aspirational: Humanism, de/institutionalization, normalization & social role valorization	Non-specific learner (one of 'all' learners) or contextually neutral learner or low-incidence, non-dominant learner groups.	Simultaneously essential and problematic to inclusive education. Generally problematic to create a curriculum that accommodates all learners.	Largely conceptualized as a vision of social inclusion for all learners in formal schooling, and then more particularly as inclusive schooling for marginalized learners or learners with disability.
Pragmatic: special needs education, knowledge & practice; disability models of theory and practice	Learner has special educational needs: is highly specific as a member of a statistical norm and evaluated as being in deficit or disadvantaged; frequently categorizes the learner as belonging to a highly specific region, highly specific educational setting, highly specific disability group/category, or as having highly specific needs related to within-learner deficit.	Requiring significant manipulation or regarded as irrelevant. Subject to highly specific education strategies (adjustments, adaptations, modifications) and educational delivery (intervention, treatment) for non-dominant, low-incidence learner groups.	Largely conceptualized as medical inclusion in formal schooling, with the additional benefits of social inclusion and, where possible, educational inclusion. Pragmatic, inclusive practice, related to special needs or additional needs education. General and specific observations on constraints and obstacles in formal schooling to implementation, or exhortations related to adequate resource allocation for the implementation of mainstreaming and segregation service provision in formal schooling.

	Conceptualizations		
Analytic Categories	**Learner**	**Curriculum**	**Formal Schooling**
Inquiry: critical theory approach to conceptualizing and implementing inclusive education	All possible learners from all possible contexts; a non-specific, socio-contextual learner; understood as having a voice, political identity and agency in a socially just inclusive education.	Recognized as fundamental to inclusive education being inclusive.	Inclusion in formal schooling is contested and contestable. Global limitations and epistemological variance of social inclusion, medical inclusion and inclusion in formal schooling. History and provenance of the conceptualization of inclusion in formal schooling is tackled. Inclusion in formal schooling assumed to have different meanings in the service of different powers.

2.3.1 Aspirational literature

The aspirational literature is drawn from documents that have communicated a universal hope of social inclusion in educational practice. In earlier days of aspirational literature that contributed to inclusion research, the research and documents were characterized by the language of humanism delineating principles of de-institutionalization, normalization and social role valorization (Bank-Mikkelson, 1969; Nirje, 1970; Wolfensberger, 1972) and equitable educational access for all (UNESCO, 1945/2014, 1990; Warnock, 1975, 1991).

The aspirational literature is largely interested in expressing the need for all peoples of all nations to be able to access a loosely identified, indiscriminate process of education. Aspirational understanding of inclusive education suggests a broad and somewhat benign political thinking in relation to those who do not easily access education; it considers a broad range of reasons (including disability) under which people are marginalized from participation in education. The aspirational research communicates a universal understanding of inclusive education which is non-specific, more intentional than pragmatic in its conceptualization, and more impassioned than implementation-focused. It is research very worthy in its ambitions, a 'venerable' idea (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016) but unclear with regards to its context-specific implementation.

2.3.1.1 The non-specific, context-neutral learner

In the aspirational literature the learner is treated as a marginalized social subject, conceptualized as: a non-specific learner who is one of 'all' learners (UNESCO, 1990, 1994; Thomas, 2013); a context-neutral or context-ambivalent learner (Berlach & Chambers, 2011b; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Forlin, 2006; HREOC, 2000; Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1996); or as a learner belonging to a low-incidence, non-dominant learner group (Bank-Mikkelson, 1969; Beloin & Peterson, 2000; Cross et al., 2009; Meyer, 2003; Nirje, 1970; Silla et al., 2008; Wolfensberger 1972).

The aspirational literature acknowledges the general importance of socio-contextual influences on the learner (e.g., Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Berlach & Chambers, 2011b; HREOC, 2000). It is generally context-neutral giving somewhat superficial attention to any specifics of contextual variations experienced by the learner who may be recognized as being from a larger context such as South Africa (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002) or Australia (Berlach & Chambers, 2011b) or from regional and remote areas (HREOC, 2000). Of their nature, aspirations refer to bigger picture hopes and intentions: it follows that, in relation to inclusive education, the aspirational literature will naturally be contextually general or vague.

2.3.1.2 *Curriculum as conundrum*

More contemporary aspirational research draws a direct relationship between curriculum and inclusive education (Berlach & Chambers, 2011a; Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1996; Bjørnsrud & Nilsen, 2011; Chappell, 2008; Osberg & Biesta, 2010). Historically, Udvari-Solner and Thousand (1996)—scholars with a specific interest in special needs education[4]—were among the first to identify the essential importance of curriculum to the successful implementation of inclusive education. Writing soon after the promulgation of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), Udvari-Solner and Thousand (1996) proposed a learner-centred, process-oriented, and communication-based educational model "to create a curriculum that accommodates *all* learners" (p. 185, emphasis mine), and argued that this model required implementation in all three areas of classroom design, curriculum approaches, and instructional practises. The obvious need to accommodate all learners in a curriculum is easier said than done, however, and how this accommodation was to be done was not stipulated. There seems a challenge here to curriculum and its capacity to actually encompass how to include all learners. Is curriculum indicative of an end-point of outcomes for all learners or a guide to possibilities of learning pathways for all learners? As Lingard and colleagues describe, contemporary trends in national curriculums development across the globe are politically neo-liberal in orientation, thus tending towards delineating an end-point of successful learners and responsible citizens (Lingard & MacGregor, 2014; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008).

When other research literature from the aspirational category directly addresses the relationship between inclusive education and curriculum, the language of polarization (Bjørnsrud and Nilsen, 2011), absence (Chappell, 2008) and conundrum (Osberg & Biesta, 2010) characterize the thinking of the respective authors. Norwegian researchers, Bjørnsrud and Nilsen (2011), found that, over three consecutive and increasingly inclusive Norwegian national curriculums, a tension between more adaptive educational delivery and more restrictive measurement of learner outcomes became increasingly apparent and problematic. In the words of Bjørnsrud and Nilsen (2011), with the increased curriculum potential for adapted teaching and inclusive education, came "a greater emphasis on identical competence aims for the pupils" (p. 563), eventuating in competency measurement pulling in the opposite direction to curriculum flexibility and adaptability.

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[4] Understood as education focused on and provided for learners with diagnosed functional impairment or disability.

This is the elusive balance for an inclusive curriculum: enough adaptability that all learners can be included, while enough rigour to justify the existence of a national curriculum. Chappell (2008)—a principal of a school exclusively for students with special education needs in regional Queensland, Australia—bemoaned the absence of the input of experienced teachers (who have worked intensively with learners with a disability) from the process of national curriculum reform. Osberg and Biesta (2010) wrote of the "conundrum" of curriculum in inclusive education, stating that "the more inclusive a curriculum becomes in practice, the less inclusive it becomes in principle" (p. 593), arguing the importance of a curriculum that guides rather than a curriculum that is an end in itself.

2.3.1.3 Vision of social inclusion for all

Beloin & Peterson (2000), Berlach & Chambers (2011a, 2011b), and Thomas (2013) have conceptualized inclusive education as an arm of social inclusion: education is understood as one of a range of public services in which inclusivity is intended to be implemented. Certainly, the legislation related to discrimination in Australia hails from principles of social inclusion. Australia's *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992), and the subsequent *Disability Discrimination and Other Human Rights Legislation Amendment Act* (2009), refine legislation to be directly applicable to individuals with disability accessing public services such as education, as well as other services including transport, access to buildings, housing and finance.

That which this thesis has accepted as original literature of the aspirational category (UNESCO 1945/2014, 1990) was the literature that intended to mark in history the right of education for every learner: that no matter what shape the learner takes or origin the learner has, there is educational access that is able to accommodate them and their way of learning needs. Aspirational research conceptualizes social inclusion as inclusion for the marginalized[5] (Bhopal & Myers, 2016; Gaymes San Vicente, 2016; Wendelborg, & Tøssebro, 2010). The language of the more contemporary aspirational research literature is frequently inspirational, explicating a 'vision' of inclusion—of a panoramic (Beloin & Peterson, 2000, Thomas, 2013) or highly specific nature (Silla, Hobbs & Wang, 2008)—to which inclusive educators may aspire.

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[5] The marginalized are defined as those persons or groups of persons with social identities and social participation that differ from, or are made different to, the expectations of the majority of the population or of formal schooling. Bhopal and Meyers (2013) conceptualized the Gypsy and traveller populations of England, UK as marginalized; even those "with social capital threatened by the education system" (Gaymes San Vicente, 2016, p. 116) are conceptualized as the marginalized; and that the processes of taking an individual approach with a learner with disability may in effect marginalize the learner rather than include (Wendelborg, & Tøssebro, 2010).

In more recent research, the aspirational knowledge of inclusive education is characterized by the conceptualization of that which would become tangible, if it could, in the hands of inclusive education practitioners and managers (Beloin & Peterson, 2000; Berlach & Chambers, 2011a, 2011b; Cross, Salazar, Dopson-Campuzano & Batchelder, 2009; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Forlin, 2006; Meyer, 2003; Silla, Hobbs & Wang, 2008; Thomas, 2013). While the aspirational research literature of inclusive education can seem inspirational, it can also be naïve in relation to the ideological incongruence of the dominant conceptualization of inclusive education to specific contexts (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002). The aspirational research is only sometimes found to be cognisant of the on-the-ground practice of inclusive education and its difficulties (HREOC, 2000; Meyer, 2003), and it is generally found to be lacking any form of critical inquiry of the socio-contextual and socio-historical contributions to marginalization (Beloin & Peterson, 2000; Cross et al., 2009; Forlin, 2006; Silla et al., 2008).

A small section of the aspirational research of inclusive education (HREOC 2000, Meyer, 2003) discusses socio-cultural, socio-contextual and socio-historical factors and findings that contribute to learners effectively not being included in formal schooling. A researcher from New Zealand, Meyer (2003) challenges the conceptualization of inclusive education in nations that are non-dominant on the international stage (i.e., New Zealand, Vietnam, Costa Rica). Australia's Human Rights Commission (HREOC, 2000) conducted a far-reaching inquiry into rural and remote educational access across Australia. This inquiry proposed many recommendations to respond to educational access needs. In effect, the recommendations coming out of this inquiry were challenges to the implementation of inclusive education across Australia for low-incidence, non-dominant groups of learners (i.e., indigenous Australians in remote locations, learners accessing distance education delivery, and learners in locations with poor telecommunication and transport access). The recommendations from this inquiry were far-reaching addressing all school systems, the Commonwealth, and organizations (present and future), however, 18 years on, it is questionable that these recommendations have been rendered much more than aspirational (as, at the time, there was no national body that had the authority to systematically follow-up implementation). In the aftermath of this HREOC (2000) report, Alston and Kent (2008) critique the gendered and structural assumptions related to aspirational and vision thinking and recommendations for rural and remote education, and the subsequent difficulties with actual implementation of the aspirations. McInerney (2007) connects the Australian rural and remote education dream with the realities of necessary and foundational community rejuvenation that must precede the local school effecting recommended changes. In short, aspirational literature may or may not address specific context, but the address is in the

language of recommendations: pragmatic in a generalized way, but not in a context-specific way.

Thomas (2013) claims inclusive education "… did not spring to life *de novo* in response to egalitarian, desegregative concerns rooted in social justice … it emerged out of special education" (p. 475). While Thomas (2013) positions inclusive education as having its origins in the arms of special needs education, he conceptualizes inclusion as being for all. Thomas (2013) directly addresses the need for researchers and practitioners to think and plan inclusively with an eye to socio-contextual, socio-cultural and socio-historical factors: this understanding appreciates that education for all means education for each individual within the all, and that individuals carry with them a way of learning that arises from a social and cultural system (i.e., their contextual norm to which they belong). In other words, rather than just including students who are different from the students of the norm of general education, Thomas (2013) invites the reader to consider inclusion as having different inclusive expressions in different settings and with a broader range of students.

Reclaiming the foundations of social inclusion as imperative to inclusive education, 21st Century aspirational researchers Berlach and Chambers (2011b) and Thomas (2013) explicitly refute the reduction of the subject of inclusion to a learner with measurable difference (i.e., deficit or disadvantage according to a norm), clearly supporting the notion that equitable access to education may not be reduced to problems related to physical or medical limitations of access to a specific school, a specific curriculum or a specific student cohort. Other 21st Century aspirational researchers (Beloin & Peterson, 2000; Cross et al., 2009; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Forlin, 2006; Meyer, 2003; Silla et al., 2008) continue to attend only to students with disabilities as the focus group pertinent to inclusive education.

As it is not predisposed to considering the context-specific resourcing of inclusive education, the aspirational research literature can be seen as a literature that has failed to notice the global reform policies of education, and the possibility of exploitative economic and political intentions of dominant world entities and independent development agencies through education. Slee and Weiner (2011) warn of a tendency to "bleach context" (p. 85) from educational research. The aspirational driving of the research that promotes the 'education for all' agenda could be considered to directly bleach context. None of the abovementioned aspirational research literature addresses *which* education is for all (or which curriculum is for all), or which powerful socio-contextual influences (such as economic security, or regional or domestic stability) might be conducive to inclusive education, and which influences would be counter-productive.

2.3.2 Pragmatic literature

Historically, special education research literature preceded the conceptualization of inclusive education and its subsequent research and literature. The initial conceptualization of "regular schools with an inclusive orientation" was first coined in the *Salamanca Statement* (UNESCO, 1994) adopted by UNESCO member countries at the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. By this proclamation on the world stage, special needs education has claimed a foundational understanding of its seminal place in inclusive education in schools. The research literature from the pragmatic category adopted for this research is considered to encapsulate research related to special education or special needs education knowledge and practice. As can be observed in Table 2.1, if the research of Roger Slee were removed from the inquiry literature, the pragmatic research literature would be the most expansive literature of inclusive education.

The pragmatic research literature is concerned with the narrow field of inclusive education for students who are conceptualized as being in deficit, having what is described as a label of disability[6] or special needs[7]. As expansive as the pragmatic research literature is, there is no international leading light either among its authors nor the journals that publish their work with the exception of Chris Forlin, a Hong Kong-based Australian researcher concerned with efficacious teacher education and skills training in the provision of inclusive education for learners with disability (Forlin, 2010; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Forlin, Earle, Loreman, & Sharma, 2011; Forlin, Sharma & Loreman, 2014; Chao, Chow, Forlin, & Ho, 2017; Romero-Contreras, Garcia-Cedillo, Forlin & Lomelí-Hernández, 2013; Rose & Forlin, 2010; Sharma, Simi & Forlin, 2015). Few of the pragmatic researchers have more than a handful of published works.

2.3.2.1 Learners with special needs

In the pragmatic research literature, the learner is generally conceptualized as a member of a statistical norm, but with less ability to the average and more capable learners who are also members of the statistical norm (see for examples Wischnowski, Salmon & Eaton, 2004; Ring & Travers, 2005; Gritzmacher & Gritzmacher, 1995/2010). The learner to be included is the marginalized learner due to their having a deficit-related problem in relation to formal schooling. The learner's 'special needs' are attributed to a within-learner problem of

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[6] 'Disability' refers to a medicalized diagnosis related to deficit that is generally considered permanent. It is arrived at by using a comparison of the deficit against a norm.

[7] 'Special needs' refers to the additional needs or specific needs of a learner with a disability or impairment. Their needs are considered special compared to average needs. An individual learner may have average needs *and* special needs.

disadvantage (Gritzmacher & Gritzmacher, 1995/2010; Mitchell, De Lange & Xuan Thuy, 2008), a medically diagnosable disability (Calculator & Black, 2009; Lynch & Irvine, 2009), or a learning difference that is conceptualized as a medicalized deficit in an academic skill (Ring & Travers, 2005), or any combination of these attributions. The learner's context and deficit are most often described in great detail in relation to factors such as disadvantage (i.e., poverty, isolation, marginalization, illness, loss or trauma), and degree of impairment (i.e., mild, moderate, severe or profound). The pragmatic research literature sees the special needs learner as wanting and needing, and describes knowledge of the learner in terms of that which they cannot do (i.e., learn like the other learners), that which they do not have (e.g., reading skills like the other learners), or a place where they cannot be (e.g., in the regular classroom like the other learners).

While regional and national circumstances are frequently noted in the pragmatic research literature (Ahsan & Burnip, 2007; Ajuwan, 2008; Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015; Bartonova, 2016; Donohue and Borman, 2014; Forlin, 2011; Ntombela, 2009; Urwick & Elliott, 2010) the impact of these circumstances on the learner or on the successful implementation of inclusive education is usually not explored. While the learner is positioned as a member of a nation or region, the learner is not conceptualized or described as context-specific. When the deleterious impact of national or regional factors on the implementation of inclusive education is noted in the pragmatic research, this is done by way of comparison to the norm espoused by the ideologies of inclusive education as implemented in nations such as USA, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, and as promoted by international educational development agencies such as UNESCO.

In the pragmatic research literature that represents specific nations or regions (Ahsan & Burnip, 2007; Ajuwon, 2008; Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015; Bartonova, 2016), there is some acknowledgement of the socio-historical, socio-economic or socio-contextual influences that are specific to the unique circumstances and interactions of the specific

nation (such as Bangladesh[8], Czechoslovakia[9], Ghana[10] or Nigeria[11]) and its people. The acknowledgement, however, does not go further than that: there has been no analysis of these contextual influences nor of their interaction, and neither has there been an analysis of the contextual assumptions of the dominant conceptualization of inclusive education. There has been no attempt to understand these influences as a pattern or inter-relationship that may have similarities with other settings. The socio-historical or socio-contextual specifics generate a sense of context uniqueness which is treated as creating a difference but, beyond that, there has been no notion that while the specifics of the difference might be unique, the pattern or inter-relationship of the specifics might bear some commonalities with other national, international or intra-national situations. Rather than a comprehensive analysis of the socio-historical and socio-contextual influences underpinning the dominant conceptualization of inclusive education that has emanated from USA, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia, the research literature from the pragmatic category communicates an assumption that the dominant conceptualization of inclusive education is the goal rather than an exemplar for some contexts, but not all contexts. There is, perhaps, a hidden mismatch between the socio-historical and socio-contextual factors assumed in the dominant conceptualization of inclusive education, and the socio-cultural and socio-contextual factors dominant in a specific setting.

As the research literature of the pragmatic category is largely concerned with the inclusion of learners with special education needs, it is frequently characterized by a medicalized ideological understanding of special needs education (an understanding that is more dominant in Western developed nations) and its place in inclusive education. It is a literature that categorizes the learner using classifications related to disability, or to disability in contextual references of geography, ethnicity, race, and poverty. As a research literature, pragmatic literature discusses learners with disability and their integration into regular schools, specialised classrooms in regular schools, or into mainstream classrooms. In her work on "getting past the hierarchies of special education", Brantlinger (2005, p. 18) refers to

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[8] Ahsan and Burnip (2007) indicate that, in Bangladesh, almost 90% of learners with disability do not attend school at all, and never have in that country.

[9] Bartonova (2016) reports a history of segregation of learners with disabilities in the Czech Republic.

[10] Ametepee and Anastasiou (2015) identify that Ghana is below the global average Human Development Index which indicates degrees of human well-being but above many other developing nations. There is a history of special schools (initially established by Christian missionaries from other countries) for learners who are deaf and blind.

[11] Ajuwon (2008) cites that Nigeria (as a federation of states) has had historical difficulties with "lack of up-to-date teaching devices, and organizational and leadership crises that have militated against reform of the special education sector" (p. 13) which has stalled their desegregation of learners with disabilities.

these learner placement options as the "stratified structures and practices" (p. 18) of special education in inclusive education.

The research literature that, in this research, has been categorized as pragmatic uses the term 'inclusive education' interchangeably with the terms 'special education' and 'special needs education'. This interchangeability of terms is confusing in that it restricts the understanding of inclusive education to being relevant to an exclusive group (those with disability) and reinforces the exclusion of that same group as they are theoretically included in formal schooling. While this substitution of terms has not been acknowledged or analyzed by the pragmatic research literature, inquiry-based researchers (Graham & Slee, 2008; Slee & Allan, 2001; Slee, 2012) have highlighted and addressed this irony repeatedly.

The pragmatic research literature considered by this thesis frequently draws its theoretical bases from the disciplines of education, educational psychology, and health (especially the health disciplines of paediatric speech pathology, occupational therapy and psychology). The learner is invariably treated as a subject for educational or medicalized treatment. It is not uncommon for the pragmatic research literature of inclusive education to promote 'best practice' in relation to learners with disability (Calculator & Black, 2009; Gritzmacher & Gritzmacher, 1995 & 2010; Lynch & Irvine, 2009; Ring & Travers, 2005; Villa et al., 2005), or to frame inclusive education practice using terminology more characteristic of health professionals, such as 'referral, assessment and placement' (Gritzmacher & Gritzmacher, 1995/2010), 'case management' (Ring & Travers, 2005), interventions and rehabilitation (Deng & Harris, 2008; Villa et al., 2005), treatments (Robinson, 2011) and best practice models (Calculator & Black, 2009; Lynch & Irvine, 2009).

In many instances, the pragmatic research literature is highly particularized in relation to categories of learner, such as:

- a learner with specific disability in a national context, as in the case of a pupil with a severe learning difficulty in Ireland (Ring & Travers, 2005);
- a learner with a specific disability as an exemplar of learners with severe disabilities in general education classrooms (Calculator & Black, 2009);
- a learner with a specific disability—such as a language processing/communication disorder (Calculator & Black, 2009) or autism (Robinson, 2011)—and requiring a specific mode of intervention;
- learners in specific educational settings such as middle and secondary school settings (Villa et al., 2005);

- specific cultural/ethnic school-aged learner populations with disabilities (Gritzmacher & Gritzmacher, 1995/2010).

- learners with low-incidence disability, outlining highly specific instances of implementation in highly specific circumstances (Forlin & Tierney, 2006; Ring & Travers, 2005; Wischnowski et al., 2004); and

- instances of learners with learning difference or disability in geographically difficult contexts and associated problem solving of resource issues (e.g., special education staff, equipment, professional development in special education) related to highly regulated inclusive education delivery (Nagel, Hernandez, Embler, McLaughlin & Doh, 2006; Radoman, Nano & Closs, 2006).

Interestingly, there is a swathe of pragmatic inclusive education research (some of which is outlined below) related to the various incarnations of inclusive education in non-dominant nations (both developed and developing), in nations recovering from years of devastation due to civil and national trauma, or in heavily industrializing nations.

Shevlin, Kenny and Loxley (2008) reported on the ongoing transition in the Republic of Ireland of inclusive learning environments for students with special needs, and the degree of struggle that mainstream schools were experiencing as their student populations increased in diversity. Ametepee and Anastasiou (2015) describe special education and inclusive education in Ghana specifically, as well as the general challenges across sub-Saharan African countries to the implementation of inclusive education. The needs of learners requiring special education in Bangladesh, and the barriers to implementing inclusive education are noted by Ahsan and Burnip (2007). Ajuwon (2008) reports on the benefits, challenges and policy implications of including students with disabilities in regular education in Nigeria. Ntombela (2009), and Donohue and Borman (2014), highlight barriers and challenges to the implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities in South Africa. The implementation of inclusive education in Vietnam has been reported by Rydstrom (2010), with a nuanced view of the exclusionary impact on girls with disability included in regular classrooms. Urwick and Elliott (2010) report research into the orthodoxy of inclusive education in Lesotho's education policies, and the challenging realities of including learners with disabilities in regular classrooms across this low income country. Forlin (2011) reports on the desegregation of learners with disability into a mainstream school setting in Macau.

In general, a primary concern in the abovementioned pragmatic research literature related to non-dominant nations is the incorporation of inclusive education as a philosophical, legislated and policy approach to formal schooling of learners with disabilities. In the case of

Ireland, on-the-ground support health services and educational practitioner knowledge were not always in place to provide meaningful inclusion (Shevlin et al., 2008). In the instance of the other nations mentioned above, the impetus for adopting and adapting the philosophical, legislated and policy-driven inclusive education approach was often in response to international development funding bodies (such as the UN) and their commitment to globalized inclusive education, rather than in response to local contextual issues and local educational needs and values. The subsequent challenges and barriers to the practice of inclusive education in these highly specific national and regional circumstances have quickly emerged and, understandably, largely have a pragmatic focus related to resourcing. Resourcing challenges are reported as lack of capacity to identify disability (Ajuwon, 2008), lack of adequate teacher skill to work with learners with disability (Urwick & Elliott, 2010), historically and contemporaneously low percentage of school attendance for children with disabilities (Ahsan & Burnip, 2007; Ametepee & Anastasiou, 2015), and poverty of learner resources such as transport to school, and then desks, text books and writing tools restricting effective educational access for all learners (Ajuwon, 2008; Donohue & Borman, 2014, Ntombela, 2009).

Inclusion in the pragmatic research literature is not referenced as social inclusion, but is rather an inclusion of specific categorizations of disadvantage and measured degrees of deficit as valued by special education. Learners are contextualized in relation to fairly fixed categories: disability, disadvantage, deficit. Other aspects of context are generalized to cosmetic categories of gender, race, ethnicity, poverty or geographical isolation. This legitimate preoccupation with context (national, regional, within-person, and comparatively between persons) is obvious in the research literature, especially the pragmatic research literature, thus flagging its importance in the local implementation of inclusive education *wherever* that locality is. What is not yet obvious in the research literature is a method of establishing some patterns across a range of contextual factors that might lead to understanding what aspects of the context-specific learner—other than deficit, disability or disadvantage—might be served by inclusion in education no matter where it is valued and implemented.

2.3.2.2 Curriculum: Absent, accommodated or adjusted

The pragmatic research literature will occasionally directly address curriculum in relation to special needs education (Jackson et al., 2008; Nilsen, 2017; Otukile-Mongwaketse, Mangope & Kuyini, 2016; Ring & Travers, 2005).

As a conceptualization that occurred a decade ago, Jackson et al. (2008) somewhat outstandingly proposed the need for inclusive education to be founded on research-based methods and practice that accounted for the dynamic relationship between curriculum, context and learners with special educational needs. Jackson et al. (2008) found that:

> … both historical and empirical data from institutions and schools … provide empirical support for the primary theoretical position … that context, together with curriculum content, matter crucially when educating students with extensive support needs. We concluded that there is theoretical and empirical support for using general education contexts and curriculum content and for not using other contexts and curriculum content both in educating students with extensive support needs and in conducting related research (p. 175).

Jackson et al. (2008) have laid the foundations of the indivisibility of curriculum and context for future investigations into the efficacy of education for students with special needs in inclusive education settings.

In a Norwegian study of regular, inclusive schools, Nilsen (2017) reported that the responsibility for curriculum planning for the students with special needs fell to the special education teachers without the collaboration of the general education teachers who were also involved in those same students' education. In Nilsen's (2017) words, "curriculum planning within special and general education appears to be more separated than coordinated … responsibility for the education of pupils with special needs seems to be more divided than shared" (p. 205).

In Otukile-Mongwaketse's et al.s (2016) work, the language of curriculum accommodations, adaptations, adjustments and modifications was used in relation to the inclusive instructional work carried out with special needs learners in regular classrooms in Botswana. In both works (Nilsen, 2017; Otukile-Mongwaketse et al., 2016) while curriculum is discussed as a document for all learners, it is considered a document that requires manipulation (adjustment, accommodation, adaptation) in order to be accessible to special needs learners. In this way, the learner is being positioned by the pragmatic research as problematic, and the curriculum positioned as a norm that may be adapted for specific differences not accounted for in the curriculum. Curriculum is not necessarily central to a pragmatic understanding of formal schooling for learners with special needs.

Curriculum is problematic in the research literature from the pragmatic category in that it is generally considered as either needing adjustment for learners with special needs or is treated as irrelevant to the learner with special needs.

2.3.2.3 *Pragmatic social inclusion of the Medicalized and Marginalized*

Some researchers (Donohue & Borman, 2014; Kenny & Shevlin, 2001; Rydstrom, 2010) have tackled more than just the pragmatic resourcing difficulties and impediments (i.e., teachers, desks, books, transport) to the implementation of inclusive education for students with special needs, and have explicitly addressed epistemological challenges to that implementation. Epistemological challenges and barriers discussed include the diverse traditional socio-cultural understandings of gender and disability (Rydstrom, 2010), and the enduring influence of divisive socio-historical and socio-political policies such as apartheid in South Africa (Donohue & Borman, 2014). In a research project that incorporated the voices of school-aged students with disability, Kenny and Shevlin (2001) wrote:

> Participants in this research project eloquently identified how disabled students are prevented from reaching their desired goals by the school environment, and the system choices that shape that environment. However, things need not be as they always have been seen. The paradigm of normality can be transformed. We would argue that the 'subject' of an inclusive paradigm of normality is the general population rather than the normative individual. It is normal for a percentage of the human race to have disabilities of some kind, so it should be presumed normal that student and teaching populations would reflect this. (p. 115)

Some of the pragmatic research literature (Dizdarević, Vantic-Tanjić & Nikolić, 2010; Mitchell, De Lange & Xuan Thuy, 2008; Radoman, Nano & Closs, 2006) has investigated the implementation of inclusive education in contexts typified by war, trauma or sickness. Dizdarević et al. (2010), of Bosnia and Herzegovina, describe the splintering of educational authorities into multiple educational districts (cantons) after this federation's 1992 to 1994 war, and the impact on students with disabilities as subjects of diverse implementations of inclusive education across the region. Mitchell et al. (2008) outline the unpreparedness of under-resourced teachers and schools to implement inclusive education in South African schools where the majority of the learner population are "hard hit by HIV and AIDS" (p. 100), including at-risk learners, learners experiencing gender-based violence, or learners who have been infected, orphaned, and bereaved. Radoman et al. (2006) investigate the social and educational exclusion of ethnic and linguistic minorities, refugees, and those internally displaced by civil unrest, and its impact on the implementation of inclusive education for special needs students in Albania and Serbia.

In general, the abovementioned research focused on the challenges and barriers to the implementation of inclusive education for learners with special needs in locations deeply affected by adverse conditions of post-war disorganization, trauma or pandemics. In a

number of the above examples of research (Dizdarević et al., 2010; Mitchell et al., 2008; Radoman et al., 2006), a lack of material resources is cited as the major challenge to the implementation of inclusive education for learners with special needs in these situations.

Literature related to the implementation of inclusive education in heavily industrializing nations such as China (Deng & Harris, 2008; Deng & Poon-McBrayer, 2004) and India (Singal, 2008) is also a literature focused on the challenges and barriers to including students with special needs. Singal (2008) reports that teachers and other stakeholders in 'inclusive schools' in India require more training and support if special needs students in regular classrooms are to be considered more than simply the 'included' students who simultaneously experience a range of exclusions (e.g., teaching practices remaining unchanged with the introduction of students with adaptation and adjustment requirements). Deng and Harris (2008) and Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2004) have noted the gradual increase in enrolments of students with disabilities in regular classrooms in China, and have also identified the problem presented to inclusive education due to a lack of resourcing (material and personnel) and a lack of training of the teachers who teach in these regular classrooms.

2.3.3 Inquiry literature

Critical inquiry research of any field of knowledge investigates that which has been assumed, unexamined or rendered invisible in knowledge claims (Inwood, 2005). The inquiry research literature related to inclusive education investigates the epistemological assumptions inherent in the conceptualization and implementation of inclusive education.

In an early critique of the politics, marketization and global movement towards inclusive education, Barton (1996) challenged the views of "disabilist assumptions and practices" in inclusive education, and emphasised "social justice, equity and choice … [as] central to the demands of inclusive education" (p. 34). Barton (1996, 1997), from Blackpool, England and Slee (2001a) from Victoria, Australia, have wrested the international and political conceptualization of inclusive education from the notion of being desegregated education for those with disabilities, and subsequently re-imagined and re-interpreted inclusive education as a field of inquiry that encompasses all possible learners in all possible contexts. Together, Barton and Slee (1999) outlined the principles of learner identity and recognition, and the redistribution of resources and educational focus, as foundational to inclusive education, while eschewing the importance educational planning focused on learner ability, standards of learning, and market forces.

Using critical inquiry, Roger Slee (Allan & Slee, 2008; Graham & Slee, 2008; Slee, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2012; Slee & Allan, 2001; Slee & Cook, 1993a,1993b, 1994; Slee & Weiner, 2011)—an educator, educational leader, and academic—has been the most prominent and persistent researcher to systematically explore the discourses and epistemologies of inclusive education and their implications for learners, schools, teachers, curriculum and pedagogy. Further, he has been instrumental in the establishment and sustainability of the *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, a refereed research literature source of critical inquiry and alternative conceptualizations of inclusive education[12]. This research literature resource has enabled capacity for theorization and analysis of inclusive education at the global and the local level.

In his early editorial work, *Is there a desk with my name on it? The politics of integration,* Slee (1993) gathered a diverse range of international voices (researchers, practitioners and parents) who commented on some of the initial politics, policies and practices of inclusive education affecting learners with impairments and their "inclusion in, or more precisely exclusion from, educational provision" (pp. 2–3). Slee's explicit theoretical investigations of the politics of inclusive education in policy and practice have been extensive (Slee, 2001a, 2006b, 2010, 2012, 2014), highlighting the political marginalization, disempowerment and disablement of vulnerable learners via the discourse of special needs education within the mantle of inclusive education.

Slee (2006b) has noted the absence of epistemological analysis in both the policy and practice of inclusive education. The 'discursive tension' between inclusive education and special education, and the "irreconcilable epistemological foundations that policy makers rarely acknowledge" (Slee, 2006b, p. 230) when planning or explicating inclusive education, have been repeatedly explored in Slee's research (Graham & Slee, 2004, 2008; Slee, 2004, 2006b, 2010, 2013; Slee & Allan, 2001; Slee & Weiner, 2011). Slee (2004) identified the conceptual confusion hidden beneath the terminology and discursive practices of inclusive education, and the tensions and the enactments of 'dangerous liaison' (Slee 2004, p. 54) this presents. The acknowledgement of this confusion is "not simply a question of an academic exchange between different education paradigms" (Slee, 2004, p. 54), it is about

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[12] Roger Slee is the Founding Editor of *The International Journal of Inclusive Education* which has been in print continuously since 1997. The aims and scope of this journal are described as encouraging international and multidisciplinary inclusive education dialogue, incorporating dialogue about the nature of exclusion that occurs for students who are unable to access the education that is theorized as being 'for all'.

the valuing and subsequent inclusion (or not) of other knowledges, experiences and beliefs to those assumed in the rhetoric, policy and practice of inclusive education.

This identification and acknowledgement of the inherent confusion in the conceptualization of inclusive education has enabled investigation into the incongruence of epistemologies at play. Further to this, the divergence of the epistemologies of inclusive education from other pre-existing epistemologies—such as indigenous epistemologies (Le Fanu, 2015; Mukhopadhyay, 2015) and others—has been opened up for analysis.[13] While the original and initial conceptualizations of inclusive education are noted for the absence of an account of specific context and knowledge, the major challenge in the implementation of inclusive education appears to be in precisely these areas.

2.3.3.1 Socio-contextual learner: Voice, identity & agency

The learner in inquiry research is positioned as every possible imagination of a learner, and includes learners that, historically, have not always been imagined as being outside of formal schooling, including the learners Slee (2001a) described above, who struggle in regular classrooms with formal schooling that is delivered via an inflexible curriculum and pedagogy.

In the inquiry research, the learner is a socio-contextual human being (Singal 2006a, 2006b; Slee, 2012): they belong to a context, a social milieu, and it is understood that that milieu may not be familiar to the processes and personnel of formal schooling. The learner is not individually particularized in the research of the inquiry category of literature, however, this research invariably insists that the voice of the particular learner is heard in context-specific, inclusive education research and practice. In Slee's (2004) words: "The centrality of minority voices in the setting of the research agenda is a fundamental requirement for progress towards inclusive schooling. The absence of these voices simultaneously absents stories that need to be told" (p. 55).

Here the learner's context is not considered as a fixed category or descriptor but as consisting of a dynamic experience of social interactions across settings. This allows for a learner who may be considered a 'traveller' across fixed settings (i.e., belonging to family systems that are mobile or nomadic). While not specifically focusing on inclusion, Danaher and Danaher (2000) questioned the assumptions of 'deficit' in learners who travel with their families from one fixed setting to another (e.g., traveller learners from 'circus' and 'show'

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[13] Other such pre-existing epistemologies inherent in other identities include those of small state nations like Pacific Island nations (Sharma, Loreman & Macanawai, 2016), or small population contexts (Kearney & Kane, 2006), as well as traveller (Miskovic & Curcic, 2016) or mobile populations (Danaher & Danaher, 2000).

families), and suggested that learner identities are perhaps not known or acknowledged (i.e., not included) in the planning or implementation of formal schooling because the learner's socio-contextual realities are not known, resulting in inadvertent marginalization. Context is not necessarily a 'place'-related dimension of inclusive education but, as this literature shows, a socio-contextual and socio-cultural experience that may be related to many experiences of diverse places.

In recent times (2006 to 2018), a 'capabilities'[14] basis for inquiry research in inclusive education has begun to emerge and gradually expand (Dalkilic & Vadeboncoeur, 2016; Le Fanu, 2014; Graham & Harwood, 2011; McGrath, 2006; Norwich, 2014; Reindal, 2009, 2010, 2016; Rogers, 2013; Terzi, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2014; Toson, Burrello & Knollman, 2013; Vandekinderen, Roets, Van Keer & Roose, 2018; Vehmas, 2010). This capabilities research related to inclusive education has investigated the relationship between learner capabilities and inclusive education as a means to a just society. The key author in this area is Lorella Terzi (2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2014) who is originally from Italy, and currently a professor of philosophy of education at the University of Roehampton, London, with a specific interest in the capability of learners with disability or at risk of exclusion from school. Terzi has re-configured the meaning of educational equality and inclusive education using the conceptualization of capability equality. Positioning the well-being and agency of all learners as central to the educational process within schools, Terzi (2014) has promoted capability equality for learners as the "normative foundation for a conception of educational equality" (p. 486) assuming that the purpose of schooling and inclusive education is to build a just society. Capability equality, a notion borrowed from Sen[15], describes persons' equitable opportunities for functioning in ways which are valued by them as constituting a good life. Considered to be a fundamental opportunity, education is understood to contribute to an individual's desired functionings. In this way, the learner is understood not simply as an individual who is a passive subject to the medical or social implementation models of inclusive education (Dalkilic & Vadeboncuer, 2017; Graham & Harwood, 2011), but as a participant *in* inclusive education, having necessary agency in their social setting and their schooling. Inclusive education which incorporates a capability approach to thinking about the learner is required to be person-centred and context-sensitive at one and the same time (Le Fanu, 2014). The socio-contextual learner is thus positioned as a member of a social

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[14] This inquiry research draws its theoretical foundations from the work of Sen (1979, 1985, 1989, 1997, 1998, 1999) and then Nussbaum (2002, 2011, 2015, 2016), which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, *Theoretical Perspectives*.

[15] From the work of Sen (1979, 1985, 1989, 1997, 1998, 1999) and then Nussbaum (2002, 2011, 2015, 2016), which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3, *Theoretical Perspectives*..

system in which they have both a need and a right to participate in tasks and social roles which are valued by them (Vehmas, 2010). This research (Vandikinderen et al., 2018) also challenges a tenet of the global reform of education in general as the pathway for successful citizenship in the global economy, drawing a clear distinction between human capital and human capability and well-being[16].

2.3.3.2 Expansive curriculum as a place for all

Compared to the pragmatic and aspirational literature of inclusive education, the relationship of the curriculum and inclusive education in the inquiry research has enjoyed the most thorough critique. Slee (2001a, 2001c, 2006b, 2015) represents the most notable voice. Characteristic of his inquiry research and its consideration of curriculum (as well as of pedagogy and measurement) and inclusive education, Slee (2001a) writes:

> A critical lesson for schools to learn is that the beneficiaries of inclusive schooling are not only the disabled children, but those children in classrooms who are not described as disabled who struggle against the inflexibility of curriculum and pedagogy. (p. 389)

Since the earliest days of the conceptualization of inclusive education, the thorny relationship between inclusive education and curriculum has consistently been taken up by Slee (2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2004, 2006b). In essence, Slee (2001a) has identified an expansive curriculum as key to effective inclusive education, having expressed the view that curriculum rigidity contributes to a process of disabling learners who are unable to connect with its requirements or measurements. Rather than inclusive education being translated as a physical place for all in the mainstream classroom, Slee (2001a) insists that inclusive education demands a place for all in an expansive curriculum and pedagogy.

Contemporarily, this quest for expansive curriculums is poignantly relevant to the Cypriot Republic which, since joining the European Union in 2004, has become "one of the main entry points of immigrants in Europe" (Hajisoteriou, Neophytou & Angelides, 2012, p. 389), including illegal immigrants and a "mass influx of immigrant workers" (p. 389) and their children. As Hajisoteriou et al. (2012) comment, since the independence of Cyprus from Greece in 1960, the history of Cypriot curriculum has demonstrated a transition from mono-cultural to multicultural and, most recently, to an intercultural focus. Hajisoteriou et al.

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[16] This aspect of the development of human capital or human capability being the focus of education is taken up in more detail in relation to the Australian Curriculum and its use of thinking of the learner with 'general capabilities' is taken up in more detail in Chapter 3, *Theoretical Perspectives* and Chapter 5, *The Curriculum-Imagined Learner.*

(2012) conceptualized the 'new' curriculum of the Cypriot Republic as intercultural: as making provision for all learners to gain the skills to operate in culturally diverse societies; as "human-oriented and human necessitated" (p. 401) and dependent on human agency; as requiring the "active comprehension and artistry" (p. 401) of those educators involved in its enactment; and as incorporating diverse learner interpretation, application and experience.

In its foregrounding of some of the conceptualizations of inclusive education, inquiry research has sought to include the nations struggling to meld the philosophy of a highly prescriptive curriculum with an historically recent adoption of the philosophy of inclusivity (Le Fanu, 2015). An ex-teacher, guest lecturer and honorary research fellow in special education and inclusion at the University of Birmingham (England), with international teaching and consulting experience across African and South-East Asian countries, Le Fanu (2015) investigated Papua New Guinea's new inclusive curriculum. He claimed that the generation of this curriculum was founded on "Western educational ideology" (p. 139), and subsequently found resistance at the local level in relation to the beliefs, motivations and interests of the communities from regional and remote parts of this nation. In Le Fanu's (2015) words:

> The failure of educational policy makers to generate a curriculum sensitive to local realities was a consequence of the problematic *politicality* of the curriculum generation process, viz. the extent to which the process was dominated by national and (in particular) international elites multiply detached from local contexts of implementation. It was also a result of the problematic ideologism of the curriculum generation process, in particular the pervasive influence of Western educational thinking. (p. 146)

The inquiry category of inclusive education literature has unearthed the necessity of an inclusive curriculum that is expansive: a curriculum that is contemporaneously relevant to, and respectful of the socio-contextualized comprehension and experience of the context-specific learner.

2.3.3.3 Social inclusion: Recognition of identity and knowledge

The inquiry research literature has documented the invisibility and invalidation of knowledge, experience and identity specific to context and to the context-specific learner (Kam Pun Wong, Pearson & Mei Kuen Lo, 2004; Le Fanu, 2015; Miskovic & Cursic, 2016; Mukherjee, 2017; Mukhopadhyay 2016; Potts, 1998; Qiong Xu, Cooper & Sin, 2018; Singal 2005, 2006a, 2006b). Dominant population majorities, such as those of China (Qiong Xu, Cooper & Sin, 2018) and India (Singal 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Mukherjee, 2017), are noted for their

highly specific socio-cultural and socio-historical contexts that are distinctly other to the dominant populations (USA, Canada, the UK and Australia) from which much of the "provincial" conceptualization of inclusive education (Mukherjee, 2017, p. 32) has emerged. Similarly, other small-state populations such as Hong Kong (Kam Pun Wong, Pearson & Mei Kuen Lo, 2004; Potts, 1998), Papua New Guinea (Le Fanu, 2015), and Botswana (Mukhopadhyay, 2016), have been investigated by the abovementioned inquiry researchers of inclusive education, demonstrating the incongruence of the unacknowledged Western ideology that is carried within the conceptualization of inclusive education. Further, inquiry researchers have reported on the incongruence of the international conceptualization of inclusive education with the contexts and identities of other small group minorities present in larger and smaller nations: Roma students in European countries (Miskovic & Cursic, 2016); and Manitoban First Nation students in Canada (Mallett, 2008). Inquiry literature introduces the voices of these non-dominant nations and populations and has posed questions about the socio-cultural and epistemological assumptions hidden within the dominant, globalized model of inclusive education: these assumptions are intrinsically alien to the specific contexts and socio-historical influences characteristic of other large and small regions and peoples around the globe. The inquiry literature has demonstrated its awareness of specific contexts and its decades-long unyieldingness in naming and staying with the problems that context and identity present to the conceptualizations of inclusive education.

Inquiry researchers (Graham and Slee, 2008; Simons & Masschelein, 2005; Slee & Allan, 2001) have addressed the philosophical assumptions underlying the conceptualization of inclusive education. In the research article, *Excluding the included: A reconsideration of inclusive education*, Slee and Allan (2001) invited researchers and practitioners to consider precisely what it is that those being included in education are being included into. Graham and Slee (2008) questioned the use of "cosmetic adjustments to traditional schooling" (p. 278) as a superficial indicator of inclusive education. In a timeless phraseology, that could well be used to interpret any official inclusive education policy, legislation, epistemology or inclusive practice imperative, Graham and Slee (2008) concluded:

> It is not enough to evaluate what was planned or what we intended to do. We must also acknowledge and ameliorate the gaps arising from our efforts to include. Fundamentally, we must ask what assumptions might inform our personal and collective philosophies in relation to inclusive education? What do we *mean* when we talk of including? What *happens*? *Whose* interests are being served? And most of all, into *what* do we seek to include? (p. 290)

Simons and Masschelein (2005) write of the modern enterprise of inclusive education as the generalized conceptualization of "education that meets the needs of every individual student" (p. 117), every individual theoretically being unique and, therefore, isolated in their educational needs. Simons and Masschelein's (2005) use of a Foucaultian analysis, however, question this apparently noble governmental enterprise of inclusive education, and conclude that inclusive education is like an "obsession … [which] seems to exclude the political and the world, and in this sense … creates a new kind of "invalidity" or "disability?" (p. 135). Context (i.e., the political and the world) can be erroneously relegated to invisibility and irrelevance in an inclusive education that positions the individual as an isolate, included but with exclusive needs that are not common to any other individual. A learner considered as though they are context-free or context-neutral is a learner invalidated and disabled by the governing influences of inclusive education. In Slee's (2004) words, "Inclusive education is about the politics of recognition" (p. 54). In some nations, recognition has historically not been enshrined for all in policy or practice, and therefore the processes and implementation of formal schooling are likely flawed for some members of the community. Although not explicitly researchers in inclusive education, Guenther, Bat and Osborne's (2017) research, relevant to education and the non-dominant identity of indigenous Australians, comments on absence of recognition in the case of Australia's indigenous population and curriculum, "What if the desirable outcomes of education in remote Australia—particularly in the remote communities where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live—were different than those that are desirable elsewhere?" (p. 101).

The inquiry research has investigated the strata of power relationships inherent in the practice of inclusive education: classrooms and schools as spaces in which objects and people are in or out of place (e.g., Ypinazar & Pagliano, 2004); competing philosophies and pedagogies in curriculum and classroom practice (e.g., Guenther et al., 2017; Kam Pun Wong, Pearson & Mei Kuen Lo, 2004); the hoped-for inclusion of children in schools and education that culturally and traditionally have not attended formal schooling (e.g., Singal, 2005); and children whose context and identity are highly mobile and who can remain unacknowledged in formal schooling (Danaher & Danaher, 2000; Kenny, 1997; Kenny & Binchy, 2009).

2.4 Conceptualizations of Learner, Curriculum and Formal Schooling in the Literature of Inclusive Education

The analytic markers used to organize and analyze the research literature of relevance to this thesis (see Table A.1 in Appendix A) have yielded a systematic summary of the disparate and conflicting knowledge in the field of inclusive education. The pragmatic,

aspirational and inquiry categorizations of inclusive education for review purposes share some commonalities in that they all, in varying degrees, address conceptualizations of the learner, the curriculum and formal schooling, however—and most strikingly—these conceptualizations are highly divergent. They carry quite specific conceptualizations (see Table 2.1 above) that have required further analysis in order to better understand what knowledge is valued across the categories of research literature.

The specific conceptualizations that have emerged from this review of the research of inclusive education are those related to the position and knowledge of the learner, contextual variation (of culture, of practice, of place, of knowledge, of the learner), the place and use of curriculum, and knowledge of advantage/disadvantage (physical, conceptual, perceptual). These have been summarized in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2 Summary of specific conceptualizations of learner, contextual variations, curriculum, and advantage/disadvantage indicated by inclusive education research categories

Inclusive Education Research Categories			
Specific Conceptualizations	**Aspirational**	**Pragmatic**	**Inquiry**
Position & Knowledge of Learner	Non-specific subject needing access to formal schooling. Within-learner knowledge not acknowledged.	A medically categorized subject with special needs. Within-learner deficit of knowledge.	A socio-contextualized subject with agency, history and identity. Acknowledges within-learner knowledge.
Contextual Variation	Non-specific contexts. Learner is imagined as context-neutral.	Context treated as category to which the learner belongs (poverty/wealth remote/urban, male/female, dominant race/non-dominant race) and to which they will be subjected (mainstream or special contexts).	Context treated as multivariable, multidimensional learner-centred experience that contributes to valued knowledge. Global/local contextual variations are unfinished conceptualizations.
Place & Use of Curriculum	Curriculum not addressed.	Curriculum as essential, requiring adaptation, but problematic to implementation.	Curriculum as on a continuum to be determined as rigid/inflexible/disabling through to expansive/flexible/enabling to socio-contextual

Inclusive Education Research Categories			
Specific Conceptualizations	**Aspirational**	**Pragmatic**	**Inquiry**
			implementation and pedagogy.
Knowledge of Advantage/Disadvantage	Advantage unacknowledged. Disadvantage is marginalization that is measured by difficulties with educational access (categories such as poverty, war, disability)	Advantage unacknowledged. Disadvantage is marginalization that is measured by difficulties with educational access due to disability/medical impairment and environmental factors (categories such as poverty, remoteness, ethnicity, trauma).	Re-positions advantage/disadvantage as relative to socio-cultural and socio-contextual determinants inherent in the dynamic between curriculum, pedagogy, the learner, the school and the community. Advantage/disadvantage is a problem of recognition.

2.4.1 Position and knowledge of the Learner

While nominally of central concern to each of the categories of the inclusive education literature, the learner is nonetheless conceptualized differently by each category. Aspirational knowledge of inclusive education positions the learner as a non-specific subject of inclusive education, one among the all (UNESCO, 1945/2014, 1990). The pragmatic understanding of the learner is of a highly categorized subject with within-learner deficit or marginalization (e.g., Calculator & Black, 2007; Wu & Komesaroff, 2007). The learner in the inquiry research is a socio-contextualized subject, with agency, history, and identity (Slee, 2014). The learner in each category is the subject of formal schooling.

The categories of inclusive education research that have been constructed by this research as aspirational and pragmatic have conceptualized the learner as respectively as non-specific or as a medicalized, disadvantaged subject. They are not conceptualized as a participant with agency in formal schooling, and they are not recognized as bringing knowledge, thinking processes or skills to their formal schooling (Brantlinger, 2004). The inquiry category of the research literature positions the learner as capable, having an identity, and as having knowledge and thinking processes prior to being included in formal schooling. Apart from the inquiry category of the research literature, inclusive education research frequently seems to treat the learner as partially-acknowledged (through some form of measurement or evaluation), and mostly-imagined as a subject of inclusive education treatment.

2.4.2 Contextual variation

While the term 'context' is frequently used throughout the research literature of inclusive education, there has been little noticeable attempt to directly define 'context.' Subsequently, context has been conceptualized in a variety of ways. across the inclusive education research literature: the ways in which the terminology and identifiers of context are used are mutable (as is summarized in Table 2.3 below, with a full list of references used in the compilation of this table provided in Appendix A).

Table 2.3 Summary of the terminology and identifiers of context used across the categories of research literature

Categories of Research Literature	Terminology and Identifiers of Context
Aspirational	Generalized identifiers such as—general education, inclusive schools, environments.*
Pragmatic	External demographic identifiers such as—Low income; disability; specific countries, regions or localities; geographic remoteness; gender; cultural markers; specific classrooms and specific schools; deficit; disadvantage; remote or urban.*
Inquiry	Systemic, political and theoretical identifiers such as—policy (intra-national, national and international); schools and societies; colonialization; socio-cultural and socio-historical influences; dominant discourse.*

The aspirational research literature may be described as hovering above a conceptualization of context, using non-specific or generalized identifiers of context such as general education, inclusive schools and environments. Context is not defined and the understanding of these generalized identifiers gives an impression of context as that to which the learner is educationally exposed (general education or inclusive schools) or otherwise exposed (environments).

The pragmatic research literature reverts to highly specific external identifiers of context such as geographical location, poverty, disability, race or ethnicity. Context is not directly theorized in the pragmatic research literature. It is, however, treated as through the lens of a microscope: context is treated as a set of observable, measurable places or conditions describing an externalized deficit or disadvantage for those subject to those places or conditions.

The inquiry research literature treats social mechanisms (policy, schools, societies) and socially dominant knowledge and practice (colonialization, dominant discourse) as elements of context. While not directly theorized in the inquiry research literature, context is assumed to be influential on the participants in these contexts.

The context of the learner receives various attentions in the three categories of the literature of inclusive education. The learner is conceptualized in the aspirational and pragmatic

research as subject to the machinations of inclusive education. The inquiry research figures the learner as a participant-subject in their acquisition of knowledge and abilities, capable of including and excluding themselves from socio-contextual interactions and learning. The learner can be 'naughty' (Slee, 2006b), different (Slee, 2001b), disruptive and disaffected (Slee, 2014, 2015)—sometimes to the annoyance or puzzlement of teachers and psychologists (Slee, 2015), to the surprise of the intention of the curriculum, or to the perception of an 'effective school' (Slee & Weiner, 2011).

In the aspirational and pragmatic research, the learner's context is either unacknowledged or generalized (as in the aspirational research) or an externalized category or categories (as in the pragmatic research) to which the learner belongs (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3). The contextual identifiers of the learner which are acknowledged by these two categories of research are generally considered identifiers of either present or future disadvantage. Learner identity (i.e., the learner's pre-existing knowledge and abilities as valued by the learner) is specifically acknowledged and valued in the inquiry research (Slee, 2001a, 2001b, 2006b; Terzi, 2005b, 2014; Reindal,2016) and includes dimensions of identity such as indigeneity (Le Fanu, 2015; Mallett, 2008), intercultural experience (Hajisoteriou et al., 2012), and the sanctioned exclusions and 'untouchables' of specific cultures (Singal, 2006a, 2006b).

As the international implications of globalized educational reform gradually reach their way in to inclusive education, context clearly and increasingly matters in inclusive education research (Graham & Slee, 2008; Slee, 2001c, 2006a, 2014; Thomas, 2013). At present, however, the way in which it matters is nominal or externally categorical across the research literature (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3) with little theoretical analysis. Context is increasingly becoming acknowledged as an essential consideration when theorizing and enabling inclusive education. However, unlike in other areas of comparative education and cross-cultural research[17], context is never specifically researched in relation to learner identity or to within-learner implications. Context that is specific to the learner's

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[17] Context sensitivity is essential to other areas of educational research—more explicitly to comparative education research (Crossley, 2010), as well as research related to linguistics, anthropology, and cross-cultural studies (Davidson & Klich,1980; Klich & Davidson, 1983; Saxe,1985; Nisbett, 2003; Nisbett, Peng, Choi & Norenzayan, 2001; Norenzayan, Smith, Kim & Nisbett, 2002; Ji, Peng & Nisbett, 2000; Nisbett & Miyamoto, 2005; Choi, Koo & Choi, 2007; Elliott, 2009). Context has long been theorized and demonstrated as contributing to an individual's thinking processes.

What context effects for the learner, and whether or not it is instrumental to the learner's inclusion in their formal schooling, has not as yet been a central concern of inclusive education research. Questions about the tools of formal schooling (such as a curriculum or pedagogy)—for example, questions relating to the conceptual framework and thinking processes favoured in a curriculum or pedagogy—are not yet considered as questions of essential importance in inclusive education.

self-understanding, *and* as having implications for the development of the learner's knowledge and thinking processes, is absent as a specific focus of exploration in the inclusive education research.

While child development literature *investigates* the nature of cumulative markers of socio-economic disadvantage (i.e., illness, low parental education, low family income, single parent family structure, racial minority, remoteness) and their impact on a learner's conceptual development and achievement outcomes (Evans & Kim, 2013; Nurius, Prince & Rocha, 2015), inclusive education literature *adopts* such markers. In inclusive education research, these markers are adopted to build a generalist profile of disadvantage or deficit in order to substantiate the eligibility of a learner for inclusive education.

It is curious that the imperative for inclusion in education and its inherent adherence to the importance of the learner context has not eventuated in more detailed investigation of any patterning of contextual factors that may form relevant themes to be addressed by inclusion across diverse contexts (e.g., conceptual framework differences between learner context and learning context) for a much wider diversity of learners. Danaher and Danaher's (2000) work on traveller circus families provides a good example of a learner population for whom the adoption of such a generalist profiling of disadvantage or educational deficit is less likely to be as workable in implementing an inclusive education than investigating patterns of contextual markers that create an otherness for traveller circus youth compared to sedentary youth. Describing the circus school-aged youth like trapeze artists who "can literally swing through the air as they engage with the constantly floating signifiers from which they derive identity and meaning" (p. 131), Danaher and Danaher (2000) draw the researcher's attention to other contextual markers for those who move across contexts on a regular basis, or who do not value the contextual markers that may be valued by the policies and processes of formal schooling. These circus youth could be conceptualized as having a pattern of contextual identifiers while not necessarily having a specific geographical context of residence or an economic context of 'household' income.

As the conceptualization of context is essential to the enactment of inclusive education, more attention will be given to its explicit definition and the complexities it presents to inclusive education in Chapter 3, *Theoretical Perspectives*.

2.4.3 Place and use of the curriculum

In the inclusive education research, the process of formal schooling is generally acknowledged as being focused by the curriculum (Berlach & Chambers, 2011a; Chappell, 2008; HREOC, 2000; Le Fanu, 2015; Miskovic & Curcic, 2016), however, there is very little

inclusive education research literature that incorporates (let alone focuses upon) the relationship between the curriculum and the learner in inclusive education. Out of thousands of research journal articles related to inclusive education, fewer than 20 directly addressed curriculum and inclusive education in school-aged educational settings.

And yet, curriculum is one of the paramount sources upon which the actual practice of effective inclusion in education depends. As Slee (2001b) writes: "The relationships between students and curriculum and its delivery (pedagogy) may be enabling or disabling." (p. 117).

The absence of a consideration of curriculum from much of the inclusive education literature, and its absence when considering the actual learning and learning needs of context-specific learners who are subject to formal schooling, looms large in the space of inclusive education considered in this research. The space of this absence seems especially large when formal schooling is considered from a global perspective characterized by the establishment and implementation of national curriculums and the measurement of globalized competencies and capabilities. The specific context of a learner, their capabilities and their connectedness to formal schooling is only as relevant as any curriculum allows them to be (Danaher & Danaher, 2000; Le Fanu, 2014, 2015; Miskovic & Curcic, 2016; Mukhopadyay, 2016; Slee, 2015). The curriculum is as essential as it is problematic to the progress of inclusive education in any educational setting. In the words of Guenther et al. (2017), "What if the underpinning assumptions about curriculum, pedagogy and professional standards were somehow wrong?" (p. 101).

As seen in Table 2.2, while the curriculum is problematic if it is rigid and inflexible in relation to the generalized learner (Osberg & Biesta, 2010) and the categorized learner (Nilsen, 2017; Otukile-Mongwaketse, 2016), it may be useful if it is conceptualized and designed to be adaptable and flexible to socio-contextual implementation and pedagogy.

2.4.4 Knowledge of advantage/disadvantage

Disadvantage for the learner in the pragmatic literature is highly prescriptive, consisting of categories of disadvantage such as disability, culture/ethnicity, urban/regional/remote location, age and gender (e.g., Beek, 2002; Calculator & Black, 2009; Cross et al., 2009). Aspirational literature is more likely to conceptualize disadvantage as a social marginalization of the learner (Bhopal & Myers, 2016; Wendelborg, & Tøssebro, 2010). The inquiry literature addresses the illusory nature of disadvantage for the learner (Graham & Slee, 2008; Slee, 2006b). Disadvantage may be constituted by politically driven categories of deficit, or politically driven devaluation of attributes that the actual learner might value. As such, across the research literature of inclusive education, disadvantage may mark the

learner as a target for inclusion, or may be manufactured to mark the placement and services provided to a learner that are congruent with the needs of the educational process (curriculum, pedagogy) or educational organization. Interestingly, Mowat (2015) has reconceptualized maginalization, providing a re-interpretation of the advantage / disadvantage polarity common in inclusive education. Marginalization is understood by Mowat (2015) as incorporating "…the subjective and emotional aspects of human life and the interpretive framework of the individual" (p. 456). This alternative understanding poses the notion that any individual may not recognize that they are marginalized even though they have been identified as such by an entity beyond themselves. This re-conceptualization queries the legitimacy of the political designation of marginalization assigned under the guise of inclusion. Such a re-thinking of marginalization is key to understanding the conceptualization of dis/advantage in inclusive education and parallels Slee's (2016b) concern with the illusory nature of disadvantage.

In any of the research literature that has been reviewed, however, there has been no account given to the advantages of the learner context nor to the knowledge or learning strengths of the learner. There is no indication in the research literature that the learner has pre-existing or co-existing knowledge when considered as the target of formalised inclusive education.

2.5 Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to investigate the conceptualization of the learner, curriculum and formal schooling in inclusive education research literature. The research questions (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 in Chapter 1) guided the bounds of this literature review as it investigated: how the learner was imagined; the markers of context (if any) with which previous research has been concerned; and, any discernible indications of what this might mean for inclusive education in formal schooling.

The literature review has indicated how the learner is imagined as well as absences in the literature regarding the conceptualization of the learner. In summary, the learner is frequently held at arm's length as it were, considered less as a participant in formal schooling and more as a subject to which inclusive education is applied. There has been a consistent continuum of who the learner is in the research of inclusive education—generalized as one of all learners, specified as deficient, or acknowledged as context-specific with a potential voice (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2). Consequently, learner advantage (that is, that which the learner brings to education) is largely invisible from the inclusive education research while learner disadvantage is prominent. Only recently, in the realm of inclusive education, has the learner

been conceptualized as having inherent agency and capabilities. While the inquiry research has begun to incorporate learner capabilities and well-being under the mantle of inclusive education, the pre-existing and co-existing knowledge of value to the context-specific learner is yet to be identified and incorporated as fundamental to inclusive education.

There is a space in the inclusive education research literature that calls for the characteristics and socio-contextual experiences of the context-specific learner to be systematically addressed. This thesis addresses this area by asking questions about the contextual markers that characterize the context-specific learner and the imagined learner.

Inclusive education researchers continue to consider context as a reality that is *external* to the learner, having influence from the 'outside in' as it were. What is absent from the literature is a conceptualization of context as a series of socio-contextual situations and interactions through which the learner moves and from which the learner develops their conceptual world (which, in turn, constitutes an internalized context for the learner). In this sense, inclusive education research does not include the context and the learner as an indivisible dynamic participating in formal schooling that is guided by curriculum.

Curriculum is figured as problematic in the research: a grey presence that denies, defies and deconstructs any consensus among inclusive education researchers. Apart from the research noting the fundamental importance of curriculum to a just and equitable society, and to the theorization and practice of inclusive education, little more than the obstacles and difficulties curriculum presents to specific learners or in specific contexts draws comment or analysis.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, this literature review has been conducted with due cognisance of the limitations of any integrative literature review. The process of literature selection, and subsequent rigorous analysis, have been guided by the research questions which have framed this study.

Chapter 3.

Theoretical Perspectives

In my encounter with her, the realm of what Rita knew remains, to this very day,
unknown to me.

(Chapter 1, Prelude)

3.1 Introduction

While extensive, the research literature of inclusive education has elicited some elements of high relevance to inclusive education that have the potential to impact both the local and global level of application. These elements were identified as: the indivisible and specific nature of the learner and their context; the unfinalizable possibilities of contextual variation across the globe; the importance and limitations of curriculum; and that which is valued by the socio-contextual learner, or by a curriculum. As introduced in the story of Rita in Chapter 1, individual learners who, for one reason or another, do not fit the expectations of formal schooling can remain largely unknown depending on the dissonance between learner experience and learning context and the experience and contexts of teachers working with the learner. As a learner from another experience to that of her teacher, the unknown of Rita (i.e., her conceptual world and context, and that which she valued as knowledge and capability), and the unknown for this research project, are likely to be more accessible through further investigation of context in the enactment of inclusive education with specific attention to the learner, curriculum, the markers of context, and formal schooling.

To consider and investigate the abovementioned elements further, this theoretical framework also utilized the three research questions to organize and conceptualize the key theoretical elements of this study. In relation to the learner and the markers of context, the theorization of learner knowledge, conceptual development, conceptual variations, and conceptual worlds as formed and forming were required. In relation to formal schooling, the theorization of capabilities and the measures by which capabilities are valued were required.

As this research study has taken a pragmatic and socio-contextualized approach to understanding the learner, curriculum, and formal schooling, it has co-opted (in varying degrees) the theorization of Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Bourdieu, and Sen. Using these theorists, this chapter lays out a conceptualization of concepts, contexts, learners, curriculum, capabilities and schooling.

The chapter first explores the thinking of Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Bourdieu and Sen and the relevance of that thinking to this research, after which it provides a conceptualization of the key terms essential to this thesis.

3.2 Theorists

The key researchers and theorists of relevance to the socio-contextual bent and theoretical perspectives of this research study are summarized in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Theorists and Key Concepts

Key Researcher/Theorist	Of Relevance to Understanding Learner	Of Relevance to Understanding Curriculum	Of Relevance to Understanding Formal Schooling
Vygotsky • Zone of Proximal Development [ZPD] • Scaffolding • More Knowledgeable Other [MKO]	Learner concepts develop via participation in socio-contextual interactions.	Curriculum may not share or have any connection with the ZPD of the learner.	Where the learner's ZPD, and the teacher's role of MKO (and use of scaffolding) meet and are enacted.
• Bakhtin • Utterance • Dialogism • Polyphony (many-voiced) • Heteroglossia (many-speaker) • 'Other' & 'Outside'	Knowledge—both unofficial and official—is formed through polyphonic dialogue in social situations.	Curriculum is an example of formal, official documentation, is finalized knowledge, a voice "caught in its own specificity" (Bakhtin, from Holquist, 1981, p. 3).	'Capabilities' and 'Inclusion' are examples of unfinalized dialogue, seeking understanding and knowledge.
Bourdieu • Field • Habitus • Complex social contexts • Structuring structures • Enduring dispositions	Within their complex context, the learner practices that which sustains them in that context. Practice is constituted by knowledge and action valued in the complex context.	A structuring structure in the field of education. May have centripetal force in sustaining that field, and centrifugal force in some complex contexts.	Enduring dispositions (knowledge, practice) in any complex context. May have centrifugal force in the field of education, and centripetal force in their specific complex context.

Key Researcher/Theorist	Of Relevance to Understanding Learner	Of Relevance to Understanding Curriculum	Of Relevance to Understanding Formal Schooling
Sen • Capability • Human well-being	Human beings, and therefore learners, are "… the most important means of social achievement, … also its profoundest end" (1989, p. 734).	Capability theorized as what a human being can do or be (i.e. the observable functioning of a human being in their social context) in pursuit of their desired and achievable needs or interests (their well-being).	Education should prepare the learner for a quality of life rather than a life bound to functionality for utilitarian or resourcism purposes. The freedom to choose what is valued and desired is highly dependent on context and schooling.

Each of these researchers and theorists will be introduced briefly below, along with their chief relevance to this research study. Beyond this, this chapter will systematically discuss the inter-relationship of concepts, context, curriculum, capabilities, the learner and formal schooling in inclusive education.

3.2.1 Vygotsky

Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), a Russian psychologist and philosopher, understood psychological development (including conceptual development) as occurring through the internalization of social interaction. Concepts of particular relevance to this thesis are Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), scaffolding, and more knowledgeable other (MKO).

Vygotsky's (1966) theorization of children's play understood it as a form of social interaction that, even if imaginary, always occurs in a physical context, and can occur when a child is in isolation or with at least one other playmate. Play, as an exemplar of social interaction, is the context in which the relationship between the semantic[18] and the actual world is formed, "… between situations in thought and real situations" (Vygotsky, 1966, p. 17). Conceptual development occurs through participation in or observation of social interactions: both the learner involved in interaction in space and time, and their internalization of that interaction, are considered intrinsic to this process of learning.

Conceptual development is built from the relationship between what the participant thinks of an external situation and what actually occurs during their involvement in the external situation. In Vygotsky's (2004) words:

> It is easy to understand what enormous significance … retention of previous experience has in a person's life insofar as it facilitates his adaptation to the world around him, giving rise to and fostering development of habits that are repeated under a particular set of conditions. (p. 8)

A concept cannot magically occur without some external experience of the participant in which the concept is forming. As such, conceptual development in any learner depends on the relationship between situations in thought and real situations. Learner concepts form via participation in socio-contextual interactions, and this process is, of course, not restricted to formal schooling. In Vygotsky's (2017) words, "a child's education begins long before it goes to school. School never starts in an empty space. Whatever a child learns in school has its

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[18] Semantic is here understood as "relating to meaning in language or logic" (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/semantic)

prehistory" (p. 364). Concepts and conceptual development have their foundations in social interaction that has occurred in context-specific situations and locations, some of which might be related to formal schooling.

Vygotsky (2011) takes conceptual development one step further in his conceptualization of the ZPD. What a child of any age is actually able to do, think or say, and what they will soon be able to do, think or say, together form the boundary of that child's ZPD. As Vygotsky (2011) describes:

> ZPD defines those functions that are not mature yet, but are currently in the process of maturation, the functions that will mature tomorrow. These functions are not fruits yet, but buds or flowers of development.
>
> The level of actual development characterizes already achieved results of the development, its "yesterday," whereas ZPD characterizes mental development that will take place "tomorrow". (p. 204)

The mental development of tomorrow is not able to occur if the connection is not made between new stimuli and the child's actual pre-existing conceptual world. The mental development that takes place tomorrow is dependent on what else is in the context of the child, which stimuli are available in the external world (including which aids, helpers or teachers) that build on the child's actual development and draw them towards the development for which the child's actual development has prepared them.

Vygotsky (2011) is mindful of the necessity of a MKO—that is "the guidance of adults or … cooperation with more intelligent peers" (p. 204)—in order for the maturation of the child towards further mental development. Without the presence of a MKO, the child may not be drawn towards further mental development and, as such, the MKO must act within the child's ZPD in order for the child to be drawn: there must be a connection between the mental stimulation invitations of the MKO and the historic and therefore, already established mental development of the child. In relation to formal schooling, Vygotsky (1978,1981,1986) introduced the conceptualization of scaffolding: whereby the actual development of the child is established by the MKO, and the next step of development in the child's ZPD is deliberately planned for and introduced to the child by a MKO such as the parent or teacher.

More recently, Richard Nisbett (1941–present)—a psychologist aligning himself with Vygotsky's historical-cultural school of psychology—has contributed to the relationship between conceptual development and context through his book, *The Geography of Thought*. Nisbett (2003) claims socio-contextual locations and situations exert substantial effects in

differences in default thinking processes and conceptual frameworks when considering Eastern and Western thinking. Nisbett (2003) asserts that context and concepts are closely inter-related producing different thinking in areas such as:

> … fundamental assumptions about the nature of the world, in the focus of attention, in the skills necessary to perceive relationships and discern objects in a complex environment, in the character of causal attribution, in the tendency to organize the world categorically or relationally, and in the inclination to use rules, including the rules of formal logic. (pp. 189–190)

Elfreda Chatman (1942–2002) was a Professor at the School of Information Studies at Florida State University whose background discipline was sociology. Through her theory of information poverty, Chatman (1999) found a way to identify and address "the information needs of people who had yet to find a voice in the literature" (p. 207) due to a lack of research interest shown in the role information plays in their needs and connections (e.g., elderly women residents in aged care, women inmates in jail). Chatman (1999) makes more of the social interaction as intrinsic to conceptual development, conceptualizing information in the interaction as a performance, a narrative and a system by which the participant becomes an insider no longer requiring conceptual development relevant to outsiders. In Chatman's (1999) words:

> In trying to explain how information aids in forming a worldview, a conclusion I've reached is that information is really a *performance.* It carries a specific *narrative* that is easily adaptable to the expectations and needs of members of a small world. It also has a certain *form.* In this situation, the form is interpersonal, and for the most part is being used by insiders to illustrate ways of assimilating one's personal world to the world of prison life.

> What makes such information potentially noteworthy is that it is produced within a specific context for use within that context. Consequently, it easily fits into the everyday reality of life. (p. 208)

Burnett, Besant and Chatman (2001) investigated world views and knowledge in what they termed 'small worlds' of our lives where most interactions and occurrences "… are predictable, and much of the information that holds it together is perceived by members of that world as appropriate, legitimate, and as having a rightful place in the general scheme of things" (p. 536) . Conceptual development is, in some 'small world' contexts dependent on the valued social interactions and concepts within particular locations.

The flow of information within and between social situations or fields of information is dependent on valued information behaviour and needs within specific situations. As Burnett et al. (2001) write:

> Ultimately, the flow of information within the small world…is most closely related to the perception of expertise, and with it, legitimacy over time. In the short term, fresh perspectives may add value to an individual's information and have some impact on who is listened to most keenly at a specific time. (pp. 544-545)

Reality of life in specific locations, and acknowledged in specific interactions within those locations, requires certain forms of conceptual development, and does not require other forms, nor necessarily afford other forms, any valency. Information poverty is either grieved or valued depending on the location (e.g., aged care facility or jail) and the valued social interactions that prevail therein (e.g., information seeking regarding past situations or information seeking for survival). Information flow is dependent on valued information behaviour and need in and across fields of information.

The relevance of Vygotsky's (1966) theorization to this research is the inextricable nature of context and conceptual development for the learner. The conceptual development of any learner—which includes their assumptions, attentional foci, perceptions, distinctions, heuristics, logic—is the natural progression of their context-specific participation. A curriculum and formal schooling are only part of any school-aged learner's context, and are not necessarily part of the school-aged learner's ZPD.

3.2.2 Bakhtin

Mikhael Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895–1975) was a Russian philosopher whose philosophical work spanned the areas of language and literature. Through very specific terminology and conceptualization—including the terms of 'word', 'utterances', 'dialogism', 'heteroglossia', 'polyphony', 'speech genre'/'literary genre', 'other' and 'outside'—Bakhtin (1986, 1994) explored human meaning-making endeavours through formal and informal language, and as involving the ongoing interaction of socio-historical and socio-contextual voices and words in social situations.

The word will demonstrate its socio-contextual and historical relatedness to the speaker or the literature that speaks it. The word speaks more than its face-valued meaning. In Bakhtin's (Bakhtin/Vološinov[19] in Morris, 1994) words:

> The word is implicated in literally each and every act of contact between people—in collaboration on the job, in ideological exchanges, in the chance contacts of ordinary life, in political relationships, and so on—countless ideological threads running through all areas of social intercourse register effect in the word. It stands to reason, then, that the word is the most sensitive index of social changes, and what is more, of changes still in the process of growth, still without definitive shape and not as yet accommodated into already regularized and fully defined ideological systems ... The word has the capacity to register all the transitory, delicate, momentary phases of social change. (p. 53)

Writing the adage, "Any true understanding is dialogic in nature" (Bakhtin/Vološinov in Morris,1994, p. 35), Bakhtin (1984, 1986) theorized that the conversation between the many voices of knowledge and experience—those voices already spoken throughout history as well as currently live voices—is the means by which knowledge is recognized, produced and comprehended. While Bakhtin did not use the psychological terminology of conceptual development, he did theorize about the acknowledgement and development of knowledge in context and between people in that context. The word as it is used signposts the preceding conversations and subsequent knowledge that is its historical and socio-contextual foundation.

> Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 110)

The word in dialogue carries historic and *in situ* knowledge and acts: that which is spoken or written is always done so in relation to other preceding words and speakers. Knowledge is endlessly forming in relation to the interaction of voices in context. Knowledge is unfinalizable.

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[19] Holquist (1981, xxvi), a Bakhtin translator and scholar of many years, maintains that "…ninety percent of the text of the three books in question is indeed the work of Bakhtin himself". The three books to which Holquist refers are: V. N. Vološinov's *Freudianism* (1927, 1987), and *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929, 1930, 1986); and P. N. Medvedev's *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1928, 1978). Excerpts from these books considered in this paper are taken from Morris 's (ed. 1994) *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov.* This paper will follow the editorial position of Holquist (1981) throughout: sources attributed to Vološinov will be indicated as Bakhtin / Vološinov.

Bakhtin (1986) writes of the basic language unit as being the utterance, rather than words or sentences. The utterance has boundaries (a start and a finish) which are not necessarily indicated by the start and finish of a sentence. The boundary of the utterance is the conversational 'handover' point in speech, by which the speaker indicates (verbally or nonverbally) that they are ready for their listener's response. In other words, Bakhtin's (1986) concept of utterance invites dialogue, expects dialogue, and is intrinsic to dialogue.

For the Bakhtinian researcher, the boundaries of the utterance are the essential site at which to seek the unfinished nature of knowledge development and expression. The utterance provides a verbal scenario in which both the influences of inner and outer voices to the individual (the 'polyphony' and 'heteroglossia' that background an individual's utterances) are brought to the social interaction. The social interaction draws utterances from each of the participating individuals that form a chain of knowledge represented in the dialogue of the social interaction.

> Not a single instance of verbal utterance can be reckoned exclusively to its utterer's account. Every utterance is the product of the interaction between speakers and the product of the broader context of the whole complex social situation in which the utterance emerges. (Bakhtin/Vološinov in Morris, 1994, p. 41)

In psychological terms, learning is generally understood to be the formation of knowledge through a process of experience (Reber, 1985). More specifically, the formation of knowledge is understood as a process of conceptual development through socio-contextualized experience (Vygotsky, 1966). Bakhtin understood that the friction[20] between formal and informal speech utterances was that which drove new understandings and emergent knowledge. Knowledge—both unofficial and official—is formed through many-voiced ('polyphonic') dialogue in social situations. The more a social situation differs from that understood in literary genres characterized by statements of definition and fact (e.g., a curriculum), the less official the words, utterances, and language of the speakers become, and the less these utterances are able to be aligned with the specificity of any formal speech or literary genres. Knowledge is dynamically formed at the boundaries of speech utterances, at the boundaries where the specificity of official language and words meets socio-contextual experiences and language that are outside of that specificity. Any

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[20] Friction is here used as an indicator of energy transfer in social situations; friction can be present in a congenial meeting of friends, in a conversation seeking a clarification of ideas, or a mediation between individuals in disagreement.

true or new understanding occurs where socio-contextual differences are active and in interaction with each other.

For this study, this meant that the data sources, both demographic and document, were the voices contributing to the dialogue intended to reach an understanding of the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education. The numerous demographic data sources, the several varied research locations, and the document of the *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2013/2014) constituted the voices of the dialogue in the first instance. The voices of the research participants were used as a form of validation of the understanding that the voices of the demographic and document data contributed.

Voices meet and interact in places where speech or literature occurs (that which Bakhtin (1986) refers to as speech and literary genres), and these interactions are conceptualized by Bakhtin (1986) as including 'outside' and 'other': "… all our utterances … [are] filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of "our-own-ness" (p. 89). Bakhtin's (1986) thinking allows for true understanding being developed in a context of friction, in a place where language and social interaction occur (i.e., where the finalized words of history and the other live words of current context are in interaction). Speech and literary genres are first germinated in the boundaries where 'outside' understanding meets formal and official utterances. As described by Bakhtin (1986), "Utterances and their types, that is, speech genres, are the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language" (p. 65). Drive belts create and transfer energy via friction. If friction is absent—that is, if there is no conflict and subsequent dialogue between 'outsideness' and formal, official understandings, between 'other' understanding and 'our-own-ness'—so is true understanding unlikely to be formed and established.

Emergent knowledge in education may thus be understood as a conscious outcome of friction in the socio-cultural contexts presented by specific educational settings. This friction occurs where one boundary or edge of socio-cultural experience meets with another. Bakhtin (Holquist, 1981, p. 3) describes the "most intense and productive life of culture" as taking place "on the boundaries of its individual areas and not where these areas have become enclosed in their own specificity". The 'outsideness' of voices and words represents unofficial knowledge or knowledge of a socio-contextual nature that is not yet documented (in which socio-cultural settings are mis-matched with the socio-cultural settings described or assumed in 'official' genres of knowledge accounts such as the curriculum) thus providing the theatre in which new experience, language and knowledge may be active and detected.

Bakhtin (1986) is relevant to this study because he conceptualizes the unfinalizability of this dialogue between other experiences (such as those outside-of-the-box) and the experience finalized in official knowledge. This conceptualization enables a reach for further understanding of context in the enactment of inclusive education. It does this by: identifying where voices that have something other to offer to the usual understanding of inclusive education may be located; including a variety of voices thus including both outsideness and official thought within the dialogue aiming to reach another understanding. Bakhtin's (1986) work enables inclusiveness of voices, official and unofficial, both in the present and the future.

3.2.3 Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), a sociologist and philosopher from France, contributed extensively to sociological and anthropological theorizations about power relationships in disciplines, environments and interactions in socio-contextual arenas and across generations of human beings.

Applicable to this research study are Bourdieu's (1977) sophisticated theorizations of 'field' and 'habitus'. 'Field' is the term that describes any situation—the "objective structure" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72) or the "objective conditions" (p. 78) or the "social order" (p. 164)— under which people and groups of people meet and interact. Any specific field generates its own specific limits and chances or opportunities in which practice occurs. In this way, any given field creates and sustains its own arbitrary reality by an established correspondence between the externalized social situation and the internal mental perception and agency of its participants. This arbitrary reality is knowledge valued in that field. In Bourdieu's (1977) words:

> Every established order tends to produce the naturalization of its own arbitrariness. Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances and the agents' aspirations, out of which arises the *sense of limits*, commonly called the sense of reality, i.e., the correspondence between the objective classes and the internalized classes, social structures and mental structures, which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order. (p. 164)

Among other expressions, Bourdieu (1977) describes field as "… the instantaneous sum of the stimuli which may appear to have directly triggered [practises]" (p. 78). Conceptually, 'field' illustrates where practice-as-action (thinking, perceiving, reacting, appreciating, valuing, responding, doing) occurs as though in relation to some future, expected and

imagined outcome of relevance to the objective structure in which the practice occurs (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 76–78). Field is, of its nature, self-perpetuating with established and valued knowledge and practice. Field may refer to any objective complex context such as education, economics or politics and is considered a social field rather than some geographically-located field.

'Habitus' describes the intertwined practice generated between, embodied in, and furthered by socio-contextual participants in their environment. In Bourdieu's (1984) words:

> … with the notion of habitus you can refer to something that is close to what is suggested by the idea of habit, while differing from it in one important respect. The habitus, as the word implies, is that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. So the term constantly reminds us that it refers to something historical, linked to individual history, and that it belongs to a genetic mode of thought, as opposed to essentialist modes of thought. (p. 86)

That which has become durably incorporated in the form of permanent dispositions are those expressed in the aspirational, pragmatic and inquiry areas of conceptualization in inclusive education literature. The learner remains a subject of inclusive education rather than a participant. The curriculum is problematic to inclusive education the more prescriptive it is in nature. Formal schooling is where the learner and curriculum meet and interact, and where inclusive education is invariably challengeable as a noble goal but a wanting social reality. That which is in the thinking of the enactment of inclusive education is not coherent with that which is in the reality of its enactment.

Bourdieu (1999) writes that, "Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and habitus, outside and inside of agents" (p. 213). The relationship of field and habitus is inextricable, a relationship theorized as having both centripetal and centrifugal socio-contextual forces (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 58) concurrently at play in any environment at any one moment. In specific complex contexts, practices are valued and enacted and pull the participants in towards a cohesive realm, sustaining and maintaining the complex context. The social field of education can exert a centrifugal force on any given complex context, pulling outwards against the valued practices of the complex context. In turn, the practices of the complex context can exert a centripetal force, pulling inwards against the social field of education. For those who are required to participate across fields—to accommodate the habitus of divergent fields—their social reality is fraught. For example, the school-aged learner—as participant in both the social field of education and the valued

practices of the complex context—can be like a lightning rod in the midst of this storm of competing forces, in various measures found to be resistant and oppositional, slow and impaired, or engaged and responsive.

Habitus is both produced and producing of any complex context. Habitus is both generated and dwells in the complexity of any context. In Bourdieu's (1977) words, "The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g., the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus* …" (p. 72). In symbiosis with the environment it inhabits, habitus is interdependent with the environment's power and force in extinguishing or rewarding future practice. Bourdieu (1977) describes this phenomenon specifically in relation to inter-generational conflicts between older and younger people in any society:

> … practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are actually confronted is too distant from that to which they are objectively fitted. This is why generation conflicts oppose not age-classes separated by natural properties, but habitus which have been produced by different *modes of generation,* that is, by conditions of existence which, in imposing different definitions of the impossible, the possible, and the probable, cause one group to experience as natural or reasonable practices or aspirations which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous, and vice versa. (p. 78)

As participant in the social realities of formal schooling and neighbourhood/family context, the school-aged learner may find that the field of education and familiar experience and pre-existing knowledge are too distant from each other. As such, the school-aged learner is immediately and perhaps enduringly in conflict, being at home in neither environment because the valued practices of one environment are devalued or rejected in the other and vice versa. The case of context in inclusive education is the lightning rod for that which is valued as inclusive practice in education. While the enactment of inclusive education includes the learner, it may not include the familiar experience or pre-existing knowledge of the learner.

Bourdieu (1977) questioned the sequential, scientistic logic that human action, interaction and practice may be simplified into a mechanistic understanding of cause and effect. Bourdieu (1977) wrote that "… any social context is complex and has its own unique dynamic. Any complex context consists of 'structuring structures' and … durable and transposing dispositions" (p. 72). Bourdieu's (1977, 1980, 1984) understanding of field and habitus, the outside and the inside of human experience, development and action in context,

is fundamental to the complex nature of the socio-contextual person and their participation in social situations and contexts, and in objective conditions such as education.

Bob Lingard (1948–present), an Australian professor with a specific interest in the sociology of education, has collaboratively written in the field of educational policy and reform from a Bourdieusian perspective for over a decade (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor, 2005; Lingard, Taylor & Rawolle, 2005; Lewis & Lingard, 2015; Lingard, Sellar & Baroutsis, 2015; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008; Sellar & Lingard, 2013). Lingard and colleagues (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008; Lingard, Sellar & Baroutsis, 2015) have researched what they term an 'emergent global field of education policy' as a Bourdieusian social field, and reported on the effects of this field on national fields of education policy, including 'cross-field effects' (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor, 2005; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008) in policy development. Through the conceptualization of contemporary education practice as an outcome of a global field of education policy, Lingard and colleagues have demonstrated that social context and conceptual development are not only the preserve of human practice in a localized social situation involving other individuals involved in that practice, but are also typical of large groups of people across large social realities involved in 'cross-field' practice. Lingard and colleagues have highlighted that some of the fields involved in cross-field practice include the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Sellar & Lingard, 2013), media (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008) and edu-business interests (Lewis & Lingard, 2015). As will be considered in more detail below, inclusive education is just one such emergent global field of education policy and practice that involves cross-field agencies that affect local social realities.

3.2.4 Sen

Amartya Sen (1933–present) born in West Bengal, India is a professor in economics and philosophy. His work was internationally recognized by the UN when, in 1998, he was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences. Sen's (1979, 1985, 1989, 1992, 1998, 1999) most acknowledged theorization, 'capability', was first publicly introduced in a Tanner Lecture called, *Equality of What?* (Sen, 1979). Sen's conceptualizations of 'capability', 'needs', 'well-being', 'capability', 'human development' and 'capacity' are of specific interest to this thesis.

Sen's (1979) conceptualization of capability was first introduced as an essential element in the construction of an alternate and "adequate theory of equality" (p. 217) for human beings, based on an alternative understanding (and subsequent alternative measurement) of human needs. Sen (1979) wrote:

My contention is that *even* the concept of *needs* does not get adequate coverage

through the information on primary goods and utility … it still is concerned with good

things rather than with what these good things *do* to human beings … what is

missing in all this framework is some notion of "basic capabilities": a person being

able to do certain basic things … I believe what is at issue is the interpretation of

needs in the form of basic capabilities. This interpretation of needs and interests is

often implicit in the demand for equality. This type of equality I shall call "basic

capability equality". (pp. 217–218)

Sen's (1979) basic capability equality, the alternative measure of human development in any context, is based upon evaluation of human well-being and capability as relevant and specific to human context and human diversity, and relevant and specific to the human pursuit of happiness and desire-fulfilment. In Sen's (1979) words, "The notion of equality of basic capabilities is a very general one, but any application of it must be rather culture-dependent, especially in the weighting of different capabilities" (Sen, 1979, p. 219). What one desires and can achieve towards that desire constitutes their capability.

The ground-breaking contribution of Sen (1979) in this point in history was to shift a conceptualization of equality *from* that which economic science valued and measured in the contribution of the generalized individual to local and global economies (e.g., their primary goods, their utility), *to* that which the socio-contextual individual valued in the living of their lives. The economic science theorization of 'needs' was shifted by Sen (1979) from an externalized evaluation (which of its nature would be biased towards the evaluator's needs) to the socio-contextualized evaluation of the needs valued by the individual in their family and community. Sen (1979, 1985) re-focused the notion of national and international fiscal wealth to one of general and socio-contextually understood human well-being. In this way, the notion of household goods and income—an index used by economic science to establish the economic wealth of a nation—was shifted to that which income does for the socio-contextual individual in their family and community. The notion of the social bases of self-respect was shifted to that which self-respect is constituted by for the socio-contextual individual in their family and community.

Sen (1998) proposed that when assessing and planning for the development of human beings, well-being and capability were more apt measures than traditional economic indices such as primary goods, utilities and household incomes, or large scale measures such as a nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Capability was inextricably tied to well-being in context: human beings and their specific valued needs and desires were essential to understanding and working towards human, local, national and global progress and

development. In Sen's (1998) words, "Human beings are not only the most important means of social achievement, they are also its profoundest end" (p. 734).

While Sen (1989) claimed that human beings are both the direct and indirect, passive and active agents in development (both their own as well as on a global level), he also noted that human agency in global development is the aspect of human capability that opens the door to confusion between human-related goals and goals of progress and economic prosperity.

Using international comparative data Sen (1989) demonstrated the ills of the pursuit of economic development and prosperity in which human well-being functions as a means to an end:

> Countries with high G[D]P per capita can nevertheless have astonishingly low achievements in the quality of life, with the bulk of the population being subject to premature mortality, escapable morbidity, overwhelming illiteracy and so on. (Sen, 1989, p. 42)

Sen (1989) was sceptical of progress understood as economic prosperity, and specifically rejected both a utilitarian-driven[21] and a resourcism-driven[22] development of human beings by which human capacity is developed and evaluated as useful as a production line commodity, and valued to the extent that it develops economic prosperity. Sen (1997) was at pains to establish a clear distinction between 'human capital' (as a means to the end of prosperity) and 'human capability' (as an end goal of progress and development) despite their inter-relatedness in relation to human and global development. Sen (1989, 1997, 1998) repeatedly acknowledged that the freedom to choose what is valued and desired is highly dependent on the education we have received that prepares us for a quality of life, rather than a life bound to functionality for utilitarian or resourcism purposes.

Sen (1985, 1989, 1998) gradually became more explicit in his theorization of human capability, describing and further explaining what became known as Sen's Capability Approach, thus clarifying that capability is a measure of an individual's actual freedom or liberty to choose the life that they have reason to value (a life that enables them to pursue their needs and interests). Sen's (1989) Capability Approach " … sees human life as a set of "doings and beings"—we may call them "functionings"—and it relates the evaluation of the

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[21] A utilitarian view of human well-being and capability values the 'use' of humans as subjectively measured and valued in relation to community, national and global economic prosperity and development.

[22] A resourcism view of human well-being and capability values the individual's resource acquisition and holdings as accrued and able to be accrued as an indicator of household, community, national and global economic prosperity and development.

quality of life to the assessment of the capability to function" (p. 43). As such, the specifics of that which constitutes quality of life, well-being and capability are understood as differing across contexts, and according to that which is valued and desired by the socio-contextual individual, and that which is achievable due to its doing being within the individual's control.

Sen's (1989, 1997, 1998) Capability Approach does not limit human difference or disadvantage to the more obvious differences or perceived disadvantages (such as disability, gender, geographic remoteness or social isolation). A globally empathic conceptualization of human difference was important to Sen's (1992, 1999) understanding of human capability, incorporating personal, environmental and social diversities. Sen (1999) identified five areas of difference in equality and quality of life for human beings:

i) difference due to personal characteristics which can include health, impairment, gender, age and constitution;

ii) environmental characteristics such as epidemiology (regions of disease), and climate;

iii) differences in social climate characteristics, such as access to public education, public health, and public safety;

iv) differences in within-society, socio-relational perspectives such as the unspoken rules or expectations which determine an individual's sense of shame or acceptance when in public; and

v) the differences prevalent within the values of family units, such as which family members are afforded resources, assets and supports.

Capabilities have been further investigated and formally considered by numerous authors (Alexander, 2003; Alkire, 2015; Boman, Gustavsson & Nussbaum, 2002; Nussbaum, 2002, 2011, 2015, 2016; Reindal, 2016; Robeyns, 2005; Terzi, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2014). Of most interest to this study is the work of Martha Nussbaum (2011) on creating capabilities, and her understanding that "… aspects of individual lives cannot be reduced to a single metric without distortion" (p. 18).

3.3 Conceptualization of Key Terms in this Study

As prefaced in the introduction to this chapter, the terms that are central and foundational to this thesis are those of contexts, concepts, the learner, curriculum, capabilities and schooling. These notions have been considered as more than artificial and disconnected silos of knowledge but, as inter-related elements as they exist in the socio-contextualized enactment of inclusive education. In the first instance, the notion of context has been discussed separately, as it is considered foundationally connected to each of the other

conceptualizations and is further discussed—throughout this chapter—as in relationship to the other notions.

As summarized in Table 3.2 below, this thesis has taken a pragmatic approach to investigating the case of context involving the learner, curriculum and schooling in the enactment of inclusive education. It has constructed a relational theoretical consideration of the notions of concepts, contexts, learners, curriculum, capabilities and schooling.

Table 3.2 Matrix of Inter-related Theoretical Perspectives and Relevant Theorists

Theoretical Perspectives	Learner	Curriculum	Formal Schooling
Contexts & Concepts	Socio-contextual conceptual development is engendered through the learner's participation in social contexts (Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Bourdieu).	A curriculum incorporates an assumed conceptual world without reference to the learner's context (Vygotsky, Bakhtin).	Formal schooling is a meeting place of concepts and contexts (Bakhtin, Bourdieu).
Curriculum	A curriculum incorporates an assumed learner and an assumed conceptual world without reference to the learner's context (Vygotsky, Bakhtin).	_A_ curriculum is _the_ curriculum in specific locations (e.g. in Australian schools it is the _Australian Curriculum,_ ACARA, 2016b).	Formal schooling is the meeting place of learner, context and curriculum (Bakhtin, Bourdieu).
Capabilities	As valued by the learner in context: the freedom to choose that which is both desirable and achievable by the learner in their complex context (Bourdieu, Sen).	As valued by a curriculum: human capacities valued by the epistemological and political contexts of a curriculum's authors in the production and reproduction of a social field (Bourdieu, Sen).	As valued by and contested within formal schooling: where the capabilities of the learner and their context and the 'capabilities' of a curriculum and pedagogy meet (Bourdieu, Sen).

3.3.1 Contexts

For Vygotsky (1966), Bakhtin (Bakhtin/Vološinov in Morris, 1994) and Bourdieu (1977), a socio-contextual understanding of context is necessary to the development of knowledge. Context is understood to comprise location factors and the social interaction that occurs in locations. Nonetheless, the foci taken by these researchers differed in their treatment of context, although each accounted for external and internalized elements of context.

For Vygotsky (1966), context was conceptualized as "real situations" (p. 17) in which humans participate, either individually or together, as well as situations in one's thoughts that have been internalized as a result of this participation. Bakhtin (Bakhtin/Vološinov in Morris, 1994) referred to "all areas of social intercourse" (p. 66) as the context in which dialogue and true understanding occurred, however, this conceptualization of dialogue understood it as constructed from the participation of a polyphony (many-voiced) and heteroglossia (many speakers). As the Bakhtinian context is where all dialogue occurs—where all areas of social intercourse occur—a context is taken to include the many voices internalized from a participant's history as well as the speech of live speakers (who are part of a participant's current externalized context).

For Bourdieu (1977), context is wherever socially situated "thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions" (p. 95) occur in a constant generative cycle of production and reproduction. Situated social practice constitutes a continually regenerating complex context. A social reality, a complex context is relationally constituted from its simultaneous co-existence "… in things and in minds, in fields and habitus, outside and inside of agents" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 213). Conceptually for Bourdieu (1977, 1999), context is more socially situated than spatially situated.

3.3.2 Contexts and concepts

Contexts are complex, a situated dynamic of interaction between humans accustomed to the prevailing meaning-making that occurs therein, and to the process of continuation of that context by the interaction between social practice and social structures of that context.

Socio-contextual conceptual development is engendered through the learner's participation in social contexts. Vygotsky (1966) defined the theoretical foundation of 'concept' and 'conceptual development' as a form of internalization of social interactions in a context. Nonetheless, Vygotsky (2011) held that across social participants in any specific social interaction identical internalizations and conceptualizations do not necessarily occur. What is learnt is dependent on the learner's ZPD and the availability of a MKO to assist the

connection between actual development in the learner and new development. Very near identical contexts, in which very near identical social interactions occur, do not of themselves engender internalization of very near identical concepts. Identical contexts do not necessarily bear identical conceptual development in the participants in those contexts. Further to this, Burnett, Besant & Chatman (2001) indicated that the types of social interactions that occur in a small world situation can be characterized by information-seeking or information-avoidant behaviour (or both) that is normative in nature and thus, conceptual development in those who participate in small world contexts remains congruent with the context. In Burnett's et al. (2001) words: "… one looks at the world, with its everyday reality, as defined by the horizons of the small world, with some degree of interest, and seeks (or avoids) information within the specific context of the small world within which one lives or works" (p. 536). Thus, curiosity and learning within the small world is alive and well, but within the bounds of the small world. Information of other is avoided and does not find its way in to social interaction within that world. Conceptual worlds are formed which sensitize "members (of the small world) to be responsive to certain events and to ignore others" (p. 538).

Given Bakhtin's (1986) theorization about 'outside' and 'other', new knowledge and conceptualizations emerge where mutually unknown social situations demand it (i.e., the boundary between utterances in a conversation, and the boundary between formalized speech and literary genres with the informal individualized language of an 'outside' speaker frames the context in which generative friction occurs. This suggests that specific boundaries between formal and informal interactions of language in socio-contextual settings produce a specific and necessary friction between its speakers: a dialogue occurs. It is perhaps an oversimplification to understand contextual boundaries as only physically or geographically situated. It is at the hub of social interaction that contextual boundaries occur, and where knowledge and language are further developed. Specific social interaction contexts are likely to contribute to specific forms of conceptual development some of which are likely to be outside of that which is expected by other social interaction contexts.

Everyday human experience suggests that it is unwarranted to assume that conceptual worlds are homogenous across individuals, groups of people, or context-specific populations. The friction of conflict and misunderstandings are the grist of everyday living in families, at work, and in social gatherings. Bourdieu's (1977, 1999) theorizations of social fields and social contexts, led to demonstrating contexts as complex, less characterized by geographic markers than by socio-contextual markers. Bourdieu's (1977, 1999) sociologically observable markers of field and habitus provided the tools by which

socio-contextual variations in complex contexts might be noticed across an endless diversity of contexts.

For Bourdieu (1977, 1999), socio-contextual differences between one complex context and another are more significant than geographical differences to understanding that which is valued in any specific complex context: the development of valued knowledge is assumed to be derived more from socio-contextual than geographical markers. This thesis proposes that there can be significant differences in contexts, and the social interactions that occur therein which, in turn, value and produce particular and diverse conceptual development and conceptual worlds. Nisbett and colleagues (Ji, Peng, & Nisbett, 2000; Nisbett, 2003; Norenzayan, Kim & Nisbett, 2002) have repeatedly investigated and identified the relationship between specific socio-cultural thinking processes (such as perception, judgement, and interpretation) and specific contexts. Specific conceptual worlds are built from the social interactions that occur in specific contexts. Social complexities (language, action, perception, knowledge, values), nascent to and reproduced by specific contexts, are necessary to a cohesively shared conceptual development and conceptual world.

The following paragraphs will discuss the relationship between the social complexities of context, concepts and the learner, a curriculum and schooling.

3.3.2.1 *And the Learner*

Concepts, conceptual development and conceptual worlds are elementary to understanding any learner and to effectively implementing any formal schooling by which the learner might be motivated or included as a participant. In this research, concepts are taken to be the socio-contextually engendered knowledge, values and thinking processes of the learner, and which form the essential thinking framework which backgrounds the learner's capabilities (as observable in the learner's language and actions).

The learner practices within their complex context that which sustains them in that context, that which connects them to their history and their current living. From Vygotsky's (1978, 1981, 1986) perspective, the learner's development is interconnected with their context, and is furthered by the presence and scaffolding of the MKO. The MKO, however, is not necessarily the learner's teacher in formal schooling.

From Bourdieu's (1977) perspective, the 'objective chances' (p. 164) available to the learner's practice within their complex context may be of more immediate value than the objective chances offered by the field of education as available in formal schooling. As a socio-contextualized and socio-historical agent in their complex context, the learner's

appreciation of their specific context, and of their subsequently associated conceptual world, may have significantly more conceptual valency than the objective structures of the field of education (such as a curriculum or that which is valued by their teacher). The conceptual worlds of a curriculum or a teacher (who interprets and applies the curriculum) may have little in common with the conceptual world of the socio-contextual learner.

If there is no shared experience of conceptual and contextual worlds between learner, a curriculum and schooling, the physical participation of the learner in schooling is no guarantee of their conceptual participation in schooling, nor of their conceptual engagement with a curriculum.

3.3.2.2 And the curriculum

Curriculum is the formulation of that which is intended to be achieved through the processes and practice of formal schooling. Any curriculum is the carrier of policy, politics, governance and practice in the field of formal schooling. Curriculum, as an objective structure of formal schooling, represents that which students should learn or become (Lingard & McGregor, 2014) as valued by the field of education.

As a literary genre, a Bakhtinian interpretation of a curriculum is that it is a formal and official document, with its own particular language about the learner and its own assumptions about the learner context, conceptual development and conceptual world. Any curriculum contains a formal, finalized language which, in its construction, is historically backgrounded by assumptions about learner concepts, conceptual development and a conceptual world.

Using Vygotsky's (1977) understanding of conceptual development, a curriculum is less likely to represent the externalized context of any actual, specific learner than it is to represent the externalized political and epistemological context of the curriculum's authors. The 'play' that engenders the assumptions about learner concepts and conceptual development in the literary genre of a curriculum is the play of the curriculum authors and enactors (e.g., teachers, systems' administrators) and not the play of any specific learner. Curriculum authors and enactors reproduce the language and concepts of their socio-contextual realities and not necessarily of the socio-contextual realities of those who will be subject to its use in formal schooling. The context and conceptual framework that have produced a curriculum may represent a social reality that has negligible congruence with the social reality (context and conceptual reality) of any given learner. The learner's actual development, and the development that is ready to occur for them (i.e., the ZPD for the learner) may not have any connection with the conceptual framework of a curriculum, any of its learning outcomes. The learner's teacher may, in the instance of enacting the

curriculum, may not be the MKO connecting and scaffolding the learner's actual development with the next step in development.

In the complex context of formal schooling, understood as a specific example of Bourdieu's (1977) dynamic forces of field and habitus, curriculum is a structuring structure produced and reproducing the valued dispositions (concepts, knowledge, perceptions, appreciations, values) of formal schooling. A curriculum is developed on the basis of *a* conceptual world (i.e., from the curriculum authors who are experienced and 'at home' in the field of inclusive education) while seeking to engender that identical conceptual world in the learners and educational staff participating in a specific social reality of formal schooling. As illustrated in Figure 3.1 below, curriculum is an objective structure that exerts a centripetal conceptual force in the context of formal schooling.

The site of friction between speech and literary genres of knowledge.

Formal schooling

Learner in formal schooling

Objective structure (e.g. a curriculum)— exerting **centripetal** force towards dispositions valued by field of education.

Other context-specific structure – exerting **centrifugal** force towards dispositions valued by a complex social context.

A specific complex context

Figure 3-1 The relationship of learner, curriculum and formal schooling with context and concepts

Adopting Bakhtin's (1984) terminology and conceptualization, a curriculum may be considered to be a document that is a finalized literary genre, expressing the official language of that which is to occur in educational delivery in formal schooling. However, the only relationality a curriculum has in any social context (other than the social context from which it originated) is as a language that is historical, fixed in time, and no longer 'live'. A curriculum speaks a language which will have no relationship with contexts and conceptual

worlds outside of itself if it remains isolated from the necessary benefit of dialogue between its historic voice and the live voices of any given social situation or context. In specific contexts, a curriculum will be (of its nature) a speech and literary site against which other socio-contextual concepts and language will be in friction (as illustrated in Figure 3.1 above).

Lingard, Hayes, Mills and Christie (2003) write of curriculum as a Bourdieuian objective structure that is increasingly influenced by "societies being rapidly reconstituted by globalization and neo-liberal politics" (p. 2). Lingard, Rawolle and Taylor (2005) position Bourdieu's theorization of habitus and field as an apt approach for understanding contemporary, international trends in policy in education, including the development of national curriculums. Indeed, the beginnings of theorizing education as a 'global education policy field' is well and truly established (see Lingard & Rawolle, 2011; Lingard, Sellar & Baroutsis, 2015), with the implication that curriculums around the world are no longer simply localized curriculums but are curriculum developed with a view to a globalization of competencies and capabilities intended to shape future citizens and workers. Lingard and colleagues (Lingard et al., 2005; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008) provide a conceptualization of 'cross-field effects' on educational reform and policy at an international, national and local level whereby a curriculum, while ostensibly representing a national or local field of education produces and reproduces the enduring dispositions of global interests and fields that may have less to do with the field of education and more to do with a resourcism and utilitarian approach to global economic development (similar to Sen's (1989, 1997, 1998) repeated cautions).

As an official document shaping formal schooling , the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016b) may be theorized as one of the objective structures of the global education policy field, carrying and expressing its own very particular conceptualization of learner conceptual development and conceptual worlds via the terminology of 'general capabilities' (ACARA, 2013/2014). The context from which the Australian Curriculum was born may be popularly argued to be a global context, however, as quoted by Lingard et al. (2015) of Spivak (2012), "The globe is on our computers … no one lives there" (p. 338). Global policy is generally word-processed rather than precisely practiced in a specific context. While sometimes responding to context-specific practitioner feedback, national curriculum is engendered from authors who share collaboratively in response to government and departmental agendas (policies and politics). The context of the Australian curriculum is not and cannot be a specific social context: it is, instead, generated from the contextual and conceptual world of its authors. In the light of this, it is arguable that the Australian curriculum communicates a

less actual and more imagined conceptualization of the Australian learner, their social context and participation in schooling.

3.3.2.3 And schooling

Schooling is where concepts and contexts meet. In Bakhtinian terms, formal understandings of social settings and social interactions are those that, using formal speech and literary genres, describe with finality the settings and interactions in question. If a formal understanding of a social setting such as a school, or of a social situation such as schooling, did not have language that might describe the exception to what is understood by school or schooling then, in Bakhtinian theorization, the exception is considered outside of understanding. The language used to describe an outside setting would likely be language characterized by informal utterances most commonly using individualistic language style (the most informal form of language). The language would be other to the recognized formal language. For this researcher, the informal individual language style used to describe a school or schooling that was other to practice expectations termed these social settings and situations as outside-of-the-box. This is one such example of an individualistic language style utterance which encapsulated an exceptional setting where many of the learners were not learning and achieving academically as expected.

These outside-of-the-box school settings, or individual learners (such as Rita from the Prelude to Chapter 1) were outside of those social settings or situations familiar to this researcher and were perceived as not being represented in the formal, official speech or literary genres. The language of published and publicly available texts such as the Australian Curriculum, or of performative measures such as National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results, seemed out of place or barely relevant to that which was known by this researcher and the formal understanding of learner practice in those settings or situations. An outside-of-the-box school was a colloquialism for a school that could be practically identified as a setting where most of the learner cohort was non-conformal with the usual expectations of learner functioning in a classroom.

For Bakhtin (1986, 1994), 'outside' social settings and interactions were the places where 'other' understandings of a situation were to be had. This other-than-formal understanding of a situation occurred because the participants in the social situation have to use individual language style in negotiating these social situations with others. Conversations have to be had in order for a situation to be a social situation, and the conversations would consist of utterances in which an understanding of this outside situation might be had. For example, the case of Rita (Prelude, Chapter 1) continues to present a conversation for the researcher

about her outside situation in a classroom that did not represent her context in any way shape or form. In this instance, an individual learner (Rita) was outside-of-the-box for that class and that teacher, and that class and that teacher were outside-of-the-box for that individual learner.

It is a foundational position of this research that outside schooling settings—such as the outside-of-the-box schooling settings from the researcher's experience—are where other knowledge and language of education that is inclusive might be investigated and identified.

3.3.3 Capabilities

Sen (1979, 1998) understood capability as that which a human being can do or be. Capabilities are the observable functionings (i.e., doings and beings) of a human being in their social context, enacted in pursuit of their desired and achievable needs or interests. This theorization positions human well-being, as valued by the socio-contextualized person, as the goal of all development and progress.

While the Senian theorization of human well-being, capabilities and development presents an instantly attractive, noble and aspirational goal, Bourdieu's (1977, 1999) theorization of field and habitus troubles the apparent simplicity of this theory of human development. Remembering Bourdieuan thinking—that social production and reproduction occur as a process which has centripetal and centrifugal social limits and forces—that which is valued in complex contexts such as local schools, will be produced and reproduced via the interaction of that which is valued by the learner and a curriculum, and numerous other social forces. Cohesion in a complex context such as a school—where enduring dispositions are very likely diverse—may be violently resisted or attained. Some enduring dispositions may be included (i.e., acknowledged, reinforced, re-enacted), while some may be excluded in that they are not cohesive with the reproduction of the social field and so are rendered invisible (i.e., unacknowledged and extinguished). The violence is perpetrated when enduring dispositions are valued because they represent the survival and inclusion of humans in their non-schooling, non-curriculum context.

In the social field of education, it is highly likely that the enduring dispositions valued by the learner, a curriculum and schooling are not identical. Subsequently, that which is valued by the socio-contextualized learner, a curriculum and schooling may be at odds with each other. That which is evaluated as human well-being then is at risk of being evaluated from a utilitarian or resourcism perspective rather than as that which humans desire and are able to achieve as members of their valued social context. As both Sen (1997) and Nussbaum (2011) warned, human capability may easily be confused with human capacity.

Assuming that the learner, a curriculum and schooling each measure values in the other according to their relative cohesion with their own valued dispositions, it is conceivable that, in some local school contexts, the learner may not value the language, knowledge, and thinking processes, and schooling and curriculum may not value the language, knowledge, and thinking processes of the learner. It is conceivable that the learner's language, knowledge and thinking processes are devalued to the point of invisibility, where the practice of a curriculum and schooling renders a learner or learners—like Rita—as unknown and, for all intents and purposes, so confounding as to be virtually invisible. Language, knowledge and thinking processes of the learner may be evaluated as either present or useful depending on who is doing the measuring and what instruments of measurement are employed. Utilizing Senian thinking in this instance of invisibility, if people are not the "beneficiaries, agents and adjudicators" (Sen, 1989, p. 41) of development and progress then, simultaneously, human well-being suffers while development can be measured as prospering. With reference to the Prelude (Chapter 1), and by way of example, Rita's class was progressing and developing as expected in the light of the curriculum, while Rita's language, knowledge, and thinking processes were invisible and unknown, and her development was invisible; "Rita's normal was not my normal, and my normal was not Rita's normal" (Prelude, Chapter 1).

In the case of the learner, that which is valued is, in the first instance, that which they have the freedom to choose from what is both desirable and achievable in their context. This intrinsically involves the language, knowledge and thinking internalized from their social interactions, and produced and reproduced through their practice in their complex context. As in many nations internationally, participation in formal schooling is not a choice in Australia; schools may be chosen if there is more than one present in a locality, and the options of distance education, traveller school or home schooling are available. Formal schooling is compulsory. In Australia, as in many other nations, curriculums are not a choice for the learner or their parents, carers or community, and neither is it for schools and schooling. There is one curriculum, and it is national.

In the case of a curriculum, the language, knowledge and thinking processes that are valued will be those valued by the epistemological and political contexts of its authors in the production and reproduction of the social field of education. In schooling, a curriculum holds a powerful position as a Bourdieuian structuring structure, enabling the language, knowledge and thinking processes valued directly and indirectly in its formal language, while disabling outside language, knowledge and thinking processes. In a learner, curriculum values language, knowledge and thinking processes that are cohesive with those valued and

formally expressed by the curriculum, while rendering other knowledge and understanding as unknown (i.e., unspoken, unheard, unwritten, invisible).

In the case of schooling, the language, knowledge and thinking processes that are valued will be in an unfinalized process of contestation between social context and the social field of education, repeatedly acting in a cycle of inclusion and exclusion, interconnection and resistance, acknowledgement and invisibility, moving towards an unfinalizable point of social cohesion. Schooling and schools are where new knowledge and understanding about the learner, their conceptual development and subsequent valued conceptual worlds, their capabilities and capacities, may be actively formed: they are a site at which the Bakhtinian drive belt between the history of society and the emergence of live, informal language occurs.

3.3.4 Learner, curriculum and schooling

A Bakhtinian theorization of a curriculum would describe it as a formal literary genre, perhaps so formal that it is trapped by its own specificity, being too specific to be of direct relevance to some particular contexts. A curriculum as both a document and a social force may be situated in diverse social contexts. From the learner's perspective, however, a curriculum is situated and encountered in formal schooling, a social situation which constitutes and enacts but a fraction of the learner's socio-contextual situation and experience.

Given Lingard and colleagues' (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008; Lingard et al., 2015) view of the global education policy field (as that which is internationally and intranationally structuring educational reform and curriculum reform), and Kiuppis' (2014) summation that inclusive education is now assumed by many nations as a global education imperative, a curriculum has the potential (at least theoretically) to become a globally structuring structure in the field of inclusive education. As to whether a curriculum exerts a centripetal or centrifugal force— or both—on specific complex contexts of formal schooling is a consideration of relevance to this research, but unable to be directly addressed by it. This research accepts that, in specific complex contexts, a curriculum exerts social limitations that simultaneously present centripetal and centrifugal pressures in schooling in specific contexts.

Formal schooling—where a curriculum and the learner rub shoulders—may be understood as a Bakhtinian 'drive belt' social interaction involving the inter-relational presence of formal and informal speech and literary genres, of speakers and listeners generating new understanding. In the first instance, schooling is the socio-contextual inter-relationship where the learner and a curriculum meet. In Bakhtinian conceptualization, at the boundary of a

curriculum and schooling—both represented by formal speech and literary genres—is the learner with a world of socio-contextualized meaning-making of their own, as represented by their specific informal and individualized speech genre. It is highly likely that this meeting of boundaries is rich with 'outside' and 'other' knowledge—both pre-existing and co-existing knowledge—that is yet to be formulated, identified and acknowledged.

Bourdieu's (1977, 1999) sophisticated conceptualization of the centripetal and centrifugal nature of social limits in the social field and habitus are especially relevant to understanding the context of the learner, a curriculum and schooling. Referring again to Figure 3.1 (above), the learner potentially co-habits a number of complex contexts beyond formal schooling (i.e., complex contexts such as household, family, neighbourhood, peer groups, social media) which constitute and re-constitute their knowledge, perceptions, appreciations, thinking processes, values and abilities. Subsequently, as a participant in formal schooling, learners are subject to the objective structure of a curriculum that may or may not have some congruence with their complex contexts and the thinking processes nascent to them.

Formal schooling of course incorporates other objective structures and social limits (e.g., behaviour policies, pedagogy, teacher expectations, expectations of learner performativity), however, for the purposes of this study, a curriculum will be the objective structure of primary interest. Where learner, a curriculum and schooling intersect and interact constitutes a hot bed of competing and, very likely, conflicting social realities. The context is likely to determine the balance by which these competing and conflicting social realities are held.

3.4 Summary

Using the theoretical frameworks of Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Bourdieu and Sen, this chapter has sought to formulate useful conceptualizations of the learner, markers of context and the meeting of conceptual worlds. The complexity of the phenomenon of inclusive education in the twenty-first century has engendered the use of several theorists of note. Acknowledged as complex, and built from the abovenamed theorists, the theoretical framework of this thesis has been guided by the parameters of the research questions related to the learner and how they are conceptualized (i.e. how they are imagined), the markers of context, and the implications for inclusive education in formal schooling.

How the learner may be conceptualized is foundational to understanding what is discoverable about the learner as imagined and as part of a specific context. The learner is conceptualized in this theoretical literature as necessarily being a participant in a social context from which the learner's conceptual world forms and develops. The context and the

conceptual world of the learner are considered indivisible. The curriculum to which a learner is subject in formal schooling may not necessarily include the learner's conceptual world: in this sense, the learner imagined in a curriculum may not be congruent with the learner subject to the curriculum informing formal schooling. The learner in any specific context may have capabilities valued in that context which are not capabilities acknowledged or valued in the curriculum to which the learner is subject.

The conceptualization of markers of context is foundational to understanding the case of context in this research.   Context for the learner is conceptualized as including the socio-contextual markers available in the public domain related to specific locations, as well as the conceptual worlds of the learner, the curriculum, and formal schooling. In this way, context has been conceptualized as complex – consisting of interwoven and interacting markers exerting centripetal and centrifugal forces upon each other in specific locations.

Complex context is understood as the meeting place of knowledge and understandings of the learner, curriculum and formal schooling, as well as the arena in which societal structures are played out. The domain in which conceptual worlds meet is conceptualized as the complex context in which the enactment of inclusive education occurs.

Theoretically, the implications for researching inclusive education in formal schooling are that: context is investigated as a complex phenomenon that both includes and goes beyond demographic data related to any specific learner; that complex context is where conceptual worlds of learner and curriculum meet and interact;   and that, complex context involves centripetal and centrifugal forces of social interaction on valued and non-valued human capabilities of learner and curriculum.

Chapter 4.

Research Approach

4.1 Introduction

The review of the research literature (Chapter 2) found that there were several areas of inclusive education that invited further investigation. Firstly, formal schooling carries expectations and an imagination of the learner that are yet to be systematically addressed in research. Secondly, the characteristics and socio-contextual markers of the context-specific learner are yet to be systematically addressed in research. Thirdly, the relationship of the imagined learner and the context-specific learner, as included in formal schooling, is a research space ready for further investigation.

In order to investigate these areas, three research questions were used:

RQ 1. How is the learner imagined?

RQ. 2. What other markers of context characterize the learner?

RQ. 3. What does this imply for inclusive education in the context of formal schooling?

These research questions and their accompanying objectives have already been outlined in Table 1.1 in Chapter 1, *Introduction*. The answers to these research questions are provided in Chapter 10*.*

The theoretical perspectives (Chapter 3) offered conceptualizations of complex context, conceptual worlds, and valued and non-valued capabilities in the learner, the curriculum and formal schooling by which to better frame this study.

The following sections of this chapter identify and describe the philosophical foundations of the research paradigm and methods from which this study was conducted, and then outline the data collection and analytical methods utilized in the implementation stages of the research. Following on from this, an account of the ethical considerations and practices that were undertaken is outlined. Finally, an account of the rigour of the methods used is provided.

4.2 Pragmatic Research Paradigm

This study follows the research paradigm of pragmatism. It has used a pragmatic, parallel mixed-methods design based on a small scale case study approach which incorporated

content analysis of document data, demographic data analysis, and a final narrative integration of findings.

As a philosophical understanding, pragmatism acknowledges "… that since our limitedly human efforts at inquiry can never achieve *totality*, we must settle for *sufficiency*, which is ultimately a practical rather than a theoretical matter" (Rescher, 2005, p. 747). Pragmatism recognizes the need of human thinking to oscillate—to move back and forth between experience and observation—in the process of forming knowledge and making sense of existence in any given context. As Bazely (2013) comments when writing of pragmatism:

> … all knowledge is tentative, and needs to be tested against experience … Knowledge results from discovering the conditions and consequences of experience, and we learn through reflection on our experience. (p. 22)

In Morgan's (2007) words, pragmatism " … offers an emphasis on the abductive–intersubjective–transferable aspects of our [pragmatic] research" (p. 73).

Abductive reasoning allows for a back and forth dialogue between data-driven and theory-driven thinking, between that which is already known by inductive reasoning (e.g. demographic knowledge), and that which is becoming known by deductive reasoning (e.g. knowledge gleaned from analysis of concepts articulated in formal, official documents). By means of inductive reasoning, "…general principles are known from specific cases" (Reber, 1985, p. 352) and, by means of deductive reasoning, conclusions and theorems are derived from specified assumptions (see Reber, 1985, p. 178).

As a theoretical perspective, pragmatism values knowledge produced from different approaches to a similar focus or case. Abductive reasoning values knowledge of inductive and deductive origin, in both data and theory, in acting in relation to a problem as well as in thinking about a problem. Pragmatism values knowledge of the external world that is established by agreement between observers and participants through inductive and deductive reasoning.

This research assumed that reliable knowledge of the external world is based on pre-existing *and* newly forming knowledge. As such, the sources of knowledge that were recognized as valued and reliable in this research were knowledge sources established by data-driven reasoning associated with demographic data and theory-driven reasoning associated with document data, utilizing knowledge sources which enjoy public recognition and use as knowledge of value in the wider Australian community.

Inter-subjectivity allows the researcher to bypass a "forced dichotomy" (Morgan, 2007, p. 71) in research pursuits between *subjective* interpretation and experience and *objective* observations, and favours the back and forth work of the researcher between "various frames of reference" (Morgan, 2007, p. 71). Existence, as valued in this research study, is understood as both subjective and objective. While human reality is considered observable in measures of well-being including household, neighbourhood, environmental and human development factors, it is also considered as interpreted reality by within-person understanding and meaning-making (conceptual development, conceptual worlds, and that which any individual counts as valued and achievable). In Bazely's (2013) words:

> Objects we perceive (including both physical and social objects) acquire meaning through our transactions with those objects over time … Our consciousness and self-consciousness are similarly dependent on our interaction with society (inter-subjectivity), as we view ourselves (and other things) from the standpoint of others. The ontological foundations of this research understand that to exist is to be and to do: in other words, to exist is to be subject to one's context while having agency in it. (p. 22)

Lastly, transferability allows the researcher " … a process of working back and forth, in this case between specific results and their more general implications" (p. 72). Pragmatism allows knowledge to become transformed through the practice of research rather than regulated by assumptions which limit what form emergent research knowledge will take (i.e., whether it will be inductive or deductive knowledge, subjective or objective knowledge, specified or generalized knowledge). As Morgan (2007) puts it, the use of a pragmatic paradigm allows that "there is no problem with asserting both that there is a single "real world" and that all individuals have their own unique interpretations of that world" (p. 72).

In the introduction to his work on Pragmatism, William James (1907, last viewed 2017) writes of this philosophy:

> … the philosophy which is so important in each of us is not a technical matter; it is our more or less dumb sense of what life honestly and deeply means. It is only partly got from books; it is our individual way of just seeing and feeling the total push and pressure of the cosmos. (James, 1907, 2017, Lecture I)

Pragmatism allows a research design that is interested in what works and what that means in our existence. Like any form of developing and gaining knowledge, the paradigm of pragmatism in research practice is not neat, and nor is it without limitations. As a research paradigm, pragmatism is perhaps the best-suited to the case study of context because it

values the limitations and strengths of human acting, perceiving, thinking, and conceptual 'wrestling' in any knowledge-seeking endeavour, including the implementation of inclusive education, as well as the process of research implementation and development. For this reason, pragmatism was chosen as the most applicable philosophical underpinning for this research in its work to understand the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education.

4.3 A Case Study Framework

This research study used the technique of a 'case study framework'. Different types of data were collected so as to "build a comprehensive understanding of a case, the focus of the study" (Fetters et al., 2013, p. 2138), the focus of the study being the case of context. Abma and Stake's (2014) approach to 'naturalistic case study' (pp. 1151–1152) guided the specific case study technique used in this research. Abma and Stake (2014) identify case study work as beginning with the generic question, 'How do we understand this case better?' (p. 1151). Using this guiding question, the researcher seeks emerging issues from the case.

The unit of investigation in this research was the case of context as related to the enactment of inclusive education, and the case study framework was used to understand this case of context better. The emerging issues inherent to this case of context were issues related to the learner, the curriculum and formal schooling. More specifically, the issues identified as most relevant to the case of context in this research were the situated environmental and developmental factors impacting on the learner, the ways in which the curriculum conceptualized the learner, and formal schooling as the space in which the context-specific and curriculum-imagined learner are both present in the enactment of inclusive education.

Other characteristics of case study work identified by Abma and Stake (2014) are " … the influence of context, meaning and interpretation, arriving at a holistic understanding of the case, and learning from the case" (p. 1151).

Taking a situational understanding of any case, Abma and Stake (2014) discuss a case as a 'bounded system' (p. 1151) in which some elements of the case lie within the boundaries of the case while some lie without. In the instance of this research, the elements within the bounded system of the case were elements of space, place and time: schools as the spaces in which formal schooling and the use of a curriculum occurs, locations in which learners live and learn, and a designated span of years (2011–2016) to situate the understanding emerging from the research. Elements that remained outside of the bounded system of the case in this research were, as Abma and Stake (2014) identified, the "physical, social and historical" elements of the case.

Using the case study technique described by Abma and Stake (2014, p. 1152) involves grasping the meaning of experience through a 'dialogical' process of understanding the case in question better. The researcher " … tries to interpret the case from multiple perspectives" (Abma & Stake, 2014, p. 1152) so as to increase the possibility of grasping the complexity of the case, and to reduce the likelihood of partiality (i.e., grasping only one limited aspect of the case). Dialogical understanding has been described by Abma and Stake (2014) as involving dialogue with those living in the world of the case being studied. In this research and its use of case study, the dialogue is understood as occurring with the multiple different data sets (the demographic and document data) relevant to the learner living in the world of specific contexts and inclusive education. In the words of Abma and Stake (2014):

> Dialogical engagement is necessary to understand the case and to generate an account that is faithful to the complexity and meanings in the case. This close engagement should be combined with a measure of distance to facilitate a view of the wider context and various perspectives on a situation. (p. 1152)

The complexity and meanings of the case of context in this research involved both close engagement combined with a measure of distance through the use of document and demographic data from within the bounds of the case.

The type of understanding sought through the use of case study Abma and Stake (2014) describe as 'holistic' understanding, seeing the case as presenting a problem to be considered in all its complexity of interaction. The process of the case study involves the parts in order to better understand the ways in which they operate and interact within the whole case. In Abma and Stake's (2014) words:

> Instead of searching for cause and effect relationships, we see the inter-related activities as being sensitive to surrounding forces, but not determined by them. The case is multiply sequenced, multiply contextual, organic rather than causally determined. (p. 1152)

In this research study, the case of context is investigated in order to arrive at an understanding of some of the possible ways in which context impacts the enactment of inclusive education. The selection of the case of context has been made in that it is hoped to provide what Abma and Stake (2014) describe as 'particularistic' context information to be learnt about the enactment of inclusive education that " … will offer insights into relationships that have not yet been recognized" (p. 1152).

4.4 Parallel Data Collection and Analysis

Fetters, Curry and Creswell (2013) describe MMR as a design that provides "powerful tools for investigating complex processes and systems" (p. 2134). Beyond this, Creswell (2015) has taken the position that mixed-methods research, while often presented as a methodology, may also be considered a method. As a method, mixed-methods involves the researcher gathering both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the streams of data, and then drawing interpretations based on the strengths of both data sets to better understand the problem. The complexity of the case of context as related to inclusive education indicated that MMR as a method of data collection and analysis was the most apt for the work of this research.

Any case study using mixed-methods of data collection and analysis has the advantage of valuing and working with a range of data and data analysis that might capture the complexity of that which is being studied. This research has followed Fetter et al's. (2013) description of a convergent typology of data collection and analsis. It has utilized a case study framework, incorporated parallel processes of data collection and analysis, merged the two sets of findings, and integrated the findings using a narrative form known as a weaving approach.

In this research design, already-documented and publicly trusted knowledge of the external world was favoured. In particular, document and demographic data forms were selected: the demographic data related to six selected locations from New South Wales, Australia (Brewarrina, Cobar, Condobolin, Lake Munmorah, Lithgow and Ulladulla—as seen in Figure 4.1 below); and the document data common to all Australian schools (including the six locations relevant to the research), the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016b).

Figure 4-1 Map of the six research locations in New South Wales, Australia

The criteria for selection of the research locations has already been discussed in Chapter 1, Section 1.3 Scope and Limitations.

The data types and sources incorporated in this research study (and their relationship to the three research questions) have been itemised in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Research Questions and Their Related Data Types and Data Sources

Research Questions	Data Type	Data Source
How is the learner imagined?	Document data	*General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2013/2014, pp. 1--17).
	Demographic data	*Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage, ICSEA* (ACARA, 2016c).
What other markers of context characterize the learner?	Demographic data	*Australian Bureau of Statistics, ABS* (2011 to 2014). *Australian Early Development Census, AEDC* (2012/2015). *Dropping Off The Edge* Report, *DOTE* (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015).

Research Questions	Data Type	Data Source
		HealthStats (NSW Govt., 2011 to 2014). *ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c). My School* (ACARA2016a). *NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) Crime Map* (NSW Govt., 2011 to 2015).
What does this imply for inclusive education in the context of formal schooling?	Analytic findings from RQ1 and RQ2.	Document and demographic data analysis generated from RQ1 and RQ2.

The rationale for the selection of data types and data sources is discussed in the following paragraphs, *data type* and *data sources*. Following on from this, the use of coding as a form of data reduction across both data forms (document and demographic) is discussed as this process preceded both paths of data analysis.

4.4.1 Data type

In the process of investigating the research questions of this study, all of the data used was pre-existing data. The pros and cons of using pre-existing or secondary data in this research have been well-documented and will be visited here, followed by the rationale for its use in this specific case study of context.

Secondary data have been defined by Boslaugh (2007) as "data collected by someone else" (p. ix). Vartanian (2011) indicates it is " … any data that are examined to answer a research question other than the question(s) for which the data were originally collected" (p. 3). O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015) refer to secondary data as "researcher-generated" and "naturally occurring data" (p. 130).

The following account of the advantages and disadvantages of using secondary data has been guided by Bryman (2016). Among the advantages identified by Bryman (2016, pp. 301-312) were cost and time efficiencies, high quality data, opportunity for longitudinal analysis and options for sub-group analysis. The disadvantages identified by Bryman (2016, pp. 316-317) included a lack of familiarity with the data, complexity of the data, no control over data quality, and the potential absence of key variables.

In this research, secondary data has been sourced from publicly recognized and respected sources of secondary data which is frequently accessed by a wide and diverse range of bodies across Australia. It is understood as data generated by previous researchers who have reasonably met ethical and legal requirements in order to collect, analyze and publish the data. The secondary data selected from these publicly recognized sources also represented changes over several years (i.e. providing the opportunity for longitudinal analysis in some instances such as school attendance and literacy and numeracy results). Further, the data from the selected sources for this study had the added advantage of being current and relevant to the sub-group populations of interest. The secondary data related to specific, small population contexts identified by the researcher (i.e. the NSW locations of Brewarrina, Cobar, Condobolin, Lake Munmorah, Lithgow and Ulladulla) provided anonymity to the individuals from these small communities. As far as possible throughout this research, when data has been used from different demographic sources, a note has been made if the measures used by the different sources vary in any way.

While Bryman's (2016) identification of disadvantages related to the use of secondary data are generally very apt, their relevance to this study had more specific implications. A disadvantage of using secondary data is that the complex data was at risk of being distorted through the process of re-use. For example, re-used demographic data may not share the demographic factors or specific interests of the research subsequently making use of it, or it may use different units of measurement to those of the research which re-uses it. In the case of the re-use of a range of secondary data related to a specific location, distortion could occur when different boundaries of the specific location are used by different big data sources (e.g., when the Australian Bureau of Statistics reports data related to Ulladulla as a region, while NSW Health reports data related to Ulladulla as a Local Health District, and the geographical boundaries of the Local Health District are at odds with those of the Ulladulla region). Further, while no control over the quality of the data is cited as a disadvantage by Bryman (2016), this disadvantage was ameliorated in this study by using secondary data from reliable and trustworthy data sources (e.g. the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the New South Wales Department of Health, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority).Despite some of the inherent disadvantages related to data distortion, it was essential to use secondary data for this research. The most important reason for using secondary data in this case study was to limit the possibility of researcher-bias in generating data for instances of formal schooling and locations that were well-known to her through her professional practice. The other reason was the capacity of some forms of secondary data to be trustworthy in that they provide standardized, commensurate measures across settings. The document data from the *Australian Curriculum* (2016b) was able to provide a text from a standard document that is used in all formal schooling in Australia (and so provide a

snapshot of the national imagined learner in formal schooling). The demographic data was able to provide statistically standardized measures of environmental and developmental data relevant to learners from actual situations (and so provide a snapshot of diverse context-specific learners).

4.4.2 Data sources

The data sources (see Table 4.1 above) for this research study were selected from the public domain. The data source of the *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b) provided the document data for collection and analysis related to the research question, 'How is the learner imagined?'. The demographic data was drawn from the wide range of secondary data sources as listed in Table 4.1 above. These demographic data sources provided the comparative data for collection and analysis related to the research question, 'What are the contextual markers that characterize the context-specific learner?'. The comparators within and between locations, and across region, state and national settings, are intrinsic to the demographic data sources used in this research.

To refer to the collective set of demographic data sources, the term 'big data' has been borrowed from the disciplines of business (Nunan & Di Domenico, 2017) and information technology (IBM, 2018). As summarized in Table 4.1 above, the big data accessed by this research included the ABS (2011–2014), the AEDC (Australian Government, 2012, 2015), the DOTE (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015), *HealthStats* (New South Wales Government, 2011–2014), the *ICSEA* (ACARA, 2016c), *My School* (ACARA, 2016a), and the *NSW BOCSAR Crime Map* (New South Wales Government, 2011–2015).

4.4.3 Data coding

During data collection and analysis, the data reduction technique of coding was initiated across both data types (document and demographic).

In his text on selecting the appropriate techniques for data, Vogt (2014) provides coding guidelines for the coding of textual data (pp. 160–165) and the coding of census and survey data (pp. 165–171). These guidelines have been summarized in Table 4.2 below, and were used in the initial approaches to coding the document and demographic data.

Table 4.2 Vogt's (2014) initial approaches to coding textual data and census/survey data

When doing this	When doing this
Coding big textual data…	Coding survey and census archives …

Then do this	Then do this
Describe the provenance of your sources.	Identify any re-coding such as combining items into scales.
Identify source as primary, secondary, or tertiary.	Identify how you have re-coded into common codes so as to combine or merge data from more than one source.
Specify the qualitative decisions you have made that guide your coding.	Identify missing data from the original sources and/or missing because of incompatibilities in the multiple sources you have used.
	Identify the level of data aggregation—e.g., individual case level or group or aggregate data.

While Vogt's (2014) guidelines steered the coding steps of the coding process, the general techniques of coding set out in Saldaña's (2016) *Coding manual for qualitative researchers* steered the coding, categorization and conceptualization decisions of data reduction and analysis.

Coding was used for the practical purpose of reducing large amounts of data to useable and comparable units of information within the bounds of the unit of investigation (i.e., the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education). Beyond initial coding, the ensuing process of working with the text codes from the document data and demographic data codes then differed. A latent content analysis technique (Bryman, 2016) was used with the document data (described in more detail in the section *document data collection and analysis* below). A pragmatic, researcher-constructed analysis technique was used with the demographic data which adapted Saldaña's (2016) coding techniques with text data: this technique treated the demographic data as though it were items of text (this will also be described in more detail below in the *demographic data collection and analysis* section).

The specifics of the coding techniques used for the different forms of data have been mapped in Figure 4.3 below, which will be further referred to in the following discussion.
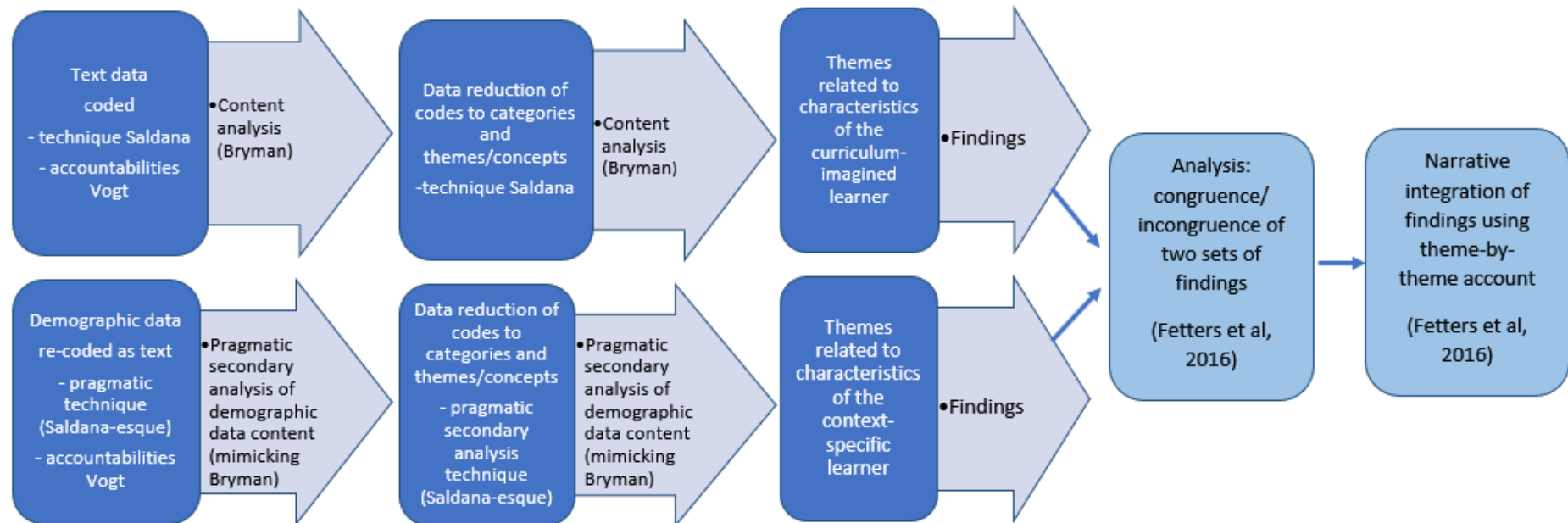
Figure 4-2 Summary of analytical sequential progress, approaches and techniques throughout the data analysis of this research

As this is a pragmatic, mixed-methods study, the specifics of the parallel analytical processes that occurred incorporated the guidelines and techniques of various researchers: Vogt's (2014) coding guidelines for the steps taken when planning coding of text data and the coding of census / survey data; Saldaña's (2016) coding, categorization and conceptualization technique used to code the document data, and adapted to code the demographic data; Bryman's (2016) content analysis approach used for the document data analysis, and adapted for the analysis of the demographic data; and, finally, Fetters, Curry and Creswell's (2013) mixed-methods analysis approach to merging the findings and reporting interpretation using a narrative integration approach.

The following sections will discuss the data collection and data analyzes, including coding, specific to the document and demographic data used in this case study in detail.

4.4.4 Document data collection and analysis

Following Vogt's (2014) recommendations, the document data collection and analysis process required a description of the provenance of the data sources, identification of the source (as a primary, secondary or tertiary source), and a specification of the qualitative decisions made that have guided the coding of the data (see Table 4.2 above).

The document data collection in this research involved the collection of secondary data that would assist in developing an understanding of the imagined learner used in the enactment of inclusive education (see Table 4.1 above). It was a requirement that the document data source selected represented an understanding of the imagined learner that was common to all Australian schools. Pragmatically, the document data had to be easily accessible and available in the public domain. As the current *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b) is quintessentially common to the enactment of education across all Australian schools, and is easily accessible and available in the public domain, it was selected as the document source from which the data collected could be considered to contribute to an understanding of the imagined learner present in Australian schools.

As the Australian Curriculum (2016b) is a very large document, and this research was a small scale study, a sample of text specifically relevant to the research was selected as a sample of text indicating the imagined learner. The specific data sampled from the selected source was the *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum*[23] (ACARA, 2013, 2014, pp. 1–17), a component of the *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b). As the title indicates,

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[23] This document will be referred to from this point onwards as the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document.

this sample contains descriptions of the expected capabilities of learners in Australian schools. The sections of this *General Capabilities* (ACARA 2013/2014) document explicitly used for this research were the Introductory and Literacy sections of the document (pages 1 to 17). This data sample was selected because it addresses the foundational conceptualization of the general capabilities of the learner in the *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b), as well as the conceptualization of general capabilities in relation to literacy (a cornerstone of formal schooling).

The analysis of the document data in this research used a coding technique (Saldaña, 2016) and a subsequent content analysis approach to arrive at its findings.

Bryman (2016) describes content analysis as:

> … an approach to the analysis of documents and texts … that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner. (p. 283)

While Bryman (2016) comments that, "Most content analysis is likely to entail several research questions" (p. 285), only one research question from this study directed the content analysis (i.e., How is the learner imagined?). The one research question was considered sufficient in that there are many substrates implied by the word *how* in the research question, thus indicating there is more than one way in which the learner is imagined. As such, the use of content analysis with the *General Capabilities* (2013/2014, pp. 1–17) document was to investigate the range of curriculum-imagined learner characteristics that were contained therein.

Following Bryman's (2016) suggested framework for content analysis a coding frame was developed. This coding frame predetermined what data would count as codes in the content analysis. Two assumptions predicated the construction of the coding frame:

i)   that the descriptor 'student' (used by the text) could be substituted with the descriptor 'learner' which is the preferred descriptor used by this research; and

ii)   that statements or implications about the student in this document are statements about the curriculum-imagined learner, that is, about the learner as imagined by the document's authors.

Reliability of content analysis is strengthened with the use of a predetermined coding frame which guides the selection of data and the way in which it is coded. The coding frame for the document data involved:

- the identification of initial coding targets as statements within the text document that described some existing or expected attribute of the learner;

- the reduction of the coding target statements into codes which were descriptive phrases taken from the original statements;

- the reduction of the codes to categories of codes, the categories making sense due to the connection between the codes assigned to each category; and

- and, the reduction of the categories to themes, the themes making sense due to the connection between the categories assigned to each them.

The sequential implementation of the coding, categorization and thematization of the document data is illustrated in Figure 4.4 below.

34 CODES
from 48 identified statements describing the learner in the General Capabilities (ACARA 2013/2014, pp. 1-17) document.

7 CATEGORIES
of statements describing the learner drawn from the CODING.

4 THEMES
describing the Curriculum-imagined learner.
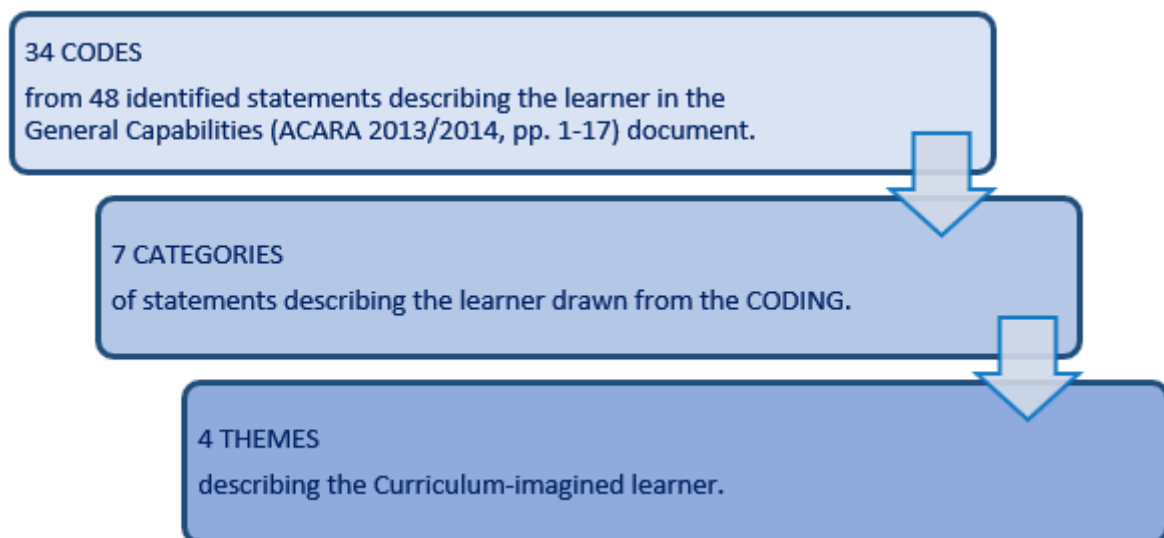
Figure 4-3 The thematic analysis process applied to the text data of the General Capabilities (ACARA 2013/2014, pp. 1–17) document.

Using the coding frame, a total of 48 statements were identified which either implied or directly described the learner as conceptualized in the document. These statements were reduced to 34 individual and separate codes. The data reduction of statements to codes was made on the basis of what was considered redundancy of statements (i.e., statements having been repeated, or statements that were very similar to each other, in the document) and the extraction of the main phrase in the statement thus becoming the code.

The codes were then reduced to a total of seven categories of learner sentences grouped by sentence stems 'The curriculum-imagined learner is/has/will/needs/is able/can have/will be … '. These seven categories were in turn grouped into themes by a labelling of the group

of sentences in such a way as it made sense of the grouping. In this way, the text data yielded four themes describing the curriculum-imagined learner.

A summary of the findings from the coding, categorization and conceptualization of the themes emerging from this latent content analysis of the *General Capabilities* (ACARA 2013/2104, pp. 1–17) may be found in Chapter 5, *The Curriculum-imagined Learner*.

4.4.5 Demographic data collection and analysis

The purpose of the demographic data collection and analysis was focused by the research question, 'What are the contextual markers that characterize the context-specific learner?'. The demographic data analysis was a secondary analysis of already-existing data drawn from a range of demographic sources related to the six research locations already identified in Figure 4.1.

This section will summarize the coding frame, re-coding frame and data reduction technique used in the analysis of the demographic data.

4.4.5.1 Coding frame—selection of sources and data

A coding frame was required to guide both the selection of demographic data sources from which the sample data was drawn, as well as to guide the subsequent selection of data codes. This coding frame provided predetermined criteria as outlined immediately below.

The data sources were required:

- to be demographic data containing codes that could be indicative of the situation and experience of the context-specific learner in their respective locations;
- to be large scale, well respected data sources easily accessible and available in the public domain;
- to use descriptive statistical coding (i.e., averages, means, ranking or percentages) enabling comparisons across the selected research locations;
- to contain context-specific data directly related to the locations of which the researcher had in situ experience; and
- to hold coding that was broad enough (i.e., over a sufficient number of locations and a sufficient number of distinct codes) so as to represent more than an isolated case or unusual statistic.

The sample of demographic data codes selected from the big data sources was required to meet either or both of two criteria: compatibility with environmental factors that are likely to

affect the context-specific learner; and, compatibility with developmental factors that are likely to affect the context-specific learner. For example, household access to the internet is an environmental factor that affects a contemporary learner's ability to complete web-based or cloud-based homework tasks, while poorer than average abilities in social communication is a developmental factor that affects a learner's ability to participate in group learning activities in the classroom or playground.

The selection of the abovenamed sampling criteria for codes was based on recent research (Baker, Sammons, Siraj, Sylva, Melhuish & Taggart, 2014; Hall, Sylva, Sammons, Melhuish, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2013; Sammons, Sylva, Melhuish, Siraj, Taggart, Toth & Smees, 2014; Sylva, 2014) related to educational disadvantage/advantage as mediated—rather than directly caused—by environmental (family, community and pre-school/school) and developmental (including early exposure to language and language participation, early exposure to planning and planning participation, early exposure to cultural experiences) factors.

Kathy Sylva, Honorary Research Fellow and Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Oxford, completed post-doctoral research with the internationally recognized educational psychologist and academic, Jerome Bruner at Oxford University. The research of Sylva (2014), has reported that lower levels of language skill and lower levels of executive function (planning abilities) are the most highly associated educational disadvantages in educational attainment up to 16 years of age, and are mediated by environmental and/or developmental factors. Sylva (2014) identified a range of mediating factors related to household and community poverty which could be summarized to be access-related, health-related, stress-related, and household income-related. For the purposes of this research, Sylva's (2014) work was used to focus and structure both the selection of data sources as well as the sampling of data codes from those sources, using the general categories of health, crime, access and formal schooling. The body of individual data codes selected was large and has been summarized in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Summary of sampling of data sources and codes mediating environmental and developmental factors that influence the academic ability of the learner in formal schooling.

Quantitative Data Sources	Environmental (E) & Developmental (D) statistical data codes included in data sample
Health	% Smoking in pregnancy (E & D) % Pre-term births (D)

Quantitative Data Sources	Environmental (E) & Developmental (D) statistical data codes included in data sample
DOTE (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015) *HealthStats* **(NSW Govt., 2011 to 2014)**	% Low birth weight (D) % Children below six years of age with developmental vulnerability (D) % Alcohol attributable hospitalizations (E & D) % Self-reports (12 to 17 yo) of smoking and alcohol use (E & D) % Self-reports (12 to 17 yo) of mental health problems (E & D) % Suicides (all ages) (E) % Intentional self-harm hospitalizations (14 to 25 yrs) (E & D) Ranking psychiatric hospital admissions (E & D) Ranking disability pension (E & D)
Crime **NSW BOCSAR** *Crime Map* **(NSW Govt., 2011 to 2015)**	% Property crime (E) % Violent crime (E) % Domestic crime (E & D)
Access **ABS (2011 to 2014)** **AEDC (2012/2015)** **DOTE (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015)** *ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c)* *My School* **(ACARA, 2016a)**	% Population <15 years of age (D) % Population Australian born and English speaking % Households receiving rental assistance (E) % Household internet access (E) Ranking—Comparative disadvantage (E & D) % Household average: persons (E) % Household average: motor vehicles (E) % Household average: income (E) % Household average: mortgage (E) % Household average: rent (E) % Long-term unemployment (E & D)

Quantitative Data Sources	Environmental (E) & Developmental (D) statistical data codes included in data sample
	Km. distances from nearest major city, nearest regional centre and nearest other town (E)
	Minutes—road travel time (to nearest major city) (E)
	Public & private transport
	Minutes—road travel time (nearest regional centre) (E)
	Public & private transport
	Minutes—road travel time (nearest other town) (E)
	Public & private transport
	% 18 to 24 yrs population employed (part-time/full-time) (E)
Formal Schooling **ABS (2011 to 2014)** **DOTE (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015)** *ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c)* *My School* (ACARA2016a)	% Attendance rates—location high schools (E & D)
	% Attendance rates—location primary schools (E & D)
	% Results below National Minimum Standard—Yr. 3 Reading NAPLAN (D)
	% Results below National Minimum Standard—Yr. 3 Numeracy NAPLAN (D)
	% Results below National Minimum Standard—Yr. 9 Reading NAPLAN (D)
	% Results below National Minimum Standard—Yr. 9 Numeracy NAPLAN (D)
	Ranking readiness for schooling (D)
	% Population attending post-school education (part-time/full-time) (E & D)
	% Population employment types (e.g., fisheries, mining, agriculture, professional) (E)

In order to keep this small scale study time-focused, as well as comparable to the time limited frame of the document data, the sampling dates for the selection of the demographic data were between the years 2011 and 2016.

4.4.5.2 Re-coding frame

The codes selected were then re-coded so as to enable comparison across data for the purposes of a structured analysis. This study adopted Vogt's (2014) guideline for the re-coding of census and survey data as reproduced in Table 4.2 (above) before implementing an adaptation of the techniques of coding, categorizing and conceptualization of Saldaña (2016) to analyze the re-codes.

The secondary analysis of data incorporated a wide range of coded variables from a range of data sources which was recorded in a single, very cumbersome spreadsheet table (too large for inclusion even in the Appendix section of this thesis). This table of codes necessarily required re-coding for the purposes of comparison across the variables of location and factors coded. This process of re-coding used a predetermined re-coding frame which incorporated Vogt's (2014) recommended guidelines (see Table 4.2) for coding census data, and criteria which determined what would be considered a legitimate re-code applicable across all six research locations.

The re-coding frame was used to identify which data codes were selected from the already-existing demographic data (see Table 4.2 above) and how they were to be re-expressed in a re-coded format. This re-coding frame required the selected already-existing data codes to:

- be representative of environmental and/or developmental factors that mediate educational advantage or disadvantage (Sylva, 2014);

- be representative of health, crime, access or formal schooling factors that mediate educational advantage or disadvantage (Sylva, 2014);

- be represented and available in identical code format (i.e., percentage, mean, average, ranking) for each of the six research locations; and

- be suitable for re-expression in a text form that summarized a nominal range of a demographic fact without distorting the data (e.g., the percentage of households with internet access across the six locations ranged between 45% to 68% and was able to be re-expressed and re-coded as 'internet access <69% of households').

By way of further explanation of this last-mentioned point above, some of the already-existing data codes contained different statistical values for each of the six research

locations. These individual codes could be clustered and re-expressed as a single re-code which represented a fact relevant to all six research locations, thus becoming a single re-code such as 'internet access <69% if households'. The aggregation of the data into a re-code did not distort the demographic fact relevant to all six locations. The replacement of six codes being replaced by a single re-code enhanced the use of the data for comparison and further clustering.

4.4.5.3 Technique

Following on from the initial recoding, further data reduction was conducted involving the clustering and re-clustering of re-coded data into categories and then themes (see Figure 4.5 for a diagrammatic summary).
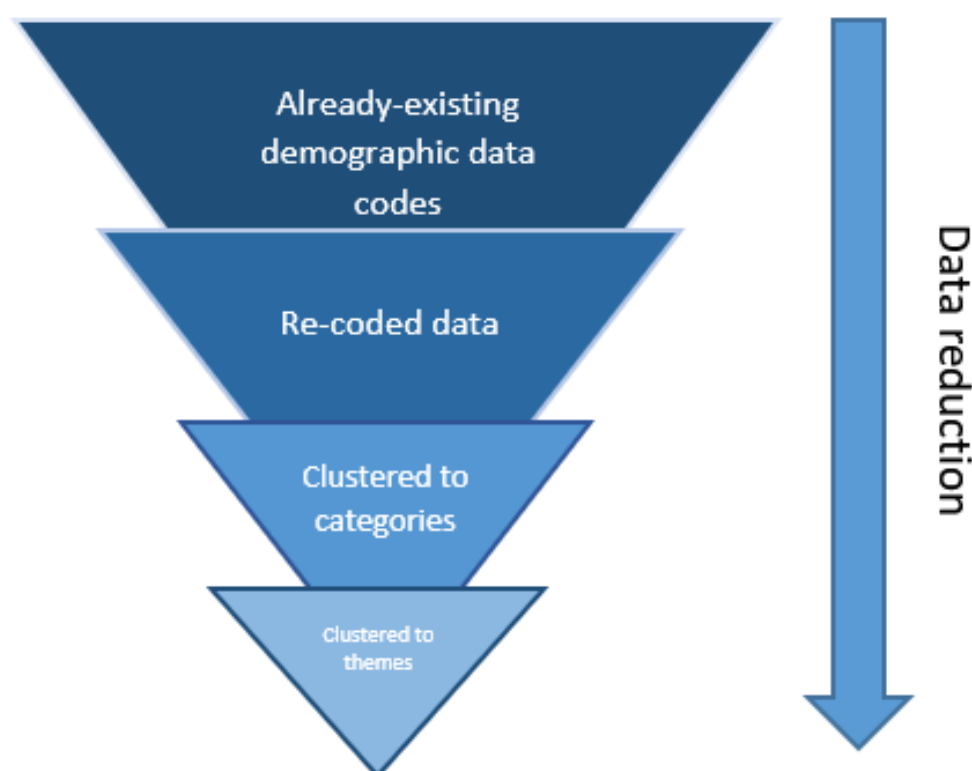
Figure 4-4 The pragmatic secondary analysis of demographic data based on Saldaña's (2016) coding, categorization and conceptualization of qualitative data

As can be observed in Figure 4.5 above, this data reduction technique used with the re-coded demographic data was an adaptation of Saldaña's (2016) coding, categorization and conceptualization technique (designed, in the first instance, for qualitative data). The secondary analysis process involved the initial selection of data codes using the coding

frame, the re-coding of selected data codes into a word summary, the clustering of re-coded data into categories, and further clustering of categories into themes.

Pragmatically, the researcher decided to conduct the data reduction by hand (i.e., item by item) *as though* the demographic codes were text codes. In other words, the already-coded demographic data was treated as though it were content in a specific-language text. The data reduction technique was conducted as illustrated in Figure 4.6 below.

Figure 4-5 The data reduction process of organizing and analyzing demographic data into re-codes, categories and themes

Figure 4.6 above provides a diagrammatic summary of the data reduction process which facilitated the systematization and communication of the re-codes, and the subsequent clustering of the re-codes into categories and final clustering of categories to themes relevant to the majority of the six research locations.

From the single large data code table, coded data was re-coded into a single large matrix incorporating 41 re-codes (see Appendix Table C.1). The re-codes were further reduced by clustering them according to their frequency of occurrence across the six research locations.

Those re-codes that were relevant to three or more of the six research locations were considered strong enough indicators of context to constitute categories applicable to the context-specific learner, regardless of the learner's location. There were 30 such categories identified. A matrix was then formed containing the 30 categories, and by which the categories were further clustered into four groups that made sense based on their constituting categories (see Appendix Table C.2). Each of these groups constituted the four

major themes considered to be of relevance to the context-specific learner based on the incidence and categories across more than half of the research locations.

As this research was designed to be investigative rather than experimental—that is, seeking to investigate possibilities rather than to determine certainties or correlations—the pragmatism of the secondary analysis approach constructed and utilized have been deemed sufficient for its purpose.

The findings from the document data analysis are reported in Chapter 5, while the findings from the demographic data analysis are provided in Chapters 6 through to 9 inclusive.

4.5 Merging and Narrative Integration

Once the parallel collection and analysis of the document and demographic data were completed, the findings were merged and considered for coherence.

The merging of findings from the parallel data collection and data analysis initially focused on determining the congruence and incongruence of the themes generated from both forms of data. This process addressed the coherence of the findings. Fetters et al. (2013) refer to this coherence as the 'fit' of the two sets of findings once merged (p. 2142). In the instance of this research, the fit was identified as a fit of expansion. Fetters et al. (2013) describe this type of fit as occurring:

> … when the findings from the two sources of data diverge and expand insights of the phenomenon of interest by addressing different aspects of a single phenomenon or by describing complementary aspects of a central phenomenon of interest.
> (pp. 2143–2144)

The final integration of the findings was completed by what Fetters et al. (2013) describe as a narrative method of integration using a weaving approach. The weaving approach followed Fetters' et al. (2013) description in which both sets of are reported together "on a theme-by-theme or concept-by-concept basis" (p. 2142).

The merging, coherence and integration of the findings are reported in Chapter 10.

Before proceeding to the chapters reporting the findings generated through the implementation of this research methodology, the following and final sections of this chapter provide an account of the ethical considerations necessitated by this research study, and the mechanisms by which this study has been evaluated to be a trustworthy body of work.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Extensive consideration was given to the ethical issues impacting the design and execution of this research in accordance with Australia's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC, 2007, updated 2018). The May 2015 version of this national Statement was used at the time of planning and conducting this research study, while the 2018 version was being introduced at the time of thesis writing.

The deliberate use of easily accessible, publicly available demographic data in relation to the six research locations was duly considered as an ethical issue in the light of the abovementioned National Statement (NHMRC, 2007, May 2015 version), as well as in relation to the guidance of the Australian National Data Service (2018), and Bryman's (2016) recommendations for the use of suitable big data sets. The Australian National Data Service (2018) encourages researchers to "find, access, and reuse data from Australian research organisations, agencies and institutions". Further, Bryman (2016) provides an extensive list of large UK data sets suitable for secondary analysis which constitute "official statistics" (see Table 14.1, pp. 316-317). This proved to be a fruitful resource for thinking through the types and sources of demographic data required for this thesis.

As such, the access and analysis of the demographic data in this research was conducted in such a way as to preclude the possibility of harm being done to the members of the communities fom the six research locations. The use of the big demographic data sets accessed for this study (and thus contributing to other understandings of the enactment of inclusive education in highly specific contexts) has been conducted in such a way as to benefit the communities of this study's research locations. The demographic data used was publicly available (and therefore not particularized to individuals in the locations). It was used to understand the case of context rather than the case of individuals within specific contexts.

So as to provide a form of member-checking (Bazely, 2013), in-depth interviews were used in this research and this involvement of humans in the study required ethical clearance. The transcripts of these interviews were used as a validation tool: the findings emerging from the document and demographic data analysis were compared against the content of the transcripts in order to identify any discrepant conclusions drawn from the case study of context (for more detail, see section below, *Evaluation of the Research Design*). For this reason, this member-checking technique presented the researcher with two areas of work in the research that required formal ethical consideration and accountability: the involvement of

human participants via the in-depth interview process; and the role of the researcher as participant in these interviews.

The use of human participants in this research required the formal proposal and approval of ethical considerations and practices during its implementation. Ethical approval was sought from and granted by the Central Queensland University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval Code: H14/06-148). The period of approval was from September 24, 2014 to June 30, 2017.

Informed consent was required from the research participants prior to proceeding with the in-depth interviews. The informed consent form that was used with participants is able to be viewed in the Appendix B. At the time that the interviews were conducted participants were not directly involved in the schools or locations that were the subject of secondary data collection at any time that the research was being conducted. Further, all locations and persons mentioned by participants during the course of the interviews were anonymized in the transcriptions.

4.7 Evaluation of the Research Design

This research design has incorporated a case study using mixed methods of data collection and analysis. The limitations of the research design developed for this study stem from the challenges that were encountered when: choosing secondary data; mixing the types of data collected; and mixing the analytic processes. These limitations reflect those commonly acknowledged in not only the case study literature, but also those in the mixed methods literature.

The choice to extend the analytic process from site-specific to cross-site analysis of secondary data offered the opportunity to study the case of context as consisting of cross-site themes-in-common. In this way, this approach has differed from inclusive education studies of context which have traditionally focused on specific stand-alone demographics (such as remoteness, disability, poverty) particular to pre-identified learners and locations. However, this research design also presented a limitation of the cross-site thematic analysis. Category saturation naturally leads to discontinuing data collection, and leaves some stand-alone data artefacts as unable to be categorized (even though, intuitively, they may seem important to a particular site while of no relelvance to the cross-site analysis). In the instance of this research design, the limitation was addressed by clearly stipulating that the categories consist of data artefacts that had occurred across *at least* three of the sites in the cross-site analysis, regardless of whether or not a data artefact seemed of significance to

one site. The research design focused on the thematic, cross-site *case of context* and not on the specific demographics of a single case study of an individual context.

Further to the abovementioned limitations, the research design for this study has been carefully constructed with a view to establishing a quality research study. Silverman (2009) asserts that, in order for a research study to claim authority in its discipline, it must first meet four criteria that ensure its quality of research design. The research design must contain: i.) analytic depth, ii.) reliability and validity, iii.) various data sources, and iv.) implications that are practically and professionally defendable and relevant (Silverman, 2009, pp. 303–309). As relevant to this research study, these criteria are accounted for below using the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

4.7.1 Credibility

Silverman (2009) describes credibility of findings as being dependent on research design which engenders "trust in the findings" (p. 296). Credibility of the research design is established by the identification of research findings which are demonstrably supported by the data of the research study. Research design credibility is enhanced by the demonstration of a clear link between the data, interpretations and conclusions of the research study.

The trustworthiness of this research study has been advanced in a number of ways. The research design incorporated a variety of demographic locations including regional, remote and urban locations. In relation to these locations, different data forms (document data and demographic data) were used in a convergent parallel data collection and analysis so as to capture the complexity of the case of context as related to the enactment of inclusive education. A wide variety of demographic data sources was trawled. Both document and demographic data were sampled and analyzed using transparent, predetermined coding frames, and a manualized coding technique was adopted and adapted for data analysis. The MMR technique of data collection and analysisguided the merging and narrative integration of findings to form thefinal understandings of the case of context as drawn from the data analysis.

The longstanding experience of the researcher in a wide variety of inclusive education roles, settings and locations established the authority of the researcher to steer and focus the demographic data collection that was pertinent to outside-of-the-box schools and their locations. The researcher used both a research journal and academic supervision to reflexively track her thinking and decision-making regarding the research design and associated data collection and data analysis.

Finally, in-depth interviews between experienced and knowledgeable practitioners (including the researcher) used the initial analysis of collected text and demographic data as a springboard from which the conversation of the interview occurred. This interview process ensured a form of validation of the data collection and analysis through the corroboration of practicing members involved in the enactment of inclusive education.

For this research project, the interview was conducted with the purpose and rationale of 'member-checking'. Bazely's (2013) definition of member-checking is that it is a data generation and analysis tool that establishes agreement between "other stakeholders regarding the conclusions you have reached" (p. 408) through the research endeavour. The interview, used as a member-checking research device, provided primary data which was able to be used to specifically confirm or disconfirm the validity and dependability of the findings elicited from the other document and demographic data analysis sources concerning the same field of interest (i.e., the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education).

While the researcher might have been able to influence the in-depth interviews, the use of equitably experienced practitioners, practiced in the analysis and decision-making of on-the-ground practice in inclusive education, guarded against undue influence from the researcher. The interview participants previewed the document and demographic data upon which the case study of context was based, which further decreased the likelihood of undue influence of the researcher in the interview process.

Additional information about the conduct of the in-depth interviews may be found in Appendix D.

4.7.2 Transferability

Transferability is an indicator of whether or not a research study is able to be replicated by other researchers, in other comparable instances (Bazely, 2013; Tappen, 2011). In the instance of this study—a case study of context—its quality relies on whether the knowledge it has generated about context in the enactment of inclusive education is applicable to other instances of context in the enactment of inclusive education. In Bazely's (2013) words:

> What is learned from individual cases or case studies reflects this: it is not that we can describe the characteristics of a larger population … but rather that we gain understanding of the way some aspect of society works—an understanding of processes and principles, theory rather than facts. (p. 411)

Transferability of a study is achieved using clearly nominated and described data sources, types, coding, and analysis, and a transparent interpretive framework. This research work— a case study—has incorporated (in Chapter 4) clear indicators of the typology of the mixed-methods research design used, and the data collection, analysis and interpretive methods used within that design.

From its inception, the researcher's intention was that this research study and its design would be adoptable and adaptable to researchers working at regional, national and international level with an interest in investigating their experience of the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education. In this study, transferability has been greatly enhanced through the maximization of the recognizability of the process of outside-of-the-box location selection, easily accessible and publicly available types of data sources (norm document and demographic data), and transparent methods and techniques of data analysis.

The selection of research locations deliberately included a diversity of locations from outer urban, outer regional, remote, and very remote New South Wales, Australia which were familiar to the researcher through residential and workplace exposure (as demonstrated in Table 4.4 below).

Table 4.4 Research locations, postcodes, remoteness classifications and familiarity to researcher

Location	Australian Postcode	Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ABS, 2011a) Remoteness Structure	Familiar to Researcher
Brewarrina	2839	Remote Australia	Yes
Cobar	2835	Remote Australia	Yes
Condobolin	2877	Outer Regional Australia	Yes
Lake Munmorah	2259	Major Cities of Australia	Yes
Lithgow	2790	Outer Regional Australia	Yes
Ulladulla	2359	Inner Regional Australia	Yes

Recognizability was established by data identification and selection. The research used an accessible text document (from which the characteristics of the curriculum-imagined learner might be deduced), demographic data sources from the public domain (from which the characteristics of the context-specific learner might be deduced), and researcher experience and knowledge of locations in which the average learner seemed to learn differently to the expectations of formal schooling.

Methods of analysis were clearly named and defined as content analysis of text data, secondary analysis of demographic data, and incorporated the techniques of data reduction through coding, categorizing and conceptualizing.

The density of the description was balanced with its readability, and accompanied by diagrams and tables to support the written text description of process.

4.7.3 Dependability

Dependability in a research study refers to the trustworthiness of some of the researcher decisions in directing the research methods, and that these researcher decisions and directions are transparent to the reader and to future users of the research (Bazely, 2013; Tappen, 2011).

Similarly to its use in establishing credibility, dependability may be established by the transparent disclosure of researcher experience and authority. In addition to this, dependability may be strengthened by the researcher keeping a reflexive researcher journal, seeking and responding to academic supervision throughout the research process, and incorporating the input of other experienced and knowledgeable practitioners as a form of member-checking of data source selection, data collection and data analysis, interpretation and reporting.

In this specific research study, dependability has been built upon practitioners' knowledge and experience within the field of inclusive education which has spanned over 30 years in a range of different roles and locations in educational settings (early childhood settings, primary and secondary schooling, and post-school institutions). Other measures that have contributed to the dependability of this study have been the consistent and standardized use of a range of secondary demographic data sources (e.g., the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the AEDC, and the NSW HealthStats database), and a document data source (i.e., the Australian Curriculum) that are understood as having pre-existing dependability and usability in the wider Australian community.

4.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability in research design involves processes that maintain as much objectivity as possible by reducing data distortion due to researcher or participant bias, or inappropriate analytical processes. Objectivity may be maintained by using more than one data source, and more than one analytical process, thereby deliberately introducing possible confounding elements if they are to be had from the data collection and analysis. As Tappen (2011) writes, the efforts made towards maintaining objectivity in qualitative research are

" … sometimes directed towards including the researcher's perspective and reactions rather than neutralizing them" (p. 161).

Objectivity was achieved in this research using two approaches. Firstly, numerous data sources were used and were processed and analyzed using a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design. Secondly, the subsequent merging of this data used a divergent method, highlighting the congruence and incongruence of the findings from the parallel data analysis. Thirdly, the fit of the parallel findings was investigated and transparently identified and discussed as a fit of expansion. That is the findings were eventually found to diverge and expand insights into the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education.

Finally, the findings of this research were considered in relation to the content of the interview transcripts of practicing members working in inclusive education, as a way of seeking respondent validation (member-checking) of the findings.

4.8 Summary

The research approach and methods of this thesis were designed to be reproducible in any context that had: easily accessible and public availability of context-specific demographic data; a curriculum document that was recognized and used across locations, including the locations of specific interest; and, a researcher capacity to carry out member-checking with practitioners familiar with the context(s) of interest. The analysis of the data collected from these sources was structured by Saldaña's (2016) coding, categorization and conceptualization approach with a view to maximizing the transferability of its findings across local, regional, national and international contexts of inclusive education.

The following chapters discuss the findings of this research approach (Chapters 5 through to 9) and the interpretation and implications of these findings for inclusion of context-specific and curriculum-imagined learners in formal schooling.

Part II

Part II of this thesis presents and interprets the findings and initial understandings that emerged from the parallel document and demographic data collection and analysis. In particular, Part II incorporates the findings related to the imagined learner (Chapter 5), and the context-specific learner from outside-of-the-box locations and schools (Chapters 6, 7, 8 & 9). So as to ease the reader into the intensity of the chapters dealing with the imagined and context-specific learner, they are introduced by a Preface which provides an interpretive device by which the findings were ordered and explained.

Preface

In order to develop a more comprehensive and contemporary understanding of the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education, this research pursued easily accessible data relevant to the curriculum-imagined and context-specific learner. The data selected and sampled, that was available in the public domain, consisted of document and demographic data, and was examined and analyzed to arrive at an interpretative profile of both categories of learner. Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9 following this Preface outline these understandings (the findings).

Drawing on the data source of the Australian Curriculum (2016b), the chapter immediately following this Preface (Chapter 5, *The Curriculum-Imagined Learner*) reports on the document analysis of specific text, the *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA 2013/2014, pp. 1–17). The Australian Curriculum (2016b) has been assumed to be the pre-eminent, finalized and official document which drives the pedagogy and delivery of education across all Australian schools. As a national curriculum, the Australian Curriculum (2016b) implicates the context, conceptual world and knowledge of an imagined learner, and explicates that which the imagined learner is intended to learn.

Following on from Chapter 5, Chapters 6 through to 9 discuss the four major themes that emerged from the analysis of demographic data related to the six outside-of-the-box locations and their respective schools. These major themes have been used as descriptors of the context-specific learner from outside-of-the-box settings (i.e., 'out-of-the-box' contexts and schools) which also relate to the context, conceptual world and knowledge of the learner.

The four major themes describing the context-specific learner presented considerable complexity for the write-up of this thesis, both as stand-alone elements and as elements in relationship to each other. Due to this complexity, this part of the thesis presented a

challenge to the researcher in her intent to clearly communicate the findings to the reader and any future researchers.

For these reasons, an interpretive device was required to visually organize the findings of this research and to serve as a diagrammatic connection upon which the reader may rely when reading the explanatory text contained in the chapters of Part II. The interpretive device chosen was an adaptation of the Johari window[24] (Luft & Ingham, 1955); this device serves to both organize the four major themes and to guide their interpretation.

The four major themes that resulted from Saldaña's (2016) coding, categorizing and thematization process of this research were: *Stacked Disadvantage*, *Social Geographic Isolation*, *Fading* and *Conceptual Poverty*. Borrowing from the instrument of the Johari window, Part II, Preface Figure 1 (see below) diagrammatically points to the relationship of the major themes to each other[25], and identifies the characteristics of the learner who learns differently to the imagined learner.

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[24] The Johari window was developed as a technique useful in group process work. Originally developed by Luff and Ingham (1955) it enabled individuals in a group to identify and further develop self-knowledge via a process of selection of adjectives that described the individual. Consisting of four window panes arranged in a square window, the Johari window was used to illustrate the known and unknown of ourselves in group process work. The different panes of the Johari window represented different degrees of knowledge of self: the top left hand pane of the window indicating our most known attributes (both to ourselves and others), while the bottom right hand pane of the window indicating our least known (or unknown) attributes (both to ourselves and others).

[25] This was the in-practice implementation of Saldaña's (2016) coding, categorization and thematization (see Figure 4.2) technique that was specific to this research study.
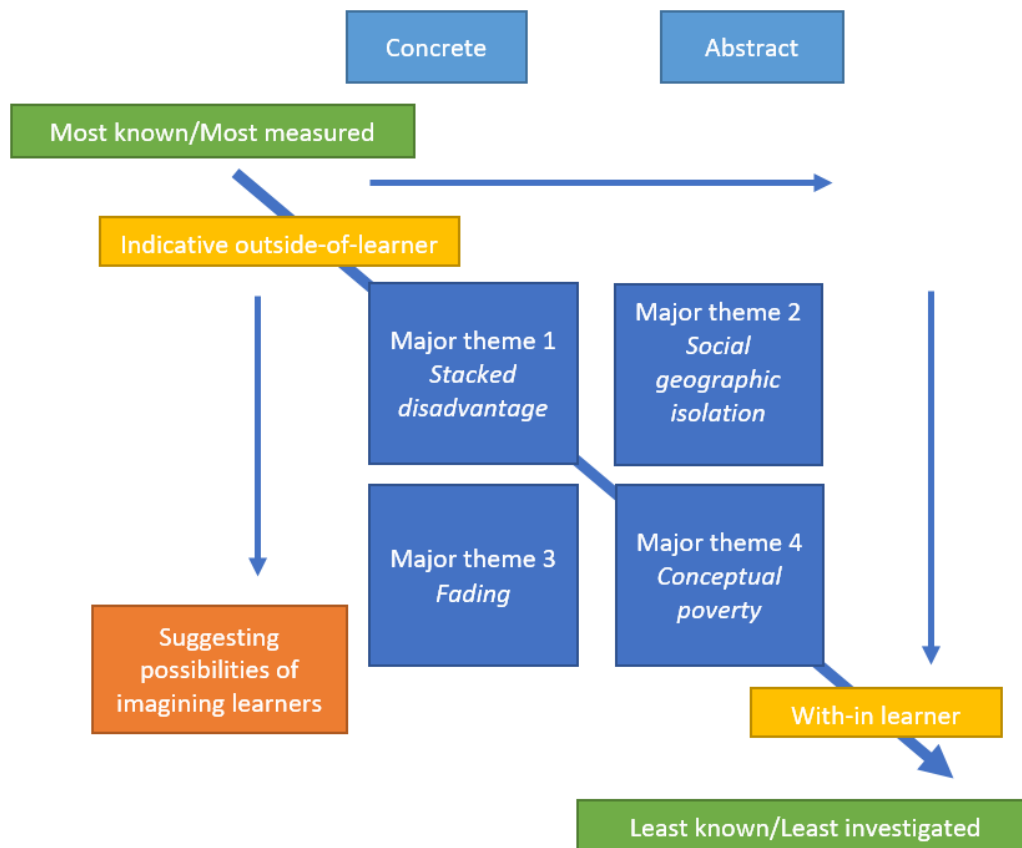
Part II, Preface Figure 1 The four major themes: The characteristics of the learner who learns differently to the imagined learner

The major themes have been built on the assumption that the learner who learns differently does so due to their belonging to specific contexts, and that these specific contexts engender context-specific conceptual development and thinking processes in those who belong to them. In other words, the context-specific learner has a functional conceptual framework and thinking processes that are essential to their adaptability and well-being in their context, but which are not necessarily present or accounted for in the documentation that represents the imagined learner. Context is everything in the adaptability, well-being and learning of any individual learner, as in the development of concepts and capabilities.

Preface Figure 1 represents the importance and the relatedness of the four major themes as influential factors both external to and within the learner who learns differently. The diagram also illustrates the degree of immediate 'knowability' of the characteristics of the learner using these four themes (e.g., the elements of *Conceptual Poverty* are much less immediately knowable about any one learner than the elements of *Stacked Disadvantage* or *Social Geographic Isolation*).

Using the principles of the Johari window (i.e., that it is a visual instrument that assists the determination of that which is most known through to that which is least known), the position of the major themes within Part II, Preface Figure 1 communicates the strength of the themes on continua. By way of illustration, the continuum of concreteness of data demonstrates that the data contributing to the theme of *Stacked Disadvantage* required little analysis: the data directly indicated a myriad of already measured disadvantages. *Social Geographic Isolation,* on the other hand, emerged as a major theme from substantial data which required more analysis (of distance, time and resources data) in order to arrive at this overarching theme: the connection between data and theme required more inductive reasoning. The major theme of *Stacked Disadvantage* holds the most strength of concreteness and dependability as a characteristic of the context-specific learner from outside-of-the-box schools and their contexts because the already-existing data spoke directly of disadvantage. Each of the other major themes required increasingly more active analysis on the part of the researcher.

Of the four major themes, that of *Conceptual Poverty* holds the highest degree of abstractness and inferability. That is, while the already-existing data *suggested* to the researcher that the conceptual world of the context-specific learner is likely poor compared to that which is expected of them, this occurred through the accumulation of data related to academic performance, school attendance and post-school engagement in tandem with data related to contextual factors negatively affecting learner access to knowledge beyond their immediate community. While there was no direct, specific datum from which this theme could be deduced, there was ample enough corroborative data to arrive at comparative conceptual poverty as an explanation of context-specific learners from outside-of-the-box locations.

Put another way, the major theme of *Stacked Disadvantage* represents the easiest and most accurately known characteristics of the context-specific learner. The coding and categories of socio-economic, socio-educational and context-specific disadvantage are readily available in demographic data sources in the public domain for anyone to access and interpret. The data directly *indicated* that disadvantages had been measured and were present in the contexts of these learners.

The major theme of *Social Geographic Isolation* represents less easily and less accurately known characteristics of the context-specific learner, although some of the coding and categories that contribute to this major theme are commonly known as measures of disadvantage (e.g., more limited access to the internet in the home compared to the average degree of accessibility in Australia) or isolation (e.g., the distance from a major population

centre). Nonetheless, the major theme of *Social Geographic Isolation* builds upon the theme of *Stacked Disadvantage* and contributes more to understanding the learner who learns differently than simply their degree of disadvantage.

The major theme of *Fading* incorporates a greater degree of abstractness and inferability than the themes of *Social Geographic Isolation* and *Stacked Disadvantage*. It builds on the coding and categories related to the context-specific learner becoming increasingly absent from performance and attendance data of their context-specific schools across their compulsory school years. The already-existing data that contributed to the emergence of the major theme of *Fading* does not clearly indicate the reason for this occurrence, however in the light of *Stacked Disadvantage* and *Social Geographic Isolation,* the inference of the learner fading from their compulsory schooling holds enough of a presence to recommend the investigation of this space.

Finally, the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* presents the strongest presence of abstractness and inferability built upon the already-existing data from which the major themes were uncovered. The theme of *Conceptual Poverty* was interpretively built from the coding and categories of poorer communication access, health impairments, developmental risk, and comparatively poorer academic performance over time.

As seen from this Part II, Preface Figure 1, the four major themes have been found to be concomitant in their building of a profile of characteristics of the context-specific learner who learns differently to the imagined learner. This learner carries all four major themes as characteristics of them as different learners: they experience stacked disadvantage, social geographic isolation, fading and conceptual poverty. The learner who learns differently to the imagined learner experiences the effect of all four of these influences, two of which are outside-of-learner influences (stacked disadvantage and social geographic isolation) and two of which appear to be within-learner influences (fading and conceptual poverty). What is most known about these learners is that which is most frequently and obviously measured (i.e., categories of disadvantage), while that which is least known about these learners is that which is least investigated and least easily measured (categories of conceptual poverty). What is least known about learners who learn differently are the characteristics that are within-learner characteristics (i.e., the experience and knowledge that they bring to compulsory, formal schooling), the characteristics that are perhaps best learnt and acknowledged in formal schooling by the learners' teachers and other adults in their communities.

With these considerations in mind, Part II will now report on the characteristics of the curriculum-imagined learner, and the categories that constitute each of the four major themes characterizing the context-specific learner, as well as summarize the Key Understandings and Key Inferences pertinent to the learner from each chapter.

Chapter 5.

The Curriculum-Imagined Learner

5.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the research question, "How is the learner imagined?" In order to better understand the imagined learner, this research had first to determine where and how the imagined learner might be identified and described in official documentation that is commonly agreed to guide thinking and practice about school-aged learners across all schools. As the research locations for this study were chosen from New South Wales, Australia, the formal document selected had to be a norm document, officially mandated and commonly used across all Australian schools. This commonly used norm document is the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016b) which was the data source selected for this research.

The particular document within this data source that specifically describes the learner is the *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2013/2014), which will be referred to from this point in the chapter as the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document.

From the *General Capabilities* (ACARA 2013/2014) document, data was selected for content analysis. The data selection incorporated the text from the first 17 pages of the document. Content analysis of this text was used to determine descriptors of the curriculum-imagined learner.

Initially, as background to understanding the curriculum-imagined learner, this chapter provides a brief description of the entire *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document. This initial section of this chapter also reiterates the theoretical analysis of the terminology of 'capability' as used by the document. Following on from this, this chapter reports the outcomes of the content analysis of the first 17 pages of the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document[26], and finally, synthesizes the understanding of the curriculum-imagined learner interpreted from this analysis.

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[26] The rationale for the section of the document to be used has previously been outlined in Chapter 4, *Research Approach*.

5.2 The General Capabilities Document

In this thesis, and according to the thinking of Bakhtin (in Holquist, 1981) the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document is considered to be an official document containing the finalized knowledge of the curriculum-imagined learner. The learner in the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document has been uttered into existence as a formal literary genre by the numerous authors of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016). In Bakhtinian thinking, the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document is an important formal speaker (representing numerous voices, historical and current) in the many-voiced dialogue about the learner and formal schooling in the field of inclusive education. As such, it is a document that contains a reliable, generalized account of the curriculum-imagined learner.

The *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document makes specific use of the term 'capabilities' or 'capability'. Prior to embarking on a content analysis of the text of this document, the conceptualization of capability was first analyzed and acknowledged.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, *Research Approach*, the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document makes a single explicit attempt at defining capability:

> In the Australian Curriculum 'capability' encompasses knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions … General capabilities comprise an integrated and interconnected set of knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that students develop and use in their learning across the curriculum, in co-curricular programs and in their lives outside school. (p. 5)

Herein is a recognition that capability is of some value to the learner both within formal schooling (i.e., across the curriculum and in co-curriculum programs) and outside of formal schooling (i.e., in the life of the learner outside of school). While learner knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions remain undefined, there is an understanding that any capability is the result of the inter-relationship between these learner characteristics. Capability "*encompasses* knowledge, skills and dispositions" ACARA 2013/2014, p. 5). Any capability is not reducible to knowledge *or* skills *or* behaviours *or* dispositions standing in isolation to other characteristics of the learner: these recognized components of any capability are considered integrally at play in the learner, "integrated and interconnected" (ACARA 2013/2014, p. 5). Time and contexts are acknowledged as integral to capabilities in that the learner 'develops and uses' their knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions over time and in contexts is acknowledged in this definition.

The term and conceptualization of contexts, however, remains unexplained in the document, even though differences in contexts are assumed in students' lives outside of school. There is a general mention of context in the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document, but an absence of a Vygotskian or Bourdieusian socio-contextual understanding of context as involving situations or social interactions in which learner characteristics (such as knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions) are engendered, developed, elicited and used.

A total of seven General Capabilities have been identified in the *General Capabilities* (ACARA 2013/2014) document: Literacy, Numeracy, Information and Communication Technology Capability, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understanding (p. 3). On face value, these seven *General Capabilities* aspire to the learner's acquisition of integrated knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions in text production and processing, quantitative reasoning, communication, technological adeptness, problem solving, interpersonal responsiveness, constructive/generative thinking, and socio-contextual interaction. They are each acknowledged as essential to social participation in a post-school sense. The seven *General Capabilities* assume much of the resources, experience, values, motivations and contexts inherent in the learner from their 'beyond school' life. Nonetheless, there is no apparent attempt in the *General Capabilities* (ACARA 2013/2014) document to acknowledge or articulate that which mediates the socio-contextual generation of learner resources, experience, values and motivations in the learner other than the learner's exposure to formal schooling and the *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b).

The case of context is of specific interest to this research. The common contexts that may be imagined of the curriculum-imagined learner, and are also likely relevant to the curriculum-imagined learner, are public contexts (such as schools, neighbourhoods, and families), as well as transactional contexts (such as playgrounds and recreational areas, roads, public parks, shops, the internet and social media, swimming pools, sporting grounds, churches etc). The social situations within these contexts have contextual instruments of governance such as language, laws, rituals, rules, guidelines and habits that predicate expectations of context-specific behaviour. In the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document, contexts are generalized and implicit at best, referring to lives "outside school" (p. 3) or life "beyond school" (p.9). While the learner is understood to be "diverse" (pp. 4, 6, 10), to have "individual learning needs" (pp. 4, 6, 10), and to have a singular "pace of development" (p. 7), this is not explicitly related to socio-contextualized learner experience.

While the learner in the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document is explicitly conceptualized using the terminology of 'citizenship' (p. 3) and 'success' (pp. 3, 7 & 9), there is little explication of what these terms mean. Nonetheless, implicit expectations are flagged by the use of these terms. The expectations of the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document are foregrounding the final, post-school outcome of that which the learner can bring to the global market rather than to the learning done as a function of who they are and where and how they live. As highlighted in Chapter 2, *Literature Review* this contemporary trend in the stated aspirations of national curriculum has been observed internationally by researchers to be neo-liberal in orientation, and tending towards delineating an end-point of successful learners and responsible citizens (Barton, 1997; Graham & Slee, 2008; Lingard, 2007; Lingard & MacGregor, 2014; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008; Slee & Weiner, 2011). The learner is imagined as useful to the life and work of the nation. Their capabilities are conceptualized as resources and utilities indicating that they are really more like what Sen (1979, 1998) conceptualized as human capacities, transferable regardless of context or human well-being.

Every Australian from any socio-contextual experience who has been subject to the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016b) is assumed to be able to develop homogeneous knowledge and skills, behaviours and dispositions related to an undefined success and citizenship. These generic curriculum outcomes of success and citizenship are intended to " … assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century" (ACARA, 2013/2014, p. 3).

The expected outcomes of the imagined learner in the Australian Curriculum are that they will come to learning the *General Capabilities* more as capacities (see Sen, 1979, 1998), unrelated to socio-contextual, within-learner needs or values, and unrelated to the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions valued by specific contexts. There is an implicit expectation in the document, the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014), that the development of learners under the enactment of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016b) in formal schooling is simultaneously context-neutral and context-adaptable, both unrelated to any specific context while transferrable to any "twenty-first century" (p. 3) context.

The implications of this treatment of capability development in the learner will be further discussed in the final section of this chapter, *The learner as imagined in the Australian Curriculum*.

5.3 Document Analysis Findings

Beyond the explicitly identified seven General Capabilities, more specific indicators of how the learner is imagined were investigated using a content analysis of the text of the *General Capabilities* (ACARA 2013/2014, pp. 1–17) document. These first 17 pages contain a general introduction to capabilities as understood in the *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b), followed by discussion of the Literacy Capability.

The content analysis of the *General Capabilities* (ACARA 2013/2014, pp. 1–17) document followed Saldaña's (2016) coding, categorization and conceptualization technique as described in detail in Chapter 4. The results of this content analysis have been synthesized into Table 5.1 below, including the page references for each of the codes. These results will be discussed in more detail below.

Table 5.1 The categories and themes emerging from the thematic analysis of the General Capabilities (ACARA 2013/2014, pp. 1–17) document

Themes	Abilities	Values	Knowledge	Needs
Codes & Categories	The curriculum-imagined learner is: • diverse (pp. 4, 6, 10) • involved in listening, reading, viewing, speaking, writing, creating, using and modifying texts (oral, print, visual and digital) (p. 9)	The curriculum-imagined learner has: • individual learning needs (pp. 4, 6, 10) • language learning needs (of students with EAL/D) (p. 9) • a pace of development, prior experience, sense of self in the world, cognitive capacity (p. 7)	The curriculum-imagined learner will: • be successful, an individual, and a citizen (p. 3) • progress through school (p. 11) • be assisted to live and work successfully (p. 3) • be reasonably expected to have developed (knowledge, skills, behaviours, dispositions) at particular stages of schooling (pp. 6, 7) • become literate (p. 9) • develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to interpret and use language confidently (p. 9)	The curriculum-imagined learner needs: • to access, understand, analyze and evaluate information (p. 9) • to make meaning (p. 9) • to express thoughts and emotions (p. 9) • to present ideas and opinions (p. 9) • to interact with others (p. 9) • to participate in activities at school and in their lives beyond school (p. 9) • opportunities to develop capabilities over time and across learning areas (p. 9)

Themes	Abilities	Values	Knowledge	Needs
				• the knowledge and skills encompassed by literacy (p. 9) • to learn how diverse texts build knowledge in different curriculum areas (p. 11) • to learn how language and visual information work together to present subject specific knowledge (p. 11)
	The curriculum-imagined learner is able : • to engage in and manage their own learning (pp. 9 & 11) • to communicate with intent (p. 8) • to be encouraged to develop capabilities(p. 6)	The curriculum-imagined learner can have: • a different world view, history, abilities (p. 5)	The curriculum-imagined learner will be: • assessed and reported on (p. 5) • added to (p. 10) • strengthened (in literacy development) (p. 9) • given access by development of	

Themes	Abilities	Values	Knowledge	Needs
	• to develop personally relevant initiatives of their own design (pp. 6 & 10)		communication (if they have a disability) (p. 11) • given access to age-equivalent content (if they have a disability) (p. 11) • given access to educational equality (if they have a disability) (p. 11) • assisted by certain behaviours and dispositions to become effective learners (p. 9) • assisted by certain behaviours and dispositions to be confident and motivated to use literacy skills broadly (p. 9)	

Before discussing the content analysis summarized in Table 5.1 above it is important to note that this analysis recognizes and acknowledges the limited purpose of any curriculum. A curriculum is authored with the express purpose of organizing the instructional and evaluative direction of teaching and learning. These parameters of a curriculum are not a deliberate attempt to exclude any learner in any specific setting but rather, provide a chart by which an agreed navigation of teaching and learning in formal schooling might occur. Of its nature then, it is also a document that does exclude learners who do not share the conceptual worlds of curriculum authors because that is, quite simply, humanly impossible.

In many senses, codes in the table could be understood from any number of perspectives—that of the curriculum authors, that of the educator's, that of the learner's or that of the learner's parents—and the casual reader might wonder as to the reason why a code has been aligned within a specific category. For example, the code "has individual learning needs" (p. 7) has been placed within the table under the category of learner values. It depends from which perspective one considers and interprets individual learning needs as to why or why not a reader might place codes in different categories to the placements used by this researcher. Learner needs can be interpreted as an absence of learner ability in relation to curriculum-based learning outcomes (i.e., from a pragmatic inclusive education perspective looking upon the learner as a subject who is in relative deficit to other learners). In this sense, the learner requires the intervention of formal schooling using the curriculum to remediate the deficit. Another view might be taken from the learner's desire or valuing of learning that is not represented in the curriculum (a Senian perspective of human well-being based upon the individual's valued desires within their socio-contextual situation). The learner needs to learn what they value.

So, to be clear, the codes in Table 5.1 have been aligned with categories, and then themes, taking the learner's position and perspective, and not from the position and perspective of the authors of the Australian Curriculum. This has occurred so as to deliberately skew an understanding of the curriculum-imagined learner towards the learner's perspective rather than from the perspective of the curriculum authors.

As indicated by the themes formulated in Table 5.1 above, the curriculum-imagined learner has been conceptualized as having abilities, values, knowledge and needs. The codes and categories from which these themes have been built, however, only envisage the learner as subject to the curriculum. From a Bourdieusian or Senian perspective, the curriculum-imagined learner is not realistically conceptualized as an active agent with capabilities developed and useful beyond the framework of the curriculum. There is no indication of the curriculum-imagined learner as having specific contexts to which they

belong or pre-existing abilities, values, knowledge and needs upon which to build and develop further.

So as to better understand the curriculum-imagined learner from the learner's perspective, each of the themes are discussed in more detail below.

5.3.1 Abilities

The curriculum-imagined learner has abilities but they are limited by the scope of the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document which focuses on that which will be developed in the learner by the enactment of the curriculum. While it is acknowledged that the learner might be described as "diverse" (pp. 4, 6 & 10), there is no acknowledgement of the relevance of this diversity to their learning other than there may need to be some allowances for such learners.

The learner is able to be involved in activities related to literacy (i.e., listening, reading, viewing etc.), but there is little indication of the learner's agency in this involvement (i.e., can they choose when to listen, which literacies are relevant abilities to the socio-contextualized learner). The learner is considered able to be encouraged "to communicate with intent" (p. 8); however, one wonders at which abilities to do this gain acknowledgement as abilities and which are not (e.g., if the learner communicates refusal with intent under which perspectives this is recognized as an ability). It could be that the ability to communicate with intent is an ability awaiting the activation of the curriculum.

The learner is able to be encouraged in "developing capabilities" (p. 6), a conceptualization that suggests limited agency in the learner to have or develop capabilities that are inherently valuable to themselves regardless of their exposure to the curriculum.

5.3.2 Values

In some cases, the curriculum-imagined learner is noted as learning differently and valuing learning differently to how the curriculum values learning. In this sense, some curriculum-imagined learners are conceptualized as having "learning needs" (pp. 4, 6 & 10). Any learning valued by the learner but not necessarily valued by the curriculum, while acknowledged in the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document, is defined as an 'in-deficit' need in relation to learning valued by the curriculum. In this way, the majority of curriculum-imagined learners are imagined by the curriculum authors as valuing that which the curriculum values. Fewer learners are imagined by the curriculum authors as having learning *needs* to be accommodated by the curriculum and its valued knowledge and learning. From a learner's perspective, they are imagined in relation to curriculum values

when their diversity (pp. 4, 6 & 10), language learning needs (p. 9), sense of self in the world (p. 7), cognitive capacity (p. 7), and different world view, history and abilities (p. 5) may well be representative of values not identically shared with those of the curriculum.

Learners with individual paces of development (p. 7)—due to cognitive capacity, prior experience, or with English as EAL/D—are acknowledged, however, they are acknowledged as exceptions to the majority of curriculum-imagined learners. A learner with values that are not congruent with the knowledge, behaviours, skills and dispositions acknowledged in the curriculum is currently imagined in the curriculum as a learner with values requiring treatment and intervention rather than a learner with values not yet imagined or included in the curriculum.

In this way, the most common curriculum-imagined learner (i.e., the one who is not the exception due to language difference, cognitive capacity, alternative prior experience or alternative sense of self) is conceptualized as naturally valuing—and therefore naturally compliant and that which is valued by the curriculum. The learner whose identity is not congruent with the identity of those who identify with the values of the curriculum is relegated to being imagined as a minority having a "different world view" (p. 5) rather than a norm of having a different world view. Both learners are imagined as curriculum-imagined, however, the learner who does not share the values of the curriculum is imagined as needing help in order to get closer to being able to do that.

5.3.3 Knowledge

The acknowledged knowledge of the curriculum-imagined learner is that knowledge developed in relation to the curriculum and only *since* the learner's exposure to the curriculum. Knowledge will be "strengthened in literacy development" (p. 9), "given access to" for those with disability (p. 11), "assisted by certain behaviours and dispositions" (p. 9), and be "reasonably expected to have developed" at particular stages of schooling (pp. 6 & 7). There is no indicator that the diversity or history of the curriculum-imagined learner suggests pre-existing knowledge upon which the curriculum might build or of which the curriculum may accommodate or find foundational to knowledge development. The curriculum authors imagine learner knowledge as curriculum-related.

The knowledge of the curriculum-imagined learner is knowledge that is able to be measured, assessed and reported on (p. 5), added to (p. 10) and developed (p. 9) by the processes of the curriculum in formal schooling. The learner in this document is imagined as being developed by the curriculum and, while the curriculum authors may have imagined that the learner has prior knowledge, the account of knowledge from the learner's perspective is not

made explicit. The curriculum writes of developing learner knowledge within the closed-system vacuum of the curriculum. The development of the curriculum-imagined learner positions the learner as needing to be confidently adept (at language and literacy), an individual, an effective learner, and a successful citizen, and that the curriculum is the treatment under which this need will be filled.

The curriculum-imagined learner is understood to have knowledge directly due to exposure to the curriculum: access to knowledge is given by the processes of the curriculum via communication, subject content, training in behaviour and dispositions, and equitable treatment. The learner's other knowledge is not registered as existing or foundational in any way.

5.3.4 Needs

In the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014, pp. 1–17), the curriculum-imagined learner is conceptualized as needing the abilities, values and knowledge of the curriculum in order to be a successful citizen (pp. 3, 9 & 11) The learner needs that are acknowledged and conceptualized are constructed as relative to the curriculum rather than relative to learner-valued knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions.

In the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document, the curriculum-imagined learner is understood as needing to: make meaning, express thoughts and emotions, present ideas and opinions, interact with others, and participate in school and post-school activities (pp. 9 & 11). These needs of the curriculum-imagined learner are conceptualized, however, in relation to the enactment of the curriculum in formal schooling and not in relation to the learner context and the demands of that specific context on meaning-making or on learner participation. They are needs identified for the purpose of measurement and evaluation, to ensure that the learner product due to curriculum influence is adaptable to what the curriculum values as the successful citizen in the 21st Century (ACARA, 2013/2014, p. 3). Beyond the evaluative requirements of the curriculum, and without the influence of the curriculum, the curriculum-imagined learner is not explicitly imagined as having their own agency in meaning-making, nor in their own timing or adaptability of meaning-making within their specific socio-contextual situations.

The curriculum-imagined learner is authored as though they are a knowledge-neutral zone. The learner is only specifically conceptualized with abilities, values and knowledge that are curriculum-related. Exposure to the enactment of curriculum in the process of formal schooling is conceptualized as fulfilling the needs of the curriculum-imagined learner within the context of the curriculum alone.

Beyond the agency, timing and implementation of the curriculum, the learner's needs are not acknowledged for the curriculum-imagined learner.

5.4 The Learner as Imagined in the Australian Curriculum

Using Bakhtinian terminology, any national curriculum is an official document, a formal literary genre used to guide and direct the processes of formal schooling within the nation for which it has been generated. For the *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b)—which drew its inspiration from the *Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008)—the terminology of capabilities is foundational to understanding its purpose " … that all young people in Australia should be supported to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens" (p. 3).

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, while the *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b) makes substantial use of the terminology of capabilities, its theorization of the term seems limited.

Sen's (1979, 1998) understanding of capability is not shared by the Australian Curriculum. Unlike the Australian Curriculum, Sen's (1979, 1988) conceptualization of capability was that it was inextricably connected to culture and context, and that basic capability equality is essentially culture-dependent. Sen (1998) and Nussbaum's (2011) work on capabilities has its foundation in the essential nature of human well-being as *the* end to be pursued and from which other ends (such as national well-being, or national and global progress and prosperity) are secondarily enhanced. The *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b), in the words of the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document, finds its purpose in generating post-school learners who are successful citizens in the 21st Century (p. 3). The understanding of capabilities is clearly divergent.

The freedom of the individual to choose valued needs and interests—and the practice of this choice—better enables the individual's participation in societies that adhere to principles of social justice, human dignity and equity—this is the end to which industry, business, government, health, transport and education might better aspire, this is the end to work towards in developing national and international well-being. *This* creation of capabilities is essential to any other big picture development, such as formal schooling, provided it remains firmly attached to the needs, interests and socio-cultural and socio-contextual knowledge and experience of the learner.

The analysis of the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014, pp. 1–17) document has found little, if any, alignment between the notion of the capabilities of the context- and

concept-neutral curriculum-imagined learner and Sen's (1979, 1998) theorization of human capabilities. It seems that, through their exposure to formal schooling, the imagined learner of the Australian Curriculum is required to develop 'capacities' more than 'capabilities', an interpretation that has been specifically investigated by Lingard and McGregor (2014).

As demonstrated by the content analysis of the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014, pp. 1–17) document, the curriculum-imagined learner is understood as having abilities, values, knowledge and needs. That which is disappointing about the conceptualization of these attributes is that they are figured as a resource developed in the learner by exposure to the curriculum, and as useful beyond school due to their development by the curriculum. There is no sense of the curriculum-imagined learner having pre-existing agency and abilities, or values other than that which is valued by the curriculum. The knowledge of the curriculum-imagined learner is that which is given by the processes of the curriculum via communication, subject content, training in behaviour and dispositions, and equitable treatment. Beyond the agency, timing and implementation of the curriculum, the curriculum-imagined learner's needs are not acknowledged. Apart from brief acknowledgement of the possibility of diversity and a different world view, the curriculum-imagined learner is conceptualized as a neutral space with regards to their pre-existing context, conceptual development and valued knowledge.

In the Australian Curriculum, the learner may be argued to be imagined as context-neutral, concept-neutral, and epistemologically-neutral while a developing successful citizen of Australia with capabilities in information and language, and social participation on the global stage. The blankness of this imagination is both disarming and disturbing.

5.4.1 Context-neutral

The curriculum-imagined learner has evolved from the policy field of education, which is a context but is not a geographical context in which social interaction is continually occurring. In Bakhtinian conceptualization, it is finalized with no further dialogue, no further interaction contributing to new knowledge or understanding within its confines. As such, it is considered context-neutral.

Using the theorization of Bourdieu (1977), and the investigations of Lingard, Sellar and Baroutsis (2015), the policy field of education is a complex context involving global politics, transnational organizations (such as OPEC, and the World Bank), and global economic development needs and planning. As briefly summarized in Chapter 2, *Literature Review*, the policy field of education is increasingly theorized as a 'global education policy field' (Lingard & Rawolle, 2011) and, in that globalized field, the learner is easily theorized as an

abstract and receptive target of educational treatment through formal schooling, such treatment theoretically intended to develop "successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens" (ACARA, 2013/2014, p. 3) with reference to the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA), 2008). The language of the Australian Curriculum—an example of a national expression of the global education policy field—is explicit: its purpose is to "assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century" (ACARA, 2013/2014, p. 3) through the process of developing capabilities.

In Bourdieuian terms, this global education policy field is a field that carries the structuring structures of curriculum, the epistemological drivers of the teacher, and the theoretical receptivity of learners. The purpose of this policy field is to achieve global development and prosperity, regardless of the context, conceptual development and pre- and co-existing knowledge of the context-specific learner, and regardless of the necessary human element of capabilities (rather than the human performance of capacities).

Unlike Sen's (1979, 1998) Capability Approach—in which any human being understood as a cultural and contextual participant with personal needs and well-being (both pursued in a context in which the person lives and develops)—the imagined learner of the global education policy-styled curriculum only has capacities developed via the processes of formal schooling and for the sole purpose of usefulness to national, transnational and international goals, progress and prosperity. In this way, the curriculum-imagined learner may be too easily imagined as elementary to an "ubiquitous human capital approach" (Greisbacher, 2015) in this pursuit of formal schooling as circumscribed by the global education policy field. The curriculum-imagined learner is not understood as having human capabilities, but rather as having capabilities relevant to the curriculum, and relevant to national, transnational and international global requirements of success and citizenship.

The policy field of education is the complex context from which the curriculum-imagined learner has evolved. The subjects of social interaction in that policy field are the social engineers and curriculum authors: they are not the socio-contextualized individual subjects for whom curriculum and formal schooling is being planned. The subjects for whom curriculum is planned are imagined by the social engineers and curriculum authors of the policy field of education. The curriculum-imagined learner is not a participant in actual, specific contexts and from which their context-specific needs and well-being are able to be considered. The curriculum-imagined learner seems to be entirely context-neutral.

5.4.2 Concept-neutral

The thinking of Vygotsky (1966, 2004) assumes that conceptual development in any individual is the result of internalization of social interaction in the learner's contexts and experience. Conceptual development is unable to occur without exposure and experience to contextual drivers, and may only occur in a limited capacity without interaction with a MKO. The learner as imagined in the curriculum is context-neutral, and is subject to the curriculum and the epistemological drivers of the teacher or teachers responsible for educational delivery. While the concession that the curriculum-imagined learner might be from a diverse background is made in the *General Capabilities* (ACARA 2013/2014), nonetheless the learner continues to be imagined as concept-neutral with the processes of formal schooling done to them. There seems to be no relationship drawn between a learner's diverse background and their conceptual development and conceptual world due to their interaction in that diverse setting. Their acquisition of knowledge and skill are measured and valued from the context of the curriculum rather than the specific context of the actual learner.

The curriculum-imagined learner is not imagined as a participant in specific contexts from which their conceptual world has developed. The curriculum-imagined learner is imagined as having a limited conceptual world: their conceptual world is comprised of that which might be measurable of the context-neutral curriculum capabilities.

5.4.3 Epistemologically-neutral

The absence of any acknowledgement of specific contexts and conceptual development of the imagined learner also absents the possibility of pre- and co-existing knowledge and thinking processes in the curriculum-imagined learner. For Bakhtin (1994, 2004), all true understanding is dialogic in nature. The problem for the curriculum-imagined learner is that there is no dialogue in which they can participate outside of the formal language and conceptualizations of the capabilities and capability development of the curriculum. Without the social situation and the voices representing the informal language of outsider knowledge there is no dialogue, and therefore there is no understanding of other knowledge. In this way, the curriculum-imagined learner is finalized. With the absence of dialogue there is also the absence of continually developing (always unfinished) knowledge either pre-existing or co-existing.

The curriculum-imagined learner is in an epistemological vacuum with no apparent way to develop knowledge independently of the curriculum and the educational delivery of their teachers. Other contexts and other concepts do not exist for the curriculum-imagined

learner, and other knowledge and thinking processes to those acknowledged in the curriculum do not exist either.

The curriculum-imagined learner is not explicitly recognized as having pre-existing or co-existing knowledge learnt from any actual context.

5.5 Summary

The *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document is the formal language describing the learner, who is imagined as context-, concept- and epistemologically-neutral. There is no dialogue in the formal document, and no explicitly expressed capacity to engage in dialogue with the context-specific learner. The document, *General Capabilities of the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA 2013/2014) is but a voice, and will only make sense in the company of the other voices participating in formal schooling. It is a formal document which, without analysis, operates as an unexamined driver of context that impacts on the enactment of inclusive education in formal schooling.

The thematic analysis of this document data suggests there is neither colour nor texture in the profile of the curriculum-imagined learner. In relation to context, conceptual development and pre-existing and co-existing knowledge, the curriculum-imagined learner appears to be a blank canvas, an object awaiting the artistic brush strokes of the teacher and the prescribed palette of the curriculum.

The thematic analysis of the document data indicates that the curriculum positions learners to achieve certain capabilities without acknowledgement of other contextual concepts they may be bringing to the learning involved in formal schooling (e.g. Rita from the Prelude in Chapter 1). Other elements of the case of context remain unknown in the curriculum documentation. The following chapters (Chapters 6 to 9) explore the secondary data (i.e. the already-existing demographic data) and provide an account of the data and its analysis that contribute to understanding these other elements of context not incorporated in curriculum documentation.

5.5.1 Key understanding and inference—curriculum-imagined learner

*Key understanding: Curriculum-imagined learner—*While context-, concept- and epistemologically-neutral and context-adaptable, the curriculum-imagined learner has general capabilities related to information, language and social participation. These general capabilities are external to the learner (i.e., able to be externally measured), and the degree

and extent of conceptual development and thinking processes that are the foundation of the general capabilities are unknown.

Key inference: Curriculum-imagined learner—The curriculum-imagined learner is an idealistic conceptualization, meant to represent all learners and no learners at all in the same moment. The curriculum-imagined learner is the learner against which all other learners are observed and measured.

Chapter 6.

Stacked Disadvantage

6.1 Introduction

This research was rich with big data indicating larger measures of disadvantage, and a cluster of re-codes of demographic data representing factors of disadvantage. While more detail will be given to this below, an outstanding major theme which was immediately obvious across the research locations was that they all carried disadvantages, and that none carried only a single disadvantage. Further, none of the locations shared an identical pattern of individual disadvantages. Disadvantage, in the research locations, was plural and context-specific. In the terminology and conceptualization of Nurius, Prince and Rocha (2015), disadvantage was stacked in each of the contexts investigated by this research, hence the choice of terminology to describe this major theme.

This chapter will define the major theme of *Stacked Disadvantage* and then report the findings of the re-coding, categorization and conceptualization technique (previously described in Chapter 3) utilized for the demographic data analysis.

6.2 Definition

Prior to being named as 'Stacked Disadvantage', the theme of non-identical aggregate disadvantages was identified from the analysis of the demographic data across research sites. This theme emerged from inductive analysis of the different big data sets of official statistics. To explain this conceptual theme, a wider literature had to be investigated. It was in the child and adolescent literature of social disadvantages experienced by young people that the explanation was found. In this way, the term 'stacked disadvantage' and its definition were found after the theme of non-identical aggregate disadvantages was identified. Given that this was an exploratory and explanatory study, the theme adopted the terminology and definition of 'stacked disadvantage'.

While disadvantage is clearly identifiable in the inclusive education literature (see Chapter 2), 'the concept of stacked disadvantage borrowed from Nurius et al. (2015) who found that the higher degree of social-emotional decrements that youth have, the poorer their psychological health, adaptive coping and physical health become, and the less they are able to ameliorate these effects via education and the existence of family strengths.

As disadvantages become stacked, the future well-being of youth becomes increasingly negatively 'stacked'. In the words of Nurius et al. (2015), " … characteristics representing

social disadvantage are additive in nature, constituting stacked or cumulative stressors that convey jeopardy for youth emotional and physical health" (p. 569). Nurius et al. (2015) write:

> In line with theories of how stress proliferates and erodes the availability of support resources, youth who experience multiple forms of disadvantage may experience decrements not only in physical and mental health markers, but also in the assets necessary to buffer these effects. (p. 569)

Borrowing from and building on Nurius' et al. (2015) concept, the major theme of *Stacked Disadvantage* describes the inseparability of one form of disadvantage from other co-existing disadvantages. This research considers the whole effect of disadvantages as cumulative, and as much greater than the circumscribed effect of its individual components. Stacked disadvantage describes the additive nature of elements of disadvantage in relation to impact on social participation/inclusion, as well as emotional and physical health.

Stacked disadvantage incorporates component disadvantages which, when applied to a learner, cumulatively build a conversation about the learner and what they are able to bring to school-based learning. The findings related to the major theme of *Stacked Disadvantage* are reported below.

6.3 Big Data and Advantage/Disadvantage

The big data sources from which the data was selected for the demographic data analysis have been outlined in Chapter 4, Table 4.1 and will not be repeated here.

Two of the big data sources will be further discussed here, however, as they were both specifically designed to illustrate disadvantage/advantage in specific locations. These two big data sources were the DOTE report by Vinson and Rawsthorne (2015) and the ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c, 2016d). Vinson and Rawsthorne's (2015) report was incorporated heavily into the data trawling for developing the disadvantage codes which informed the disadvantage categories and the final major theme of *Stacked Disadvantage*.

The DOTE report (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015) is a measure of disadvantage. Its results for NSW (the State from which the six research locations for this study were investigated) were grouped according to the 621 NSW postcodes. It used 21 descriptors of disadvantage, each individually ranked for any single location against all of the other NSW postcodes. Finally, the study ascertained an overall ranking of disadvantage for a specific location (postcode) compared to all other 620 NSW postcodes. These rankings have enabled comparisons across the 621 postcodes belonging to NSW in each of the 21 descriptors as well as the overall postcode ranking compared to all other postcodes. For example, Condobolin, NSW

has a disadvantage ranking of 147 out of 621 NSW postcodes. The lower the ranking pertaining to any NSW postcode is indicative of the higher degree of relative disadvantage experienced by the community within the postcode boundaries. From the rankings, Vinson and Rawsthorne (2015) determined a set of four descriptors (i.e., 'Most Advantaged', 'Advantaged', 'Disadvantaged', and 'Most Disadvantaged'), one of which was applied to each postcode according to the interpretation of overall disadvantage over the 21 descriptors. For example, Condobolin, NSW is considered to fit the descriptor 'Most Disadvantaged'.

Four of the six locations of this study fit the Vinson and Rawsthorne (2015) descriptor of 'Most disadvantaged' (i.e., Ulladulla, Condobolin, Lithgow and Brewarrina), while the remaining two locations (i.e., Lake Munmorah and Cobar) fit the descriptor of 'Disadvantaged' (see Table 6.1 below).

Table 6.1 Location rankings and disadvantage descriptors (DOTE Report, Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015) with school ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c) ratings

Location/Context	Vinson & Rawsthorne's Disadvantage Measure	Vinson & Rawsthorne's Ranking/621 NSW Postcodes	School ICSEA Ratings (ACARA, 2016c)
Brewarrina, NSW	Most disadvantaged	80	660, 810
Condobolin, NSW	Most disadvantaged	147	824, 844, 947
Lithgow, NSW	Most disadvantaged	165	928, 938, 903, 980, 1010, 930
Ulladulla, NSW	Most disadvantaged	183	977, 963
Lake Munmorah, NSW	Disadvantaged to Most Disadvantaged	201	945, 958, 1002, 992
Cobar, NSW	Disadvantaged	251	926, 907, 998

ICSEA (based on parent ratings at each school in the location)

ICSEA ratings are listed for each school in the order in which the schools are listed on the *MySchool* (ACARA, 2016a) website.

For locations that contain a campus of a larger school (e.g. MET, Aspect Schools), these campuses are not included.

Average ICSEA value: 1000 Less than 1000 is less than average.

The ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c) was first developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority in about 2008, and is re-evaluated annually with revised ICSEA

ratings per school every year. The ICSEA was developed as a school-based rating of educational advantage based on an average ICSEA rating of 1000. The higher above 1000 a school rating is indicative of how much more than average educational advantage exists in the school. The lower the school-based rating is than 1000 represents the degree of educational disadvantage occurring in the school.

The ICSEA rating was determined by rating each school against four measures of advantage/disadvantage: the student-level factors of parents' occupation, and parents' education (school and non-school); and the school level factors of a school's geographical location and the proportion of indigenous students for which a school caters. The school ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c) ratings can be substantially divergent in two schools in the same town. For example, Brewarrina Central School (Years 7 to 12) has an ICSEA value of 660, while the local non-government systemic primary school (St. Patrick's School, K to Year 6) has an ICSEA value of 810.

Interestingly, there are discrepancies between the rankings and ratings of these two widely used big data measures of advantage/disadvantage. Big data measures of advantage/disadvantage do not always agree with each other about which locations may be summarized as disadvantaged or advantaged, and to what degree this might be the case. For example, while Cobar is the least disadvantaged community of the five research locations (when referring to the Vinson & Rawsthorne (2015) data), the school ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c) ratings place Cobar schools at approximately the same rating of advantage as many, but not all, of Lithgow's schools (see Table 6.1).

From Table 6.1, it is clear that data selection from more than one data source was necessary to understand the case of context with specific reference to advantage or disadvantage. If represented by a summative number or descriptor from a large data source (e.g., ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c)), a location's advantage/disadvantage is less likely able to be relied upon in isolation from other more specific data. An accurate array of specific disadvantages pertinent to any location is more useful in understanding the experience of that location and its impact on the learner than a summative singular ranking or rating.

6.4 Patterns in the Categories of Stacked Disadvantage

The pre-existing codes of data in the big sources were re-coded (selected and re-expressed), prior to categorization and conceptualization. The major theme Matrix of Stacked Disadvantage included 12 categories of disadvantage which constituted the range of individual disadvantages at play across the six research locations. Table 6.2 illustrates

which of the 12 categories of disadvantage occur in which research locations, and the load of disadvantage carried by each location.

Table 6.2 Incidence of specific disadvantages across the six research locations

Categories of Disadvantage	BRE	LM	CONDO	COBAR	ULLA	LI
Long-term unemployment (ranked at <250/621)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Health risk factors above state average in 2+ categories^	√	√	√	√	√	√
Moderately high incidence of domestic crime (10–49% more than NSW incidence average per 1000,000)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Low family income	√	√	√	0	√	√
High incidence of disability pension (ranked at <250/621	√	√	√	0	√	√
Ready for school (2 or more criteria of developmental vulnerability below Australian average AEDC, 2015)	0	√	√	0	√	√
Not ready for school (> 3 criteria of developmental vulnerability exceed Australian average AEDC, 2015)	√	0	√	√	0	√
Very high incidence of violent crimes within 6km of home (100% + > NSW incidence average per 100,000)	0	√	√	√	√	0
Rent assistance (ranked at < 250/621)	0	√	0	0	√	√
Remote (ASGS, 2011)	√	o	√	√	0	0
Higher incidence of psychiatric admissions (ranked at < 250/621)	√	√	0	0	0	√
Readiness for schooling (< 250/621 ranking DOTE 2015)	0	0	√	0	√	√
TOTAL categories of disadvantage per location	8	9	10	6	9	10

AEDC (Australian Government, 2012/2015); DOTE 2015 (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015); ASGS 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a)

For the purpose of ease of communication, each of the categories of disadvantage will generally be simply discussed as disadvantages in the following paragraphs relating to the major theme of *Stacked Disadvantage*.

6.4.1 Most common disadvantages across locations

It may be seen in Table 6.2 that the three disadvantages that were found to be absolutely common and prominent to all six research locations were: long-term unemployment, health risk factors above the state average in two or more descriptors of health risk, and moderately high risk of domestic crime compared to the state average. Further to this, five of the six research locations shared the identical disadvantages of low family income and high incidence of disability. Table 6.2 below demonstrates how similar the six locations are in these top five disadvantages, and how dissimilar the six locations are in the disadvantages that occur in only four of the locations (two or more criteria of developmental vulnerability below Australian average, and more than three criteria of developmental vulnerability exceed Australian average) and then in only three of the locations (rent assistance, remoteness, incidence of psychiatric admissions, and below average readiness for schooling).

While these lower-incidence disadvantages in the six research locations are significant to the learner, they are not carried in a common pattern across the six research locations. Interestingly, remoteness (commonly used by big data as a component of advantage/disadvantage ratings) is carried as a disadvantage across only half of the locations investigated for this research. Below average readiness for schooling is also only carried as a disadvantage by half of the locations.

There were other specific stand-alone disadvantages identified as occurring at two or less research locations (e.g. see Appendix C, Table C.1, Code 13, >25% of population <15 yrs old) which would have added to the picture of stacked disadvantage for these *specific* locations, but did not add to the picture of stacked disadvantage in the case of context which was the focus of this thesis. It is important to remember that an early methodological decision (as mentioned in Chapter 4, section 4.4.5.3, and indicated in Figure 4.5) regarding the re-coding, categorizing and thematic analysis of the demographic data was to only categorize coded data that occurred across 3 or more of the locations.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, these specific stand-alone demographic data codes – relevant to a specific location but not to the case of context – were deliberately not formed into categories of disadvantage because the infrequency of these data codes did not warrant further analysis relevant to the case of context. The research focused on stacked

disadvantage as relevant to *the case of context* across a diversity of locations subject to the enactment of inclusive education.

What is clear from Table 6.2 is that each of the six study locations carries substantial stacked disadvantage, each carrying at least six specifically delineated individual disadvantages. Of further note is that each of the 12 specific disadvantages listed in Table 6.2 are either relevant to household or developmental influences on the school-aged learner in their respective locations. They are disadvantages that affect the milieu in which the learner lives and learns or affect learner capacity to learn without assistance and supportive intervention.

6.4.2 Degree of specific disadvantages

Figure 6.1 illustrates the incidence of specific disadvantages across the six research locations. The locations with the highest incidence of individual disadvantages were Condobolin (10) and Lithgow (10). These were followed closely by Lake Munmorah (9), Ulladulla (9) and then Brewarrina (8). Cobar had the lowest incidence of disadvantages with six specific disadvantages. The researcher's experience of Brewarrina suggested that it would have met the other two specific disadvantages, and it likely does, however, during the 18 month course of the data collection and analysis, some of the data sources removed the relevant data entries for Brewarrina over the period that data was being trawled (see more information about disappearing data at the beginning of Chapter 8, *Fading*).

6.4.3 Non-identical patterns of specific disadvantages

Of particular interest in the demographic data analysis was that none of the research locations shared the identical pattern of disadvantages even though each research location had clear arrays of disadvantages (see Table 6.2). All six locations had their uniquely specific patterns of disadvantage, or accumulations of contextual influences that are highly likely to contribute to the learners from those locations being non-conformal, nontraditional and nonconventional in relation to that which might be expected of them as learners given, for instance, the norms (i.e., *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum,* NAPLAN) by which they are measured. For example, from the results in Table 6.2, it may be seen that while both Condobolin and Lithgow each experienced 10 disadvantages, and the type of disadvantages differed across the two locations (e.g., Lithgow experienced very high incidence of violent crime within six kilometres of home, whereas Cobar did not).

As the disadvantages are diverse and stacked from one location to the next, it can be expected that the learners' capabilities which they bring with them to formal schooling (i.e.,

their non-conformal, non-traditional and non-conventional ways of thinking and doing) will also vary across locations. In other words, there is unlikely to be a 'one size fits all' jersey—a single composite rating of disadvantage—that will adequately summarize the learning needs or pre-existing knowledge and experiences of learners from outside-of-the-box schools and their locations. Stacked disadvantage (with its component disadvantages) is likely to be a more accurate reflection of the context-specific learner than a summative advantage/disadvantage rating arbitrarily constructed from a few identical disadvantage measures.

6.5 Relationship between Categories and Big Data Measures of Disadvantage

'Remoteness' is the only one of the 12 categories (that constitute the major theme of *Stacked Disadvantage*) which directly correlates with the ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c) construction of advantage/disadvantage. The ICSEA rating is constructed on the statistical coding of parental occupation, parental education, geographic location of the school, and the school proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ACARA, 2016c).

As a category or component of disadvantage, remoteness has not been fundamental to each of the six research locations in which the researcher had identified outside-of-the-box schools in which she had worked (see Table 4.3, *Research locations, postcodes and remoteness classifications*). Of the six research locations, Brewarrina and Cobar are the only two locations classified as remote locations in Australia and, while Brewarrina and Cobar carry substantial stacked disadvantage, Condobolin and Lithgow (neither of which is classified as a remote location) carry the heaviest burden of stacked disadvantage (see Table 6.2).

Stacked disadvantage presents a very different picture of locations and, therefore, of the learners within these locations, than stand-alone components of disadvantage can.

6.6 Member-checking

The transcripts of the in-depth interviews were used for member-checking (Bazely, 2013, p. 408) the relevance of disadvantages to the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education. These transcripts yielded some confirmation that disadvantages were relevant. Table 6.3 (below) contains utterances conveying disadvantage in one form or another. The utterances were conveyed using what Bakhtin (1986) … termed individualistic language style, and were specific to learners that the participants actually knew and with whom they had had experience. The utterances speak of specific disadvantages of which the research

participants were aware or with which they were attempting to work. While the utterances did not specifically express the presence of stacked disadvantage, each utterance referred to either a complexity of disadvantage or to connected disadvantages. In the transcripts, disadvantage was never referred to as a single, stand-alone entity affecting the learners the participants knew.

The utterances conveyed by the participants were not identical across the research participants: compared to each other, participants focused on different aspects of disadvantage. Each utterance indicated that the disadvantage being addressed by the participant was a disadvantage related to a context or situation of which they were thinking at the time (e.g., the limited self-imagination of learners was related to learners from complex and confused communities, and learner anxiety and depression was related to performance measures to which the learners are required to respond). Disadvantage in the utterances carried context or situation with it, even though the utterances did not describe context or situation in any detail at all.

Table 6.3 Sentence stems related to disadvantage from participant utterances

The learner experiences disadvantage as …	Evidence
Limited self-imagination	**Participant 1**: "Self-prophesised learners" (pp. 8 & 14) from " … complex and confused communities" (Conversation 1, p. 14)
Displacement	**Participant 1**: Learners who had been purposefully displaced to an institution as "they weren't able to keep them in the cities … they were too wild." (Conversation 1, p. 16)
Physical/physiological	**Participant 2**: Learners "tired" (Conversation 2, p. 9) when they get to school due to long travel distances.
Socio-emotional	**Participant 2**: "27% (of Years 3 and 4) are struggling with anxiety around things like NAPLAN … 56%, I think it is, by the time they get to the [High School Certificate] HSC are quite anxious, and clinically, I think there are major issues around depression." (Conversation 2, p. 8)

The learner experiences disadvantage as …	Evidence
Learning difficulty (reading fluency, reading comprehension)	**Participant 2**: " … fluency came out very strongly (between 50 to 67% of kids in the region) as being a weakness ... it impacts significantly on comprehension. Slow, disjointed readers don't get it …" (Conversation 2, p. 6)
Isolation (physical and emotional)	**Participant 3**: " … parents have communicated to us often that they feel isolated (due to) … distance … they don't have enough money to pay for the petrol … (they have) a child with a disability … I think isolation, yeah, it can come in many forms." (Conversation 3, p. 9)

6.7 Summary

The clear emergence of the major theme of *Stacked Disadvantage* proposes a doubt to the usefulness of separated indicators of disadvantage, or to the practice of isolated socio-economic indicators of disadvantage/advantage combined into a weighted score (e.g., the ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c) used by ACARA).

Stacked disadvantage presents a very different picture of locations and, therefore, of the learners within these locations, than stand-alone components of disadvantage is able to. Stacked disadvantage is considered to describe what the learner in stacked disadvantage situations may not be able to do or think or access due to a range of disadvantages related to household resources, developmental delays, health risk factors, neighbourhood influences including crime incidence, disability, and unchallenged inter-generational beliefs. These elements of disadvantage, while not exhaustive, are a far cry from the disadvantages that are statistically loaded into a single ICSEA value based on parental/family economic or educational situations and on geographic location (remoteness) and the proportion of the school population that is Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander in heritage.

The major theme of *Stacked Disadvantage* favours the idea of the learner 'not being able to' (due to the additive effects of disadvantages and their social-emotional stressors) over the idea of 'not having' (highly educated parents, household cash flow, or proximity to a large

city) or 'having' (Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage). Stacke Disadvantage is a theme that better represents the learner from outside-of-the-box locations than does a single rating representing limited realities of the context-specific learner.

A stacked disadvantage measure (with its uniquely component disadvantages for any location) is likely a more accurate reflection of the pre-existing and co-existing knowledge and experience of the context-specific learner than a summative advantage/disadvantage rating arbitrarily constructed from a few identical disadvantage measures.

6.7.1 Key understanding and inference—stacked disadvantage

Key understanding 1: None of the research locations with stacked disadvantage had identical stacking of disadvantages.

Inference 1: An accurate array of specific disadvantages pertinent to any location is more useful in understanding the experience and knowledge of learners in that location and understanding the impact of specific disadvantages on the learner than a summative singular ranking or rating.

Chapter 7.

Social Geographic Isolation

7.1 Introduction

On immediate face value inspection of the demographic data, each of the research locations bore no similarity in relation to its distance from larger communities and their resources, assets and social opportunities. For example, Lake Munmorah is considered to be part of Greater Sydney, even though it is approximately 100 kilometres from the Sydney central business district (CBD), while Lithgow is about 250 kilometres or several hours journey (by car or rail) from the Sydney CBD. Notwithstanding this lack of similarity with regard to degree of geographical distance from a major city, there did appear to be something very similar across the six research locations in relation to gaining ready access to, and participating in, other communities and their social interaction offerings. It was the issue of social access in relation to geographic distance that emerged from initially investigating the more obvious and more frequently researched geographic isolation or remoteness affecting educational capability. From the analysis of the demographic data, a major theme of *Social Geographic Isolation* emerged as common to all six of the research locations.

This chapter will provide a definition of social geographic isolation, and outline the evidence of its impact on each of the six research locations and the learners from these locations.

7.2 Definition

Social geographic isolation is not simply isolation due to distance from the next major regional centre or city. It is an isolation from the milieu of diverse social contexts, an isolation due to limited exposure to thinking processes of social contexts that differ from one's social context of origin, and an isolation from the social connectedness and resources of those contexts. While this isolation might be due to sheer distance (such as the remoteness of Cobar or Brewarrina), so that even a journey by car is long and arduous, it is more than a factor of geographical distance as the 'crow flies' or as mileage on a road.

From his experience with researching education comparatively and internationally, which included extensive experience with 'small-state' educational contexts, Brock (2013) proposed the notion that global education was faced with many educational dilemmas and priorities which were most readily evident when considering small-state contexts worldwide. Brock (2013) argued that:

> In the light of the changing political economy of both educational research and educational development, … all involved in such activities should do more to acknowledge the influence and the impact of contextual factors and issues. (Brock, 2013, p. 421)

Context is vital to understanding inclusive education and its enactment. The locale, social influences and social ambience of context are thus considered essential social structures intrinsically involved in the enactment of inclusive education. For about two decades, comparative and international education researchers such as Crossley (1999, 2000, 2010) have argued that context sensitivity matters when thinking about and planning education from a national and international perspective. While the conceptualization of context sensitivity is argued as having qualitative, ethnographic and quantitative elements for measurement, this study has favoured an abductive analysis of a range of formal, spatially-based measures of specific contexts (i.e. demographic data across 6 locations) so as to better understand *the case of context* across diverse locations.

Historically, in Australia, this attention to context has been fairly superficial, involving the use of spatially-based scales (such as, Stokes, Holdsworth & Stafford, 1999; the *Australian Statistical Geography Standard* (ASGS) (ABS, 2011a) which are in turn used to contribute to socio-economic (e.g., Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011b) or socio-educational (e.g., ICSEA rankings used by ACARA, 2016c) indices or ratings of locations or areas. These rankings or categorizations have been based on a location's distance or remoteness from what have been considered important geographical centres (such as major capital cities or regional centres) and a location's degree of population density within geographical boundaries. They may also include scales of employment, income and education. Rather grossly, they can incorporate the percentage of the population which is Aboriginal Australian.

There is evidence of discontent (both historical and recent, internationally and regionally) with the degree of relevance that simplistic formulaic measures provide to understanding educational efficacy or need may bring to equitable educational support for schools and their learners (e.g., Danaher, 2012; Brock & Crossley, 2013; Cooke, 2017, p. 2). Danaher (2012) writes of the "the complexity and contentiousness of evidentiary data sets" (p. 5) in relation to learner mobility, while Brock and Crossley (2013) encourage more attention be given to the incorporation of " … context sensitivity, local voice, post-colonial analyses and work beyond traditional parameters" (p. 398). It is the relationship between context sensitivity and learning and capabilities beyond traditional parameters to which, it appears, social geographic isolation speaks.

In their discussions of comparative education and geography, Brock and Crossley (2013) argue for " … a more sophisticated perception of the spatial dimension of educational activity and provision … especially in relation to comparative education" (p. 275). Brock and Crossley (2013) refer to 'differences of scale' when attempting to make context-related comparisons between educational settings and educational delivery. In this sense, it is not the tyranny of geographical distance (i.e., the scale of remoteness) that is at issue in relation to disadvantage in the activity and provision of education, but the disrupted or dislocated nature of communication and knowledge activity and interaction (i.e., the scale of information flow) in relation to its surrounds (i.e. the possibilities of information flow from a wider field).

While the concept of information flow was not found in the inclusive education literature examined in Chapter 2, it was a concept related to the theoretical work around conceptual development considered in Chapter 3 (see section 3.2.1). Conceptually, the notion of information flow also emerged from the inductive analysis of demographic data arriving at the theme of isolation. This analysis indicated that the theme of isolation was connected to the inter-related social and geographic factors typical of the research locations of this thesis and was, therefore, a theme of social geographic isolation.

To explore the theme of social geographic isolation, the concept of information flow emerged as important, and was investigated in wider literature. It was in the literature of information science (Chatman, 1986, 1996, 1999, 2001; Burnett, Besant & Chatman, 2001; Huotari & Chatman, 2001) that the concept of information flow was found. While the concept of information flow underpins the emerging theme of social geographic isolation, social interactions are understood as the information fields in which information flow occurs.

Across educational settings, social geographic isolation refers to the socially restrictive and disruptive influence of the distance/time/public transport difficulties/geographic difficulties in accessing larger population medical and allied health services (let alone health services specialised in paediatrics), in accessing other populations and their social contexts, and in accessing other socio-economic contexts and their dominant thinking processes. Some of the factors of isolation included in this research are the burden of psychiatric illness or other disability, low family income restricting access and transport to other populations, limited diversity of language and culture, limited school or work engagement, and limited household access to outside communication through the Internet.

Social geographic isolation references limited exposure to and experience of different contexts and milieus of interaction, different languages and cultures, and different geographies (e.g., desert dwelling to urban dwelling, coastal living to inland city etc.).

So, social geographic isolation refers to isolation from other conceptual worlds, thinking processes, social interactions and information seeking. It refers to isolation from broader sources of information and from the information flow that comes from interest in other social situations and interactions. This understanding of social geographic isolation has been formed in the light of the Vygotskian thinking that conceptual development is due to internalization of social interaction. If some forms of social interaction are not available or not experienced by the developing learner, then conceptual development relevant to other contexts is likely not to occur. From a different philosophical discipline, in the book entitled *The Geography of Thinking,* Nisbett (2003) also connects cultural context as the situation in which characteristic thinking processes and conceptual worlds are formed and from which other characteristic thinking processes and conceptual worlds are misunderstood. Information in small worlds is described by Chatman (1999) as a performance or a narrative and, dependent on the type of the social participant's isolation from other worlds, will contribute to a world view that can reinforce or resist the need for information from outside. Social geographic isolation affects information flow in a small world community.

There is limited social continuity between each of the six research locations and other closest towns, regional centres or major cities. As such, there is limited social continuity with any dominant socio-cultural influences other than the socio-cultural influence of the location in which the learner lives. So the informal language and default thinking processes of the learners in each of the six research locations do not necessarily share anything in common with those of the next town or regional centre, let alone with the dominant language and thinking processes of the Australian Curriculum. Thus it is quite conceivable that there is limited socio-cultural or socio-educational connection between the taught, the teacher and the vehicles of educational transmission. The information flow and the information field are disrupted and dislocated compared to the dominant or norm for these learners due to their social geographic isolation. The social connectedness in the six 'out-of-the-box' research locations appears as though it may vary considerably to the information flow and information field of social connectedness experienced in communities that are statistically represented as average or considered to represent the Australian norm.

7.3 Big Data and Isolation

There is no specific indicator of social geographic isolation that is available in the big data used by this research. However, in the Australian Bureau of Statistics data, and data available through Google Maps there is data that speaks to some components of social geographic isolation and, more specifically, that directly addresses remoteness, and travel distance and time.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, remoteness was present in the Australian Bureau of Statistics data, more specifically in the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ABS, 2011). This Standard underpins most modern Australian data collections related to population. Remoteness is also one of the four factors used by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority to construct its socio-educational rating index, the ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c), applied to every school in Australia.

Learners in each of the research locations face public transport journeys of three hours or more to the nearest major city (see Table 7.1 below).

Table 7.1 Research locations: Comparisons of travel distance and time from nearest major city

Site	Vinson & Rawsthorne's (2015) Disadvantage Measure	Remote	Distance (km) from Nearest Major City	Proportionate: Time Travelled by Public Transport v Time Travelled by Car to Nearest Major City (Times Longer)*	Time Travelled by Public Transport to Nearest Major City (3 hours or more)*
Brewarrina, NSW	Most Disadvantaged	√	784	6.70	√
Lake Munmorah, NSW	Disadvantaged to Most Disadvantaged	0	113	1.72	√
Condobolin, NSW	Most Disadvantaged	√	462	1.72	√
Cobar ,NSW	Disadvantaged	√	689	1.30	√
Ulladulla, NSW	Most Disadvantaged	0	198	1.40	√
Lithgow, NSW	Most Disadvantaged	0	146	1.40	√

√ Location congruent with 'remote' theme 0 Location not congruent with 'remote' theme

* *Source*: Google Maps

In practical terms, it takes at least the best part of any one day to complete a return trip to the nearest major city, prior to any plans being carried out once there (e.g., visit to a medical specialist, attending some form of entertainment, visiting relatives). As it takes the best part of a day to complete the return trip travel, and the public transport timetable may not coincide with the purpose of the trip being completed (i.e., it leaves to early or too late), the added expense of accommodation would be a factor as to whether or not the trip was taken in the first place. It is important to remember that not all of the research locations are overly distant in geographical terms to their nearest major city (e.g., Lake Munmorah is about 100 kilometres from Sydney CBD, and is a location that is considered to be part of Greater Sydney), but they are time and accessibility distant, and therefore distant from a continuity of participation in the information and social field of the larger population of the national community to which they belong.

7.4 Patterns in the Categories of Isolation

The re-coded demographic data was clustered into Categories of Social Geographic Isolation. For the purpose of ease of communication, each of the categories of social geographic isolation will generally be simply discussed as isolations in the following paragraphs relating to the major theme of *Social Geographic Isolation*. The major theme Matrix of Social Geographic Isolation included 11 categories of isolation which constituted the range of individual isolations at play across the six research locations. Table 7.2 illustrates which of the 11 categories of isolation occur in which research locations, and the load of isolation carried by each location.

Table 7.2 Incidence of specific isolations across the six research locations

Categories of Isolation	BRE	LM	CONDO	COBAR	ULLA	LI
Home internet access <69% of households	√	√	√	√	√	√
Long-term unemployment (ranked at <250/621 NSW postcodes)	√	√	√	√	√	√
>80% population is English speaking and Australian born	√	√	√	√	√	√
Attendance rate <90% (high school)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Low family income	√	√	√	0	√	√
High incidence of disability pension (ranked at <250/621 NSW postcodes)	√	√	√	0	√	√

Categories of Isolation	BRE	LM	CONDO	COBAR	ULLA	LI
Remote (ASGS, 2011)	√	0	√	√	0	0
Higher incidence of psychiatric admissions (ranked at < 250/621)	√	√	0	0	0	√
>30% of high school learners leave location to attend high school elsewhere	√	0	√	√	0	0
Adolescent learner left behind by age-peers	√	0	√	√	0	0
Young adults not engaged (ranking <200/261 NSW postcodes)—in education/work	√	0	√	0	0	√
TOTAL categories of isolation per location	**11**	**7**	**10**	**7**	**6**	**8**

Source: ASGS 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011a)

The individual isolations considered as stand-alone isolations (e.g., low family income) could easily be dismissed as barely indicative of any form of social geographic isolation. When considered as a thread in the fabric of other context-specific isolations, the stand-alone isolation is not as easily dismissed. For example, in the households of Lake Munmorah, higher than state average factors are being carried in low family income, higher incidence of disability pension and psychiatric admissions, and long-term unemployment. Further to these isolations, the households in Lake Munmorah have less than average internet access, higher incidence of below average attendance at high school, and less than average access to other world views (languages and cultures). Lake Munmorah is not geographically remote, but is considered to belong to Greater Sydney. Despite this, when reviewing Table 7.1 (above), the people of Lake Munmorah spend more than six hours (i.e., about a working day) on public transport just to carry out a return trip to Sydney CBD, let alone to participate in any social aspect of Sydney (such as a medical appointment, or entertainment, the NSW State Library or a museum). In the case of Lake Munmorah, the pattern of isolations appears to be quite onerous despite the location's geographical proximity to a major city.

From the data in Table 7.2, it appears that the context-specific learner is subject to an array of isolations which, when viewed cumulatively, create a profile of isolation that is much more complex than that presented by geographic isolation. Similarly to the notion of

disadvantages being stacked, and the stacking having more impact than the stand-alone disadvantages, the stacking of isolations for each research location appears to have more power and impact than any individual context-specific isolation that was found in the demographic data in the public domain.

7.4.1 Most common isolations across locations

From a review of Table 7.2 it can be seen that the four isolations that were found to be absolutely common and prominent to all six 'out-of-the-box' locations were: home internet access in less than 69% of location households; long-term unemployment in the location (ranked at less than 250 out of 621 NSW postcodes); greater than 80% of the location's population is English speaking and Australian born; and less than 90% of the high school learner cohort attends school on a regular basis.

Further to this, five of the research locations shared the identical isolations of low family income and high incidence of disability.

Lower-incidence isolations are those isolations that occur in three or fewer of the six research locations. Similar to the categories of *Stacked Disadvantage*, the categories of social geographic isolation are uniquely diverse once they were limited to presence on three (or fewer) of the research locations. Nonetheless, Brewarrina, Condobolin and Cobar shared several identical isolations: each of these locations could be classified as geographically remote, as losing more than 30% of their respective high school populations due to learner attendance at high schools elsewhere, and as having therefore a cohort of adolescents 'left behind' in their respective location specific high schools. These three locations shared identical isolations in this regard.

Two other lower-incidence isolations (i.e., they occur in three or fewer of the six research locations) are likely significant to the learner, they are not carried in a common pattern across the six research locations. Psychiatric illness and low youth engagement in post-school education/work were prevalent isolations in three of the six locations, however, there was no commonality among the three locations for either isolation.

What is clear from Table 7.2 is that each of the six research locations carries substantial social geographic isolation, each carrying at least six specifically delineated individual isolations. Of further note is that each of the 11 specific disadvantages listed in Table 7.2 are either relevant to household or neighbourhood influences on the school-aged learner in their respective locations. They are isolations that affect the milieu in which the learner lives and learns. They are isolations which impact on social connectedness and therefore flow of

communication both within and beyond the community in which the learner lives, and thus builds foundational knowledge and experience.

7.4.2 Degree of specific isolations

Table 7.2 illustrates the incidence of specific isolations across the six research locations. The location with the highest incidence of individual isolations is Brewarrina (11), closely followed by Condobolin (10). Lake Munmorah had the lowest incidence of isolations with six specific isolations.

7.4.3 Non-identical patterns of specific isolations

None of the research locations shared the identical pattern of isolations even though each research location had clear arrays of isolations (see Table 7.2). All six locations had their uniquely specific array of isolations. As an example, both Lake Munmorah and Cobar are each observed to experience seven isolations, and the type of isolations differed across the two locations (e.g., Cobar is classified as remote, whereas Lake Munmorah is not, while Lake Munmorah has isolations of low family income and high incidence of disability pension, while Cobar does not).

7.5 Differences between Categories and Big Data Measures of Isolation

The big data and the categories of social geographic isolation could be interpreted as being in relationship with each other rather than demonstrating any substantial differences to each other.

The big data supporting the notion of *Social Geographic Isolation* is related to the problems of 'time-and-distance' impediment to ease of accessibility of any of the locations with the population of a major city. Accessibility to the experience and knowledge of a major city requires resources of finance, adequate transport and accommodation, as well as the personal resources of endurance for such a trip, and the capability to negotiate all aspects of such a trip.

The categories that constitute the major theme of *Social Geographic Isolation* point to the absence of some of the resources needed to negotiate and manage the 'time-and-distance' impediment for the context-specific learner to explore interests in outside information available say in the nearest major city. Low income (due to unemployment, or poor health, or functional impairment) impacts on the travel that is required. Poor internet access impacts on virtual access of larger information forms. Poorer attendance at high school impacts on other

forms of access to social communication with adults with experience outside of the world view of their location. Poorer levels of participation in post-school education/work limits personal resources for accessing other forms of social interaction to the learner's context-specific and highly familiar forms of social communication.

Rather than any noted difference between the big data and the categories of isolation there is a clear inter-connectedness. The big data provides coding of separate social and geographic contributors to isolation, while the categories demonstrate the cumulative nature of social geographic isolation for the six research locations.

7.6 Member-checking

There was no direct reference made to social geographic isolation in the in-depth interviews. Nonetheless, the utterances of the research participants (see Table 7.3 below) referred to displacement and separation of the learner, 'bridges' being absent between learners and the intended learning, and the 'distance' between the knowledge and experience of actual learners and the knowledge and experience of educators who plan for or work with them. In the in-depth interviews, the isolations experienced by learners gained some valuable nuances that were not present in the demographic data.

Table 7.3 Sentence stems related to isolation from participant utterances

The learner experiences isolation as…	Evidence
Displacement	**Participant 1**: Learners who had been purposefully displaced to an institution as "they weren't able to keep them in the cities … they were too wild." (Conversation 1, p. 16)
Limiting imagination through circumscribed/standardized experience and knowledge	**Participant 1**: "It wasn't an isolated school but it was a school three hours out of [one of the nearest major cities], I guess, and we were all very, very consistent values, I found, throughout all the community, a very sort of—similar values of how they see the world, their children, love, care." (Conversation 1, p. 7)
Being on the other side of a 'bridge-less' chasm to formal school learning	**Researcher—Participant**: " … it's just we're not finding the right bridge … we're not connecting … the bridge between them and their thinking processes." (Conversation 2, p. 19)
Expectation that they can't/won't learn	**Researcher—Participant**: " … sometimes you can go to these communities and it's kind of almost an attitude that you can't expect these kids to do good at academic skills … [at] any curriculum." (Conversation 2, p. 19)
Remaining unknown to the teacher/curriculum writers	**Participant 2**: "I don't know that … the people that are building curriculums have reflected on the population that they've got in schools" (Conversation 2, p. 19)

The learner experiences isolation as…	Evidence
Physical, emotional and functional absence from participation	**Participant 3**: " … parents have communicated to us often that they feel isolated (due to) … distance … they don't have enough money to pay for the petrol … (they have) a child with a disability … I think isolation, yeah, it can come in many forms." (Conversation 3, p. 9)
Separation from mainstream classrooms	**Participant 3**: " … in some government schools in [a State of Australia] they do have those separate classes … those children, I think we're doing them a disservice if we don't expose them to all walks of life … there's a lot to learn from everyone." (Conversation 3, p. 4)

Isolations may be due to physically and emotionally experienced distances from participation in services and experiences, or the result of the limitations of learner imagination and/or the imagination of the educator. Isolations can also be due to metaphorical 'distances' between the learner, the intended learning, and the educator. How the learner is imagined by the educator and/or the curriculum can represent a form of the learner becoming isolated due to their experience and knowledge being unknown and unacknowledged, a type of 'blindness' to a chasm between the learner and the learning.

Isolations can be due to the deliberate displacement of the learner from their context, or separation of the learner from their cohort of peer connections.

The isolations investigated in the demographic data point to the socio-economic indicators, which taken together, weave social geographic isolation characterized by interruptions and breaks in social communication flow and the social field of communication. The in-depth interviews mirrored the findings of the demographic data: they contained references to distance of the community or the learners from major population centres, and the lack of resources to access these centres and what they provide.

Nonetheless, while the in-depth interviews supported the findings of the demographic data, they indicated something more. These conversations suggested the interruptions and breaks to the information field and information flow in outside-of-the-box communities and schools can be due to ill-formed but likely well-meaning planning and decisions in relation to the learner (e.g., deliberate displacement and separation of the learner).

Further, the utterances contained in the in-depth interviews implicated limitations, absences and unknowns as part of the learner's experience of isolation. For example, the learner imagination being circumscribed by the values of their context, and the educator imagination of the learner being circumscribed by the limitations of their expectations of the learner or by the curriculum expectations of the learner. The accurate knowledge of the context-specific learner by the educator and the curriculum is questioned by the utterances of the research participants. The absence of other experiences for the learner is also indicated. Finally, the absence of a connection and means of access (i.e., a bridge) between the knowledge and experience of the learner and the knowledge and experience assumed in the intended learning is part of the conversation utterances.

The research participants' knowledge of actual learners from specific contexts in which they have worked or are currently working, mirrors the findings of the demographic data while adding some subtleties of understanding for further research of social geographic isolation.

7.7 Summary

The conceptualization and investigation of social geographic isolation has the potential to add more to the understanding of the context-specific learner in formal schooling than a stand-alone measure of remoteness. The major theme of *Social Geographic Isolation* is a referent to isolation as firstly being social isolation and, secondly, being due to the impact of living in certain geographies on access to communication field and flow. One can live in an urban area and experience similar isolation from communication field and flow to someone living in an outer regional or remote area.

This has implications for the simplistic use of a remoteness indicator in identifying learners with educational disadvantage which continues to be used in Australia at present. Further, an understanding of any learner's degree of social geographic isolation has implications for learner access to the curriculum and formal schooling. If a learner's access to the dominant communication field and flow is impaired (by poor internet access, long and arduous travel to locations where the dominant communication field and flow is present, and an absence of or limited access to effective transport to such locations), it is possible that the learner's access to the communication field and flow from which the processes and practices of formal schooling have evolved.

7.7.1 Key understanding and inference—social geographic isolation

Key understanding 2: Social geographic isolation from the field and flow of communication is more pertinent to learner language, knowledge and experience than remoteness.

Inference 2: An accurate profile of a learner's degree of social geographic isolation will provide a base from which to understand, plan and connect that learner's current field and flow of social communication, with the broader field and flow of social communication.

Chapter 8.

Fading

8.1 Introduction

During the period of time between 2012 and 2016 that the researcher was following the demographic data in the public domain for each of the six research locations, the data for Brewarrina were updated in some of the data sources (e.g., AEDC, 2012 to AEDC, 2015; NSW BOCSAR 2014 to NSW BOCSAR 2015). In effect, some of the data that had been present at the beginning of this time period disappeared from the web-based data sources during 2015. For example, the NSW BOCSAR data that had been present for Brewarrina in 2014, was replaced and the statement made that the population in Brewarrina was too small to count the 'per 100,000' incidence of many of the specific crimes that were of interest in relation to the context of the learner. The researcher had to make a decision: to either keep and analyze the earlier data that had already been gathered for the purposes of this research (but would not be able to be located by a casual mining of the data source), or to replace the earlier data with the more current data which, for Brewarrina, was replaced with 'n.c.' (not calculated) in the case of NSW BOCSAR data or, in the case of the AEDC (Australian Government, 2012) data, 'too few teachers or children to display'. So while the researcher's experience, due to her having stayed and worked in Brewarrina, indicated that the previously available data (indicating the incidence of crime per 100,000 or the percentage of children in the population who were developmentally at risk) was in fact accurate, the researcher judged it was important to report the data accurately according to how the data source reported it in its current form.

While new for this researcher, this experience of updating data, and in the process of doing so, finding a disappearance, absence of reporting, or deliberate withholding of data in the midst of a research project is not new for researchers (New, 2017; Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015). In the instance of other researchers, such as Dixon and Angelo (2014, p. 213), they report data as lost in the midst of larger data such as when they found the 'profound language invisibility' of Queensland Aboriginal Australian students who were identified as English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) learners. Vinson and Rawsthorne (2015) indicated that, for instance, NSW did not make available statistical data for the descriptor 'Child Maltreatment' in time for inclusion in their analysis (see Vinson & Rawsthorne (2015), Chapter 3 NSW, p. 44), when all other states of Australia were able to do so. Subsequently none of the NSW postcodes has a ranking for this variable of disadvantage.

While the rationale for excluding data under the parameters of statistical science may be a technically accurate process to use, and the decision to remove the previously recorded data was likely based on these parameters, this withdrawal of data effectively disappears this group from the public domain. This disappearance of data effectively diminished the knowledge that is important to understanding the learner in this specific context.

Subsequently, this researcher began to wonder about that which might be contributing to actual people, and their realities, at the very least fading from data collections, and at the very worst, completely disappearing. Thus, the possible disappearance of the context-specific learner became a consideration of this research.

While the demographic data did not demonstrate as obvious a withdrawal of data as in the case of Brewarrina and the BOCSAR and AEDC web-based sources of data, what became apparent was: that the learner performed less and less well in NAPLAN results for reading; that the presence of the learner in their schools decreased as they became older; that the engagement of youth in work and study in the research locations generally fell below the average of youth engagement in the state of NSW; and that the percentage of youth in the locations diminished as they grew older. A number of the categories contained in the categories matrix supported the notion of the major theme of *Fading*.

8.2 Definition

Since the late 1980s, learner engagement has been a common theme in contemporary educational literature (Finn, 1989; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Reeve, Ryan, Deci, & Jang, 2007; Finn & Zimmer, 2012) and, on face value, describes learner motivation to participate in the programs of learning provided in educational settings at all levels. Motivation and intent are difficult to describe in quantifiable terms, whereas behaviours suggesting learner engagement are more easily operationalized. Recently, learner engagement has been described as a multidimensional construct, incorporating academic engagement, behavioural engagement and emotional engagement (Kinsella, Putwain & Kaye, 2016).

On the other hand, learner disengagement has been characterized and measured as disruptive behaviours, inattentive behaviours or behaviours of 'special needs' learners (Sullivan, Johnson, Owens & Conway, 2014). When considering the major theme of *Fading*, learner engagement or disengagement is likely related, but perhaps a side issue to, what appears to be occurring with the learners who come from the sites considered for this study. As a theme common to the research locations, fading does not appear to be as 'energetic' as any of the abovementioned forms of disengagement and might be better likened to what

Nardi and Steward (2003) refer to as (in relation to Mathematics classrooms) a form of 'quiet disaffection'.

As a theme that has emerged from the analysis of the demographic data of this research, fading is defined as a gradual deterioration in the measurable presence of the learner in their formal learning[27]. For learners from the six outside-of-the-box situations which have been the focus of this research study, the learner's presence in school and post-school learning appears to fade—to become less and less visible—as they progress through formal schooling. The visibility that might be expected throughout formal schooling, given how the learners appear to start out at school, is not perceivable. The learner appears to fade either *from* the statistics (as in they attend school elsewhere or are left out of the statistics, as in the case of Brewarrina learners) or to fade *within* the statistics (as in their basic reading ability stagnates over the six years between Year 3 to Year 9). A reasonable expectation would be that fading from some areas of demographic measurement (e.g., attendance at secondary school), would be balanced by increased presence in other demographic indicators (e.g., involvement in post-school employment or education). As the data will be seen to indicate in this chapter, this is not necessarily the case in the instance of the research locations used in this study. At this point, it is important to remember that the six research locations are being used by this research study as indicators of possible themes relevant to better understanding the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education in formal schooling. The consideration of this theme of fading as related to deterioration in the learner's measurable presence in locations over time was significant to better understanding the case of context.

Fading describes the gradually increasing invisibility of learners from these outside-of-the-box sites as they progress through formal schooling. Metaphorically, it is as though the learner resembles one of the students in an old class or small school photograph: as the photograph has aged the facial features of the person become less and less discernible, less and less able to be used to identify exactly who that particular student was.

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[27] Please note, the measurable presence of the learner in formal learning is based on that measurable presence available in the data sources identified and used for this research study and subsequent thesis. The identified data sources have been clearly outlined in Chapter 4, sub-section 4.5.2 *Data Sources* and Table 4.1 *Research questions and their related data types and data sources*, and generally outlined in Figure 8.1 *Data sets contributing to the major theme of Fading*. Changes in measurable presence of the learner were ascertained within the data sources chosen from the public domain (so as to protect the privacy of individuals within the schools of the specific research locations). Some data not available within those data sources were statistics related to school-based truancy, or school exclusion (temporary or permanent).

In this study, the learner's data presence appears to deteriorate[28] (in relation to both school attendance, and falling levels of basic skill achievement (negative growth)) or to disappear (in relation to the actual population of high school learners compared to primary school learners).

8.3 Big Data and Fading

The major theme of *Fading* was not immediately apparent in any of the big data sets. As a theme, *Fading* proved to be elusive to grasp via the demographic data evidence and to define conceptually. In effect, it is a theme characterized by data inconsistency, disappearance, deterioration and queries. The major theme of *Fading* was the result of a mural of big data sets (see Figure 8.1 below).

Big data discrepancies (… My School)

NAPLAN results Reading Year 3, 2010 Year 9, 2016

Interviews

Attendance rates

Dropping off the edge report (2015)
- Reading
- Young adults—not engaged
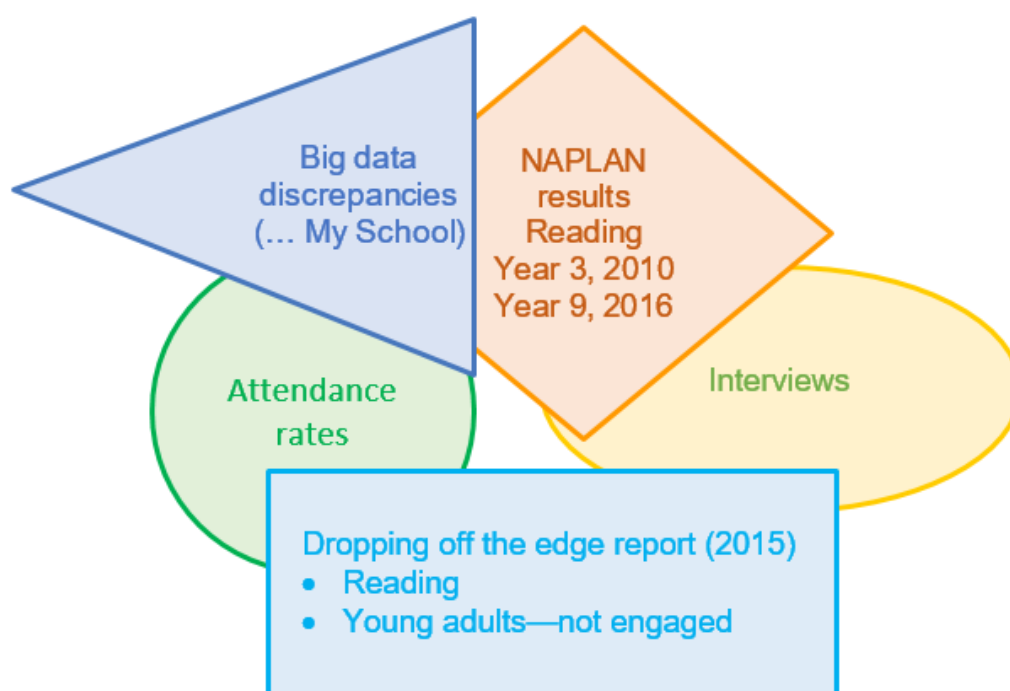
Figure 8-1 Data sets contributing to the major theme of *Fading*

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[28] The deterioration considered in this research study has been a deterioration involving within-location, across-location, across-state (i.e. NSW), and across-nation comparators. A within-location comparator has been the deterioration in attendance ratios across location schools over time. Across-location and across-NSW deterioration in NAPLAN rankings in reading and numeracy compared to all other postcode locations in NSW have also been considered from this study's identified data sources. Further, the National Minimum Standard identified by ACARA in relation to NAPLAN reading and numeracy was used to determine gradual deterioration in learner achievement in the research locations. For detailed reference points related to the inclusion of comparators and comparative data, please refer to Tables 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6 and Appendix C, Tables C.1 and C.2.

That which was confounding about the context-specific learner across the big data sets was that there was inconsistency or insufficient detail about the numbers of context-specific learners. At face value, the tiles comprising Figure 8.1 were apparently disconnected while, as an accumulation, the component parts suggest that the context-specific learner gradually fades across a range of variables. As will be more explicitly demonstrated in the findings below, NAPLAN results indicate worsening achievement and mastery of basic academic skills, attendance rates drop off the longer a learner is at school, and post-school engagement results indicate poor uptake in education and work. Finally, the member-checking results support what other tiles on the mural cumulatively suggest: the learner's presence in the research location is either gradually disappearing or effectively lacking growth in formal schooling.

So, while there were no explicit data found in the big data sources that directly indicated fading of the context-specific learner, the big data of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (web-based data relating to school-aged population between five and 14 years of age), and the My School (ACARA, 2016a) web-based data (relating to enrolments in specific location schools) revealed several discrepancies across locations about actual numbers of context-specific learners participating in location schools. These inconsistencies are illustrated in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1 Research locations: Discrepancies in learner numbers across ABS (2016) and MySchool (ACARA, 2016a) web-based data sources

Locations	2016 Total School Enrolments (My School, (ACARA, 2016a) website)	2016 Population 5–14yo (ABS website)	Apparent Discrepancy—Growth in Numbers of Learners +/- (2016)	Indicative Discrepancy re number of learners (2016)	Remoteness Classification (2016)	Population 5–14yo Growth (2011–2016)	Other Villages/Locations Feeding School Enrolments	No. of persons per 1,000 ha (ABS, 2016)	Boarding Schools (2016)
Brewarrina LGA	198	257	+	Yes	Very Remote	No (falling)	No	<1	No
Condobolin SA2	614	912	+	Yes	Outer Regional	No (falling)	No	4	No
Coba LGA	682	662	−	Yes	Remote	Yes	No	1	No
Lithgow SA2	2,227	1,386	−	Yes	Inner Regional	No (falling)	Yes	28	No
Lake Munmorah SSC	1,827	576	−	Yes	Metro	No (falling)	Yes	1,750	No
Ulladulla SA2	1,936	1,646	−	Yes	Inner Regional	Yes	Yes	6,005	No

Sources: ABS (2016), My School (ACARA, 2016a) website

Key: LGA—Local Government Area; SA2—Statistical Area 2; SSC—State Suburb Classification.

Of immediate noteworthiness in Table 8.1 are the discrepancies in the numbers of context-specific learners accounted for using the ABS (2016) population data for each location, and the total school enrolments (ACARA, 2016a) for each location. There are differences between the population of five to 14 year old learners resident in each of the locations, and the total enrolments in the schools in each of the locations. Some of the inconsistencies are more difficult to explain than others.

Difficult to explain are the discrepancies of learner numbers (population vs enrolments) for Brewarrina and Condobolin. In these two locations, the number of school-aged learners exceeds the total school enrolments. This observation is even more startling as the learner population accounted for in Table 8.1 does not include 15 to 19 year olds (i.e., the senior high school learners) which, if included, would make the difference between school-aged population and enrolments even larger for these two locations.

As for Cobar (see Table 8.1 above), the discrepancy between location population (of five to 14 year olds) and total enrolments in Cobar's schools would suggest that only 20 learners in the only secondary school in town are in Years 10 to 12 inclusive. From the researcher's experience of living and working in the town, this seems highly unlikely, however, any reasonable explanation is unable to be established on the basis of the information available from the big data statistics.

Easier to explain data are the population versus total school enrolment discrepancies for Lithgow, Lake Munmorah and Ulladulla. Each of these locations have much larger total school enrolments than the five to 14 year old learner population living in each of these locations (see Table 8.1). Lithgow, Lake Munmorah and Ulladulla are each near a major highway which connects them to local villages and towns in close proximity to them (e.g., in the case of Lithgow, the towns and villages of Portland and Bell are close by) and it is along these routes which learners travel to these schools in a relatively brief amount of time.

The differences in population versus school enrolments thus have a reasonable explanation for the locations of Lithgow, Lake Munmorah and Ulladulla, whereas for Brewarrina and Condobolin (the only locations where the numbers of learners clearly exceed the total school enrolments by a little more than 30%) this explanation is not as readily made.

For at least three of the six research locations (Brewarrina, Condobolin and Cobar) there is an inconsistency in learner numbers that is not easily explained. From Table 8.1, the other identifying factors for these three locations is that they are each classified as outer regional,

remote or very remote, and that the five to 14 year old population (from 2011 to 2016) for Brewarrina and Condobolin has been falling in each of these locations.

As indicated in Table 8.1, the big data illustrates discrepancies in learner numbers: it appears to demonstrate a trend of learners who are either absent or unaccounted for. For Brewarrina and Condobolin, there are quite a large number of learners resident in the location that are not enrolled in the locations' schools (which will be discussed in more detail below).

In the case of Cobar, there are more learners enrolled in the location's schools than there are learners resident in the town (remembering Cobar is a remote town with no other towns nearby). This is the most difficult inconsistency to reconcile across the big data sources in that there seems to be no reasonable interpretation which can be made.

The researcher's experience working in both Brewarrina and Condobolin suggests two main trends relating to a significant percentage of post-primary school learners from these locations. There is a migration of high school level learners to boarding school, and there is also a significant proportion of the learner population that does not attend either primary or high school in the location, probably accessing distance education or home schooling instead. Effectively, this results in a fading of location specific learners from the big data as well as from the data of individual location schools.

In effect, the learners that attend boarding school during their secondary school years disappear from the demographic data for their location of origin. They disappear from their home location statistical data. The context-specific learner left behind goes on to represent the location. The 'learner left behind' will be discussed in more detail below.

There is no clearly identified evidence across all six research locations of *Fading* in the big data. Two of the locations, Brewarrina and Condobolin, exhibit data trends in the ABS (2016) Census data (number of persons five to 14 years of age resident in the location) and the ACARA, (2016a) enrolment data (total enrolment in the schools of the location) which seem counter-intuitive. In both instances, there are significantly less learners enrolled in the schools of each location than there are school-aged learners identified as living in the location. This discrepancy indicates an absence of some school-aged children from the two locations' schools, but a presence in the location from the perspective of the August 9 Censuses for 2011 and 2016. This, unfortunately, is the most that may be interpreted from this data discrepancy for these two locations. The reason it is a most striking data artefact for these two locations is because there is nowhere else to go to school within the surrounding

regions of these locations that is easily accessible within a day including travel time. There is some fading of learners in this data which is not explained or necessarily explainable.

If the learner was still resident in the locations of Brewarrina and Condobolin and counted as present in their household on census night, the big data leaves these learners unidentified as participants (enrolees) in their school education. Where were these missing learners? Clearly there is some invisibility of school-aged learners in these two outside-of-the-box locations. Reasonably, it might be concluded that the learners might have been away at boarding school, or that they may access education via distance means while being resident in their homes, or they may be learners who were seasonal travellers on one of the many stock routes that are still used in the surrounding areas of Brewarrina and Condobolin (McDonald, 1888). There are reasonable explanations as to why learners from Brewarrina and Condobolin might not be enrolled in the local schools, while still being counted as members of the location's population.

If the learners were away at boarding school, they would have been counted as members of the population belonging to the counting area in which the boarding school is located (ABS, 2016 Census data was collected on a school night—August 9, 2016). This does not explain why the local population of school-aged learners in Brewarrina and Condobolin exceeded the school attendance population. The most reasonable explanation for learners not being enrolled in the local schools of Brewarrina and Condobolin is that of their participation in distance education or home schooling while residing at home. Learners from these locations will, in some instances, live too far outside of the town to make the return journey to and from one of the local schools on a daily basis as well as effectively participate in their schooling given the nature of the journey required.

In brief then, learners are not well accounted for across the big data related to school-aged learners. In three of the six research locations (Brewarrina, Condobolin and Cobar), the context-specific learner fades from big data in that they are not consistently accounted for in it.

8.4 Patterns in the Categories of Fading

A total of 12 categories indicating the absence or deterioration of the context-specific learner from participation were identified as constituting the major theme of *Fading*. Table 8.2 (below) illustrates which of the 12 categories occur in which research locations, as well as the load of fading carried by each location.

Table 8.2 Incidence of specific fading across the six research locations

Categories of Fading	BRE	LM	CONDO	COBAR	ULLA	LI
Long-term unemployment (ranked at <250/621)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Attendance rate <90% at high school	√	√	√	√	√	√
Basic reading poor (NAPLAN) Yr 9 ranking <150/621	√	√	√	√	√	√
Deterioration in attendance rate (primary school to high school)	0	√	√	√	√	√
Stagnation of learner performance—NAPLAN reading and numeracy, across primary to secondary, ranked <200/621	√	0	√	√	√	√
Basic numeracy poor (NAPLAN) Yr 9 ranking <150/621	√	0	√	0	√	√
Basic reading poor (NAPLAN Yr 3 ranking <150/621)	√	0	√	0	0	√
Basic numeracy poor (NAPLAN Yr 3 ranking <150/621)	√	0	√	0	0	√
Year 9 reading and numeracy learner no longer performs compared to primary school (drop >75 ranking points)	0	√	0	√	√	0
>30% learners leave town to attend high school	√	0	√	√	0	0
Adolescent learner 'left behind'	√	0	√	√	0	0
Young adults not engaged (ranking <200/621)—education or work	√	0	√	○	0	√
TOTAL categories of fading per location	10	5	11	7	7	9

It may be observed from Table 8.2 that some of the categories are identical to some of those categories used to contribute to the major themes of *Stacked Disadvantage* and *Social Geographic Isolation*. Using Saldaña's (2016) approach to coding, categorizing and conceptualizing, the categories have gone through a process of clustering and re-clustering, of considering inter-categorical relationships from which alternative conceptualizations might be constructed. For example, the category of 'long-term unemployment' may be used to contribute to an understanding of isolation due to lack of access to some forms of social

participation, just as it may also be used to contribute to an understanding of the learner losing a sense of connection between what is learnt now through formal schooling, and that which might be learnt in the future through post-school options. In other words, there are numerous outcomes for the school-aged learner growing and developing with a neighbourhood trend of long-term unemployment and, as such, this category can (in relationship with other categories) contribute to the learner experience of stacked disadvantage, social geographic disadvantage or fading.

8.4.1 Most common fading across locations

All six research locations share the categories of a high rate of long-term unemployment, poor basic reading skills at Year 9 level, and an attendance rate at less than 90% for high school learners. For five of the six locations, the attendance rate of less than 90% is a deterioration in attendance rate when compared to the primary school attendance rates for each location (Brewarrina's attendance rate in both primary and secondary schools is less than 90%).

The poor basic reading skills at Year 9 level[29] is a deterioration from Year 3 reading skills for the context-specific learner from only three of the locations: Lake Munmorah, Cobar and Ulladulla. Long-term unemployment includes young people transitioning from high school to post-school options, and is problematic in each location and, possibly, indicates one of the ultimate deteriorations of the context-specific learner over the period of their schooling and into the post-school world at that location.

Five locations are identified as carrying two categories each (deterioration in attendance rate from primary school to high school, and stagnation of learning performance). Only four of the locations are identical in carrying both of these categories (Cobar, Condobolin, Lithgow & Ulladulla).

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[29] In their *Dropping Off the Edge* report, Vinson and Rawsthorne (2015) arrived at variables of disadvantage identified as 'Yr 3 Numeracy', 'Yr 3 Reading', 'Yr 9 Numeracy' and 'Yr 9 Reading'. Rankings were established for postcode locations around Australia by using NAPLAN results to determine "… the proportion(s) of students from each locality failing to attain the 'minimum standard' on the literacy and numeracy assessment scales for Year 3 and Year 9" (p. 41). In brief, the lower the ranking designated to the variable (such as Yr 3 Numeracy) specific to a postcode, the higher the proportion of location learners who have failed to attain the minimum standard on NAPLAN (and therefore the higher their disadvantage in this variable). Vinson and Rawsthorne's (2015) four variables related to Years 3 and 9 Numeracy and Reading are the specifically delineated, context-specific categories that were initially compared for the six research locations, and which suggest a general (although not comprehensive) trend of the learner fading from their school-aged education. Table 8.2 illustrates the rankings for the 2014 cohorts of Year 3 and Year 9 learners for each research location compared to the 621 other postcodes of NSW.

As seen in Table 8.2 above, the descriptor of each of the 12 categories that constitute the major theme of *Fading* foregrounds more detailed levels of background analysis of demographic data. These more detailed levels of analysis are represented in Tables 8.3 to 8.6 inclusive, and will be further discussed in the relevant paragraphs below.

8.4.1.1 Reading skills fade in all schools in all locations

Table 8.3 below provides a summary of the percentage of learners (from each school in the research locations) that attained reading results at or below the National Minimum Standard on NAPLAN.

Table 8.3 Schools of the Research Locations: Percentage of 2010 Year 3 learners and 2016 Year 9 learners (notionally identical cohort) at or below the National Minimum Standard (NMS) on NAPLAN reading tests

Location Schools	2010 Yr 3	2016 Yr 9
Brewarrina School 1~	67%	78%
Brewarrina School 2	50%	
Condobolin School 1		57%
Condobolin School 2	35%	
Condobolin School 3*		
Condobolin School 4	26%	
Cobar School 1		40%
Cobar School 2	33%	
Cobar School 3	13%	
Lake Munmorah School 1		41%
Lake Munmorah School 2	12%	
Lake Munmorah School 3*		
Lake Munmorah School 4	7%	
Lake Munmorah School 5		25%
Lithgow School 1		38%
Lithgow School 2	17%	
Lithgow School 3*		
Lithgow School 4	34%	
Lithgow School 5		19%
Lithgow School 6	15%	
Lithgow School 7	33%	

Location Schools	2010 Yr 3	2016 Yr 9
Ulladulla School 1		27%
Ulladulla School 2	17%	
Ulladulla School 3^		

Key: *The school is a campus of a school; ^NAPLAN data are unavailable for this school; ~ K to 12 school

NMS Year 3—Band 2 (of Bands 1 to 6)

NMS Year 9—Band 6 (of Bands 5 to 10)

Source: My School web-based data (ACARA, 2016a)

Table 8.3 notionally represents the identical learners from Year 3 (in 2010) to Year 9 (in 2016). Familiarity with the location of Lithgow allows the researcher to explain which schools in these locations are faith-based and which are government schools, as well as to identify which primary schools feed into which secondary schools. It is important to note that Lithgow School five (a faith-based secondary school) draws heavily on Lithgow School six (a faith-based primary school) for its enrolments, whereas Lithgow School 1 (government secondary school) draws heavily on Lithgow Schools 2, 4 and 7 (government primary schools) for its enrolments.

Across the board, the Year 9 learners in each research location may be observed as fading in their basic reading skills: that is, the percentage of learners attaining at or below the NMS on basic reading skills in Year 9 exceeds the percentage of the notionally identical Year 3 learners attaining at or below the NMS. For all six research locations, there is a clear deterioration (negative growth) in expected reading standards. The Year 9 learners have faded in their reading abilities.

8.4.1.2 Attendance rates fade in most schools in all locations

Table 8.4 (below) provides a summary of the 2011 to 2016 attendance rates for the schools of the research locations.

Table 8.4 Research locations: Attendance rates greater than or less than 90%

Location	Attendance rate > 90% (primary school)	Attendance rate < 90% (high school)
Brewarrina, NSW	0	√
Lake Munmorah, NSW	√	√/0*

Location	Attendance rate > 90% (primary school)	Attendance rate < 90% (high school)
Condobolin, NSW	√	√
Cobar, NSW	√	√
Ulladulla, NSW	√	√
Lithgow, NSW	√	√

Source: My School (ACARA, 2016a) web-based data for schools 2011 to 2016

All of the secondary schools (except for one of the secondary schools in Lake Munmorah) have attendance rates which drop below 90%. All of the locations except Brewarrina have greater than 90% attendance rates in their primary schools.

For most of the schools across all research locations, the secondary school learners appear to fade from attendance compared to their primary school attendance.

8.4.1.3 Numeracy skills fade in most locations

Table 8.5 (below) provides a summary of the percentage of learners (from each school in the research locations) that attained numeracy results at or below the NMS on NAPLAN.

Table 8.5 Schools in research locations: Percentage of 2010 Year 3 learners and 2016 Year 9 learners (notionally identical cohort) at or below the NMS on NAPLAN numeracy tests

Location Schools	2010 Yr 3	2016 Yr 9
Brewarrina School 1~	67%	89%
Brewarrina School 2	50%	
Condobolin School 1		46%
Condobolin School 2	61%	
Condobolin School 3*		
Condobolin School 4	22%	
Cobar School 1		35%
Cobar School 2	38%	
Cobar School 3	8%	
Lake Munmorah School 1		37%
Lake Munmorah School 2	21%	
Lake Munmorah School 3*		

Location Schools	2010 Yr 3	2016 Yr 9
Lake Munmorah School 4	14%	
Lake Munmorah School 5		23%
Lithgow School 1		37%
Lithgow School 2	35%	
Lithgow School 3*		
Lithgow School 4	35%	
Lithgow School 5		17%
Lithgow School 6	11%	
Lithgow School 7	0%	
Ulladulla School 1		27%
Ulladulla School 2	13%	
Ulladulla School 3^		

Key: *The school is a campus of a school; ^NAPLAN data are unavailable for this school; ~ K to 12 school

NMS Year 3—Band 2 (of Bands 1 to 6)

NMS Year 9—Band 6 (of Bands 5 to 10)

Source: My School web-based data (2010, 2016)

From Table 8.5 it is evident then that the Year 9 learners in four of the six research locations may be observed as fading in their basic numeracy skills: the percentage of learners attaining at or below the NMS on basic numeracy skills in Year 9 exceeds the percentage of the notionally identical Year 3 learners attaining at or below the NMS. For these four research locations, there is a clear deterioration (negative growth) in expected numeracy standards. There appears to be a trend in Year 9 learners fading in their numeracy abilities in two thirds of the research locations.

8.4.1.4 Engagement of young adults

The data sets (as seen in Table 8.6 below) used to demonstrate engagement of young adults (15 to 19 year olds) were drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Regional Profiles as the ABS QuickStats webpages did not cover the detail that was required.

Table 8.6 Research locations: 2011 population and apparent participation of young adults 15 to 19 year olds (ABS, 2011)

	No. Persons Resident (15–19 yrs)	% Working Full Time (FT) & Studying Part Time (PT)	% Working PT & Studying FT	% Working PT & Studying PT	% Working FT	% Studying FT	% Working FT & Studying FT	% Engaged in Work/Study
Brewarrina LGA	148	2.3	0	2.3	9.4	47.7	0	61.7
Cobar LGA	302	11.7	11.0	1.3	11.0	34.1	0	70.6
Condobolin SA2	397	2.9	9.6	1.3	10.1	49.2	0	73.1
Lithgow LGA	1,355	5.9	15.3	1.4	9.6	41.7	0.5	74.3
Lake Munmorah SSC	325	not available	not available	not available	not available	not available	not available	not available
Lake Munmorah-Mannering Park SA2	672	3.5	14.8	2.2	8.4	42.2	1.2	72.7

	No. Persons Resident (15–19 yrs)	% Working Full Time (FT) & Studying Part Time (PT)	% Working PT & Studying FT	% Working PT & Studying PT	% Working FT	% Studying FT	% Working FT & Studying FT	% Engaged in Work/Study
Ulladulla SA2	241	6.7	18.8	0	5.8	50.5	0	72.8
NSW	460,670	3.0	17.9	1.3	6.0	50.4	0.5	79.2

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011 Regional Data Profiles

Key: FT Full Time; PT Part Time

Lake Munmorah SSC statistics were not available to the specificity of detail required for work/study percentages however Lake Munmorah-Mannering Park SA2 was available and, as can be seen from Table 8.6, only included a little more than 340, 15 to 19 year olds. Further, the 2016 statistics were not available at the time of writing this thesis, and were expected to be released in October, 2017 which was later than the writing up of the thesis could include.

The data in Table 8.6 is obtained from the ABS Census data which is a form of self-report via the basic counting unit of the household. It is not an indicator of actual attendance at either educational setting or workplace, nor an indicator of completion and accreditation of educational tasks. It assumes that all households have reported, and that the household reporting has been accurate.

While it would be ideal to separate out the 15 to 17 year olds from the 15 to 19 year olds in the 2011 ABS Census data, this is not possible using access to the data through the public domain of the webpages for each research location.

When reviewing the data in Table 8.6, it is important to remember that learners in Australian schools are legally required to attend school until age 17, unless they are granted formal exemption which ascertains them to be in full time employment, full time post-school education, or some pro-rata form of the two forms of participation combined (full-time being considered at least 25 hours per week). In the case of learners who carry this exemption, they would still be counted in the full-time/part-time participation data. In this way, all 15 to 19 year olds may be assumed to be counted in the census data if the household reporting was accurate.

For the purposes of this research, the NSW percentages for full-time/part-time engagement of 15 to 19 year olds in 2011 have been taken as predictors of what might be expected as reasonable participation for the 15 to 19 year olds in each of the locations. From Table 8.6 it may be observed that Ulladulla is the location that most closely mirrors (+/- 1.5%) the NSW percentages for engagement of 15 to 19 year olds in 2011. It has been assumed therefore that Ulladulla's percentages for most forms of engagement are reasonable, assuming that approximately 50% of 15 to 19 year olds represents the 15 to 17 year olds (i.e., the compulsory school-aged component of the 15 to 19 year olds). The exception for Ulladulla is the percentage of learners working full-time and studying part-time, where the percentage of Ulladulla 15 to 19 year olds clearly exceeds the NSW percentage.

The most striking indicator from Table 8.6 is that, in all research locations except Ulladulla, less than 50% of 15 to 19 year olds were studying full time as counted in the 2011 Census. It is desirable for most 15 to 19 year olds to be studying through formal schooling and further education, an aspiration that has been clearly expressed in Australian legislation and policy.[30] Additionally, given the data in Table 8.6, and the assumptions already mentioned, it appears that at least some of the compulsory 15 to 17 year old cohort is not participating either at school nor participating in post-school education in Brewarrina, Condobolin, Cobar, Lithgow and Lake Munmorah. It appears that an indeterminate percentage of the secondary school cohort (the 15 to 17 year olds of the 15 to 19 year old cohort) may have disappeared from participation in formal schooling or post-school education entirely.

The data in Table 8.6 that relate to studying full-time and working part-time—a form of participation that can be common to learners in late secondary and early post-school education—is also of interest to this research and the major theme of *Fading*. It may be observed in Table 8.6 that, in NSW, almost 18% of 15 to 19 year old learners are studying full-time and working part-time. All locations except Ulladulla (with a participation rate of 18.8% of 15 to 19 year olds) show percentages below the NSW percentage of learners involved in work and education in this manner. Again, there appears to be the context-specific learner that is not represented in these figures. If they are neither studying full-time, nor studying full-time and working part-time, where are they and what are they doing?

So, across the six research locations, less than one in four 15 to 19 year old learners participate in part-time work and full-time study, no more (and frequently less) than one in two study full-time, and a fraction more than one in ten work full-time. Compared to NSW overall percentage of 15 to 19 year olds engaged in work/study, every research location has a smaller percentage engaged, and each of them fall below 75% work/study engagement for all 15 to 19 year olds.

As this is secondary analysis of demographic data, it was important to investigate some source that could validate the claim being made from this analysis. This validation was discovered in the *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report* (2008). In this review, Bradley, Noonan, Nugent and Scales (2008, pp. 27–34) reported the serious under-representation in post-school education of learners from remote parts of Australia,

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[30] ACT Education Act (2004), NSW Education Act (1990), NSW Education Regulations (2001), Queensland Education (General Provisions) Act (2006), SA Education Act (1992), SA Education Regulations (2012), Tasmania Education Act (2016), Tasmania Education Regulations (2017), Victoria Education and Training Reform Act (2006), WA School Education Act (1999).

indigenous students, those from low socio-economic backgrounds and those from regional locations. In the light of Bradley's et al. (2008) review, and given the data from the six research locations related to fading from basic skills acquisition and attendance, each of the locations either regional, remote or on the urban edge, it seems fading of the learner is established and evident by the time they could be expected to be involved in post-school participation.

8.4.2 Degree of specific fading

Many of the categories contributing to the major theme of *Fading* have been constructed from a range of demographic data which, when viewed together, indicate a type of fading of the context-specific learner. For example, the Emerging Theme of 'stagnation of the learner' was built from a collection of data related to learners' progression from Year 3 to Year 9 in numeracy and literacy (see Tables 8.4 and 8.5). In this way, the degree of fading occurring in the six research locations is indicative only.

The locations found to have the highest loading of fading were Condobolin, Brewarrina and Lithgow (see Table 8.2), carrying 11, 10 and 9 categories of *Fading* respectively. The pattern of the loading for each of these locations was not identical: they did not share the identical set of categories of fading with each other.

8.4.3 Non-identical patterns of specific fading

The locations that had the least in common with each other when comparing the incidence of the categories of *Fading* were Lake Munmorah, Cobar and Ulladulla. They also carried the least number of categories of *Fading*, with Lake Munmorah carrying five themes, Cobar and Ulladulla each carrying seven themes (although not the identical seven themes).

8.5 Relationship Between Categories and Big Data Measures of Fading

The big data resources (i.e., the ABS, DOTE, My School) used for this research signposted the possibility that fading of the context-specific learner might be occurring for the learner from outside-of-the-box locations. Data from the big data resources was noted to disappear, or to evidence inconsistencies related to the number of context-specific learners and the number of school enrolments.

The categories that constituted the major theme of *Fading* were not as clearly present in the demographic data as they had been in establishing the major themes of *Stacked Disadvantage* and *Social Geographic Isolation*. Fading of the context-specific learner was

established as not explicitly measured and represented in the big data resources, and was only discovered by accident due to the big data either 'disappearing' data about locations within itself over time, or between big data inconsistencies becoming apparent. The big data created a curiosity about what was happening to the context-specific learner in relation to not being counted or not being counted accurately. The relationship between the big data and the categories is associative more than direct, linking absence and inconsistency with curiosity and deeper trawling of data. This is especially significant to the establishment of the final major theme of *Conceptual Poverty*, as outlined in the following chapter.

8.6 Member-checking

The transcripts of the in-depth interviews provided no direct reference to the context-specific learner fading from the data measuring them, nor from their participation or performance in their formal schooling. Nonetheless, there were concepts and terminology used by the participants which were associated with the notion of a disappearance of learners or an inconsistency in acknowledging or understanding the learners. The in-depth interviews included utterances which referred to actual learners being replaced by preconceptions and assumptions of them and of their capabilities, by labels or diagnoses that limit them, and by predetermined futures (for more detail, see Table 8.7 below).

Table 8.7 Sentence stems related to fading from participant utterances

The learner experiences fading as …	Evidence
Learning to devalue themselves	**Participant 1**: "They had learned to devalue it (culture, genetics, language, self), to devalue themselves, all this stuff of self-esteem … all the things we talk about in communities that are really complex and confused" (Conversation 1, p. 14)
Preconceptions of the learner by the adults or the learners	**Participant 1**: " … there are preconceptions here (in the already-existing data)…you can come up with all sorts of assumptions which don't even reflect the truth of the child" (Conversation 1, p. 1) " … the guys (fathers of the learners) would see themselves as not really having much—it was

The learner experiences fading as …	Evidence
	about their self-esteem. And … the whole notion of the self-prophesising theory would be passed on to your child, just like that" (Conversation 1, p. 8)
Others' assumptions/curriculum assumptions about who they are and what they bring to learning	**Participant 2**: "I think the curriculum does assume a lot (about the learner) … (teachers) think—especially as (learners) get older ... that everyone can read." (Conversation 2, p. 14)
Predetermined future	**Participant 3**: "Oh well, when my child was first diagnosed they said they *won't* walk and they'll be very limited …' (and they did achieve all their developmental milestones)" (Conversation 3, p. 14)
A label/diagnosis which limits the thinking of practitioners	**Participant 3**: "Straight away, it truncates thinking, that label (diagnosis), about the possibilities for the child" (Conversation 3, p. 16)

These utterances (as listed in Table 8.7 above) suggest that the actual learner may be easily limited by their own imagination, by how they are imagined by the adults who work with them, or by the educational documents (e.g., the curriculum) that guide the educational process within formal schooling.

8.7 Summary

Over the time they begin school until they are 19 years old, learners are fading in their attendance at, and participation in, formal schooling and post-school education. This is evident from the data reported from their schools, as well as the data reported from their households regarding study and work participation.

The learners from five of the six research locations generally become less and less present in the data that represents participation in education and work. The learners from all six locations become less and less age-appropriately able in reading while, learners from four of the six locations become less and less age-appropriately able in numeracy. In general,

across all six locations, the learners' attendance rates drop once they begin attending secondary school.

Compared to NSW, the 15 to 19 year olds from each of the locations do not attend work and study in the same percentages as the average 15 to 19 year olds of NSW. While the NSW percentage is very much an average, and therefore perhaps representative of as much error as accuracy, it is nonetheless telling that the percentages for *each* of the research locations is below this percentage rather than above it.

The learner from each of these research locations appears to fade over time in relation to their formal learning, most specifically in the areas of basic reading skills and attendance at school, and in post-school work and study. The process of fading as occurring in the six research locations seems to be cumulative as demonstrated in Figure 8.2 below.
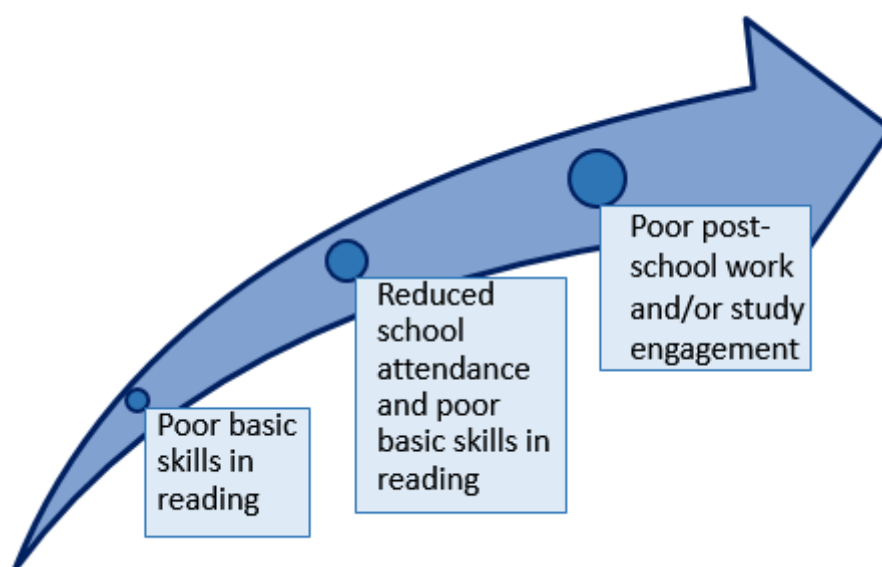
Figure 8-2 Diagrammatic representation of the cumulative process of fading apparently occurring in the research locations

The process is evidenced by poor basic skills in reading in primary schooling, continues into poor reading and lower attendance during the secondary school years, and eventuates in poorer engagement in post-school work and/or study.

It appears that the context-specific learner from the research locations fades from formal measurements of them and their capabilities. They seem to become less and less able or willing to participate in education, less and less able or willing to perform in education and, eventually, less and less present in measures of post-school options (employment and

training and education). While they disappear from what is measured, it is not clear whether they are measured as present in other ways or spaces.

Across their schooling, it appears that their fading from their formal schooling grows as their measured capabilities deteriorate (see Figure 8.2 above).

8.7.1 Key understanding and inference—fading

Key understanding 3: The context-specific learner from settings characterized by stacked disadvantage and social geographic isolation may be observed to fade both from participation and performance in compulsory schooling, as well as from participation in post-school options (employment/education).

Inference 3: To better understand the context-specific learner, the traditional measures of attendance and academic skill performance are probably inadequate in informing and evaluating the efficacy of favoured educational guidelines, educational delivery processes and teacher practice. We need to know more about the context-specific learner's 'other' capabilities (pre-existing, co-existing knowledge, skills and thinking processes) and learn to connect them with the knowledge, skills and thinking processes assumed of the curriculum-imagined learner).

Chapter 9.

Conceptual Poverty

9.1 Introduction

In wealthy countries, like Australia, poverty is determined relative to the context and financial fluidity of the population[31]. For example, an individual, household, neighbourhood or community is considered economically poor when assets, cash flow and employment opportunities are significantly less than the surrounding individuals, households, neighbourhood or communities. Demographic measures such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census are designed to detect real-time, real-life indicators of consumption and financial activity (e.g., internet access, average household motor vehicles) or adult financial capacity (e.g., parental education, parental employment), thus determining a snapshot of relative advantage in relation to wealth and poverty. Poverty is conceptualized as financial and consumption poverty. This means that poverty is measured against an arbitrarily established sufficiency of funds contributing to the ability to purchase or use goods and services. It is built on the comparison between those who can purchase and use, and those who cannot.

When considering the context-specific learner in the six research locations, the data analysis from this research clearly indicated a theme of financial poverty. However, a theme that emerged more prominently from a pattern of categories (around readiness for school, developmental risk, access to thoughts other than those related to the dominant social influences in the town of origin) was the theme that suggested a poverty of concepts. This was somewhat unexpected, and became identified as the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty*.

As mentioned in the Preface to Part II of this thesis, the four major themes are best understood using an adaptation of the Johari window as an interpretive device which visually organized the understandings provided by the four major themes emerging from this research (see Part II, Preface, Figure 1). As demonstrated by this diagrammatic representation, the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* is the least known, least investigated major theme in the literature of inclusive education. It is a theme built on conjecture about within-learner development. It is also built from the observation of a relationship between

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[31] "To be relatively poor is … to be forced to live on the margins of society, to be excluded from the normal spheres of consumption and activity which together define social participation and national identity". (Saunders, 1996, p. 227)

categories that are understood to contribute to/detract from conceptual development in infants, children and young people (e.g., from categories related to poor health (in carers or young people), chronic disability, chronic unemployment, and chronic financial poverty). While this conjecture regarding within-learner development turned out to be only a part of the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty*, this is the elementary focus of this theme. While characterized as the least known, least investigated major theme, this research values it as the most important understanding of the context-specific learner.

Firstly, this chapter will define the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* as a context-specific learner characteristic that develops relative to their socio-contextual influences and demands. Then, the chapter will outline the categories drawn from already-existing data which have contributed to the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty*. Relevant utterances from the in-depth interviews will then be briefly reviewed. Finally, this chapter will consider the dialogue within and between the different data voices which relate to conceptual poverty.

9.2 Definition

In this research, conceptual poverty refers to the relative absence, paucity or limitations of concepts essential to formal school-based learning and upon which an individual may draw, or upon which an individual may build or extend more complex concepts. Alternatively, conceptual wealth refers to the relative presence and richness of concepts essential to formal school-based learning. Conceptual poverty may also be understood as poverty of concepts and networks of concepts in favour in contemporary school-based learning. These concepts and networks of concepts might include concept as fact, concept as a process or heuristic, and concept as knowledge generalization and performance (see Medin, Lynch & Solomon, 2000, Sloutsky, 2010; Sloutsky & Deng, 2017). These concepts and networks of concepts may be thought of as conceptual stores. The term conceptual poverty may also be used to describe aspects of a curriculum, in that curriculum and its assessment regimes may represent dominant conceptual wealth, but not all conceptual wealth. In this sense, a curriculum may be conceptually poor in relation to some learners. Lingard et al's. (2001) pedagogy—that is, "the interrelationships between teacher practice and student outcomes, all located within a particular socio-political environment" (p. 102)—is also the context in which the continuum of conceptual poverty to conceptual wealth is at play. The curriculum, classroom and conceptual poverty will be discussed in more detail below in order to flesh out the definition of conceptual poverty in contextual terms.

A broader understanding of conceptual poverty embraces the many ways in which it may be present not only in the context-specific learner, but also in the adults (parents, carers and

professionals) involved in and around formal schooling. The learner is reliant on the conceptual wealth or poverty of the adults in their lives and the capacity of the adults to recognize, better identify and act as intermediaries between conceptual stores and expectations being applied in different settings and drawn from different sources.

9.2.1 Conceptual poverty in the classroom

Conceptual poverty is understood as occurring in the social interaction between the curriculum-imagined learner of the educational policy field and the context-specific learner of a specific social geographic experience. This interaction contains what Bakhtin refers to as the many-voiced dialogue, and the social setting where it most often occurs is the classroom. The classroom is where conceptual worlds meet and are measured. Slee (2001a) discusses the incidence of classrooms where learners that "struggle against the inflexibility of curriculum or pedagogy" (p. 388), foregrounding this notion of the learners' conceptual worlds dysfunctional in the presence of the conceptual worlds in favour in the classroom. The interactions between, and evaluations of, teacher practice and learner outcomes (i.e., pedagogy) demonstrate which of the conceptual worlds present in the classroom are valued, which are invisible, and which are deliberately minimised or ignored. Those conceptual worlds that are invisible, or deliberately minimised or ignored in the classroom, are effectively delimited as 'poor' conceptual worlds compared to the conceptual worlds (e.g., of the curriculum, of the teacher, of the school) that are favoured in the classroom. For example, the conceptual world of Rita (from the Prelude at the beginning of Chapter 1 of this thesis) was invisible in her in the six weeks in which she was present in my early career teacher classroom.

9.2.2 Measurement of the context-specific learner

The modern policy field of globalized education values national curriculums that are congruent and act centripetally to further the globalized policy field. In the words of Lingard and McGregor (2014) the *Australian Curriculum* (2016b) has a focus " … on what the nation wants students to become, in addition to what the nation wants them to learn" (p. 107).

The learner is evaluated as successful if they measure well against curriculum outcomes (such as capabilities in the case of the *Australian Curriculum*) and against the other valued measurement instruments of the policy field (such as NAPLAN, in the Australian context). In this way, the learner is evaluated as successful if able to share in or replicate the valued knowledge, behaviours, skills and dispositions of these evaluative instruments. If the learner's conceptual world is congruent with the implicit conceptual world of the

curriculum-imagined learner, then they are likely to be measured as successful---conceptually wealthy—thus becoming what the nation wants them to become.

Not everyone, however, shares the same conceptual world held implicitly and explicitly in the instrumentality of formal schooling. As Lingard (2005) notes, conscious and deliberate decisions about pedagogy and measurement are required so as to ensure that " … implicitly demanded cultural capital was not allowed to work in its unequal ways" (p. 174). Lingard's (2005) point is pertinent to which conceptual world is valued in the learner, the curriculum and formal schooling. In this way, some conceptual stores are valued as stores of conceptual wealth, while other stores are either not acknowledged or acknowledged as a form of conceptual poverty.

The degree of a learner's success is dependent on which conceptual worlds are valued. The successful learner expected by the policy field (e.g., the learner imagined in the *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b)) is the learner with comparative conceptual wealth, while the unsuccessful learner expected by the policy field is the learner deemed to be carrying conceptual poverty (see Figure 9.1 below).
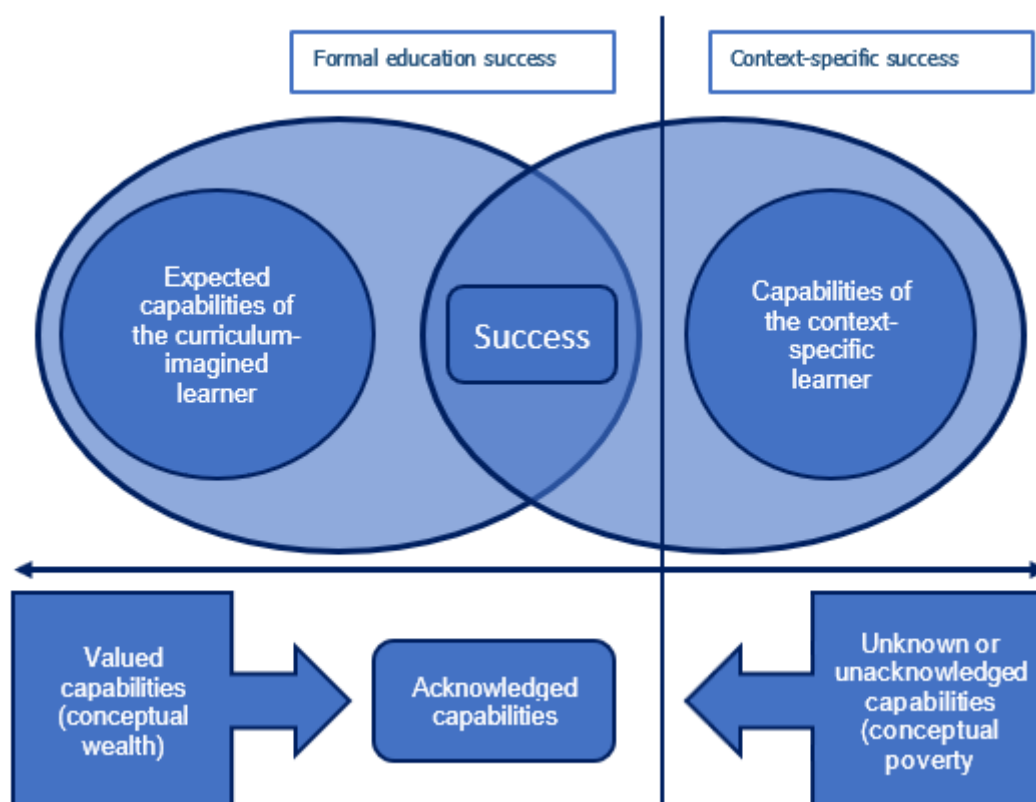

Figure 9-1 The acknowledged success of the context-specific learner relative to the expected capabilities of the curriculum-imagined learner

With reference to Figure 9.1 above, success is dependent on the field, on who is measuring, and on what is being measured. In the case of the context-specific learner, success in the educational policy field is acknowledged to the extent that the learner is able to attenuate the conceptual world of the curriculum-imagined learner. Alternatively, success in the socio-contextual experience of the context-specific learner is acknowledged to the extent that the context-specific valued capabilities and knowledge of their social geographic location have been attenuated.

Which learner is deemed conceptually poor—the curriculum-imagined learner or the context-specific learner—is dependent on context and the measurement instrument used to establish success and successful learning. The knowledge, thinking processes and capabilities that are valued in the measurement instrument of formal schooling represent conceptual wealth in the social field of formal schooling, regardless of whether they are of any relevance to, or have any correlation with, the knowledge, thinking processes and capabilities of the context-specific learner. An absence, paucity or limitation of that which is assumed and valued in the measurement instrument represents conceptual poverty, regardless of whether other valued knowledge, thinking processes or capabilities are present or not.

Concepts engendered and elicited in relation to context-specific social structures are not always known, understood or generalized to other fields. For example, the measure that might be used to evaluate the map-reading skills of the Australian learner may favour the learner from a context that uses transport maps and timetables regularly. This measure may not include the knowledge, thinking processes and capabilities of a context-specific learner who has never had a functional need for such skills due to their contextual demands, and who first might need to establish the position of their embodied whereabouts in relation to the hard copy of the map in order to usefully manipulate the set of lines and words on a printed page.

9.2.3 Summing up conceptual poverty relative to context, concepts and curriculum

With the increasing use of the formal language of criterion-referenced and norm-referenced measures of expectations and general capabilities of the learner (e.g., found in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016b), NAPLAN), along with the increasing use of brief indicators of educational advantage based on rough measures of economic disadvantage (e.g., the ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c)), the actual context-specific learner, along with their knowledge, thinking processes and capabilities, can be easily lost or overlooked (see Figure 9.1 above—"unknown, unacknowledged capabilities").

The conceptual development of the context-specific learner may not necessarily be included in the instruments of the policy field of education. The formal documentation that prescribes the formal schooling for which the context-specific learner is destined may not include the conceptual world which has been engendered through social interactions in specific locations, particularly if this documentation is context-neutral in its expression. Without a teacher whose epistemological and theoretical drivers include awareness of the knowledge, thinking processes and capabilities of the context-specific learner, the actual learner may be invisible because their capabilities are unknown and unacknowledged. Without a curriculum that includes the knowledge, thinking processes and capabilities of the context-specific learner, the actual learner is only able to demonstrate limited success in the formal field of education: they are effectively conceptually poor. Without measurement instruments that incorporate the capabilities of the context-specific learner as well as the capabilities of the curriculum, the context-specific learner will very likely be evaluated as conceptually poor.

In among the measures that indicate where a learner should be, might be and could be performing, the context-specific learner may not be registering due to their context-specific knowledge, thinking processes and capabilities being absent from the assumptions built into the measures about the learner. In other words, the learner imagined in the measure is differently capable and knowledgeable compared to the context-specific learner.

This research indicates conceptual poverty may be associated with (but not necessarily caused by) financial poverty, consumption poverty, access poverty (to places and expertise), poverty in household and community language-use, social interaction poverty, and poverty of exposure to diversity and multicultural experience. Conceptual poverty may be the lot of individuals whose thinking processes and contexts of learning are not represented in the conceptual world of the majority of any population (i.e., the population represented in formal documentation). For example, the learner may be conceptually poor in relation to the curriculum because their conceptual strengths and thinking processes may not be represented in the curriculum.

Conceptual poverty is more likely context-relevant than impairment-relevant. Conceptual poverty is likely a relative reality, dependent on one's performance in the dominant information field represented in formal schooling. The context-specific learner's conceptual poverty cannot be considered as an absolute poverty, but more as a relative poverty. Conceptual poverty is relative to the specific contexts and larger populations to which the learner belongs, or to the measures by which it is counted: it may be *seen* as a poverty of conceptual ability (i.e., it may be seen as a poverty of intellectual ability), and labelled as such, when observed in juxtaposition to the dominant, favoured conceptual world

represented in the curriculum, the assessment methodology, or when measured on an ability measurement instrument (such as a standardized cognitive assessment).

Within their community or family system, a learner (who is measured as conceptually poor in relation to the curriculum and the teaching and learning approaches of formal schooling) may be considered conceptually wealthy and adaptive. In their community of origin, therefore, the learner considered conceptually poor at school may be esteemed as a 'success' due to their valued knowledge, behaviours, skills and capabilities in their specific context and population. This same learner, however, may be seen to be ignorant, incapable, slow to learn or resistant in comparison to the context and expected capabilities of formal schooling and its policies and documents.

9.3 Big Data and Conceptual Poverty

In the big data sources (i.e., the ICSEA, NAPLAN, ABS, or DOTE) there was no direct evidence of conceptual poverty either contributing to or suggesting a better understanding of the context-specific learner from any or all of the 20 schools and the six locations included in this research. Conceptual poverty is not directly represented in the big data.

9.4 Patterns in the Categories of Conceptual Poverty

A total of 12 categories were found to contribute to the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* (see Table 9.1 below).

Table 9.1 Incidence of Indicators of Conceptual Poverty across the six Research Locations

Categories of conceptual poverty	BRE	LM	CONDO	COBAR	ULLA	LI
Basic reading poor (NAPLAN Yr 9) (ranking < 150/261)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Home internet access <69% of households (2011)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Long-term unemployment (ranked at <250/621)	√	√	√	√	√	√
>80% English speaking, Australian by birth ABS Census 2011)	√	√	√	0	√	√
Low family income	√	√	√	0	√	√
High Incidence of disability pension (ranked at <250/621)	√	√	√	0	√	√

Categories of conceptual poverty	BRE	LM	CONDO	COBAR	ULLA	LI
Not ready for school (> 3 criteria of developmental vulnerability exceed Australian average AEDC, 2015)	√	0	√	√	0	0
Basic numeracy poor (NAPLAN Yr 9) (ranking < 150/621)	√	0	√	0	√	√
Poor Readiness for Schooling (< 250/621 ranking DOTE 2015)	0	0	√	0	√	√
Basic literacy poor (NAPLAN) Yr 3 (ranking < 150/621)	√	0	√	0	0	√
Basic numeracy poor (NAPLAN Yr 3) (ranking < 150/621)	√	0	√	0	0	√
>25% population is less than 15 yrs	√					
TOTAL categories of conceptual poverty per location	**11**	**6**	**11**	**5**	**8**	**11**

Source: AEDC (Australian Government, 2012/2015); DOTE (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015)

Similarly to the major theme of *Fading*, the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* is more abstract than the major themes of *Stacked Disadvantage* and *Social Geographic Isola*tion. As understood by this research the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* is the least directly measured, and least directly known of the other major themes (see Part II, Preface, Figure 1). There is no single datum available that has measured conceptual poverty in relation to the context-specific learner.

Two of the six research locations carried the identical pattern of 11 categories contributing to the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* (i.e., Condobolin and Lithgow).

Similarly to *Fading*, the categories that make up the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* are inter-related and foundational to conceptual poverty rather than clearly known and accumulating categories each separately indicating disadvantage or isolation. For example, as a stand-alone category, long-term unemployment was not considered a direct measure of conceptual poverty, but rather a factor which, combined with other factors, contributes to a relative paucity in concepts and concept development. Long-term unemployment combined with low family income, homogenous language and cultural heritage, poorer accessibility to the internet, and poor reading skills together form a limited information field of social

communication and interaction. The less exposed we are as human beings to experiences in a variety of contexts, the more likely we are to have very specific concepts, and subsequent capabilities, built on very specific conditions. Such concepts and capabilities may be highly functional in a specific setting, and barely recognizable in any other setting.

Conceptual poverty is positioned as a progression from the three preceding major themes of *Stacked Disadvantage*, *Social Geographic Isolation* and *Fading*. With one exception, the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* shares each of its categories with at least one other major theme (see Table 9.2 below).

Table 9.2 Categories contributing to the major theme of Conceptual Poverty as shared by other major themes

	Shared by …		
Categories	**1 Other Major Theme**	**2 Other Major Themes**	**3 Other Major Themes**
Long-Term unemployment	SD	SGI	F
Basic reading poor (Yr 9)	F		
Home internet access <69% households	SGI		
>80% English speaking, Australian born	SGI		
Low family income	SD	SGI	
High incidence disability pension	SD	SGI	
Not ready for school (>3 criteria of dev. Disability exceeding Australian average	SD		
Basic numeracy poor (Yr 9)	F		
Poor readiness for schooling	SD		
Basic reading poor (Yr 3)	F		
Basic numeracy poor (Yr 3)	F		
>25% of population is < 25 yrs			

SD—Major Theme of Stacked Disadvantage

SGI—Major Theme of Social Geographic Isolation

F—Major Theme of Fading

In any one major theme, five of the 12 categories contributing to the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* may also be located. The major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* is built firmly on the three preceding major themes.

In other words, the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* was found to be the saturation end-point (Saldaña, 2016, p. 248) of the major themes of this research. Conceptual poverty is like the sediment filtrated out of the percolation of context-specific learner's stacked disadvantage, social geographic isolation and gradual fading from participation and performance in formal schooling.

9.4.1 Most common conceptual poverty across locations

From the re-coding of the demographic data, there were four categories shared by all six research locations. These categories were: basic reading poor in Year 9; home internet access available in less than 69% of households; higher than average incidence of long-term unemployment; and more than 80% of the location's population was English speaking and Australian born.

Together, these four categories were interpreted as presenting limited, small world information flow and limitations to information seeking behaviour (Chatman, 1999, Burnett et al., 2001): subject to these four categories, the context-specific learner has limited access and exposure to non-location experiences and subsequent concepts and conceptual development (Vygotsky, 1966, 1978). For example, long-term unemployment limits access to other people and places (both financially and via adult absence from workplace problem solving and task completion), social interactions are limited to a similarity of contextual experiences related to mono-language and mono-cultural exposure, while poor reading combined with poor internet access limits access to 'outside-of-context' thinking and problem solving. Conceptual development and understanding of otherness can become strangled by the limitations on access to other speakers and other voices, and other speech and literary genres (Bakhtin, 1986, 1994), and the centripetal pull of the isolated social field limiting the knowledge, behaviours, skills and dispositions of the social participants to that field (Bourdieu, 1977, 1980).

Two of the categories (low income and high incidence of disability) were identically shared across all research locations with the exception of Cobar. In relation to conceptual poverty, these categories contribute to conceptual poverty in that, combined with the other categories, they effectively truncate accessibility to a larger information field and larger source of information flow.

Beyond the most commonly occurring categories across the majority of research locations, there was only one other identical pattern of categories across locations and that was related to Year 3 reading and numeracy. Three locations (Brewarrina, Condobolin and Lithgow) shared the categories of poor reading (Yr. 3) and poor numeracy (Yr. 3).

In brief then, three of the research locations shared the identical pattern of eight categories which, together, are interpreted as limiting conceptual development to very specific settings, and contributing to poor access to the conceptual world of the imagined learner in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016b).

9.4.2 Degree of specific conceptual poverty

Brewarrina, Condobolin and Lithgow were the three research locations that carried the highest number of categories (11 each) contributing to the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty*. The other three research locations carried a lesser degree of categories: Ulladulla, Lake Munmorah, and Cobar with eight, six and five categories respectively.

Given the understanding of conceptual poverty mobilized by this research, Brewarrina, Condobolin and Lithgow were the locations understood to be the most affected relative conceptual poverty. As Chatman (1999) and others (Burnett et al., 2001) describe, these locations—as compared to the other three research locations—carried the frequency and degree of categories indicating significant small world restrictions on information performance, narrative and forms with limited knowledge-seeking opportunities.

As indicated in the Prelude to the evidentiary chapters, the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* presents the strongest presence of abstractness and inferability built upon the demographic data from which the major themes were indicated. This is due to the notion of conceptual poverty being understood from the array of data rather than from individual data codes or individual categories.

9.4.3 Non-identical patterns of specific conceptual poverty

While Brewarrina carried 11 categories related to conceptual poverty, the patterning of these themes was unique to Brewarrina when compared to Condobolin and Lithgow, which locations also carried 11 themes.

As a result of this research, conceptual poverty is understood to be the result of a pattern of non-identical categories that is unique to the specific location.

9.5 Relationship between Categories and Big Data Measures of Conceptual Poverty

As there were no big data measures of conceptual poverty, there is no capacity to actively draw on a relationship between the categories indicative of conceptual poverty and the big data. The absence of any single datum related to conceptual poverty, however, does suggest that this major theme is an area ripe for further observation, evaluation and research.

The theme of conceptual poverty recognized as an interpretive result of the demographic data: an explanation of the aggregate of categories drawn from the demographic data sources that makes sense until it is demonstrated otherwise. This theme demarcates an area of further investigation.

9.6 Member-checking

At no stage did the transcripts of the in-depth interviews directly address conceptual poverty. The informal language contained in the transcripts confirmed the theme of conceptual poverty. The sentence stems and associated utterances from the transcript have been tabulated in Table 9.3 below.

Table 9.3 Sentence stems related to conceptual poverty from participant utterances

The learner experiences conceptual poverty as …	Evidence
Limited exposure/experience/practice (within learner)	**Participant 2**: "I think it's that they haven't been exposed to certain things" (Conversation 2, p. 6) "We … identified that there was a whole lot of kids … that needed more practice, that needed more than the neuro-typical kids out there to practice and learn about basic communication and social skills" (Conversation 3, p. 2)

The learner experiences conceptual poverty as …	Evidence
Not belonging (within learner)	**Researcher—Participant**: "… a lot of them are because of social isolation or not belonging or feeling like you don't belong or not having the requisite behaviours to belong to a particular group or that type of thing" (Conversation 3, pp. 9 & 10).
Limited knowledge of pragmatic behaviours for learning in groups (e.g., class groups) (within learner)	**Participant 2**: " … we worked on things like what it's explicitly like to be at school … across a whole range of classes and settings" (Conversation 2, p. 12)
Devaluing self (within learner)	**Participant 1**: "They had learned to devalue it (their culture, their heritage, their knowledge), to devalue themselves" (Conversation 1, p. 14)
Others' preconceptions (within educator/within educational documents)	**Participant 1**: " … you can come up with all sorts of assumptions which don't even reflect the truth of the child … the data tells you something about the society or the social setting … " (Conversation 1, p. 1) **Researcher—Participant**: "… in front of a classroom of kids, in specific situations, we can really feel at sea because they're not doing or being or … learning, the way they're written about" Conversation 2, p. 2)

The learner experiences conceptual poverty as …	Evidence
Mismatch between imagination of practitioner, imagination of parent/carer, and the actual learner	**Researcher—Participant and Participant 3**: R-P " … the difference between a professional imagining and going 'This is where they (the child) have to go; this is the best thing for them', and you're (the parent/carer) actually imagining the same child who is yours … " **Participant 3**: "And those early pieces of advice that a parent might hear might actually then put them in that mindset of, oh, well, I'm not going to try to have my child learn that because they're never going to so it limits them" (Conversation 2, p. 6)

The supporting statements came under two main areas: the within-learner thinking (i.e., addressing the learner's understanding and imagination of themselves and their experience); and, thinking and understanding about the learner by teachers, parents or other practitioners. The transcripts tended to point towards conceptual poverty as a shared experience for all persons involved in education: the learner, the teacher, the curriculum writer(s), the parents/carers. This supports the notion that conceptual poverty is relative, dependent on who is measuring, and what is being measured in relation to conceptual poverty or conceptual wealth.

9.7 Summary

In the instance of a context characterized by stacked disadvantage, social geographic isolation, and fading from formal schooling, it is not surprising that the major theme of *Conceptual Poverty* is also indicated in the demographic data analysis of this study. That which contributes to the context-specific learner's conceptual world is largely engendered through their participation in their context.

In the case of context for the learner from outside-of-the-box contexts, this study has indicated that relative conceptual poverty is a shared contextual element for context-specific learners. This shared contextual element is likely to characterize the context-specific

learner's conceptual development. The conceptual world of the context-specific learner may be very particular to their context, and bear little relationship to the conceptual world of any other context-specific learner or imagined learner (practitioner-imagined learner or curriculum-imagined learner). The conceptual world of the context-specific learner may be very useful and adaptive in their specific outside-of-the-box context, while not very useful or adaptive to formal schooling.

Conceptual poverty has socio-contextual and systemic implications and is ill-used if simply applied to what the learner does not have or cannot do when compared to some guideline or expectation. The more unique and specific the factors are contributing to a context, the more the context-specific learner is likely to carry that which might be deemed a conceptual poverty relative to more commonly shared contexts. In this way, conceptual poverty may be what is measured by comparison to commonly agreed conceptual wealth in commonly shared contexts. Conceptual poverty in the context-specific learner from a uniquely specific context may, in fact, conceal conceptual wealth in unusually specific circumstances.

While conceptual poverty is a common experience to all of us—depending on the demands of the context in which we find ourselves it is not an identical experience foregrounding identical factors of poverty. The nature of the context and its functional demands determines which concepts are learnt and which concepts remain unknown or unmastered. The measurement of concepts indicates which concepts are valued and which are unacknowledged or even invisible.

9.7.1 Key understanding and inference—conceptual poverty

Key understanding 4: *Context-specific learner*—The context-specific learner from settings characterized by stacked disadvantage and social geographic isolation may be observed as having relative conceptual poverty depending on who or what is carrying out the valuing and measurement of knowledge, abilities, dispositions and skills.

Inference 4: Analysis and identification of the assumed pre-existing and co-existing concepts and thinking processes of the teacher, the curriculum, the process of educational delivery and the learner are essential to building conceptual frameworks that better connect the context-specific learner and the curriculum-imagined learner.

Part III

Part III of the thesis consists of the final chapter (Chapter 10), the list of relevant references used throughout the thesis, and the Appendix containing relevant supporting documents not included in the main body of text. Chapter 10 provides an account of the meaning and relevance of the insights of this research to inclusive education practice as well as to research in the future.

Chapter 10.

The Case of Context

10.1   Introduction

This chapter will provide a final account of this pragmatic mixed-methods case study that investigated the phenomenon of inclusive education through a particular national curriculum and a necessarily selective choice of six communities in Australia. The case of context in which inclusive education is enacted was the unit of analysis. Context emerged as both imagined in the curriculum, yet specific to particular communities. The primary purpose of this concluding chapter is to respond to the three research questions of this thesis and to draw pragmatic implications of this research to future practice and research. This chapter will: (1) synthesize the key findings from previous evidentiary chapters and use them to answer the three research questions; (2) examine the utility of the research design in relation to previous and future studies into inclusive education; and (3) present the contribution that this thesis makes to knowledge and understanding of the significance of context in the field of inclusive education for the compulsory years of schooling.

10.2   Key Findings

In the research literature of inclusive education (see Table 2.2 in Chapter 2), the notion of context was found to be treated variously as: generalized and non-specific (as in the aspirational category of literature); a set of socio-contextual identifiers designated by demographic data alone (as in the pragmatic category of literature); or implicitly multivariable and multidimensional (as in the inquiry category of literature).

Further, the literature review (see Chapter 2) yielded a range of factors contributing to context. The learner and their knowledge, the variety of factors that constitute the demographics of learner context, the curriculum, and the nature of advantage and disadvantage each received attention across the literature reviewed, but without a consensus on any of these factors (see Table 2.2).

In Chapter 3, context was conceptualized as complex, incorporating learner social situations and conceptual worlds, the presence and influence of formal documents such as a curriculum with its conceptual world, and imagined and actual capabilities of learners. Inclusive education was theorized as being inclusive of conceptual worlds and capabilities as well as inclusive of externalized factors of context. The case of context was theorized as

consisting of curriculum-imagined and context-specific learners, with imagined and specific conceptual worlds and capabilities.

Three research questions were framed to guide this investigation of the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education:

1. How is the learner imagined?

2. What other markers of context characterize the learner?

3. What does this imply for inclusive education in the context of formal schooling?

To address these questions, a a case study using mixed methods of data collection and analysis was used (see Chapter 4) which incorporated document and demographic data. This design incorporated parallel data collection and analysis, with subsequent convergent merging and integration of findings. Document data was used to investigate the imagined learner (i.e., the curriculum-imagined learner), while demographic data was drawn from a range of databases available in the public domain to investigate other markers of context that may be known about the learner (i.e., the context-specific learner).

The merging and integration of the findings from the evidentiary chapters (Chapters 5 to 9), with the emergent understandings in relation to the three research questions, are summarized below (in the remainder of section 10.2).

10.2.1 The imagined learner

For the purposes of better understanding the case of context, the imagined learner has been investigated as the curriculum-imagined learner.

As demonstrated in Chapter 5 of this thesis, the learner imagined in the *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum* (2013/2014) is understood as:

- Context-neutral
- Concept-neutral
- Neither advantaged or disadvantaged
- Subject to learning prescribed capabilities

The *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document is intended as a guideline for imagining and understanding, in a general fashion, all learners participating in formal schooling across Australia. It does not imagine learners in their specificity—their experience of advantage or disadvantage, and the connectedness of their conceptual world and

conceptual wealth to specific socio-contextual fields of information. The curriculum-imagined learner is conceptualized as learning general capabilities, but has little else identified or known of their situation and experience, conceptual world, or the degree of educational advantage or disadvantage which they carry.

There is no statement in the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) that outlines or explicitly corresponds to the thinking processes of the curriculum-imagined learner. The general capabilities that the curriculum-imagined learner acquires are discussed in relation to what the learner can do, what they know, what they can and will learn through their formal schooling, and how they may be expected to demonstrate what they can do and know. While there is a general nod to the existence of different world views and diversity this is in reference to some learners due to cultural, language or disability with the implication that this diversity is related to an exceptional curriculum-imagined learner. While thinking processes and conceptual worlds are assumed in the curriculum-imagined learner, there is no explicit reference to the existence of these necessary foundations in the realm of formal schooling. There is no indicator of the existence of the learner's conceptual stores specific to context-driven conceptual development or context-valued capabilities.

The curriculum-imagined learner in the *General Capabilities* (ACARA 2013/2014) is conceptualized as an homogenous learner in a socio-contextual and conceptual vacuum. While thoroughly described in some aspects, the curriculum-imagined learner remains uninhabited by a range of real-life context-specific factors including: their readiness for formal schooling; their default thinking and problem solving processes; their pre-existing capabilities; or that which motivates them or engenders their curiosity.

The *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document illustrates what learners will learn, will be able to do, and will know during the course of their formal schooling. The curriculum-imagined learner is only known by measurability of external performance of predetermined learning outcomes. The document imagines the future learner as the learner yet to be exposed to the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2016b). At no point is the curriculum-imagined learner supported by a description of that which the learner brings or already knows, thinks or already does, or from what knowledge base and world view the learner comes.

The language describing the curriculum-imagined learner is predictive and assumption-laden, bereft of socio-contextual markers, and ignorant of the pre-existing knowledge of the learner prior to and co-existing with exposure to the curriculum. While acknowledging that there will be diversity in learners, as well as different world views, the

Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2013/2014, 2016b) does not explicitly outline the specifics of diversity or an explanation of ways of looking at and interpreting the world.

As such, curriculum-imagined learners do not appear to be imagined, in the first instance, as having knowledge or bringing contextual experience (i.e. pre-existing concepts or conceptual networks) to their formal schooling. Their prior learning, while sometimes assumed to exist, does not appear to be imagined as important enough to be measured or to have value in and of itself. Overwhelmingly, the curriculum-imagined learner is made ready for and given formal schooling from outside of themselves, and without reference to what is inside of themselves.

In Senian conceptualization, the capabilities of the curriculum-imagined learner are more aptly thought of as human capacities, trained and educated for the utilitarian purposes of human development, and a resource for global economic planning and development. The general capabilities which are the subject of the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) are not Sen's (1985, 1997) capabilities marked by the learner's freedom to choose the desires and interests that are achievable in their context. The capabilities of the curriculum-imagined learner are context-neutral and therefore blind to the conceptual development of the learner. They are an apt example of that which both Sen (1979, 1985, 1997) and Nussbaum (2002, 2011, 2015) identified as the confusion between capabilities and capacities. Capabilities are best conceptualized with reference to human well-being as an end to human progress and development, while capacities describe that which human beings can do and be to progress the interests and outcomes of economic development.

In relation to the research literature related to inclusive education, the *General Capabilities* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document is more aligned with an aspirational conceptualization of the enactment of inclusive education. The lack of specificity related to the imagined learner's context and conceptual world indicates a lack of specificity related to learner access to formal schooling. While the document indicates the possibility of some learners having different world views, or having diversity due to culture, language or disability, it is a possibility framed as being typical of a minority of learners. The general learner is imagined as having homogenous thinking processes and conceptual worlds.

The implication for the enactment of inclusive education is that schools and teachers in specific locations require considerable endorsed autonomy to adapt the *Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2016b). This process of adaptation is not a simple process: it requires a different level of analysis and planning to that required by the application of superficial or cosmetic approaches to modifying learning outcomes, the shifting learners into adapted

learning environments or the introduction of adaptive technology. The process requires close attention to the congruence (or otherwise) of the assumed conceptual development and conceptual world of the curriculum-imagined learner with the specific conceptual development and conceptual world of each actual learner participating in formal schooling in specific locations. The adaptations require the inclusion of the pre-existing and co-existing conceptual processes and valued knowledge of the context-specific learner. It is important that this adaptive process is not, in an oversimplified manner, only applied to some learners (such as those with diversity due to culture, language or disability) or some locations (such as remote locations or urban locations considered disadvantaged due to arbitrary measures of educational advantage or socio-economic disadvantage).

The enactment of inclusive education requires a curriculum that clearly states that conceptual worlds of all learners may be expected to differ from each other, as well as from those of the imagined learner. This diversity in conceptual worlds is not the preserve of only a minority of learners compared to all learners. Without such a clear foundational statement, formal schooling in specific locations runs the very high risk of whole cohorts of learners fading from participation in school and post-school endeavours. Such a statement clears the road for adaptation to be specifically learner-focused in its orientation rather than inadvertently exceptional learner-focused. It endorses both the normality of difference and of anticipated difficulties of accessing the curriculum. An equitable balance between the imagined learner's conceptual world and the context-specific learner's conceptual world is required in the enactment of inclusive education.

10.2.2 Other contextual characteristics of the learner

For the purposes of better understanding the case of context, possible characteristics of context-specific learners were investigated in this research.

As demonstrated in Chapters 6 through to 9, the other characteristics of the context-specific learner are understood as:

- Stacked disadvantage
- Social geographic isolation
- Fading
- Conceptual poverty

While the categories of disadvantage present in each of the six research locations were not found to be identical, the presence of these categories was substantial in each location (i.e., at least six categories of disadvantage were found to occur in each location). In each

location, the categories of disadvantage identified from the demographic data could be observed to be cumulative in that one category of disadvantage could be interpreted as contributing to or aggravating another category of disadvantage (see Chapter 6, *Stacked Disadvantage*). In the case of Lithgow, for example, a high incidence of psychiatric hospital admissions could contribute to low family income, poor health, and poor readiness for schooling in learners due to the developmental disruptions for children of the household. Further to the cumulative categories of disadvantage that appeared to be at play in each location from this research, it was further noted that each location had what Nurius et al. (2015) coined as stacked disadvantage. There were a range of disadvantages documented as present, but in no particular common pattern shared across all locations.

Nurius et al. (2015) suggested that more than cumulative disadvantage, stacked disadvantage was detrimental to adolescent developmental and social participation outcomes. The understandings that have emerged from this research—the indications of gradual fading from educational participation and performance, and the relative conceptual poverty of the context-specific learner from outside-of-the-box locations—would appear to support Nurius' et al. (2015) finding.

As a contextual characteristic of the context-specific learner, stacked disadvantage is understood as a contributor to the development of the conceptual stores of the learner. Due to the changing disadvantage variables across locations, the knowledge-base of learners across locations might be predicted to differ from each other. As stacked disadvantage is not a 'one size fits all' conceptualization of disadvantage, neither is the contextually engendered conceptual world of the learner. Language, knowledge and thinking processes for individuals across outside-of-the-box locations are likely to engender some differences in conceptual worlds.

While measures of geographical remoteness have frequently been used to establish an indicator of learner disadvantage, this research indicates that social geographic isolation is a common characteristic of learners from outside-of-the-box contexts (see Chapter 7, *Social Geographic Isolation*). Naturally, geographic isolation contributes to difficulties with accessing other populations, health support, and public resources and services. These difficulties, however, were also found to be a reality for locations that are not geographically remote from a capital city but are challenged geographically by excessive travel times to the available information flow occurring in the social field of a capital city (e.g. Lake Munmorah on the outer edge of Greater Sydney).

This study found that it is not the raw, lineal distance from major cities that each of the study locations have in common, but the compounding factors specific to each geographical location that created social isolation for the context-specific learners who live there. In the location of Lake Munmorah, poor internet access, time- and cost-expensive public transport to services and other populations, combined with relatively low household income and motor vehicle ownership, are the factors that contribute to social geographic isolation. The categories that contribute to social geographic isolation act together towards limiting equitable participation in an information field characterized by greater diversity of participants and a more complex information flow between them. This research has demonstrated that context-specific learners from outside-of-the-box locations experience social geographic isolation even though not all learners are located in a remote or regional area of Australia.

Over the time of their compulsory formal schooling, the learner from each of the six research locations was observed to gradually fade from some of the performance (i.e., NAPLAN results) and participation (i.e., attendance and enrolment) indicators used to measure learners across schools (see Chapter 8, *Fading*). The contextual characteristics of stacked disadvantage and social geographic isolation suggest that the conceptual worlds of the context-specific learners are likely bumping up against the conceptual worlds and capabilities expected of learners participating in formal schooling (e.g., expected by curriculum and teachers). The effect of fading, as outlined in Chapter 8, illustrates learners who initially and gradually begin to disappear from the processes and performance expectations of formal schooling, culminating in relatively poor levels of engagement post-school. This would suggest that the processes and personnel involved in formal schooling have gradually decreasing cogency for the context-specific learner.

Through the process of this study, the categories of data that contributed to the context-specific learner characteristics of stacked disadvantage, social geographic isolation and fading were interpreted as contributing the final contextual characteristic of conceptual poverty (see Chapter 9, *Conceptual Poverty*). Conceptual poverty is understood as relative, indicating that there is a mismatch between the conceptual worlds of the learner from outside-of-the-box locations and the personnel and processes of formal schooling. As such, conceptual poverty in the curriculum may be summarized as an absence of any number of diverse conceptual worlds of value to context-specific learners. In other words, the curriculum-imagined learner might be conceptually poor in the location of the outside-of-the-box, context-specific learner, while the outside-of-the-box, context-specific learner might be conceptually poor in the conceptual world of the curriculum-imagined learner.

Cumulatively combined, the contextual characteristics of stacked disadvantage, social geographic isolation, fading and relative conceptual poverty indicate a strong possibility of the learner having different world views and conceptual stores which are not necessarily the result of culture, language or disability. The outside-of-the-box, context-specific learner is understood as having diverse thinking processes and conceptual worlds that are not accounted for simply due to ethno-cultural or ability differences which are assumed in the pragmatic research literature of inclusive education.

The implication for the enactment of inclusive education is the need for a comprehensive evaluation of the contextual characteristics of all context-specific learners. In more detail, it is suggested that this comprehensive evaluation includes the assessment of:

- any evidence of stacked disadvantage or social geographic isolation contributing to the conceptual world of the learner;

- learner accessibility to information field and information flow that corresponds to the access enjoyed by the majority of the learner population; and

- the nature of the learner's conceptual world which includes the pre-existing, knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions valued and generated in their location.

Further to this comprehensive evaluation of the context-specific learner, a comprehensive evaluation of the imagined and expected characteristics of the learner inherent in the processes and personnel involved in formal schooling is also necessary to the enactment of inclusive education. The implications of such an evaluation of the conceptual worlds present in the process of formal schooling are far-reaching. A mismatch between diverse conceptual worlds will become more apparent by this evaluation. Theoretically, the possibility of such diversity of conceptual worlds being included in formal schooling is more likely to become actual rather than aspirational. A diversity of conceptual worlds is more likely to be acknowledged, connected and built upon—an aspiration of the inquiry research literature of inclusive education—and thus included in formal schooling.

In this way, subsequent pragmatic adaptation to the curriculum, and to the teaching and learning practices incorporated in the formal schooling occurring in a specific location, are likely to acknowledge, include and develop the pre-existing capabilities of the context-specific learner. The participation and performance of the outside-of-the-box, context-specific learner have a greater likelihood of remaining engaged in formal schooling if the conceptual world of the learner is included in educational evaluation and planning.

10.2.3 Implications of the case of context for inclusive education in formal schooling

As indicated in Chapter 1, the problem for inclusive education is this: that while the idea of inclusion is noble and good, its enactment in formal schooling has been problematic. Once the aspiration of inclusive education is transitioned from theoretical consideration to pragmatic implementation in actual situations of formal schooling, inevitable problems and questions arise. It is at the site of actual situations of formal schooling that new understandings of inclusive education are likely to emerge for for further investigation and discovery.

The research literature of inclusive education (as outlined in Chapter 2 has struggled to agree on the conceptualization of context. The history of the theorization, delivery and problem solving of inclusive education has been ill at ease with its conceptualization of context and what context means to inclusion (see Chapter 2).

For the purpose of better understanding the enactment of inclusive education in formal schooling, the case of context has been investigated rather than specific stand-alone contextual factors. Other possible understandings of the case of context have been sought. These other possible understandings emerging from this research are:

- The case of context considers *all* learners as consisting of imagined and actual learners;
- The case of context is not limited by the demographic or deficit-related socio-contextual identifiers of learners;
- The case of context consists of multivariable and multidimensional factors which contribute to the diverse conceptual worlds of learners, curriculum, and formal schooling; and
- The case of context acknowledges, incorporates and develops the learner's context-generated, pre-existing and valued knowledge, skills, behaviours and predispositions in formal schooling.

The understandings of the case of context as listed above are briefly discussed in more detail below.

Across the aspirational, pragmatic and inquiry categories of inclusive education research literature (see Chapter 2), context has been recognized as elementary to the practise of inclusive education in formal schooling. The inclusion of *all* learners has been the particular focus of aspirational research literature in inclusive education. This case study of context has

expanded the term 'all learners' reconceptualizing it to be understood as both imagined and actual learners. In the case of context, all learners may be better understood through the investigation and interpretation of formal document data (implicitly and explicitly describing the imagined learner) and of official demographic data (related to specific locations and schools). All learners in formal schooling may be more particularly understood by reviewing the documented expectations of learners (as delineated in a curriculum document common to all learners across all contexts) and observing the participation of learners (as engaged and performing in formal schooling).

The pragmatic research literature in inclusive education has tended to focus on the inclusion of learners in formal schooling with deficit or difference (as determined by socio-contextual identifiers of the learner in relation to predetermined values or norms). While having incorporated socio-contextual categories of the context-specific learner's location and school to interpret contextual characteristics of the learner, the case of context is not limited to these socio-contextual categories. Similar to the inquiry research literature of inclusive education, the case of context recognizes the multivariable and multidimensional nature of context. In the instance of this research work, the case of context understands the multivariable and multidimensional nature of context as consisting of the conceptual worlds inherent in all participants in formal schooling (i.e., teaching staff and learners), and inherent in all procedures (e.g., assemblies, excursions, classroom management), guidelines (e.g., the curriculum, behavioural guidelines) and infrastructure (e.g., furniture, buildings, recreational areas, technology). The case of context recognizes formal schooling as the meeting place of any number of possible conceptual worlds represented by multivariable and multidimensional factors.

Finally, the case of context adds insight to the 'all' of every learner acknowledging that within-learner conceptual development may place them at educational advantage or educational disadvantage in the presence of other contextual factors (such as the assumed conceptual development of the curriculum-imagined learner). The pre-existing knowledge, skills, behaviours and predispositions of the learner are understood as essential contextual characteristics of all learners in formal schooling. The learner's participation in location and school contributes to conceptual world development, and so the case of context includes every part of every learner, both within and without.

10.3   Limitations of Study

The theoretical limitations of this study were related to the use of several theorists rather than one. As noted in Chapter 3, *Theoretical Perspectives*, the complexity of the

phenomenon of inclusive education in the twenty-first century necessitated the use of several perspectives to consider new understandings of the complexity of context, conceptual worlds and capabilities of the learner, and formal schooling (see section 3.4).

This study was designed to consider the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education using delimitations related to: i) the selection and use of specific locations known and familiar to the researcher; ii) a specific section of a norm document relevant to the enactment of inclusive education in schools within those locations, and iii) a form of member-checking based on informal interviewing of practitioners also known to the practitioner. The details and rationale of these delimitations have been clearly outlined in Chapter 4, *Research Approach*.

Other methodological delimitations were related to the necessary bounding of the number of research locations used as a source of cross-site analysis of the case of context, and the necessary protection of individuals living–and easily identified–in the small, outside-of-the-box communities form the research locations. These limitations have been explicitly described in section 4.7 *Evaluation of the Research Design* and section 4.6 *Ethical Considerations* respectively.

The representation of all of the data used in this research was limited by its sheer volume, resulting in not all data codes being explicitly provided in the body of the thesis (but may be found in the Appendices). While this was a necessary limitation, the process of coding, re-coding and categorization of data in table form was explicitly outlined (in Chapter 4, *Research Approach*) so as to strengthen the quality of this research design.

10.4   Significance of the Research

The significance of this research is that it proposes insights into the case of context in inclusive education which expand on the contextual conceptualizations available in the research literature. These insights relate to the conceptual worlds of learners and teachers who engage together in formal schooling, the relationship between formal schooling and educational advantage, and the development and use of the curriculum.

10.4.1   Conceptual worlds in formal schooling

For any single individual, context learning is foundational learning: conceptual frameworks and thinking processes are developed first and foremost by experience in social interaction in specific settings. As Vygotsky (1966, 1978, 1986) theorized, conceptual worlds are internalized from the experience of the immediate external world and its interactions.

An insight drawn from this case study is that the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education incorporates a wide variety of conceptual worlds. In Chapter 1, Artiles and Kozleski (2016) were noted for acknowledging the challenge to inclusive education to include in formal schooling the "characteristics, needs and interests of students that represent the widest spectrum of human variability" (p. 3). The widest spectrum of human variability foregrounds the widest spectrum of human contexts and, therefore, the widest spectrum of human conceptual worlds.

For conceptual worlds to be included in formal schooling, acknowledgement of all conceptual worlds—in the learner, the teacher, the curriculum, school practices, school objects, and pedagogy—is indicated by this research as necessary to inclusion. The case of context is considered as the case of *complex* context—that which Bourdieu (1977, 1984) has called a "social field"—transcending description by socio-contextual demographic markers. Context-generated conceptual worlds, and the interactions of these conceptual worlds in social fields such as global education policy, inclusive education in national education policy, inclusive education practice in specific schools, and in learner-teacher practice in classrooms and playgrounds are all understood as populating the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education.

In the first instance, marginalization[32] is the exclusion of conceptual worlds that are outside of the realm of the social field that generates a specific social reality. Marginalization—a social experience which the aspirational, pragmatic and inquiry inclusive education research literature acknowledges—is complex because of the human tendency to behave and practice according to the valued and favoured dispositions of a known conceptual world.

The insight added by this research study to the knowledge of inclusive education is that beyond including learners with difference, deficit or disability, the practice of inclusive education requires the active learning and acknowledgement of the diversity of conceptual worlds that exist outside of global education policy, national education policy, inclusive education practice in specific schools, and learner-teacher practice in specific classrooms.

10.4.2   Formal schooling and educational advantage

In Australia, educational advantage has a formal, socio-contextual index (the ICSEA (ACARA, 2016c)) which is used across schools to understand the typical learner. This study has provided further insight into understanding advantage and disadvantage for the learner

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[32] The term 'marginalization' is understood here as Mowat's (2015) reconceptualization of marginalization as discussed in Chapter 2, *Literature Review*, section 2.4.4 pp. 49-50.

based on notions of stacked disadvantage and social geographic isolation and the possible contribution of these contextual characteristics on the fading of learners from performance and participation in formal schooling, and the gradual development of relative conceptual poverty in the learner compared to the curriculum.

Bourdieu's (1999) understanding that social reality exists in minds and in practices positions formal schooling as a social field in which minds and practices meet. This study has added insight to the aspirational, pragmatic and inquiry research literature knowledge of inclusive education by focusing on the learner—imagined and actual—as participant in formal schooling rather than subject of inclusive education. In formal schooling, the learner participates by degrees of performance in studies and attendance at the school. The actual learner's knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions are either entirely congruent with the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions expected of them in the processes of formal schooling or, by degrees, these attributes are incongruent.

Understanding formal schooling as a social field, educational advantage exists for the prospective learner to the extent that learner mind and practices are congruent with the expectations of formal schooling. To the extent that the learner mind and practices are incongruent with these expectations is the extent to which the learner is present but not performing or, more extremely, neither present nor performing.

In Bourdieusian terms, the social field of formal schooling can centripetally engage the mind and practices of the learner if the learner capabilities are congruent with those capabilities valued by formal schooling. Alternatively, the learner capabilities can be such that there is no alignment with the capabilities expected by the processes of formal schooling: the learner can become educationally disadvantaged by this lack of alignment, and gradually be an element under the influence of the centrifugal force of the social field of formal schooling.

Aspirational, pragmatic and inquiry research literature of inclusive education regards formal schooling as including the learner with educational disadvantage as a subject, valuing that which the learner cannot do or does not have. Advantage or disadvantage are measured according to the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that are valued by formal schooling. This study adds the insight of the learner as a participant in formal schooling, and that the degree of participation is dependent on the degree to which the mind and practices of the learner are congruent with the mind and practices acknowledged and favoured by formal schooling. Educational advantage depends on the degree of congruence between the context-specific learner and the imagined learner.

10.4.3   Development and use of curriculum

In the aspirational, pragmatic and inquiry inclusive education research literature, the curriculum has been either disregarded, or regarded as problematic. This research has placed the *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2013/2014) as an important element in understanding the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education.

In Bourdieu's understanding of the centripetal and centrifugal forces of any social field, this research understands the curriculum as a structuring element in the social field of inclusive education. Without acknowledging teacher capacity and autonomy in the adaptation of any curriculum to any context, it is a structuring device which can act centripetally and centrifugally in establishing learners with educational advantage and learners with educational disadvantage in the social field of inclusive education.

In this study, the *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA, 2013/2014) document has been demonstrated to imagine learners as context- and concept-neutral while developing prescriptive general capabilities (see Chapter 5, *Curriculum-imagined Learner*). Learner conceptual development is not acknowledged in this document, while capabilities development is a major focus. The theoretical stance of this study (see Chapter 3, *Theoretical Considerations*) has found this disconnect between conceptual world and capabilities development to be problematic. Vygotsky (1966, 1978, 1986), Bakhtin (1986), Bourdieu (1977, 1984) and Sen (1985, 1989) each acknowledge the inextricable connection between context and conceptual frameworks constituted by conceptual development, the development of knowledge and understanding, and the development of skills, behaviours and dispositions. The curriculum-imagined learner and the context-specific learner both have contexts.

The curriculum-imagined learner has only the context of the document which is really the context of the authors of the document. As Lingard and colleagues (Lewis & Lingard, 2015; Rawolle & Lingard, 2008; Sellar & Lingard, 2013) have noted, contemporary curriculums frequently have the context of the contemporary global education policy field which is influenced by the cross-field effects of international bodies (e.g., the Organization of Economic cooperation & Development, OECD), the media and edu-business, all with varying degrees of fiscal interest in the contribution of formal schooling through the learner to their respective enterprises.

The context-specific learner carries a range of contextual characteristics related to learner (dis)advantage, learner access to communication flow in available social fields, and learner

fading from attendance and performance in formal schooling. For the context-specific learner, conceptual poverty is better understood as resulting from access to limited information flow in social fields. Conceptual poverty is a contextual marker that culminates from a collection of foundational contextual markers of stacked disadvantage, social geographic isolation and fading. Conceptual poverty may simply be another way of thinking about not sharing the educational advantage that the curriculum-imagined learner possesses. In Bourdieusian terms, conceptual poverty may be the lot of those learners whose context-engendered minds and practices have little correspondence with the minds and practices of learners (such as curriculum authors) caught up in the centripetal forces of the social field of global education policy.

The insight this study has brought to the understanding of curriculum in the case of context is that of its inherent power to include or exclude learners on the basis of which conceptual worlds it values and of which conceptual worlds it has no apparent knowledge. A curriculum is seen as a significant centripetal force in the case of context in the enactment of inclusive education in formal schooling. How a curriculum is developed and used impacts on the inclusion or otherwise of capable context-specific learners.

10.5   Opportunities for Further Research

The scope of this research in to the case of context in inclusive education was limited by the use of single official document to identify how the learner is imagined, and a small number of locations to identify context-specific learner characteristics. Indicators of the imagined learner were drawn and analyzed from an excerpt of an Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2013/2014, 2016b) document. Only six outside-of-the-box locations in New South Wales, Australia—where almost entire cohorts of learners were achieving below expected levels on assessment—were used to establish contextual characteristics of the context-specific learner.

Opportunities for further research into the case of context are, subsequently, many and varied. In general, these opportunities could address further investigation into the imagined learner and the context-specific learner across numerous aspects of formal schooling, and the congruence or otherwise of conceptual worlds across those aspects. The methodology used by this research provides the opportunity to use a standardized mixed-methods approach of investigating the case of context with consistency across all further studies. Each of these opportunities for future research will be discussed in more detail below.

10.5.1 Learners and congruence of conceptual worlds

There are other pathways to investigate the imagined learner that could involve document or text analysis, and analysis of physical settings and social interactions that occur there. For instance, the learner is imagined in the conceptual worlds of the teachers who work with actual learners as they plan and evaluate, and that conceptualization of learners likely plays itself out in the day-to-day functioning of formal schooling (e.g., in staff room discussions, in the policies and procedures that address relationships in schools, in the physical organization of learning spaces, or the design of assessment tasks).

Other than in an official document, there are other forms in which the actual learner is imagined in specific locations. The voice of the context-specific learner was not included in this research and would seem a natural development in future research seeking to further develop context-specific understandings of education that included the curriculum-imagined and context-specific learner. What has not been incorporated in this research is the self-imaginings of the context-specific learner. Learners might be expected to have some imagination regarding themselves across their day-to-day participation in their families, communities and schools.

Any number of school-based documents and incidental school-based dialogues, or individual verbal accounts, could provide a rich source of data for further investigation of the imagined learner in specific locations and situations.

Further, there are additional pathways by which the actual learner could be further investigated that would likely act as a supplement to the wealth of demographic data available. For instance, the actual or figurative voices of individual learners could be incorporated in future research to assist in the identification of pre-existing knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that come with the learner in to formal schooling and to better understand the congruence or incongruence of the conceptual worlds of the imagined learner and the context-specific learner.

Finally, this research study has opened the door for further development of an understanding of the theme of conceptual poverty in the imagined and context-specific learner. The theoretical approaches of Vygotsky, Bourdieu, Bakhtin and Sen, are well-suited to this further research, as is the cross-location observation of the misalignment of specific frames of official knowledge with context-driven conceptual stores.

10.5.2　Standardized methodology

The research methodology used by this research was designed to be of practical use to individual schools and their communities, as well as to local regions which include a range of schools. It is hoped that it could be of use on a national level as well. The research methodology was borne out of a pragmatic theorization of the case of context across sites rather than a case study of a specific context. It provides a framework and strategies by which indicators of the imagined learner and characteristics of the context-specific learner may be identified and further explored, and by which the relative advantage / disadvantage of conceptual worlds might be determined in relation to the expectations of success in formal schooling.

It is highly likely that, in some specific locations, there are additional characteristics of the context-specific learner to be unearthed. For example, within the limitations of this research, Brewarrina alone carried the category of more than 25% of the population being under 15 years of age, which was eventually discarded from contributing to a major theme as it was only relevant to that one context. Nonetheless, this seemed an important stand-alone artefact to be heard, and may be so for other contexts which were not included in this cross-site study. Succinctly, the standardized methodology utilized by this research is both useful and limited. It is useful to better understand the cross-site themes of the case of context impacting on learners and the enactment of inclusive education, and it is useful in identifying stand-alone data artefacts related to a specific site that are relevant to the development of the learner's conceptual world within that specific site. The limitation is that the stand-alone artefact may be ignored in cross-site study when it is important to learners from a specific context while not relevant to the case of context across sites.

It is also highly likely that, in some specific aspects of formal schooling other than a curriculum, there are additional indicators of how the learner is imagined. For example, this research chose the *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum* (ACARA 2013/2014) document, but could just as easily have chosen another normative cross-schools document if dealing with several schools, or a within-school normative document (such as a school behaviour management policy or guidelines document) to identify indicators of the imagined learner driving any location's expectations of the actual learner. Again, the standardized methodology developed and utilized by this research is both useful and limited. It is useful to better understand the imagined learner across a range of schools based on indicators from *a specific and normative* cross-schools' document, however, it is limited by which document is chosen to mine for better understanding of the conceptualization of the imagined learner.

The value of this research methodology to future research is that, once the parameters of any bounded location-set are determined, it is a context-adaptable research methodology. It is able to assist in developing insights into the congruence of the imagined learner and the actual learner, and therefore to assist in pragmatic approaches to conceptualizing and enacting inclusive education in that particular case of context (whether that be across a range of schools, or within a specific school).

10.6   Final Conclusion

The findings of this research have indicated that the case of context is complex, consisting of specific locations and their participants, and the formal guidelines and documents that influence formal schooling. From the findings, a further element belonging to the complex case of context is inferred: that diverse conceptual worlds—not necessarily congruent with each other and of local and global origin—are present and interact in the process of formal schooling.

The aspirational, pragmatic and inquiry inclusive education research literatures acknowledge the importance of context in relation to the enactment of inclusive education, however, there is no discernible agreement about the conceptualization of the term (see Chapter 2) across these categories of research literature. The case of context is presented in this thesis as dynamic: the elements of learner, curriculum and formal schooling may be investigated and applied in highly specific locations and on a more extensive scale. The case of context has the capacity to address the contextual characteristics that impact the efficacy of inclusive education in micro- and macro-settings (i.e., in a single, small location, as well as in a region or country). Unlike the term context used by inclusive education research literature to date, the case of context investigated in this research has the capacity to be used as a common comparator across innumerable locations and situations. If the common comparator across all locations is the case of context, rather than stand-alone demographic indicators or academic performance indicators, the enactment of inclusive education has the possibility of being implemented with better adapted context sensitivity. The possibility of conceptual worlds in friction with each other has been acknowledged by this case study, and indicated by the findings. The case of context expects friction between the conceptual world of formal schooling and the conceptual worlds of context-specific learners. This friction belongs to the enactment of inclusive education. The case of context not only allows for exceptions to the rule that may be imposed by the conceptual world favoured by formal schooling: it enables investigation and identification of the conceptual world of the rule and the conceptual worlds that are not congruent with that of the rule.

The inter-relationship of the multivariable and multidimensional factors of the case of context may present either educational advantage or disadvantage for the learner who is to be included in formal schooling. Rita and the rookie teacher (from the Prelude in Chapter 1 in this thesis) were both carrying and working with multivariable and multidimensional factors of that specific case of context. Rita's factors resulted in significant educational disadvantage for her in the formal schooling implemented by the rookie teacher precisely because there were too many unknowns of Rita's 'within-learner' factors for her to be included in the rookie teacher's classroom and practice (see Preface Figure 1, Part II). The incongruence of the conceptual worlds—of the learner (Rita), the rookie teacher, and the guidelines and expectations of formal schooling in that setting (at that period of time and practice) - was jarring, characterised by dramatic friction. Rita's normal was not the normal of the rookie teacher, the classroom or the school because of the incongruence of conceptual worlds that occurred in the dynamics of that place at that time.

As a vehicle to understanding and taking a context-specific pathway to the enactment of inclusive education, the case of context has agency where the demographics of context do not. The case of context has the capacity to account not just for the multivariable and multidimensional factors of context and participants, but that these factors are dynamic in place and time. The case of context pays attention to the congruence of conceptual worlds present in formal schooling, and thus differs substantially to the historical attention in formal schooling to demographic measures of disadvantage, deficit and difference.

The case of context allows for the inclusion of a diverse range of context-engendered conceptual worlds in formal schooling. Ultimately, education is as inclusive in practice as it intends to be by aspiration to the extent that diverse conceptual worlds find a relational place in the world valued by formal schooling.

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Appendix A References for Analytic Markers

Table A.1 Summary of analytic markers and literature of inclusive education

Conceptualizations	Learner	Curriculum (& Inclusive Education)	Inclusion
Inclusive Education Categories			
Aspirational	No key author(s), but key documents (UNESCO, 1945/2014, 1990). Other authors: Bhopal & Myers, 2016; Cross et al, 2009; Dopson-Campuzano & Batchelder, 2009; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Cross et al, 2009; Forlin, 2006; Gaymes San Vicente, 2016; HREOC, 2000; Silla, Hobbs & Wang, 2008; Warnock, 1975, 1991; Wendelborg, & Tøssebro, 2010.	No key author(s). Other authors: Bjørnsrud and Nilsen, 2011; Chappell, 2008; Osberg & Biesta, 2010; Udvari-Solner & Thousand, 1996.	No key author(s). Other authors and documents: Bank-Mikkelson, 1969; Beloin & Peterson, 2000; Berlach & Chambers, 2011a. 2011b; Bhopal & Myers, 2016; Gaymes San Vicente, 2016; Meyer, 2003; Nirje, 1970; Thomas, 2013; Wendelborg, & Tøssebro, 2010; Wolfensberger, 1972. Australian Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and subsequent Disability Discrimination and Other Human Rights Legislation Amendment Act (2009).

Conceptualizations	Learner	Curriculum (& Inclusive Education)	Inclusion
Pragmatic	No key author(s). Other authors: Ahsan & Burnip, 2007; Ajuwon, 2008; Amatapee & Anastasiou, 2015; Bartonova, 2016; Beek, 2002; Calculator & Black, 2009; Deng & Harris, 2008; Deng & Poon-McBrayer, 2004; Deng & Zhu, 2000; Dizdarević, Vantic-Tanjić & Nikolić, 2010; Donohue & Borman, 2014; Forlin, 2011; Forlin & Tierney, 2006; Gritzmacher & Gritzmacher, 1995/2010); Jackson et al, 2008; Johnstone & Chapman, 2009; Kenny & Shevlin, 2001; Lynch & Irvine, 2009; Mitchell et al, 2008; Nagel et al, 2006; Nilsen, 2017; Ntombela, 2009; Otukile-Mongwaketse et al,	No key author(s). Other authors: Jackson et al (2008); Nilsen (2017); Otukile-Mongwaketse et al, 2016; Le Fanu, 2015.	Slee & Cook (1993a); Jackson et al (2008); Cigman (2007); Warnock (1975, 1991).

Conceptualizations	Learner	Curriculum (& Inclusive Education)	Inclusion
	2016; Radoman et al, 2006; Robinson, 2011; Ring & Travers, 2005; Rydstrom, 2010; Shevlin et al, 2008; Singal, 2005 2006a, 2008; Urwick and Elliott, 2010; Villa et al, 2005; Wischnowski et al, 2004; Wu & Komesaroff, 2007.		
Inquiry	Key author: Slee, 1993, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2010, 2012, 2014; and Slee with other authors— Barton & Slee, 1999; Graham & Slee, 2004; Slee & Allan, 2001. Other authors: Dalkilic & Vadeboncoeur, 2016; Danaher & Danaher, 2000; Kam Pun Wong et al, 2004; Kenny, 1997; Kenny & Binchy, 2009; Le Fanu, 2014; Graham & Harwood, 2011;	Key author: Slee, 1996, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2004, 2006, 2015; and Slee with other authors—Slee & Weiner, 2011. Other authors: Guenther, Bat and Osborne, 2017; Hajisoteriou et al, 2012; Le Fanu, 2014; Miskovic & Curcic, 2016.	Key author: Slee, 2001b, 2001c, 2006b, 2010, 2013; and Slee with other authors—Barton & Slee, 1999; Graham & Slee, 2004, 2008; Slee & Allan, 2001. Other authors: Barton 1996, 1997; Kearney & Kane, 2006; Kiuppis, 2014; Mukhopadhyay, 2015; Simons and Masschelein, 2005. Key Journal: International Journal of Inclusive Education.

Conceptualizations	Learner	Curriculum (& Inclusive Education)	Inclusion
	Mallett, 2008; McGrath, 2006; Miskovic & Curcic, 2016; Mukherjee, 2017; Mukhopadhyay, 2015; Norwich, 2014; Potts, 1998; Qiong Xu et al, 2018; Reindal, 2009, 2010, 2016; Rogers, 2013; Sharma et al, 2016; Singal, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Terzi, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2014; Toson et al, 2013; Vandekinderen et al, 2018; Vehmas, 2010; Ypinazar & Pagliano, 2004.		

Appendix B Administration

Appendix B. 1 Informed Consent Form

Project Title: The experience and knowledge of inclusive education practitioners—a Bakhtinian approach to investigating the curriculum-imagined learner and the context-specific learner

HREC Approval Number Project H14/06-148

Participant Informed Consent Form—Individual Interviews

You have been invited to participate in a 60 minute semi-structured interview. Before we commence the interview, please read and complete this form.

I consent to participate in this research project and agree that:

1. An Information Sheet has been provided to me that I have read and understood;
2. I have had any questions I had about the project answered to my satisfaction by the Information Sheet and any further verbal explanation provided;
3. I understand that my participation or non-participation in the research project will not affect my academic standing or my employment;
4. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without penalty;
5. I understand the research findings will be included in the researcher's publication(s) on the project and this may include conferences and articles written for journals and other methods of dissemination stated in the Information Sheet;
6. I understand that to preserve anonymity and maintain confidentiality of participants that fictitious names may be used any publication(s);
7. I am aware that a Plain English statement of results will be available on the web address provided in the Information Sheet;
8. I agree that I am providing informed consent to participate in this project.

Name: [please print]	Position:
	255
Contact Address:	Email:
Telephone:	Signature:
Date:	I request a copy of the transcript of my interview (please circle) YES NO

Should there be any concern about the nature and/or conduct of this research project, please contact CQUniversity's Office of Research (07) 49232603, or ethics@cqu.edu.au

Appendix B. 2 Briefing Sheet for Interviewee

Research Project

The experience and knowledge of inclusive education practitioners regarding the curriculum-imagined learner and the context-specific learner.

Aims

To investigate specific factors that are characteristic of curriculum-imagined learners in documents representing the norm, and context-specific learners who attend school in 'out-of-the-box' settings/situations.

To establish publicly available knowledge regarding learners as participants in their social context in order to develop a profile of the curriculum-imagined learner in documents representing the norm and of the context-specific learner in specific locations.

To identify common themes which describe the shared experience of learners in 'out-of-the-box' situations.

To initiate 'conversations' between practitioners' knowledge of learners in 'out-of-the-box' situations and the learner profiles indicated by the data.

Research Background

i) **Data gathered**—The data was gathered from data sources available in the public domain, and therefore considered to be data available to all educational practitioners without requiring additional applications or permissions.

The data used to establish a profile of the 'curriculum-imagined learner' was the Australian Curriculum *General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum (2013)* document[1]. The data used to establish a profiles of 'context-specific learners' in each location were the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Local Government Area, Statistical Area, QuickStats), DOTE report (Vinson & Rawsthorne, 2015), NSW Department of Health (HealthStats), Australian Curriculum Assessment & Reporting Authority *MySchool* website, the Australian Early Development Index, the NSW BOCSAR.

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[1] http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/generalcapabilities/pdf/overview Last viewed, July 17, 2017

The location data pursued was driven by the researcher's knowledge of each of the locations (that she had visited and worked in at least one school in each location in the past 24 months), her direct observation that more than the average number of learners in these settings appeared to struggle with accessing and mastering the curriculum, and her curiosity as to why this might be occurring. The data was pursued assuming that the learners from these locations were being exposed to the same curriculum and teaching methods of their state and national counterparts.

The data was gathered for six locations around NSW (in the order of Brewarrina, Lake Munmorah, Condobolin, Cobar, Ulladulla and Lithgow). Geographically, the locations range across geographical descriptors/contexts that are identified by the ABS (ASGC Remoteness Areas, 2006) as very remote (Brewarrina, Cobar), outer regional (Condobolin), inner regional (Lithgow, Ulladulla) and major cities (Lake Munmorah). Lake Munmorah is considered to be a part of Greater Sydney.

ii) **Analytical process**—Initially, the data was built in to a location-specific, same-format Location Matrix for each location (6 separate but same-format matrices). From these six matrices, a single Major Matrix of emerging themes was developed, eventually containing over 30 emerging themes, not all of which were shared by each location. Some of the emerging themes included: poor readiness for school, higher incidence than the state/national average of developmental risk in domains such as language for children below 6 years of age, high incidence of people on the disability pension, and high incidence of health impairments including psychiatric admissions). This single Major Matrix began to indicate that some of the emerging themes were common to at least four of the locations and, in many cases, common to all six locations.

From this single 'emerging' themes Major Matrix, groupings of sub-themes were constructed, such grouping suggesting four major themes. These four major themes indicated common characteristics of the learners in each location and were so named: *Geographic Social Isolation*, *Conceptual Poverty*, *Fading* and *Stacked Disadvantage*.

iii) **Cross-case analysis**—Specific Comparative Tables were then developed for the purpose of more intensive cross-case analysis of the six locations. These tables were most often developed in response to the questions begged by the data in the single, 'emerging themes' matrix (e.g. "What are the rates of domestic and

violent crimes in each of the locations compared to the state average incidence rate within the six kilometre radius of the town setting?" OR "How many hours travel is this town from the next regional town/nearest major city if an individual has to travel by public transport?" OR "What are the health statistics like across six locations compared to the state average of statistics on the same measure of health?"). These Comparative Tables were then used as further supporting evidence (validation) for the sub-themes belonging to the four major themes.

Initial Findings

The themes themselves are considered some of the initial findings of this study. Other preliminary and conditional findings are:

1. Traditional/commonly used disadvantage categories are limiting in determining contemporary educational need and disadvantage.
2. Educational need is poorly predicted when using a norm/comparator such as the Australian Curriculum 'General Capabilities'.
3. For the purpose of learning to read, current educational delivery appears to disadvantage learners from the locations of this study.
4. 14 to 25 year old females from the locations of this study are 2 to 3 times more likely to have poorer mental health than 14 to 25 year old males from the same locations.
5. Thinking processes of individuals from the locations of this study are likely different compared to thinking processes of individuals from locations where NAPLAN/the Australian Curriculum capabilities are mastered at a consistently higher level.

Appendix B.3 Research Questions and Focus Questions from Interviewee Package

Research Questions

This project hopes to answer the following research questions.

When considering 'out-of-the-box' situations and settings:

Q1. How is the learner imagined?

Q2. What other markers of context characterize the learner?

Q3. What does this imply for inclusive education in the context of formal schooling?

Questions for Interviewees Considering Data/Themes

i)   What could this data be saying about learners, about what we expect of learners, and about what is possible for learners? What does this data suggest to us about learners in these situations? What do you make of the learners in these situations?

ii)   What might be happening for these learners that can't be explained by traditional concepts of educational disadvantage or educational need? How can this data explain learners in these situations?

iii)   What are the factors/the learner characteristics that the learner brings to school that are within teacher control/education system control that emerge from this study?

iv)   How might this data change teaching practice in relation to site-specific learners? (Can you provide a scenario)?

Appendix C Tables

Table C.1 Coding, cross-location coding frequency and categories

Coding	Cross-location Frequency	Category
1. Disadvantage Measure #	6	Yes
2. Ranking /621 NSW Postcodes #	6	Yes
3. Remote ^^	3	Yes
4. 'Geographical Social Isolation' +	6	Yes
5. 'Urban edge' +	1	No
6. Agricultural production/Fisheries/Forestry ^^	5	Yes
7. Mining ^^	2	No
8. Rental/Real Estate ^^	1	No
9. Construction ^^	2	No
10. Retail trade ^^	1	No
11. Public Admin/Education/Health Services/Safety ^^	1	No
12. Data varies across sources	3	Yes
13. >25% of population <15 yrs old ^^	1	No
14. Home internet access <69% of households ^^	6	Yes
15. Low family income #, ^^	5	Yes
16. Long-term unemployment (ranked at <250/621) #	6	Yes
17. Rent assistance (ranked at < 250/621) #	3	Yes

Coding		Cross-location Frequency	Category
18.	High Incidence of disability pension (ranked at <250/621) #	5	Yes
19.	>80% English speaking, Australian by birth ^^	6	Yes
20.	Health risk factors above state average in 2+ categories	6	Yes
21.	Higher incidence of psychiatric admissions (ranked at < 250/621) #	3	Yes
22.	Large Aboriginal population compared to other centres >15% ^^	2	No
23.	Moderate incidence of developmental risk (see Emerging Theme 25)	4	Yes
24.	High incidence developmental risk (see Emerging Theme 26)	4	Yes
25.	Not ready for school (2 or more criteria of developmental vulnerability below Australian average) ##	4	Yes
26.	Not ready for school (> 3 criteria of developmental vulnerability exceed Australian average) ##	4	Yes
27.	Readiness for Schooling (< 250/621) #	3	Yes
28.	Very High Incidence of Violent Crimes within 6km of home (100% + > NSW incidence average per 100,000) **	4	Yes
29.	Moderately High incidence of domestic crime (10–49% more than NSW incidence average per 1000,000) **	6	Yes
30.	"Diversity poor" +	6	Yes
31.	"Experience poor"+	6	Yes
32.	"Fading"+	6	Yes
33.	Social engagement in primary school is high (>80% all students attend 90% of the time) in at least one primary school ^	2	No

Coding	Cross-location Frequency	Category
34. Attendance rate < 90% (high school) ^	6	Yes
35. Attendance rate > 90% (primary school) ^	5	Yes
36. Basic reading poor (NAPLAN) Yr 3 (ranking < 150/621) #	3	Yes
37. Basic numeracy poor (NAPLAN Yr 3) (ranking < 150/621) #	3	Yes
38. Basic reading poor (NAPLAN) Yr 9 (ranking < 150/621) #	6	Yes
39. Basic numeracy poor (NAPLAN Yr 9) (ranking < 150/621) #	4	Yes
40. Stagnation in learner performance—NAPLAN Numeracy and Literacy, primary and secondary, ranked <200/621 postcodes #	5	Yes
41. Year 9 Numeracy & Reading: Learner No Longer Performs compared to primary school (drop of >75 ranking points) #	3	Yes
42. >30% learners leave town to attend high school	3	Yes
43. Adolescent learner 'left behind'	3	Yes
44. Alcohol evidence (risky consumption)12 to 17 years	1	No
45. Young adults not engaged (ranking, <200/621)—post-school or work	3	Yes
46. 'Stacked Disadvantage '*	6	Yes

Sources: *Nurius et al (2015); # Vinson & Rawsthorne (2015); ^ My School 2011–2016; + Defined major emerging themes (see definitions in Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9); ** NSW BOCSAR 2015; ## AEDC (Australian Government, 2012/2015); ^^ ABS Census, 2011;—NSW DOH HealthStats, 2014.

Table C.2 Relationship between the categories and the major themes

Categories	Major Theme Conceptual Poverty	Major Theme Geographical Social Isolation	Major Theme Fading	Major Theme Stacked Disadvantage
1. Disadvantage Measure #	√	√	√	√
2. Ranking/621 NSW Postcodes #	√	√	√	√
3. Remote ^^		√		√
4. 'Geographical Social Isolation' +		√		√
5. Agricultural production/Fisheries/Forestry ^^	?	?	?	?
6. Data varies across sources				√
7. Home internet access <69% of households ^^	√	√		√
8. Low family income #, ^^	√	√		√
9. Long-term unemployment (ranked at <250/621) #	√	√	√	√
10. Rent assistance (ranked at < 250/621) #	√			√
11. High Incidence of disability pension (ranked at <250/621) #	√	√		√
12. >80% English speaking, Australian by birth ^^	√	√		
13. Health risk factors above state average in 2+ categories				√
14. Higher incidence of psychiatric admissions (ranked at < 250/621) #		√		√

Categories	Major Theme Conceptual Poverty	Major Theme Geographical Social Isolation	Major Theme Fading	Major Theme Stacked Disadvantage
15. Moderate incidence of developmental risk (see Emerging Theme 25)				√
16. High incidence developmental risk (see Emerging Theme 26)	√			√
17. Not ready for school (2 or more criteria of developmental vulnerability below Australian average) ##	√			√
18. Not ready for school (> 3 criteria of developmental vulnerability exceed Australian average) ##	√			√
19. Readiness for Schooling (< 250/621) #	√			√
20. Very High Incidence of Violent Crimes within 6km of home (100% + > NSW incidence average per 100,000) **				√
21. Moderately High incidence of domestic crime (10–49% more than NSW incidence average per 1000,000) **				√
22. "Diversity poor" +		√		
23. "Experience poor"+	√	√		√
24. "Fading"+			√	

Categories	Major Theme Conceptual Poverty	Major Theme Geographical Social Isolation	Major Theme Fading	Major Theme Stacked Disadvantage
25. Attendance rate < 90% (high school) ^		√	√	
26. Attendance rate > 90% (primary school) ^			√	
27. Basic reading poor (NAPLAN) Yr 3 (ranking < 150/621) #	√		√	√
28. Basic numeracy poor (NAPLAN Yr 3) (ranking < 150/621) #	√		√	√
29. Basic reading poor (NAPLAN) Yr 9 (ranking < 150/621) #	√		√	√
30. Basic numeracy poor (NAPLAN Yr 9) (ranking < 150/621) #	√		√	√
31. Stagnation in learner performance—NAPLAN Numeracy and Literacy, primary and secondary, ranked <200/621 postcodes #			√	√
32. Year 9 Numeracy & Reading: Learner No Longer Performs compared to primary school (drop of >75 ranking points) #			√	
33. >30% learners leave town to attend high school		√	√	
34. Adolescent learner 'left behind'		√	√	
35. Young adults not engaged (ranking, <200/621)—post-school or work	√	√	√	√

Categories	Major Theme Conceptual Poverty	Major Theme Geographical Social Isolation	Major Theme Fading	Major Theme Stacked Disadvantage
36. 'Stacked Disadvantage '*	√	√	√	√

Sources: *Nurius et al (2015); # Vinson & Rawsthorne (2015); ^ My School 2011–2016; + Defined major emerging themes (see definitions in Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9); ** NSW BOCSAR 2015; ## AEDC,(Australian Government, 2012/2015); ^^ ABS Census, 2011;—NSW DOH HealthStats, 2014

Note: ? This indicates that the Emerging Theme, although occurring across all six locations, did not reasonably support any of the four Major Themes.

Appendix D The In-depth Interviews

D.1 Purpose & Implementation of the Interviews

For this research project, the interview was conducted with the purpose and rationale of 'member-checking'. Bazely's (2013) definition of member-checking is that it is a data generation and analysis tool that establishes agreement between "other stakeholders regarding the conclusions … reached" (p. 408) by a research endeavour. The interview, used as a member-checking research device, provided primary data that was used to specifically confirm or disconfirm the validity and dependability of data analysis related to the curriculum-imagined and context-specific learners.

In-depth interviewing was the technique that was implemented. In-depth interviewing is described by Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015) as:

> … face to face encounters between the researcher and informants directed towards understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words. (p. 102)

In-depth interviewing allows for data that is not yet known or documented to be incorporated into a study. As a technique, it is " … nondirective, unstructured, non-standardized, and open-ended interviewing", and is "modeled after a conversation between equals rather than a formal question and answer exchange" (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 102).

The role of the researcher in the in-depth interviews was as participant rather than 'pollster' or 'prober' (refer to Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 109). The in-depth interview was designed to elicit responses, questions, comments and discussion in relation to the demographic data and, by so doing, to elicit the participant's knowledge and experience. The purpose of using this format was to gather data indicative of practitioner knowledge, expressed in their informal and formal language, and based on their experience of the context-specific learner from outside-of-the-box inclusive education settings.

The interview focus questions may be viewed in the *Interviewee Package* (see Appendix B, Administration, B.1, B.2 and B.3). These focus questions were designed as a set of open-ended, flexible questions deliberately presented in a loosely professional format with additional indicators of where the conversation might go. Each of the three in-depth interviews was, as far as possible, intended to incorporate formal and informal utterances co-constructing understanding (cf Bakhtin, 1986; Harvey, 2015).

A week ahead of the scheduled individual interviews, the participants were provided with identical interviewee packages. These packages contained:

- a brief description of the research project

- several focus questions

- the research questions

- a consent form

- and, a wide range of visually presented secondary data (in graph and table format) grouped in sections and labelled *Profile of the Curriculum-imagined learner* (see Chapter 5, Table 5.1), and *Influences on the Context-specific Learner*

The graphs and tables have not been included in this thesis as there were over 20 different figures, however, the remainder of the inclusions mentioned above may be found in Appendix B.

An interview time and place were agreed upon between each participant and the researcher. The interviews were audio-recorded and the digital audio recording was transcribed by an independent transcribing service.

Three separate one-on-one interviews were conducted between the researcher and three research participants. The three separate interviews were an hour each in length.

D.2 Participant Selection

The selection of research participants for interviewing involved the purposive and opportunistic selection of three participants. Etika, Musa and Alkassim (2016) researched the usefulness and reach of purposive sampling, concluding that the primary disadvantage of purposive selection of participants is that it may distort data by introducing bias if the research demands that data is representative of a large population or is intended to determine generalizable applications of the research. Etika et al. (2016) propose the advantage of purposive selection of participants is that it yields very specific data (e.g., data from expert knowledge) which is more applicable to a particular area of thinking, interpretation or understanding, and " … when investigating new areas of research, to garner whether or not further study would be worth the effort" (p. 3).

The purpose of this research and thesis was to investigate the case of context, and specifically the imagined learner and actual learner included in formal schooling. It was intended to identify additional understandings to those commonly documented across inclusive education literature. For this reason, purposive participant selection was used so as

to maximize expert knowledge and experience of the school-aged learner across a diversity of settings.

The participant selection criteria were very specific, as elaborated in Table D.1 below.

Table D.1 Criteria and purposes for the selection of interview participants

	Selection Criteria for In-depth Interview Participants	Purpose of the Criterion
1	Between 24 years and 74 years of age.	Old enough to have worked in an inclusive education setting for at least a year if they completed a degree directly after finishing high school. Young enough to clearly remember their experience in an inclusive education setting since the passing of the Disability Discrimination Act (1992).
2	Currently works or has worked in or across inclusive education settings and situations.	Has experience working in or across inclusive education settings.
3	Is qualified as a teacher, teacher assistant, or educational manager and has worked with the context-specific learner.	Has experience in a professional and accountable capacity working with the context-specific learner.
4	Has worked as a professional in an inclusive education setting or situation for more than one year.	Has a reasonable length of time exposed to and immersed in an inclusive education setting.
5	Has a pre-existing relationship with the principal researcher in the area of inclusive education.	Can be reasonably expected to be comfortable when engaged in professional conversation with the principal researcher, so as to incorporate both informal and formal language and utterances in the conversation.
6	Has worked in at least one of the following conditions: a) A geographically remote or regional area of Australia b) A school/educational setting population which is culturally diverse by Australian standards	Each of these conditions is designed to increase the likelihood that the interviewee/practitioner has experience in an 'out-of-the-box' educational setting.

Selection Criteria for In-depth Interview Participants	Purpose of the Criterion
c) A school/educational setting that has a greater than 20% incidence of students with learning difficulties as indicated in its 2013 Year 3 or Year 5 NAPLAN results d) A school/educational setting with greater than 50% of individual teaching staff with less than three years' experience.	

In brief, the application of the selection criteria ensured that each participant had inclusive education experience and practice, that their experience was of a professional nature, and their experience in inclusive education had included an educational setting that was not fully accounted for in formal and official documentation of inclusive education practice (in other words, represented each of the participants' experiences of an outside-of-the-box locations and educational settings). The criterion of having a previous relationship with the researcher-practitioner (Criterion 5) was to ensure that the in-depth interview did not only contain formal, professional utterances, but was more likely to revert to informal utterances and, therefore, be more likely to contain exploration of meanings and understandings that were still evolving in each of the participants' understanding (including the researcher) during the discussion. In this way the in-depth interviews were dialogic and co-constructed as described by Harvey (2015).

D.3 Interview Transcripts & Analysis

The interviews were transcribed by an independent transcribing service. It was hypothesized that the themes borne out of the demographic data analysis would be mirrored by the data from the interview transcripts.

The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted by the researcher for the purposes of respondent validation or, that which Bazely (2013) refers to as member-checking, a method that "is seeking agreement from participants and/or other stakeholders regarding the conclusions you (the researcher) have reached" (p. 408).

The interview transcript data were able to be used to establish respondent validation of the themes that emerged from the demographic data analysis. The transcript data was coded, and then the codes cross-referenced to the themes of the demographic data with the purpose of establishing whether the demographic data themes could be applied more broadly than this research project, and transferred from case to case beyond this research project.

Following Bazely's (2013) lead, this research considered that the important issues across relevant data collection and analysis were "what is able to be generalized (applied more broadly) or transferred (from case to case), and under what conditions that can occur" (p. 410). Subsequently, the codes developed from the interview transcripts were not categorized, as the codes were all that was required to establish the dependability and transferability of the themes that emerged from the analysis of the demographic data.

The coding process involved the initial segmenting and coding of utterances from each of the transcripts into three separate spreadsheets. Each of these spreadsheets was very large and, thus, not included in the body of this thesis. Sentence beginnings (or sentence stems) based on the themes from the demographic data were used as organizational tools for the results. The sentence stems that were used were:

- The learner experiences disadvantage as …

- The learner experiences isolation as …

- The learner experiences fading as …

- The learner experiences conceptual poverty as …

These evidentiary codings were organized into tables which have been included in each of the chapters outlining the four themes (i.e., Chapters 6 to 9 inclusive, Tables 6.2, 7.2, 8.6 and 9.2) that emerged from the demographic data.