



# MONASH University

## **Equity and Quality Education: Lived Experiences of Teachers and Students**

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School of Education

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## **Abstract**

This study explores how equity and quality education is understood and enacted in two independent schools in Melbourne, Australia. By investigating the lived experience of middle years teachers, students and school leaders, along with a sector representative, this research responds to current scarcity in understanding of how this sector is reacting to these educational commitments.

Equity and quality are dominant agendas in education at policy and school levels, locally to globally (AITSL, 2011; DET, 2015; DET, 2017a; MCEETYA, 2008; OECD, 2012; UNESCO, 2000; UNESCO 2013/14). These commitments emphasise the responsibility of schools to focus on quality teaching and learning and inclusion as a means to ensure equity and quality education for all. This is despite widespread acknowledgement that the terms and their associated concepts are contested and confused (Reid, 2011; Loreman, Forlin, Chambers, Sharma & Deppeler, 2014), and in light of enduring findings that teachers feel underprepared for the task (Cook, 2004; Curcic, 2009; Evans & Lunt, 2002; Forlin, Keen & Barrett, 2008; Hodgkinson, 2006; Richards & Clough, 2004; Scruggs & Masteropieri, 1996).

Informed by Bourdieu's social critical theory (Grenfell, 2012; Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002), related policy, empirical and theoretical literature, this study used a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Usher & Jackson, 2014). School leaders, teachers and Year 8 students in two co-educational independent schools of typical profile for the sector were invited to participate in focus group discussions and/or one to one semi-structured interviews to share their lived experiences of equity and quality education in their schools. The research expanded to include a system-level perspective when schools identified Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) as a component of their understanding and enactment of

equity and quality education.

Through careful iterative thematic analysis, four major themes were identified as central to student and teacher lived experiences of the principles and practices of equity and quality in the sector. These were:

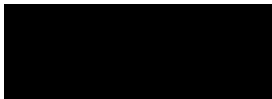
1. Understood as...what is valued
2. Actioned via...practice
3. Offered through...opportunities
4. Expedited by...stakeholders and relationships

Each theme was found to encompass two sub-themes which when taken together, indicated participants experiences of tension and dissonance at points of convergence for equity and quality in the field. Of significance too, was participants' generation of pragmatic responses as a means to manage combinations of connection and disconnection with declared educational agendas for equity and quality. Dynamic and interactive relationships between components of equity and quality were found to shape and be shaping the lived experiences of the teachers and students. The implications of these findings for policy, practice and theory are discussed and the thesis concludes with a summary and recommendations for future research.

## **Declaration**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature.

Print Name: Rucelle Hughes

Date: 14 December 2017

## Acknowledgements

I wish to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this research was conducted and created, the people of the Kulin Nations, and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

I wish to acknowledge the generous financial support I received from both The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) and Monash Research Scholarships throughout my candidature. There is no question that embarking on (let alone completing) this immensely rewarding experience would simply not have been possible without such generosity.

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I thank my Dad for showing me how to be courageous in my life and my thinking. For encouraging me to stay curious and ask questions that it would be easier not too.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CS1	Case School 1
CS2	Case School 2
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DET	Department of Education and Training
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Economic Advantage
ISCA	Independent Schools Council of Australia
ISV	Independent Schools Victoria
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NCCDSSD	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability
NGSC	Non-government Schools Census
NSSC	National Schools Statistics Collection
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	The Program for International Student Assessment
R/LRPE	Read/ Listen, Reflect, Play, Explore
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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## **Dedication**

*For Travis*

*- For being you -*

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

### **Background to the research**

For decades, principles of equity and quality have been dominant in education agendas, and are increasingly prominent in Australian education policy. Focuses on inclusive education research and practice has also been heightened (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015). These policy interests influence all facets of education and shape teaching and learning practice, teacher education and experiences of schooling for all stakeholders, including students and their families. However this increased attention at policy, research and practice levels of education is despite an enduring confusion and contestation over what these concepts mean and how they should be enacted (Loreman, Forlin, Chambers, Sharma & Deppeler, 2014; Reid, 2011). Given current educational climates demand increased accountability and autonomy for schools and educators, understanding how these principles are interpreted and enacted in schools is significant - particularly for students and teachers currently under-served by the status quo. Failure to improve performance over time and persistent inequity in educational outcomes for marginalised and vulnerable groups in Australian schools suggests that current conceptions of equity and quality are at minimum unhelpful and at worst, have perpetuated these trends in educational outcomes (OECD, 2016).

This phenomenological study uses Pierre Bourdieu's social critical theory to explore the lived experiences students and teachers are having as they negotiate these increasingly high stakes focuses. The study prioritised the voices and perspectives of those at the nexus of policy and practice in order to contribute to robust understandings of how dominant yet contested and

confused ideologies are being interpreted and enacted. The use of social critical theory (and Bourdieu's mechanisms of *capital*, *habitus* and *field* in particular) supports consideration of complex, visible and invisible influences on lived experience. In this introductory chapter I outline my personal motivation for the study and relevant conceptual and policy influences on the research context. The research gap is highlighted and the research questions guiding the study are outlined. The chapter concludes with the rationale for the inquiry. This incorporates both the theoretical underpinnings of the study and its significance in addressing the stated research problem.

### *Personal Motivation*

When I commenced this doctoral research, I felt most strongly connected to my teacher identity. My student and researcher identities needed some dusting off and while I knew I would be increasingly reconnecting with these in the coming months and years, recent experiences as a classroom teacher, coordinating learning enhancement in independent middle schools and lecturing in teacher education at tertiary levels defined what would become my research focus.

Independent schools and the students who attend them are frequently associated with ideas of social and economic advantage in reference to education. As an insider-teacher in these contexts I was conscious of this privilege and the awareness that as a teacher I had many advantages in supporting all my students to realise success. It was around this very acknowledgment that my subjective tensions arose as I struggled to make this a reality for the privileged students in the privileged context I taught in. My experience as a teacher was shaped significantly by diversity in student ability (in many cases upwards of 7 years difference), disability and learning needs, social and emotional factors, racial diversity, gender and identity. To this end, my teacher experience at a classroom level shares

complexity faced by so many in this profession who are committed to improving outcomes and offering quality education for all students. I found myself needing to negotiate many agendas from many perspectives with multiple stakeholders. Coupled with my own commitment, drive and philosophy of best practice - more often than not aligning with that espoused in the various fields in which I was operating - I was struck by how challenging it was to meet the individual needs of all students in this privileged school.

I am cognisant that my personal and professional experience of being both an insider-student and an insider-teacher to independent school discourse shapes and influences not only my world-view and lived experience but also my perspectives as a researcher and as a doctoral student. Thomson and Gunter (2011) deconstruct the dominant insider-outsider binary in an attempt to acknowledge the messiness of research practice in schools. While conceding that the binary perspective continues to dominate they emphasise that in undertaking doctoral research it is essential that insiders have outside perspectives and vice versa (Thomson & Gunter, 2011, p. 18). Further, they point to a responsibility of researchers to continuously shift in engaging with these perspectives making use of what Bauman (2000) refers to as fluid or liquid identities. It is with this understanding, coupled with my prior experience that I begin my inquiry to better understand the lived experiences of enacting equity and quality education in schools.

## **Conceptual influences on the research context**

### *Equity and quality in education*

Equity and quality education agendas are theoretically and conceptually impacted by social, historical, political, scientific and economic contexts, which have shaped their interpretation and significance in current educational milieu. Figure 1.1 offers an illustration of prominent philosophies and practices informing these principles. Please note, orientations of the words

are considered neither sequential nor reflective of priority or influence on the research context.

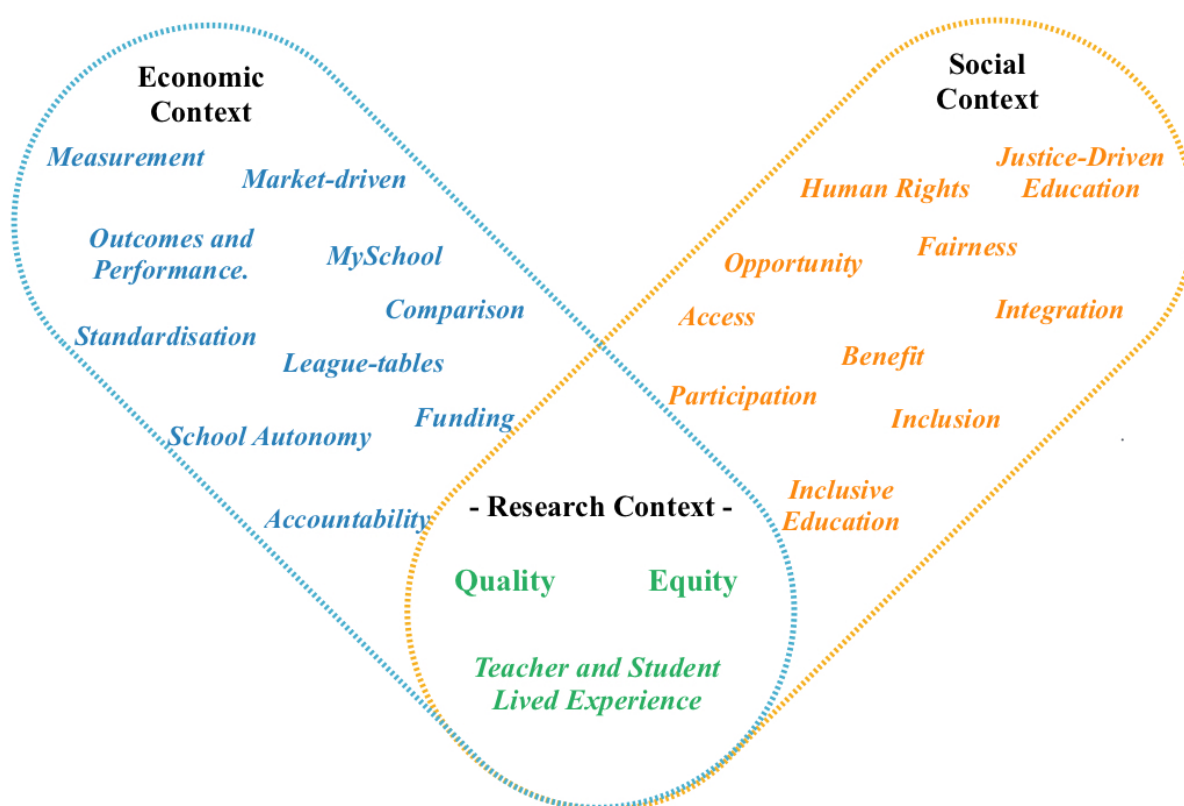


Figure 1.1. Conceptual influences on the research context.

Given widespread use of the expression *equity and quality education* it is important to clarify that I will be using this phrase in a particular way and in reference to a particular idea. Establishing this requires consideration of how each principle is conceptualised in policy and education ideologies.

### *Conceptual influences on equity*

Equity in education is now framed as a democratic principle meaning “personal or social circumstances...are not obstacles to achieving educational potential (fairness) and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills (inclusion)” (OECD, 2012, p. 9). This framing is a result of ongoing development. For students with disabilities, a slow evolution of equity toward increased fairness and inclusivity in education can be seen from

the 60's and 70's, when public attitudes previously in favour of segregated schooling for students with disabilities were changing. Increased advocacy of a human rights perspective against separation and isolation of minority groups resulted in a movement toward integration. This progression was marked by the idea that students with special needs would now be *a part of* instead of *apart from* the mainstream classroom. However when coupled with a dominant legacy from the segregation era of 'within-child' deficit views of ability the new integration model, where the onus was on the student for fitting into the system, left educators with few options and limited efficacy. Topping (2012) acknowledges that:

[t]he notion that there is an obligation on the school to create a suitable learning environment for all children has not been accepted quickly. As it becomes accepted that every child has a right to learn differently and teaching has to take into account these differences, then inclusion should truly become a school improvement issue, with quality assurance at its core. (p. 12)

While "education is a fundamental human right" (UNESCO, 2000, p. 8) the two components of equity - fairness and inclusion, are difficult to reconcile when personal or social circumstances such as ability, gender, cultural, religious or family background exclude individuals from access, participation and benefit from education (OECD, 2012). Florian (2017) cautions that interpretations of inclusion that frame "including *all* learners by differentiating for *some*" (author emphasis) (p. 11), points to preoccupation with identity markers such as language, race, disability, status, gender/ sexual orientation. This in turn limits understandings of inclusive education by reinforcing "current approaches to diversity and inclusion that position difference as a problem" (Florian, 2017, p. 10). Further, it increases the risk of contributing to pervasive 'othering' that perpetuates exclusionary practices including those occurring in schools (Graham & Slee, 2006; Rosenthal, 2001).

Nevertheless equity as fairness and inclusion is now not only the expected standard but it is promoted as the path to realising success for all (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), 2011; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Goodwin, 2010; OECD, 2016).

### *Conceptual influences on inclusive education*

Consideration of theoretical paradigms and historical contexts out of which inclusion and inclusive education have evolved are crucial to understanding current ideations of equity and quality education. According to Thomas (2013), concepts should be understood as “the product of systems of belief” (p. 475) and the example offered in the previous segment illustrates this in relation to education of students with disabilities. In a broader sense, student diversity on the whole is significant given broad range of factors contributing to marginalisation and exclusion from education. In current nomenclature, inclusion and inclusive education are considered the ideal standard in practice for addressing equity concerns (UNESCO, 2015). Importantly though, these terms (like equity and quality) are also variously interpreted and used interchangeably as both principle and process (Anderson, Boyle & Deppeler, 2014; Loreman et al, 2014; Shaddock, Giorcelli & Smith, 2007; vanKraayenoord, 2007).

Framing this research prior to data collection was the UNESCO (2009) definition of inclusive education:

a process of responding to diversity of needs of all children, youths and adults, through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. (p. 8)

This framing encourages consideration of how inclusion as a principle might be being enacted in schools and classrooms and experienced by teachers and students. It informed this inquiry’s conceptualisation of inclusive education as school and classroom level processes

and practices intricately linked to aspects of education such as: pedagogical approaches, instructional practices, curriculum, differentiation, school structure and organisation of teaching and learning, assessment and reporting procedures.

### *Conceptual influences on quality*

The simple statement, “Quality is at the heart of education” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 17) veils a great deal of contestation and debate surrounding the idea of quality education at the world education forum in Dakar, where the key declaration was born. Difficulties clarifying quality, like those for equity and inclusion stem in large part from its myriad conceptions (Curcic, 2009). The concept of quality originates from manufacturing and management fields and as such, applications to education some 30 years ago have resulted in close alignment with economic-rationalist perspectives. As a consequence, quality is measured in terms of standards, outcomes and performances of students, teachers, schools and countries. Preoccupation with measurement and the quality of measurement, is celebrated by the OECD (2016) who espouse: “Over the past decade, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA, has become the world’s premier yardstick for evaluating the quality, equity and efficiency of school systems” (p. 3). Angus (1992) notes however that, “the term ‘quality’, like ‘excellence’ and ‘effectiveness’ takes on specific meaning only when it is used in relation to particular referents” (p. 379). He goes on to emphasise the importance of asking questions such as *quality of what?* and *quality for whom?*, a view corroborated in the OECD (1989) Schools and Quality Report and a vital consideration for the conceptualisation of quality in this inquiry given the critical social theory perspective taken.

Rising (and often public) emphasis on foci such as OECD league performances, MySchool data (Australian literacy and numeracy testing) and ongoing teacher performance debates,

promote comparative and competitive cultures reflective of market-driven education agendas (Evans & Lunt, 2002; Liasidou, 2012; Winter & O’Raw, 2010). This preoccupation with demonstrations of performance at standards for both teachers and students adds complexity to the on the ground experience in schools of equity and quality education (Deppeler, 2006; Deppeler & Huggins, 2010) and as Graham and Jahnukainen (2011) eloquently point out: “the measurement of school/teacher performance has placed a premium on the heads of students who are difficult to teach” (p. 269). Acknowledgement of current limitations for measuring and reporting on progress and achievement, particularly for students with disabilities, has resulted in many of these students not readily or consistently participating in national testing (Forlin, Chambers, Loreman, Deppeler & Sharma, 2013) in Australia. Forlin et al (2013) also point out that as a consequence of this exclusion, accountability for outcomes of these students is significantly lowered. Nevertheless, teacher quality/ quality teaching is increasingly viewed as vital to achieving a world-class system with corresponding outcomes. Mockler (2013) points out that “the Australian Professional Standards of Teachers and accompanying Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework are positioned as the key technologies through which this goal is to be realised” (p. 36).

### **Equity and quality education in policy**

Building on conceptual orientations of equity, quality and inclusive education, relevant policy at global, national and sector levels will be outlined, establishing the position of this inquiry in the education landscape.

#### *Global policy context*

With a strong focus on access and quality the UNESCO (1994) Salamanca statement is the most well known international policy to reference inclusion and quality education for students with disabilities in specific ways. Commitments to achieving education for all were espoused through principles of inclusion to promote equality of access and opportunity for

students with special needs in integrated settings (UNESCO, 1994, p. 17). The term equity was not used in this documentation. Rather, the language focus was on inclusion, access and participation. Building from this, the UNESCO Dakar framework for action (2000) - *Education for All*, outlined six goals for collective commitment world-wide. At this time, emphasis was placed on those from early childhood through to adults, who were considered 'vulnerable' and/or 'marginalised' and/or, who needed access to 'quality' education. There was focused attention in this policy on gender, with girls and women identified as those most in need of equitable access and achievement in schools and education (UNESCO, 2000, p. 8), particularly in developing countries. Inclusive education was the central focus of the UNESCO (2008) International Conference on Education in Geneva, Switzerland, which called for "a new educational policy agenda for inclusive education, including increasing equity and, at the same time, improving quality" (2008 p. 7). It was at this time that inclusive education as a process was touted as a cornerstone to facilitating equity and quality education for all.

Fifteen years on from Dakar, the 2015 Incheon UNESCO WEF Framework for Action focus expanded again to: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 7). The centralising of 'equitable quality' suggests recognition that access alone does not guarantee benefit from education, a sentiment recognised by those in the field of inclusive education who have argued for a deeper and more comprehensive appreciation of what is required for genuine inclusion (Aguerrondo, 2008; Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Boyle & Topping, 2012; Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2014; Miles & Singal, 2010; Slee, 2006, 2013; Thomas, 2013).

Acknowledgment that the 2015 framework is “inspired by a humanistic vision of education and development based on human rights” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 7), the previous emphasis on access, equity and inclusion expanded to focus on quality and learning outcomes. Unlike previous policy documentation, the Incheon Declaration (UNESCO, 2015) offers descriptors for what quality education should do and look like.

Quality education fosters creativity and knowledge, and ensures the acquisition of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy as well as analytical, problem solving and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. It also develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED). (p. 8)

Despite a need for increased clarification of quality education, this expansive list indicates that the opposite appears to be occurring. It shows not only an increase in the size and scope of its conceptualisation, but by encouraging a focus placed on “strengthening inputs, process and evaluation of outcomes and mechanisms to measure progress” in conjunction with the role of teacher training and support (UNESCO, 2015, p. 8), we are left with little doubt of the expectation to measure more and more frequently. A focus likely to further complicate the goal of equity and quality education. Please note, while this most recent definition for quality came about after this study had begun and data was collected, it is accounted for in both analysis of the data and in the discussion of findings.

#### *Australian policy context*

Inclusion and fairness as equity indicators in the most recent PISA results indicate that Australia performs below and demonstrates less equity than the OECD average. According to current measures, trends in performance over time are following a downward trajectory and

inequity in outcomes in Australian schooling is one of the highest in the world (OECD, 2016; Thompson, Wernet, O'Grady & Rodrigues, 2015). Australian policy endeavours to address dimensions of inequalities between groups and schools, including disparities in opportunities, experiences and outcomes (Perry, 2017) through stated commitments to equity and quality education for all. Key Australian policy documents and reports reinforce focus on equity and quality education include the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008), the Measurement framework for Schooling in Australia (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2015b), The Australian Education Act (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2013) and the National Report on Schooling (ACARA, 2014).

In the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) clear priorities that Australian schools promote equity and excellence are stated with particular focus on improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds. The outcomes of students with disabilities has also received recent and widespread attention in Australia (ACARA, 2012; AITSL, 2011) given not only low levels of achievement but where measures of achievement have not been taken at all (Deppeler, Forlin, Chambers, Loreman & Sharma, 2016; Forlin et al, 2013). Recent implementation of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data: School Students with Disability (NCCD) over 2013 - 2015 can be seen as an attempt to increase accountability for the outcomes of these students. However, an overview of literature by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority highlighted the absence of mature systems of curriculum, assessment and reporting provisions for students with disability in most countries, including Australia, which is likely to impact the effectiveness of this practice (ACARA, 2012).

Focused attention on quality teaching and leadership in Australian schools has seen the creation of professional teaching standards and a framework for professional learning for teachers and school leaders (ACARA, 2014; AITSL, 2012). These initiatives support priorities outlined in the Melbourne Declaration with emphasis on performance, development and outcomes. National testing in Australia is a well-known marker of the educational landscape, reinforcing focuses on performance over time and comparison between sectors, schools, year levels and students. Australia's performance on a global scale indicates there is a way to go to achieve its "world class" aims (ACARA, 2014; AITSL, 2012) however, national commitment to equity and quality education through measurement and standards is clear in policy and initiatives across states and territories. While calls for systemic reforms to teacher training, professional standards, funding, assessment and reporting systems, curriculum and in some cases philosophical reimagining of education entirely are not infrequent (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2011; Department of Education and Training (DET), 2016; Ingvarson, Kleinhenz & Wilkinson, 2007), at the time of writing the focus is primarily on school reform. Importantly too, interpretations and practices of equity and quality education for all are implemented at local levels and therefore remain the responsibility of school communities.

#### *Independent school sector policy context*

In Australia, the education system is divided into two sectors; government and non-government. The government sector serves the largest population with the non-government schools sector encompassing slightly less than 35% of school provision in Australia in 2016 (Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA), 2017b). The non-government or Independent schools sector is comprised of Catholic and independent schools that are sometimes referred to as 'private schools'. Most often, these schools are affiliated with religious denominations or a particular educational philosophy (ACARA, 2014; ISCA,

2017b). Beyond the established global and national policy landscape a dearth of explicit policy for enacting equity and quality education leaves independent schools in a position of needing to establish their own guidelines and benchmarks for what equity and quality education for all looks like within their communities.

Public versus private education debates in Australia are common in our social and political landscape with educational and economic inequity and/or funding and resourcing issues regularly fuelling them. By and large, private schools rhetoric refers to ‘top tier’ schools and there is ample research focusing on these elite schools and their role in perpetuating inequity (Drew, 2013; Kenway & Koh, 2013; McDonald, Pini & Mayes, 2012; Tsolidis, 2006). Independent schools as a whole however, while they do serve those with economic capital to purchase education are not necessarily serving wealthy families by the SES and family income standards of those attending elite schools. The socio-economic status (SES) of a school community is determined by income, education and occupation of parents from that community. According to the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA), “the majority of non-government schools - both Catholic systemic and independent - are in the middle range of SES and ICSEA scores” (ISCA, 2017c, p. 1). Instead of reliance on SES alone, a broader range of factors is now considered to impact on student-educational advantage (SEA) and in Australia, the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is now used when making comparisons of socio-educational profiles of Australian schools because it enables data to be measured across sectors. Of significance to this research, student enrolments into the independent school sector increases at secondary schooling (ACARA, 2014) and students with disability enrolments in the sector continue to increase by 8% per year (ISCA, 2017a). In other words:

Australia-wide the growth in enrolments of students with disability has been the most significant in mainstream independent schools, which now account for some 82% of students with disability in independent schools, including those with high to very high support needs. (ISCA, 2016b, p. 1)

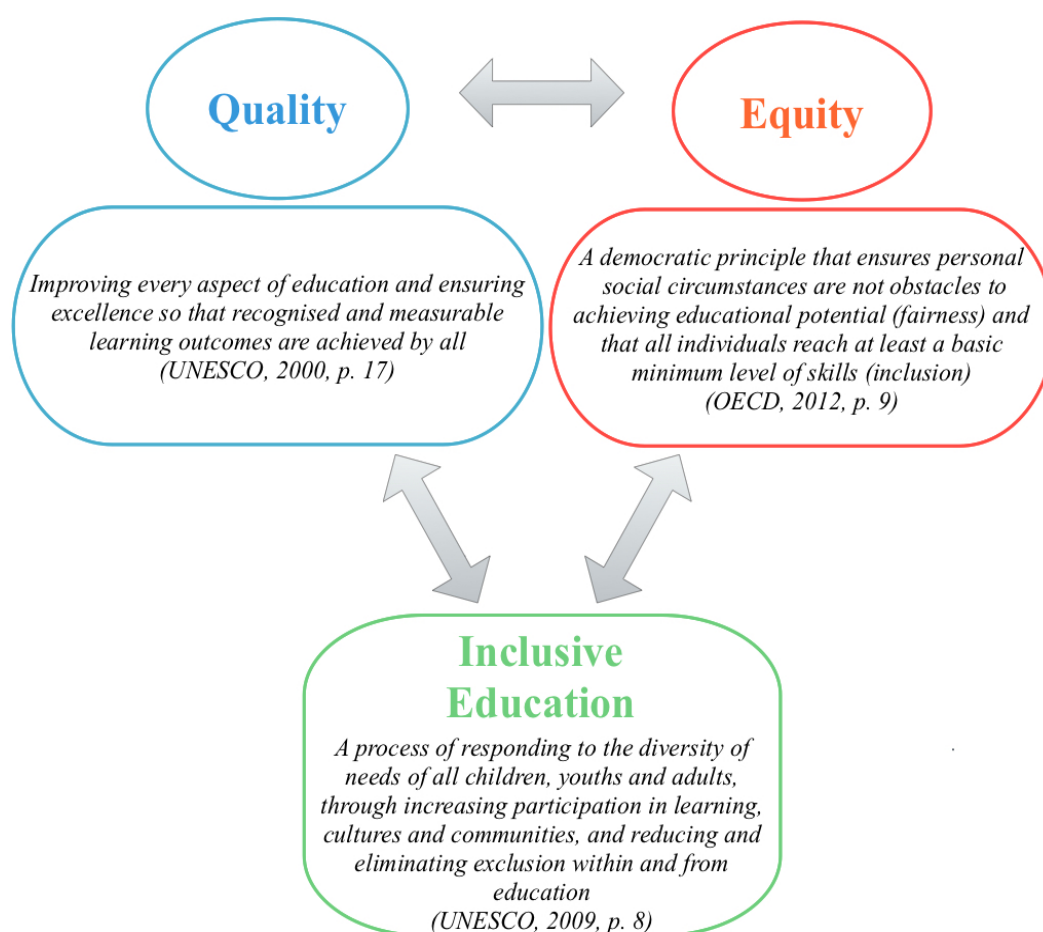
This is important given SES status of school communities has been the greatest determinant of funding eligibility for both state and federal governments to date.

Changes to the funding system for students with disabilities in Australian schools has received much media, political and research attention with significant reforms proposed and slow, complicated roll outs of frequently changing models (DET, 2017b; Gonski et al, 2011). A new funding model, the school resource standard (SRS) (DET, 2017b), builds on a much publicised review of funding for schools led by David Gonski in 2011, which pointed to urgent need for funding to be based on student needs rather than schools themselves. In the most recent funding model, Schools Resourcing Standard (SRS), it is proposed that SES will still be used to determine a school community's 'capacity to contribute' to the cost of schooling (ISCA 2016a). Concern for the Independent schools sector is that unlike for Government and Catholic schools, there are currently no mechanisms in place for the new Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) funding model to target funding directly to students. In a growing school sector with increasing numbers of enrolments of students with disabilities who will not receive the same level of funding as their counterparts in government schools, "the cost of meeting the special educational needs of students with disability largely falls to individual families and school communities" (ISCA, 2016b, p. 2).

### **Conceptualisation of relationships among the key principles underpinning the study**

Informed by the previous outline of conceptual and policy influences, *Figure 1.2* illustrates how the relationships among the key principles of equity and quality in the context of

inclusive education have been conceptualised prior to data collection. Given the focus in literature and policy on inclusive education as a means to realise equity and quality, this research made use of these definitions as a starting place in order to account for multiple principles and paradigms of influence on interpretations.



*Figure 1.2.* Policy definitions and relationships between the key principles underpinning the research prior to data collection.

Of importance is acknowledgement of conceptual binaries in policy principles of equity and quality education. Positioning the inclusive education component underneath equity and quality is deliberate. It is intended to reflect global policy positions that inclusive education is a key means to realising equity and quality education for all. The two-way arrows speak to

the idea that this component would not operate in isolation but would impact and be impacted by commitments and practices related to the other principles.

### **The research gap**

Policy increasingly promotes inclusive education as ‘quality education’ for all at international and local levels (MCEETYA, 2008; AITSL, 2011; UNESCO, 2000). Inclusive education is held as the expected standard for schools and teachers to ensure that personal and social circumstances (e.g. ethnicity, disabilities or socio-economic status) do not present barriers to students access, participation and benefit from high quality schooling (Field, Kuczera & Pont, 2007). Espoused commitments to equity and quality education have and are influencing national and local practices emphasising measurement and tracking of achievement at standards for students, teachers and schools along with increasingly public comparisons of performances. Despite these commitments and resulting practices, there is a paucity of critical research into how teachers come to understand and enact equity and quality education in independent school contexts, with student experiences of these practices in independent schools remaining largely overlooked.

Given repeated findings that teachers by and large do not feel prepared for the demands of inclusive education (Cook, 2004; Evans & Lunt, 2002; Forlin, Keen & Barrett, 2008; Hodgkinson, 2006; Richards & Clough, 2004; Smith & Tyler, 2011) the focus on standards which increasingly places heavy responsibility for the delivery of equitable and inclusive education on teachers (AITSL, 2011; AITSL, 2012) is concerning. Further, research on inclusive education has regularly demonstrated that shared cultures, understandings and active involvement are vital to equity and quality education for all (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Carrington & Elkins, 2002; Deppeler & Ainscow, 2016; Deppeler, Loreman & Sharma, 2005; Ingvarsom, Miles & Beavis, 2005; Reupert, Deppeler & Sharma,

2015), indicating that collaborative and process orientations of inclusive education are most successful.

### *Rationale of the study*

Schooling in Australia reflects a long held legacy of neo-liberal climates encouraging parental choice and competition in an education market (Forlin et al, 2013; Angus, 1992). The market demands that schools in all sectors be in competition for clientele and influences schools focus on provision and delivery of 'quality' education. While the independent school sector is often criticised for its contribution to sustaining societal and educational inequity (Gonski et al, 2011; Kenway, 2013) it is a site frequently lauded as reflecting a 'gold standard' (Kenway, 2013) in education and theoretically primed for success. Bauman (2000) has referred to independent schools as 'purified spaces...cleansed of variety and difference...tame, sanitized' (p. 99) and while the description in terms of social variability is apposite, this argument fails to take into account the challenge of enacting equity and quality education for all and teacher's pursuits of the twin goals. Nor does it consider the lived experience of students in these school contexts. Most importantly, there is no assurance that teachers, peers, school practices or school conceptualisations of success are inclusive of all students. Some indeed may be made to understand they do not belong. Further, while students in these contexts do for the most part come with cultural capital and familiarity of discourse to support their achievement in school, learning ability and social and emotional wellbeing are not guaranteed and the presumption that cultural capital is enough for student success is both unfounded (Edgerton, Roberts & Peter, 2013) and unfair for students and teachers.

With identified and well-documented implications for long term social, health and financial costs to individuals and society more broadly, school failure can penalise a child for life

(UNESCO, 2009). Those most at risk of school failure and disengagement in the independent sector include middle years students with disabilities and learning difficulties (diagnosed and undiagnosed), socially and emotionally vulnerable students and other minority groups. Transition between primary and secondary school has been identified as a pivotal point in schooling that can compound these risks for vulnerable students (Anderson et al, 2000; MCEETYA, 2008; UNESCO, 2005). Thus the middle years of schooling are a particularly appropriate orientation for this research. Taking advantage of the existing controls within already well-resourced environments, more research needs to be conducted within the independent sector to better elucidate teacher and student understanding and experience of enacting equity and quality education.

#### *Statement of the problem*

Three elements appear to constrain the realisation of equity and quality education. Firstly, while conceptualisation of inclusive education has become increasingly sophisticated (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn & Christensen, 2006) it remains that “policies leave a lot of room for interpretation at municipal and school levels, resulting in extensive variations” (Goransson, Nilholm & Karlsson, 2011, p. 541). Secondly, in inclusive education, “...the research focus continues to be on students with disabilities rather than on the complete compositions of what is theorised to be an inclusive school (Artiles et al, 2006, p. 97). This leaves policy emphasis on equity and quality education for *all* remaining largely unknown territory. Finally, where teaching standards continue to emphasise responsibility for inclusive education on teachers and their practice, less importance is placed on the whole school context and collaborative responsibility in understanding inclusive education as a process rather than a product. The consequence of the interaction of these elements becomes an intensification of focus upon the work of teachers in their facilitation of student success.

This study seeks better understanding of how these elements might constrain or inform the enactment of policy principles in the context of independent schools. Forlin et al (2013) recognise that variation of practices and policies across Independent schools, as a result of their greater autonomy, contribute to the complexity of establishing overviews of the sector. Compounded by government policies and initiatives pushing for increasing self-governance of schools across all sectors, the already largely autonomous independent school sector offers an important space for research about understandings and enactments of equity and quality education for all. This study has potential to reveal that what is apparent in the name of inclusive education, may hide exclusionary effects in these contexts. Findings may point to ways for building school capacity and identifying future directions for schools and research.

### *Research Questions*

The main aim of the research is to interrogate how equity and quality education are understood and enacted by teachers and students in independent schools. This leads to four research questions:

1. What do teachers report as their experiences of equity and quality education and how do their experiences align with policy principles of equity and quality?
2. What do students report as their experiences of equity and quality education and how do their experiences align with policy principles of equity and quality?
3. What do teachers and students identify as facilitators to achieving equity and quality education?
4. What do teachers and students identify as barriers to achieving equity and quality education?

### *Theoretical underpinnings of the inquiry*

The social critical perspective and theoretical frame of the study are offered in detail in chapters three (Theoretical framework) and four (Methodology). Here an overview of the theoretical underpinning of the study is offered.

Social critical theory is useful for research about contested ideas and practices because it allows consideration of the objective and subjective or what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as spaces and practices that are both ‘structured and structuring’ (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18). This perspective also supports the consideration that schools themselves embody cultures reflective of broader fields. A phenomenological social critical inquiry approach to research facilitates taking various positions and perspectives into account, such as those of students, teachers, school leadership staff and system level stakeholders engaged in these spaces. This is essential for a hermeneutic inquiry that seeks to understand the lived experience of negotiating the key concepts at the heart of this research. The framework offered by Bourdieu in his social critical theory of practice (Grenfell & James, 2004) not only allows consideration of the complex interplay between ideologies and principles, systems and structures, groups and individuals; but it also offers conceptual ‘tools’ or ‘lenses’ for the researcher to use as theory and/or as methods for analysis (Bennett, Frow, Hage & Noble, 2013; Grenfell, 2012; Hage, 2011). Finally, the use of Bourdieu’s social critical theory supports making meaning of possible tensions in order to extend theoretical understandings of how equity and quality education is understood, practiced and experienced by teachers and students in independent schools.

### *Policy and practice significance*

Principles and practices of equity and quality are educational priorities that are increasingly being held together in policy, despite the different conceptualisations and interpretations.

Clearly stated in the OECD (2016) Equity and Excellence report: “PISA defines success in education as a combination of high levels of achievement and high levels of equity, and has consistently found that high performance and greater equity in education are not mutually exclusive” (OECD, 2016, p. 39). The enduring linkage of equity and quality education in policy indicates that in Australia their joint realisation if not mutually exclusive, remains elusive.

This research is significant to policy and practice in a number of ways. Firstly, shedding light on how equity (fairness and inclusion) and quality education is understood and enacted in Independent schools in light of dominant policy and amidst teacher effectiveness and inclusive education ideals contributes to a more robust picture of the reality of pursuing these policy principles. Secondly, understanding potential barriers and facilitators to enacting equity and quality education for teachers and students can guide individuals as well as whole school communities and the broader education profession in best practice for negotiating these commitments. Finally, using social critical theory to elucidate the experience that teachers and students have of these educational goals in practice, enables consideration of hidden or taken-for-granted assumptions that risk limiting of transformative potential in pursuing education agendas that centralise educational benefit for all.

### **Definitions of key concepts**

#### **Barriers**

Factors that limit, significantly impinge on or restrict access to educational success. These can be created by cultures, institutions, as well as knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and dispositions of agents in the field.

#### ***Capital***

Accumulated assets (cultural, economic, symbolic, knowledge etc.) that serve as a *field*

mechanism which allow agents to manoeuvre and ‘buy’ positioning in the *field*. (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015, p. 68)

#### Doxa

A set of core values and discourses which a field articulates as its fundamental principles and which tend to be viewed as inherently true and necessary. (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, p. xi)

#### Equity

A democratic principle that ensures personal or social circumstances are not obstacles to achieving educational potential (fairness) and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills (inclusion). (OECD, 2012, p. 9)

#### Facilitators

Factors that enable the successful education and inclusion of all students. Facilitators can be structural, material, related to people and related to resources.

#### *Field*

A social space that can be comprised of a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities, or positions occupied by agents. (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, p. 21)

#### *Habitus*

A concept that expresses on the one hand, the way in which individuals ‘become themselves’ – develop attitudes and dispositions – and, on the other hand, the ways in which those individuals engage with practices (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, p. xii)

#### Inclusion

A democratic principle that ensures all individuals achieve a basic minimum standard of education through access, participation, fairness and benefit commensurate for all students

irrespective of individual needs and circumstance.

#### Inclusive Education

A pedagogical aspect of inclusion reflected in process and practice at school and classroom levels.

#### Inclusive Pedagogy

An approach to teaching that is determined by the use of chosen strategies which actively seek to respond to differences in ways that avoid or minimise exclusion and marginalisation of some learners as a result of reinforcing differences between them. (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012, p. 580)

#### Quality

Ensuring excellence so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills (UNESCO, 2000, p. 17),

#### Wellbeing

Student satisfaction, dispositions, social functioning, resilience and belongingness are factors of significance for students in the learning environment and are considered essential to the realisation and experience of quality inclusive education.

### **Thesis structure and overview**

This thesis is organised in seven chapters. The first chapter has outlined the conceptual and policy background to the research problem and explicated the aims and focus of the study. In chapter two a review of relevant literature is offered, establishing the empirical landscape pertinent to the research topic. Chapter three outlines the theoretical framework of the study underpinned by Pierre Bourdieu's social critical theory. In this chapter, three theoretical concepts utilised in the study are detailed along with an outline of existing research to have made use of these lenses. The fourth chapter is the methodology chapter. Detailed explanation of the approach to research, methods of data collection and analysis are outlined

along with ethical considerations and steps taken for trustworthiness and reliability of the research. Chapter five presents the findings of the study that emerged from iterative thematic analysis of qualitative data collected from focus groups and one-to-one interviews. Initially, the findings are presented as four major themes (each comprised of two sub-themes) before the findings are considered as a whole. Chapter six is the discussion chapter where the meaning of the findings is discussed in light of the theoretical framework, existing literature and the research questions guiding the inquiry. The final chapter is the conclusion chapter. Starting with a summary of research findings, implications of the research findings for policy, practice and research are then offered. Following statement of the limitations of the inquiry, the contribution made by the research is acknowledged before directions for future research are proposed.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter one has established the policy and conceptual contexts of this inquiry into how complex and, as Clarke (2014) identifies, ‘elusive’ policy goals such as equity and quality education are understood and enacted in two independent schools in Victoria. The following chapter highlights existing literature and research contributing to current understandings and interpretations of these principles in practice. Of particular focus are studies and literature that appraise equity and quality in schooling as well as established understandings of facilitators and barriers to their enactment in schools.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter conceptual influences on equity and quality and their representation in international and local policy were discussed in order to provide orientation and context for the study. The focus in this chapter is to offer a critical review of common perspectives taken with equity and quality education in literature, establishing the scope of existing research and gaps that this inquiry seeks to address. Initial reviews of related research through online databases indicated a paucity of specific qualitative research in similar educational environments of interest to this inquiry. As such a broad overview of research contributing to the overall milieu impacting teaching environments has been conducted.

Haug (2010) offers a useful structure when he specifies: “[i]nclusion may be understood with reference to both vertical and horizontal dimensions” (p. 199). Borrowing from his conceptualisation, this chapter is initially broken into two parts. Offering a foundation for research questions one and two, vertical dimension research illuminates already identified experiences of equity and quality education and how these may or may not align with policy principles. Review of horizontal dimension research establishes already identified facilitators and barriers to equity and quality education, informing the context for exploring research questions three and four. The chapter concludes by bringing these perspectives together through constructs of difference and diversity in light of identified conceptual binaries established in the previous chapter.

## **Vertical dimensions in equity and quality education research**

Research on what Haug (2010) describes as the vertical dimension, encompasses “different levels in the education system, ranging from ideology, policy and structures, via teaching and learning processes to results” (Haug, 2010, p. 199). Critical review of empirical literature about equity and quality education at these levels resulted in the emergence of four dominant themes, each of which is expanded on below.

### *Inequity and division in the education milieu*

Inequity in social and educational outcomes is a common focus with macro level research comparing performances between countries, groups and sectors (ACARA, 2016; OECD, 2016, Thomas, Wernert, O’Grady & Rodrigues 2015). Findings of entrenched and sustained inequity related to the likes of attendance, retention, gender and ethnicity, achievement gaps, academic outcomes, resourcing and socio-economic status have been reflected in this research repeatedly with reciprocity of these factors in varying degrees and combinations (Baird, 2012; Dyson, Farrell, Polat & Hutcheson, 2004; Willms, 2010). Dominated by outcomes-based as opposed to process-based research, themes in this literature frequently call for reducing inequity by raising standards as a vital step to achieving equity and quality education for all.

In this literature, identity markers such as: low SES backgrounds, students from rural and urban backgrounds, indigenous students, students with disabilities, ESL students and gender, are often used to compare social and educational outcomes for students (Baird, 2012; Cushing, Carter, Clark, Wallis & Kennedy, 2009; Fox & Cheng, 2007; Lindsay, 2007; McKnight, 2015; Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; OECD, 2012). Armstrong & Cairnduff (2012) use access to higher education contexts as an indicator of educational outcomes for these different groups of students. Due in part to established links between level of education and

long term outcomes - life, financial, wellbeing etc (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2015) the use of this indicator nevertheless reinforces the idea that equity in education is being measured by increases in quantifiable educational capital.

Review of vertical dimension literature revealed a preponderance of quantitative research perspectives across policy at all levels of education from early childhood to higher education. At secondary school levels, particular emphasis has been on school completion rates, often accompanied by references such as “achieving educational potential” (OECD, 2012, p. 9). Using the higher education context as an example, Gale (2014) offers a likely reason for the dominance of quantitative perspectives:

...quantitative indicators of equity in Higher Education (eg. expressed enrolments, progression and completion rates) are easy to grasp and to channel into public policy narratives. Whereas, qualitative accounts of equity are more invisible, personal and difficult to measure and thus not easily taken up within public policy arenas. (p. 13)

While qualitative research perspectives may be more challenging to investigate and place in context, their lack of consideration in policy arenas may well be a contributing factor to ongoing confusion and perpetuation of inequities. In addition, vertical dimension literature rarely explores or reflects what inequity looks like *within* sectors. This inquiry contributes to methodological and knowledge gaps by illuminating lived experiences in the independent sector of schools not considered ‘elite’ but, as fee-paying schools are considered privileged in the sense of social advantage. By using qualitative research to consider how teachers and students in independent schools interpret these agendas a contribution to research about equity and quality education is made in an area seldom considered.

### *High stakes testing*

In a bid to counter reliance on quantitative data and research to measure ‘good teaching’, Thompson and Cook (2013) make use of Deleuzian concepts to examine “a particular ‘machine’ of reform in Australia, the high stakes testing machine of NAPLAN...a machine of auditing, that creates and accounts for data that is used to measure, amongst other things, good teaching” (p. 243). Through their sophisticated critique of audit cultures as a tool for bringing about equitable reform in schools they conclude that “an attempt to return past commonsense logic of ‘good teaching’ as a result of NAPLAN is not possible” (Thompson & Cook, 2013, p. 243). From a US perspective, Smyth (2008) analysed the impact federal legislation had on an intensification of testing practices in schools, identifying that educational testing and ‘teaching to the test’ are practices that have negative effects on the very students the legislation is supposedly designed to most benefit.

Despite federal mandates for high stakes testing and increased focus on testing and assessment in schools educational outcomes of students with disabilities are largely unknown (Australian Government Department of Education, 2013; Dempsey & Davies, 2013). Exploring this problem, Dempsey and Davies (2013) made use of secondary data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAD) conducted in mid 2010. Analysis of data from Year three students with special educational needs revealed that when these students participated in NAPLAN testing they performed significantly lower than students without special educational needs. Dempsey and Davies (2013) research is one of very few attempts to report on the performance of students with disabilities in high stakes testing. This research offers findings of NAPLAN test performance of primary school students with disabilities, an important contribution given “ACARA does not release this detail in national reports” (Dempsey & Davies, 2013, p. 15). It is important to note that there were no NAPLAN results for over one-third of the sample of students with additional needs. Practices of exclusion

from national testing are not uncommon and can be attributed, at least in part to use of these high stakes tests to inform league tables which as Glynn and Waldeck (2013) point out lead to “school rankings mislead[ing] the market”.

### *Teaching standards*

Alternative to high stakes testing are focuses on regulating teaching and standards to curtail inequity in educational outcomes. Luke (2003) offers a US perspective of teacher surveillance efforts through certification, teacher testing, standardising curriculum and instruction practices and acknowledges that such policy moves are shared by the UK, New Zealand and Europe. In the Australian context, Mockler (2014) undertook a case study to explore how ‘panic’ in policy might serve as a tool in fostering teaching quality rhetoric aligning with neo-liberal agendas of measurement and surveillance. Analysing 42 Prime Ministerial and Ministerial speeches, media interview and related print media articles during a single ‘moment’ in Australian education policy in September 2012, Mockler (2014) found that:

In none of the communication texts does the Prime Minister or Minister for Schools explicitly elaborate the issue of how far current teachers need to be ‘improved’ and how widespread the ‘problem’ of ‘teacher quality’ is, however there are very many statements that indicate, through their spaces and silences, that teacher quality is a definite crisis to be addressed. (p. 129)

Mockler (2014) goes on to point out the misalignment between purporting to attract the best and brightest to the profession and the need to value teachers more with the ‘logic’ of testing, assessing and measuring these same best and brightest (p. 130). This speaks to to a confused desire to raise the value of the profession by increasing accountability measures and surveillance. Seemingly, surveillance and measurement of teachers work is touted as a facilitator for equity and quality education, but as Bahr and Mellor (2016) warn “with the

introduction of national set professional standards for teachers, teachers' roles have been constrained into a set of competency-like behaviours that dictate the knowledge and capacities required to become a teacher" (p. iv).

Despite "correlation between regulation of the profession and enhanced quality outcomes for students [being] highly contestable" (Bahr & Mellor, 2016, p. iv), national professional standards for teachers (AITSL, 2011), Australian professional standard for Principals (AITSL, 2014) and accreditation for initial teacher education (ITE) programs (AITSL, 2015) have been progressively rolled out in Australia in a bid to ensure quality teaching at all levels of education. The latter accreditation focus comes with identification of an overall lack of evidence about effectiveness of initial teacher education programs (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group TEMAG, 2014). Coates (2010) points out that the term standards is used in both substantive and descriptive ways, referring respectively to 'the what' and the 'how much' (p. 5). The 'what' of standards includes the likes of teaching quality and learning outcomes that, by definition, are measurable and comparative. When the term standards is used substantively it is used "to refer to varying levels of quality or performance, as in phrases such as low performance, high quality or teaching excellence" (Coates, 2010, p. 5). Importantly, the measures for this remain predominantly in student outcomes and performance. Ultimately, as Dinham, Ingvarson and Kleinhenz (2008) explain: "Although there is strong agreement that teacher quality is fundamental...[a]ccountability for ensuring quality teachers and school leaders is unclear and diffused" (p. 8).

Research into effective/quality teacher education is receiving increased attention with focuses on teacher accreditation standards and processes (Ingvarson & Rowley, 2017), academic standards and indicators of quality in higher education for teachers (Coates, 2010), use of

technology and online materials for initial teacher preparation and ongoing professional learning (Smith & Tyler, 2011), and teacher preparedness for inclusive education (Sharma, 2012; Villegas, Ciotoli & Lucas, 2017). Overall though, findings in this research are not instructive for teaching quality. Rather, given the prevalence of checklists, observation scales, rubrics and surveys auditing teaching practice in this research, they focus attention on identification of what teachers do (Bahr & Pendergast, 2002; Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007; Louden, Rohl, Barratt-Pugh, Brown, Cairney, Elderfield, House, Meiers, Rivalland & Rowe, 2005) rather than how teaching quality can be conceptualised and improved.

#### *Funding and resources*

Dominant neo-liberal influences see funding as an obvious and convenient catalyst to address inequity. Here the private and public school debates are reinforced (Daniels, 2011) with long running calls for restructuring funding models so that equitable distribution of funds across sectors and schools reach those most in need (Gonski et al, 2011). Dempsey and Davies' (2013) research findings offer confirmation that government schools support students with higher level of needs and that their students with special needs perform at substantially lower levels, "add[ing] weight to on-going criticism about the manner in which Australian governments apportion funds among the three education sectors" (Dempsey & Davies, 2013, p. 15). Recurrent focus and debates about funding distribution suggests that previous and current funding structures are not working. Further, research has pointed to the aforementioned focuses (high stakes testing practices and standardising of teacher education and teaching) as not having been adequately informative.

The More Support for Students with Disabilities Initiative (MSSDI) which started in 2012 was intended to provide additional funding that "targets teachers and other school personnel to enhance their capabilities so that they are more able to meet the educational needs of

students with disabilities” (Australian Government Department of Education, 2013, p. 119). An evaluation of this initiative in 2013 commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education, compared states and sectors in their progress and implementation of its 12 outputs. Large-scale cross sector evaluations such as these are important to examine how national policy is being implemented. To make meaningful funding choices however, we need research to be telling us a lot more about micro level practices. Hattie (2015) urges that an increased focus in research that looks at inequity *within* schools rather than between schools is needed as this latter perspective is limited in its contribution to our current understandings of how policy is interpreted at micro levels.

#### *Summary of vertical dimension research*

Vertical dimension research is predominantly comparative across countries, states, systems and groups. It is dominated by quantitative approaches and offers product oriented insights rather than process oriented ones. These lead to ‘solutions’ or strategies for reducing inequity such as high stakes testing, teaching standards and resourcing /funding focuses. Unfortunately these insights have had limited impact on establishing clarity about what equity and quality education looks like. Rather, they have been shown to reinforce confusion at school levels through preoccupation and engagement with practices that emphasise social and educational achievement differences between groups. It is not just that the approaches lack clarity; they rest on implicit assumptions that equity in delivery produces equality in results. Research considering perspectives from within schools and systems is less common in vertical dimension research and this inquiry addresses this gap using qualitative approaches to offer insights about such phenomena.

#### **Horizontal dimensions of equity and quality education**

The following section of this review of literature considers studies focused on horizontal dimensions of equity and quality research. These are classified in terms of facilitators and

barriers in this inquiry, and align with Haug's (2010) description of horizontal dimensions as, consisting of "elements or challenges that could or should be met on different single vertical levels" (p. 200). Research interest in identifying facilitators and barriers to inclusion and equity and quality education is not new and this review concentrates on current and dominant themes in that research.

#### *Facilitators of equity and quality education*

Developing inclusive cultures, quality teaching/teacher quality, pedagogical styles and approaches and active student participation and involvement are identified in research as being central to the facilitation of equity and quality education in schools. While these themes do not reflect the entirety of identified facilitators in research they are representative of dominant findings.

#### *Inclusive Cultures*

Many studies have pointed to the significance of collective responsibility for developing inclusive cultures in schools. The creation, organisation and leadership of inclusive schools (Ainscow, 2005; Booth and Ainscow, 2002; Walton, Nel, Hugo & Muller, 2009) as well as partnerships and collaboration between stakeholders and organisations committed to inclusive agendas (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2004; Frederickson, Dunsmuir, Lang & Monsen, 2004) are recurrent focuses in literature. Concerned with facilitating equity and quality education, this research extends across a range of educational contexts from early childhood through to primary, secondary and tertiary.

Examining sustainable ways for school communities to organise themselves to promote inclusive cultures, has been the goal of much research about inclusive cultures. In order to support schools as a whole to develop inclusive cultures, Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan and Shaw (2000) developed a resource called the Index for Inclusion. Offering

schools a collaborative “process of self-review and development... [for] attending to values and the conditions for teaching and learning” (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, p. 1) to help schools to sustain improvements such as reducing barriers to learning and participation for students. The Index for Inclusion has been widely used in the UK where it was conceived and across the world (Deppeler & Harvey, 2004; Engelbrecht, Oswald & Forlin, 2006; Forlin, 2006).

Removal of barriers to inclusion was also a concern for Ainscow, Howes, Farrell and Frankham (2003) who reported in their three-year study that set out to illuminate what would be needed to develop inclusive practices in schools. Aligning with concerns to identify and remove barriers to inclusion such as access, participation and benefit (Haug, 2010; UNESCO, 2005), this research project saw teams from universities working with groups of schools to help move their inclusive practices forward. They found social learning processes within workplaces to be highly influential on people’s actions and thinking about inclusive education (Ainscow et al, 2003). This led to further interest in the nature and types of social processes that influence inclusive practice. Research in this arena has been focused on collaboration between institutions such as universities and schools, (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998) between school types, such as mainstream and special schools (Frederickson et al, 2004), and collaboration between stakeholders in school communities (Carrington & Robinson, 2006). The nature and purpose of collaborations within sectors remains largely unknown and an important area that this inquiry contributes to.

Erten and Savage (2012) point out the unsatisfactory reality that in a majority of studies at school levels, “inclusive education is operationally defined as the physical placement of students with disabilities in regular classrooms” (p. 224). This view is supported in a review of co-teaching conducted by Scruggs, Mastropiero and McDuffie (2007) who note that

classrooms are often described as inclusive when children with disabilities are placed there. Nilholm and Alm (2010) implore that “classrooms should by no means be labelled ‘inclusive’ if we do not have firm data regarding how children experience the classroom” (p. 249). They go on to emphasise the rarity of this perspective, reinforcing again the significance of research that captures student perspectives and experiences.

### *Quality Teaching/ Teacher Quality*

Policy and system level interest in the quality assurance of teachers and teaching has been established as a primary focus of vertical dimensions research given its alignment with standards for teacher training and qualifications. In research about quality teaching that focuses on horizontal dimensions, there are repeated findings that the quality of teachers and teaching practices are key school related factors influencing student outcomes (Dinham, Ingvarson, Kleinhenz & Business Council of Australia (BCA), 2008; Goodwin, 2010; Hattie, 2003; Rowe, 2003). To some extent we can distil a definition of a ‘quality teacher’ from Dinham et al’s (2008) proclamation that: “Every student deserves teachers who are suited to teaching, well-trained and qualified, highly skilled, caring and committed to moving forward the learning of their students” (p.7). In moving students forward (notwithstanding social factors of influence in research about equity and quality education which include socio-economic backgrounds and parental education), Hattie (2003) isolates feedback, instructional quality and direct instruction as the top three factors of teacher influence on student achievement. However, Bahr and Mellor (2016) are careful to acknowledge the worrisome “lack of regard for the personal attributes of teachers as central to quality teaching” (p. v) reflected in newly-formulated standards of initial teacher education accreditation programs. They also emphasise the contestable nature of developing competency-based standards as a means to realise quality teaching, given the varied clientele in Australian communities “who require differentiated curriculum and differentiated forms of learning engagement that are

responsive to their specific needs” (Bahr & Mellor, 2016, p. v).

Research that has looked at aspects of responsiveness to student needs includes that of Cameron, Cook and Tankersly (2012) who used an interval observation system to examine the nature and frequency of one-to-one interactions between educational professionals and students with varying abilities in inclusive classrooms. The educational professionals in this study were considered general educators, special educators or para-professionals. The student participants were classified as having mild disabilities, severe disabilities or being without disability. Using the Inclusive Classroom Observation System (ICOS) at 10-second intervals the researcher recorded teacher-student interactions according to five categories: academic, behavioural, social, functional and procedural. They found that nearly 70% of interactions between educational professionals and students with disabilities were non-instructional, concerned with keeping students on task and focused on meeting academic objectives (Cameron et al, 2012). These findings align with longitudinal research conducted by Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Martin, Russell and Webster (2009) in England and Wales who sought reliable data on the deployment, characteristics and impact of support staff on pupil outcomes and teacher workloads.

Seminal work about characteristics and qualities of effective teachers comes from Kleinfeld in the late 60s who looked at types of teachers, seeking to identify which teaching styles had the greatest impact on Native Alaskan students (1972). Through this research Kleinfeld came to characterise four different types of teachers but only one was identified as consistently successful with students; the *warm demander*. More recent work about qualities of effective teachers now aligns effectiveness and quality teaching with “setting high expectations while nurturing student growth” (Goodwin, 2010, p. 10). Hamre and Pianta (2001, 2005) support

this position through their research finding that when teacher-child relationships in the early years are close, student levels of participation are higher. Furthermore, in their study of kindergarten to grade one students, Ahnert, Milatz, Kappler, Schneiderwind & Fisher (2013) found that student cognitive processing was much more efficient and effective “if close teacher-student relationships are involved” (p. 554).

Offering a secondary school perspective, Bernstein-Yamashiro (2004) acknowledges that despite little policy focus on affective variables, data from her qualitative study looking at learning relationships in high schools suggests that they are of vital importance in successful teaching and learning. Similarly, in their case study on a school in Queensland, Carrington and Robinson (2006) used the Index for Inclusion (Booth et al, 2000) and found that a focus on staff-pupil relationships in combination with curriculum and pedagogy, enhanced teachers’ practice in more successfully meeting the needs of diverse learners. However, while teacher and students relationships have been demonstrated in research to be of significance to student learning, participation and success, how these are fostered in the context of equity and quality education is less clear and warrants further critical analysis.

#### *Pedagogical styles and approaches*

According to Haug (2010) micro-perspectives of inclusive education research focus on “the way teaching and learning happen” (p.204), actions and experiences of teachers and their pupils in schools. In line with this perspective, pedagogical practices such as differentiation and ‘authentic’ instruction methods have been reviewed in terms of their impact (Preus, 2012; Roy, Guay & Valois, 2013). As with vertical dimensions research, sub-sets of students are usually the focus, such as those with ASD, learning difficulties, visual or hearing impairments, gender specific groups and marginalised or low SES groups. For pedagogies to be effective in an inclusive sense they must centralise the notion of all (Deppeler, Loreman &

Smith, 2015). Purporting to do so are the likes of personalising learning, differentiation and curriculum planning structures such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (Brooks, 2016; Capp, 2016; Goodwin, 2010; Liasidou, 2012; vanKraayenoord, 2007). However the concept of quality or the extent to which these practices help to realise outcomes for all has had limited exploration within empirical research.

To shed light on inclusive classroom practices studies have been designed to consider student and teacher experiences, and have explored how specific curriculum areas (such as mathematics and science) or other factors either facilitate or hinder inclusive education (Emam, 2014; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Forlin, et al, 2008; Rietveld, 2005; Roy et al, 2013; Zevenbergen, 2007). Frequently this research responds to ongoing calls for comprehensive definitions of characteristics of inclusion within the classroom context (Nilholm & Alm, 2010; Pascal, Bertram, Mould & Hall, 1998). Setting out to address this issue, Nilholm & Alm (2010) developed a methodology for investigating what makes a classroom inclusive. In order to identify teaching strategies central to inclusive processes, they argue for explicit definitions of characteristics and clear-cut methods for studying them that ensure students perspectives are captured. This single case study was conducted with a grade 5/6 class comprising two teachers and 15 students, one-third of whom had a diagnosed disability. Using a combination of interviews, socio-grams, questionnaires, observations and samples of poetry written by students, 6 teaching strategies to emerge from analysis of the data were identified as inclusive. These reflected a range of pedagogical approaches and structures along with expectations of engagement from both teachers and students. In conclusion, Nilholm and Alm (2010) caution that inclusion should not be seen “as an all-or-none phenomenon” but rather that “classrooms can be more or less inclusive” (p. 246).

At classroom and teaching and learning levels, there is a growing body of literature about inclusive pedagogy. In their study of two primary schools in Scotland over a six-month period, Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) looked at the actions, methods and reasons behind teachers' inclusive pedagogy. They identified two distinct approaches to inclusive practice amongst teachers; an 'inclusive pedagogical approach' or 'additional needs approach' (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, p. 820). Significantly, their findings revealed that where "the additional needs approach to inclusion focuses only on the student who has been identified as in need of additional support, the inclusive pedagogical approach focuses on everybody in the community of the classroom" (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, p. 820). Inclusive pedagogical approaches reflect and support constructivist, experiential, discovery and inquiry-based teaching. As such they determined the nature of the active learning environment perceived by teachers as facilitating inclusive education. While this did not negate the challenges and dilemmas encountered by teachers through system constraints which: "provide a partial explanation for why such practice is difficult to develop and sustain" (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011, p. 827), it nevertheless offers a practical suggestion as well as ideological support for this component of quality as it relates to inclusive education.

Florian and Spratt (2013) went on to develop a framework called the Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action (IPAA) framework. This framework is aimed at helping teachers to a) gather evidence about their practice, b) consider how their principles align with their actions and c) identify challenges believed to inhibit inclusive practices. As a tool it has also been used to "analyse complex and overlapping sets of knowledge, beliefs and practice" (Florian, 2015, p. 16), a key issue for research about inclusive education. Of particular interest is tracking teachers "shift in thinking from most and some, to everybody" (Florian, 2015, p. 14)

a vital component of socio-cultural perspectives on learning that underpin inclusive pedagogy (Florian & Kershner, 2009). Bringing together the application of the IPAA framework across a number of curriculum domains including: literacy, mathematics, science, social studies and the arts, Deppeler et al (2015) report on possibilities for expanding the use of inclusive pedagogy for enhancing teaching and learning. Loughran (2015) points out that these approaches “recognise that expert teachers develop, innovate and adapt teaching and learning possibilities, they do not simply adopt the work of others” (p. 286).

Berlach and Chambers (2010) proposed a three-faceted model of a functional school-based inclusivity framework as a means to “consider the knotty problem of what is meant by inclusivity” (p. 529). The third facet of this model offers examples of classroom implementations (from philosophical underpinnings and school-based emphasis) however, vagueness of suggestions such as “appropriate pedagogy; appropriate recognition of effort; integration of ICT for teaching and learning” (Berlach & Chambers, 2010, p. 534) leaves practitioners once again with minimal guidance but much responsibility given “such change is only likely to be successful if teachers are committed, well-resourced and supported” (p. 535). While each of these offerings acknowledge the importance of whole school engagement and tailoring responses to contexts, both frameworks have emerged through focus on including students with disabilities. The authors are also quick to acknowledge likely barriers to the successful implementation of and/or benefit from the use of the frameworks; a clear indication that there is some way to go in confident application and adoption of inclusive pedagogies.

It is important to acknowledge that there are strong critiques of approaches underpinned by constructivist views that are considered to offer ‘minimal guidance’ instruction (Kirschner,

Sweller & Clark, 2006; Mayer, 2004). Supporting their argument with empirical evidence over the course of the last half-century, Kirschner et al (2006) argue that these approaches are less effective and less efficient when taking into account the functions of cognitive structures such as working and long term memory. They also argue that such approaches are only effective for those who have reached a level of expertise that supports independent learning. In other words, more-able students experience success with these approaches, and less-able students do not benefit as much. At the same time, constructivist approaches inherently incorporate student voice and encourage active participation (Deppeler et al, 2015; Florian, 2015), and therefore align with inclusive principles. This points to the need for further consideration of how such principles and pedagogies are reflected in student experiences in independent schools.

#### *Active Participation and Involvement*

The third facilitator to emerge from the review of horizontal dimensions of research is active participation and involvement. According to Kong (2008) conceptualisations of active learning and active learning environments have developed predominantly out of constructivist theories about learners and learning. Related research in this area has found that teaching and learning practices that foster deep learning (as opposed to surface learning) are recognised as more effectively meeting criteria for ‘quality’ or ‘best practice’ (Dart, Burnett, Boulton-Lewis, Campbell, Smith & McCrindle, 1999; Laevers, 2005).

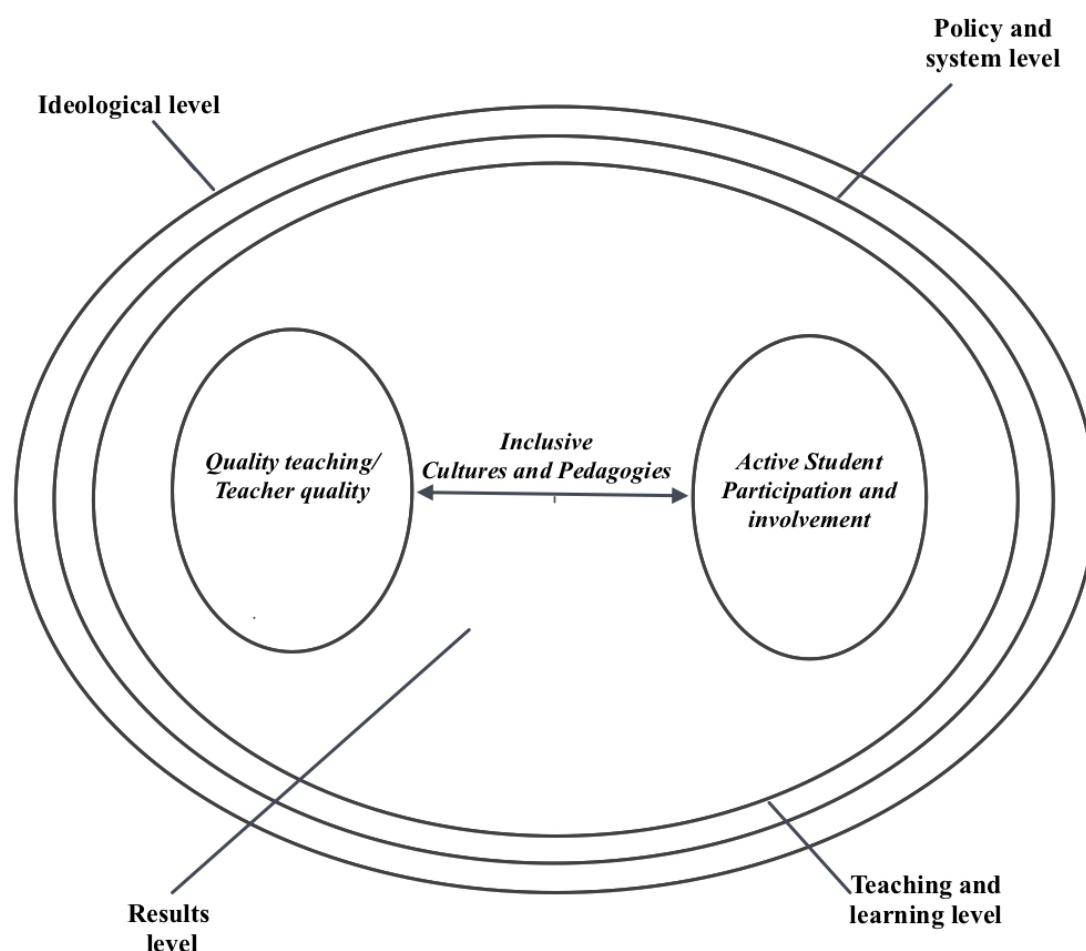
According to Hattie (2003) students themselves account for about 50% of the variance of achievement. In this light, actively finding ways to enhance student engagement and buy-in is a vital component of equity and quality education. As previously acknowledged, inclusion of student voice and active participation are inherent in constructivist approaches, of which IPAA and Assessment for Learning (AfL) are working illustrations. Black and Wiliam (2009)

point to the capacity of AfL to promote self and peer assessment, activities “particularly relevant to the development of students’ own capacity to learn how to learn and to learner autonomy” (p. 12). Relatedly, Ellis and Worthington (1994) looked at motivational, cognitive, academic and social characteristics of what they conceptualized as ‘empowered students/learners’. This framing was thought to be supportive of “addressing the needs of all students, whether they be high-achieving or low-achieving” (Ellis & Worthington, 1994, p. 9). However, given they went on to frame the inverse as ‘ineffective students/ learners’, contradictory conceptualisations are once again at play with implications for perceptions of student agency. Black and Wiliam (2009) draw our attention to the significance of “...the agent of assessment” reflected in the promotion of self and peer assessment practices. They stated: “While it is clear that in many cases the decisions will be made by the teacher the definition also includes peers, or the individual learner, as agents in making such decisions” (Black & Wiliam, 2009, p. 14). It is therefore, not only what the input is but who has it that is of significance. An important consideration given Ainscow & Miles’ (2008) assertion that “[t]he design, selection and use of particular teaching approaches and strategies arise from perceptions about learning and learners” (p. 22).

Participation is considered a central tenant of inclusion (Ainscow, 2005; UNESCO 2008) and the removal of barriers to participation has been of particular interest in research (Slee, 2006; Wilde & Avramidis, 2011). There is an inadequacy or passivity inherent in this framing of inclusion as the removal of barriers though and this has contributed to some levels of complacency stemming from mistaken views that presence or access alone is sufficient to claim inclusion (Erten & Savage, 2012). Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler and Bereded-Samuel (2010) offer a possible reason for this when they suggest that participation is supplementary to access. They point out that: “Quality is positioned as a complex generic concept while

access and success are identified as key concepts in the social inclusion domain, supplemented by the concept of participation” (Gidley et al, 2010, p.123). Difficulty centralising the relationship between active participation and student success may be a consequence of what Haug (2010) points to as a dearth in research that gives consideration to “pupil’s benefits or result quality” from participation in classrooms.

*Figure 2.1* offers an illustration of how the themes in literature related to vertical dimensions, coupled with the facilitators from the horizontal dimensions relate in the research context. The oval rings demarcate the four levels on the vertical dimensions (ideological, policy and system, teaching and learning, and results levels). These orient the dominant themes from the review of this literature: reducing inequity, high stakes testing, teaching standards and resourcing and funding concerns. In the centre ring horizontal dimensions of research highlight the dominant themes in the literature in relation to facilitators of equity and quality education. The two-way arrow reflects the relational aspect of facilitating equity and quality at school and classroom levels. This is understood as informing and being informed by multiple agents/ stakeholders and levels of influence that determine focuses, practices and the nature of participation in the research contexts. This is an important conceptualisation at this juncture given the next section reviews literature in relation to barriers that can occur at each vertical dimension.



*Figure 2.1.* Conceptualisation of the four levels on the vertical dimension of research with relational facilitators of equity and quality education distilled from the review of literature.

### *Barriers to equity and quality education*

Consideration of barriers to equity and quality education is important given their potential influence at all levels – from ideology to results. Making use of Darrow’s (2009) three categories; systemic/organisational barriers, knowledge barriers, beliefs and attitudinal barriers; analysis of the literature indicates relevance of these categories from policy to practice (Evans & Lunt, 2002; Hodgkinson, 2006).

### *Systemic/ organisational barriers*

Systemic and organisational barriers occur at all levels of the vertical dimension and have already been noted with respect to ideological and policy/system levels. Managerial focuses shape system and organisational structures and can consequently inform barriers encountered

(Lagotte, 2012). In a bid to be judicious, the focus here is on literature concerned with barriers at micro levels. School level characteristics make a difference to student achievement (Hoy, Tarter & Hoy, 2006) and consideration of the way schools are structured and organised including staffing and resource deployment as well as teaching and learning practices are all of interest at this level. Research has looked at organisational barriers to inclusion that link to curriculum, assessment, IEPs, physical, classroom, pedagogical, grouping, transition, timetabling, time, resourcing and resource distribution, all of which have been found to impact at a classroom level (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm & Splittgerber, 2000; de Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2011; Evans & Lunt, 2002; Smith & Smith, 2000; Walton et al, 2009; Zevenbergen, 2007).

Carrington and Elkins (2002) highlight the important contribution collaborative partnerships between colleagues can bring, not only for developing inclusive cultures in schools but the ability for teachers to create better learning opportunities for students. Other studies have highlighted the benefits of collaborative partnerships between universities and schools for enhancing knowledge (Ainscow, 2005; Deppeler, 2012; Grima-Farell, Bain & McDonagh, 2011), in addition to Ingvarson (2015; 2016; 2017) and Ingvarson et al's (2005) extensive work considering the benefit of professional learning communities. By strengthening schools as professional learning communities Ingvarson (2017) explains that school leaders and teachers improve the quality of teaching and student outcomes. In alignment with principles of inclusive schooling through school organisation and 'horizontal forms of professional accountability' (Ingvarson, 2017, p. 1), shared leadership and decision making; maintenance of top down organisational structures is considered an obstruction to developing an essential "shared commitment to work together to create an effective learning environment" (p. 2).

At classroom levels, streaming and ability grouping practices are organisational practices that have received much attention in research (Francis, Archer, Hodgen, Pepper, Taylor & Travers, 2017; Johnston & Wildy, 2016; Wiliam & Bartholomew, 2004; Zevenbergen, 2005). Streaming is defined by Wiliam and Bartholomew (2004) as “allocating [children] to teaching groups according to some measure of general ability” (p. 281). Grouping systems are now more commonly referred to in schools as ‘grouping by ability’ or ‘ability grouping’, terms from a culture of child-centred interests. This is done “even though what is meant by ability (and in particular whether this is some fixed notion of ability, or just what a student is able to do at a particular time) is rarely made clear” (Wiliam & Bartholomew, 2004, p. 281). Of concern at systemic school levels, Jorgensen and Sullivan (2010) identified that streaming has impacted indigenous students from remote schools via practices of sending high achieving students to elite boarding schools in urban areas. Demonstrating not just a systemic school level impact, such practices are reflective of beliefs and attitudes about equity and quality education (where it occurs, who has access to it, how it is realised) at cultural, social and political levels. The far-reaching implications of these sorts of belief driven practices are concerning in their echoes of historic reflections of privilege and power driving educational practice.

At school and classroom levels, student progress in mathematics was of interest to Wiliam and Bartholomew (2004) in their London based research about the impacts of ability grouping practices. They found evidence that being assigned to ‘sets’ had more of an impact on student performance than the schools they attended. This research made use of data from a combination of questionnaires, student interviews and lesson observations to examine the mathematics achievement of a cohort of 955 students across 42 classes in six government secondary schools over a 4-year period (1996 – 2000). Students in all schools had been taught

in mixed ability classrooms in year 7 but by year 11 all were being taught in ‘sets’ or subject-specific ability groups. They found that while teacher qualification levels tended to align with groupings of students – low sets, less qualified teachers; higher sets, higher qualified teachers – neither were seen to meet the needs the groups they taught. In Australia, Zevenbergen (2005) also looked at the impact of ability grouping in mathematics but in this case focus was on the impact in terms of middle school student beliefs about themselves and their habitus. Further consideration of this research is given in the next chapter in light of theoretical links to this inquiry, however important here are Zevenbergen’s findings that this structural and organisational practice was found to have detrimental effects on the ways students saw themselves and their efficacy in relation to mathematics learning. This was particularly the case for students in lower ability groups.

More remarkable than these well-established research findings of the damaging and exclusionary outcomes of these practices is the lack of impact these repeated findings have had (Francis et al, 2017). This is indicative of how well entrenched the practices are, most notably at secondary levels. Thomas (2013) offers useful insight for next steps in reducing barriers at organisational/ structural levels by discussing the impact of gradient effects and comparative cultures reflected in streaming and ability grouping practices:

I have talked about the closure on learning brought about by alienation. The focus of inclusive education can now shift to the ways in which the school may abstain from actively promoting community structure, in fact doing much through its routines (for example, of assessment and comparison) actually to impair the development of communities of learning and to encourage withdrawal. (p. 486)

Booth et al's (2000) aforementioned Index for Inclusion requires schools to examine their cultures and organisation practices. Making deliberate and targeted space for schools to consider their cultural context and potential organisational barriers is considered crucial to this process. Without the willingness to do so, the development of inclusive culture and practices may be at best frustrated and at worst, impossible (Booth and Ainscow, 2002).

### *Knowledge barriers*

Teacher knowledge, expertise and professional development for inclusive education has been identified repeatedly as a significant factor in the quality or successfulness of teachers and schools to utilise inclusive education practices (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Glazzard, 2011; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008). While research findings such as these have been translated at policy level (AITSL, 2011; MCEETYA, 2008) suggesting that Australia is “well poised... to tackle the complexities of inclusive education” (Berlach and Chambers, 2011, p. 61), discrepancies between policy agendas of inclusive education and practice realities of exclusive education (Gibson, 2009) are a natural extension of broader confusion around best practice for equity and quality education.

Perceptions of the need for specialised knowledge and of their own professional competence in inclusive education has been repeatedly identified as a dominant feature in professional concerns expressed by teachers (Abawi & Oliver, 2013; Deppeler et al 2005; Forlin et al, 2008; Sharma et al, 2008). Abawi and Oliver (2013) point to “the widespread belief held by general education teachers that they are not equipped with the necessary skills to teach children with special needs (2013, p. 161). This idea of specialist knowledge required to teach certain students suggests that this perception has firmly developed and consequently children with special needs can be considered the responsibility of some but not all teachers. Subverting this, when Frederikson et al (2004) undertook qualitative research in the UK to

explore partnerships related to transitions for students from special to mainstream schools they found that “sharing staff expertise” (p. 53) was important for successful inclusive education. Their research considered a small sample of perspectives from students, parents and school staff through interviews. While this finding was identified almost exclusively by staff, it is an indicator of benefit seen by staff in opportunities for sharing lived experience and collaborating with colleagues. Corroborating this view in later research, Boyle, Jindal-Snape, Topping and Norwich (2012), found peer support among staff to be more important than resourcing for inclusion in high schools. This is an important consideration for overcoming barriers in perceived (and actual) lack of knowledge for inclusive education.

In some research, combinations of barriers have been in focus (de Boer et al, 2011; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Hodgkinson, 2006; Pivik, McComas & Laflamme, 2002). Hemmings and Woodcock (2011) for example, looked at two categories in their study about pre-service teachers knowledge and attitudes toward inclusive education while Hodgkinson (2006) was interested in the graduate teacher experience. Reviewing related research, de Boer et al (2011) were able to establish that variables such as training and experience impacted on teacher attitudes toward inclusive education. All studies used in de Boer et al’s (2011) research examined primary school teacher attitudes with no studies related to Australia. Furthermore, each study reflected in the review was examining attitudes toward specific groups of students, those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Ainscow et al (2004) believe that inclusive education should be aimed at finding ways to “reduce barriers to learning and participation that might impact on a wide range of students” (p. 2). So while the aforementioned groups of students are of interest in this study this inquiry does not make presumptions about which students in the case school (CS) contexts experience barriers to learning and participation.

### *Beliefs and attitudinal barriers*

Teacher views and beliefs have received a sizeable empirical focus in the area of inclusion and reflect how macro-perspectives interact with micro level practices. Lauchlan and Fadda (2012) report on the Italian education context, naming positive attitudes of parents, teachers and educators towards full inclusion of students with disabilities as key to the success of their model. However, quantitative and qualitative studies have consistently found that while teachers are ideologically supportive of inclusion, they are less confident in their ability to facilitate its actualisation (Cook, 2004; Evans & Lunt, 2002; Richards & Clough, 2004). Significantly, findings in research about attitudinal barriers demonstrate that negative teacher attitudes towards including students with disabilities in general education classrooms have endured for decades (Scruggs & Masteropieri, 1996). These are often deeply held beliefs that embody deficit views of difference (Ainscow, 2005; Trent, Artiles & Englert, 1998; Hodkinson, 2006). Carrington, Deppeler and Moss (2010) drew on three Australian projects to analyse how critical reflection of teachers' own beliefs, knowledge and skills could serve to better meet the needs of schools. Their use of critical social theory highlighted the potential for scaffolded social dialogue and self-reflection among teachers to provoke taken-for-granted assumptions about particular groups of pupils, people and the nature of schooling. Importantly for equity and quality education commitments, as Ferri and Connor (2005) noted, shifts in beliefs and attitudes are far slower than shifts in practice.

Considering the views of teachers and teaching assistants, Glazzard (2011) examined barriers to inclusion in a primary school in England. A focus group interview was conducted with an unknown number of participants and eight themes emerged. These were attitudinal, one-to-one support, teamwork, standards agenda, location, parental resistance, training and resource related barriers. Aligning attitudinal barriers with system/organisational barriers, Glazzard (2011) reports:

There was a strong sense of feeling that the standards agenda prevented practitioners from effectively implementing inclusion. This emerged as the strongest barrier to inclusion and teacher attitudes towards inclusion were also linked to the standards agenda. The two policy agendas were seen as oppositional rather than complementary. (p. 59)

Pre-service and early career teachers have also been of interest in a number of studies about beliefs and attitudes toward inclusion (Berry, 2010; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Sharma, 2012). Berry (2010) conducted qualitative research with 60 participants (43 pre-service teachers and 17 early career teachers with <5 years experience) to examine attitudes toward inclusion, instructional accommodations and fairness. Using Q-sort analysis Berry identified three teacher profiles: Keen but anxious (beginners), Positive doers (mostly young and inexperienced) and Resisters (most experience). Not only did these profiles align with levels of experience but Resisters, who were the most experienced of the participant group, were also middle and high school teachers. Teacher efficacy was noted by Berry (2010) as central to the attitudes pre-service and early career teacher participants held; a finding supported by the work of Hemmings and Woodcock (2011) and Sharma (2012) in Australian contexts. These latter two studies focused on the impact that university preparations might have on views of inclusion and inclusive education, offering contributions about how teacher education program can respond to this barrier.

#### *Summary and critical overview of literature*

This literature review has made use of Haug's vertical and horizontal dimensions in research to consider pertinent literature related to the research questions and aims of this inquiry. The reductionist and social/cultural trends in this literature (across both vertical and horizontal dimensions) is a reflection of how research paradigms share the impact of the conceptual

binaries reflected in the policy context outlined in Chapter 1. Constructs of difference and diversity are fundamental and frequent starting points for research about equity and quality education (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004; Deppeler, 2017; Florian & Pantic, 2017; Rosenthal, 2001). Special education versus inclusive education debates are working illustrations of how scientific and social constructivist perspectives have and continue to shape research about equity and quality education. Thomas (2013) keenly identifies that trends of assessment and testing in schools produce “[p]erceptions of ‘difficulty’ or ‘disability’ [that] are thus constructed around and within discourses of comparison - around normality and abnormality, success and failure, the functional and the dysfunctional” (p. 482), a decidedly positivist influence. Relatedly, Graham and Jahnukainen (2011) argue that special education supports widespread beliefs that school failure is intrinsic to students who have been diagnosed with special educational needs. Skirtic’s (1991, 2005) contributions to learning disabilities research establishes the problematic nature of social constructions of school failure as student disability, a finding that speaks to possible reasons for statistical increases of students with ASD (Conway, 2012; Slee, 2013), social, emotional and general learning difficulties (Lauchlan & Fadda, 2012) in mainstream schools and classrooms. Importantly though, Graham and Jahnukainen (2011) say that rises in identification rates of the latter group cannot be explained by improvements to or frequency of diagnostic practices as they are identified in educational domains through ‘soft’ or ‘judgmental’ diagnoses, rather than medical contexts. They go on to argue for educational systems to draw more deeply from a philosophical basis in order to “deal with the paradox of growing exclusion in societies that profess to be inclusive” (Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011, p. 282). So while scientific paradigms explain constructs of difference and diversity through biological based perspectives that consider students as more or less capable, social paradigms endorse the human rights of individuals and understand difference and diversity as natural to the human condition, worthy of

inclusion and requiring sensitivity and compassion.

Overcoming these binary perspectives, critical theory posits that *reality* (ontology) is politically, socially and economically constructed and *knowing* (epistemology), comes from critical analysis of conflicts in society (Ornstein & Levine, 1997). This inquiry aligns with Liasidou's (2012) position that "the notion of power is central in attempting to decipher the ways in which the notion of difference is constructed, positioned and dealt with in mainstream settings" (p. 31). Taking a critical view, constructs of difference and diversity are considered by Dei (2005) in his research looking at the politics of difference and shared identities as it relates to inclusive schooling in Ghanaian context. Adopting an anti-colonial discursive approach in his paper which reports on case study research, the impact of discourses emerging from the complex politics of difference can be seen in how shared identities are framed by educators, either as 'unity in difference' or 'unity in sameness'. The former is understood to affirm diversity and the latter, serving to silence difference by "conforming and accepting the dominant as the norm" (Dei, 2005, p. 282). Dei posits that: "By sweeping social differences and identities under the carpet schooling is colonising for some bodies" (p. 273). While Dei's context is specific, his expression of the importance of addressing what is dominating within schools, along with consideration of individual identities (such as cultural, religious, ethnic, gender, class, and linguistic) is essential to inclusive schooling/education. Critical theory recognises that constructs of difference and diversity are influenced by social structures as well as the individual self and from this perspective for truly inclusive schooling/education, "...educators must engage difference as a strategic knowledge base from which to rupture the conventional processes of educational delivery" (Dei, 2005, p. 283).

## **Chapter Summary**

This literature review examined existing contributions made by research that has informed current understandings and enactments of equity and quality education. Comprising vertical and horizontal dimensions, key themes informing prevailing conceptions reflect the principles and ideologies underpinning ideals of equity and quality education. While these principles are acknowledged, recognition that they need to respond to the specifics of particular environments is important given practices are always context specific. The majority of school-based research cites government school contexts. Paucity of research focusing on non-elite schools in the independent schools sector and consideration of student voice, means these context specific enactments remain unknown. Further, when student voices are present, these participants are frequently selected based on characterisation that they belong to a particular group considered ‘at risk’ from the outset. In the next chapter, the theoretical framework for this inquiry will be outlined.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is intended to serve as a bridge between the literature review evaluating the current landscape of the research area, and the methodology chapter that explains and justifies the approach to this inquiry. Firstly a brief consideration of philosophical perspectives taken with research about equity, quality and inclusive education is undertaken, prior to the introduction of the conceptual framework of this study. Review of related empirical research that has made use of Bourdieu's theory and methodology concludes the chapter, establishing how the theory has been applied and where further focus is warranted.

#### **Relevance of critical perspectives in research about equity and quality education**

Allison and Pomeroy (2000) explain that theoretical perspectives emerge from philosophical views about ontologies and epistemologies both of which are central to what and how we understand our world (Allison and Pomeroy, 2000). A range of philosophical and theoretical perspectives have been used to guide and conduct research on equity, quality and inclusive education with each perspective able to offer different insights from their respective positions. Visible distinctions and influences of objective/scientific perspectives and subjective/humanistic perspectives are seen in the equity and quality education field and reflect the conceptual binaries influencing the research sites. The critical theory paradigm belongs to what Bredo (2006) refers to as a "third family of approaches [that] attempts to bring external and internal considerations together" (p. 26). This is essential for addressing the aims and research questions guiding this inquiry which require accounting for both structural, and for individual influences on how equity and quality education are understood

and enacted in the research sites.

Originally influenced by founding fathers of sociology; Marx, Durkheim and Weber, this social and political movement of thought emerged in Frankfurt, Germany, establishing itself formally in the early 1930s. Carrington and Selva (2010) explain that the “Frankfurt School theorists were anti-positivists who...were sceptical of prevailing ideologies and the thoughts associated with them as they argued that these ideologies and thoughts concealed social inequalities” (p. 46). According to Ornstein and Levine (1997) critical theorists aspire to expose power relationships underlying world orders so they can interrupt the status quo. To do so, consideration of taken-for-granted assumptions is essential so that disclosure of “ideological underpinnings, inevitable contradictions and special interests” can result in possibilities for reasonable alternatives (Collins, 2003, p. 68). The role of power and positioning (how this is and can be distributed, and who is privileged in what space and why) is recognised as central in how equity and quality education are understood and enacted in schools.

Power inequalities in society occur in many different arenas, consideration of factors like gender, race, sexual orientation and ability/disability for example can be looked at through different critical theory perspectives. For example, research that has made use of critical race, post-colonial and anti-colonial theories has illuminated inequities related to themes such as disproportionate representations of students from racial/ethnic minority groups in special education programs and high school drop out rates, participation rates in higher education, beliefs and attitudes toward ethnic groups in tertiary institutions, barriers to inclusion (Ahram, Fergus & Nogeura, 2011; Bensimon & Bishop, 2012; Cabrera, 2014; Dei, 2005; Jefferson, 2015; Zion & Blanchett, 2011).

French post-modern philosophers during the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Foucault, Derrida, Barthes and Lyotard shared the emancipatory ideals of the Frankfurt School. Pierre Bourdieu, who was primarily regarded as a sociologist, was a social philosopher contributing to the Parisian intellectual world at the time (Grenfell, 2012). Of particular interest to these contemporaries was consideration of unconscious and taken-for-granted norms through which power relations shape social worlds (Swartz, 2003) and inequalities are reinforced within structures, privileging some at the expense of others. So where critical theory is primarily concerned with power and positioning, social critical theory perspectives are concerned more with the transformative potential within social structures and how it may be that structures and the agents in these spaces enhance or inhibit this prospect.

Given social critical theory perspectives reject the notion of objectivity in knowledge; rather, the object of knowledge is considered embedded in an historical and social process (Corradetti, 2017), this perspective considers knowledge functional to ideology critique and social emancipation. An example of this was demonstrated in Carrington and Selva's (2010) research that sought to inform and explore transformative learning of pre-service teachers. In a bid to support pre-service teachers to challenge unexamined assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning, they considered that "[t]raditional teacher education has strengthened the transfer of knowledge that reinforces power relations between institutions and community, and between institutions and faculty" (Carrington & Selva, 2010, p. 46). Central to their inquiry this premise informed the use of critical social theory to develop a structured reflection process that promoted moves away from knowledge transmission to knowledge transformation for pre-service teachers in service-learning. By considering that traditional teacher education structures and the knowledge produced within them are embedded in

historical and social contexts, Carrington and Selva (2010) showed that it was possible for individuals to foster their ability to identify, critique and transform their practice and beliefs.

### **Situating this research in Bourdieu's social critical theory perspective**

While equity and quality education have become a central focus in policy, aligned with 'quality teaching' and 'best practice', how teachers and students understand and enact these policy principles is not well understood. The research questions guiding the inquiry require examination of these little known experiences as well as identification of potential barriers and facilitators to equity and quality education in the research sites. A social critical theoretical perspective is necessary for this inquiry because of the need "to transcend [sic] dualities" (Wacquant, 1992, p. 11) in equity and quality education for all. This research also necessitates consideration of complex and contested ideologies, taken-for-granted assumptions and 'hidden' power structures (Collins, 2003) that influence who is and who is not successful in the research sites. To this end Pierre Bourdieu's social critical theory framework is fitting.

Pierre Bourdieu was interested in the relationship between objective social structures and everyday practice. In particular, power relations, where power lies, what it produces (and reproduces) and why. Sites of cultural practice are "made up not simply of institutions and rules, but of the interactions between institutions, rules and practices" (Webb et al, 2002, p. 22), and Bourdieu believed that you could not make sense of one without the other. He was careful to point out that in his conceptualisation, "structures are nothing other than the objectified product of historical struggles such as can be apprehended at a given moment in time" (1988a, p. 157). In this research, objective social structures include the education system; its sectors, schools, school structures (such as middle schools, departments, discipline areas), and classrooms/learning spaces. In addition to objective social structures, the second

relational component - everyday practices - denotes what people do and why they do it (Webb et al, 2002). In this inquiry, practice in relation to schooling, teaching, learning, and the work of teachers and educators within the objective structures is in focus. For Bourdieu: “Practice is, at one and the same time, necessary and relatively autonomous...because it is the product of the dialectical relationship between a situation and a *habitus*” (1973, p. 67). Examination of the relationship between objective social structures and everyday practices allows insight into how equity and quality education are understood and being enacted in the research sites for this inquiry.

#### *Bourdieu’s conceptual tools*

The ultimate goal of social critical theory is emancipation and/or transformation. To this end, Bourdieu has argued that it is particularly useful to see theory as sets of thinking tools (Bourdieu, 1989). Schirato and Webb (2003) have stated Bourdieu’s conceptual tools; *capital*, *habitus* and *field* are “arguably the most significant and successful attempt to make sense of the relationship between objective social structures (institutions, discourses, fields, ideologies) and everyday practices (what people do, and why they do it)” (p. 540). These tools offer lenses through which researchers and practitioners can examine the often hidden power structures that constitute social spaces, like schools (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2012). In this study, these conceptual tools aid in the elucidation of participants lived experience and context-specific examination of practices and resources that facilitate or hinder the development of equity and quality education in the two independent schools.

Detailed explanations of these three main conceptual tools are now offered, along with how they link to equity and quality education and their significance to this inquiry. According to Swartz (2002) “Bourdieu’s complete model of practices conceptualises human action as the outcome of a complex relationship between *habitus*, *capital* and *field*” (p. 66S). Klibthong

(2012) points out that it is these networks of relations among objective positions within the field that are central to Bourdieuan perspectives and characterise social lived experiences. In other words, the dynamic network of relations in and around the structures that comprise the *field* make it a place in and through which *habitus* and *capital* are formed and experienced. This means that when discussing each concept, references to others are at times essential. While each concept is elucidated in its own right, it is essential to keep the interconnected and dialectic relationship of these concepts in mind.

### *Field*

*Field* for Bourdieu is a social arena in which people interact, manoeuvre and struggle (Bourdieu, 1997). Hardy (2012) acknowledges that Bourdieu used the term *field* in three distinct ways; geographical field, playing field and battlefield. Each of these meanings can be described in relation to the research object of this inquiry. The intention in this section is to deliver an overview of the key concept of field as it relates to equity and quality education, rather than attempt to address the entirety of this concept as theorised by Bourdieu.

Considered the most neutral of the three meanings, geographical fields refer to a bounded area that can be mapped (Bourdieu, 1984). In a literal sense, the case schools are geographical fields inclusive of the physical spaces, buildings and organisation of Middle Schools in terms of classrooms, learning spaces and material resources within. In constructing the research object of this inquiry (Grenfell, 2012), the case schools as geographical fields locate enactments of equity and quality education for all. These include organisational components of school structures and practices ranging from timetabling, titles and staffing of school departments, role descriptions and responsibilities, teacher-student ratios, curriculum, assessment and reporting practices and schedules, pedagogical approaches, physical spaces and resource distribution and application. While Swartz (2002)

sites Bourdieu's reference to fields as "structured social contexts" (p. 65S), according to Moore (2012) "the most important feature of a field is that it is dynamic - it exists in and through time" (p. 102). Given pursuit of 'best practice' and 'quality education' by schools results in modifications and changes to any number of these aspects, the case school field while structured is also shown to be dynamic. School structure and organisation is an important line of inquiry for understanding how equity and quality are understood and enacted. It is important to remember that while physical spaces and organisation of schools align with geographical fields, dynamic processes of schooling however, encompass features that are less tangible.

In addition to physical spaces and organisation, schools can also be seen as sites of cultural practice and Bourdieu's use of sporting analogies help us to understand the reference to a playing field (Bourdieu, 1988a). To play a physical sporting game, there are not only players, there is also a location or space in which the game is played and often, equipment for players to play the game with. A playing field denotes cultural practices that inform how a game is played. Webb et al (2002) highlight that a cultural field, "can be defined as a series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations, appointments and titles which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorize certain discourses and activities" (p. 21). The production and authorisation mechanism, constructs these as fields of power, which in *Figure 3.1*, is denoted by oval lines demarcating distinct fields and their orientations to other fields. In this figure the school field is incorporated by the broader educational field, which in turn is encompassed by ideological fields. Significantly though, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) point out that a cultural field such as these are "not a product of a deliberate act of creation, and it follows rules or better, regularities, that are not explicit or codified" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 98). This implies that individuals need to

learn/pick up rules in dynamic fields. Therefore the idea of a playing field is important in this inquiry when considering perceptions and experiences students and teachers have of success and non-success, as well as fairness and un-fairness.

The third way Bourdieu uses field is in reference to the idea of a battlefield where social contexts like the case schools become “a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve” the playing field (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 312). Bourdieu used the term *reproduction* to describe “the tendencies of fields such as education to reproduce existing social inequalities rather than challenging or transforming the status quo” (Webb et al, 2002, p. xv). By extension, establishing an idea of ‘status quo’ around equity and quality education in the case schools will support consideration of how practices and beliefs held within the case schools may be reproductive or transformative of these ideas.

### *Capital*

Subgroups of Bourdieu’s thinking tool *capital* include social, cultural, linguistic, scientific and literary. Bourdieu states: “It is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms.” (1986, p. 241). Economic capital can be considered material as in “financial assets” (Webb et al, 2002, p. 109), while symbolic capital embodies characteristics unique to each of its subgroups. The latter operate symbolically “because they mean nothing in themselves, but depend on people believing that someone possesses these qualities” (Webb et al, 2002, p.xvi). Because agents struggle for capital in the field, *Figure 3.1* shows this concept as central in the case school fields.

Of the different subgroups of symbolic capital, cultural capital has received the most attention in literature. Webb et al (2002) define cultural capital as “a form of value associated with

culturally authorised tastes, consumptions patterns, attributes, skills and awards. Within the field of education, for example, an academic degree constitutes cultural capital” (p. x). Laureau and Weininger (2003) offer a broad analysis and critique of what they determine to be a dominant and salient misinterpretation of cultural capital in education research. They call for researchers to consider the evidence that Bourdieu fuses cultural capital with the likes of ability or technical skills rather than making distinctions between them, as has been dominant in research to date. This has important implications for research looking at how equity and quality education is understood and enacted in the independent sector, and ultimately to whether and how educational principles align and are realised.

### *Habitus*

Reiterating the theory and method duality in Bourdieu’s work, habitus is understood as both a concept and a thinking tool (Rawolle & Lingard, 2013). As a concept, habitus is a system of dispositions and “durable ways of standing, speaking, walking and thereby of feeling and thinking” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 70). In this inquiry, teacher and student understanding and engagement with equity and quality education in the *field* is considered to be reflected through *habitus*.

Nash (1999) refers to habitus as an agent’s ‘feel for the game’ (p. 176). Where the game represents the school playing field’s social practices and structures (which are underpinned by values and beliefs that regulate behaviour), the feel that agents have for this game, their knowledge and ability to play by the rules, is reflected in their ways of being. This is the habitus in action. Importantly Mills, Molla, Gale, Cross, Parker & Smith (2017) point out that: “In practice, dispositions signal an unthinking-ness in action” (p. 857). This unthinking-ness is significant given habitus is considered generative. Pertinent to this study, members of an independent school community become an identifiable group when considered to be

sharing similar dispositional characteristics and habitus that support their ability to play the game. Habitus reinforces and recreates ways of being, by generating practices that become self-reinforcing. In this way, not only might it be expected that agents in this school context have habitus that supports their engagement with the facilitators of equity and quality education but, as they engage in these practices, habitus is reinforced. Nash (1999) also reads *habitus* as operating predominantly on an unconscious level, a contributing factor to why it is so challenging to change and modify social practices such as those inculcated in pursuits of equity and quality education.

### **Conceptualising Bourdieu's thinking tools with this inquiry**

The conceptual diagram below has been informed by the empirical literature review presented in chapter 2, as well as Bourdieu's social critical theory. The three outer fields, ideological, educational and school broadly reflect the vertical dimensions in the previous *Figure (2.3)* but at this juncture they are labelled in terms of fields of power in order to align with Bourdieu's social critical theory. The facilitators identified through the review of literature remain in the educational and school fields but are joined by illustrations of capital and habitus. These are by no means a fixed or exhaustive representation of these concepts.

According to Grenfell (1996) Bourdieu's approach "understands objective and subjective structures as dialectically related" (p. 291). Keeping in mind the two-dimensional limitation of any diagram, this is an important consideration, which informed *Figure 3.1* in a few ways. Firstly, the use of broken lines demarcates not only the fields themselves but is designed to encapsulate this dialectic relationship. This relational aspect of Bourdieu's social critical theory is considered significant to the lived experiences in school and sector fields as well as interactions between stakeholders, and between the facilitators of equity and quality.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 97) argue that capital neither exists nor functions except in relation to a field, at least in part due to the struggle for the acquisition of capital occurring there. For this reason, capital is depicted in the school field to reflect where the study participants have their struggle.

Finally, habitus is conceptualised in the middle bands of *Figure 3.1*. Habitus is “predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is as principles which generate and organize practices and representations...” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). Coupled with the established understanding that habitus influences and is influenced by the fields in which it operates, in *Figure 3.1* its location between fields is designed to reflect this function as well as its utility in setting “boundaries within which agents are ‘free’ to adopt strategic practices” (Harker & May, 1993, p. 174). In the diagram, habitus could have been depicted within the school field and between the ideological and educational fields, however in a bid for clarity and simplicity, *Figure 3.1* locates habitus in one field, primarily to demonstrate its relational function.

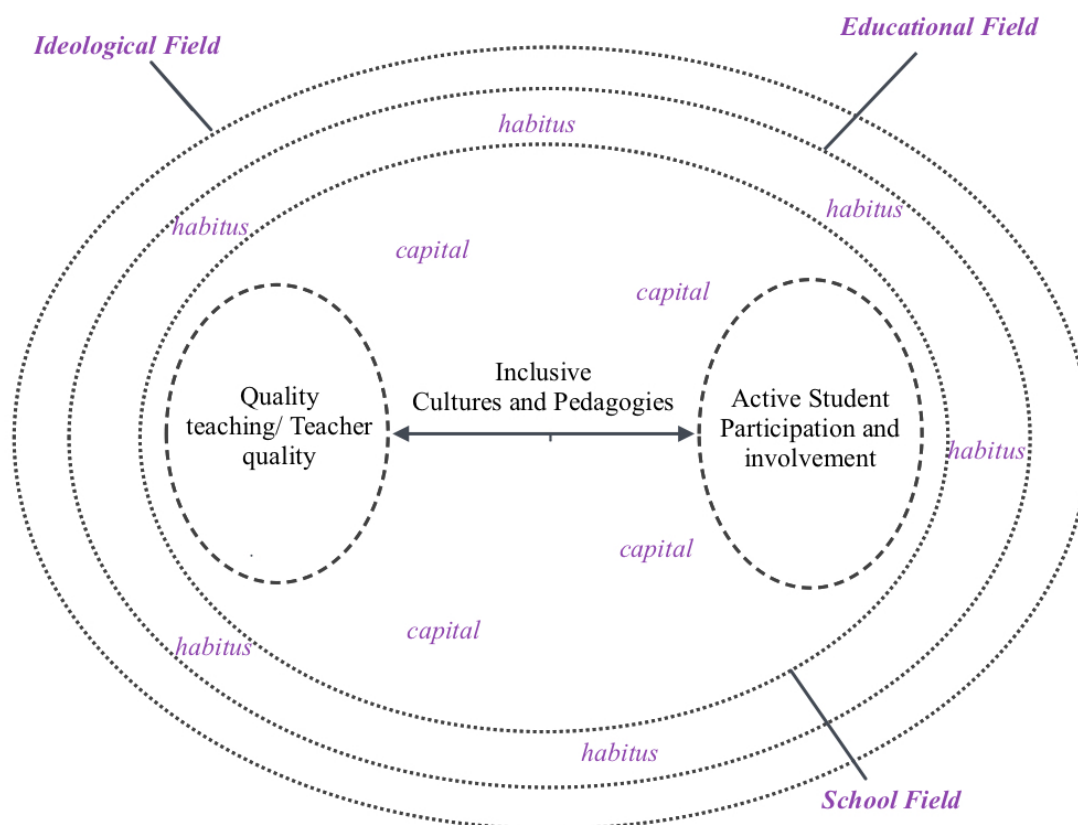


Figure 3.1. Conceptualisation of facilitators of equity and quality education with Bourdieu's mechanisms; field, habitus and capital.

Bourdieu's thinking tools are considered both theoretical and generative resources (Rawolle & Lingard, 2013) and as such, have been applied as a means of investigation as well as objects in education research (Costa & Murphy, 2016). To clarify this, the following section offers illustrations of Bourdieu's theory and concepts having been used in related research.

### ***Bourdieu's theory as method***

Lareau and Horvat (1999) consider that Bourdieu's method allows "for a more fluid interplay and better understanding of the relationship between structure and agency" (p. 37). Interpretations of Bourdieu's theory as method have led to a number of different frameworks for application to research. Grenfell (2012) describes a three-level methodology comprised of: 1. Construction of the research object as a field; 2. Field analysis; and 3. Participant objectification. Using this methodology with research about initial teacher education,

Grenfell (1996) studied the training field in three distinct levels, making use of five case studies of pre-service language teachers. In doing so, he found the approach made it possible to “unpick the dynamic processes underlying metaphors of pedagogic narration” (Grenfell, 2012, p. 301). The insights gleaned from the approach are meaningful not only for learning about the processes of developing as a teaching professional but also for guiding the nature and knowledge of educational research. While this inquiry does not step through the levels overtly, *Figure 3.1* shows the construction of the research object as a field, informed by the research aim, questions and review of policy and empirical literature.

Aligning with Grenfell’s (2012) interpretation of field analysis, Costa and Murphy (2016) describe Bourdieu’s theory-method as developed in two complementary moments. When preparing for fieldwork with Bourdieu:

The first moment consists of mapping out the space of social relations and actions. This involves identifying the nature and features the field displays and which determine agent’s actions and positions from within. Once the properties of the field have been critically examined; i.e. the social contexts, the researcher should then turn his/her attention to the qualities of agency. The emphasis placed on agents lived experiences allows us to access agents categories of perception and appreciation. (Costa and Murphy, 2016, p. 53)

Emphasis is placed on tandem analysis of these two moments so that explanation and identification of relationships within the field of power can be interpreted. The inner school field depicted in *Figure 3.1* locates the primary social relations for participants in the case schools. In this inquiry approaching research sites and gaining informed consent, collecting data, analysis and the presentation of findings supported detailed mapping of this research space.

### **Trends in research that have made use of Bourdieu's theory and methodology**

Use of Bourdieu's social critical theory in research focusing on issues around equity and quality education is not uncommon. Most common is explication of the use of Bourdieu's thinking tools as lenses through which to study and analyse findings, as opposed to spelling out how the theory as method framework may have supported research. Studies that have used Bourdieu's theoretical framework can also be seen to reflect Haug's (2010) vertical and horizontal dimensions of inclusive education research, as described in the previous chapter.

Vertical dimension research is seen for example in Roksa and Robinson's (2017) study using quantitative data from large-scale surveys in the US to consider the relationship between college going cultures in high schools and transitions to higher education with a particular interest on levels of advantage. Seeking to interrogate the relationship between cultural capital, habitus and these transitions, Roksa and Robinson (2017) found context specific relationships between cultural capital and transition to higher education. Students from schools with high college going cultures, like those of the case schools in this inquiry, were found to benefit less from cultural capital as a factor in determining tertiary attendance than students from less advantaged backgrounds. Habitus was related to the transitions in all cases, regardless of levels of advantage. From a sector level perspective, Roksa and Robinson's study findings aligned with Bourdieu's argument "that schools reproduce inequality by rewarding cultural capital of the dominant social class" in turn contributing to cultural reproduction (Roksa and Robinson, 2017, p. 1230).

In the previous chapter, classroom level streaming practices were identified as informing systemic/organisational barriers to equity and quality education. A reflection of horizontal dimension research, Zevenbergen (2005) was interested in the impact of these teaching and learning practices on students in mathematics. Conducting interviews with middle years

students in Australia about their experiences in ability groups, deemed low or high, Zevenbergen (2005) found that the practices were more or less empowering depending on which groups students were in. For students in the lower ability groups the practices were found to have direct and salient negative impacts on student self concept and development of student habitus. Despite similar and repeated findings over time (Slavin, 1990; Wiliam & Bartholomew, 2004) Francis et al (2017) point out the notable lack of impact of these findings given the ongoing use of these practices in schools. Here we see evidence of the reproduction of inequalities at a classroom level through teaching and learning practices identified as detrimental to some groups of students. An important consideration for this inquiry that will interrogate practices engaged in and experienced by teachers and students in the case schools.

Both of these studies made use of habitus, arguably Bourdieu's most controversial concept. Considered "one of the most misunderstood and hotly contested of Bourdieu's ideas" (Maton, 2012, p. 48) habitus is most commonly challenged for being deterministic (Reay, 1995, 2004; Jenkins, 1992) and more broadly, as a concept that "appears to have little to offer educational research (Nash 1999, p.177). Sullivan (2002) considers Bourdieu's concept of habitus to be "theoretically incoherent" despite some "intuitive plausibility" (p. 163). Despite such critiques, others conducting research about aspects of equity and quality education have made use of habitus as both a conceptual tool and research method.

Comparing the impact of habitus to that of cultural capital on educational outcomes has been a focus in response to contradictory conclusions drawn from dominant attention on the influence of cultural capital alone (Dumais, 2002). Including a focus on gender, Dumais' (2002) study used longitudinal survey data from eighth grade participants to evaluate the

impact of cultural capital (participation in activities – considered linked to socioeconomic background) and habitus (occupational aspirations) on educational outcomes (grades). Findings from this research indicate that while cultural capital had a greater impact on females than males, habitus was more influential on outcomes than cultural capital, irrespective of gender.

In light of previous studies relying almost exclusively on occupational aspiration, operationalising habitus more substantially was of concern to Roksa and Robinson (2017). They considered the relationship between cultural capital, habitus and the transition to higher education in their inquiry. Habitus was measured on three variables – Level of expectation (Low, moderate or high); consistency in expectations over time (10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade); congruency of expectations with parents. Like Dumais, this quantitative study made use of longitudinal survey data finding habitus to be more influential than cultural capital on transitions to higher education, however they were careful to point out that the degree of impact of cultural capital differed depending on levels of advantage and disadvantage (Roksa & Robinson, 2017).

Rather than a focus on comparing habitus to cultural capital for its impact, a number of studies have made use of the concept in a relational sense. Nash (2002) and Edgerton, Roberts and Peter (2013) made use of the Structure-Disposition-Practice model, considered a scheme for a standard form of sociological explanation (Nash, 2002), in conjunction with Bourdieu's concepts in their studies. Edgerton and Roberts (2014) argue that incorporation of key concepts such as habitus with such an explanatory framework aids researchers to “address the misalignment between Bourdieuan relational constructs and standard positivist qualitative research methods” (p. 193). In New Zealand, Nash (2002) interrogated the link

between elements of habitus and educational progress at school. Analysis of data from interviews with seven-16 year old students considered of standard scholastic ability revealed aspiration, academic self-concept and perception of schooling as the most important elements of habitus associated with the successful student.

Research about equity and quality that uses the concept of cultural capital, focuses on its states, effects and activation in various education fields. However, Kraaykamp and van Eijck (2010) make a case that empirical studies on cultural capital have not fully operationalised the three states described by Bourdieu (institutionalised, embodied and objectified). Laureau and Horvat's (1999) qualitative research went some way in considering these different dimensions when they sought to interrogate the experiences black parents had of involvement in their third-grade children's schooling. Considering both cultural and social capital they conducted interviews and classroom observations in their case study, and established that being white is an advantage in white dominant schooling. Whiteness was found to represent a cultural resource that while largely hidden, nevertheless enabled "white parents' compliance with the standard of deferential and positive parental involvement in school" (Laureau & Horvat, 1999, p. 49). Acknowledging some critiques of Bourdieu's conceptual model of reproduction as overly deterministic and under-emphasising the role of school fields in whether or not family members are able to activate cultural and social capital, they recommend a "conceptual framework of moments of inclusion and moments of exclusion. (One could use the terms moments of reproduction or moments of contestation)" be adopted (Laureau & Horvat, 1999, p. 48).

This small sample of research related to issues around equity and quality education has been highlighted here to demonstrate the relevance, range and spaces in which Bourdieu's theory

and methodology have and have yet to be applied. This inquiry contributes to this literature by using Bourdieu's concepts and theory as method to gain greater insights into how equity and quality education are understood and enacted in school contexts seldom explored. Additionally, consideration of both vertical and horizontal dimensions within the research and analysis is expected to offer important insights about the lived experiences teachers and students are having of contested and complex policy ideals.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has focused on the relevance of Bourdieu's social critical theory to this inquiry and offered an overview of how this framework and three main concepts have been applied in existing bodies of empirical literature about equity and quality education. The usefulness of this framework for making sense of lived experiences reported by teachers and students within complex social fields, like those of schools is considered a strength of this research. The following chapter considers how this framework aligns methodologically and outlines the research design and methodology applied.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapters have established the conceptual and policy context of this inquiry, outlined and critically analysed existing research and relevant literature informing the problem. In chapter three, Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital were explained in relation to how they have been used in developing the theoretical framework for the study. In this chapter, the research methodology is summarised. Along with the conceptual framework of the methodology, research methods, design and tools used in data collection are outlined. Ethical considerations, approaches used to analyse data, and an elucidation of steps taken to ensure trustworthiness and rigour in the research conclude the chapter.

In order to avoid repetition in light of extensive coverage in the previous chapter of the theoretical framework and review, following a very brief overview, the orientation of the research and research design is considered in light of Bourdieu's social critical theory.

#### **Relationship between the theoretical perspective and research paradigm of this inquiry**

Positivist and interpretivist philosophies lend themselves to quantitative and qualitative approaches to research in different ways. A positivist stance more often lends itself to objective styles that seek facts in order to make generalisations about the research (Dowling & Brown, 2010). An interpretivist stance on the other hand, "acknowledges some degree of subjectivity in the researcher and other participants... and seeks to throw light on a particular case or situation" (Atkins & Wallace, 2012, p. 22). While this stance can involve the

collection of qualitative and/or quantitative data, this study focuses on collecting qualitative data. Onwuegbuzie (2000) argues that various dichotomies “used to distinguish quantitative and qualitative paradigms should be re-conceptualised as lying on continua” (p. 13) rather than strict categories. Researcher willingness to probe beyond the surface and involve ourselves in complexity when examining social phenomenon and educational issues is important to Bourdieu who also seeks to challenge this separateness reflected in what Webb et al (2002) point out as his attempts to “think through the divide between quantitative and qualitative positions” (p. 48). Given the purpose of this study is to investigate how equity and quality education are understood and experienced in the independent sector, particularly in terms of realising quality education for all students, Bourdieu’s theory and approach to research are pertinent because of the dualities inherent in both the question itself and the area of research.

*Situating the research in Bourdieu’s social critical theory and methodology*

Various methodologies have been used to inform equity and quality education research including but not limited to; positivist, critical feminist, indigenous, critical race, post-structural, community based, cultural-historical and post-modern. Each of these methodologies privileges certain ways of knowing and offer diverse contributions to the field. Critical theory supports the examination of what is ‘unseen’ by looking through what Freire has termed the “ideological fog within which the origins and processes of power hide” (Freire, 1998; as cited in Ballard, 2013, p. 763). This is important for research about concepts that are complex and poorly understood (Loreman et al, 2014), research in schools that have received little attention in relation to these concepts, and in school sites that are frequently identified as privileged (Bauman, 2000; Kenway, 2013). Conceptualising critical theory in a social perspective supports the research aims to understand facilitators and barriers to equity and quality education in the research contexts. Bourdieu suggests agent’s objective relations

with their field are inevitable, but warns; “you shouldn’t forget the other possible relation to the social world, that of agents really engaging in the market...” (1994, p. 20-21). He also emphasises the importance of researchers ensuring they are able to take into account the relation of ordinary experience by also drawing upon the structured and structuring practices of the social world. The use of Bourdeuiian methodology to support data analysis is intended to address this concern. In particular, the application of Bourdieu’s conceptual tools *field*, *habitus* and *capital* are generative for elucidating practices and possible resources, experienced as facilitating or hindering the development of cultures supporting equity and quality, as well as facilitating a context-specific analysis of these practices in independent schools. Here we also find a link between Bourdieu’s critical social theoretical framework for the research and the philosophical perspectives underpinning phenomenology.

#### *Linking Bourdieu to phenomenology in this research*

Phenomenology is relevant to this inquiry given the focus on teacher and student lived experiences of understanding and enacting equity and quality education. Little is known about these experiences of teachers and students in non-elite independent schools and therefore consideration of existing conditions and experiences is an important contribution to knowledge. It is important to acknowledge that Bourdieu critiques phenomenology for its emphasis on description of lived experience, arguing it does not explore the conditions through which the lived experience occurs. His most significant issue with this is that the approach is then “limited to apprehending ‘the world as self evident’, (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 3) and importantly, “remains decidedly deficient in its ability to penetrate the obscuring veils of doxa” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 26). Doxa are taken-for-granted assumptions or “uncontested acceptance of the daily lifeworld” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1002, p. 73). Reproduction and transformation are key interests of Bourdieu’s critical social theory and if this inquiry does not consider how the lived experience has come to be, only a partial picture of the way equity

and quality education is working in these spaces will be gleaned, limiting the contribution able to be made by the research. To address this described limitation, hermeneutic phenomenology is used in this research and as a research method, it is described in the following subsection.

Rather than seeing phenomenology and Bourdieu's social critical approach as incompatible, this inquiry takes the position that they offer scope to be complimentary. According to Wacquant (1992), "Bourdieu rarely separated epistemology, theory and empirical work" (p. 261). This way of engaging as a social critical theorist, led Bourdieu to outline an approach to research or "'social praxeology' that weaves together a "structuralist" and a "constructivist" approach to analysis" (Wacquant, 1992, p. 11). Various referred to as *levels* (Grenfell, 2012) or *moments* (Costa & Murphy, 2016; Wacquant, 1992), this inquiry has made deliberate efforts to:

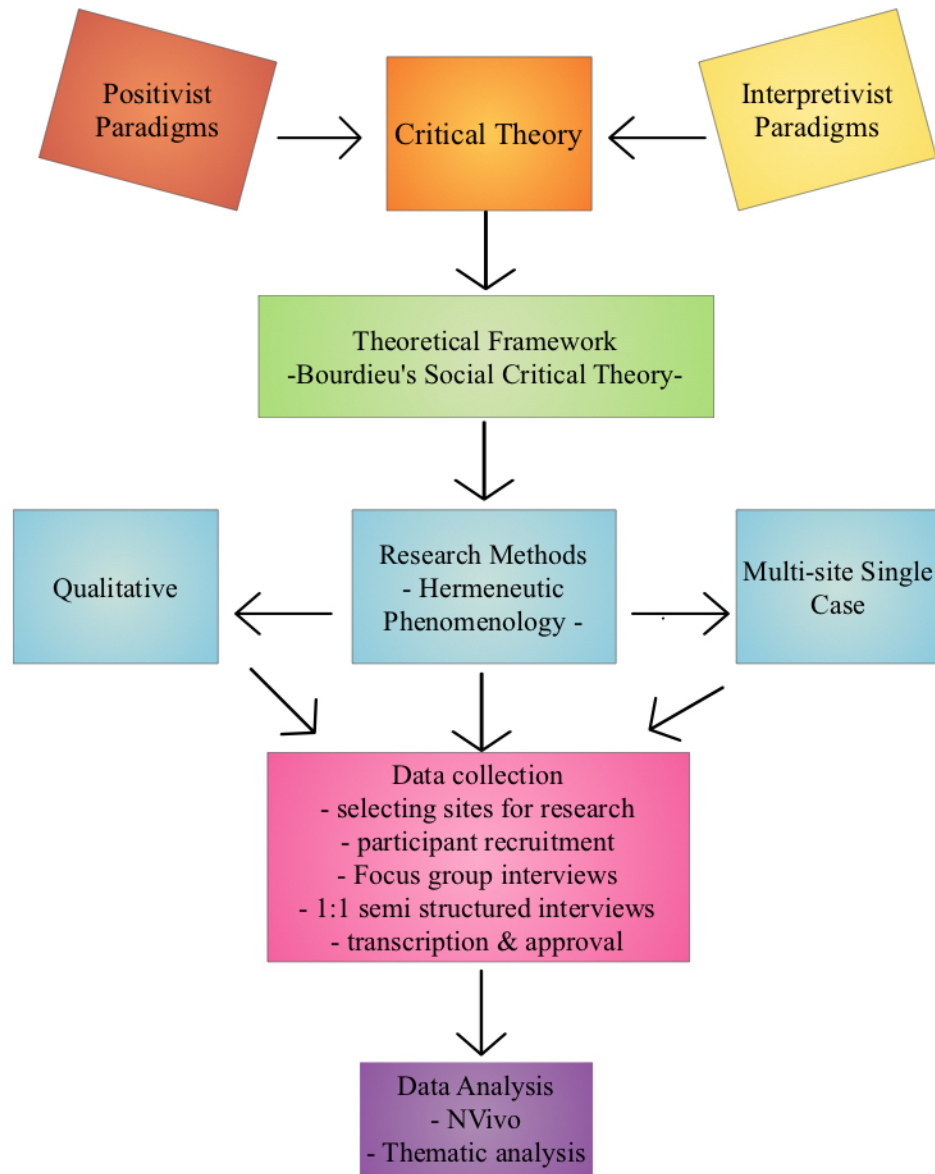
- a) Map out the objective structure of relations between the positions occupied by agents who compete for legitimate forms of specific authority of which the field is a site; construct the objective structures (*spaces of positions*)
- b) Analyse the habitus of the agents; reintroduce the immediate lived experience of agents in order to explicate the categories of perception and appreciation (*dispositions*) that structure action from the inside

Bourdieu considers the first 'moment' to hold epistemological priority and initial considerations of this for this inquiry have been detailed through chapters 1, 2 and 3. For example, the introduction chapter established historical, political and social contexts of the key concepts and demonstrated the contested space in which the research is conducted. The literature review highlighted existing research and policy that have shaped and legitimised forms of authority in relation to equity and quality education and in relation to school sites.

The theoretical framework chapter (chapter 3) has laid the foundation for how this inquiry can benefit from the social critical theory perspective being taken. The conceptualisation of spaces of positions occupied by the participants in the research sites has been depicted in *Figure 3.1*.

The second ‘moment’ is explicated in chapters 5 and 6. Following on from establishing the objective structures, these chapters bring the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants to the fore through detailed consideration and analysis of the interview data. Through analysis of habitus, interrogation of how equity and quality education are understood and enacted in the case schools is able to occur through consideration of how participants actions and beliefs may be reinforcing or transforming dominant beliefs. In conjunction with hermeneutic phenomenology, application of these moments and Bourdieu’s thinking tools (field, habitus and capital) is expected to address the limitations outlined above and actively support the consideration of doxa and doxic relationships in the research sites.

Following the foundation of critical social methodology, translation of this grounding into method shapes the research process. *Figure 4.1* shows a flow diagram of the methodological process of the study and in the following section, the research methods are outlined.



*Figure 4.1.* Methodological process of the research.

## Research Methods

### *Qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological design*

The focus on lived experience distinguishes phenomenology from other types of qualitative research interested in human experience (Usher & Jackson, 2014). The goal of

phenomenological research is to describe the meaning that experiences hold for subjects, and in doing so it can be used to study areas in which there is little knowledge (Donalek, 2004). In order to meet the aims of the study - to offer insights in to how equity and quality education are understood and enacted by students and teachers in independent schools, this research cannot rely on classroom observations as it would be insufficient for capturing the complexity of experience agents have within the field. A closer examination of the lived experiences teachers and students are having of these is required. According to Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) the priority of qualitative approaches to educational research is “understanding beliefs, opinions and teaching practice” (p. 17). By examining connections between beliefs and understandings about equity and quality and the lived experiences students and teachers have of these in terms of quality education, this research will be looking at both macro (structure) and micro (process) perspectives (Haug, 2010).

Descriptions provided by research participants were used to examine human lived experiences. In other words, this research is grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology. As Usher and Jackson (2014) point out: “phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method becomes interpretive rather than purely descriptive” (p. 184). Birks (2014) highlights that interpretivism is a methodology based on recognition that human “actions are the product of our judgments, reasons and intentions” (p. 19). This acknowledgment is of central importance for exploring and describing teacher and student understandings and enactments of equity and quality education in independent schools. Of particular interest to this type of phenomenology is “bringing that which is hidden to the forefront” (Geanellos, 1998 as cited in Usher & Jackson, 2014, p. 184) and in this way the approach aligns neatly with the interests of critical social theory.

### *Multi-site single case research*

This research used multi-site case design. Bogdan and Biklan (2007) explain: ‘When researchers study two or more subjects, settings or depositories of data they are usually doing what we call multi-site cases’ (p. 69). The research was conducted in more than one school but the focus of the study and data collection methods were the same in each of the two settings. Capturing the views and experiences of teachers and students, as well as drawing on publicly available information through school websites and MySchool online profiles accounts for multiple subjects and caches of data. Yin (2003) offers: ‘case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context’ (p. 1). The combination of research focus and approach meet each of the above-mentioned criteria, which made this a suitable approach.

By conducting multi-site single case research a degree of trustworthiness from an empirical perspective can be claimed while also allowing for site based or context specific focuses, established as necessary for research about equity and quality education. The importance of being able to triangulate data in order to add credibility to conclusions drawn in the research cannot be understated. Given this design “uses a variety of data collection tools...and a variety of perspectives...to provide depth” (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013, p. 11) this research is well situated. Moreover, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that the richness of the findings availed by this approach are often more interesting, revealing and useful for the researcher as well as making more significant contributions to social theories.

### *Justification for the research design*

Equity and quality are variously presented in policy and literature as practices, processes and principles. At policy level these commitments are priorities for governments and schools

(AITSL, 2011; DET, 2015; MCEETYA, 2008; OECD, 2012; UNESCO, 2000; UNESCO 2013/14). However, in research and literature they are repeatedly identified as terms and ideas that are confused, complex and contested (Reid, 2011; Loreman et al, 2014). This context combined with the research problem being explored, warrants the qualitative approach taken. To capture how teachers and students are experiencing these agendas (as practice, process and/or principle) in schools, the research questions focus on student and teacher reports of what they understand, what they do and how they respond to equity and quality, including their perceptions of barriers and/or facilitators to these commitments. A limited number of studies have used the independent school sector to explore how equity and quality education are understood and experienced thus this study offers the chance for important insights and perspectives that to date have been rarely illuminated.

## **Selection of Cases**

### *School participants*

Teacher and student participants were members of non-elite, co-educational, independent school communities. The case schools were identified through a combination of Independent Schools Victoria, school specific and MySchool website searches that revealed commitment to equity and quality education ideals, practices and opportunities. Analysis of the information obtained through these investigations ensured that schools were comparable in terms of the selection criteria: co-educational, having defined middle schools, socio-economic advantage, demographic profiles of student population and performance outcomes. For ease of reading, codes were assigned to the case schools. CS1 denotes Case School 1 and CS2, Case School 2.

At the time of recruitment, both schools were average in size for independent schools, according to the Independent Schools Council of Australia (2015). CS1 had a total school

population of 540 students from ECC – 12. CS2 had a total school population of 793 spanning years 5 – 12. The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a measure developed for the My Schools website which measures key factors that correlate with educational outcomes (ACARA, 2015a). These factors include parent occupation and parent education data, socio-economic advantage (SEA), remoteness and percentage of indigenous student enrolment. Quartile breakdowns of the distribution of socio-educational advantage across the school populations were also considered to ensure schools reflected close profiles in this as well. Overall, at the time of recruitment, ICSEA values for both schools were between 1.2 and 1.5 standard deviations above the average, indicating that students at these schools are considered educationally advantaged but not elite.

#### *Case School 1 (CS1)*

CS1 identifies as a metropolitan independent school and is located within a 20 kilometre radius from Melbourne's CBD. At the time of data collection 17% of the student population identified as having a language background other than English (LOTE) and there were no Indigenous students enrolled according to publicly available data (ACARA, 2017). Both groups of CS1 school participants (students and teachers) as well as the school principal identified a lack of cultural and religious diversity among the student population, describing the population as largely "white bread".

School websites and publicly available online information about CS1 highlighted school efforts in pursuing equity and quality education through configurations of educational, pedagogical and wellbeing models underpinning practices and initiatives. For de-identification purposes, specific titles are not given however the frameworks are central to the schools strategic plan and objectives.

### *Case School 2 (CS2)*

CS2 is identified as an inner regional independent school, situated within an 80 kilometre radius from Melbourne CBD. At the time of data collection 15% of the student population identified with having a language background other than English (LOTE) and there were no Indigenous students enrolled according to publicly available data (ACARA, 2017). Like CS1, both groups of CS2 participants (students and teachers) remarked on the lack of cultural and religious diversity among the student population identifying the broader community as having a comparable lack of cultural and religious diversity in its population.

School websites and publicly available online information about CS2 highlight school commitments towards being recognised as a leading school, known for offering an engaging curriculum that allows students to achieve high quality learning outcomes through the creation of supportive, inclusive and caring learning environments. Central to the schools strategic plan and objectives were focuses on student experience, high quality teachers, community engagement, sustainable operations and authentic leadership.

### *Student Participants*

Interested in the views and experiences of all students belonging to a year level cohort in the middle years, consistent with emphasis on equity and fairness, this position informed methodological and participant selection approaches. Graham and Slee (2008) have argued that inclusion and inclusive education language sometimes “discursively privileges notions of the pre-existing by seeking to include the ‘Other’ into a prefabricated, naturalised space” (p. 278). From a methodological perspective, this research sought to avoid the risks associated with making assumptions about student lived experiences of equity and quality in order to circumvent predetermined ideas about who constitutes the other. As such, capturing the voices and experiences of any student belonging to the Year 8 cohort of the CSSs was

important. Students were not nominated because they fit a predetermined category of potential marginalisation. Instead, voluntary participation was sought from the year level cohort with a two-stage data collection and participant selection process utilised as a means to be responsive to the context and capture a range of views.

Purposive random sampling “allows researchers to claim that the cases included in a study were selected without knowing the outcomes of the stories to be told” (Emmel, 2013, p. 41). This approach was used to avoid targeting marginalised groups from the outset and to mitigate potential assumptions about diversity in the field held either by me as the researcher, or the school itself. Just over 25% of the Year 8 student cohort in CS1 and just under 20% of the year 8 cohort in CS2 were recruited for participation in one of three focus group discussions run in each school.

Maximum variation and emergent sampling (Emmel, 2013) approaches were used to select 8 students (4 boys and 4 girls in CS1 and 6 girls and 2 boys in CS2) to participate in one-to-one interviews following focus group discussions. According to Patton (1990) maximum variation sampling can turn what would ordinarily be a weakness of small samples in qualitative research into a strength. Emmel (2013) points out, “this strategy purposefully identifies common patterns and core experiences and shared aspects of the cases, while purposefully selecting cases because they varied in quite distinct and marked ways” (p. 38). Emergent sampling enabled this research to be sensitive and responsive not only to the research context but to the participants themselves. Further, as Emmel (2013) explains, “this strategy accepts that samples cannot be wholly planned in advanced” (p. 41). Where focus group discussions were used to capture initial views and experiences of students and could be arguably limited by the purposeful random sampling, with this follow up sampling approach

and opportunity, variance of perspectives from the original pool of volunteers could be sought and captured. Table 4.1 offers an illustration of how these sampling approaches were used consecutively in engaging student participants in the research.

Table 4.1

*Example of process of student recruitment and data collection in case schools*

<i>Data collection methods</i>	<i>Participants and Selection Process</i>					
	Inviting participation from the whole Year 8 cohort					
Audio of Focus Group discussion and sticky-notes	Focus Group 1		Focus Group 2		Focus Group 3	
	Student 1	Student 4	Student 7	Student 10	Student 13	Student 16
	Student 2	Student 5	Student 8	Student 11	Student 14	Student 17
	Student 3	Student 6	Student 9	Student 12	Student 15	Student 18
One-to-one Interviews	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F

#### *Teacher/ Educator participants*

With school support, teachers of core curriculum subjects and middle school leaders who worked with the year eight cohorts were contacted, fully informed and invited to participate in the study. As with initial student recruitment, purposeful random sampling was used to gain teacher participation in the research. In a couple of instances, purposive sampling was also used because preliminary findings from data collection with students identified specific school programs as components of the schools commitment to equity and quality education. While Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) make the case that this kind of sampling “does not pretend to represent the wider population; it is deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased” (p. 104), in trying to better understand the lived experiences of students and teachers, this research holds the position that to not listen to the student voices at the heart of this research would be to deny not only the reality of experience in the sector but the validity of the research could be called into question. It is also important to note that as with other staff, voluntary participation of these identified staff members were sought and there was no expectation that they would agree.

### *Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) Participant*

Nearly one third of Victorian schools are non-government schools and are attended by more than 36% of all students in Victoria (ISV, 2017). Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) is a not-for-profit organisation that provides professional services to approximately 200 member schools. The case schools in this research are members. Member schools “reflect various religious affiliations and educational philosophies” and share with ISV a belief in choice and excellence in education (ISV, 2017). ISV aims to support its member schools in two ways, firstly with employment relations and professional development for schools and secondly through government advocacy. The government advocacy occurs in both directions, supporting schools in their understanding of current and incoming legislation as well as working with governments, advocating for keeping legislation broad enough and flexible enough so that members can remain independent, innovative and able to pursue their own ethos (ISV, 2017).

Participants holding comparable positions as Heads of Learning support in each school, independently mentioned their experiences and involvement in network meetings run through ISV as significant to their understanding and enactment of equity and quality education. As a result, the research expanded to incorporate this perspective. Following application and approval for an ethics amendment, purposive sampling (Cohen et al, 2000) was used to fully inform and invite a representative from ISV to volunteer to participate in the study.

### **Approaches to data collection**

A combination of focus group discussions with the use of sticky-notes and semi-structured one-to-one interviews with students as well as semi-structured one-to-one interviews with staff, were used in this critical social inquiry. These approaches to data collection worked effectively in combination to elicit verbal and written responses from participants while

ensuring responsiveness to the research context was possible. This minimised the risk of a limitation recognised in the field; data reflecting politically correct and theoretical views and beliefs (de Boer et al, 2011).

The theoretical framework guiding the research also informs the approaches to data collection. This study is concerned with not only the views and beliefs of participants but also their experiences and as de Boer et al (2011) note: “It is not surprising that experience is related to attitudes, as the theory about the formation of attitudes states that attitudes are formed by direct and indirect experience (p. 348). Accounting for this, data was collected in more than one way and from more than one perspective as a means to better understand the views held by the participants and to consider which experiences might be informing beliefs and attitudes.

Table 4.2

*Typology of research questions, key concepts and data sources*

<b>Main:</b> How do teachers and students understand and enact equity and quality education in independent schools?		
<b>Key Concepts</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Data Collection</b>
Quality, Success, Equity, Fairness, Inclusion, Inclusive Education, All	<b>Subsidiary Question 1:</b> What do teachers report as their experiences of equity and quality education and how do their experiences align with policy principles of equity and quality?	Teacher Interviews ISV Interview
Quality, Success, Equity, Fairness, Inclusion, Inclusive Education	<b>Subsidiary Question 2:</b> What do students report as their experiences of equity and quality education and how do their experiences align with policy principles of equity and quality?	Focus Group Discussions Sticky Notes Student Interviews
Quality, Success, Equity, Fairness, Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Facilitators	<b>Subsidiary Question 3:</b> What do teachers and students identify as facilitators to achieving equity and quality education?	Focus Group Discussions Sticky Notes Student Interviews Teacher Interviews ISV Interview
Quality, Success, Equity, Fairness, Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Barriers	<b>Subsidiary Question 4:</b> What do teachers and students identify as barriers to achieving equity and quality education?	Focus Group Discussions Sticky Notes Student Interviews Teacher Interviews ISV Interview

### *Using focus groups*

Some inclusive education studies have utilised focus groups with students as a means to collect data (Evans & Lunt, 2002; Fox & Cheng, 2007; Frederickson et al, 2004; Preus, 2012) however most of these have targeted specific groups of students identified as requiring inclusion (e.g. students with special education needs (SEN) integrating into mainstream schools, ASD, Learning Disabilities, ESL students). As this study shares Messiou's (2012) view that all students can experience marginalisation, it sought the views of any member of the student year level cohort in focus group discussions.

Facilitation of participant discussion is vital to the quality of data generated through focus groups. Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (2007) identify the need for researchers who work with children to be calm and experienced which they assert is "important in ensuring the children are comfortable and relaxed" (p. 101) so that they can freely contribute. Stewart et al (2007) also suggests that students of a similar age in focus groups are "likely to increase the cohesion of the group and facilitate the discussion" (p. 101). Each focus group was mixed gender, reflecting the school context. Once informed consent from students and their parents was received, the researcher met with the school's nominated coordinator to determine the size and composition of the groups. At this time it was requested that without disclosing information about students to the researcher, no strong existing relationships occurred between students in the focus groups. This related to things such as close friendships or histories of social difficulties between students.

### *Using sticky notes*

The importance of student voice in this research cannot be overstated. In order to ensure that students' views and experiences of equity and quality education in their schools were captured comprehensively it was decided that during focus group discussions students would

be offered the option of writing ideas on sticky-notes. These could serve as either talking points or as a vehicle for students to write and express personal accounts or ideas that they didn't feel comfortable sharing verbally with the group. According to Bessell (2008), the use of multiple methods “are best able to provide rigour and facilitate children’s rights to express their views in a manner of their choosing” and further, can “give deeper insights into children’s perspectives and experiences” (p. 21).

#### *Using semi-structured interviews*

One-to-one semi-structured interviews were used with student, teacher and ISV participants. The use of interviews in education research is widespread with a range of education stakeholders including principals, teachers, parents and students (Abawi & Oliver, 2013; Carrington & Robinson, 2004; Clark, 2005; Curcic, 2009; Forlin, 2004; Frederickson et al, 2004; Nilholm & Alm, 2010; Preus, 2012; Rietveld, 2005). The distinguishing point of semi-structured interviews in comparison with structured interviews is that they operate more as “guided conversations rather than structured queries” (Yin, 2003, p. 89). This approach assisted the researcher in targeting questions to meet the needs of the inquiry in a non-threatening way that would not compromise the quality of responses. As noted by Becker (1998) in wanting to discover why something happens, “posing a “why” question to an informant can create defensiveness on an informants part” (Yin, 2003, p. 90). Thus careful consideration and trials and pilots of interview questions supported the facilitation of discussion.

#### *Secondary data collection approaches*

In line with qualitative research design, secondary approaches were utilised in a bid to be responsive to the research sites, ensuring a holistic representation of the setting. Mills (2014) notes, “...websites...are examples of grey literature that can provide data for qualitative studies” (p. 40). Information about independent schools that is made public is considered an

extension and reflection of the field and as such offers relevant insights that contribute to findings.

### **Data collection process**

The data collection process in each CS commenced once final ethics approval was granted for the study (Project Number: CF 14/4001-2014002069) by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) on 12 February 2015 (see Appendix A). Independent School Victoria (ISV) indicated that as long as schools give permission to participate in research no further formalities of applications would be required. Services offered by ISV were raised explicitly and independently during interviews with Heads of Learning Support in each CSS, in relation to their understanding and experience of equity and quality education. This led the researcher to apply for an amendment to the ethics application for this project, so that incorporation of this perspective could occur. Ethics approval of this amendment was granted for this study (Project Number: CF14/4001 – 2014002069) by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC). *Figure 4.2* summarises the phases and timelines of data collection for the inquiry.

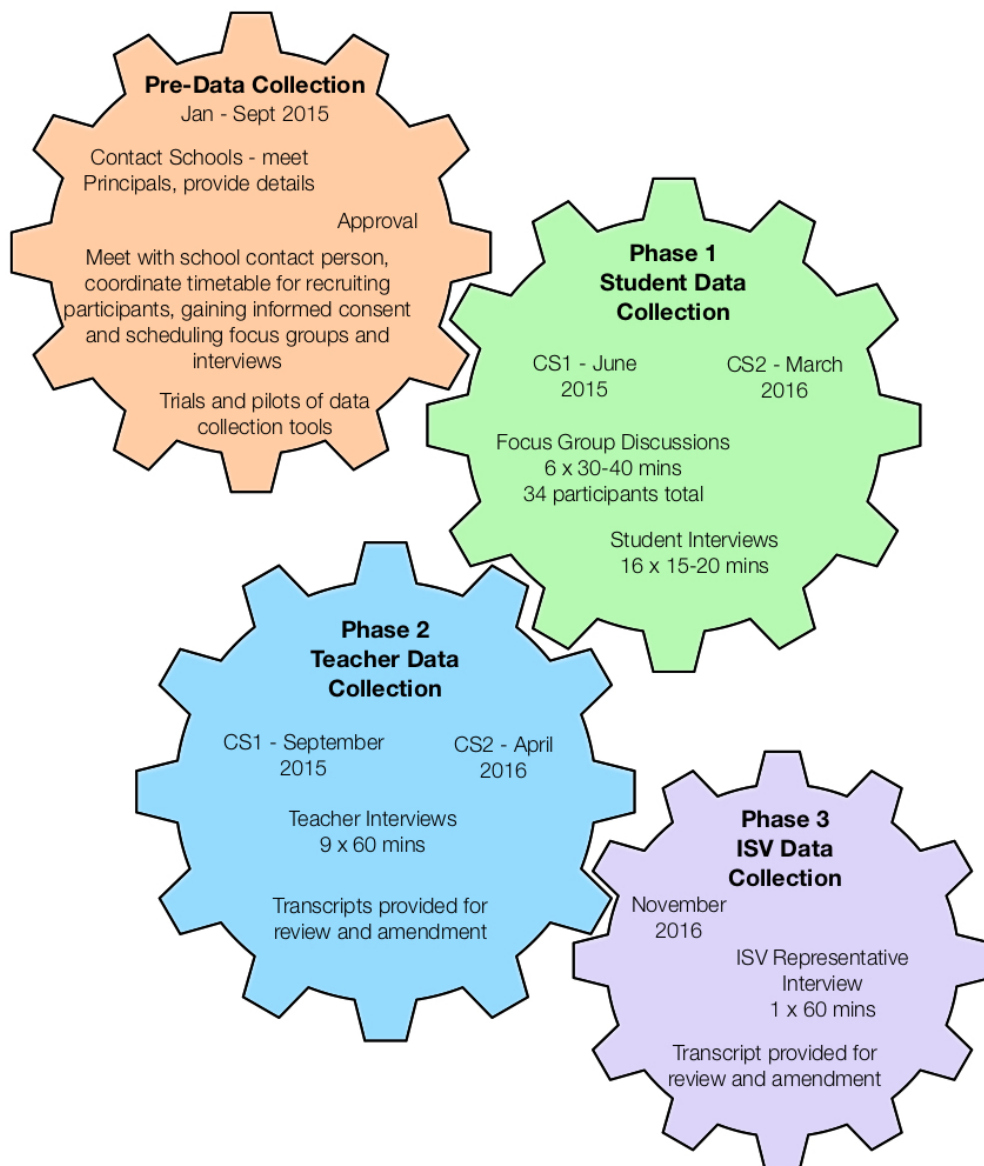


Figure 4.2. Phases and duration of participant recruitment and data collection.

*Pre-data collection: Preparing for and entering the field*

Following the receipt of final ethics approval, I began the process of approaching schools that fit my predetermined criteria for the study as previously outlined. Contact was made with key staff members and school principals via email with a brief introduction to the research, as well as an offer to provide more information either through explanatory statements or an initial face-to-face meeting. Both participant schools sought both of these options and meeting times were set up. Initial meetings with leadership staff were free flowing in terms

of discussion about the research specifically as well as education more broadly and the schools themselves. These meetings highlighted the schools willingness to engage in research about the focus areas and following discussion both school representatives sought final approval from their leadership teams and school staff. Explanatory statements (see Appendix B) and Permission letters (see Appendix G) were offered to facilitate this sharing with their leadership teams and staff.

Once permission was granted, a school staff member was assigned as a coordinator for the project. The initial meeting with this staff member resulted in a draft timetable for the student recruitment process, returning of consent forms, focus group and one-to-one interview times. As a qualitative researcher, engaging fully and deliberately in every interaction with the schools was important. Through a reflection process following every school visit, detailed notes and observations about my interactions with school staff during meetings as well as observations about the physical school environment were recorded in separate school journals. It was important to be aware of my researcher footprints as I engaged with participant schools, their staff and their students.

### *Phase 1: Student data collection*

#### *Trials and pilots of focus group protocol*

Given focus groups were the initial means of data collection with students, careful consideration of how best to facilitate discussion in this context resulted in the decision to use sticky-notes in addition to verbal questioning and discussion. It was critical to trial a pilot of the initial focus group protocol to test the relevance and pertinence of the language and wording of the questions as well as to assess how best to use the sticky notes. The focus group protocol was firstly trialled with my main supervisor and then with university students I teach (Fourth year Bachelor of Education students). While these students were older and

more familiar than my research participants would be, these students were asked to consider their student identities and the context of the university in response to the questions asked.

The language presented to and generated by participants is of significance particularly given the concepts and principles being explored in this inquiry. Gidley et al (2010) offers:

Access, participation and success are shown to represent degrees of social inclusion underpinned by a nested spectrum of ideologies - neoliberalism, social justice and human potential, respectively - with human potential ideology offering the most embracing perspective (p. 123).

For students, the terms equity and quality are inappropriate. Informed by the review of literature and prior research, as well as the trials of the methods with university students it was determined that the words; diversity, success and fairness were appropriate anchors for discussion by students. The importance of ensuring that the researcher did not bring or impose their own definitions of the terminology (diversity, success and fairness) became apparent through the trials. Instead, allowing students to offer their own understandings and framing of these through discussion and the use of their own experiences in the field. Given the aim of this research is to elucidate how equity and quality are understood and working in well-resourced schools, it was critical that those in the field were as free as possible to share their insights and experiences qualitatively. Overall the trials and pilots were extremely helpful and resulted in modifications to the wording and sequence of the questions in the focus group protocol (see Appendix M) as well as the way sticky notes would be used during the focus group discussion.

#### *Conducting focus groups*

Composition of focus groups was coordinated with the school contact person to ensure there was an attempt at a gender balance and that students with strong relationships would not be in

the same group. Interviews were conducted at a time deemed appropriate by the schools. In both CSs it was a time when all students in the year level cohort were timetabled together. Focus groups were conducted in spaces pre-arranged and pre-booked following discussion with the school contact person. Requests were made for spaces that would be uninterrupted and included a table for students to sit and move around comfortably. Each focus group ran for approximately 40 minutes and commenced with a warm up activity to serve both as an icebreaker as well as an introduction to the key concepts and ideas for discussion (see appendix M). Following the warm up game, an A1 sized poster was placed in the centre of the group as well as coloured felt tip pens and sticky-notes. Students were encouraged to speak and/or write down their ideas. Students had access to as many sticky notes as they liked during the focus group discussion and could write or speak at any time, switching between the two if they wished. All focus group interviews were audio-recorded with consent of participants and their parents. Table 4.3 highlights the numbers of student participants in the focus groups in both CSs.

Table 4.3

*Number of students who participated in focus group discussions*

<b>Case School 1 (CS1)</b>		<b>Case School 2 (CS2)</b>	
Focus Group 1 (FG1a)	6 Students	Focus Group 1 (FG1b)	5 Students
Focus Group 2 (FG2a)	6 Students	Focus Group 2 (FG2b)	5 Students
Focus Group 3 (FG3a)	7 Students	Focus Group 3 (FG3b)	5 Students
<b>Total</b>	<b>19 Participants</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>15 Participants</b>

I transcribed the audio recordings within a couple of hours of the focus group discussions. This was to ensure high-level accuracy in attributing verbal contributions to student participants. Students were assigned a code number according to where they were sitting during the discussion and were referred to in the transcript by this assigned code.

### *Conducting student interviews*

Interviews with students were conducted one or two days following the focus groups and as outlined previously, maximum variation and emergent sampling (Emmel, 2013) approaches were used to select students to participate in one-to-one interviews. Student's participation in the focus groups, their willingness to share ideas verbally or written were a primary consideration in selection, as was a diversity of experiences and views about the key concepts.

The school contact person was notified of which student participants were selected for the interview component and a 10-15 minute timeslot was then allocated in the days following. Private spaces for the interviews were booked to ensure comfort and no interruptions. All students interviewed were willing participants and appeared keen to offer further insights about their experiences in this one-on-one context. Salient themes and language that emerged from focus group discussions was identified and incorporated in the one-to-one student interview guide (see appendix N) prior to interviews being conducted. For example, questions 5a and 5b were modified to reflect CS1 students use of the phrases '*try hard*' and '*have a voice*'. These expressions emerged during focus group discussions and were repeatedly used by students when describing examples of success and fairness. Interviews were audio-recorded with student and parent permission, and transcription of these interviews was completed within a day or two by the researcher. Table 4.4 depicts the number of student participants who participated in the one-to-one interviews in each case school.

Table 4.4

*Number of students who participated in one-to-one interviews*

Case School 1 (CS1)		Case Study School 2 (CS2)	
Focus Group 1 (FG1a)	3 Students	Focus Group 1 (FG1b)	3 Students
Focus Group 2 (FG2a)	2 Students	Focus Group 2 (FG2b)	3 Students
Focus Group 3 (FG3a)	3 Students	Focus Group 3 (FG3b)	2 Students
<b>Total</b>	8 Participants	<b>Total</b>	8 Participants

## *Phase 2: Teacher data collection*

### *Trials and pilots of teacher interview schedule*

Trials with a couple of secondary school teachers who work in the independent sector were conducted following the drafting of an initial teacher interview guide. These teachers were familiar to me and did not work in the case schools. They were asked to consider their teaching skills and experiences in the context of their own schools. These trials were extremely helpful and resulted in some modifications to the teacher interview guide (see Appendix O) in particular the wording, order and repetition of questions. Doing this offered some reassurance of capturing the agents' experience of the field adequately, or as Fetterman (1989) describes getting "the natives to map the terrain" (p. 51).

### *Conducting teacher interviews*

Views of four staff members from CS1 and five staff members from CS2 were captured through one-to-one semi-structured interviews. Staff held comparable positions in each school, including Humanities teachers, Maths/Science teachers, Heads of Learning Support departments, Year 8 Coordinators and Heads of Middle School. Interviews took between 45 – 60 minutes and were scheduled at a convenient time and place. Depending on the roles held by staff the interviews were conducted in staff offices or in booked private spaces on the school grounds. In each case the researcher and the teacher participant were the only ones present. Teachers consented to audio recording of these interviews so that transcripts could be developed and later reviewed by teachers before being included in analysis. Table 4.5 shows the numbers of school staff participants in the research, some of whom held multiple roles.

Table 4.5

*Number and roles held by teacher/educators who participated in interviews*

<b>Roles held by teacher/ educator participants</b>	<b>Case School 1 (CS1)</b>	<b>Case School 2 (CS2)</b>
Head of Middle School	1	1
Head of Learning Support	1	1
Year 8 Coordinator	1	1
Year 8 Teachers	3	3
<b>Total No. Staff interviews:</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

*Note. Some staff members held multiple roles.*

### *Phase 3: Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) Data Collection*

Participants in each CS pointed to ISV as a resource in their pursuit of equity and quality education and it was considered prudent to pursue this additional perspective for the research. An ethics amendment was applied for and granted so that this could occur. The protocol for this interview (see Appendix P) was informed by the teacher interviews, prior knowledge and research about ISV as an organisation.

### *Conducting the ISV representative interview*

The representative from ISV was keen to be involved and following consideration of the explanatory statement (see Appendix F) and the receipt of written consent, a 50-minute semi-structured interview was conducted and audio recorded. The interview was conducted in a meeting space on the ISV premises to ensure privacy and comfort. The researcher and participant were the only two people in attendance. Following the interview the transcript was sent to the participant for approval before being included in analysis

### **Transcription and approval**

Following the recording and transcription of interviews, teacher participants and the ISV representative had an opportunity to amend and offer final approval of the transcription before analysis commenced. Only one out of 10 participants indicated a preference for some

omissions as well as writing amendments for clarification. These modifications were accounted for in the transcripts prior to the commencement of data analysis.

### **Ethical considerations and dilemmas**

Informed consent was imperative for all participants. In the case of student participants, parental consent was also sought along with permission for student discussions to be audio taped and transcribed. Staff, students and their parents were provided with explanatory statements (See Appendices C, D and E) clearly informing about the purpose and nature of the research activities, including expected benefits and risks. While the process of seeking ethical approval engages researchers in prior consideration and anticipation of possible issues, ensuring that participants are able to give informed consent and are protected from harm, it is never really possible to anticipate every scenario that may pose ethical dilemmas during research. Researchers must also be aware of their ongoing ethical responsibilities while in the field and mindful that schools are social constructs - alive and dependent on the human engagements and interactions that occur daily.

This was brought to the fore when I found myself, as researcher, facing an ethical dilemma in real time that had implications for my research. Following a brief presentation introducing them to the research, students from the Year 8 cohort of the CSs were invited to express interest in participation. The school was supportive of this approach and ensured all students who were interested in participating received explanatory statements and consent forms for them and their parents. As a researcher I expressed to staff members the importance of not being privy to student backgrounds or history nor any staff opinions about these students. However as one particular working relationship developed, familiarity contributed to an over-disclosure about a particular student's background and very personal family history. Seemingly motivated by concern about what this student may share, this revelation occurred

only a few moments before the student was due to arrive for the focus group discussion. I felt it would be inappropriate to exclude the student from the discussion at such short notice given their expectation to be involved, consent already received from student and parents, and the social implications of what would have been a somewhat public exclusion given other students in attendance. What it did mean however was that I would exclude this student from the second component of data collection with students, the possibility of a one-to-one interview. As a researcher, my awareness of this information would mean that the contributions the student would make would inevitably be filtered through my prior knowledge and moreover, the schools expression of concern around the student's contribution could not be ignored. A significant positive of this experience was the reinforced awareness of the need to develop and engage in reflexivity as I approached the analysis stage of my research.

### **Data analysis and interpretation procedures**

According to Bazeley and Jackson (2013) "working intensively with rich data" is at the core of qualitative data analysis (p. 68). As a complex and iterative process it "involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, and between description and interpretation" (Merriam, 2009, p. 177). Multiple and detailed contributions from the range of participants involved in this project needed to be examined with care; a process supported through the use of NVivo for Mac software. Multiple analysis techniques were modified and applied to support critical steps of data interpretation and analysis. Designed to help "build a sense of the whole [and] capture the essential nature of what was being spoken of" (Bazeley, 2013, p. 101) the Read, Reflect, Play, Explore (RRPE) strategy offered an appropriate starting point to early familiarisation and coding of data. Building from this the second approach was modified from Attride-Stirling's (2001) development of thematic networks to support moving from codes to themes.

The combination of these procedures supports rigour and transparency in interpretation and analysis of data. This is important for qualitative research traditions, to continue to be seen as “learned and robust methodology [which] can only be achieved by recording, systematising and disclosing our methods of analysis” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 386). Table 4.6 shows how Bazeley’s (2013, p. 101) technique was modified for use with the NVivo platform during the initial phases of data interpretation and analysis. Elaborations of these steps are then offered.

Table 4.6

*Read/Listen Reflect Play Explore process and analysis of data using NVivo*

Step	Purpose	Action in NVivo
<b>Read/Listen</b>	Rapid read/ listen to audio recording, no notes, record analytic thoughts only, identify data items. ‘Walk-Sit-Daydream’	Import interview transcript, Annotations as relevant during read/listen
<b>Reflect</b>	Summarise, establish keywords, distinguish between my observational, analytic and interpretive comments	Progress Journal Memo’s, Interview Summary Memo’s
<b>Play</b>	Holistic focus, Purposeful Play, Wordles of interviews, contrasting and comparative properties, Generate, Sort, Connect, Elaborate thinking routine	Broad brush coding, Thinking and Sorting Nodes/Themes through Memo’s
<b>Explore</b>	Explore storylines, contexts, metaphors, language	Queries across coding and memo’s Iterations of themes using coded data from participant groups and cases: schools & ISV

*Read/Listen: Annotations*

Annotations in NVivo are brief notes made during the initial listen/read of the interviews (see appendix Q). The focus at this stage was not on analysis but on familiarising myself with the participant’s views and capturing key observations about the field/case. Listening to the audio

of the interviews while reading the transcript was helpful in ensuring that participant tones, hesitations and/or enthusiasms in their contributions could be captured and considered in the context of their responses.

*Reflect: Memo – summary of interviews*

Following the initial listen/read approach where only brief annotations are made about the data, deliberate and extended reflection on the interview and contributions as a whole enabled participant views and to be captured in more detail (see appendix R). It is important to note here though that these summaries are not intended to be reductive or summative in terms of findings. Rather, this step supports early development of thick descriptions. Like Flyvbjerg (2006), “I demur from the role of omniscient narrator and summariser. Instead, I tell the story in its diversity, allowing the story to unfold from the many-sided, complex and sometimes conflicting stories that the actors have told me” (p .238). While Flyvbjerg (2006) is referencing his treatment of cases as a whole, it is important to set such a precedent in the early stages and on smaller scales of analysis as well (as demonstrated in Appendix R) so that when the cases are taken as a whole, with all participant groups and individual voices considered, preconceived positions and views do not unconsciously shape findings.

*Play: Coding – broad brush*

As reflections on participant interviews continued broad themes began to emerge and as a result, sections of transcripts were coded to emerging themes in NVivo (see Appendix S). In addition, patterns emerged requiring child nodes to be created in relation to parent nodes. This ensured data points could be coded and stored in an organised fashion (see Appendix T). Once more substantial numbers of transcripts had been coded into the initial thematic categories it was possible to get a better idea of which themes were more pervasive, nuanced and warranted further exploration.

### *Play and Explore: Thinking and sorting thematic memo's*

As coding evolved, contributions from different participant groups and cases were reviewed and considered in light of their significance, similarities, differences, frequency and so forth. Running coding queries in NVivo tested reliability of the coding. These queries helped with identification of emerging patterns of significance and combined with the hierarchy of parent and child nodes, supported a process of thinking and sorting (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Memos specific to these themes were created in NVivo to assess their ongoing relevance (see Appendix U). This step encouraged writing about preliminary analysis, which resulted in recoding of data as the essence of participant voices became clearer and patterns continued to emerge.

### *Iterations of major themes*

Moving from codes to themes is an important step in the qualitative analysis process. Doing so in a way that ensures thoroughness and the ability to defend not only the determination of themes but also the ones that are most significant to the research is of vital importance. Attride-Stirling (2001) encourages examination of salient issues discussed in the data by participants. This led to a number of considerations including frequency of issues presented, emphasis and passion of participants when discussing salient themes and whether multiple participant groups and schools raised these issues. The NVivo database supported the checking of frequency, perspective and intensity thereby ensuring a level of trustworthiness in the determination of themes central to the research problem. Refining identified salient issues into themes involved re-reading text segments and re-coding data points in the node tree structures in NVivo. Meta-thinking and multiple iterations of this process were crucial to ensuring incorporation of context and positioning of participants in the field, as well as attention to conceptual detail. This interpretive work is central not only to qualitative research

but to the hermeneutical phenomenological approach to this research (Usher & Jackson, 2014).

Ensuring at this stage that the codes had explicit boundaries and focused clearly on the object of analysis was important so they would not be interchangeable (Attride-Stirling, 2001) and so that further clarity around the key aspects and features of equity and quality in the schools could be gleaned. Rigorous discussions with supervisors through shared excerpts of data being examined and debated also informed interpretations and significance of themes as well as conceptual models of findings. Coming to agreements through shared discussion with supervisors, in combination with the reflexive processes inherent in the analysis and interpretation procedures described above, led to further iterations of initial thematic hierarchies. Coding of data was then merged, renamed and/or split with researcher satisfaction that the identified themes encapsulated the key and most significant components of participants lived experience of equity and quality education in the case study schools.

### **Trustworthiness and transferability**

The selection of multi-site single case research has been determined as an effective means of exploring aspects of complex social phenomena at the heart of the research problem this project seeks to interrogate. Highlighted by Yin (2003), common criticisms of case study research is their limitation for scientific generalisation. While this research will be replicated in more than one site, it is important to point out that scientific generalisation is not the aim of this research. Instead the focus is on what Bazeley (2013) describes as “theoretical or analytic generalisation, with the goal of developing theory with application beyond the immediate context” (p. 410). Rather than a focus on ‘proving something’, the goal of this research is to ‘learn something’ that may have practical transference and through “context-dependent knowledge is [considered] more valuable than the vain search for predictive

theories and universals” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 224). Where research about the nature and development of inclusive cultures and practices acknowledges the significance of the need to be responsive to unique school contexts (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2011) it would be remiss of this research to pursue population or phenomenological generalisations as its goal.

With a range of data collection methods having been deployed (including field notes, focus group discussions using sticky-notes and semi-structured interviews), the research problem was explored in depth and from multiple perspectives. In this way potential limitations resulting from data gathered at only two research sites has been minimised. Further, as Bazeley (2013) points out, “with multiple-case analyses, each case effectively acts as a replication of the study in a different person or setting. This gives some assurance that the results are not completely idiosyncratic – that they will be more broadly applicable” (Bazeley, 2013, p. 411).

#### *Rigour and reflexivity*

According to Bourdieu, reflexivity is ‘the principal weapon of epistemological vigilance’ (1988b, p. 15). Three types of limitations that can be addressed through reflexivity were considered pertinent for this research: personal, positional and theoretical. The social origins of the researcher and personal history that could influence potential bias require personal reflexivity. I am an insider-outsider to the research context through my experiences as a student and teacher in the independent school sector. Being a product and producer in this field means I have intimate experience of the sector and the cultural, social and symbolic capitals that support access to it. Engagement with Bourdieu's concept of reflexivity supported my ability to “understand the vantage point from which I am speaking” (Deer, 2012, p. 124) and make some attempts to safeguard against potential bias brought about

through my own social conditions, beliefs, values and assumptions that shape my perception and comprehension of the world and my relationship to the object of research.

The risk of bias resulting from a researcher's position within the microcosm of the academic field of research (Schirato & Webb, 2003) and the *doing* of the research demands positional reflexivity. Here it was important to acknowledge my role in the construction of the research proposal, the selection of and engagement with the case schools and my interpretation of the research findings. Adopting the role of a researcher in school contexts automatically positions me in relation to the participants. Pillow (2003) emphasises the importance of researchers becoming consciously aware of these factors and the potential implications of these factors for research.

Interrogation of what Schirato and Webb refer to as the 'scholastic point of view' (2003, p. 545) asks that researchers are mindful of potential intellectual bias occurring through dispositions and/or perspectives produced within academic fields. Here a kind of theoretical reflexivity is required to ensure that broader academic, political and theoretical histories and contexts are not 'masquerad[ing] as a natural and objective point of view' (Kenway & McLeod, 2004, p. 528).

Taken together, Costa and Murphy (2016) claim that:

Reflexivity calls for the development of robust methodological tools that allow reflexivity to be embedded in the way social reality is accessed and 'acquired' for study and how the analysis that proceeds excavates beyond our own bias as social agents embodying specific social, intellectual and technological backgrounds. (p. 54)

In this light, Table 4.7 highlights features of the research design, tools and analysis as they align with the types of reflexivity significant to the research. Following this, a detailed explanation of one of these applications.

Table 4.7

*Application of reflexivity during research design and data analysis*

	<b>Personal Reflexivity</b>	<b>Positional Reflexivity</b>	<b>Theoretical Reflexivity</b>
<b>Design and Methods</b>			
<b>Research Focus</b> – selection, areas of interest, literature and theory, social/ historical/ political/ educational context and climate		✓	✓
<b>Choice of Methodology</b> – multi case study; hermeneutic phenomenology		✓	✓
<b>Ethics</b> - Participant Selection, places and people			
<b>Design of data collection tools</b>	✓	✓	✓
Trials and development of tools			
Types and order of Interview questions			
Facilitating voice			
Observation of demeanour – field notes			
<b>Engagement with schools</b>	✓	✓	
Making arrangements			
Conduct during interviews/focus groups			
<b>Interpretation and Analysis</b>			
<b>NVivo</b>	✓	✓	✓
Journaling/memos/ summaries			
Attribute data			
Queries			
<b>Read/Listen Reflect Play Explore</b>	✓	✓	✓
Hearing the participant voices			
Iterations – developing coding structures			
<b>Supervisory consultations</b>		✓	✓
<b>Bourdieu's moments and approach to research</b>		✓	✓

Pillow's (2003) observation of the tendency of researchers to regularly use reflexivity but to fail to adequately define how it is used (assuming that it is something that is commonly understood and practised by critical qualitative researchers) has motivated sharing a specific example of how this was done at the data analysis stage. While any could have been chosen for elaboration, application of the R/LRPE strategy is apt given its representation of each type

of reflexivity. At this stage of the analysis process, data (the interviews/voices of participants) has already been interpreted through the creation of the transcript. Next, deliberate focus on participant 'voices', particularly the stories and illustrations told in response to research questions and prompts. Coupled with the creation of memos, summaries of interviews and focus group discussions, iterations of potential coding structures were created and reviewed as more transcripts were coded. At each of these stages as the researcher, I moved continuously between reading/listening to the data (excerpts from transcripts) and interpreting the data. The process of identifying basic and organisational themes was another interpretation process used and while it was mitigated through careful consideration of theoretical interests and salient issues arising from the text, what is considered 'salient' could be informed by researcher bias at personal, positional and/or theoretical levels. It was through the iterative processes described, guidance from carefully informed and crafted research questions, consultations with supervisors and deliberate attempts to see and explore data from a range of perspectives that reflexivity to address each potential limitation was engaged with.

In conclusion, while three types of reflexivity were particularly important in this research, to be able to "balance the distance as well as the proximity between the researcher and the researched" (Costa & Murphy, 2016, p. 3), Mauthner and Doucet (2003) ask that researchers think about degrees of reflexivity as well as types, given limits as well as possibilities afforded by engaging in reflexive practice. They are mindful that researchers are limited in "the extent to which we can be aware of the influences on our research" particularly at the time of conducting it (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 425). So this research is claiming only that the practice and construction of knowledge has been made somewhat more visible through engagement with personal, positional and theoretical reflexivity and that this has occurred

within the space and time of the research being conducted. Broader claims can not and should not be made.

### **Chapter Summary**

The importance of theoretical and methodological approaches underpinning and informing the design of research cannot be overstated given their influence on the quality of research. This chapter outlined the methodological framework of this research, the design and methods deployed, the process of data analysis and ethical considerations. Findings generated from employing this methodology are presented in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### Presentation of Findings

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research, which set out to explore how equity and quality education is experienced and enacted by teachers, educators and students in two independent schools in Melbourne, Australia. Contextual background of the research sites, organisational structure and profile information about the schools and Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) is outlined in the first part of the chapter. Four major themes emerged from data analysis as most significant to participants lived experience of equity and quality education in these schools. These are:

- 1 – *Understood as...*What is valued
- 3 – *Actioned via...*Practice
- 2 – *Offered through...*Opportunities
- 4 – *Expedited by...*Stakeholders and relationships

Each major theme is unpacked using representative direct quotes from the data. A conceptual diagram at the end of this chapter provides direction for the theoretical discussion, elaboration and implications of the findings in relation to the research questions which will be elaborated on in chapter six.

#### Organisational profiles and structures

##### *Case Schools (CSs)*

This multi-site single case research was conducted in two co-educational schools identifying as members of the independent school sector in Victoria. The case schools for this research were comparable in terms of the selection criteria: co-educational, Primary-12,

socioeconomic advantage, demographic profiles of student population and performance outcomes. Including the perspectives of school Learning Support staff, Middle School staff and Year 8 students was essential for exploring the lived experience of equity and quality education in these schools. While these schools were determined as typical representations of the sector and reflected similarities in many ways, there were also a number of differences that impact participant perspectives and findings. On the next page Table 5.1 offers a compositional and organisational comparison to illuminate some of these differences.

The snapshot of school profiles and organisational structures offered in Table 5.1 also includes key features of school commitments espoused in publicly available school policy. For example, wellbeing was a current focus in both schools according to school websites and this was corroborated by participants as data collection commenced. Context for the concept of wellbeing is important before findings are presented. Like the terms equity and quality, the concept of wellbeing is open to a range of definitions and conceptualisations (Crivello, Camfield and Woodhead, 2009; Mashford-Scott, Church & Tayler, 2012). In schools, wellbeing is significant to physical and emotional health (de Roist, Kelly, Molcho, Gavin & Gabhainn, 2012), belongingness (Osterman, 2000), resilience (Yeager & Dweck, 2012) and mental-health, particularly for adolescents (Tomyyn & Cummins, 2011). Laevers (2005) aligns these factors with “the full realization of a person’s potential” (p. 1), linking wellbeing to equity and quality education policy (MCEETYA, 2008; Gonski et al, 2011). In the research sites, this focus was impacting at a whole school level through policy and management initiatives, as well as participants directly. In this chapter, capitalisation of ‘Wellbeing’ denotes reference to school policy

and curriculum programs. Where ‘wellbeing’ is not capitalised it denotes reference to the above associated concepts.

Table 5.1

*School profile information*

<b>Organisational Structures</b>	<b>Case School 1 CS1</b>	<b>Case School 2 CS2</b>
<b>General Overview</b>		
Years	K – 12	5 – 12
Middle School	7 – 10	5 – 8
Denomination	Uniting	Ecumenical
Leadership		
Whole School	Principal	Principal
Middle School	Head of Middle School	Head of Middle School
Year Level	Year 8 Coordinator	Year 8 Level Leader
Year 8 pop.	80 approximately	120 approximately
Yr 8 Structure		
Students	4 groups x approx. 20 each	4 grades x approx. 30 each
Staff	2 x Wellbeing Mentors per group	1 x Learning Community Leader per class
<b>Public Mission Statements</b>		
Key language	Empowering Potential Strive for excellence Achieving personal best Breadth of opportunities to suit every students interests Encourage and Support	Equipping Potential Encourage to excel Achieving very best Innovative personalised programs to meet learning styles, talents and interests
Descriptors in School Education Models	Cultures, Discoveries, Journeys, Explorations, Innovation, Collaboration and Engagement	Encounter, Investigate, Create, Being, Language
<b>Learning Support Departments</b>		
Leadership	Coordinator	Director
Staff	Tutors	Integration Aide
Middle School	2	1
Junior School	1	NA
Total staff	4	2
Dept. Location	Recent move to space near Library	Recent move to office in main building
Language	Learning Support	Learning Enhancement
<b>Wellbeing Links</b>		
	Positive Education Personal best - academic, cultural, personal, spiritual and sporting Cared for, encouraged and valued Chaplaincy, counselling Partnerships - parents, staff, external professionals Child Safety Organisation	Student Wellbeing Commitment to child safety Nursing and counselling Nurturing environment

### *Independent Schools Victoria (ISV)*

In chapters one and four, the context and function of this state level organisation has been detailed. Expansion of the research to include this system level perspective was in direct response to references made by participants in both case schools, particularly, how ISV supported schools in their understanding and enactment of equity and quality education. Prior to 2014, ISV played a central role in administering Commonwealth funding for students with disabilities in member schools. To support this process, briefings were run at ISV informing schools and staff about criteria and application processes for disability funding. Schools then submitted applications to ISV on behalf of their students, and the organisation employed panels of specialists (Occupational therapists, Speech therapists, Educational psychologists etc) to assess applications and determine the distribution of funding. Since 2014, ISVs involvement in this process was terminated and monies now go to schools directly from the government. As pointed to previously, changes to school funding models are continuing.

As a service provider, part of ISVs work at the time of this study included supporting parents to understand how funding distribution works:

*It's no longer targeted. Precisely. Which made it difficult for parents too...I used to get parents ringing me and saying could you tell me how much money my child's been allocated? And I used to say none. The school's got the money. Your child hasn't got ANY money; the school's got the money.*

[Henry]

The decentralisation process was also influencing the evolution of ISV's support services to schools. Staff in many schools expressed the desire for ongoing support in understanding the system changes and how this impacted their work and communities. Network meetings evolved from this need and the experiences and impact of these ISV

coordinated meetings for Learning Support staff is covered later in this chapter, particularly in relation to major themes three and four.

### Presentation of data and major themes

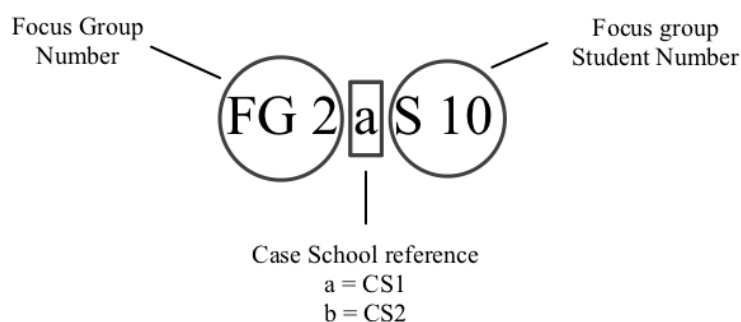
In the following sections, four themes are presented and described using representative direct quotes from focus groups and/or one-to-one interviews with participants. Data is presented in the form of verbatim quotes and pseudonyms have been used with all participants. Table 5.2 shows the pseudonyms in relation to the roles held by the participants.

Table 5.2

*Pseudonyms and roles held by participants*

Roles	Pseudonyms
Heads of Middle School	Ella, Sara
Heads of Learning Support	Nora, Isobel
Year 8 Coordinators	Anna, Eve
Year 8 Teachers	Dan, Nat, Ella, Eliza, Sara, Eve, Anna
Students	Tom, Hazel, Nate, Xavier, Dione, Ariel, Esra, Ned, Grace, Ieva, Hayley, Naomi, Van, Yvette, Ailsa, Yasmin
ISV	Henry

Given focus groups were run multiple times in each CS and included upwards of six student participants each, identification of these data sources is offered using codes rather than pseudonyms. *Figure 5.1* offers an illustration of how these codes can be interpreted.

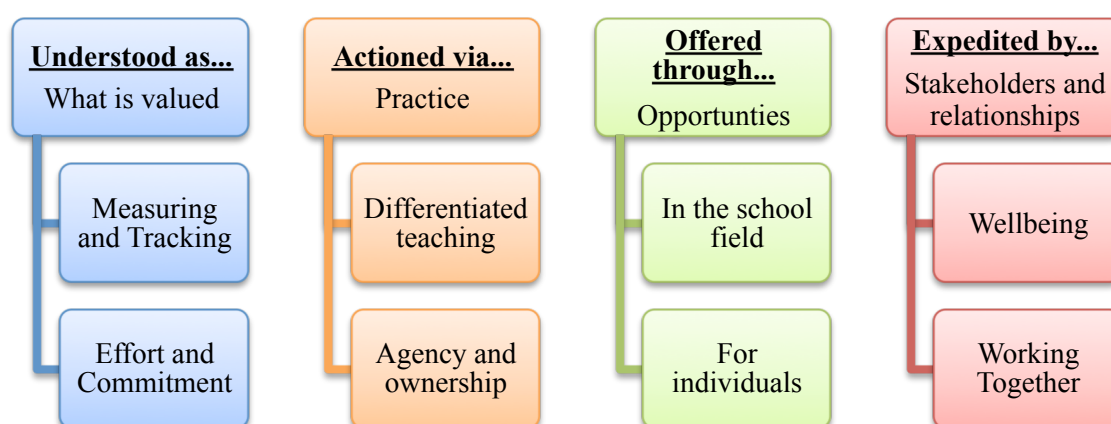


*Figure 5.1.* Breakdown of data source codes

The study aim, to understand teacher and student experiences and enactment of equity and quality education within schools, led to the following subsidiary questions:

1. What do teachers report as their experiences of enacting equity and quality education and how do their experiences align with policy principles of equity and quality?
2. What do students report as their experiences of enacting equity and quality education and how do their experiences align with policy principles of equity and quality?
3. What do teachers and students identify as facilitators to achieving equity and quality education?
4. What do teachers and students identify as barriers to achieving equity and quality education?

Below, *Figure 5.2* summarises the major and composite sub-themes identified through data analysis. These reflect the key components participants identified in relation to their understandings and enactment of equity and quality education in the case schools. For a more detailed outline of the coding of themes to sub-themes refer to Appendices Q-U.



*Figure 5.2.* Major and associated subordinate themes identified through iterative thematic data analysis.

*Major Theme One: Understood as...what is valued*

Major theme one encompasses how teachers and students understand equity and quality in the case schools. As contributors to equity and quality in the field, participants make clear distinctions between measuring and tracking versus effort and commitment. While the former reflects emphasis on what can be measured in a deterministic sense, the latter stresses the significance of attitudes and dispositions.

*Sub Theme 1.1: Measuring and tracking*

Measuring and tracking as a component of lived experience was prominent in the data and participants also saw this as a priority in at all levels: system, school and classroom. While each school reflected different emphasis and structures for doing so, references to tests and test results (academic, cognitive), grades, awards, marks, feedback, policy, tracking, monitoring, profiling and the role of diagnosis were common.

Academic achievement and progress are strongly emphasised, with testing and assessment named as a primary means for tracking student success. As a Head of Middle School at CS2, Sara described recent efforts to reduce testing culture in the middle years and to create structures and opportunities that emphasise education of the whole child - academic, social, emotional, physical. However, the big picture influence of measuring and tracking on school practices was made clear in her expression of the influence of ensuring that schools prepare students adequately for the ‘*end point...an exam at the end of a year*’ [Sara]. The influence of this reality on teaching and learning was also acknowledged in CS1:

*You know in a given year, you have to get through a certain amount of material, or get as close as you can to it, because the fact of life is, in year*

*eleven and twelve there's a certain amount material they need to know because there's that exam at the end. [Dan]*

This reference to testing in schools as a 'fact of life' indicates a belief that measuring and tracking in schools is a core feature of equity and quality education. Student awareness of this emphasis is made clear when Sara explains:

*Well kids go, "are we being tested on this?" that's the first question they ask, is it going on my report? So you know they are conscious of it.*

When describing school reporting procedures students readily acknowledged they considered grades and results were more important than being successful in terms of behaviour, attitude and effort:

*....you'll have a bunch of assessments you'll have A, B, C and D. You'll have whatever mark you got in that assessment. And then they are all combined to make a global grade. Effort and behaviour are completely separated from it...You have a global grade for each subject. Except it's purely academic...Oh there's effort, behaviour...I can't remember the others. I just look at it as if I passed or not [laughs] [Ned]*

This dominant focus on grades and results is reinforced to students by the school field through formal practices of celebrating achievements through awards and ceremonies:

*They have the academic assembly, and for sport like we have like the ribbons [laughs] and stuff for the age champion, but like yeah I think it's mainly on academics like because we have the Celebration night at the end of the year. [Yasmin]*

So, as well as the separation seen between academic and sporting achievements, academic achievement is understood as distinct from effort and commitment. By

formalising this separation through reports and reporting practices while still attempting a dual emphasis, a relational component to this major theme is evident. However, citing Ramsden's relational view of education, Dart, Burnett, Purdie, Boulton-Lewis, Campbell and Smith (2000) illustrate that simply espousing a value, i.e. telling students that effort and commitment is valued, will not be enough to change conceptions of success. Using conceptions of learning as an example, they explain that: "the teaching context and classroom environment must be congruent with that view. That is, the classroom environment, the teaching strategies, and the assessment procedures must reflect the qualitative view" (Dart et al, 2000, p. 268). This has implications for schools whose messages about the value of effort and commitment are not supported by broader school practices.

In addition to measuring and tracking as it related to academic achievement, teachers also referenced current focuses on student profiling and diagnostic practices as a valued feature of equity and quality education practice in the schools. Priorities in both case schools for Heads of Learning Support were establishing department aims, and determining the needs of students in their schools. Nora described how she went about this initially:

*So the first big part was, gathering the evidence and summarising it and getting the head around our needs. Um, there wasn't actually a funded student ever, for CS2.... Yep. Ever. Um, and so there was a real need there.*

A similar experience was evident at CS1 where diagnosis had not previously been a focus or had not been followed up on:

*And when I got here...there was no...um I think there was only two or three students that had identified disabilities. There was documentation and stuff*

*and nothing had been followed through, so...so a lot of what is happening at the moment is getting them diagnosed, getting kids diagnosed but also putting supports in place for them, which they haven't had before [Isobel]*

While diagnosis had not previously been a priority in the schools it was now seen as a crucial step for the provision of support for students and therefore was becoming more of a focus.

Measuring and tracking was also being reinforced at system levels through policy initiatives asking schools for data on students in both arenas. MySchool (ACARA, 2017) and the National Consistent Collection of Data for School Students with Disability (NCCSSD) (DET, 2017a) are two such examples and Henry from ISV spoke about how the latter influences changes to school funding and collaborations with schools:

*The national collection of data. So there's the next challenge for schools...Yes, yes. So very much 2015 and probably first semester 2016 has been based round that... just understanding. In other words, the difference between a student with a disability for funding, on the Commonwealth census, and a student with a disability on the couch... and, schools will come along to those [network meetings] with some case studies, their own and talk about kids. And then say what do you reckon...should this child be included? And what level of adjustment? [Henry]*

The NCCD initiative is predicated on principles of equity to the extent that students with disabilities are being formally acknowledged by the system. However the emphasis on diagnosis to determine levels of need along with expectations that schools and teachers name and justify the 'quality differentiated teaching practice' and 'levels of reasonable adjustments' being undertaken for these students when this data is reported, indicates

that measuring and tracking remains a primary focus. The fact that ISV runs network meetings for Heads of Learning Support staff to help them make sense of such initiatives, reinforces that measuring and tracking is valued in equity and quality education but also that there remains a lack of clarity between diagnostic information and real life impacts on school and classroom practice. Nevertheless this priority drives practice at system and school levels.

Data emerged as an authority in these schools with clear indications from staff and students about how it influences school practices, experiences and the ability to communicate with various stakeholders. Just as diagnosis could be used to shape decision making for student support structures, participants also describe how school testing and assessment priorities shaped in-class student support. Isobel offered an example of this in her context: *we do a lot of scribing for tests so we have to readjust the timetable of all the tutors to meet all that*. Another example of data as an authority is when Heads of Learning Support describe student performance data and profiling as useful for their communication with teaching staff.

*Isobel: I think the data collection project [NCCD] actually has done a lot to help us; to sell what we are doing here... "Oh it's not just your opinion"*

*Nora: I actually profiled every student in the school. So a massive amount of work, ok. ...Yep, that was presented two years ago to staff, and it still is. And it really showed, because we have an older...teaching staff here, that it's not just about Mary needs an aide. An Aide will fix that. It's about the reasonable adjustments. Then came the national data collection. Which linked in perfectly to all the stuff...*

These are indications that in both schools, teaching staff consider professional expertise as subsidiary to data. Heads of Learning Support recognise this authority of data, using it to inform teaching staff about the needs of students and to try and move teaching staff forward in their inclusive practice.

### *Sub-Theme 1.2: Effort and Commitment*

In addition to measuring and tracking, value is also placed on effort and commitment as key factors to equity and quality education in the school field. On school websites, encouragement of effort and commitment is clear in language such as ‘*empower students to strive for excellence in academic, cultural, personal, spiritual and sporting arena’s*’ and ‘*encourage students to excel in every endeavour*’. School commitment to empowering and encouraging students in all aspects of schooling clearly indicates that schools see themselves as playing an important part in the pursuit of excellence. At the same time, students are expected to view their own effort and commitment as a vital component of realising their potential.

Students named engagement and attitude as integral to effort and commitment. Common descriptors of successful students across case schools included; *focusing, trying, interested, confident, striving, organised, positive attitude, efficient time use, hard working, calm, proactive*. Conversely, the most frequent descriptors of unsuccessful students included; *negative outcomes, bad grades, bad/negative attitude, struggling, quiet/shy, less focused, vague, not trying, disorganised, procrastinates, don’t participate, don’t want to learn, being mean or antisocial, skipping class*. Nate elaborates, describing key traits of student engagement in the context of his lived experience at school:

*If you want to get good grades [clears throat] you’ve got to put the work in like anything... So I say, determined ...attentive...hard working*

This attribution of effort and commitment in class to getting ‘good grades’ links the previous sub-theme of measuring and tracking performance and progress.

Teaching staff and students expressed the importance of keeping up with curriculum and learning for academic and social success. Having or not having ‘the basics’ is seen by teachers as pivotal to whether or not students ‘keep up’ and perform well in tests and assessments, especially when time constraints applied. Immediate consequences of not ‘keeping up’ in class were described in a focus group:

*In our maths our teacher sets quite a few questions, and only the people who really understand and finish them before the end of class, and then people end up having heaps of questions to do for homework and they take forever.*

[FG1aS1]

Here the student acknowledges the need for comprehension of what is expected as well as timely completion, in order to avoid extra homework as a consequence for not keeping up in class. This practice is consistent with the importance reported by teachers, who ascribed time pressures and the focus on ‘getting through’ the curriculum.

Keeping up with homework demands in and of itself is identified as a key indicator of effort and commitment. Emphasis is on revising for tests, multiple sets of homework for different curriculum areas and meeting deadlines. Those who complete their homework are considered successful but students describe challenges juggling co-curricular and homework commitments after school and the pressures that are felt especially when assignments are due. Students in FG2b describe feeling stressed at home when there are multiple homework commitments or when teachers indicate there will be tests the following day.

*And I was up like all night revising and everything, and everyone was freaking out and then we went into the class and she's like....oh I don't think we'll do the test...[FG2bS10].*

The pressure felt under these circumstances directly impacts student effort and commitment even though certainty of follow through by teachers is not assured.

Effort and commitment in the school field is a valued component of enacting equity and quality education, however students do not view it to be as important as measuring and tracking. When making sense of their awards system, students at CS2 see the school and themselves as valuing these two sub-themes very differently:

*I guess the smartest in year, and then there's like the reserve dux which is the person who's second...but I don't really like that because it's kind of, it's also really annoying when people are really naturally talented, so they don't even like, um, they don't even bother with the people who actually try...There's one effort award. One... And I think there should be... people say it's lame if you get it but you know [FG2bS10]*

The way schools acknowledge success reflects interesting tensions. Types of success (that which is measured and tracked, and effort and commitment to learning) are not seen as equally valuable given that effort awards are viewed as “*lame*”. However frustration occurs when schools are seen to be consistently rewarding those who are ‘*naturally talented*’ rather than those “*who actually try*”. Naomi offers her experience:

*I think some schools aren't so focused on like awarding if you are good at it. Because their Dux of English, Dux of Maths and stuff and I don't, I don't like them, because it kind of makes you feel like you have to try really hard but it's not getting recognised. Like I try really hard, and I*

*really only come away with Bs and B+s. Even though I will have put in 110% and I'm only coming away with...yeah*

Through this insight we see the interplay between the schools awards system and the student's lived experience; feeling that her effort and commitment is vain in terms of achieving well enough for an award. Her interpretation of this practice as '*awarding if you are good at it*' is significant too, explaining her perception of a shortfall in her achievement of Bs and B+s through effort and commitment.

The relationship between these two perspectives (measuring and tracking & effort and commitment) emerges as significant in itself in light of participant's struggles to reconcile the two values. For students, impacts of this experience of struggle were felt in terms of efficacy, self-confidence and attitude:

Van: *if they've had not the best feedback, not the best test results, just it's kinda going down hill and then they make it go even more down hill by just ... not feeling like... they're still trying but they just, in the back of their mind they know, I'm bad at this subject, I can't...*

Esra: *Probably like attitude towards you know teachers and...like work and of course end results...grades and....although sometimes even the people who study the hardest can get some of the worst marks...even...even though they've put in probably some of the most effort*

Esra goes on to explain potential impacts on self-esteem with this struggle:

*um, well, it's really self confidence...like if you think that you've, that that's the best I could have done, you could say that you've succeeded but if you feel like nah I didn't, like you might not deserve it or... it was expected that I'd get this.*

Nora made links to efficacy for teachers when juggling external, policy level pressures with school practice and teacher's work. Describing the process of designing and implementing Individual Learning Plan's [ILPs] following student profiling, the influence of the authority in data phenomenon on the thinking of this Head of Learning Support is clear. However, she also acknowledges the potential impact on teachers of what she considers unreasonable expectations:

*Yep, yeah and I'm playing with it a bit because I want it evidence based, I mean we are grappling with the government coming out with all these statements and trying to be in reality, these teachers are busy. You know, guiding reasonable adjustments for every child for every lesson for every day is just not, it's not doable. It's not feasible and then people just go, this gets too hard. [Nora]*

Major theme one distinguishes two perceived understandings and values of equity and quality in the field – measuring and tracking, effort and commitment. While one reflects emphasis on measurable outcomes and performance, the other stresses the importance of student dispositions and traits required for success in the field. These examples were given by students and teachers and were echoed by the system level perspective from ISV. Aspects of each sub-theme were described by participants as potential barriers and/or facilitators to the enactment of equity and quality education in their schools. However this is dependent on shifting focuses and priorities in the school field. Elaboration of findings as barriers and facilitators to equity and quality education is offered after the major themes are unpacked.

### *Major theme two: Actioned via... practice*

The second theme to emerge from the data emphasises how equity and quality education is actioned. Differentiated teaching practices and the agency and ownership of participants in their work were named as vital. Clarifying what is meant by agency is important for distinguishing this sub-theme from the effort and commitment sub-theme. Effort and commitment referred to student attitudes and dispositions, and was understood as a facilitative component of equity and quality education in the field. Here, agency denotes participants acting with intent, knowing when and how to act (Schirato & Webb, 2003, p. 541). Nate from CS1 offers features of student agency required for success with test taking when he describes: *but yeah you've really got to take notes, and then revise for it, and know when the tests are coming up*. Thus, agency is knowledge and skill/traits, understanding and action/behaviour. As such, it links to the way equity and quality education are expressed and enacted in the field.

### *Sub-theme 2.1: Differentiated Teaching*

Differentiated teaching practices are repeatedly named as a key feature of enacting equity and quality education for all in classrooms. When staff were asked how they went about supporting all students to be successful in their classes and cater to student diversity, a range of strategies were described. These included adjustments to content, levels of support, modes of teaching and learning and using technology. Students expressed expectation that teachers should be teaching to their preferred ways of learning and offer diverse opportunities and experiences during learning time for them to benefit the most.

Both students and teachers note differences between primary and secondary school experiences of this and feel that the secondary school environment is less flexible:

*I think it's different really...because I feel like when I was in grade 5 and 6, we did a lot of like different ways for learning things whereas when you get like older, they just expect you to try and like focus on one way of learning cos that's like the way you go through it and they way you should learn it*  
[Ariel]

Heads of Learning Support and Heads of Middle School in both case schools offer possible explanations for this. One is that while staff may have a theoretical appreciation of differentiated teaching practice, application is not yet consistently evident. Sara suggests that a lack of knowledge and skills for differentiation in her school is an impediment:

*They are getting there. They are still getting there skill wise, so differentiation and um that difference between what a modified and a um... differentiated program, is still very sketchy between staff*

Correspondingly the other explanation offered by leadership staff in the school is confusion among teachers about the distinction between reasonable adjustments and modifications.

*I think they have that idea in theory, is in place but I've got to try to get through to them what that actually looks like* [Isobel]

Perhaps a natural extension, confusion about how adjustments and accommodations for students should impact assessment was also identified. As a Year 8 Coordinator Anna describes challenges she faced in her role in supporting staff who 'don't get' differentiation. She notes that teachers struggle with the idea that kids could get A+ for a one page modified test along with students who completed a full six page version and also get an A+. In this illustration, school based interpretation of practices for reasonable adjustments and modifications appear to conflict with measuring and tracking priorities

in terms of what is valued. This then results in teachers struggling with negotiating links between differentiation and assessment.

Students and teachers were in theoretical agreement about the importance of being responsive to student needs and teaching to preferred ways of learning. At the same time a matter-of-factness about level playing field thinking was also expressed. Staff tied this to ideas of fairness, which is particularly notable in relation to confusion around the relationship between differentiation and assessment. Isobel shared her frustration around this in her work with teachers:

*Um and...and they're still stuck on that level playing field stuff, you know, just because the child does it verbally doesn't make their knowledge less, knowledgeable or...than writing it down, yeah if they say the same thing verbally than the other student does in a written form, then they need to be given the same mark [Isobel]*

Dan places importance on ensuring that benchmarks and expectations are consistent for all students and he sees teaching staff doing a disservice to students if they 'carve sections of it off'.

*I don't want to label them, because I think then your expectations change. Again, with the level playing field, I want everybody to feel as though, if you succeed, you're doing it fairly...and and we all have different skills and abilities, we can all improve them ... [Dan]*

Evidenced in the classroom practices he deployed, Dan supports students with varying abilities by using a combination of formative and summative assessments to place students in one of three groups. These groups reflect whether students were struggling, pretty confident or fully across the different topics. Students stay in these groups for a

couple of weeks having earned various levels of independence or teacher support. Dan expressed feeling that this practice enabled him to meet the diverse learning needs of his students and was motivating for them.

Amidst the identified confusion and inconsistency in teacher skills and knowledge, planning and implementation of differentiated teaching is being formalised in both schools and seen as an important and overdue step. Whole school adoption while in the early stages is seen as part of a long-term process. Current focus in CS2 on using school intranet platforms to support transparency of planning and differentiated teaching strategies was described by the Head of Middle School:

*We are asking staff now to make that more visible so, because we can't see that otherwise...it's becoming mandatory in our things and so we are trying to make sure that we are ahead rather than behind... and Nora has done a great job in um getting people up to speed on that, but it's frightening for staff... [Sara]*

This new practice has a clearly identified emotional impact on teachers who while theoretically supportive of differentiated teaching sometimes they feel they lack understanding and skills.

#### *Sub-theme 2.2: Agency and ownership*

As outlined earlier, agency denotes participants “acting with intent, knowing when and how to act” (Schirato & Webb, 2003, p. 541). Agency and ownership emerged as significant to how equity and quality education was being actioned by teachers and students in the schools.

Student agency and ownership is linked to success in school. Particular views around the kind of student agency that is beneficial was expressed but ultimately students see themselves as needing to take ownership of the way they engaged at school if they are to reap the benefits.

*The student determines the outcome. Teachers can only go so far but students can really make the difference [FG2aS9]*

*The teachers job...would nearly always be to help the kids as much as possible but I've got to look out for myself a bit in the process trying to make sure that they are as useful as possible [FG1bS3]*

This latter comment reflects complexity of agency for students in terms of requiring insight about what would be useful and how they should engage teachers for this benefit. In the same focus group, a student identified different 'rules' for different subjects and saw herself as having ownership over whether she would engage in or 'play' by those rules:

*I feel like, in classes like Maths and English you are meant to be sort of quiet like listen to the teacher all the time. Whereas in drama, cos I don't really like drama, I find that you sort of like they want you to be like an outgoing sort of person and they want you to be like that and I'm like, I'm not like that and I don't want to do that [FG1bS6]*

In addition to this described impact of personality and preference, students named independence, confidence and help-seeking behaviours (such as approaching teachers, raising your hand, seeking support) as beneficial for them to engage in:

*But that's not...it's our like job to speak up rather than them to ask us every two minutes oh do you understand that? do you understand that? do you*

*understand that? We have to actually tell them, we don't understand it*

[FG1bS3]

However, knowing that these are important and engaging in the behaviours are different things. Even when they might be struggling Haley offers a reason why students might not engage in beneficial strategies: *people might be shy to put up their hand*. Making an alternative suggestion: *you could email the teacher or go and see the teacher after class when no one is looking*. Students see agency as influenced by dispositions, self-confidence and social currency. Importantly, where agency is perceived as a choice, something students can choose to engage, this means responsibility is on the student for success and therefore they need to take ownership:

*They [teachers] can only go to a certain point, students have to help themselves, they can't just expect the school to do it for them* [FG2bS8]

Teacher agency and ownership in practising equity and quality education is identified as part of student success as well. Acknowledging the responsibility of fellow students, Grace also emphasised the ownership teachers needed in supporting student success:

*So probably the teacher trying to motivate the class really... trying to make sure that they're [students] interested and they're not just sitting there you know writing down things that they don't understand*

Teaching practice is at the heart of this comment, with responsibility of ensuring students are engaged with and comprehending materials laying, at least in part, with the teacher. This comment speaks to experiences of students engaging in behaviours known to reflect the rules (in this case note taking) but the benefit of engaging in this process may not translate further than the act of writing. Student agency alone is not enough, teacher agency and ownership for meeting student needs is critical as well.

Shared commitment can depend on shared understandings. In CS1 the Head of Learning Support, recounted an instance of differences in understanding when an ‘ungraded’ mark might be appropriate. A student on her caseload hadn’t submitted assignments on time and received ‘ungraded’ on his report:

*there was one that we just got in year eight too that ended up getting ungraded’s for some of his reports and the parents coming back and saying, why did he get an ungraded ...and when you go back to that member of staff and go, why have you given them an ungraded and it was, oh because it was a week late. And you go [sigh] ...ok...yeah...and do you know what was happening with that child at the time? And yes, we were working on it and yes, it was a week late but it was done. [Isobel]*

Knowing and adhering to rules, such as deadlines, for both students and teachers is an expected standard. Isobel’s view is that this rule could and should be bent under certain circumstances. The dissonance here between multiple stakeholders reflects misalignment between understandings of what constitutes fairness, equity and quality and the way these ideals were actioned.

Confusion around differentiation, adjustments and modifications – what they are and how to do them, also has an impact on teacher agency and ownership. Isobel elaborates on her experience with this in her role as Head of Learning Support:

*I still have opposition with, “oh but I’ve got twenty-eight in the class and how do I do that?” And you go, “well, actually that’s your craft. You’re a teacher. You have to do it” [laughs] So, I’m being a bit of the bad guy at times to do that, but you’ve got to keep saying that this is...it’s not an addition to your work load, it’s actually your work.*

The Head of Learning Support at CS2 describes similar experiences with teaching staff. In this school context focus is on supporting teachers to develop their understanding of adjusting assessments, writing ILPs and success criteria for individual students. The need for this type of collaboration again indicates that teachers may not be fully cognisant of ‘the rules’ and how to enact this aspect of equity and quality education. Nora acknowledges that policy expectations from government are shaping and hastening many of these practices and also feels teacher agency and ownership may be restricted:

*Because these poor teachers are being hit with so much at the minute. Um that we’ve got to make it that we roll it in the right way, the language is correct. You know, because I’m still training a lot of people in what does this mean? and to make sure that everyone’s on the same page with the reporting but also with what’s happening everyday in the classroom*

At classroom level, equity and quality education was actioned via a combination of differentiated teaching practices and through agency and ownership of participants. Participants highlight the challenges and experiences of grappling with fairness when staff and students negotiate these ideals.

### *Major Theme 3: Offered through... Opportunities*

All participants described the opportunities available in the field as reflective of quality and supportive of individual pursuits of equity.

#### *Sub-Theme 3.1: Opportunities in the field*

Changes to funding processes and disability policies impact at ISV with Henry fielding multiple phone calls a day where schools seek clarification on various issues related to these changes. In response to clear confusion, he thought:

*Ok, why don't I set up some groups...we'll call them network meetings, to, so, to enable schools to talk to each other about the sorts of issues they were facing umm and how they would deal with it...*

These opportunities for support staff to go to other member schools are seen as beneficial not only in terms of staff professional development but also to see how other member school's Learning Support Departments were structured and working:

*Yeah and people love getting into each other's schools. They love seeing you know, because we always get the host to talk about their school, and they might show us around their Special Ed area, or their Individual Needs area and all those sorts of things...and a and a terrific sharing too, really fantastic sharing [Henry]*

Henry described school staff commitment to these network meetings state-wide with approximately six regional groups and four-five metropolitan groups, generally running twice a year. He noted that the regional groups were strong with the same people attending each time and getting to know each other really well. The metropolitan ones 'are not quite so tightly bound groups' which is attributed at least in part, to staff choosing meetings based on days and topics that suit. Nevertheless, this system level offering for Learning Support staff is considered a valuable opportunity in the field by member schools given that these network meetings have been running for three years and are attended on a voluntary basis.

All participant groups consider the curricular and co-curricular offerings in the case schools to be excellent opportunities. Both schools had recently reviewed their educational models and structures, which had resulted in school-wide reconfigurations for CS2 and the creation of a school-wide model for learning in CS1. Adoption of new

language and terminology aligned with stated objectives to break down discipline-based traditions for teaching and learning. Both schools used verbs as descriptors for clusters of discipline areas. For example, science and mathematics subjects were housed under the term ‘*investigate*’ in one school and ‘*discoveries*’ in another. English and humanities subjects were under banners of ‘*cultures*’ in one school and ‘*encounter*’ in the other. At CS1 their holistic schooling structure, designed to explicitly link discipline/subject based areas with pedagogies, had been rolled out a year or so prior to data collection. Ella offered an illustration of how this structure was impacting:

*Yeah, and I even know, we’ve had drama teachers going into the science rooms and sharing...some of the skills that can be translatable, that you can, you know... role play can become a great way of sort of teaching a whole range of different concepts*

In this case, the school structure enables collaboration between staff of core and elective subjects by facilitating cross-curricular teaching and learning opportunities. However Ella went on to clarify that it was early days, these practices were not yet widespread and were dependent on teacher initiative at that point in time.

Co-curricular offerings in both school fields include opportunities such as camps, exchange programs, school productions, art exhibitions and sporting competitions. Participants in both schools understand co-curricular opportunities as a means for students to gain valuable experiences, knowledge and personal growth. The Head of Middle School at CS2 shared how her school considers the needs of the cohort when determining co-curricular opportunities. Sara mentioned curriculum focuses, excursions and extra-curricular trips as useful tools to mitigate cohort ‘*naivety of diverse world perspectives*’. Staff expressed frustration at students not making the most of these

opportunities and even more so when parents were supportive of the non-participation. The Year 8 coordinator at CS1 attributes some reluctance to participate to a lack of resilience among both students and parents, but the overriding concern is about the missed opportunity for growth. Here Anna refers to Year 8 camp: *but we had a few, two or three this year that parents didn't send them. Well, they learnt nothing.* Gatekeeping student participation by parents presented challenges but school commitment to encouraging participation in this opportunity is reflected in steps the school took with the family the next time:

*And the tack was, we took, and OEG [Outdoor Education Group] were very good and said, if he goes through this experience now, and it's ok, oh oh, it might not be even great but he gets through the experience, next time he feels like that, he's got something to draw on and say, actually I was ok... I didn't love it but I got through it and I did that, I felt good I did it. Whereas if we don't do it it's like, oh next time Dad'll ring up and I don't have to do it. So you never... you don't get to that point. [Anna]*

Staff acknowledge the emotional challenge that some co-curricular opportunities present for students, in terms of anxiety and resilience, but perceived benefit to students (and families) is seen to outweigh these concerns.

### *Sub-Theme 3.2: Opportunities for individuals*

Cultural and racial diversity in the schools is recognised as very low, a reality students and teachers in both schools consider a limitation of their communities. Participants in both case schools claimed a diversity of student learning needs and abilities:

*We've got some students in the school who are very very low, as in you know, stanine one's in testing, like, so they are working 4 or 5 years behind. [Sara]*

Participants in both schools describe composition of student diversity predominantly in terms of:

1. Diagnosed disability (references were mainly to students with ASD and/or dyslexia)
2. Students who presented challenging behaviours such as disruption in class, being disengaged and unmotivated
3. Students who struggled socially and/or emotionally
4. Highly able students
5. Those needing one to one support during and/or outside of class time

An expressed belief that the case schools' reputations meant they were attracting a high number of students with diverse learning needs is in spite of data indicating that the range of diversity in their schools is no different to other schools:

*we've got a bit of a reputation in the area of being a school that supports kids with a variety of learning needs. Especially on the spectrum [Autism Spectrum]. [Sara]*

Isobel from CS1 gave some perspective on their experience:

*I am told that um, the perception is that it's for kids with learning difficulties and that's...yeah. Yeah...and some of our staff feel that we have more than our fair share, but the national collection of data or the documentation we've just done, proves that we haven't got any more than any other school.*

Isobel's statement reflects the authority of data phenomenon, this time in relation to busting myths within school communities about student diversity.

Along with curricular and co-curricular offerings at whole school levels, opportunities for support and extension are seen as part of equity and quality practice in both schools. Formal and informal structures in each case school create opportunities for individualised support beyond the standard schooling being offered. Staff in both schools explained that timetabled, small group support classes run in each case school. Students receive targeted support with class work across the curriculum and/or with homework in these timetabled classes. Another shared practice was for students who were attending formal support classes at school to be excluded from LOTE to attend at least some of their support class allocation at this time. A student explains:

*We do have, for the people who are not as bright, like people that have dyslexia and stuff, we have opportunities for them but they're not very often, they are only like...They are only like twice a week... Every time we have a language, they have English [FG2bS11]*

While access to this formal support structure is available for those who qualify, timetabled opportunities are scarce across a two-week period. The qualification process is variously codified in both schools but broadly it is based on a combination of diagnosis, professional judgement about degree of need and consultations with students and families. Students in FG3a shared their experience of how this formal support opportunity worked:

*S18a and there's also for like if you are like struggling with some classes you can do something called [names school support class] where you don't do a language and you go to [names school support class]*

*S19a yeah it's [names school support class] it was ID last year*

*S18a and um, so like you go over things, you do homework*

*Researcher* ok so you can do homework in the [names school support class] class

*S19a* and then the teacher helps you with tutoring

*S18a* they like help you with homework

*S15a* but the thing is for that..I think I ..I definitely tried to get into that last year but they didn't let me

*Researcher* ok, how come?

*S15a* I had to go through all these tests and apparently I wasn't...

*S16a* dumb enough

Despite feeling that it would be beneficial, this exchange indicates that gatekeeping and qualification processes can prevent students from accessing the opportunity.

In-class one-to-one support for students was also offered in both schools with aides or tutors timetabled to join classes. In CS1 this was identified as a relatively new practice, but one that for the most part teachers were embracing:

*Isobel:* Because these staff haven't all had aide support in the classroom before...

*Researcher:* Yes ok, and how have teachers responded to that do you think?

*Isobel:* Fantastically. They love it. A couple of times they might say, oh I don't need you today but that doesn't happen very often.

Nat describes how the in-class support works for her as an English/Humanities teacher at CS2:

*Yeah so they go to their Learning Support group as well, get some extra support, but like we had a writing assessment, um one of them needs to be, needs to speak and needs it scribed. The other one I let her do text to talk. But I do need the aide to help while I'm watching the other kids, so I would*

*sort of schedule it in probably here on the Thursday when I know she's around.*

In both schools staff value the in-class support and expressions of desire for more in-class support were universal. However teachers are still working out how to maximise the in-class support while working within the timetable itself.

Informal learning support is also used and came in various forms depending on the school and subject areas. CS2 for example offers an option for attending tutor groups at school lunchtimes where students are able to meet with heads of subject areas for support. In CS1 students are encouraged to initiate meetings with teachers to go over material they may have been struggling with, and senior school students run a homework club once a week after school, where Year 8 students acknowledged they could go. While teachers may encourage students to take up informal support opportunities, student agency and ownership and effort and commitment are required for participation in these cases.

Driven by engagement with NCCD, focus in both schools had been on establishing support structures and opportunities. Fewer mentions were made of opportunities for extension and enrichment for students in schools, but CS1 does have a defined extension and enrichment program, which extends across all curriculum areas and is based on community demand. Students explained that qualifying for extension programs was based on '*doing well*' in normal classes which could lead to more opportunities. The Head of Middle School at CS1 offers a bit more detail in her explanation:

*Our [names school extension program] programs are offered for students who have excelled in their subjects...so they're identified and they have to*

*put in an application... they've said "I think this might be good for you...can you put in an application?" And for, the Arts [names school extension program] program it might be um a letter and two pieces of Artwork that they are proud of, and to talk about those um, I think in Maths, there's a little test that's involved as well so students go into those programs, very like-minded groups because they're all achieving really highly, and they engage in work that is sort of year levels above [Ella]*

Similarly to experiences with support programs, students indicated that not everyone who applies for the extension and enrichment classes is successful. Dione explained: *Well, I know there's a [names school extension program] program that my, that I've been involved in and one of my friends tried to get into it and they didn't get in.* Once again, gatekeeping and qualification processes are in place which impact individuals' access to opportunities.

#### *Major Theme 4: Expedited by... Stakeholders and Relationships*

The experiences of enacting equity and quality education - what it is *understood as*, how it is *actioned* and/or *offered*, were expedited by relationships with stakeholders. A stakeholder refers to a group or individual with an investment in equity and quality education for students. In this inquiry, these predominantly include school leadership staff, teachers, students themselves, parents and families, external professionals and specialists such as speech therapist, psychologists etc. This final major theme to emerge from the data comprises two sub-themes, wellbeing and working together. These were named as vital in shaping expectations that informed what equity and quality should look like for individuals and how it would be enacted.

#### *Sub-theme 4.1: Wellbeing*

On their school websites, both case schools reference commitment to supporting students to *achieve their potential* and/or *personal best*. The websites also promote child safety as well as student access to nursing, counselling, and chaplaincy services. Student Wellbeing programs were part of academic school curriculum in Year 8 with sessions timetabled on a weekly basis and programs overseen by the year level coordinator in each school. The program's foci include: sex education, stress management and attention to mental health issues including anxiety and depression. Encompassing social, spiritual and emotional needs arising from personal and familial circumstances, student wellbeing in schools made mention of supporting students with concerns related to gender or sexual identity, particularly negotiation of peer and family concerns.

In CS1 a clear and coordinated structure for supporting student wellbeing was outlined by the Head of Middle School. Regular meetings are held and information shared about students between school staff and across stakeholder groups. Responsibility for the sharing of information depends on the nature of identified concerns and determination of next steps. While the Principal, Heads of School, Head of Learning Support, School Counsellor, Chaplain and Year level Coordinators could all be involved, Ella explained that Mentor teachers are the primary point of contact for students themselves and they: *probably have the biggest part in referring students that may need more support in the school*. Needing more support referred to the likes of counselling, access to learning support or gifted/enrichment programs. However, Henry did not see coordinated approaches such as these as the norm across the sector. While staff attending the ISV network meetings verbally expressed desire for student wellbeing focuses, getting them off the ground was challenging for Henry. Offering a possible reason for this:

*in our Independent schools, Wellbeing is spread over a group of people. And so I might send an email out about these to 500 people, and I reckon these people are saying, oh I don't know whether that is me or not?* [Henry]

Nora shares her struggle pushing for a school shift to shared leadership where wellbeing is understood and functions in more integrated ways at CS2:

*This is holistic, you know, trying to drop the silos that, oh the wellbeing side of it, well actually that's not learning...Cos that's been a bit of a challenge here, that wellbeing is separate from Learning Support, no [names self] you don't need to be a part of Wellbeing because you don't need to know that, and I'm going no no no, it goes across.*

Her desire for a multidisciplinary approach to student services for wellbeing was clear and she expresses a belief that: *if we did that and we did it well, half the anxiety and the stress of the students and the families wouldn't be. Or the staff* [Nora]

When asked about their lived experience of enacting equity and quality education in schools, teachers' wellbeing was raised and the link to stakeholders and relationships made clear. When sharing his view about why the network meetings for Heads of Learning Support had been so well received, Henry surmises:

*I think a lot of schools are just saying that they are getting sort of affirmation of what they are doing by checking with other people. I mean it can be a very lonely role, especially in small schools when there's only the one person.*

The Head of Learning Support at CS1 describes herself as *a bit of a lone ranger* [Isobel] given her role and having a department that employed two other part-time Learning

Support teachers across the K-12 school. When reiterating a conversation between herself and one of these part time Learning Support teachers the job was described as emotionally draining:

*Our teaching is intense and it's working with kids that you know, life's not easy for them. Um and you're working with parents that are often hurting, most ILP meetings you have parents in tears because they're still having to confront...*

In a show of emotional support she describes how they made chocolate available for people who come in to their office space. While light hearted, Isobel emphasised it is meant as a symbol of solidarity: *we're with you, we're supporting you, we're giving you chocolate to help you on your way*. Through this act, teacher wellbeing is shown to be of concern for a range of stakeholders working together in emotionally charged circumstances.

#### *Sub-theme 4.2: Working Together*

There is a clear identification of partnerships as significant to school commitments to student wellbeing and to equity and quality education more broadly. Of particular focus in the schools at the time of data collection was communication and collaboration between stakeholders. In fact both schools were in the process of updating intranet platforms that allow stakeholders to access information about student learning and achievement. This includes homework, goals and goal setting, online learning, progress and achievement with assessment tasks and reminders. At CS2 Sara describes the benefit of this platform even in its infancy:

*now, it's a one stop shop...for wellbeing and curriculum, yeah one stop shop. Yep so students have a portal page and that allows them to see all the work that their teachers all their resources all their homework and that sort of*

*stuff. Parents have a portal so that they can access exactly the same thing, and then staff have a different portal again that has all their curriculum documentation...so we can do our communication through that.*

The flexibility in this resource was seen as a positive feature and participants describe the primary goal of this type of information sharing as supporting stakeholders in their communication and expectations.

Ella outlined a collaborative approach to goal setting being rolled out at CS1:

*I think it is very much a partnership with our parents, and I think our students you know, need to be a part of that as well...mhmm, so there's like sections on it in which the teacher fills in, the student fills in, the parent fills in, and then they all kind of sign off on it and agree to some of the things that are in that document. [Ella]*

Starting with wellbeing focuses, the program will expand to incorporate learning focuses. Working collaboratively the idea is that parents, students and mentors determine three goals for individual students that become an overarching focus across subject areas for the school year. Active engagement with this process by all stakeholders is vital to ensuring shared understandings and commitment.

From a system perspective, Henry describes fielding phone calls from parents raising issues of concern for them, such as school responses to claims of bullying, family court issues, fee disputes, suspension and expulsion. Henry also mentioned that parents contact ISV for support if they feel the school is not meeting the educational and academic needs of their child:

*they are not giving me an IEP, am I entitled to it? I mean I love the parents who ring up and say what are my rights? To which I say, well actually I don't know if you've got any rights, let talk about your child.*

Competing priorities and agendas are informed to some extent by the role of parents in the independent education sector. In this sector where parents choose and buy an education product for their child, families have their own sense and expectation of what quality and equity should look like. As Henry explained:

*I will get a parent ringing to complain... I know a couple of the kids have got learning problems but why should my child's teacher spend 90% of their time with them, I'm paying good fees*

Schools are then in a position where they are required to negotiate with family stakeholders to ensure that their product remains desirable to the family whilst also reflecting quality and equity from a policy, educational, community perspective. In this space teachers are agents, not necessarily equipped but nevertheless responsible for mediating much of this complexity.

Henry describes the challenge of having to ring a principal to let them know they've got a parent who thinks they're not doing the right thing. Not being a regulatory body, Henry identifies limits to the influence ISV has on schools but recognises the organisation's responsibility in sharing information and working with all stakeholders to resolve problems. When negotiating expectations with parents transitioning from government to independent schools this can be hard:

*And our schools are getting students coming to them from the department schools where they've had a full-time aide. And the parents come to the independent school, why wouldn't they still expect a full time aide? You*

*know? I would! Umm and then...And at the same time the staff have got, they might have this child but they've 24 other kids and then they've got a business manager who's saying sorry we can't afford to spend any more, that sort of thing [Henry]*

Anna extends this point through describing the experience of struggling to establish shared expectations between the school, parents and the student:

*Well, there, like there's one this year, you know, he's quite an able boy especially in Maths, he's not loving Maths and he's not doing great but he's not doing the basics so why should he have the extension? And then the teacher would give him the extension and he couldn't be bothered doing that or then parents said the extension was too hard, so we can't win, yet this is a boy that has struggled socially all his life and he suddenly has a social group, so he's actually feeling a stigma, not to perform academically...*

Reflecting on the implications and parent motivations for sending their children to the school, Dan shares his view that some students come to CS1 after having struggled in other environments for academic and/or social reasons. At CS1 he identifies that some students find a social or interest niche and this works well. Alternatively, he perceived a problem if students were sent to the school 'to be fixed':

*we can help them maybe. You end up with this tension across, you've got some kids who just like the school, the parents like the school they're not that interested in whether it's academic or not, they just want a good school, they feel as though they can afford this one, it's a good location, it's suits their lifestyle and it presents well.*

Participants recognise that stakeholders and relationships can expedite equity and quality education, particularly through a focus on wellbeing and working together. However, misalignment in establishing and negotiating expectations led to tensions and dissonance when these foci were pursued together.

### **Presentation of a meta-theme: Negotiating dualities**

When taken together, the presentation of the major and sub-themes speak to a broader meta-theme of participants negotiating dualities in their understandings, actions, offerings and expediting of equity and quality education. Dualities are able to reflect contrasts and/or compliments of components of equity and quality identified by participants. This is particularly evident at micro levels in terms of barriers and facilitators and at macro levels in dynamic and interactive relationships between the components of equity and quality. These micro and macro level findings are expanded on below. In the next chapter, the research questions, vertical and horizontal dimension literature and Bourdieu's social critical theory are brought to bear in more detail.

### **Micro level negotiations of dualities**

#### *Major and sub-themes in light of barriers and facilitators*

Each major theme distinguished two perceived understandings and enactments of equity and quality education. Notably, aspects of each of the sub-themes were described by participants as potential barriers and/or facilitators to the enactment of equity and quality education in their schools. This duality is reflected in table 5.3 which offers a condensed illustration of participant lived experiences and descriptions of some associated barriers and facilitators in relation to the major themes.

Table 5.3

*Examples of facilitators and barriers offered by participants in relation to each theme*

Facilitators	Lived experiences of Equity and Quality Education	Barriers
Independence Keeping pace Data and evidence Natural Talent Good grades and results	<i>Understood as...</i> what is valued  Measuring and tracking & Effort and commitment	Poor attitude and engagement Lack of motivation Pace of curriculum Limited formal recognition of effort Lack of confidence and resilience
Help seeking behaviour Striving to excel Ability grouping Flexibility and personalisation	<i>Actioned via...</i> Practice  Differentiated teaching & Agency and ownership	Lack of knowledge/skills and time Not having 'the basics' Emphasis on measuring and tracking Spread of ability / learning needs
Resources Organisation of school structures Determined level of need – diagnosis, funding, support	<i>Offered through...</i> Opportunities  In the field & For individuals	Denial of Access Insufficient level of need Non-participation Lack of family support for student participation
Supportive relationships Platforms and systems for shared communication Growth focused	<i>Expedited by...</i> Stakeholders and relationships  Wellbeing & Working together	Misalignment of expectations Siloed responsibility for wellbeing Not knowing students – needs, experiences, preferences

These descriptions and examples offered by participants share clear links to the themes of barriers and facilitators presented in chapter 2. In the literature review Haug's (2010) horizontal dimension structure supported identification of existing themes in literature and research related to barriers and facilitators, which are echoed here in the identified experiences of these participants. Importantly, these examples also speak to some identified gaps in the horizontal dimensions research. Namely, this data reflects student voices and perspectives of their experiences and these students are representative of a broad student population, distinct from research that has usually sought the views of sub-sets of students chosen by identity markers that assume the need or relevance of inclusion (Nilhom & Alm, 2010). This consideration of 'all' as opposed to 'some' for the student participant sample, also means that named barriers and facilitators are reflective of the experiences of a broader student population which gives us insight into the impact pedagogical practices such as

differentiation have, an identified gap in research (Preus, 2012; Roy et al, 2013). Light is also shed on student-teacher relationships in the context of equity and quality education, another area seldom explored (Blatchford et al, 2009; Cameron et al, 2012; Goodwin, 2010). Finally, expansion of this study to incorporate a sector level perspective in ISV elucidates how collaborations within sectors are working as well as consideration of barriers and facilitators to these collaborations. This contributes insight to a much needed area for exploration in terms of inclusion according to Ainscow et al (2003).

### **Macro level negotiation of dualities**

#### *Dynamic and interactive relationships between components of equity and quality*

Building on from micro level negotiations of barriers and facilitators, participant's descriptions also reflected their negotiations of shifting focuses and priorities in the school field, speaking to an ebb and flow or swinging pendulum in the lived experience. Interactions between sub-themes at their points of convergence highlight a lived experience for participants of negotiating between perspectives in the field. More specifically, when equity and quality education for all was being actively pursued, experiences of tensions and dissonance were generative of pragmatic responses. *Figure 5.3* offers this conceptualisation of the interactive and dynamic nature of perceived components of equity and quality education in the case schools.



Figure 5.3. Dynamic and interactive relationship between subordinate themes of the components of equity and quality identified by participants.

In this figure, the vertical sequence is not intended to reflect hierarchy or importance. The two-way arrows mark the pendulum swing of the lived experience as participants negotiate each component of equity and quality (sub-theme) in the broader context or fields of power. Descriptions of the dynamic and interactive lived experience of each theme is offered in the purple writing and elucidates the meta theme or what Attride-Stirling (2001) refers to as a global theme which reflects a metaphor, of this experience in changing fields of power.

### Summary of major themes in light of micro and macro lived experiences of equity and quality education

The first major theme distinguished two perceived understandings and values of equity and quality in the field – measuring and tracking, effort and commitment. While one

reflected emphasis on measurable outcomes and performance, the other stressed the importance of student dispositions and traits required for success in the field. When this theme is considered as a whole, *a sense of futility* arose for student participants when effort (a noted facilitator) was not translating to outcomes that teachers could measure. For teachers a sense of futility emerged when reconciling curriculum expectations, time pressures and standards with diverse student needs and abilities. Negotiating dualities of what is understood and valued in equity and quality education is evidently a key feature of the lived experience of students the teachers in these schools.

At classroom level, enacting equity and quality education involved differentiated teaching, curriculum and assessment along with agency and ownership for students and teachers in their roles. Despite teacher and student participants naming their own and each other's roles and responsibilities in equity and quality education, significant challenges and struggles with actioning these practices were expressed. Differentiated teaching was readily espoused as an essential facilitator for equity and quality at classroom level given its perceived ability to offer flexibility, personalisation and target student needs. Equally expressed though was uncertainty in how to engage in differentiated teaching practices and particularly, what this should be in terms of fairness and equality. This second major theme to emerge from the data highlighted experiences of *grappling with fairness* when understandings and enactments of the sub-themes were harnessed together.

The third major theme emphasised opportunities as key features of participants' lived experiences of equity and quality. Both case schools valued their system, school and classroom level resourcing and structures as well as the curricular and co-curricular

opportunities available to students. Schools sought to meet individual needs of students through combinations of restructuring school systems and learning models, formal and informal learning support opportunities and harnessing human and material resources. However, dissonance for some participants emerged when *gatekeeping and qualification* processes impacted student access to opportunities, especially when this was as a result of system level practices, parent influence or determination of student level of need (not seen as significant enough).

Major theme four highlighted that stakeholders and relationships expedited participants understanding and enactment of equity and quality education. The importance participants placed on the need for shared commitment to quality and equity education through a focus on wellbeing and working together was significant. Commitment to student wellbeing was demonstrated in both case schools through formal curriculum programs as well as welfare structures and supports. Collaboration and teamwork was viewed as vital to these endeavours. However, *establishing and negotiating expectations* of quality and equity - what this was and how it should be achieved – was a point of tension or dissonance when misalignment of expectations occurred between stakeholders.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the findings from focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews with staff and students in both case schools, as well as the interview with the ISV representative. Four major themes were described using representative quotes from these interviews. Dominant understandings and enactments of equity and quality in the field were reflective of the following themes:

1. Understood as.... What is valued
2. Actioned via...Practice
3. Offered through... Opportunities
4. Expedited by.... Stakeholders and relationships

The sub-themes of each of these major themes reflected participant's experiences of negotiating dualities at both micro and macro levels. At a micro level, features of each sub-theme were described in terms of barriers and/or facilitators to equity and quality education. When sub-themes were taken together, participants were shown to be continually negotiating a dynamic and interactive field at a macro level. At the point of convergence meta-themes emerged which reflect combinations of tensions and dissonance and pragmatic responses. These were:

1. *A sense of futility*
2. *Grappling with fairness*
3. *Qualification and gatekeeping*
4. *Establishing and negotiating expectations*

But what does this mean in terms of Bourdieu's social critical theory? In terms of education policy? In terms of school and teaching practice? What contributions do these findings make to current understandings? And what remains difficult to explain? These questions are explored in the following chapter through theoretical explanations of the phenomenon using Bourdieu's social critical theory and reflections on the literature presented in chapter two using Haug's (2010) horizontal and vertical dimensions structure. The research questions guide the discussion of findings, with implications for policy, practice and theory offered in conclusion.

## Chapter 6

### Discussion

#### Introduction

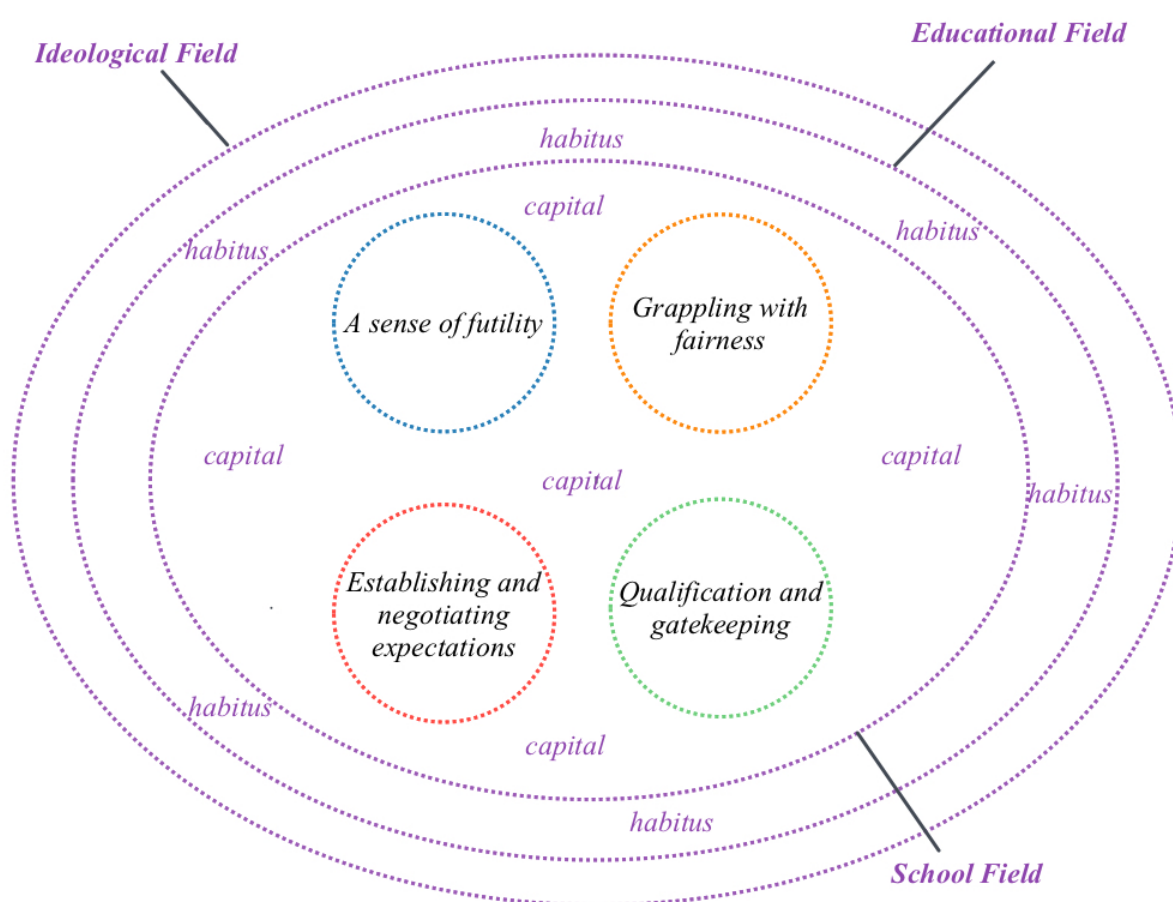
Components of equity and quality education in the case schools were presented in the previous chapter in the form of major and sub-themes. When taken together a meta-theme emerged of participants negotiating dualities at micro and macro levels of understandings, actions, offerings and expediting equity and quality education. The relatively small data set along with the research aims and questions warranted keeping data together. This means that the themes outlined in the previous chapter reflect the perspectives of all participants in the study and through analysis, dominant experiences emerged; *a sense of futility, grappling with fairness, qualification and gatekeeping of opportunities and establishing and negotiating expectations.*

In this chapter, critical discussion of these phenomena is offered in relation to the research questions by building on previous work in the field (as presented in chapter two) and making use of Bourdieu's social critical theory and thinking tools; field, habitus and capital to theoretically elaborate on the findings. Implications for the study's contribution to knowledge in terms of theory, policy and practice conclude the chapter.

#### Conceptual framework guiding discussion of research findings

The conceptual diagram below is offered to support the orientation of findings to date. In chapter two Haug's (2010) conceptualisation of inclusive education research as reflecting vertical and horizontal dimensions was useful for structuring the literature review and presenting dominant themes identified in related research to this inquiry. This supported the

development of *Figure 2.1*. In the theoretical framework chapter *Figure 3.1* demonstrates how Bourdieu's mechanisms of field, capital and habitus are conceptualised alongside those key themes from vertical and horizontal dimensions research. Below, in *Figure 6.1* the findings of this research presented as meta-themes in the previous chapter are shown in this conceptual iteration.



*Figure 6.1.* Conceptual framework locating the established meta-themes in relation to vertical and horizontal dimensions, and Bourdieu's social critical theory mechanisms; field, capital and habitus.

The design and features of this conceptual diagram have been carefully chosen. Fields are socially produced spaces (Thomson, 2012) and in *Figure 6.1* they are indicated by broken oval lines, framing macro and micro level influences on the case school fields. The purple oval rings demarcate educational fields of power. These are changing and dynamic in education and schooling given broad influence of social and political landscapes at all levels,

as well as localised changing dynamics of communities and practices. The oval lines serve to distinguish and locate *habitus* (individual and collective; present and forming) and types and forms of *capital* significant in the *fields*. Compounded by the mutually constitutive nature of the relationship between field and habitus (Bourdieu, 1990), the dynamic and interactive features of the field are continuously negotiated and renegotiated by stakeholders at macro and micro levels.

Blue, yellow, red and green circles indicate the meta-themes described at the end of chapter 5. This design is not intended to reflect a hierarchy of any kind, merely the shared presence of each experience of enacting equity and quality education identified by research participants. Broken lines signify capacity for ebb and flow between *fields* of power and the components of equity and quality, represented by participant's dominant experiences of *a sense of futility*, *grappling with fairness*, *establishing and negotiating expectations* and *qualification and gatekeeping*. Bourdieu's conceptual tools habitus and capital are situated within fields of power and, while not an exhaustive or exclusive representation; their orientation indicates how these mechanisms are understood to operate in relation to each other.

The research questions presented in chapter one are used to structure the following subsections of this chapter. In order to ensure rich critical discussion, previously identified literature and research along with identified gaps in knowledge at vertical and horizontal dimensions (Haug, 2010) as well as Bourdieu's social critical theory and mechanisms (field, habitus and capital) are brought to bear on the findings. In doing so, theoretical elaborations of the findings are offered along with illumination of how the findings of this research builds on the previous work in the field. Reflections on vertical dimensions research are particularly

apposite for research questions one and two. Horizontal dimensions are pertinent to research questions three and four.

### **Discussion in relation to the research questions**

*Research question 1: What do teachers report as their experiences of enacting equity and quality education and how do their experiences align with policy principles of equity and quality?*

The social spaces in which participants have lived experiences is significant given social critical theory views these as structured and structuring of agents' actions and positions (Bourdieu, 1989). Social spaces influence participants in terms of policy structures and interpretations of equity and quality at school levels or beyond. Influences that come from within participants, such as underlying beliefs, attitudes, values and assumptions that individuals hold toward equity and quality education are also considered a structuring aspect of a field.

Considering the former perspective in more detail, direct influences on teachers in the case school fields include policy directives, system (government, non-government/independent) and school level structures and practices. School level filters variously focus and emphasise macro and micro influences depending on how schools interpret policy and how they wish to identify themselves. As a result, teacher (and student) agency in the case school fields is impacted by these changes and focuses to varying degrees and in numerous ways. For Bourdieu:

practice is always informed by a sense of agency (the ability to understand and control our own actions), but that the possibilities of agency must be understood and contextualised in terms of its relation to the objective structures

of a culture – what he refers to generally as cultural fields. (Webb et al, 2002, p. 36)

In each case school, commitments to differentiated teaching along with agency and ownership were identified as vital practices in the enactment of equity and quality education. However when considered alongside the broader context, the most prominent experience expressed by teachers reporting on enacting equity and quality education was an experience of *grappling with fairness*. This experience cannot be explained purely in terms of external influences. Competing frames of fairness emerged for teacher participants when different foci in the field were shaping their practice but not always aligning with their views and beliefs. In other words, frames compete because social spaces are interactive – influences *on* and influences *from within* structure agent's actions and positions. The resulting tensions and dissonance for teachers as they grappled with dominant 'fairness as equality' perspectives from broader standards driven fields, and the more seemingly ideological 'fairness as equity' individual views reflects an important qualitative account of teacher struggles with equity. This warrants further discussion given Gale's (2014) recognition of the urgent need for more research considering qualitative accounts of equity.

When teachers saw fairness as an even playing field i.e. that all students should be assessed in the same way and have the same consequences, a 'fairness as equality' framework was evident. Dan offered an orientation for himself in this:

*Part of education is there are standards, and I think a knowledge that not everybody can meet those standards all the time. But you have to know what the standards, what you are aiming for and I think to be fair to everybody involved in the process, to say, well this is an agreed standard...*

Dan's perspective echoes findings from Glazzard's (2011) study, which reported that standards agendas were the strongest barrier to inclusion and that teacher's attitudes toward inclusion were linked to standards agendas. Fairness as an inclusive principle is linked to equality for Dan when he sees agreed standards as reflective of fairness.

In contrast Isobel was frustrated by these views held by teaching staff, especially the idea that students needed to earn success in particular ways:

*Yep. Um and...and they're still stuck on that level playing field stuff, you know, just because the child does it verbally doesn't make their knowledge less, knowledgeable*

From Bourdieu's perspective, these standards have been determined in the educational field and they go on to structure practice in the case schools. To use his playing field analogy, they inform how the game is played (Bourdieu, 1988a). In this illustration, the sanctioning of standards by the broader educational field aligns with Dan's views and beliefs about fairness. He sees these standards as fair in the sense that they are held for all, despite acknowledging that not everyone will achieve them. Further, he supposes student achievement should occur authentically:

*Again, with the level playing field, I want everybody to feel as though, if you succeed, you're doing it fairly...*

Teacher interpretations of education commitments to standards were resulting in student competencies (reflected in habitus) being valued differently i.e.: writing down responses was considered more valuable than verbalising them. Given school fields produce and authorise certain discourses and activities (Webb et al, 2002, p. 21) the valuing of certain habitus over others is reinforced along with views about fairness. When fairness was framed from an equality perspective, not only was lack of success attributed to student agency but alternatives

or diversification of standards was an exception that some believed students needed to earn rights to.

Policy principles contribute to the dominant view that quality education is realised when “recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 17). Alternatively, policy principles of equity and inclusive education endorse the acceptance of learner diversity as the norm and promote shared responsibility of schools and teachers to meet individual needs (Graham & Jahnukainen, 2011). When the school field and teachers interpreted policy in a ‘fairness as equity’ framework, they promoted ‘differentiation’, ‘modifications’ and ‘reasonable adjustments’. Importantly, while this perspective was advocated it was largely rhetoric and inconsistently enacted at classroom levels. As a reflection of how policy is interpreted and enacted at micro levels of practice this is significant not only in terms of the findings of this inquiry but it is an important indicator of how inequity within schools may look and work. This latter consideration has been an area of vertical dimension research identified as warranting further exploration (AGDE, 2013; Hattie, 2015; Smyth, 2008).

At the time of data collection, in both case schools differentiation practices were in the early stages of being established, along with agency for their implementation.

*also...moderated learning, in terms of modified programs, adjustments, like all that sort of terminology is sort of coming in to conversations in the classroom...it's an ongoing challenge. Um, I don't think teachers are that well prepared for that...there's a lot of different interpretations of what adjustment, adjusting and modifying is [Eve]*

The dominance or subservience of the different views of fairness in school fields sanctions different kinds of agency for teachers and students, which informs how equity and quality education are expressed and enacted within the field. The authorising of discourses of quality (reflected in focus on standards, equality, excellence etc) was evidently confusing for staff trying to determine how diverse student needs should be met. Lack of regard for personal attributes of teachers in quality teaching standards (Bahr & Mellor, 2016; Goodwin, 2010; Mockler, 2014) arguably contribute to this confusion too, given quantitative measures of equity and quality have dominated in the determination of standards. With teaching staff at the forefront of the delivery and actioning of equity and quality practice with students, consideration of the contribution made by personal qualities, teacher values and assumptions in the determination of quality teaching is essential.

While there are clear commonalities in the views expressed by teachers within and across the case schools about the importance of fairness as equity, there were clear differences in how these interpretations were understood and the extent and ways they were enacted. This finding is consistent with Savage (2013) whose research with teachers in secondary schools showed that “whilst there was a coherence of thought about the importance of equity in principle, there were clear differences in terms of what being equitable meant or looked like in practice” (p. 190). Savage (2013) goes on to argue that under-examined policy tensions around views that secondary schools are capable of tailoring education to different students and local markets are problematic. At the classroom level, differences are evident in beliefs that inform engagement with inclusive practices, with important distinctions seen when teachers differentiate from an additional needs perspective compared to an inclusive pedagogical perspective (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012; Deppeler et al, 2015; Florian, 2015). This distinction highlights that at teaching and learning/ classroom levels, the agency

of teachers, their beliefs, understandings, values and assumptions about equity shaped their practice and therefore the lived experience of all in the case school fields. While this research was not looking specifically at how inequity may work within schools, phenomena such as that described may be informative and be a worthy candidate for exploration on inequity within schools.

The tension and dissonance created by competing frames of fairness as teachers negotiated their work was an important marker of lived experience. Policy principles of equity and fairness were not consistently understood and unable to be confidently practised. Savage (2013) offers a possible reason for this when stating: “equity is a flexible and ‘chameleon-like’ concept and practice, adapting and manifesting differently in different environments” (p. 196). It is important not to minimise the impact that teachers’ underlying beliefs, attitudes, values and assumptions have on how equity manifests in social spaces and the qualitative accounts of these experiences are essential for building on existing understandings that have shaped experiences to date. For the teachers, *grappling with fairness* was a clear dominant experience in the case school fields as they pursued equity and quality for all.

*Research question 2: What do students report as their experiences of equity and quality education and how do their experiences align with policy principles of equity and quality?*

Students reported that most valued for ‘success’ in the case school fields were high academic outcomes as well as personal commitment. The importance of measuring and tracking performance within the case schools was made clear from the outset, named as a key component in quality education and the primary mechanism to indicate success for both students and teachers. According to students, their effort and commitment and that of teachers in terms of their engagement and attitudes was also deemed important. The perception of success as something that relied on effort and commitment was widely and

publicly espoused and reinforced through school edicts to ‘empower students to strive’ and ‘encourage students to excel’. Both facets - high outcomes and personal commitment were held together ideologically by students and were reinforced by teachers.

To theoretically frame the discussion here, Bourdieu’s (1997) use of a football field metaphor to explain social fields (like education and schools) where people interact, manoeuvre and struggle is apposite. Like a game of football played on a field, ‘the game that occurs in a social field is also competitive’ (Thomson, 2012, p. 67) as agents seek to improve or maintain their position and accumulate capital. It is the concept (and pursuit) of capital that is particularly fruitful for understanding the lived experience students were having of equity and quality education. Specifically, their negotiation of the two primary values - measuring and tracking as well as effort and commitment resulted in many cases, in *a sense of futility*.

In *Figure 6.1*, capital is depicted in the centre of the case school field, although as previously established, the fluid and dynamic nature of the case school field means this is neither an exclusive or exhaustive representation. As described in chapter 3, Bourdieu’s concept of capital is reflected in types as well as forms. Types of capital include economic and symbolic with the latter also reflected in sub-types, such as cultural, social, educational, scientific etc. According to Moore (2012): “Capital can be understood as the energy that drives the development of a field through time. Capital in action is the enactment of the principle of the field. It is the realisation in specific forms of power in general” (p. 102). Where the principle within the field dictates what is acceptable or not acceptable, it can be said that the case school field itself will determine the value of this capital because symbolic capital, “depends on people believing that someone possesses these qualities” (Webb et al, 2002, p. xvi). In other words, status, prestige and recognition are symbolic indicators of those who possess

capital in the field. In these case schools this is described in relation to awards and presentations, test scores and grades, and extension and enrichment opportunities. A Head of Middle School neatly sums up how symbolic capital works in one of the case schools in this explanation of a school practice: *Our extension programs are offered for students who have excelled in their subjects...so they're identified and they have to put in an application.* In order to be recognised (identified) by staff, students have accumulated symbolic capital (excelled in class), which earns them an opportunity (extension program). However they need to choose to 'buy' this capital by putting in an application.

For students though, while the school field may have nominated an objective form of symbolic capital worthy of pursuit, whether individuals or the student population value these is not assured. These views and experiences students have are particularly significant in light of vertical dimension research about inequity and division at school levels.

*The Dux is I guess the smartest in year, and then there's like the reserve dux which is the person who's second... There's one effort award. One... And I think there should be... people say it's lame if you get it but you know*  
[FG2bS10]

*you'll have a bunch of assessments you'll have A, B, C and D. You'll have whatever mark you got in that assessment. And then they are all combined to make a global grade. Effort and behaviour are completely separated from it... You have a global grade for each subject. Except it's purely academic... Oh there's effort, behaviour... I can't remember the others. I just look at it as if I passed or not [laughs] [Ned]*

In these descriptions, responses to attempts by the school to acknowledge effort and commitment are seen by students as less important by individuals. In addition the

description of collective views about effort awards being ‘lame’ indicates social capital is also part of the experience. Minimal representation of student qualitative accounts of equity in research at school levels (Gale, 2014; Nilholm & Alm, 2010) means that this insight offers an important and rare understanding into how students are experiencing school cultures and discourse. And in Bourdieu’s terms, how and who acquires capital extends insight into how inequity and division occurs at school levels.

Another way of understanding why measurable outcomes might trump effort and commitment is to consider that philosophical ideals of the value of education reflected in policy for example, dictate the defining characteristics of quality. Characteristics such as measurable knowledge are referred to by Burbules (2004) as “strong teleologies” (p. 2.) because they are objectively determinable. “Weak teleologies” (Burbules, 2004, p. 2) such as effort and commitment or dispositions-competencies on the other hand, are not objectively determinable. This framing, that what can be counted counts the most, informs students’ experiences of equity and quality education. Therefore understanding the relationship and struggle over what is recognised and most valued is necessary in order to consider how and which students may be at risk for not achieving success.

Moore’s (2012) explanation that symbolic capital is expressed in three different forms - *objective*, *habitus* and *embodied* is helpful for this and is reflected in the following example from a focus group discussion. The description offered by the student demonstrates the experience of struggle in generating capital as well as the confused messages students negotiate in what they understand as valuable capital in the field.

*Umm, at times you might think that you didn’t do as well as you thought you could...and I don’t know how to explain...just...you don’t feel as successful to*

*yourself...other people are like, oh that's really great, that's amazing and you're like well, no it's not...because you've kind of worked yourself up to think oh I really, I've tried to get this mark and then, you don't get it...and you're sort of like, that's not as good as I thought I could have got* [FG2aS9]

The objective form of the symbolic educational capital being illustrated is grades/results/performance, which can be measured and tracked in the school field. The habitus form is shown in the effort and commitment of agents as they pursue the educational capital. Finally, the embodied form of this educational capital presents as success and/or non-success in the field. Each form of capital (objective, *habitus* and embodied) is essential to making sense of how the capital is generated so that it can be used as leverage for agents in the field and as Moore (2012) points out, "...these forms of capital should be seen as being continuous with each other, as moments of one thing rather than three different varieties of the thing" (p. 103). In this light the *sense of futility* experienced by students is understood as the struggle students have when their habitus form of capital, their effort and commitment to their schooling does not translate to the objective form of capital, the grades and results they vie for.

While student agency (in terms of effort and commitment) in acquiring capital was viewed as vital, given this occurs in teaching and learning contexts it is necessary to consider how pedagogical approaches may serve to open up or close down opportunities. Acknowledged in the review of literature, there are critiques of teaching and learning approaches underpinned by constructivist views that offer minimal guidance instruction (Kirschner et al, 2006; Mayer, 2004) because they are seen to favour students who have already reached a level of expertise that supports independent learning and thus, less able students do not benefit from these approaches as much. Nevertheless, inclusive pedagogical approaches that focus on everybody

in the classroom (as opposed to the focus on most and some that occurs when additional needs perspectives are taken) such as those described by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) reflect constructivist, experiential and inquiry-based teaching. It is important to note that more detailed exploration of the relationship between constructivist teaching approaches and inclusive pedagogical approaches is needed (and not offered here). Further, observation and analysis of teaching approaches were not undertaken in this inquiry and student comments such as those above were made in general reference to classes as a whole. Students' experience of *a sense of futility* is seen in another light when considering the idea that teaching approaches may favour some students over others in their presumption of expertise and need for independence. In turn, advantaging some students in their acquisition of capital over others.

Building on established considerations of capital and field, Bourdieu's concept of habitus is also central to the experience students have. According to Maton (2012) where field can be seen as material conditions of existence, habitus can be referred to as durable dispositions or 'ways of being' in the field which are shaped by beliefs and attitudes. These concepts of Bourdieu's are considered relational structures that are generated and generating of each other in the field. This relational component of the lived experience, the field-habitus development, is reflected in the struggle students' experience. Importantly, *habitus* applies at individual/personal as well as community/collective levels (Webb et al, 2002, p. 115) given they evolve from beliefs and attitudes developed over time and in different fields. Personal habitus develops from birth, and is considered the most established, whereas community or institutional habitus develops as individuals engage with these social fields, such as schools, at a later time. This means that schools influence the creation of student habitus in real time; in the way they encourage individuals to engage with the field. School interpretations of

policy are then significant to the development of both individual and collective habitus because they establish the rules for the game that influence the development of participant's habitus.

Liasidou (2012) points out the “tensions” created for schools and stakeholders in their endeavour to negotiate what she describes as “contradictory policy terrain” where standards/excellence agendas meet inclusivity/equity agendas (p. 5). A clear illustration of this contradictory policy terrain is seen where equity and quality are conceptualised in policy in reference to outcomes in two distinct ways. On the one hand, quality outcomes are realised when all students have reached minimum standards (Field et al, 2007; OECD, 2012) while on the other, the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) emphasises as its primary goal, the promotion of ‘equity and excellence’ (p. 8) where quality outcomes for students lie in realising their ‘full potential’ (p. 18). Here schools are encouraged to ‘promote a culture of excellence’ through challenging, stimulating and personalised learning experiences to ensure all students are able to be successful. These two illustrations highlight confusion on vertical dimensions - sector, school and classroom, as a direct result of a lack of clarity around terminology and what successful equity and quality education might look like in terms of outcomes. It is no wonder that sectors, teachers and students struggle to interpret this messy policy terrain in practice terms that can be agreed upon and endorsed by all.

In the dynamic case school fields, teachers and students were seen to be in constant struggle over their developing understandings and engagement with their beliefs, values, attitudes and dispositions around what equity and quality looks like for each person and how they can be attained. Where standards agendas encourage competitive market ideologies, struggles in the field result in focuses on ranking and comparisons, which means focus inevitably turns to

who is positioned to achieve success and who isn't. There is potential in schools focusing on developing their institutional habitus, but of crucial importance to whether or not students experience *a sense of futurity* is the agency that they have in the development of their own habitus and in shaping capital considered valuable in light of equity and quality education.

*Research question 3: What do teachers and students identify as facilitators to achieving equity and quality education?*

Teachers and students identified a number of facilitators to success and fairness for all in their case school fields. Arising from analysis of the findings was clear emphasis on the processes and practices that participants employed to *establish and negotiate expectations* vital for enacting equity and quality education. This meta-theme highlights a contribution to horizontal dimension research with all stakeholders engaged in these practices in different ways. Henry talked about the work ISV does as mediators between parents and schools citing examples of complaints about bullying, school expulsions or suspensions and whether students were being offered IEPs. Heads of Learning Support, Isobel and Nora, talked about their experiences working with teachers in negotiating strategies and expectations around differentiation in their teaching practice. As a Year 8 Coordinator Anna described negotiations with parents in relation to student participation in school opportunities such as camps, sports days and other activities. These and other examples from participants indicated that there were two primary aims. One was to clarify what equity and quality was, and the other was to negotiate the differing expectations among stakeholders. In all cases though, getting 'on the same page' was considered a facilitator of equity and quality education which is consistent with three previously identified areas in vertical dimensions research presented in chapter two – inclusive cultures, pedagogical styles and approached, and active participation and engagement.

Two features of Bourdieu's theory are helpful in understanding why *establishing and negotiating expectations* was so important to the case schools' facilitation of equity and quality education. Firstly, Bourdieu's conceptualisation of field as a network of relations clarifies why consideration of multiple perspectives is central in how equity and quality education are facilitated. Secondly, the development of personal and institutional habitus is again significant, although in this case relative to networks of relations. Edgerton et al (2013) explain: "habitus becomes internalised within the family context and is conditioned by one's position in the social structure" (p. 305). Positions in the social structure/ network of relations for this inquiry include students, teachers, heads of middle school or learning support, Year 8 coordinators, ISV representative, principals, parents and external specialists. Each of these stakeholders was seen to not only occupy different positions in the network of relations but they embody both individual and collective habitus in those positions.

The network meetings coordinated by ISV, for Learning Support staff and hosted in member schools is an example of a professional community seeking to de-privatise practice and encourage opportunities for feedback from colleagues (Ingvarson et al, 2005). The benefits of these networks were seen to be sharing expertise and experience, a finding corroborated in Boyle et al's (2012) research. They concluded that successful inclusion in high schools was more to do with peer support among staff than physical resourcing. Constructing the reality of equity and quality education in the context of the network meetings, run for and by Heads of Learning Support staff, Henry reported: *I think a lot of schools are just saying that they are getting sort of affirmation of what they are doing by checking in with other people. I mean it can be a very lonely role, especially in schools where there's only one person.* Costa (2013) found similarly in her research with digital scholars who were reassured in their digital scholastic practices by like-minded people. She explains: "Their networks become a kind of

support group which approves of, contributes to and motivates research participant's digital practices" (Costa, 2013, p. 13). Among their peers, in this network of relations, the Learning Support staff members were constructing their understandings of equity and quality education by sharing experiences of their practices for enacting this.

Bourdieu (1989) says: "the construction of social reality is not only an individual enterprise but may also become a collective enterprise" (p. 18). In this light, the social reality of equity and quality education is embodied and constructed both individually and collectively through the professional community of the network meetings. This experience is reflected in Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) explanation that we can understand the relationship between field and habitus as operating in two distinct ways, as a relation of conditioning and as a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction. This relational component is significant in that the understandings of equity and quality education that are generated within this professional community will be reflective of personal histories and backgrounds of its members. Given many of heads of learning support had special education teaching backgrounds; views of equity and quality were filtered through this history and paradigm, shaping their practice. The lack of clarity for these staff (nevertheless held accountable for many aspects of enacting equity and quality education in the case school fields) around the policy principles and how they should be translated into practice means they generated pragmatic responses to establishing their own understandings and expectations of equity and quality education.

Another vehicle for *establishing and negotiating expectations* was the development of online platforms for communication between the school, students, parents and teachers was an

active priority in both schools. Frederickson et al's (2004) research that considered perspectives of students, teachers and parents on inclusion partnerships found:

Parental responses indicated that that they valued effective, responsive communication channels that facilitate the smooth flow of information between home and school and provide opportunities for cooperative relationships to develop. (p. 55)

This would suggest that current focus on developing platforms for communication between students, teachers and parents in both case schools would be well received by parents. Sara saw potential benefit for many stakeholders:

*it's a one stop shop...for wellbeing and curriculum, yeah one stop shop. Yep so students have a portal page and that allows them to see all the work that their teachers all their resources, all their homework and that sort of stuff. Parents have a portal so that they can access exactly the same thing, and then staff have a different portal again that has all their curriculum documentation....so we can do our communication through that.*

This example speaks to what Ingvarson (2017) calls “horizontal forms of professional accountability and shared responsibility for learning and wellbeing” where, “[t]eaching as a practice maintained in isolation is replaced by collaboration” (p.1). However, while horizontal forms of collaboration are considered a means to strengthen professional learning communities and facilitate school improvement, it is important to acknowledge that staff in each school demonstrated mixed feelings about the initiative particularly with regard to increasing transparency and anticipated effects on workload, with Sara stating, *it's frightening for staff*.

In addition to the online platforms, the development of processes for collaborative goal setting was also a priority in CS1. Ella described the aim of this new initiative was to bring together students, parents and teachers in shared practices of goal setting and monitoring around wellbeing and academic areas. The substantial body of literature endorsing partnerships and collaborative practices as a means to facilitate equity and quality education in schools (Carrington & Elkins, 2002; Frederickson et al, 2004; Ingvarson et al, 2005; Muijs, 2015; Reupert et al, 2015) offers justification for why commitment to these practices is sustained. Ella sees this practice as:

*very much a partnership with our parents, and I think our students you know, need to be a part of that as well...mhmm, so there's like sections on it in which the teacher fills in, the student fills in, the parent fills in, and then they all kind of sign off on it and agree to some of the things that are in that document*

Responsibility for the outcome of their schooling experience has largely been shared between the students and the school although current measures being taken in schools indicate commitment to changing this. By encouraging increased participation and engagement of families an attempt is being made to address potential disconnect and misalignment of expectations held by stakeholders and in turn, facilitate equity and quality education.

The goal setting practice described by Ella also reflects constructivist ideas about learning and commitment to including student voice in *establishing and negotiating expectations*. The importance of engaging student voice, particularly those in the middle years, is a widely supported view in research about school reform, barriers and facilitators to student participation and involvement, and developing and sustaining inclusive school cultures (Levin, 2000; Carrington, Bland & Brady, 2010; Moss, Deppeler, Astley & Pattison, 2007;

Zion, 2009). Importantly as Jones, Folin and Gillies (2013) outline, sustained change begins with common shared visions of outcomes and shared ownership of identified needs, progressing to shared implementation and evaluation of the change. The collaborative goal setting practice was intended to establish wellbeing and academic goals that would be agreed upon and signed off on by students, teachers and parents. This practice was also intended to be progressive, able to be tracked and monitored as the students moved through the school.

Carrington, Bland and Brady (2010) point out “working with young people in projects where students have a voice can break-down traditional assumptions about students in schools and promote dialogic relationships between teachers and students” (p. 450). In this sense the collaborative goal-setting practice has the potential to help teachers understand students more effectively and to improve their practice. However Bourdieu (1989) acknowledges that where such practices occur within a network of relations there is a risk of unequal power relations. Further, “it is the monopoly of the power to consecrate producers or products” (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 323). In other words, the field’s monopoly of dominant definitions of success and quality determines who (students, teachers, parents) and what (goals) are legitimised. In the shared commitment to equity and quality education, power relations emerge through negotiations of expectations where stakeholders have different views about what equity and quality looks like. Therefore how these case schools engage in the collaborative goal setting will influence the outcomes of the practice through what is established, negotiated and reported.

*Research question 4: What do teachers and students identify as barriers to achieving equity and quality education?*

Barriers to equity and quality education are experienced in the immediate case school field as well as school system fields and broader policy and political fields influencing students and teachers in their day-to-day lives. In the case school fields, barriers to equity and quality

identified by participants reflected processes around *qualification and gatekeeping* of access to opportunities. As with depictions of this in vertical dimensions research, such barriers could arise due to organisational, knowledge or belief and attitudinal influences. Curricular and co-curricular opportunities and access to resources were seen as markers of quality education and participants readily named this as a strength of the case schools. Qualification referred to access to resources and opportunities provided by the school and participants repeatedly referenced qualification with gatekeeping processes and criteria when talking about access to formal and informal support and enrichment opportunities. For example, in CS1, to participate in timetabled support classes, documentation was required such as cognitive assessments, language assessments, psychologist reports and perhaps formal diagnosis, although this was not essential. Instead of doing a LOTE subject (also a practice at CS2) students would be involved in the support program where they could work with a teacher on assignments, homework or other learning goals. Students saw this opportunity as being for those who were struggling but when one student described his experience of trying to access this program he was clearly hampered by the organisations qualification process:

*S15a*                    *but the thing is for that...I..I definitely tried to get into that  
last year but they didn't let me*

*Researcher*        *ok, how come?*

*S15a*                    *I had to go through all these tests and apparently I wasn't...*

*S16a*                    *dumb enough*

Isobel offers a teacher's perspective on the qualification process for formal support opportunities, saying it is important for ensuring students: *don't come into the support program just because they want to get out of French. They have to have some sort of testing or diagnosis*. While the case school field availed different programs and opportunities for students outside of standard school offerings in order to ensure equity and quality education

for all, these objective social structures relied on test based qualification practices to determine participation and access. Such practices risk limiting responsiveness to students needs through system level barriers. From Bourdieu's social critical theory perspective, such cultural practices and rules of the case school fields are "constitut[ing] an objective hierarchy, and...[are] produc[ing] and authoris[ing] certain discourses and activities" (Webb et al, 2002, p. 21). In this case, standards discourses dominate how and who has access to opportunities for support and enrichment. Aptly reflecting this common school practice is Gidley et al's (2010) description of the neoliberal approach to social inclusion which: "works from models of deficiency [and]...it can also be reductive in the sense of promoting a dominator hierarchy homogenising that which is included" (p. 133). As acknowledged in the review of literature, Booth et al (2000) emphasised the significance of schools examining existing cultures and organisational practices in order to develop and sustain inclusive schools cultures and practices. This links to another of Bourdieu's field mechanisms, doxa: "a set of core values and discourses which a field articulates as its fundamental principles and which tend to be viewed as inherently true and necessary" (Webb et al, 2002, p. xi). Shifting away from historically embedded, deficit framing that informs qualification practices schools must be willing and supported to challenge doxa, underlying and often hidden assumptions, about equity and quality. Developing and sustaining inclusive cultures over time requires commitment to routines of re-evaluation in order to ensure consideration and where necessary challenging of doxa that inform the authorisation of practices and processes in the field.

The category of knowledge barriers identified in the literature review of horizontal dimension research revealed that perceptions of the need for specialist knowledge and professional competence in order to engage in inclusive education dominated professional concerns of teachers (Abawi & Oliver, 2013; Deppeler et al, 2005; Forlin et al, 2008; Sharma et al, 2008).

This inquiry found that knowledge barriers were reflective of confusion around best practice for equity and quality education without an emphasis on students with special needs (a likely reflection and consequence of student composition in the schools). As Gibson (2009) points out there are clear discrepancies between policy agenda's of inclusive education and practice realities of exclusive education. In the CS fields, discrepancies are reflected in the articulated commitment to personalisation and flexibility of curriculum structures and delivery. This runs alongside stated uncertainty around preparedness for doing so and frustration when students prior knowledge and skills are considered unsatisfactory given starting points and expectations informed by standards. In previous research, teacher training and experience were found to have impacted teacher attitudes (de Boer et al, 2011) however these findings did not relate to Australian secondary school teacher perspectives, nor did they consider the learning and participation of a wide range of students. The findings of this current inquiry are pertinent to this identified gap. When reflecting on the learning needs of all their students, teachers expressed strong desires for more professional development, opportunities to collaborate/work together and the need to increase their efficacy around differentiation practices particularly in light of time pressures and emphasis on measuring and tracking student performances.

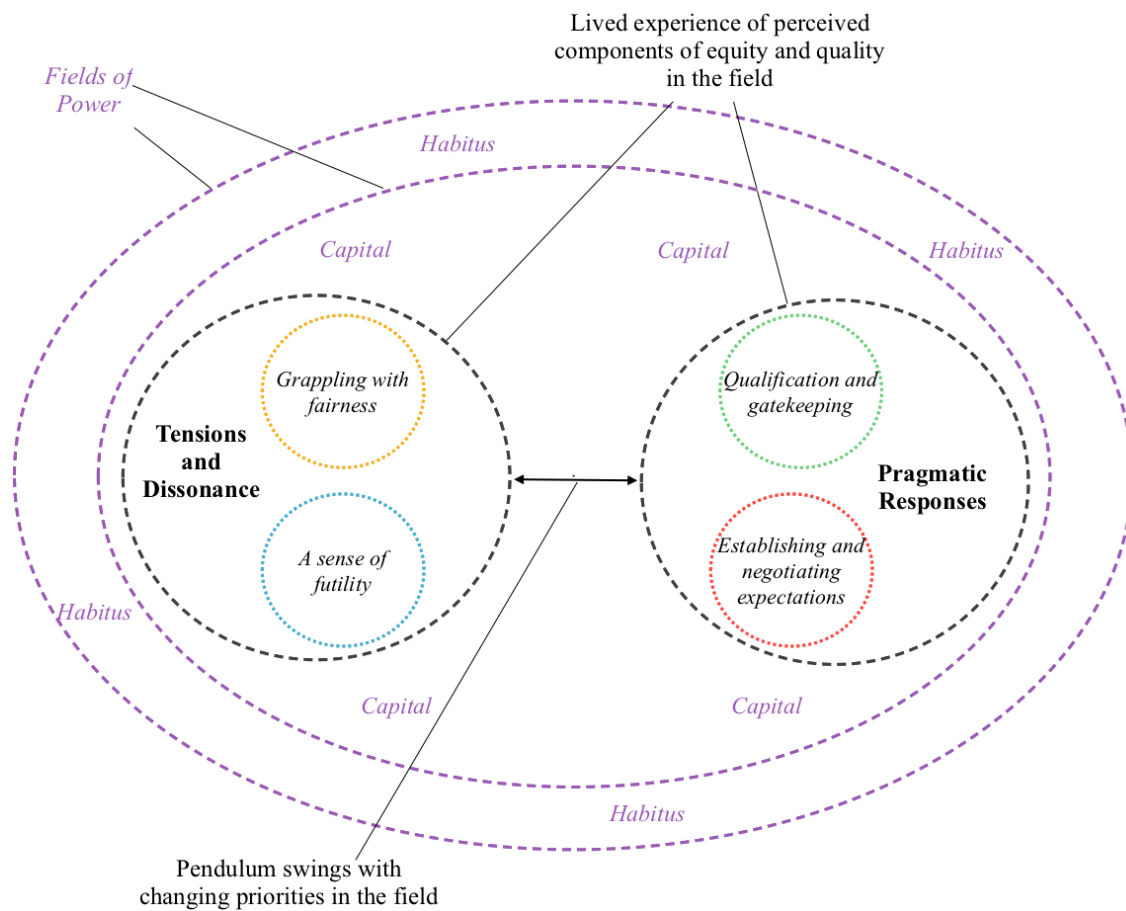
The experiences of tension and dissonance expressed by teachers and students in the pursuit of equity and quality (*grappling with fairness and a sense of futility*) are partly influenced by organisational, knowledge and/or belief and attitudinal barriers. Bourdieu uses the expression of having 'a feel for the game' when knowledge of the various rules and objectives of a cultural field such as a school, "allows agents to make sense of what is happening around them, and to make decisions as to how 'the game' should be played – which practices, genres, discourses, moves or forms of capital are appropriate to the moment" (Schirato &

Webb, 2003, p. 541). Importantly, the process of developing habitus (embodied in behaviours and ways of being) is also informed by Bourdieu's theorisation that individuals seek alignment between the *field* and their own *habitus* as this generates a sense of comfort, described as 'a fish in water' by Maton (2012, p. 56). Importantly, in terms of day-to-day experience, the 'fish in water' field-habitus alignment is something that individuals are largely unaware of. Like doxa, it is largely a naturalised and taken-for-granted experience. Significantly, as explained by Nash (1999) 'fish in water' habitus-field alignment reinforces unthinkingness whereby practices are seen as natural and even necessary. Adherence to qualification and gatekeeping processes can then be understood as practices in response to perceived demands of the field and also as indicators of whether the habitus of the agents in the field either align ('fish in water') or do not align ('fish out of water'). The feeling of being unprepared or confused about what and how equity and quality education should be pursued means that in the case school fields, misalignment of field and habitus has been more frequently reported.

### **Dynamic and interactive nature of enacting equity and quality in case schools**

*Figure 6.2* expands the earlier conceptualisation offered in *Figure 6.1* in order to illustrate the complexities of the dynamic and interactive reality for teachers and students enacting equity and quality in the case schools. As with *Figure 6.1*, the broken lines indicate capacity for ebb and flow between *fields* of power and components of equity and quality (represented by the meta-themes to emerge from analysis). The discussion has shown the meta-themes as reflecting both tensions and dissonance, and pragmatic responses in the enactment of equity and quality education for students and teachers. In the school field, participant's pendulum experiences of tensions and dissonance generating pragmatic responses (and vice versa) occurred amidst changing priorities within the case school fields and struggles for different

types and forms of capital. In *Figure 6.2* this pendulum dynamic is shown through the use of a two-way arrow between the two themes of lived experience.



*Figure 6.2.* Conceptual framework of dynamic and interactive experiences of enacting equity and quality education within fields of power.

It is important to keep in mind that the conceptualisation offered in *Figure 6.2* is an oversimplification. The dynamic nature of the lived experience is challenging to reflect. The four main elements are shown given the significant influence of the changing field on each of these aspects. However, not easily depicted in the diagram is the distinction between the declared dissonance elements and the pragmatic responses that participants engaged in as a solution to the experiences of tension. Finally, it is not possible to reflect that which is undeclared. Rather than a limitation though, acknowledgement that there will be undeclared

(as well as what is declared) experiences and understandings highlights the complexity of the research area and findings.

## **Implications**

In light of the identified dynamic and interactive nature of enacting equity and quality education, implications for theory, policy and practice are outlined below. These are significant for the future of equity and quality education given participants' experiences of tensions and dissonance generating pragmatic responses is occurring in "a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve this field of forces" (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 312).

### *Implications for theory*

Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) remind us of the worth in "the power of theories and ideas to bring about change and transformation in social life" (p. 298). The use of Bourdieu's social critical theory and conceptual tools has been helpful in analysing the complexity of experiences participants had in their enactment of equity and quality education. The tensions and dissonance and pragmatic responses generated in the field indicate that participants seek progress irrespective of ongoing uncertainty around equity and quality education. With limited incentives for schools and educators to seek clarity beyond the needs present and applicable to their own school environments, teachers and schools seek solutions and move forward in their pursuit of meeting the needs of students, irrespective of whether the cultural fields offer clarity. In this way, schools can focus on immediate fields of power and define their own cultural field in response to community needs and demands. Whether or not such responses and practices are able to realise equity and quality education for all however, requires willingness to "question, interrogate, and challenge the foundations of institutionalised power and privilege" (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 300).

This notion of privilege is discussed by Taylor (2017) who used critical analysis to interrogate the concept of disability. Seeking to highlight implications of persistent privileging of (in her case) the able-bodied and able-minded and the advantages that those without disability experience by virtue of ability privilege, she points us to phenomena of ‘fitting’ and ‘mis-fitting’ between what is expected and what is not. Examples are offered to illustrate that ‘misfit’ occurs through “a lack of fit between some standard of a built environment and a person in the context of that built environment” (Taylor, 2017, p. 149). Examples from the case schools in this inquiry include set times for completing tests and means for doing so ie: writing an essay in 40mins or giving oral presentations of assignments. Taylor’s (2017) consideration of the role of complicity through ‘fit-ness’ is most significant. In particular that “those who frequently experience fit with their environment are likely to be less aware of how their environments fail to support others” (Taylor, 2017, p. 149). In Bourdieu’s terms, we return to the implications of field-habitus alignment, when being ‘fish-in-water’ privileges unthinkingness about practices that may not work for others. There are clear implications of such phenomena for all stakeholders in school fields and Taylor (2017) advocates for encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their complicity in the marginalisation of others within fields “by remaining critical of how they participate within a system that confers benefits” to those who experience ‘fit-ness’ (p. 150). From a Bourdieuan perspective, stakeholders are thus being encouraged to challenge doxa, taken-for-granted views and assumptions that define and authorise practices a school field, as a means to contribute to the construction of social spaces that enable equity and quality education for all.

#### *Implications for policy*

Schools continue to be engaged with multiple, related policies about equity and quality education that are blatantly confused and confusing. For example, in Australia, two national statistics collections about students with disabilities have been mandated. Firstly the NSSC

(National Schools Statistics Collection) for Government schools, or NGSC (Non-government schools census) for Independent/Catholic schools); and secondly the aforementioned NCCDSSD (Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for School Students with Disability). Of significance in light of this current research is how different definitions of ‘student with disability’ are used in each. On one hand, the NSSC/NGSC asks schools to record students who meet the requirements of the state or territory to receive financial assistance in the form of funding for students with disabilities. On the other hand, the NCCDSSD uses the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Disability Standards for Education (2005) to inform the identification of students for its data collection. Acknowledging this discrepancy, the NCCD Guidelines (DET, 2017a) point out that one implication of the different definitions is that ‘a student counted in the NCCD *may not* have been counted as a student with a disability in the NSSC/NGSC cohort’ (DET, 2017a, p. 10). Confusion at the point of recognition and identification of students leaves little hope for development of consistent, clear and sustainable inclusive practice that facilitates access, participation and benefit for students. Further, tying standards and ideas about teacher quality to a milieu that will be haphazard at best is equally unfair and is illustrative of Mockler’s (2014) identification of panic in policy that fuels ideas about a teacher quality ‘crisis’ perpetuated by neoliberal agendas of measurement and surveillance (p.129).

From a process perspective, principals are primarily responsible for the reporting in both cases however the NCCSSD requires reports on numbers and categories of students with disabilities in schools, as well as the types of adjustments provided for these students in order for them to access and participate in education on the same basis as other students. Of significance: “This collection is based on the professional judgement of teachers about their students. Teachers determine the level of Adjustments provided to students” (DET 2017a, p.

5). While not an immediate intent, these types of statistical collections can be used to inform policy. In light of the study's findings that teachers are *grappling with fairness* when it comes to understanding equity and quality, and turn to others in order to *establish and negotiate expectations* around what this should look like, leaving this responsibility with teachers who by and large feel neither prepared nor clear about what and how to adjust and modify programs is questionable. Gale (2014) identifies a paucity of qualitative accounts of equity, such as those captured in this research. Many more of these sorts of accounts and in fact, more explicit dives into qualitative experiences of teachers are needed and should be used in conjunction with statistical collections to inform types of inequity at vertical and horizontal dimensions as well as conceptualisations of teacher quality (Mockler, 2014), and to address a "worrisome lack of regard for the personal attributes of teachers as central to quality teaching" (Bahr & Mellor, 2016, p.v).

This contemporary example is just one that links explicitly to equity and quality education but it reflects a notorious feature of education policy which Boyle and Topping (2012) urge: "need[s] to be written in terms that can be implemented, not in sweeping generalisations that might mean anything" (p. 4). If policy is built on conceptual foundations that are unclear and contested, school based initiatives will be underpinned by the same lack of clarity and interpretations will remain varied. If policy interpretations remain varied, policy goals will remain unachievable and their associated principles difficult to translate into practice. Potential and ideological benefit of policy initiatives will remain just that – ideological. The immediacy of school fields (school structures, year levels, students) will more likely be the driver of how equity and quality education are understood and enacted, rather than policy principles. While the opportunity for schools to be responsive to the needs of their communities can be seen as a positive product of this, reliance on school leadership, teaching

staff and the school community to define and facilitate this becomes another responsibility requiring time, commitment, vision and knowledge about community needs and how best to serve them.

### *Implications for practice*

In practice the implications of confusion in dynamic and interactive educational, system and school fields, mean the enactment of inclusion and inclusive education will be in jeopardy. *A sense of futility* tells us that students are caught between messages they receive about diversity, their uniqueness in terms of learning preferences and their effort and commitment to learning, and a system that does not yet acknowledge these in ways that are recognisable in the field more broadly. Unless or until symbolic educational capital reflects the value and importance of achievement beyond that which is measured in grades i.e. that benefit from equity and quality education can be more broadly defined, efficacy of both students and teachers will be limited. Pleasingly, as more research (such as this current inquiry) considers student perspectives and qualitative accounts of their experiences of equity and quality education, a strong recommendation for future research made by Nilholm and Alm (2010), it is possible for such insights to shape what is and needs to be recognised as valuable symbolic capital.

This research has highlighted that schools need to be vigilant in their analysis and interpretation of policy, which is shaped by unspoken assumptions about grades and outcomes as a gold-plated capital asset. While both schools readily acknowledged and touted the significance of effort and commitment, student wellbeing and differentiated teaching practices to equity and quality education, they do not translate as capital considered as worthy of pursuit than that which can be measured. Goodwin's (2010) call for the need to align quality teaching with high expectations and nurturing of student growth is important here

given the power and influence these kinds of underlying beliefs and resulting practices can have in determining the kinds of capital worth struggling for.

The experience of *grappling with fairness* reinforces that teachers are negotiating uncertain terrain and that understandings, beliefs and attitudes are regularly challenged. When changes in directions or pace in the *field* occur more rapidly than the *habitus* of its members, Maton (2012) explains that the practices of agents can become out-dated. Perceptions of these sustained and out-dated practices engaged in by teachers (in this case), can in turn influence these agents being seen as “anachronistic, stubbornly resistant or ill-informed” (Maton, 2012, p. 58). This phenomenon ( known as the ‘hysteresis effect’ in Bourdieu’s theory) is reflected in frustrations expressed by leadership staff when teachers see differentiation and catering for individual learning needs as an addition to their workload rather than part of their ‘craft’. Despite broad acknowledgement of uncertainty around differentiated teaching practice and strong desires for professional learning opportunities and skill development in this area, tension and dissonance arises when conceptualisations of teachers work differ between leadership and teachers themselves. The ebb and flow of responsibility, response to needs and change over time must be seen as natural to the process of inclusion and moreover that they are a natural part of teachers work. Again, these qualitative accounts of equity are vital contributions to research and speak directly to the ongoing work required at school and teacher level beliefs and understandings about inclusion. In particular whether additional needs or inclusive pedagogical perspectives (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011) are driving practice. Nilholm and Alm’s (2010) observation that classrooms should be seen as ‘more or less’ inclusive rather than ‘all or none’ (p.246) offers an important starting point that would be particularly relevant here.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter offered a critical analysis and theorisation of the phenomena being studied by making use of Bourdieu's social critical theory and thinking tools; field, habitus and capital, along with existing literature. The discussion took into account the lived experience of participants as well as the social and political landscape in which the enactment of equity and quality education occurs. In sum, policy goals for equity and quality education are translating into expectations of symbolic capital for all. As forms of symbolic educational capital (objective, *habitus* and embodied) vied for recognition, the lived experience of this pursuit for students produced *a sense of futility* when lack of success was perceived. Further, power structures that influence the determination of capital were themselves operating in indeterminate fields that shared overlapping interests. This saw teacher participants *grappling with fairness* as the changing configuration of capital shaped expectations of stakeholders, relationships and practices in the field. Thus, *establishing and negotiating expectations* became an increased focus in the day-to-day lives of participants and schools themselves demonstrated commitment to this pragmatic response to dissonance by investing resources and implementing formal practices such as shared goal setting initiatives and online platforms for stakeholder communication. *Qualification and gatekeeping* practices were identified as a response to managing expectations and distributing resources for realising equity and quality education, in accordance with field doxa.

The next chapter offers a conclusion to the research. Limitations of the study will be identified with contributions and significance of the findings also outlined, despite limitations. Directions for future research are also proposed.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

*Importantly, lack of fit is not merely material; it is also political. A person's "fit" with his or her environment accords with anonymity, ease, and the benefit of accessing spaces of education, transportation and democratic exercise. (Taylor, 2017, p. 149)*

### Introduction

This thesis set out to examine the lived experiences that teachers and students in independent schools were having with current principles of equity and quality education. Specifically, how they understood and were enacting these policy and practice principles. Interactions between understandings and enactments resulted in dominant experiences of tensions and dissonance for participants, actively mitigated by pragmatic responses in a bid to harmonise struggles of trying to realise equity and quality for all. A range of factors were shown to influence the way these education principles were understood and experienced in the school fields.

In this chapter, an overview of the research and key findings is offered along with limitations and key contributions of the study to policy, practice and theory. The thesis concludes with considerations for future research.

### Overview of the research

Equity and quality are dominant agendas in education at policy and school levels from a local to a global level (AITSL, 2011; DET, 2017a; MCEETYA, 2008; OECD, 2012; UNESCO, 2000; UNESCO 2015), despite widespread acknowledgement that the terms and their associated concepts are accepted as contested and confused (Reid, 2011; Loreman, Forlin,

Chambers, Sharma & Deppeler, 2014). Elucidating the lived experiences that teachers and students in independent schools were having of policy commitments and practices was of primary interest in this research. Year 8 teacher and student participants from two case schools were interviewed, and a sector perspective through Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) captured through a semi-structured interview with a key representative. The independent school sector, frequently lauded as ‘gold standard’ education and maligned for its contribution to social inequity, has largely been ignored in terms of their experiences of these policy commitments. Arguing that students in any sector can be vulnerable to marginalisation, this thesis made use of Bourdieu’s social critical theory to elucidate the lived experience of participants in the case schools by considering objective and subjective influences that are both ‘structured and structuring’ (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18). In addition to iterative thematic analysis, application of Bourdieu’s mechanisms; field, capital and habitus, was helpful for illuminating the lived experiences of enacting equity and quality education named in this research:

- *Grappling with fairness,*
- *A sense of futility,*
- *Establishing and negotiating expectations and;*
- *Qualification and gatekeeping.*

These experiences were shown to be neither discrete nor fixed. Rather, they were interactive and continuously shaped and negotiated through the dynamic lived experiences of those in the school context. Students and teachers had a pendulum experience within these negotiations as they attempted to reconcile tensions and dissonance by generating pragmatic responses.

## Summary of key findings

### *Key finding of tensions and dissonance*

Fields of power are changing and dynamic in education and schooling, given broad influences and changing social and political landscapes at macro and micro levels. Different levels of influence in educational fields can include policy directives, education systems (government, non-government/independent), school level structures as well as trends and evidence based practice. Filters at school level then variously focus and emphasise macro and micro influences depending on how schools identified themselves. These social spaces in which participants had their lived experience are significant to what social critical theory sees as structured and structuring agents actions and positions (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18).

Shifting boundaries and goal posts of capital within and outside the immediate school field contributed to the dynamic experience of interactions between the components of equity and quality education named by participants. The research findings of tensions and dissonance – *grappling with fairness* for teachers and *a sense of futility* for students are experienced through pendulum swings as participants negotiate competing and at times conflicting principles and policy goals of equity and quality education with their own values, beliefs and assumptions about these ideals. It is clear that the dominant focus is on measuring performance and this is the primary influence on interpretations of what is deemed not just valuable, but vital. Ainscow (2005) points out serious implications of this ongoing and narrow focus as filtered from educational and system level fields:

On the one hand, data are required in order to monitor the progress of children, evaluate the impact of interventions, review the effectiveness of policies and processes, plan new initiatives, and so on. In these senses, data can, justifiably, be seen as the life-blood of continuous improvement. On the

other hand, if effectiveness is evaluated on the basis of narrow, even inappropriate, performance indicators, then the impact can be deeply damaging. Whilst appearing to promote the causes of accountability and transparency, the use of data can, in practice: conceal more than it reveals; invite misinterpretation; and, worst of all, have a perverse effect on the behaviour of professionals. (p. 120)

It is these latter three points that are most concerning in light of the findings of this inquiry. Over-reliance on data may conceal information depending on how it is used. In turn, fostering misconceptions and informing educators' engagement and reinforcement of practices that may be inadvertently damaging to students and their families and the pursuit of equity and quality education for all.

*Key finding of pragmatic responses to tensions and dissonance*

A number of pragmatic responses were clearly evident in teachers and students lived experience of enacting equity and quality education. As acknowledged by Kloot (2016) 'the struggle over capital drives social practice' (p. 138). Given that policy goals have to be managed within the field on a practical level, schools and participants seek progress regardless of whether the cultural fields offer clarity or not. Whilst by no means an exhaustive representation, *qualification and gatekeeping* and *establishing and negotiating expectations* are two processes of pragmatic responses to the tensions and dissonance generated through negotiating principles of equity and quality. Interestingly, these pragmatic responses themselves were experienced as both barriers and facilitators to enacting equity and quality in the school field, variably according to perspectives taken and case-by-case needs.

Bourdieu's concept of habitus also sheds light here. According to Maton (2012) field can be seen as material conditions of existence, habitus can be referred to as durable dispositions or

‘ways of being’ in the field shaped by beliefs and attitudes. Considered relational structures, field and habitus are independent of each other. For example, the case school fields offer curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students via human and material resources that include the likes of teachers, coaches, subjects, teaching and learning experiences, buses, ovals, instruments, tools, technology etc. Separate to this are the ‘ways of being’ that individuals embody in the field. Importantly, habitus applies at individual/personal as well as community/collective levels (Webb et al, 2002, p. 115) given they evolve from beliefs and attitudes developed over time and in different contexts. Personal habitus develops from birth, whereas community or institutional habitus develops as individuals engage with social fields such as schools, at a later time.

The relationship between field and habitus is also helpful in understanding the barriers and facilitators named by teachers and students. Maton (2012) explains that just as field and habitus have relative autonomy, they are also mutually constitutive and he makes clear that practices should be considered ‘phenomenon emergent from relations between actors’ habituses and their contextual social fields’ (p. 60). Understanding practice in this way is an important pursuit for understanding pendulum swings when agents are negotiating the competing and at times conflicting principles of equity and quality education as well as changing priorities in the field. This is especially so as it is through habitus that social reproduction or transformation takes place (Maton, 2012). The two declared pragmatic responses to tensions and dissonance generated within the field are seen in everyday practices that help to manage access to opportunities and distribution of capital as well as negotiating expectations of the range of stakeholders in uncertain fields. Through these practices the habitus of agents is continually shaped and developed both in terms of individual/personal habitus and collective/community habitus. Further, it is the relational spaces and in “the field

of struggles tending to transform or conserve” (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 312) that opportunities to disrupt momentum are found.

#### *Linking key findings to vertical and horizontal dimensions literature*

The findings from this research offer qualitative perspectives from within schools and systems. This perspective is infrequently found in vertical dimension research where comparisons between countries, states, systems and groups are much more common. By considering within-school and system perspectives the research has shown that each vertical dimension (ideological, policy and structure, teaching and learning process and results) contributes to the lived experiences of students and teachers in the case schools. Through a within-system perspective, ISV has been shown to be in a unique position for contributing to equity and quality education with its network meetings a direct reflection of what happens when qualitative experience drives practice.

Horizontal dimension experiences occurred within each vertical dimension and moreover these barriers and facilitators were shown to be parts of the same pursuit when participants described their experiences of the components of each theme. Teachers and students were negotiating shifting focuses and priorities on the vertical dimensions, which produced a swinging pendulum experience as tensions and dissonance generated pragmatic responses. This is significant in light of student data particularly, as this was collected from the broad student populations which means the findings give some insight into the impact pedagogical practices have on a student population in the sense of ‘all’ as opposed to ‘most and some’ when groups of students are targeted because of their association with a particular category. Deppeler et al (2015) and Liasidou (2012) emphasise that for pedagogies to be effective in an inclusive sense, they need to centralise the notion of all. While a range of approaches purport to do so (Brooks, 2016; Capp, 2016; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Goodwin, 2010) as

acknowledged in the literature review, the concept of quality and ways these practices help to realise outcomes for all remains largely unexplored or explained. The findings of this research suggests that a range of students experience *a sense of futility* in their pursuit of success and their teacher counterparts across all manner of roles, are *grappling with fairness* in their attempts to deliver equity and quality education in their teaching practice.

### **Limitations of the research**

Rather than a focus on proving something, the goal of this research was to learn something through the value of “context-dependent knowledge” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 224) and lived experiences. Nevertheless, research can never be entirely neutral or objective, and while steps were taken to engage personal, positional and theoretical reflexivity (See Table 4.7) there are limitations to this study and notable considerations are now offered.

Ainscow, Muijs and West (2010) describe how previous work led them to be mindful of limitations in the determination of schools appropriate for their research. In their case, schools considered disadvantaged or “facing challenging circumstances” were of interest but they were “anxious about the limitations of such a formulation, not least in the way it might imply a deficit view of certain schools, and the students and communities they serve” (p. 194). For this inquiry, it is considered just as problematic to hold views of privilege about communities, as it is to hold deficit ones. While steps were taken in determination and selection of case schools to mitigate potential bias in this area (see Chapter 4 for details), views held by the researcher and participants shape expectations from the outset and therefore have the potential to limit research design, conduct and findings.

Insights from the application of Bourdieu’s social critical theory enabled consideration of taken-for-granted assumptions informing understandings and enactments of equity and

quality education. The conceptual diagram of the research findings (*Figure 6.2*) was also enhanced by being able to account for not just Bourdieu's mechanisms but in depicting how the concepts inform objective social structures and practices, and how they relate to each other. It is nonetheless important to note the limitations in depicting such complexity in a 2-dimensional diagram, not to mention the limitations inherent in working only with data that has been declared by participants and interpreted by the researcher.

This research was limited to one state in Australia, one school sector and two case schools within that sector. Further, recruitment processes relied on schools, staff and students volunteering their time. While every effort was made to ensure participation was given of their own undertaking, power relationships in schools and dynamics within leadership, teaching staff, students and peers as well as parents means assurance of entirely voluntary participation cannot be guaranteed. There are inevitably ranges of influence that shape the conduct of research with and in schools. Recruitment of students for this research was underpinned by commitment to avoiding assumptions about who might constitute 'other' and allowing the case schools to offer insights about their community experience. The combination of purposive random sampling for recruiting focus group participants, followed by maximum variation sampling to capture a range of perspectives in one-to-one interviews was used to capture diversity in the student cohort. However, the initial reliance on students volunteering to participate could have worked as a barrier for some students, particularly those who may have felt marginalised, excluded and/or vulnerable in the field. Finally, given approximately 25% of the Year 8 student cohorts participated in the research, it is not possible to claim that these findings reflect the entirety of the case school communities but instead, they are representative of the views and experiences of those who participated.

## **Contributions and recommendations of the research**

This study has begun to address a dearth of research focusing on the independent school sector relating to issues of equity and quality education. The lived experience of pursuing the twin goals is of tensions and dissonance and pragmatic responses largely driven by immediacy of need rather than solid sense of best practice and skills. The research has enabled suggestions contributions to policy, practice, teacher education and theory, examples of which are now offered.

### *Policy contribution and recommendation*

Concerns with contested and confused policy agendas and ideological commitments to equity and quality education mean that understanding the relationship between objective social structures and everyday practice needs to be a primary interest in education and for schools. Objective social structures embodied within school organisations are influenced by broader system, educational and political fields. School interpretations of equity and quality education policy translate into everyday practices such as teaching and learning models and methods, pedagogical approaches and choices, and provision and access to opportunities. But as this research has found, when it comes to enacting equity and quality education in independent schools the process and interpretations are dynamic, changing and marked by combinations of tensions and dissonance and pragmatic responses in the school field. Cochrane-Smith (2005) reminds us that:

...we need to embrace the political aspects of education policy as the inevitable stuff of social institutions in human societies. This will mean we need to understand policy not as purely rationale choice based on expediency but as the struggle over ideas, ideals, competing goals, values, and notions about what constitutes public and private interest (p. 15).

In such framing there is clear space for consideration of educational futures that account for

and centralise pluralities, difference and diversity. The idea of beginning anew, as opposed to adding or modifying what already exists, is important here given that these latter trends are more susceptible to the maintenance of dominant power structures that may not serve the interest of those vulnerable to marginalisation.

Schools need to be responsive to changing needs and influences within and outside of their communities, and policy that emphasises strategies for process rather than product are essential for this endeavour. Education policy must be more explicit and more instructive for schools to critically interrogate equity and quality education for all in their communities. The findings of this research have shown that schools currently interpret policy in various and at times conflicting ways, which inform experiences of tensions and dissonance. A clear example of this in research is the *grappling with fairness* teachers experienced in reconciling fairness as equity with fairness as equality frames. As Cochran-Smith (2005) pointed out though, this type of struggle is not to be demonised. In fact while referencing inclusion, Dyson (1999) explains that we need:

to seek out rigorous and reputable ways of enabling the different discourses to inform each other. One way to do this is to recognise the extent to which the different discourses construct different notions of inclusion, and to pursue different implications arising from those notions. It then becomes possible to interrogate one notion of inclusion in terms of another in order to find the limitations of each and open up possibilities for new ways of thinking (p. 44).

Policy must boost expectations and provisions for educators to engage in critically oriented perspectives and practices so that ongoing negotiation and renegotiation of understandings and enactments of equity and quality education is itself recognised as understanding and enacting equity and quality education.

### *Practical contribution and recommendations*

This research has shown that process rather than product orientations of equity and quality education are being attempted. This was evident in participants creating opportunities to work together, *establishing and negotiating expectations* and engaging in collaborative partnerships with system, school and individual stakeholders. Policy and practice that advances capacity for schools to facilitate opportunities for collaborative partnerships, sharing understandings and utilising expertise have been readily recognised as highly beneficial for developing and sustaining inclusive school cultures (Ainscow, 2005; Boyle et al's, 2012; Deppeler, 2012; Grima-Farell, Bain & McDonagh, 2011; Ingvarson, 2015, 2017; Ingvarson et al, 2005). The findings reported in this thesis offer support for extending these well-established insights about communities of practice. In particular, a case can be made for the need for pre and post-service teachers to engage with active critical perspectives and practice in and about their work. This idea is corroborated by Carrington and Selva (2010) and Agbenyega and Klibthong (2012) in their respective research, each of whom make the case for potential of such practices to help agents critique their own assumptions, identify practices in education that reinforce status quo, reveal hidden power dynamics and perhaps most exciting for equity and quality education, "challenge them so that the best interests of students can be promoted" (Carrington & Selva, 2010, p. 54).

Engagement with critical perspectives is significant in order to mitigate the risks that collaborations and networking in insular groups, members belonging to one community ie: learning support staff in a school, year 8 history teachers for example, are generative and reinforcing of perspectives inherent in commonality. In this sense, the study findings that endorse student engagement with active critical perspectives and interrogation of equity and quality education also become a clear recommendation for practice. Black and Harrison (2001) in exploring the impact of formative assessment with regard to developing student

agency in the process found feedback from students to teachers “opened up deeper changes in the roles of, and relationships between, learners and their teachers. In particular, the teacher [shifts] from delivery of learning to guiding and coaching students’ own learning activity” (p. 48). The potential for genuine reciprocity through engagement with critical perspectives is empowering not only for students and teachers but all those committed to pursuing equity and quality education that is context and individually responsive.

#### *Theoretical contribution and recommendations*

Where critical theory is primarily concerned with power and positioning such as where power lies, what it produces and reproduces, social critical theory perspectives seek identification of the transformative potential within social structures and how it may be that structures and the agents in these spaces enhance or inhibit this prospect. This research has made a small contribution to research through the application of Bourdieu’s social critical theory to this inquiry, in two independent schools in Victoria, Australia. Having made use of the thinking tools; field, habitus and capital to analyse and discuss the research findings, a visual conceptualisation has been developed depicting an interpretation of these constructs in relation to the research context and to each other (See *Figure 6.2*). Bourdieu used the term *reproduction* to describe “the tendencies of fields such as education to reproduce existing social inequalities rather than challenging or transforming the status quo” (Webb et al, 2002, p. xv).

Motivated by the desire for comfort produced when individuals experience alignment between the field and their habitus (Maton, 2012), even though they are by and large, unaware of what is considered a taken-for-granted experience. Taylor (2017) notes an important implication of this in that “...those who frequently experience fit with their environment are likely to be less aware of how their environments fail to support others. They

may therefore experience a knowledge deficit relative to that particular experience” (p. 149). Through the aforementioned critical perspectives, along with conceptualisations of school fields like that depicted in *Figure 6.2*, there is potential to help researchers and those in school communities to think through what it is that is being reproduced and how this occurs. Perhaps more importantly, although not separate from, is support for identifying and thinking through the status quo in terms of what kinds of transformations are needed and how this might be done.

### **Directions for further research**

There are a number of areas where further research is needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the realities of enacting equity and quality education for all. Clearly more research in the independent school sector is warranted given minimal voices from the field. This particular inquiry did not capture the perspectives of school principal or parents, which would certainly offer further school level insight. Further interrogation of ISVs role and positioning in the promotion of equity and quality education should also be pursued. This system perspective was a late addition to the data sample, (as explained on pages ii, 101 & 112) resulting from early data analysis naming this system perspective as significant. However, targeted focus on learning communities and partnerships in relation to what is already happening within school fields has the potential to extend insight into how diverse equity and quality policy interpretations are in practice.

Capturing perspectives both within and between schools and sectors using a social critical perspective will also inform how and why these collaborations occur and whether they serve to reinforce or transform status quo, as broader field influences and directives are introduced. Finally, making use of theory as methodology frameworks in the design and critical analysis of future research can elucidate hidden power structures and taken-for-granted assumptions

that, as shown in this research, contribute to experiences of tensions and dissonance in the field. While not inherently problematic, it becomes so when power structures reinforce the positions of those who ‘fit’ and those who ‘misfit’ the status quo (Taylor, 2017).

### **Concluding Statement**

When I began this doctoral research, at the forefront of my mind were the many students, teachers and educators I have been fortunate to learn from, work with, teach and support. I have always found the reciprocity of these relationships to be powerful and empowering, and this research has helped me to more deeply understand why this has been the case. Bourdieu’s social critical theory illuminated how changing and complex combinations of forces on educational fields, influence and are influenced by those within them. The elements are never separate and critical theory offers useful tools for recognising this and considering intersections in dynamic spaces. Given the impact of power and privilege in determining educational ‘status quo’ that advantages some at the expense of others, this perspective has been under-utilised in policy spaces, and in the research that informs the development of those spaces. There are many ways that education and schooling systems struggle to promote and enact equity and quality education for all but nevertheless, there are reasons to hope for transformation if we are empowered to do so.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A



**MONASH University**

**Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)**  
Research Office

### Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

**Project Number:** CF14/4001 - 2014002069  
**Project Title:** Equity and quality education: Experiences of teachers and students  
**Chief Investigator:** Assoc Prof Joanne Deppeler  
**Approved:** **From:** 12 February 2015 **To:** 12 February 2020

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**Terms of approval - Failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.**

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Require the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.



Professor Nip Thomson  
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Ms Rucelle Hughes, Dr Joseph Agbenyega

Monash University, Room 111, Chancellery Building 3e  
24 Sports Walk, Clayton Campus, Wellington Rd  
Clayton VIC 3800, Australia  
Telephone: [REDACTED] Facsimile: +61 3 9905 3831  
Email: [REDACTED] <http://intranet.monash.edu.au/researchadmin/human/index.php>  
ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C



MONASH University

### EXPLANATORY STATEMENT- Principals

**Project:** Equity and Quality Education: Experiences of Teachers and Students

Chief Investigator's name:

Professor Joanne Deppeler

Faculty of Education

Phone:

email:

Student's name:

Rucelle Hughes

Phone :

email:

My name is Rucelle Hughes and I am conducting a doctoral research study under the supervision of Professor Joanne Deppeler and Dr Joseph Agbenyega at Monash University. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a principal of a co-educational independent school in Victoria. I accessed your school details from both your school and the My School website.

#### **What is the study about?**

Inclusive education is the expected standard for Australian schools and teachers to ensure that diversity of students does not present barriers to equity and quality education for all. Australian education policy promotes equity (fairness and inclusion) and quality education for all in inclusive schools, where commitments that promote personalised learning and high quality teaching and learning outcomes ensure all students can realise their potential. The middle years is frequently identified as significant to these commitments given the increased diversity of student populations and complexity of schooling structures and practices at this time.

While there has been extensive research investigating the beliefs and attitudes of teachers, there has been little research exploring how teachers and students understand and experience inclusive education. Furthermore the independent school sector has been largely overlooked.

This critical evaluative multi-site case study in two independent schools in Melbourne will investigate how teachers come to understand and practice inclusive education in the middle years and how year 8 students experience this schooling.

#### **Possible benefits**

This study is significant for establishing a fuller picture of equity and quality education in Melbourne. Furthermore the findings of this study will help schools:

- to identify factors that contribute to effectively meeting diverse student needs in ways that promote school and student success.
- to identify and implement professional learning and development opportunities in support of equity and quality education for all
- to help teachers identify ways they can support their students more effectively to ensure equity and quality education for all.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this research.

#### **What is asked of my school?**

The study involves a combination of focus groups discussions and interviews with students and interviews with teachers. The focus group discussions are expected to take between 30 – 40 mins and it is hoped that 3 focus groups with 4-6 students in each, would be conducted with students across the year 8 cohort. Students will be able to speak, write and/or draw their ideas linked to the following themes – diversity, fairness, involvement and success.

One-on-one interviews are also sought from 4-6 students who participated in a focus group discussion. These interviews are expected to take 15 – 20 mins each and would involve students

elaborating on ideas shared during the focus group discussion. Both the focus group discussions and student interviews would be audio recorded to allow for accurate transcription and would be conducted on school premises at a time and place convenient to all parties.

Interviews are also sought from 3-6 teachers or educators who work directly with the year 8 cohort. These interviews would take between 50 – 60 mins and would follow a semi-structured interview method

Teachers will be asked about their understandings and experiences of student diversity (support and challenges), inclusive education practices, success and achievement as well as discussion about possible barriers or facilitators to these endeavours. Teacher interviews will also be audio recorded to enable accurate transcription of participant responses and an opportunity to review a copy of the transcript will be made available. The interviews will be conducted on school premises, at a convenient time and place.

### **Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research**

Included with this explanatory statement is a permission letter that once signed, gives consent for the research to be conducted in your school. A brief presentation to staff and students at a convenient time, to invite participation in the research is offered. In addition, Explanatory Statements and Consent Forms for the research can be forwarded to you for dissemination to staff members, students and their parents.

Participation in the research is voluntary and no person will be disadvantaged by not participating. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time, and may withdraw previously submitted interview data up to the point when the researcher begins to write articles and reports about the research.

### **Payment**

There will be no payment or reward for participating in this research.

### **Confidentiality**

No specific place, school or person will be named in any publication or output of the research.

### **Storage of data**

Data (including interview recordings and transcripts) will be stored on password-protected computers at Monash University. The chief investigator and student investigator will have access to the data. Data will be stored in accordance with Monash University regulations.

### **Results**

A summary with the results of the research can be requested by emailing [REDACTED] in January 2017.

### **Complaints**

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the

Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics  
(MUHREC):

Executive Officer

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)

Room 111, Building 3e

Research Office

Monash University VIC 3800

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Professor Joanne Deppeler



## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT FOR TEACHERS

**Project:** Equity and Quality Education: Experiences of Teachers and Students

Professor Joanne Deppeler  
Department of Education

Rucelle Hughes  
PhD Student

Hi my name is Rucelle Hughes and I am conducting a doctoral research study with Professor Joanne Deppeler and Dr Joseph Agbenyega at Monash University. You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not you agree to their participation in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

### What is the study about?

Inclusive education is the expected standard for Australian schools and teachers to ensure that diversity of students does not present barriers to equity and quality education for all. Australian education policy promotes equity (fairness and inclusion) and quality education for all in inclusive schools, where commitments that promote personalised learning and high quality teaching and learning outcomes ensure all students can realise their potential. The middle years is frequently identified as significant to these commitments given the increased diversity of student populations and complexity of schooling structures and practices at this time.

While there has been extensive research investigating the beliefs and attitudes of teachers, there has been little research exploring how teachers and students understand and experience inclusive education. Furthermore the independent school sector has been largely overlooked.

As a former teacher and coordinator in independent schools in Melbourne over the last 12 years, I understand and have experienced some of the complexities faced by teachers in these contexts and as a PhD student I am interested in how teachers and students understand and experience pursuits of equity and quality in independent schools.

This critical evaluative multi-site case study in two independent schools in Melbourne will investigate how teachers come to understand and practice inclusive education in the middle years and how year 8 students experience this schooling.

### Possible benefits

This study is significant for establishing a fuller picture of equity and quality education in Melbourne. Furthermore the findings of this study will help schools:

- to identify factors that contribute to effectively meeting diverse student needs in ways that promote school and student success.
- to identify and implement professional learning and development opportunities in support of equity and quality education for all
- to help teachers identify ways they can support their students more effectively to ensure equity and quality education for all.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this research.

### What is asked of me?

Teacher participants will be asked to participate in one semi-structured interview and student participants will be invited to participate in a focus group discussion as well as a follow up interview. Teachers will be asked about their understandings and experiences of student diversity (support and challenges), inclusive education practices, success and achievement.

The interviews will take 50- 60 minutes and will be audio-recorded. Interviews will be conducted on school property at a time and place convenient to the participant and school management.

Participants will receive a copy of the transcript to review.

**Why were you chosen for this research?**

You are invited to participate in this study because you teach or work with Year 8 students. The middle years is known to be a turning point for some students in terms of their involvement and outcomes at school and as such, your experience as teachers of this year level is of significance to this research.

If you have been sent this explanatory statement then your Principal is in full support of this research and your participation in it, should you agree to be involved.

**Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research**

If you are willing to be part of the investigation then please sign the attached consent form and email it to [REDACTED]. Alternatively, I can come and collect a hard copy of the consent form at a convenient time.

Participation in this research is voluntary and no person will be disadvantaged by not participating. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time, and may withdraw previously submitted interview data up to the point when the researcher begins to write articles and reports about the study.

**Payment**

There will be no payment or reward for participating in this research.

**Inconvenience/Discomfort**

If for any reason your participation in the research causes you distress, we have provided you with the contact details of local counselling services and details regarding how you can access these services should you require them.

**Confidentiality**

No specific place, school or person will be named in any publications or output of the research.

**Storage of data**

Data (including interview recordings and transcripts) will be stored on password-protected computers at Monash University. The chief investigator and student investigator will have access to the data.

Data collected will be stored in accordance with [Monash University regulations](#).

**Results**

A summary of the results of the research can be requested by emailing [REDACTED] in January 2017.

**Complaints**

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the

Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)

Room 111, Building 3e

Research Office

Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Professor Joanne Deppeler



**MONASH University**

## **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS**

**Project:** Equity and Quality Education: Experiences of Teachers and Students

Professor Joanne Deppeler

Department of Education

Phone: [REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

Rucelle Hughes

PhD Student

Phone : [REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

Hi my name is Rucelle Hughes and I am a PhD student at Monash University. I am also a teacher and have worked in primary and secondary schools as well as universities. I am doing a research project about student diversity as well as success at school. I want to find out what it is like to be a student at your school and how your school tries to include everyone so that they can be their best

### **If I agree to be part of the investigation what would I have to do?**

If you and your parents agree to your participation, there are two ways you can be involved in the research. Firstly, at a time your school and teachers say is a good time, I will come to school and run a group discussion with you and a small group of students from your year level who also want to participate. This focus group will take about 30 – 40 minutes altogether. In the group discussion, you will be invited to share your ideas and experiences about:

- Diversity
- Fairness
- Barriers and bridges to success

We will do an activity where you will be able to choose whether you speak, write or draw about these ideas. The discussions we have while we do the activity will be audio recorded.

The second way to be involved is to have a one-on-one talk with me. You can do this if you participated in the group discussion. This talk will be focused on the same ideas but I might ask you to elaborate and give more information about some of the ideas you shared during the group discussion. This interview will take about 15-20 minutes and will also be audio recorded.

### **Why were you chosen for this research?**

I have chosen you because you are in year 8 and you go to an Independent school. You have this information because your School Principal and teachers have agreed that this investigation would be helpful and they are happy to support you being a part of the investigation if you want to be.

### **How do I join in and can I change my mind?**

If you are willing to be part of the investigation then please ask your parents to read the Explanatory statement attached and if they agree to you participating, ask them to sign the consent form. Once you have done this, return the form to your home room teacher/ school reception or email it to me at [REDACTED] by \_\_\_\_\_ 2015.

It is your choice if you would like to participate. You will not be in trouble if you don't want to. You can stop being in the investigation at any time I can take your ideas out up to the time when I start to write reports about the investigation.

**Possible benefits**

- Your ideas will help schools to find ways they can be fair and ensure everyone is successful
- Your ideas will help schools and teachers to improve what they do so that everyone can be successful and happy at school

There are no dangers linked with being in this investigation.

**Inconvenience/Discomfort**

In the unlikely event that you find the focus group activity or interview questions upsetting, or if for any reason your participation in the research causes you distress you will be able to discontinue and will be offered the opportunity to talk to the school counsellor.

**Confidentiality**

The results of this investigation are anonymous. This means that it will not be possible for anyone to identify who you are because I will use made up names for schools and people when I write reports and articles about this investigation.

**Storage of data**

I will store the audio recordings of our discussions on a computer that only I know the password to. I will store the ideas that are written down in a locked cabinet at Monash University and the only people who will be able to see this information are the researchers who are involved in this investigation. I will follow Monash University's rules about keeping this information safe.

**Results**

I can send a summary of the investigation to your school if they email [REDACTED] in January 2017

**Complaints**

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the

Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer  
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)  
Room 111, Building 3e  
Research Office  
Monash University VIC 3800

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Professor Joanne Deppeler



## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT FOR PARENTS

**Project:** Equity and Quality Education: Experiences of Teachers and Students

Professor Joanne Deppeler  
Department of Education

Phone: [REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

Rucelle Hughes  
PhD Student

Phone : [REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

Your son or daughter has been invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not you agree to their participation in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

Hi my name is Rucelle Hughes and I am a PhD student at Monash University. I am also a teacher and have worked in independent schools at primary and secondary levels, as well as universities for the last 12 years. I am conducting research about student diversity and success at school in order to better understand how schools and teachers can make sure all students are able to realise their potential.

### What does the research involve?

The research involves one focus group discussion and a one-on-one interview. The focus group discussion will involve 4 – 6 students from Year 8 and students will be invited to share their ideas and experiences of school under the following themes:

- Diversity
- Fairness
- Barriers and bridges to success

The focus group discussion will take 30 – 40 minutes and will be conducted on school premises at a time convenient to the school and students.

Students are also invited to participate in a one-on-one interview to further elaborate on the ideas they shared during the focus group discussion. This interview will take between 15 – 20 minutes and be conducted on school premises at a time convenient to all parties. A before or after school option will be available for this aspect of the research.

### Why was my child chosen for this research?

Your child was chosen for this research because they are in year 8 at a co-educational independent school. If you have received this information then the school Principal is in full support of this research and your child's participation in it.

### Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

If you are willing for your child to participate in this research then please complete the attached consent form. Participation is voluntary and no person will be disadvantaged by not participating. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time, and withdrawal of interview data is possible up until the time the researcher begins to write articles and reports on the research findings.

### Possible benefits

- The findings of this study could help to identify factors that contribute to schools and teachers being able to effectively meet diverse student needs.
- Schools may develop greater insight into how they can support their teachers and how teachers can support their all students more effectively.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this research.

**Inconvenience/Discomfort**

In the unlikely event that your child finds the focus group activity or interview questions upsetting, or if for any reason their participation in the research causes your child distress they will be able to discontinue and will be offered the opportunity to talk to the school counsellor.

**Payment**

There will be no payment or reward for participating in this research.

**Confidentiality**

No specific place, school or person will be named in any publication or output of the research.

**Storage of data**

Data will be stored on password-protected computers at Monash University. The chief investigator and student investigator will have access to the data. Data collected must be stored in accordance with [Monash University regulations](#).

**Results**

A summary of the results of the research can be requested by emailing [REDACTED] in January 2017.

**Complaints**

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the

Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics  
(MUHREC):

Executive Officer  
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)  
Room 111, Building 3e  
Research Office  
Monash University VIC 3800

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Professor Joanne Deppeler



## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT - Independent Schools Victoria (ISV)

Project: CF14/4001 - 2014002069: Equity and Quality Education: Experiences of Teachers and Students

Chief Investigator's name:  
Professor Joanne Deppeler  
Faculty of Education  
Phone: [REDACTED]  
email: [REDACTED]

Student's name:  
Rucelle Hughes  
Phone : [REDACTED]  
email: [REDACTED]

My name is Rucelle Hughes and I am conducting a doctoral research study under the supervision of Professor Joanne Deppeler and Dr Joseph Agbenyega at Monash University. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed above.

### What is the study about?

Inclusive education is the expected standard for Australian schools and teachers to ensure that diversity of students does not present barriers to equity and quality education for all. Australian education policy promotes equity (fairness and inclusion) and quality education for all in inclusive schools, where commitments that promote personalised learning and high quality teaching and learning outcomes ensure all students can realise their potential. The middle years is frequently identified as significant to these commitments given the increased diversity of student populations and complexity of schooling structures and practices at this time.

While there has been extensive research investigating the beliefs and attitudes of teachers, there has been little research exploring how teachers and students understand and experience inclusive education. Furthermore the independent school sector has been largely overlooked.

This critical evaluative multi-site case study in two independent schools in Melbourne investigates how teachers come to understand and practice inclusive education in the middle years and how year 8 students experience this schooling.

You are being invited to participate in this study because preliminary findings indicate that the case study schools recognise ISV as a component of their school commitments to equity and quality education.

### Possible benefits

This study is significant for establishing a fuller picture of equity and quality education in Melbourne. Furthermore the findings of this study will help schools to:

- Identify factors that contribute to effectively meeting diverse student needs in ways that promote school and student success.
- Identify and implement professional learning and development opportunities in support of equity and quality education for all
- Help teachers identify ways they can support their students more effectively to ensure equity and quality education for all.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this research.

**What is asked of ISV?**

An informal interview is sought to enquire about ISV run Network Meetings identified by case study schools as part of their commitment to equity and quality education. Specifically, what the aims and objectives of these meetings are, how they are established and run, current and future focuses for the meetings and any general understandings of how these meetings are impacting on schools, staff and students.

The interview would be conducted at a time and place convenient to the relevant ISV staff member and is anticipated to go for approximately 30mins.

**Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research**

Included with this explanatory statement is a permission letter that once signed, gives consent for the research to be conducted with ISV. If you are willing to be part of the investigation then please sign the attached consent form and return it to the researcher.

Participation in the research is voluntary and no person will be disadvantaged by not participating. Participants may withdraw from the research at any time, and may withdraw previously submitted interview data up to the point when the researcher begins to write articles and reports about the research.

**Payment**

There will be no payment or reward for participating in this research.

**Confidentiality**

No specific place, school or person will be named in any publication or output of the research.

**Storage of data**

Data (including interview recordings and transcripts) will be stored on password-protected computers at Monash University. The chief investigator and student investigator will have access to the data. Data will be stored in accordance with Monash University regulations.

**Results**

A summary with the results of the research can be requested by emailing [REDACTED] in November 2017.

**Complaints**

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC)

Executive Officer

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)

Room 111, Building 3e

Research Office

Monash University VIC 3800

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Professor Joanne Deppeler



MONASH University

**PERMISSION LETTER – Case Schools**

Project: Equity and Quality Education: Experiences of Teachers and Students

**DATE**

Professor Joanne Deppeler and Rucelle Hughes  
Faculty of Education  
Monash University  
Clayton Campus  
Wellington Road, Clayton  
Victoria 3800



Dear Joanne Deppeler and Rucelle Hughes,

Thank you for your request to recruit participants from [School Name] for the above-named research.

I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement regarding the research project (CF14/4001 - 2014002069: Equity and Quality Education: Experiences of Teachers and Students) and hereby give permission for this research to be conducted.

I understand that Rucelle Hughes will conduct a brief presentation to Year 8 staff and students, along with an information session offered to parents, inviting participation in this research.

I am aware that teaching staff, parents and students are under no obligation to consent to participate.

Yours sincerely.

(Signature of person granting permission)

[Name of Principal]  
Principal



### CONSENT FORM - Teacher Participants

Project: Equity and Quality Education: Experience of Teachers and Students

Chief Investigator:  
Professor Joanne Deppeler  
Department of Education

Student Researcher:  
Rucelle Hughes  
PhD Student

I have been invited to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
I agree to be interviewed by the researcher once in a 50-60 min semi-structured interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the interview to be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand the following:		
I understand that participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the research at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that data collected in interviews can be withdrawn up until the researcher begins to write up findings from the study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand the data will be stored securely at Monash University and that only the research team will have access to it. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that any interview data used in publications or reports will contain no names of places, schools or people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

Subject/ Positions Held \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## CONSENT FORM - Student Participants

Project: Equity and Quality Education: Experience of Teachers and Students

Chief Investigator:  
Professor Joanne Deppeler  
Department of Education

Student Investigator:  
Rucelle Hughes  
PhD Student

I am in Year 8 at \_\_\_\_\_ and have been asked to take part in the Monash University research investigation specified above.

I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
I agree to take part in one x 30-40 min focus group discussion of up to 6 people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the focus group discussion to be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in one x 15-20min interview with the researcher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the one-on-one interview with the researcher to be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand the following:		
I understand that it is my choice to be in this investigation and I can stop at any time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my interview ideas can be taken out of the investigation up until the researcher begins to write about the investigation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my ideas will be kept safely at Monash University and that only the research team will have access to them. I also understand that all ideas will be destroyed after 5 years.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that any interview ideas used in publications or reports will be secret and will not include people's or schools' names.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Student's name \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**MONASH** University

**CONSENT FORM - Parent Consent**

Project: Equity and Quality: Experience of Teachers and Students

Chief Investigator:  
Professor Joanne Deppeler  
Department of Education

Student Investigator:  
Rucelle Hughes  
PhD Student

My child has been invited to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby give consent for my child to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
I agree for my child to take part in one x 30-40 min focus group discussion of up to 6 people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the focus group discussion my child participates in to be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for my child to take part in one x 15-20 minute one-on-one interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the one-on-one interview my child participates in to be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand the following:		
I understand that participation is voluntary and that my child can stop at any time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the focus group discussion will take place on school premises during school hours and that my child may miss one x 30-40 minutes of normal scheduled classes at a time approved by the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the one-on-one interview will be conducted on school premises with the student researcher and will take 15-20 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my child's interview responses can be removed up until the researcher begins to write about the investigation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my child's interview responses will be kept safely at Monash University and that only the research team will have access to them. I also understand that all ideas will be destroyed after 5 years.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that any discussion or interview data used in publications or reports will be anonymous and will not include names of places, schools or people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Parent/caregiver's name

Child's Name

Child's School

Parent's Signature

Parent's email address

Parent's phone number

Date



**PERMISSION LETTER – Independent Schools Victoria (ISV)**

Project: Equity and Quality Education: Experiences of Teachers and Students

16 November 2016

Professor Joanne Deppeler and Rucelle Hughes  
Faculty of Education  
Monash University  
Clayton Campus  
Wellington Road, Clayton  
Victoria 3800



Dear Joanne Deppeler and Rucelle Hughes,

Thank you for your request to engage ISV in the above-named research.

I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement regarding the research project CF14/4001 - 2014002069: Equity and Quality Education: Experiences of Teachers and Students and hereby give permission for this research to be conducted.

I understand that Rucelle Hughes will arrange to conduct a semi-structured interview with a relevant staff member at a convenient time and place.

I am aware that staff are under no obligation to consent to participate.

Yours sincerely.

(Signature of person granting permission)

[Name of person granting permission]



# MONASH University

## CONSENT FORM - ISV Representative

Project: Equity and Quality Education: Experience of Teachers and Students

Chief Investigator:  
Professor Joanne Deppeler  
Department of Education

Student Researcher:  
Rucelle Hughes  
PhD Student

I have been invited to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
I agree to be interviewed by the researcher once in a 30-40 minute semi-structured interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the interview to be audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand the following:		
I understand that participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the research at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that data collected in interviews can be withdrawn up until the researcher begins to write up findings from the study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand the data will be stored securely at Monash University and that only the research team will have access to it. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that any interview data used in publications or reports will contain no names of places, schools or people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of ISV Representative \_\_\_\_\_

Position Held \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

### Set Up

*Welcome and thank you for being here.*

*We are here today because I am doing a research project about how schools try to make sure all their students are included and are able to be successful. By sharing your ideas and experiences of school, I can get an idea of what might be working well and what might not work so well when it comes to fairness, diversity and success at school.*

*During our focus group time we are going to move, talk, write and even draw (if you want to). I will ask questions to prompt your ideas along the way.*

### Establishing rules presenting cue cards

Before we get started there are a couple of rules we need to remember and work with.

Firstly, it's really important that you don't mention specific names of students or teachers. You will be able to describe a situation or something that has happened to someone but you must not mention names.

Secondly, it's important that we create a safe space in terms of our discussion so that everyone can speak and be heard. You might not always agree with someone, and you might have had a different experience but we need to listen to each other.

Finally, there is no such thing as right or wrong when it comes to answering questions and sharing ideas. If you can't think of anything to share then you can always pass.

Is everyone ok with those rules? Does anyone have any questions at this stage?

### Warm Up (Establishing individual views, safe space, introducing and establishing language)

#### Agree/Disagree Game

Stick a line of masking tape across table labelling one end agree, the other disagree. Explain to students that you will call out a statement and students decide whether they agree or disagree, placing a counter on the masking tape in a position that reflects their view. If they wish, they can position their counter in the middle of the tape assuming a Can't Decide/Neutral position. Students will be invited to briefly share a justification for their position with the group.

- Snapchat over Instagram
- Hawthorn will win the AFL grand final this year
- Samsung over Apple
- Camps are more fun than Sports Days
- Different kinds of students come to \_\_\_\_\_

(In what ways? Where do these differences show up? When? How? Why?)

- \_\_\_\_\_ is a place where all students are successful
- \_\_\_\_\_ is a school that is fair for everyone

### Generate

We are now going to record and build on some of the ideas from our warm up game using posters and sticky-it notes.

I will ask questions firstly about 'success' and then about 'fairness'. You can answer these questions verbally and/or write your ideas down on a sticky-it note. Would anyone like to be a scribe?

There are no right or wrong answers and if we get more than one of the same idea down, don't worry, we will have time to organize our ideas later.

You can work together or on your own to record ideas and stick them on posters. Without using names...

Is this school a place where students **succeed**?

**Who** is successful— everyone, some, none  
**What** do they succeed at?  
**Where** do they succeed? – places, activities, in class, outside of class, subjects, sports,  
**When** do students succeed?  
 Without using names, **describe** someone who would be successful at this school – what would this student be like? What would they do?  
**Why** do you think they succeed?  
**How** do you know if you’ve been successful?  
 When do you feel successful?

**Who** isn’t successful— everyone, some, none  
 Are there things students don’t succeed at?  
**Where** don’t students succeed? – places, activities, in class, out of class, subjects, sports  
**When** don’t students succeed?  
 Without using names, can you **describe** someone who would not be able to succeed here?  
**Why** don’t students succeed?  
**How** do you know if you haven’t been successful?

Is this school **fair** for everyone?

How does CSS1/CSS2 try to include everyone?  
 In what ways is the school fair for everyone?  
 Describe how this school is/tries to be fair  
 In what ways are teachers fair? How Describe  
 When Most or few? Ratios  
 Do these things work for most students? Who is it fair for?  
 Are there some settings/ environments in this school that are always fair?

Are there times when not everyone is included?  
 Are there times when it isn't fair?  
 When – give me an example  
 Are there ways teachers aren’t fair? How?  
 Describe When Most or few? Ratios  
 Are there any students they might not work for?  
 Who isn’t it fair for?  
 Are there some settings/environments in this school that are unfair?

What does \_\_\_\_\_ -

Do to make itself a place where kids can be successful?  
 Do to make it fair for everyone?

What else could the school do to make itself a place where kids can be **successful**?  
 It would be good if...  
 What else could the school do to make sure it’s **fair** for everyone?

**Sort/**  
**Connect:**

Make sure posters are on the table so all students can gather around -  
*“Looking at all the ideas you generated about our topics, can anyone identify any that they think have something in common and could be grouped together?”*  
*Why do you think they belong together? Could we label them?*  
*Does everyone agree? Why? Why not? Are any of the groups connected in some way? How are they connected? How are they related?*

[Capturing Discussion – verbal data at this point]

**Elaborate:**

Anything else you can think of to add that we might have missed? Do we need to clarify anything?  
 Descriptions, examples

[Final Language Grab!]

## Appendix N

### Student Interview Guide

**Name:**

**Participated in Focus Group:**

**Interview Date:**

**Interview Time:**

**Interview Location:**

**General observations/ Demeanour:**

**Warm Up Q:** How long have you been at \_\_\_\_ for? Do you have any siblings or family also at this school?

**Q1** What sorts of things do students here have in common?

*Diversity*

**Q2** Can **all** the students who come to Kingswood be successful students here?

Why? Why not? How?

*Equity*

**Q3a** How do you know if a student is not successful?

Can you **describe** what this might look like?

Always? How does the school know if students are less successful? *Quality -*

**Q3b** How do you know if a student is successful? Can you **describe** what this might look like?

Always? How does the school recognize if students are successful? *Quality +*

**Q4a** Can the school/teachers support all students to be their best? How?

*Equity*

**Q4b** How does the school try to be fair for all students?

Give examples?

**Q5a** What might make it more difficult for students to take up/make the most of an **opportunity/ have a voice/try hard** the school offers?

*Barrier – Equity*

**Q5b** What might make it easier to take up/make the most of an **opportunity/ have a voice/ try hard** the school offers?

*Facilitator – Equity*

**Q6a** Can you tell me about a time when the school and/or teachers might not help students to be successful? What happens? Why might this happen?

*Quality - Barrier*

**Q6b** Can you tell me about a time when the school and/or teachers help students to be successful? What happens?

Why do you think they do this?

*Quality - Facilitator*

**Q7** What else could happen at school so all students can be successful?

*Future – Quality*

### Prompts

What makes you say that?

Tell me about a time when...Give examples

Can it be different for other students? Who? Why?

Can you tell me what you mean by...?

## Appendix O

### Teacher Interview Guide

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Role:</b>	
<b>Interview Date:</b>	<b>Interview Time:</b>	<b>Interview Location:</b>
<b>General observations/ Demeanor:</b>		
<b>Warm Up Qs:</b> How long have you worked at KW for? What roles have you had here in that time?		
<b>Q1</b> What would you say CSS1/CSS2 is best known for? Reputation, wider community, does well? Mapping the terrain		
<b>Q2</b> How would you describe student diversity here at CSS1/CSS2? Has this changed over time? Does it apply to Year 8 specifically? Diversity		
<b>Q3</b> How do you meet the diverse needs of students? What works/is effective in terms of students being successful here? Facilitators		
<b>Q4</b> Are some students more challenging to teach than others? Why do you think this is? Barriers		
<b>Q5a</b> What sorts of things make it easier for you to support students? Conditions/ practices Facilitators		
<b>Q5b</b> What sorts of things make it harder for you to support students? Conditions/ practices Barriers		
<b>Q6</b> What do you understand by the term ‘personalised learning’? Example? Process? Who or what supports you in this? Are there challenges? How do you address/overcome them?		
<b>Q7</b> Is there anything else you could suggest or would like to see happening? Future		
<b>Prompts</b>		
What makes you say that?	Can you elaborate? Give examples	
Can it be different for other teachers? Why?	Can you tell me what you mean by...?	
Tell me about a time when...	Describe... Give Examples...	

# ISV Representative Interview Guide

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Role:</b>
<b>Interview Date:</b>	<b>Interview Time:</b>
<b>Interview Location:</b>	
<b>General observations/ Demeanour:</b>	
<b>Warm Up Qs:</b> Tell me about your role at ISV? Talk about ISVs role and interests in working with schools and staff?	
<b>Q1</b> Network Meetings – What is the purpose of them and how have they come to be? Motivation for them? Why do you run them? Mapping the terrain	
<b>Q2</b> Who is involved in the network meetings and how do the meetings typically run? - frequency, location,	
<b>Q3</b> What sorts of things are covered in the meetings and how are these focuses determined?	
<b>Q4</b> What kinds of feedback have you had from participants? Schools? About the meetings?	
<b>Q5</b> What have you learnt about school needs and experiences in these areas, as a result of running the meetings? How will this impact ISV?	
<b>Q6</b> Where to from here? Future – meetings, focuses etc etc  Future	
<b>Q7</b> Is there anything else you could suggest or would like to see happening?  Future	
<b>Prompts</b>	
What makes you say that?	Can you elaborate? Give examples
Can it be different for other teachers? Why?	Can you tell me what you mean by...?
Tell me about a time when...	Describe... Give Examples...

## Sample of Read/Listen Step &amp; NVivo Annotations

you describe what it looks like if people are trying to do something or have had a nightmare just think  
answers but yeah...trying..

**SI2a**  
Um..yeah..I think.in my opinion asking questions and taking someone's trying hard and they're actually striving to get be..even if they're not a strong student, even if they are just I think that takes quite a lot of effort and that means they topic

**Researcher**  
do you think the school can um..how does the school record effort part? Do you get grades for that or?

**SI2a**  
Um..I think that's one thing where the school is kind of missing out..um..most of the recognition comes from..predominantly..just um.. test results in my opinion. I'm in two [Names school extension program] groups, for..I've got [Names school extension program] Art and a [Names school extension program] Creative Writing...and um..personally I'd like to be in a few more but um..

**Researcher**  
So how do you get into those groups

**SI2a**  
Um I'm not too sure how I was...well basically I was invited through email to a creative writing session...and my English teacher approached me and said, you're quite strong and we'd like you to...to put you in this class

**Annotations:**

#	Annotation
12	not a strong student..? meaning in terms of grades? So students can not be 'strong' but still engage in these behaviours. The behaviours are an indication of success even if they don't translate to goals... The behaviours are valued?
13	Efforts/behaviours aren't translating into grades/ test results
14	School structure/option to recognise students who perform well
15	Seemingly, on the one hand students are monitored and then invited to attend the class
16	Alternatively, some are voluntary..? Seemingly grades aren't tied in here but students still keen to volunteer...

SOURCES > Internals > Interviews > SI2aNate

## Sample of Reflect Step & NVivo memo of Interview Summary

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. On the left, a hierarchical tree view shows the project structure, including folders for 'Online Sources', 'Externals', 'Memos', 'Emerging Theme Memos', 'Literature Review Notes', 'Meta Memos', 'Parent Node Memos', 'Progress Journal', 'Transcript Summaries', 'Focus Group Summaries', 'ISV Transcript', 'Student Transcripts', and 'Teacher Transcripts'. The 'Student Transcripts' folder is selected. Below this, the 'OPEN ITEMS' section shows 'SI2aNate' and 'Sum of Nate's Int CSS1'. The main workspace on the right displays a memo titled 'Summary of Nate's Interview' with the following content:

**Summary of Nate's Interview**

25/8/16

Emphasises link between social world and success - support. "the first weeks at year seven were a little bit slow, but I think I found making friends quite easy and yeah..I really settled in quite well..and I'm really enjoying it" "Good class" - cohort, supports ability to focus and stay motivated

Trying hard and striving by students - asking questions and taking notes (skills, understandings)

Demonstrations of trying hard, motivated and goal focussed in terms of grades, Students may not be 'strong' but can still engage in these behaviours - the behaviours are indicators of success even if they don't translate into grades...

"Um..yeah..I think.in my opinion asking questions and taking notes is really big keys if someone's trying hard and they're actually striving to get those good marks and um..that can be..even if they're not a strong student, even if they are just taking notes and asking questions I think that takes quite a lot of effort and that means they're trying hard to to understand the topic. Struggling Vs Striving for success - Struggling & Striving for success: valued... Shows that students are taking responsibility for their success if they put in effort and are trying... Striving to excel Striving to get good marks - marks as the 'prize' marker of success

There's a 'magic' that some don't have therefore their efforts may not translate to grade, but improving, getting a lot better - everyone can do that "Not naturally gifted"

Opportunities are there - students need to make the most of them

Long term benefits of this - security - financial, job, emotional "knowing you aren't weak"

Nate expresses a confident, capable and enthusiastic involvement at CSS1. He perceives that he is able to achieve well in this environment and attributes much of this to his confidence, commitment and independence in his learning. He describes skills and behaviours that students engage in which he attributes to being successful such as note taking & asking questions.

Nate indicated that school is an easier experience for some than others and that while putting in effort, taking opportunities and striving for success is very important, for some students it won't be easy. He expresses a desire to do well at school and values the opportunities offered at CCS1 as well as a perceived bigger picture of opportunities availed to him through his parents decision to send him to the school - which is a 'good fit for the family'.

The bottom status bar shows the path: SOURCES > Memos > Transcript Summaries > Student Transcripts > Sum of Nate's Int CSS1

## Sample of Play step and NVivo Coding Stripes

SI2aNate

describe for me, what a successful student at CSS1 ... is like, what's someone that you see that's successful and what are they like?

**SI2a**

Ok.. yeah...I think at CSS1, they've got to be quite attentive there's a lot of subjects that involve note taking.. so...I think all the.. a lot of the...if you want to get good grades [clears throat] you've got to put the work in like anything...but yeah you've really got to take notes, and then revise for it, and know when the tests are coming up

**Researcher**

Ok, yep

**SI2a**

So I say determined...attentive...hard working

Created: 18 Aug 2016 By: RH

descriptors for success

Umm, I think...from my perspective...I think students that are less successful are a little bit less confident...um

Barriers  
Independence  
Support  
Opportunities  
Reasons for...  
Trying Hard  
School Responses to student needs  
Success  
Coding Density

## Appendix T

### NVivo Coding tree of themes and subthemes

Name	^	Sources	Referen...		
▼ ● Assessment		8	40		
● Awards		9	15		
● Grades - Marks		35	135		
● Testing and Test Results		24	46		
▼ ● Effort Trying Hard		42	118		
● Agency		38	116		
● Attitude - Motivation		38	105		
● Behaviour		35	79		
● Effortless		10	24		
● Independence		28	55		
▼ ● Equity		29	110		
● Diversity		22	104		
● Equality		15	33		
● Fairness		24	73		
▼ ● Opportunities		22	52		
● Curricular & Co-Curric...		24	101		
● Extension		21	42		
● Support		39	164		
▼ ● Relationships		33	131		
● Communication		7	67		
● Expectations		12	78		
▶ ● Stakeholders		4	6		
● Supportiveness		16	112		
● Teacher-Student		34	120		
● School Structures		12	139		
▼ ● Success		41	126		
● Academic Success		33	147		
● Access to Opportunities		26	117		
● Co-Curricular Success		12	33		
● Individual Success		22	90		
● Social Success		14	31		
▼ ● Teachers Work		39	193		
● - Assessment and Rep...		21	73		
● - Collaborations -		9	115		
● - Pedagogy		13	53		
● - Professional Develop...		9	47		
▼ ● Wellbeing		25	97		
● Identity Development		20	43		
● Social & Emotional WB		34	90		
				▼ ● Relationships	33 131
				● Communication	7 67
				● Expectations	12 78
				▼ ● Stakeholders	4 6
				● AIDES-ESOs	6 11
				● External stakeholders	9 54
				● Family	34 120
				● Peers - Social	30 76
				● School Leadership	16 77
				● Students	25 96
				● Teachers	25 117
				● Supportiveness	16 112
				● Teacher-Student	34 120
				● School Structures	12 139

## Sample of Play/Explore Step & Thinking and Sorting memo

Name	•Agency
Agency	<i>"if a student wants to do something then they'll do it well, whereas if they are just doing a half job then they may not do as well"</i>
Assessment	<i>"people might be shy to put up their hand"</i>
Barriers	<i>"you could email the teacher or go and see the teacher when no one is looking"</i>
Fairness – Equity	<i>"Well, they're really confident. At school, they go into a subject, they're asking lots of questions, they really want to know. And they know, in the back of their mind they say, I'm confident about this subject, I can do this."</i>
Perceptions	<i>"well because...because there's like um...lots of, the choice to do whatever you want and so if they chose to take that path and they chose to keep trying all the way through, they have the support to get, to get what they want"</i>
Perspectives Driving Pra...	Thinking and Sorting Nodes - 170131
Quality Schooling	<b>AGENCY</b>
School Responses to Stu...	<b>Why am I interested in this particular category? Concept?</b>
Student Characteristics	- I am interested in this category because of it's perceived link to students ability to be successful in school. There seem to be particular views around the kind of student agency that is beneficial and kinds that are not. These are wrapped in awareness of 'right and wrong' ways/ habitus to go about spending the capital... Then there is tension (of sorts) around whether students can engage in this agency - at times their ability to engage in it relates to dispositions, self confidence and social currency. Agency where it is perceived as a choice, something students can choose to engage - means responsibility is on the student for success
Success	- Could be a barrier to or a facilitator for success. SQ3, SQ4
Teachers Work – Experie...	<b>What sort of thing is this concept/category about? What group does it belong to? It's a kind of...</b>
Working with others – R...	- Here, agency is both knowledge and skill/traits. Understanding and action/behaviour. - Agency is central to students ability to play by the rules...knowing when and how to act. - Student voices speak to the importance of independence, trying hard, keeping up, confidence, help-seeking and positive attitudes as traits that are beneficial in the field. As types of learner/ educational capital, these can be exchanged for positioning in the field - could lead to subject-based success. However, it is considered the students responsibility to do this. - Students also expressed that possessing these traits was an indicator of personal success and wellbeing at school.

SOURCES > Memos > Parent Node Memos > Agency