

**Perceptions and Practices of an Inclusive Education for Social Justice:
The case of ZEP Schools of Mauritius**

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DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics Committees.

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Date: -----

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction	1
	Research Purpose and Question	2
	Context and Background to the Study	3
	The historical and social context of Mauritius	4
	The socio-economic context of Mauritius	7
	The Mauritian education system	9
	Main challenges within the Mauritian education system	11
	The ‘Zones d’Education Prioritaires’ (ZEP) strategy	14
	The context of the researcher.....	18
	Research Design	20
	Significance of the Study.....	21
	Overview of the Thesis.....	21
Chapter 2	Literature Review	24
	The Concept of Inclusive Education	24
	Understanding an inclusive education.....	24
	Approaches to inclusive education.....	30
	A Social Justice Perspective	35
	Understanding Social Justice.....	36
	Approaches to social justice.....	41
	The redistribution-recognition dilemma.....	47

Social justice in education.....	57
New approaches to social justice in education.....	63
Literature Specific to the Mauritian Context.....	65
Research on the ZEP school project.....	68
Reframing an Inclusive Education within a Social Justice Framework.....	72
The conceptual framework.....	73
Investigating an inclusive education.....	75
Social justice framework: Gewirtz and Cribb plural conceptions of social justice (2002).	78
Chapter Summary.....	81
Chapter 3 Research Design.....	85
Paradigm.....	86
Epistemology.....	88
Theoretical Perspectives.....	89
Symbolic interactionism.....	90
Critical hermeneutics.....	91
Case Study Methodology.....	94
Selection of participants.....	96
Schools.....	96
Individuals and groups.....	98
Data collecting strategies.....	100
Semi-structured interviews.....	101

Focus Group Interviews.	102
Participant Observation.	104
Questionnaires.	106
Learners' Drawings.	107
Documents.	108
Data Management and Analysis	108
Data Management.	109
Data analysis process.	110
Trustworthiness and rigour of the study	121
Data triangulation.	122
Member checking.	123
Use of thick descriptions.	124
Ethical considerations.	124
Reflexivity.	126
Chapter Summary	127
Chapter 4 Data Presentation: Expanded Vignettes	129
Redrock School	130
School neighbourhood.	130
School context.	132
School stakeholders and their concerns.	134
Understanding of an inclusive education.	148

Implementation of an inclusive education.....	150
Understanding of social justice.....	154
Mountain School	156
School neighbourhood.....	156
School context.....	157
School stakeholders and their concerns.....	159
Understanding of an inclusive education.....	166
Implementation of an inclusive education.....	168
Understanding of social justice.....	171
Lady of the Sea Catholic School	172
School neighbourhood.....	172
School context.....	174
School stakeholders and their concerns.....	175
Understanding of an inclusive education.....	186
Implementation of an inclusive education.....	188
Understanding of social justice.....	190
Sunflower School	193
School neighbourhood.....	193
School context.....	194
School stakeholders and their concerns.....	195
Understanding of an inclusive education.....	204

Implementation of an inclusive education.....	205
Understanding of social justice.....	207
Perspectives from the system leaders	209
Profile of the system leaders.....	210
The Mauritian education system.	210
Understandings of ZEP schools.....	212
Understandings of an inclusive education	215
Implementation of an inclusive education.....	218
Understanding of social justice.....	223
Chapter 5 Cross-case analysis and Identification of Key practices of inclusive education in ZEP Schools	226
Cross-case analysis process	226
Analytical steps to cross-case analysis.	226
Perceptions of inclusive education in ZEP schools.	231
Attending to the diversity of learners.	232
Integrating the ZEP school learners into mainstream education.	239
Importance of a welcoming and caring relationship.	243
Summary of the perceptions of an inclusive education.....	246
Intended practices of an inclusive education in ZEP Schools	247
Inclusive classroom strategies.	248
Caring for the emotional and social needs of learners.	258
Providing resources and school materials.	261

Building relationships amongst stakeholders.	263
Collaboration amongst stakeholders.....	269
Synthesis of the main understanding about an inclusive education and identification of the key practices in ZEP schools.	277
Main understanding of an inclusive education.	277
Identification of the key practices of an inclusive education.	279
Chapter Summary	283
Chapter 6 Key Practices of an inclusive education from a social justice perspective .	285
Cross Case Analysis Process	285
Perception Theme One: Social equality within a diverse community.....	289
Perception Theme Two: Enabling equality in, and through, education.	291
Key practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools from a social justice perspective	297
Key Practice One: Teaching and learning for academic performance measured by examinations.....	298
Key Practice Two: Provision of resources.	308
Key Practice Three: Creating and maintaining relationships.	316
Key Practice Four: Initiating collaboration amongst stakeholders.....	324
Chapter Summary	330
Chapter 7 Discussion of Main Findings and Recommendations	331
Finding One	331
Finding Two	335

The concept of integration is established upon the normalisation and standardisation of the ZEP school learners.....	335
The concept of equality is founded only upon compensation and retributive justice.	339
Finding Three	345
Finding Four	355
Summary of main findings	363
Chapter 8 Conclusion.....	366
The research journey	366
The research design	369
Research findings and recommendations	369
Contributions to current areas of research.....	374
Limitations of the study.....	376
Recommendations for future research.....	377
Concluding note: “Re-visioning” the Mauritian education system.....	378
References	386
Appendices	415
Appendix A: Number of ZEP school learners examined at CPE exams and Percentage pass rate	415
Appendix B: Structure of the Mauritian education system	416
Appendix C: Current grading system of results at CPE exams (prior to reform proposed by the Ministry of Education in 2015).....	417

Appendix D: Percentage pass rate of the four ZEP schools at the CPE exams (2006-2013)	418
Appendix E: Information & invitation letters to school staff to participate in study	419
Appendix F: Interview schedules	428
Appendix G: Questionnaire	432
Appendix H: Excerpt from Research Journal.....	441
Appendix I: Master list of groups of codes	443
Appendix J: Approval from Human Research Ethics Committee.....	446
Appendix K: Official consent from Ministry of Education and Human Resources prior to data collection & official consent from BEC Mauritius.....	448
Appendix L: Information letter to parent whose child will be interviewed & Consent form from the parents	451

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.1</i> Geographical location of the Republic of Mauritius in the world.	4
<i>Figure 2.1</i> Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) plural conceptions of social justice.	51
<i>Figure 2.2.</i> Main elements of first stage of the conceptual framework.	74
<i>Figure 2.3.</i> Components of inclusive education in this study.	76
<i>Figure 2.4.</i> Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) plural conceptions of social justice.	79
<i>Figure 2.5.</i> Complete conceptual framework for the study.	81
<i>Figure 3.1.</i> Miles, Huberman and Saldana’s Data Analysis process (2014).....	111
<i>Figure 4.1.</i> Drawing, representing the school building and the Mauritian national flag, from one of the ZEP school learners of this study.	129
<i>Figure 4.2.</i> Redrock Village and other neighbouring villages at the foot of the Mountain.	131
<i>Figure 4.3.</i> Alice’s drawing of what she liked the most about Redrock School.	147
<i>Figure 4.4</i> The jetty of Serenity Village.....	157
<i>Figure 4.5.</i> View of Beautiful Bay from Lady of the Sea Catholic School.	173
<i>Figure 4.6</i> Julio’s drawing of what he disliked about his neighbourhood	184
<i>Figure 4.7</i> Daphne’s drawing of what she liked best at school.....	185
<i>Figure 4.8.</i> One of the fast growing areas of Sunflower village	194
<i>Figure 7.1.</i> Transformative framework of an inclusive education for social justice.....	359
<i>Figure 8.1.</i> Conceptual framework of the study.....	368

List of Tables

Table 1.1.	<i>Number and percentage rate of learners who sat and passed the CPE examinations.</i>	12
Table 1.2.	<i>Presentation of terms used and description of respective roles in the ZEP school context.</i>	17
Table 2.1.	<i>Typology of perspectives on inclusive education (adapted from Ainscow et al., 2006)</i>	25
Table 2.2.	<i>Fraser's matrix of redistribution-recognition dilemma (2008, p. 34)</i>	49
Table 3.1.	<i>Summary of the Research Design.</i>	86
Table 3.2.	<i>Number of participants from the respective ZEP schools.</i>	99
Table 3.3.	<i>Primary sources of data and number collected.</i>	101
Table 3.4.	<i>Phases of Category construction (adapted from Merriam, 2014).</i>	112
Table 3.5.	<i>Master list of groups of codes in inclusive education for Redrock School.</i>	117
Table 4.1.	<i>Basic information on Redrock School (2013).</i>	132
Table 4.2.	<i>Profile of class teachers from Redrock School.</i>	140
Table 4.3.	<i>Basic information on Mountain School (2013).</i>	158
Table 4.4.	<i>Profile of class teachers from Mountain School.</i>	163
Table 4.5.	<i>Basic information on Lady of the Sea Catholic School (2013).</i>	174
Table 4.6.	<i>Profile of class teachers from Lady of the Sea Catholic School.</i>	179
Table 4.7.	<i>Basic information on Sunflower School (2013).</i>	195
Table 4.8.	<i>Profile of class teachers from Sunflower School.</i>	200
Table 5.1.	<i>Patterns of colour codes for the four ZEP schools and codes from system leaders (inclusive education).</i>	227
Table 5.2.	<i>Categorised patterns of codes in inclusive education after the Cross-case analysis.</i>	230

Table 5.3.	<i>Perceptions and intended practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools.</i>	231
Table 5.4.	<i>Perceptions and intended practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools.</i>	247
Table 5.5.	<i>Perceptions and intended practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools.</i>	277
Table 6.1.	<i>Patterns of colour codes for the four ZEP schools and codes from system leaders (social justice).</i>	286
Table 6.2.	<i>Categorised patterns of codes in social justice after the cross-case analysis...</i>	288
Table 6.3	<i>Identified themes of the perceptions of ZEP school staff about social justice. .</i>	288
Table 6.4.	<i>Summary of Key Practice One from a social justice perspective.</i>	307
Table 6.5.	<i>Summary of Key Practice Two from a social justice perspective.</i>	315
Table 6.6.	<i>Summary of Key Practice Three from a social justice perspective.</i>	323
Table 6.7.	<i>Summary of Key Practice Four from a social justice perspective.</i>	329
Table 7.1.	<i>Identified themes related to the perceptions of an inclusive education and social justice.</i>	332

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores inclusive education for social justice in the ‘Zones d’Education Prioritaires’ (ZEP) school project of Mauritius in response to the main research question: “What are the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools of Mauritius”?

The ZEP School Project aims to deliver an inclusive education by providing additional resources to schools in less developed regions of Mauritius for the purpose of improving the academic achievement of students in these schools. One strategy for inclusive education is to provide a quality education to those whose needs have been left unmet by the school and society as a result of social and structural inequalities. Such an approach to inclusive education reframes the concept within a social justice perspective which is mainly concerned with challenging marginalisation, disadvantage and lack of recognition. The following three sub-questions guided this study: a) What are the perceptions of ZEP school staff about an inclusive education for social justice and how is it implemented? b) What are the experiences of ZEP school stakeholders, including parents and learners, of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools? c) What do these perceptions and practices mean for a model of an inclusive education for social justice in the Mauritian education system?

The study was grounded within an interpretive paradigm and a social constructionist approach, using a multi-site case study methodology, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, focus-group interviews, participant-observation and documents, with school leaders, class teachers, parents and learners of four ZEP schools as well as the system leaders. The perceptions and practices of the ZEP school stakeholders were then compared through a cross-case analysis process.

This study established four main findings which were: a) ZEP school communities aspire to achieve social and educational equality for the learners and their family by integrating the learners into the education system through the ZEP school project; b) ZEP school staff have a partial understanding of an inclusive education for social justice and this leads to its limited enactment; c) The current practices of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools address more the distributive justice dimension and less the cultural and associational justice dimensions; and, d) In order to promote the achievement of an authentic inclusive education for social justice in Mauritian schools, especially ZEP schools, there is a need for a transformative model of an inclusive education for social justice which is structured around a recognitive framework. A number of recommendations in response to these findings are then presented.

List of abbreviations

ZEP	Zones d'Education Prioritaires
MOE	Ministry of Education ¹
CPE	Certificate of Primary Education
BEC	Bureau d'Education Catholique
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
TJC	Truth and Justice Commission
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MIE	Mauritius Institute of Education

¹ Shortened version of Ministry of Education, and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research

Chapter 1 Introduction

This thesis presents a research study investigating the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in the ‘Zones d’Education Prioritaires’ (ZEP) school project of Mauritius. The main research question was:

“What are the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools of Mauritius?”

In addressing this question, the concept of inclusive education was explored and it lead to an understanding of inclusive education founded upon an education system which caters for the diversity of learners, especially for learners from marginalised and vulnerable groups. It is achieved through the provision of free quality education by respecting the learners’ unique needs and aspirations (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010).

This understanding of an inclusive education is grounded within a social justice perspective (Jelas & Mohd, 2014), whereby both concepts have in common principles such as respect for difference (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015), recognition of diversity (Nieto & Bode, 2012) as well as the need for challenging restrictive and normative educational structures (Armstrong et al., 2010). This approach to an inclusive education within a social justice framework resonates with Shyman (2015) who states that: “any real attempt at implementing inclusive education must consider what it means to promote and practice a socially just society” (p. 351).

However, in line with current international influences in education which are centred upon performance and competitiveness (Danzak, Wilkinson & Silliman, 2012; Forlin, 2006; Hardy & Woodcock, 2015), the Mauritian education system is focussed upon the academic achievement of its learners (Bunwaree, 2001; UNESCO, 2015) and, in this way, does not adequately include the poor or marginalised child (Unterhalter, Yates,

Makinda & North, 2012). This study addressed the area of research which is concerned with education for children coming from low socio-economic areas or, as described by the ZEP school policy document, “less developed regions” of Mauritius (MOE, 2002, p. 1) with the aim of providing opportunities for an inclusive and socially just education.

Research Purpose and Question

This study examines the case of four Mauritian primary schools belonging to the educational project known as the ‘Zones d’Education Prioritaires’ (ZEP) school project. The ZEP schools are located in the less developed regions of Mauritius and are challenged by poverty, unemployment, difficult living conditions and other social problems (Panday & Li Xu, 2013; Truth and Justice Commission, 2011). The Ministry of Education (MOE) aspired to address the low performance of ZEP school learners at the national summative exams, the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE), and improve the educational opportunities of these learners, with the purpose of providing a supportive framework to alleviate educational inequalities in Mauritius. The MOE established two Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor the progress of the ZEP schools:

- a) the percentage pass rate of the schools at the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) examinations;
- b) the annual percentage rate of learners’ absenteeism from school.

When looking at the performance of ZEP school learners at the CPE examinations in the last ten years (Appendix A), there has been a slow but ongoing increase in the percentage pass rate but the rate of failure at the exams is still high despite the additional financial and human resources invested in the project. Furthermore, there have been very few research studies (Mahadeo & Mahomed, 2008; Payneeandy, 2014) which have investigated the ZEP school project and only a few reports (Indian Ocean Child Rights

Observatory, 2008; Panday & Li Xu, 2013) evaluating their progress towards achieving the KPIs.

This study aims to capture the views of the ZEP school staff, parents, learners and system leaders in order to understand their practices or experiences in the context of ZEP schools as an inclusive education strategy for social justice. The perspectives of these stakeholders are fundamental as they can inform the policy makers of the challenges, accomplishments and daily realities in the ZEP schools. By hearing the voices of the stakeholders, the Mauritian education system can be guided in finding new ways of improving ZEP schools as an inclusive strategy for the achievement of social justice. Therefore, three sub-questions were identified from the research question of this study and guided the research process:

1. What are the perceptions of ZEP school staff about an inclusive education for social justice and how is it implemented?
2. What are the experiences of ZEP school stakeholders, including parents and learners, of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools?
3. What do these perceptions and practices mean for a model of an inclusive education for social justice in the Mauritian education system?

Context and Background to the Study

This section provides an overview of the socio-historical and economic contexts of Mauritius, the education context including the ZEP school project, and the background and motivation of the researcher undertaking this research journey.

Situated in the Indian Ocean (see Figure 1.1), the Republic of Mauritius is comprised of the main island, Mauritius, and three other islands of Rodrigues, Agaléga and Saint Brandon and currently has a population of around 1.3 million people (Central Statistics Office, 2011).

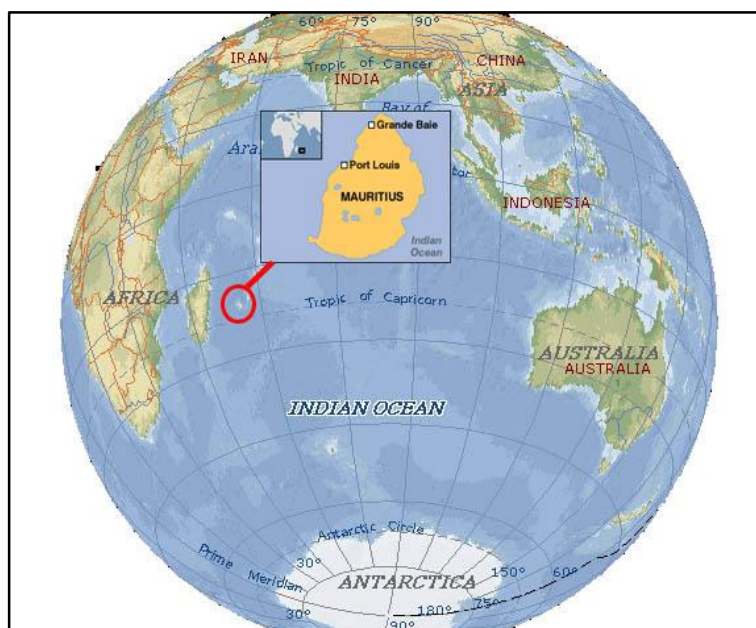


Figure 1.1 Geographical location of the Republic of Mauritius in the world.

Note: Retrieved on 6th January 2016 from <http://mauritiusattractions.com/content/images/maps/Locations-map-.jpg>

The Republic of Mauritius had no indigenous population when it was discovered by the Portuguese in the 16th century. It was colonised subsequently by the Dutch, French and British who, in turn, brought economic and social changes. In 1968, Mauritius gained its independence from British rule and became a Republic in 1992. As a young African nation, the Republic of Mauritius has been a politically and socially stable country ever since its independence. Since this study focussed upon ZEP schools located in mainland Mauritius and not the other islands, the name Mauritius will be used throughout this study.

In order to have an understanding of the educational and social context of Mauritian schools, it is important to have an overview of the socio-historical background of Mauritius.

The historical and social context of Mauritius

Mauritius is composed of a rich mixture of groups of people of European, African and Asian descent. The Dutch settlers named the island 'Mauritius' after one of their princes in Holland in 1638 and aimed to develop the commercial potential of Mauritius through sugar cane plantations, the exploitation of ebony trees and the shipment of slaves

mainly from Madagascar. The difficult climatic and social conditions led to the end of the Dutch settlement in 1710.

In 1721, the French colonisers settled in Mauritius and named the country 'Isle de France'. The French set up an appropriate administration system, developed Port-Louis (today's capital) as a naval base, and brought more slaves, mainly from Madagascar and Mozambique, for the cultivation of sugar cane. The ethnic group now called "Creole" in the current Mauritian population trace their origins to the plantation owners and slaves as well as those of mixed race. It was under the French rule that colonial education began but, as claimed by Bunwaree (1997):

The history of the French colonial period is characterised by the reluctance of the colonial administration to expand education to the island. There was strong discrimination against black, coloured people and women. This situation changed dramatically when the British took over the island in 1810 (p. 3).

After several attempts to take possession of the island from the French colonisers through several naval battles, the British were successful in 1810, when they reinstated the name 'Mauritius'. The British assured the inhabitants that their traditions, laws and languages would be respected, which explains the continued presence of the French language in contemporary Mauritius. With the abolition of slavery in 1835, the British rulers gave the sugar cane planters a significant financial compensation for the loss of their slaves. The abolition of slavery also led to the arrival of indentured labourers mainly from India and China. The Indian labourers came in bigger numbers and were mainly Hindus although there was also an Indian Muslim community.

As would be expected from this history, contemporary Mauritius is rich in terms of ethnic and religious diversity. The country takes great pride in proclaiming and selling the

image of being a “rainbow” (Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2015, p. 680) nation to the world and it is acknowledged that Mauritius has strived to achieve a multicultural society through ethnic–cultural heterogeneity, political stability and social cohesion (Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2015). Since 1983 the central statistics office of Mauritius, which undertakes the national census, has not collected data on ethnicity and religion in order to avoid any ethnic discrimination or sectarianism in the country (Hempel, 2009; Lallmahomed-Aumeerally, 2015). However, for electoral and political purposes (Boswell, 2005), the Mauritian government categorises the Mauritian population in four components: Hindu, Muslim, Chinese and General Population. The term ‘General Population’ is used to describe the socio-ethnic group of people, mainly Creoles, who have African ancestry or are of mixed descent with European, African and Indian roots (Laville, 2000; Eriksen, 1999) but it is considered by the Mauritian State as a “mixed-bag ‘other’ rubric” (Lallmahomed-Aumeerally, 2015, p. 3). Most of the General Population group are Christian, particularly the Creole ethnic group which is predominantly Catholic. Amongst the Indo-Mauritian group, there are different religious and cultural groups such as the Hindus, Tamils, Marathi, and Telegu who all follow Hinduism (Hempel, 2009).

According to the Mauritian branch of Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG²), which established a country profile of Mauritius, the following statistics pertaining to the ethnic composition of Mauritius for the years 2012-2013 were: Hindu (48%); Roman Catholic (23.6%); Muslim (16.6%); Other Christian (8.6%) (KPMG, 2014). It will be noticed that the term General Population was not used in the presentation of these statistics but references were made to the religious beliefs of the population. The diversity of terms used to describe the ethnic and religious beliefs of the Mauritian population highlights the complexity of the social and cultural fabric of the country. According to Boswell (2005),

² KPMG stands for the name Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler which is an international company providing Audit, Tax and Advisory services.

despite the inter-ethnic marriages in the country, there is still “a significant level of ethnic separateness and attempt to cultivate ethnic homogeneity through distinct religious practices, ethicised politics, and personal networks” (p. 197). This quote reveals the dualities within the social and cultural context of the Mauritian population.

The linguistic status of English, French and Kreol Morisien (KM) languages reflects a similar level of complexity and duality within the Mauritian constitution. The English language is the official language of Mauritius as it is the preferred business language (KPMG, 2014), but the Central Statistics Office of Mauritius (CSO) established that only 0.3% of the total population (Central Statistics Office, 2011) usually speaks this language at home. French is fluently spoken by only 3.4% of the population (CSO, 2011) but it is more frequently used in the local newspapers, television and radio than English is. The Kreol Morisien language, a mixed language developed during the colonial times, is spoken at home by 70.1% of the population (CSO, 2011) which considers it as their mother tongue but, within the Mauritian constitution, it is not considered as an official language of the country (Palmyre, 2007; Rajah-Carrim, 2007). Therefore, the socio-cultural background and linguistic context of Mauritius not only reflect the cultural plurality of the country but also the paradoxes and complexity of being a multicultural nation.

The socio-economic context of Mauritius

When the country gained its independence in 1968, Mauritius was an agriculturally-based economy, largely dependent upon the sugar cane industry which was developed by the French and British colonisers. With the liberalisation of the international market the Mauritian government, in partnership with the private sector, aimed at diversifying its economy in the late 70s and early 80s by developing its manufacturing and textile industry, as well as investing in the tourism sector.

With democratically elected governments and the establishment of strong private and public institutions, the Mauritian economy became successful through a balance between private and government partnership and an aspiration of ‘nation building’ founded upon respect and tolerance amongst the different ethnic groups (Bunwaree, 2001).

However, within this apparent social and economic harmony (Bunwaree, Wake Carroll & Carroll, 2005; Laville, 2000), there were obviously underlying tensions between groups which were highlighted when a famous Creole singer died in police custody in 1999. This major civil conflict was marked by allegations of police brutality towards the singer, violent civil protests, as well as rioting and looting which have been interpreted as expressions of socio-economic and ethnic frustration explained by Bunwaree (2001) as:

... although the working class is made up of people from different ethnic groups, the Creoles are disproportionately represented within this group. There has been in recent years a growing feeling of marginalisation by the Creole group (p. 261).

The marginalisation of the Creole group was called “Le Malaise Créole”³ by a Catholic priest who publicly affirmed that the Creole group was socially, economically and educationally excluded and that they were denied employment and socio-economic opportunities (Bunwaree, 2001; Lallmahomed-Aumeerally, 2015; Laville, 2000).

In a study of ethnic-based access to economic goods in Mauritius, Hempel (2009) revealed that ethnic membership played a fundamental role in accessing economic and political goods and that the Creole and Muslim groups tend to be marginalised. The sociologist Bunwaree (2001) also identified:

The Creoles in Mauritius are perhaps the ones endowed with the least resources. Large sections of the Creole community are landless. They are

³ Reference to the economic and social marginalisation of the Creole ethnic group in the Catholic Church and Mauritian society

also amongst the least educated and trained. They are disproportionately represented in low paid, low status positions on the labour market (p. 262).

It can therefore be seen that the economic prosperity of Mauritius has not reached all the ethnic groups in the population, particularly the Creole group.

The Mauritian education system

The MOE is in charge of the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education of Mauritius and the structure of the primary and secondary education is set out in Appendix B. The structure of the Mauritian education system, as it was in 2013 at the time of this study⁴, was mostly influenced by the British education system. In 2005, the government of Mauritius changed the legislation so that schooling would be free and compulsory till the age of 16 years, also known as the ‘eleven year schooling’. The traditional education system is comprised of six years at primary school level and is then followed by seven years of secondary schooling.

Since its Independence from colonial rule, the Mauritian government has invested in one of its most important “assets” (Noury, 2011, p. 79) - its people- through the provision of free universal primary and secondary education. One of the missions of the Ministry of Education as stated in its 2008-2020 Strategy Plan (MOE, 2007) is: “To ensure learning opportunities accessible to all, provide learners with values and skills to further their personal growth, enhance their critical and exploratory thinking and encourage them to innovate and to adapt to changes in an increasingly globalised environment” (p. 11).

The school system is divided into government and grant-aided schools, mainly financed by the MOE, as well as private schools. There are 320 primary schools, among which are 46 grant aided Catholic primary schools managed by the Bureau de l’Education Catholique (BEC), which is an important private partner of the MOE as it caters for around

⁴ At the time of finalizing this thesis, the Mauritian government has announced a major restructure of primary schooling in Mauritius which will be addressed in the concluding chapter.

35,000 Mauritian children and youth (Bureau de l'Education Catholique [BEC], n.d.). The enrolment of children in government and Catholic primary schools is done according to the 'catchment area' of the children (MOE, 2007), even though there have been several cases of fraud based on the parents' fake identification and proof of address ("Education primaire" 2013).

The methods of assessing the progress of primary school learners are different according to the Grades. In lower Grades (Grades One to Three), the primary school learners are assessed and progress from one Grade to another, through school-based continuous assessment method (MOE, 2007). At the end of the school year, the learners in upper Grades (Grades Four to Six) sit for national summative exams. All types of assessment are based on the national curriculum which has been designed by the MOE and the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) which is a semi-government institution responsible for the training of the teaching and management staff from pre-primary to secondary school levels. The Mauritius Examinations Syndicate is the official institution which is responsible for the development and running of the CPE exams.

The primary school system culminates with the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) examinations which are compulsory for all primary school children. According to their results at the CPE exams, the primary school learners can either have access to secondary education (government and private aided schools) or study an additional year in the primary school and retake the CPE exams. Since 2013, the MOE has strongly encouraged those who fail the CPE exams to be enrolled in a Pre-Vocational school where they have the opportunity to have a second attempt at the CPE exams or pursue pre-vocational secondary schooling.

Main challenges within the Mauritian education system

Mauritian and international scholars (Chinapah, 1987; Bunwaree, 1997; Griffiths, 2000; Chumun, 2002; Bunwaree et al. 2005; Busgopaul, 2006) have identified several factors which contribute to educational inequalities in the primary school sector of the Mauritian education system. These factors include an overloaded curriculum, a fiercely competitive examinations system, the language of instruction, and an institutionalised system of fee-paying private tutoring which is a financial burden for most parents.

According to Bunwaree, Wake Carroll and Carroll (2005), a major hurdle of the Mauritian education system is that it is largely determined by the high stakes evaluation system amongst which are the extremely competitive CPE exams. Several researchers (Bunwaree, 2001; Bunwaree et al., 2005; Griffiths, 2000; Si Moussa & Tupin, 1999) have highlighted this strenuous and elitist system of evaluation which leads to children's inability to be creative and original in their approach to learning and which requires continuous rote-learning and 'regurgitating' of their teachers' words and ideas.

Table 1.1 shows the yearly percentage rate of learners who have passed the CPE over the last seven years and therefore the significant failure rate:

Table 1.1

Number and percentage rate of learners who sat and passed the CPE examinations.

Year	% Pass
2005	65.30
2006	68.50
2007	66.90
2008	68.00
2009	68.61
2010	68.85
2011	68.56
2012	68.79
2013	77.48

One of the effects of the CPE exams is that primary schools are unofficially ‘sorted’ into three categories of schools, based on their performance at these exams. The ‘Star’ or ‘A+’ schools are considered by the population as schools which ensure high academic performance (Pearlman, 2012) and they are generally sought after by many Mauritian parents; the ‘average’ performing schools for average performing pupils, and the ‘Zones d’Education Prioritaires’ (ZEP) schools, often located in low socio-economic areas, for pupils considered to be low-achievers. Si Moussa and Tupin (1999) have called this categorisation process as an “educational sorting and social sorting” (p. 541). These categories of primary schools are determined according to the pass rate of the pupils belonging to the different schools. The ‘A+’ schools attract children from wealthy and influential families (Bunwaree et al., 2005) and these school learners are taught by the most skilled class teachers who enable the pupils to successfully complete their CPE exams and gain access to the best secondary schools. On the other hand, ZEP schools are often associated with “failure” (Panday & Li Xu, 2013, p. 29) due to a lower pass rate at CPE exams.

The other challenge faced by Mauritian primary schools is the culture of fee-paying private tutoring sessions: these after-school sessions are generally considered as a 'formal institution' or an industry in the education system. Most educational researchers (Bunwaree, 2001; Dauguet, 2007; Foondun, 2002) have highlighted the fact that private tuition has been so intrinsically assimilated in children's and parents' minds that if children do not attend fee-paying private tutoring sessions, they think they are doomed to fail. As stated by Bunwaree (2001), private tuition at the primary level is stripping children of their childhood by allowing them little time to play and be creative. In his study of fee-paying private tutoring sessions in Mauritius and some other Asian countries, Foondun (2002) stated:

The extent of private tuition increases in families whose income is high. In other words, the more money the parents earn, the more tuition the child takes. At times, the system is so competitive that the child has recourse to a second tuition in the same subject by a more qualified and competent tutor (p. 489).

In fact, fee-paying private tutoring sessions are not provided for children who are having difficulties in class, but as a way of enabling high achieving pupils of excelling further.

The language used as the medium of education is another challenge for the primary school learners, especially those in disadvantaged areas. Due to the complex linguistic situation, complicated by socio-ethnic tension, the Kreol Morisien language is not one of the languages used as medium of instruction in the education system. This situation was highly criticised by local and international scholars and linguists as well as the local NGO and alternative political party *Lalit* which organised in 2009 an 'International Hearing on the Harm done in Schools by the Suppression of the Mother-Tongue'. It was only in 2011 that the Minister of Education officially endorsed the implementation of Kreol Morisien as

a subject in Primary schools (MOE, 2011). In an official statement, he explained that it was the commitment of the Mauritian government to give Kreol Morisien language “its legitimate place in the education system” (MOE, 2011, p. 5) and hoped that this approach to the recognition of this mother-tongue will help in standardising the Kreol Morisien language.

This study aims at investigating the impact of the identified challenges and factors within the education system which can contribute to educational inequality in the context of the ZEP school project.

The ‘Zones d’Education Prioritaires’ (ZEP) strategy

In June 2002, the Mauritian government adopted the ZEP school project (MOE, 2002) whose goal was articulated as:

As an inclusive strategy, the ‘ZEP’ concept aims at improving the school standards within a medium term period in order to obtain tangible results. The ‘ZEP’ innovative strategy lies at the heart of the government’s education programme in favour of disadvantaged children. This strategy is being established to improve the performance in schools in challenging circumstances and forms an integral part of the overall educational reform plan (pp. 1-2).

It was further noted by the Ministry of Education that there is a positive correlation between the poor performance of the school learners in CPE exams and the socio-economically disadvantaged areas of the country in which these learners live (MOE, 2002). The ZEP school project was adopted from the French Education system which, in 1981, highlighted the need to address social inequalities by providing additional educational support to schools which had high rate of failures (Bénabou, Kramarz & Prost, 2009).

The primary schools which have had a percentage pass rate of less than 40% over the last 5 years are grouped into clusters named as Zones A to D. In 2003, 28 primary schools were identified as part of the ZEP school project and this number increased to 30 at the time of this study in 2013.

In July 2003, the Ministry of Education launched the ZEP project and, in March 2006, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported the Ministry's initiative by signing a protocol which made official their commitment to the ZEP strategy (Mahadeo & Mahomed, 2008). The UNDP agreed to provide its support through ZEP class teachers training, provision of teaching materials, support to projects initiated by the community and neighbourhood surrounding the ZEP schools, as well as monitoring any evaluation programmes of ZEP schools. The innovation of the ZEP project is that it has been set up to encourage a strong partnership between all major stakeholders - ZEP schools, the business sector, local communities, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and parents, so as to bring about academic improvement and alleviate the effects of socio-economic disadvantage within these identified schools (MOE, 2002).

The ZEP school project is founded upon three main pillars: human resources, infrastructure and the school/community partnership (MOE, 2002) reflecting a perceived need for specially trained class teachers and leaders and community workers, additional specialised equipment and a safe and supportive environment for disadvantaged children. Finally, it is seen that ZEP schools depend on the strong collaboration between Head Teachers and class teachers, the Parents-Teacher Association (PTA), Non-Governmental Organisations and private organisations which support the schools out of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)⁵ initiatives (Gokulsingh, 2011; Ragoodoo, 2009).

⁵ CSR initiative is a public-private partnership set up by the Mauritian government which requires that all private companies spend 2 % of their profits on social or environmental projects in the country.

In terms of the administration of the ZEP project, the Ministry of Education chairs a ZEP council, which is responsible for formulating policies and strategies, which guides the schools. This council established a ZEP unit which coordinates all ZEP schools which are then organised into clusters to respond to specific needs and issues faced by the schools. A cluster coordination team is usually set up and is composed of a Cluster Coordinator, a Parent-Mediator who is the link between the parents and school, and the school's Head teacher who monitors the KPIs. As at December 2013, there were four Cluster Coordinators (full time) and five Parent-Mediators (part-time) employed by the MOE.

According to the MOE, the philosophy and structure of the ZEP school project is founded upon "positive reinforcement" (MOE, 2002, p.) which aims at creating favourable learning conditions for these children living in the less developed regions of Mauritius. It is through this supportive framework that the MOE aspires to challenge academic failure and promote social justice.

In order to better understand the ZEP school project, some of the key terms are described in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2.

Presentation of terms used and description of respective roles in the ZEP school context.

Terms or roles within the ZEP schools	Description
ZEP schools	Mainstream primary schools which are provided with additional resources by the MOE to improve their performance and support children from less developed regions of Mauritius.
ZEP school class teacher	Responsible for teaching learners from Grades One to Six; also known as General Purpose (GP) teachers as they have been appointed to teach Science, Mathematics, History/Geography, English and French languages.
ZEP school Head Teacher	Is responsible for the school management, pedagogical innovations and general school welfare.
ZEP school Cluster Coordinator	Is responsible for a specific group of ZEP schools clustered in a specific zone; helps teaching and management staff to envision, plan, implement and evaluate pedagogical and school improvement programmes.
ZEP school Parent-Mediator	Is accountable to the ZEP school project manager. Is appointed by the Ministry of Education to establish communication and links between the ZEP school and the ZEP school parents. Is expected to investigate learners' absenteeism from school and carry out capacity building programmes for ZEP school parents.

Terms or roles within the ZEP schools	Description
System leader	Is the formal leader of the managerial structure of the education system- Government and Catholic in this study.
Educational or school structure	Formal division of duties and positions within the education system or the primary school which facilitates the control and reporting process of the management.
Educational or school culture	Assumptions, beliefs, norms, traditions and practices which are specific to the education system or the school.

The context of the researcher

In order to have a better understanding of the context of the study and the researcher's interest in this research, this sub-section provides some contextual information about the researcher. This process, also known as "researcher positionality" (Cousin, 2010, p. 9; Frost & Holt, 2014, p. 90), acknowledges that "...all researchers in human activities brought their own subjectivity to the research table" (Cousin, 2010, p. 9).

In the context of this study, I acknowledge that my multiple identities, which are socially and culturally categorised according to gender, ethnic origin, social class and educational background, have influenced the choice for this research topic, the theoretical lens used as well as the epistemological stance of the study. I am a woman of Creole origin and locate myself within the middle-class group of the Mauritian society. My parents, who both worked for the Mauritian government, have always encouraged their children to pursue academic excellence. I was schooled in a Catholic education environment both at primary and secondary school levels and started my teaching career in a Catholic secondary school.

My personal interest, as a Mauritian, Creole woman and scholar, in social justice issues began with Toni Morrison's novel "The Bluest Eye" (1970) which depicted the impact of difference in society: race, skin colour, gender, social class or family backgrounds are all socially constructed markers which can either affirm or damage one's identity.

Through further studies, the notion of leading with a difference through the concept of leadership for social justice (Blackmore, 2009; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Theoharis, 2004) brought another dimension to my understanding of difference in education. Aligning with the notion that leadership should aspire to serve for a higher purpose (Staratt, 2004), my professional and academic aims had now turned towards investigating the ways that schools and other educational institutions work, or are led to work, to reduce social exclusion, educational inequalities and operate with a sense of agency and social responsibility towards their learners and society (Phendla, 2004).

As a teacher and scholar, I consider that school learners should be encouraged to use their talents, skills and unique characteristics to make a difference in their family and society and that an enabling education system is about facilitating the development of the staff, learners and the whole school structures and culture as opposed to managing for performativity (Ball, 2012). Through various social and professional interactions, I became more and more aware that convictions about the right and value of being different were not enough to enhance the understandings and practices of an inclusive education and social justice in the Mauritian schools and society. Since actions and actual practices (Furman, 2012) of social justice and inclusion are equally necessary in education, I was interested in examining the practices and achievement of an inclusive education from a social justice perspective.

Research Design

This study uses an interpretive paradigm with an ontological view that there are multiple realities and meanings which are constructed and co-constructed between the researcher and the researched (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Driven by the aim of understanding the multiple meanings and lived experiences of the researched, the researcher used a case study methodology, more specifically, a multi-site case study (Bishop, 2010), with the goal of achieving an in-depth exploration (Savin-Badell & Major, 2013) of the realities of the ZEP schools and the daily experiences of their stakeholders.

Data was collected from the members of four ZEP school communities in Mauritius including the Head Teachers, Cluster Coordinator, parents and learners and the two system leaders through interviews. Questionnaires were completed by the class teachers and participant-observation method was used to understand the school realities in the ZEP school project and to complement the data collected from the ZEP school stakeholders.

The overarching theoretical perspective underpinning this study is Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Crotty, 1998) informed by Critical hermeneutics (Habermas, 1987; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2007) which was also used in the interpretation process. The data from each ZEP school was analysed independently before carrying out a cross-case analysis so as to generate the themes and sub-themes of the perceptions and practices of inclusive education of the ZEP school staff. Following the discussion of these themes and sub-themes, the researcher identified the Key Practices of inclusive education which were then analysed from Gewirtz and Cribb's (2002) model of social justice. This final analytical process led to the identification of the main findings of the study.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it contributes to the limited research on the ZEP school project in the Mauritian education system and the research findings can be used to inform the improvement of the practices in ZEP schools. By paying close attention to the socio-cultural environment of each ZEP school, this study develops new knowledge about the understandings and practices of an inclusive education in the context of the Mauritian education system as well as informing the system about opportunities for advancing a social justice agenda.

Furthermore, the research findings about the inclusive practices in ZEP schools can be used as a basis for designing other models of inclusive schooling for the Mauritian society and also for the primary school system within a developing country context. In addition, the originality of the study lies in providing a voice for those who are rarely heard - learners, class teachers and parents from the ZEP schools.

Overview of the Thesis

This section provides an overview of the thesis which comprises eight chapters.

Chapter One has presented an overview of the research purpose, background to the study, research design, research questions and structure of the thesis.

Chapter Two presents the two main concepts which frame this study, that is, inclusive education and social justice. The understandings and different approaches to both concepts in education are provided with the aim of identifying a conceptualisation of an inclusive education from a social justice perspective. An overview of the Mauritian based research and past studies which have focussed upon the ZEP school project are also presented. Informed by these literatures, the conceptual framework of the study concludes the second chapter.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the research design of this qualitative study founded upon social constructionism and using symbolic interactionism and critical hermeneutics as theoretical perspectives. The case study, a multi-site case study methodology, was used and the data collecting strategies were qualitative interviews, questionnaires, participant observation, learners' drawings supported by school documents and reports from the Ministry of Education. The choice of participants and site, as well as the data analysis process, are also presented. The chapter concludes with the ethical issues which were considered before, during and after the research process.

Chapter Four presents expanded vignettes of four ZEP schools using the voices of the research participants about their views of an inclusive education, social justice and their daily realities in the ZEP schools. These expanded vignettes offer detailed descriptions of the four ZEP schools and their stakeholders and shed light on the social and educational background of the ZEP schools which has informed the constructions of an inclusive education for social justice in these settings.

Chapter Five presents the cross-case analysis process which identified the themes of the perceptions and intended practices of inclusive education constructed from the views of the ZEP school staff, parents, learners, system leaders and notes from participant observation. The analysis of these themes are then synthesised and the key practices of an inclusive education are presented for further analysis from a social justice perspective.

Chapter Six firstly presents the identified themes of the perceptions of the ZEP school staff about social justice and, then, the key practices of an inclusive education are analysed through Gewirtz and Cribb's (2002) plural conceptions of social justice, namely, distributive justice, cultural justice and associational justice.

Chapter Seven presents and discusses the identified main findings of the study with the aim of providing a response to the research question. Some suggested

recommendations for the Mauritian education context are provided as well as the proposal of a new conceptualisation of a model of an inclusive education for social justice.

Chapter Eight reviews and summarises this study, its implications, the significance of the study and its contribution to research. The chapter ends with the limitations of the study, some suggested recommendations for further research and a vignette envisioning a school operating within the proposed model of an inclusive education for social justice in Mauritius.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The previous chapter presented the context and purpose of this study for exploring the question:

“What are the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools of Mauritius?”

In order to address the research question, the concepts of inclusive education and social justice are examined and discussed by focussing upon the Mauritian context. After exploring these main concepts of this study, a conceptual framework guiding the research will also be constructed and presented.

The Concept of Inclusive Education

This section identifies some of the understandings and purposes of an inclusive education as well as the main approaches used by schools to implement the concept. It is important to note that this study is not concerned with the issues of learners with a physical or mental disability in the ZEP schools, as learners with disabilities in Mauritius are usually catered for in specialised primary schools. Rather, it is about investigating a primary school project which is founded upon an inclusive education philosophy (MOE, 2002). Since studies in disabilities and special education needs have largely contributed to the development of the concept of inclusive education (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010), they have also informed this discussion of the inclusive education literature.

Understanding an inclusive education.

The concept of inclusive education is multifaceted (Rix & Simmons, 2005) and has been greatly debated (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006; Armstrong et al., 2010; Miles & Singal, 2010; Slee & Allan, 2005). It has even been labelled as a “conceptual confusion” (Miles

& Singal, 2010, p. 7) due to the multiple meanings attached to it. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) proposed a typology of perspectives of inclusive education to describe the different understandings and concerns attached to the concept. The proposed perspectives of this typology, which is presented in Table 2.1, contributed to the understanding of inclusive education of this study.

Table 2.1.

Typology of perspectives on inclusive education (adapted from Ainscow et al., 2006)

Perspective	Concerns
Inclusion concerned with disability in education and 'special education needs'.	'Special education needs' as a way of identifying barriers to learning and participation; finding support and necessary resources; contesting educational difficulties framed within deficit perspective of the individual.
Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion.	Responses to exclusion due to difficult or challenging behaviour; from truancy to teenage pregnancy.
Inclusion concerned with vulnerable groups being excluded.	Addressing discrimination of any groups of learners who are vulnerable to all types of exclusions.
Inclusion as promoting the school for all.	A school aiming at assimilating those who are considered as different to achieve "a homogeneous normality rather than promoting transformation through diversity" (Ainscow & Miles, 2008, p. 42).
Inclusion as 'Education for All'.	Related to UNESCO's millennium goals (UNESCO, 2000) of providing universal education to all children; improving literacy and numeracy and addressing the gender inequality in education.

The first perspective of inclusive education is related to special education - a recurring discussion in the inclusive education literature (Armstrong et al., 2010; Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Miles & Singal, 2010; Slee, 2011). Often, the concept of inclusive

education is connected to the education of children with disabilities (Slee, 2001) as both concepts are ideological and are “based upon alternative views of the world and the nature and form of schooling that will build that world” (Slee, 2011, p.12). Therefore, one of the beliefs of special education is to provide an *alternative view* of society’s construction of disability which claims that the person with a disability is as valuable and powerful as the ‘abled’ counterpart (Armstrong et al., 2010; Shakespeare, 1996). In other words, one of the aims of an inclusive education is to challenge the deficit perspectives (Armstrong et al., 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013) branding people who have a disability. These deficit perspectives can also be applied to learners who belong to marginalised groups from developing countries (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010). In this study, the concept of *deficit perspectives* and inclusive education was significant as, in the Mauritian education and the society in general, ZEP schools are looked down on and are negatively labelled (Panday & Li Xu, 2013; Jacquette, 2013) as low-performing schools.

Another perspective of an inclusive education relates to fighting school exclusion on the grounds of learners’ behavioural and disciplinary problems. Ainscow and Miles (2008) stated that schools which find alternative methods to school exclusion practise an inclusive education. This perspective of inclusive education was relevant to this study as ZEP schools receive additional support from specialised staff such as Parent-Mediators and psychologists who can provide help in cases such as learning difficulties and behavioural issues (Mahadeo & Mahomed, 2008; Panday & Li Xu, 2013).

The next perspective explores inclusive education as the opportunity to mitigate the effects of socio-economic exclusion upon learners from vulnerable groups. As shown in the typology, an inclusive education reaches out to individuals, or groups of individuals, who are vulnerable or those who are discriminated against within society based on economic, social, cultural or ethnic marginalisation. This area includes: the exclusion of

learners because of unfair social structures or society's inequalities (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006; Forlin, 2006); poverty (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013); HIV/AIDS (UNESCO, 2010; 2012); or being schooled in an urban or rural area (Cuervo, 2012). There could also be discrimination because of cultural and ethnic prejudices (Nieto & Bode, 2012) in society influencing the school culture and practices, or because of the marginalisation of an indigenous group (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006; Keddie, 2012). From that perspective, an inclusive education also means fighting social exclusion which permeates the education system and the schools, as seen in the case of ZEP schools which are located in less developed regions of Mauritius (MOE, 2002). This perspective of an inclusive education plays a significant role in understanding ZEP schools as these schools and the learners are not only affected by the socio-economic difficulties of the neighbourhood, but they are also subject to negative perceptions from society and some employees of the Ministry of Education (Jacquette, 2008; Truth and Justice Commission⁶, 2011).

Another view of the concept associates an inclusive education with enhancing access, participation and success of all school learners. Following the World Conference on Special Needs education which led to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the member countries of the United Nations (UN) were urged to ensure that schools:

...accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled⁷ and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6).

⁶ Will be referred as TJC onwards

⁷ Children with a disability

UNESCO is advocating for a philosophy which is based on welcoming diversity under one roof with the aim of reducing any type of segregation based on differences in terms of race, ethnicity, language, social class, gender, and culture amongst others. However, in their quest to promote a school for all, education systems can also promote an inclusive education with the aim of achieving “homogeneous normality” (Ainscow & Miles, 2008, p. 42) through the guise of welcoming learners with diverse needs but, then, forcing them to adapt to the system by a process of assimilation. This perspective of inclusive education, associated to assimilation, is opposed to an authentic inclusive philosophy which is about welcoming diversity of learners through the recognition and respect of their individual differences (Aniftos & McLuskie, 2003). Schools adopting an authentic inclusive stance are not expected to treat all pupils in a similar way but are encouraged to acknowledge the diverse needs and characteristics of their learners and cater for them (Armstrong et al., 2010).

In the same way, the policy document of the ZEP school project highlights the “inclusive” (MOE, 2002, p. 2) nature of the project in terms of the additional support and special pedagogy provided to the learners with the aim of improving their academic performance at the CPE exams. The learners’ success at these exams means that they have opportunities to pursue secondary schooling.

The last perspective presents an inclusive education as the provision of universal education with the aim of achieving a quality education, relevant to the needs of developing countries through the achievement of the Education for All (EFA) goals (Miles & Singal, 2010; Udjo & Lalthapersad-Pillay, 2015; UNESCO, 2010; 2015). At the World Conference on Education for All, organised in 1990 by UNESCO, the member countries of the UN were primarily concerned with the provision of education for all children which culminated in the formulation of six key education goals at the World Education Forum in

Dakar in the year 2000 (Armstrong et al., 2010; UNESCO, 2015). The six EFA goals are: providing early childhood care; free and compulsory primary education for all; improving quality of education; the promotion of literacy and life skills for youngsters and adults; increasing adult literacy by 50% by the year 2015; and achieving gender equality in schools (UNESCO, 2000). These goals are expected to meet the needs of youth, adult learners and children and were set to be achieved by 2015. Under the monitoring of UNESCO, these goals ensure universal free basic education for children from developing countries by focussing on several areas which have historically led to the marginalisation of children inside or outside formal schooling such as illiteracy, gender disparity, poverty or lack of life skills (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). This perspective of an inclusive education informed this study's understanding of the concept as the main concern of the Mauritian government, through the ZEP school project, is to enhance educational opportunities for learners who are located in less developed regions (MOE, 2002).

Therefore, in the light of these different perspectives of an inclusive education, this study is based on an understanding of inclusive education as providing universal education for all children through the formal structures of society, with a particular focus upon education for vulnerable and disadvantaged children. This understanding of inclusive education also challenges the sources of marginalisation, oppression and deficit perspectives which often influence the educational goals, policies, structures, culture and practices in the schools. It is an inclusive education which is built upon the premise of welcoming diversity, recognising and respecting people's identity and developing their potential.

Approaches to inclusive education.

This section presents ways in which developed and developing⁸ countries have approached the implementation of an inclusive education. The advancement of an inclusive education approach in developed countries informed the developing countries about the need to shift towards more inclusive practices within their respective education systems (Armstrong et al., 2010).

The practice of inclusive education is challenging for many countries, including developed countries which are more advanced in terms of policy framework and its implementation (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015). One of their approaches to an inclusive education is the “integrated model” (Armstrong et al., 2010, p. 77; Jelas & Mohd, 2014, p. 995) which is concerned with the physical placement of learners ‘diagnosed’ with mild disabilities in mainstream schools. The aim of an integrated model of inclusive education is also to assist the learners to “adapt to the norms, expectations, styles, routines and practices of the education system (Jelas & Mohd, 2014, p. 995). Therefore, the *integration* approach allows children with disabilities to be part of the same school structure and benefit from the same infrastructure, however, they are often catered for in separate classrooms or groups.

Integration, or integrated education, has been contested by the political agenda of the disability activists who claimed the right to receive a fair and ‘non-segregationist’ education (Armstrong et al., 2010). From that perspective Cardona (2011), a disability activist from Malta, shared that his school days as a boy with a disability were marked by integration and not inclusion because he had to prove to the schooling system that he would not pose a problem and could adapt to the curriculum.

⁸ There is no official definition of ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries from the major international organisations (WTO, 2015) as countries decide, with the approval of WTO, whether they wish to be categorised accordingly. Yet, it was identified that developed countries include members from European Union, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and the United States (Michalopoulos, 2001). Countries outside these are considered as developing countries.

Even if integration in education can be considered as a step towards inclusive education, the exclusionary factor is still present. As stated earlier, education systems often promote a *homogeneous normality* (Ainscow & Miles, 2008) through the guise of welcoming learners with diverse needs but, then, forcing them to adapt to the system by a process of assimilation. According to Slee (2011), an inclusive education is about the education system and the schools adjusting to the needs of the learners whereas, through an integrated approach, the child is forced to adapt to the school system. Therefore, Slee (2011) made the distinction between an *inclusive education* which is a “project of political struggle and cultural change” and *integration* which can generate political tension but “does not challenge the dominant culture” (p. 110). Consequently, an integrated approach neither recognises nor values the learner’s difference as opposed to an inclusive education which promotes difference as an “educational and social asset” (Slee, 2011, p. 110) and supports the transformation of the education system in order to adapt to the learners’ needs and differences.

Norwich (2008) highlighted another setback in the implementation of inclusive practice which involves a “dilemmatic approach” (p. 217) causing tensions and conflicts. An effect of such tensions can be seen when schools are known to cater for learners with special needs, but, the same schools are stigmatised or looked down because of the label of special educational needs. This tension arises because of a mainstream educational structure and culture which privileges uniformity over diversity (Norwich, 2008). Therefore, implementing an inclusive approach in education proves to be challenging at the level of practice.

In developing countries, EFA goals are indirect ways of ensuring that their education systems adopt an inclusive stance (Armstrong et al., 2010). Since the ratification of the EFA goals in the year 2000, many developing countries have tried to

bring about the necessary reforms in their educational programs with the aim of providing quality basic education for their citizens and offering equal opportunities in education (UNESCO, 2011; Angelides, 2012; Miles & Singal, 2010). In the Mauritian context, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources set up in 2006 a special department to provide education services to children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and inclusive education (MOE, 2006). The Ministry's definition of children with special educational needs is as follows: children with disabilities, children with specific learning needs (gifted children or those with learning difficulties) and children who are part of vulnerable groups and experience learning difficulties because of social problems (MOE, 2006). The national education system understands an integrated approach as the provision of education to children with a disability, based on the premise that all Mauritian children have equal rights to education (MOE, 2006). This approach is implemented either through the integration of children with mild to severe disabilities in mainstream schools or through Special Education Needs schools and the Integrated Units in mainstream primary schools. For instance, one of the ZEP schools which participated in this study had an Integrated Unit which catered to the needs of learners with hearing impairment.

The inclusive education strategic plan from the Special Educational Needs (SEN) department of the Ministry of Education is different from the objectives of the ZEP school project. The ZEP schools are endorsed, by the Ministry of Education, as mainstream primary schools which receive additional support from the Mauritian government. In other words, at the level of educational policy, the ZEP schools have not been identified as specialist schools but they are considered as part of the mainstream education system with the aim of catering for primary school learners located in disadvantaged areas (MOE, 2002). Since the implementation of the school project in 2002, the Mauritian education system has aimed at improving the learning opportunities of the learners and encouraging

them to attend school. These goals of the ZEP school project indicate the willingness and commitment of the Mauritian government to facilitate access to education for children from low socio-economic areas and help them to successfully complete primary school education. This strategy is in line with the provision of education for all children and improving the quality of education for the ZEP school learners as expressed by UNESCO's EFA goals (UNESCO, 2000).

For Mauritius and other developing countries, an inclusive education is about equal access to education for children but, according to UNESCO (2010), they should also be concerned with the quality of the education provided, the school completion rates of learners (Miles & Singal, 2010) as well as “opportunities they have for achieving desired outcomes” (Tikly & Barrett, 2011, p. 9). The warning note of UNESCO (2010) in its ‘Education for All Global Monitoring Report’ was that: “...less attention has been paid to the fact that millions of children emerge from primary school each year without having acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills” (p. 104). Therefore, according to UNESCO, in terms of the implementation of an inclusive education, access to education should not be the only priority. The quality of the education and the educational outcomes are crucial in achieving a meaningful and authentic inclusive education strategy.

Both developing and developed countries face the issue of implementing an inclusive education in national and international contexts which value performance and competitiveness (Charema, 2010), often referred to as a “neoliberal approach” (Welch, 2013) in education. Addressing this issue, Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2010) considered that schools which aspire to implement an inclusive education are expected to “negotiate the complexities of the continua of achievement and support” (p. 110). In other words, these schools have to find the balance between a sustained school performance and assisting the diversity of learners in educational systems. Similarly, ZEP schools, being

part of the mainstream primary schools, are expected to achieve high educational performance at the CPE exams and provide an education which can respond to the uniqueness of learners from less developed regions. Consequently, the ZEP school project as an inclusive strategy requires that ZEP school teachers implement a flexible pedagogical approach for the learners through the provision of additional physical and adapted pedagogical resources.

Yet, published reports (Mahadeo & Mahomed, 2008; Panday & Li Xu, 2013) about the ZEP schools highlight the fact that the progress of ZEP schools is restricted because of the tension between attaining academic performance and “a place heightened to fight social exclusion and inequality” (Panday & Li Xu, 2013, p. 36). Both reports further stated that the ZEP school project was associated with ‘negative branding/labelling’ and that “the spotlight with regard to ZEP schools must be taken away from ‘failure’ by promoting measures to enhance the ‘successes’ of ZEP learners and schools” (Panday & Li Xu, 2013, p. 29). This difficulty faced by ZEP schools reflects Norwich’s (2008) observation about “negative consequences of inclusion” (p. 138). Therefore, it is seen that both developed and developing countries face difficulties in the implementation of an inclusive education which embraces the needs and diversity of learners.

In summary, it was shown that approaches to an inclusive education were principally founded upon a model of integration which provides the marginalised groups with access to education, but it is within a segregated structure and culture which does not reflect an authentic approach to inclusive education. Furthermore, some of the barriers to inclusive education were identified in terms of the overarching vision and goal of education systems focussing upon academic performance and the stigmatisation of those who have different needs and interests. In a similar way, the ZEP school project of

Mauritius experiences similar issues in their attempt to implement this inclusive philosophy of the Ministry of Education.

In that context, Slee's (2011) proposal of an alternative approach to inclusive education is pertinent in this study. He believes that inclusive education needs to be reframed in those terms: "A reframing of the field is required to disentangle itself from the neo-liberal education imagination and the values of competitive individualism" (p. 155).

Therefore, in response to Slee's call for a "reframing" of inclusive education, this study intends to *reframe* the concept of inclusive education within a social justice perspective, highlighting the fact that the underlying beliefs of inclusive education need to be entrenched in social justice principles, such as challenging unequal educational structures. However, it has been found that in the international educational context, these inclusive education beliefs have come under the dominant influence of *competitive individualism* (Slee, 2011). Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice by investigating the ZEP school project of Mauritius and identifying the impact of both the underlying beliefs of social justice as well as the *competitive individualism* identified by Slee (2011).

This discussion has identified that many of the concepts and much of the language underlying this study's understanding of inclusive education reflect principles of social justice- a theme which is explored in the next section.

A Social Justice Perspective

The purpose of this section is to explore the literature around the concept of social justice and examine some of the definitions and terms attached to the concept such as 'equality', 'equity', 'fairness' as well as 'compensation' and 'recognition'. Then, the educational context is examined from a social justice perspective by exploring some of the social and educational factors which influence the achievement of learners at school.

Lastly, the different approaches to the implementation of social justice are examined through the social justice theories of Iris Marion Young (2011), Nancy Fraser (1997; 2008), Gale and Densmore (2000) and Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) who have informed other major theories of social justice in this study.

Understanding Social Justice.

Even though the concept of social justice dates back to the times of Plato and Aristotle (Zajda, Majhanovich & Rust, 2006), it is still difficult to have a clear understanding of the concept. Described as an “elusive and contested term” (Cuervo, 2012, p. 84), social justice is considered “problematic” (Taysum & Gunter, 2008, p. 184) as different people have different understandings of it. Some researchers (Bosu, Dare, Dachi & Fertig, 2009) have concluded that seeking to reach a clear definition of the concept was similar to entering a minefield. The aim here is not to offer an exact definition of social justice which would restrict the multiple inequalities as experienced by social groups and individuals (Cuervo, 2012), but to examine some of the terms and understandings which inform a social justice perspective. This perspective supports the theoretical approach of this research which is presented and discussed in the next chapter.

One of the understandings of social justice is that it is a social and political perspective used to explore the inequities between individuals or groups of individuals because of difference in disability, social class, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and race (Gereluk, 2008). The emphasis is placed on the features of social relations which are sometimes founded on discrimination or marginalisation by a dominant group (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). According to critical theory literature (Apple, 2000; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), those who belong to a dominant group are the ones who possess and control the economic, political and social resources. A social justice perspective is not limited to shedding light on discrimination in terms of monetary or material possession,

but also focuses upon concepts such as non-respect for cultural, religious, ethnic, gender or sexual difference (Fraser, 1997; Theoharis, 2004; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Young, 2011).

Examining the Latin origins of the word ‘social justice’, it is seen that the equivalent of *justice* is *equitas* which is related to the sense of fairness and equity, and *social* which comes from the Latin word *socius* meaning companionship. The combination of these two terms suggests that the term ‘social justice’ is about being fair to one another (Shoho, Merchant & Lugg, 2011). The notion of fairness and the means of achieving this notion through equitable measures are mentioned by Rawls (1972) whose understanding of social justice sheds light on the welfare of marginalised and disadvantaged by stating:

Justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by the greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many (pp. 3-4).

Rawls’ definition is founded upon the concept of *equity* which is also mentioned by Chapman & West-Burnham (2010) who described the nature of social justice as being the equal balance between *equality* and *equity*. For them, individuals are entitled to equal rights and benefits but their rights to benefits should be balanced with their needs, based on principles of fairness (Chapman & West-Burnham, 2010). In the literature pertaining to social justice, expressions such as *equality*, *equity* and, *fairness* are often mentioned and according to Buettner-Schmidt and Lobo (2012), these terms can be considered as characteristics and outcomes of social justice. Therefore, it is important to explore the significance of these key terms.

The dictionary's definition of the concept of equality describes the term as "the quality or state of having the same rights, social status" ("Equality", 2014) and it is about ensuring that all individuals are treated in the same way. Embedded in the concept of equality or an egalitarian society is the expectation of parity of treatment, or opportunities, which enable people to receive the same resources or achieve equality through solidarity (Zadja et al., 2006). The French philosopher Rancière (1991) also believed that all people are intrinsically equal intellectually, morally and discursively in society. He also considered the concept of equality in education as a "practice rather than a reward situated in a distant future" (1991, p. xix). In other words, Rancière was of opinion that equality should be experienced and accomplished through daily school interactions and not something which schools aim at achieving.

In the educational context, equality is related to providing all children with the same resources and ensuring that they follow the same school curriculum. However, Gale and Densmore (2000) considered that aspiring to equal treatment is not achievable as the social, political and economic structures of society often create inequalities or contribute to further inequalities in society. They proposed the notion of *equity* which requires a "different treatment" (p. 150) for those who have been oppressed. The concept of *equity* is associated with the means by which inequalities are addressed. From that perspective, Nieuwenhuis (2010) asserts that social justice can be achieved through equity: "Social justice provides equitable outcomes to marginalised groups by recognising past disadvantages and existence of structural barriers embedded in the social, economic and political system that perpetuate systemic discrimination" (p. 273).

In an educational context, Nieto & Bode (2012) explicitly made the distinction between an 'equal' and 'equitable' education: "...*equal* education implies we are giving every student the *same* thing and an *equitable* education provides learners with what they

need to achieve equality” (p. 9). It is with the objective of ‘achieving equality’ that the ZEP school project has been implemented (MOE, 2002). Therefore, equity is understood as a process which is applied to achieve equality through the fair distribution of benefits for those who require help from society or those who have been treated unfairly in the past (Bottrell & Goodwin, 2011; Nieto & Bode, 2012). Similarly, in civil society, politicians often relate social justice to *equal opportunities* or “giving everyone a fair go”, a phrase well known in the Australian context (McInerney 2004, p. 45). According to Bottrell and Goodwin (2011), the notion of *fairness* and social justice have been combined to “...ensure equality of opportunity for excluded groups” (p. 24) through compensatory policy interventions. In other words, the concepts of *equity* and *fairness* both refer to the process of providing equal opportunities and achieving social justice.

The aspect of compensation is another element linked to social justice referring to the practice of offsetting marginalisation or discrimination incurred by a social group, mainly through providing additional financial resources. In the context of education, Gale and Densmore (2000) suggested that remedial classes were an example of a compensatory strategy for learners who lack some of the academic skills required to achieve the expected norm of academic performance.

Yet, compensation is not enough in cases of disrespect (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Power, 2012) for a people’s culture or identity. The effects of not acknowledging people’s differences, uniqueness, traditions or beliefs, or, purposefully ignoring or disregarding these characteristics, leads to a lack of *recognition* (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Mills & Gale, 2010; Power, 2012) towards others and results in marginalisation. Furthermore, Gale and Densmore (2000) stated that providing access to material goods may be important in ensuring equality of opportunities to disadvantaged individuals but “access to opportunities of acquiring these goods” (p. 255) is equally vital.

Once again, the concept of recognition highlights the fact that disadvantage and marginalisation are issues which transcend material resources and economic disparity.

The concept of recognition is founded upon the acknowledgement of differences amongst social groups (Young, 2011) and accepting that these differences contribute to diversity in society. Young (2011) defined a social group as “a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life...social groups are an expression of social relations; a group exists only in relation to at least one other group” (p. 43). In this quote, recognition highlights the diversity of social identities in society and these social identities have their *raison d’être* by interacting with others. Gale and Densmore (2000) supported the idea that recognition is a way of rethinking about the concept of social justice which is not only characterised through compensation and financial resources but is also about cultural differences and “meanings” (p. 2) related to these differences. The concept of recognition is further discussed in the next section.

While there is a range of different meanings attached to social justice, it can be said that the concepts of equality, equity and fairness, as well as compensation and recognition, are used by societies as a foundation for creating better opportunities for all and socially just relationships amongst individuals. Some of the key attributes of social justice are: a) equality which seeks equal treatment and opportunities; b) equity which addresses situations of inequalities through a different treatment; c) fairness which is associated with compensation to achieve equality; d) compensation as a method, often financial, used to redress an unequal situation; and, e) recognition which is the public acknowledgement and respect for individuals or social groups. Some of the approaches to social justice are examined in the next section.

Approaches to social justice.

This section identifies three approaches to social justice which are influenced by following theorists: Young (2011), Fraser (1997), Gale and Densmore (2000), and Gewirtz and Cribb (2002).

Social justice through (re)distribution.

Rawls (1972) is primarily concerned with the distributive dimension of social justice. His first principle of justice is that each individual should have “an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all” (p. 250). The first principle therefore entails that the individual should have access to all basic liberties so long as they do not impede the liberties of others. The second principle states that social and economic inequalities can be called ‘just’ when offices and positions are “open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity” and when they are “to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of the society” (p. 83). It is important to note that the second principle should not undermine the first principle. Therefore, Rawls’s understanding of justice emphasises equal distribution of material resources and that fairness is essential in the distribution of goods.

The critical feminist theorists Young (2011) and Fraser (1997) extended Rawls’s distributive perspective on social justice. Young’s “distributive paradigm” (2011) defines social justice as “the morally proper distribution of social benefits and burdens among society’s members. Paramount among these are wealth, income, and other material resources” (p. 16). She further claimed that a politic of social justice based on a distributive paradigm is essential, especially in situations of economic and resource deprivation. Fraser (2008) also proposed the “redistribution paradigm” as a strategy to offset “socio-economic injustice” (p. 16) which is embedded in the political and economic

structure of society. This *economic injustice* (Fraser, 1997, pp.13-14) involves three categories:

- Exploitation: having the fruits of one's labour appropriated for the benefit of others;
- Economic marginalisation: being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work or being denied access to income-generating labour altogether;
- Deprivation: being denied an adequate material standard of living.

Building on Fraser's concept of economic justice, Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) added that economic justice can also be achieved through the "distribution of cultural and social resources" (p. 502) which they considered similar to Bourdieu's cultural and social capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 30). In an Australian context, Keddie (2012) further defined economic justice as an effective way of alleviating the cycle of poverty, low academic performance and reduced life opportunities for disadvantaged learners.

However, several scholars (Fraser, 1997; 2008; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Power, 2012; Young, 2011) further argued that restricting a social justice agenda to the distributive paradigm denies the presence of power relations, culture, rights to participation and decision-making which can prevent access to commodities, funds and resources (Young, 2011; Cuervo, 2012; Lister, 2008). In that context, Young (2011) warned against a unilateral perspective of social justice by stating that:

...philosophical theories of justice tend to restrict the meaning of social justice to the morally proper distribution of benefits and burdens among society's members...While distributive issues are crucial to a satisfactory conception of justice, it is a mistake to reduce social justice to distribution (p. 15).

It has therefore been identified that social and cultural relationships or structures and processes often act as barriers to the achievement of the distributive justice dimension and the presence of these barriers has prompted a shift beyond the distributive justice paradigm.

Social justice through retributive justice

The scholars Gale and Densmore (2000) have identified the retributive justice approach as another social justice approach which aims at rewarding those who contribute to society and punishing those who do not respect other people's rights or are not committed to participating in society. In other words, they reported that social justice "is primarily concerned with fairness in the competition for goods...and is not a matter of equalizing possessions" (pp. 14-15). A retributive approach to social justice is founded upon rewarding those who work hard and the concept is characterised through notions of meritocracy, fair competition and rewards (Gale & Densmore, 2000).

Discussing the retributive approach to social justice in education, Gale and Densmore (2000) identified some restraining elements for the educational achievement of the learners. For instance, evaluation methods whose only focus is about rewarding learners' efforts at high stakes examinations is an example of a superficial approach to social justice as it does not consider socio-political factors such as the type of knowledge which is valued or assessed. It may not also take into account the cultural and linguistic capital of all learners. Therefore, retributive justice is based on a system of reward and punishment or *merit* but it fails to look into the underlying socio-economic or cultural framework which is often at the heart of the injustice (Gale & Densmore, 2000). Consequently, it is seen that, just as with distributive justice, retributive justice does not by itself provide a sufficient approach to social justice.

Beyond (re)distribution: Social justice through recognition.

Fraser (2008) called for a *critical* theory of recognition which she defined as “one that identifies and defends only those versions of the cultural politics of difference that can be coherently combined with the social politics of equality” (p. 12). Fraser conceptualised recognition as a perspective that complements the redistribution paradigm which is concerned with addressing socioeconomic injustice through an egalitarian view of social justice.

Through a recognitive approach to social justice, difference amongst people is acknowledged and valued (Gale & Densmore, 2000). This difference can be perceived in terms of gender, social class, race, ethnic group or linguistic identity through which people are discriminated against or marginalised. Fraser (1997) described cultural injustice as being “rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication” (p. 14) and is characterised by:

- Cultural domination: being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien/or hostile to one’s own;
- Non-recognition: being rendered invisible by means of the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one’s culture;
- Disrespect: being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions.

A lack of cultural justice sheds light on perceptions and practices within society which repeatedly marginalise some people as opposed to others. Fraser (1997) further claimed that cultural disrespect and slanting can also cause an explicit alienation of specific cultures or ethno-cultural groups through a process called “misrecognition”

(Fraser, 1997, p. 7; Garrett, 2010, p. 1521; North, 2006, p. 513; Power, 2012, p. 475) of other cultures by a dominant norm. Her definition of misrecognition is broader than the process of distorting a group or social identity but, rather, it is related to the notion of “being prevented from participating as a peer in social life” or what she calls “social subordination” (Fraser, 2000, p. 113). Therefore, Fraser proposed “revaluing disrespected identities” as well as “recognizing and positively valorising cultural diversity” (Fraser 1997, p. 7) through recognition which she described as “the status of individual group members as full partners in social interaction” (Fraser, 2008, p. 113).

Similarly, the Mauritian scholar Lallmahomed-Aumeerally (2015) asserted that the phenomenon known as *Malaise Créole* in the Mauritian society “signifies the way that ‘misrecognition’ and ‘maldistribution’ are intertwined in the case of the Creole minority” and that proposals, made by anti-discrimination institutions, to address the *disrespected* ethnic group were “shelved indefinitely” (p. 2).

In the same line, Young (2011) looked at power relations which enable supremacy of one group over others in society and considered that these power relations “...are produced and reproduced through a systematic process in which the energies of the have-nots are continuously expended to maintain and augment the power, status and wealth of the haves” (p. 50). Young (2011) linked these power relations to economic power and asserted that they are usually reproduced by division of labour in a process of “cultural imperialism” (p. 58). *Cultural imperialism*, which is similar to *cultural domination* (Fraser, 1997), refers to the overpowering influence of one culture (through beliefs, symbols, languages, norms) at the expense of the cultures of other social groups who are often ignored or silenced (Young, 2011).

It is seen that both Fraser and Young identified power relations as contributing to marginalisation and domination within social relationships. Consequently, these power

relations often divide and categorise social and cultural groups in society into dominant and sub-dominant groups according to those who possess or do not possess power. In the context of this study, the *dominant* and *sub-dominant* groups are terms which will be used to describe and discuss the power relations within the cultural groups located amongst the ZEP school stakeholders. The dominant group not only has power and control over society's material economic structures such as resources, job allocation or job positions, but they also possess privileged "social and cultural resources" (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002, p. 502) such as influential social networking which further assert their supremacy and domination in society and its institutions, contributing to "institutionalized domination and oppression" (Young, 2011, p. 15). In that context, the concept of oppression is defined by Bell (2007) as: "...the fusion of institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that shade most aspects of life in our society" (p. 3). Young (2011) further stated that oppression operates in society in complex and hierarchical ways, often leading to constrained identities and internalisation of this domination, even for several generations.

The recognitive approach to social justice further shows that another consequence of this *institutionalized domination and oppression* (Young, 2011) is that the sub-dominant group becomes inhibited and repressed. This leads to them being not provided with opportunities to participate in the decision making process or voice their concerns and marginalised status and, therefore, not empowered to become autonomous or assertive about their hopes and needs. A recognitive approach to social justice enables the sub-dominant group to be represented and participate in decision making processes, or in strategies which could address their economic and cultural marginalisation. Young (2011) recommended "democratic decision making procedures as an element and condition of social justice" (p. 23) to fight unjust decision-making structures (economic, legal and

corporate procedures) which determine the distribution of wealth and power, and reproduce unjust models and practices creating further inequality. She also referred to democratic strategies essential in dismantling an exploitative division of labour. Consequently, through a mechanism of “participatory democracy” (p. 183), elements such as *economic marginalisation, cultural domination* (Fraser, 1997) and “restricted participation” (Fraser, 2008, p.61) can be weakened.

A recognitive approach to social justice reveals that society is made of unequal relationships, where social and cultural powers are in conflict and create different social groups: those who are advantaged (*dominant group*) and those who are marginalised (*sub-dominant group*). The sub-dominant groups are alienated, made invisible and are not respected by the dominant group which leads to a process where the sub-dominant groups internalise their differences instead of asserting them and silence their own voice. Such cases of social injustice are particularly relevant to this study because such situations exist in the Mauritian context (Jeffery, 2010; Lallmahomed-Aumeerally, 2015) and they also reflect the professional and personal experience of the researcher.

In summary, the conceptualisation of social justice from a recognitive perspective provides opportunities for the sub-dominant group to be seen, heard and represented.

The redistribution-recognition dilemma.

The title of this sub-section is taken from Fraser (2008) who claimed that the “distinction between redistributive remedies and recognition remedies is analytical. Redistributive remedies generally presuppose an underlying conception of recognition...Conversely, recognition remedies sometimes presuppose an underlying conception of redistribution” (p. 17). In other words, Fraser pointed out that economic injustice is influenced by cultural injustice and that the source of cultural injustice can sometimes be rooted in economic injustice. Similarly, in trying to enforce distributive

justice, the cultural justice dimension may sometimes be affected and, in trying to enforce cultural justice, the distributive justice can be affected.

The tension between redistribution and recognition is seen at the level of the assumptions of each dimension: supporting a redistribution dimension sometimes involves a hindrance of the recognition area because “cultural groups frequently want a (sic) recognition of difference, whereas socioeconomic classes usually seek a reduction of difference via redistribution” (North, 2008, p. 1185). On the other hand, emphasising only cultural, gender, ethnic or religious difference leads to ignoring the current, highly segregated socio-economic class stratification which often results in scarcity in resources. It is concluded that institutions, policy-makers and governments should make sure that both redistribution and recognition are addressed in their attempt to bring about social justice.

As a way of reconciling the dilemma, Fraser (2008) identified “Affirmative remedies” which “correct inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying framework that generates them” (p. 28) and “Transformative remedies” which are related to deconstruction and “redress disrespect by transforming the underlying cultural-valuational structure” (p. 29). According to Fraser (2008), the *affirmative* action brings change by asserting “group differentiations” (p. 29) without attempting to contest the cause of their differentiated status. Similarly, Young (2011) stated that the “affirmative action debate is an instance of the application of the distributive paradigm of justice” (pp. 192-193). For instance, the concept of positive discrimination in society can be considered as a facet of affirmative action whereby disadvantaged social groups are recognised and are sometimes provided with distributive measures to redress their unequal status in society.

On the other hand, the *transformative* action calls for a complete change in structure to eliminate any case of group differentiation and give rise to the creation of an undivided group. Both *affirmative* and *transformative* actions are solutions which can address this *redistribution-recognition dilemma* but one is more inclusive and reduces stigmatisation. Fraser (2008) stated:

...whereas affirmative remedies can have the perverse effect of promoting class differentiation, transformative remedies tend to blur it...Affirmative redistribution can stigmatise the disadvantaged, adding the insult of misrecognition to the injury of deprivation. Transformative redistribution, in contrast, can promote solidarity, helping to redress some forms of misrecognition (p. 33).

It can be seen therefore that the *redistribution-recognition dilemma* is complex at the level of the implementation and practice of a socially just approach to inequality. In order to better understand this complexity, Fraser (2008) provided a four celled-matrix which is shown in Table 2.2:

Table 2.2.

Fraser's matrix of redistribution-recognition dilemma (2008, p. 34)

	Affirmation	Transformation
Redistribution	<i>the liberal welfare state</i> surface reallocations of existing goods to existing groups; supports group differentiation; can generate misrecognition.	<i>socialism</i> deep restructuring of relations of production; blurs groups differentiation; can help remedy some forms of misrecognition.
Recognition	<i>mainstream multiculturalism</i> surface reallocations of respect to existing identities of existing groups; supports group differentiation.	<i>deconstruction</i> deep restructuring of relations of recognition; destabilizes group differentiation.

The matrix shows that the effects of an affirmation approach to social justice are different from a transformative one because, within the affirmation approach, the system is not changed and differentiation is encouraged which may lead to stigmatisation and misrecognition. In the transformation approach, the structures of the system are changed to bring an alternative view of relations and challenge stigmatisation.

One can conclude that the most effective strategy to address both economic injustice and cultural injustice is to adopt a *transformative* approach at all levels of society, including within the education system, which prevents further misrecognition or marginalisation. Yet, as stated by Fraser (2008), there can be no “neat theoretical move” when addressing such a type of dilemma and, therefore, she concluded: “the project of transforming the deep structures of both political economy and culture appears to be the one overarching programmatic orientation capable of doing justice to all current struggles against injustice” (p. 41). Therefore, an approach to solving the (re)distribution-recognition dilemma is the implementation of a radical transformation of the underlying structures of injustice in order to give rise to something new. This understanding of a transformative approach to social justice reinforced the personal experiences and beliefs of the researcher and provided a theoretical approach to address issues related to social injustice in education.

Power and Gewirtz (2001) further explored Fraser’s models of social justice by adding another dimension, the associational dimension, which they considered had been “sidelined” (p. 41) by Fraser’s Redistributive-Recognition tension. They defined associational injustice as “patterns of association amongst individuals and amongst social groups which prevent some people from participating fully in decisions which affect the conditions within which they live and act” (p. 41). In a school context, the literature showed that learners, parents and teachers are usually the last ones to be consulted by

policy makers in decision making processes (Cuervo, 2012; Power & Gewirtz, 2001). Such a process of decision making often leads to a “general position of marginalization and powerlessness for these groups” (Power & Gewirtz, 2001, p. 42) or, in some rare cases, a form of resistance by teachers and parents (Bunwaree et al., 2005).

Building upon the founding theory proposed by Power and Gewirtz (2001), Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) developed a model of plural conceptions of social justice from Fraser’s theory of social justice (1997) which highlights the different types of influences which prevent the achievement of social justice. Gewirtz and Cribb’s model aimed at showing the “enlarged agenda” (p. 502) of social justice and it is built on the premise that “social justice is viewed as having a variety of facets” (p. 499). These facets or dimensions of social justice are explored in the next sub-section.

A model of the plural conceptions of social justice

Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) proposed a model which highlighted the plural conceptions of social justice which they described as: a) distributive justice; b) cultural justice; and, c) associational justice. These social justice dimensions are shown in Figure 2.1 and are explained in detail.

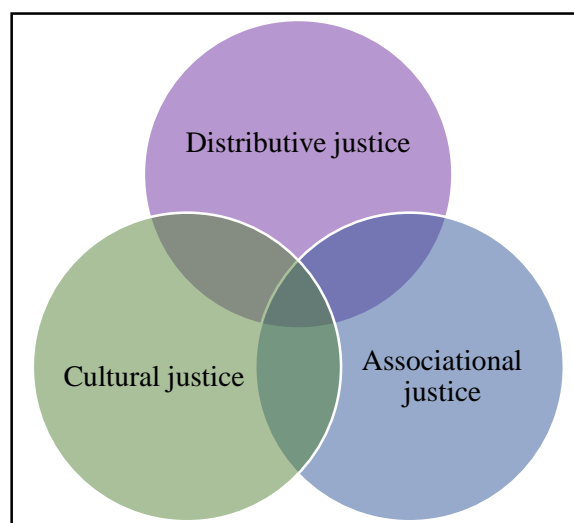


Figure 2.1 Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) plural conceptions of social justice.

Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) defined the distributive dimension of social justice through the principles by which resources, goods, services and other advantages are distributed in society. They used Fraser's descriptors of *economic injustice* (1997, pp. 13-14): *Exploitation* (having the fruits of one's labour appropriated for the benefit of others); *Economic marginalisation* (being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work or being denied access to income-generating labour altogether); *Deprivation* (being denied an adequate material standard of living).

They also considered that distributive justice involves the distribution of "cultural and social resources" (p. 502) which they associated with Bourdieu's cultural and social capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) discussion of social and cultural capital is an important element within the distributive justice dimension. They argued that social capital and cultural capital play a fundamental role in promoting or impeding children's educational achievement at school but the extent to which children have access to such capital depends on their family and cultural background.

Cultural capital can be understood as one's familiarity with, and acquisition of, a specific set of values, competencies, thinking and knowledge of one's cultural and family traditions or related to one's social class (Mills & Gale, 2010). According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), society is largely dominated by the cultural capital of a "bourgeois culture" (p. 201) or middle class culture whose values, knowledge and language are set as the norm. They contended that schools represent and perpetuate the dominant, middle class cultural capital through their structures and culture and, therefore, reject all other forms of cultural capital brought by the learners and their families. Social capital can be described as access to social relationship with the privileged middle-class and to networking that can help in the acquisition of knowledge, resources and social skills. Again, Bourdieu and Passeron claimed that schools maintain and share the social capital of

the middle-class which can help the learner to establish and develop privileged social relationships in the future.

Therefore, from the understanding of distributive justice, schools can enhance social justice through the provision of adequate learning materials, quality infrastructure, and trained teachers but these elements alone do not guarantee the child's success. Schools also have the capacity to provide the social and cultural resources which either exclude the child from, or consolidate his/ her identity in, society and in education depending whether he/she comes from the same social and cultural milieu as promoted at school.

The other social justice dimension is cultural justice which is grounded in Fraser's (1997, p. 14) understanding of cultural justice founded upon the absence of: a) *cultural domination* (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien/or hostile to one's own); b) *non-recognition* (being rendered invisible by means of the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture); and, c) *disrespect* (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions).

Cultural justice is also founded upon a politics of recognition (Fraser, 1997; Power, 2012; Taylor, 1994) as well as other concepts such as multiculturalism (Banks & Banks, 2013) and post-modernism (Said, 1979). Taylor (1994), who discussed the relationship between multiculturalism and recognition, claims that one's identity is defined or is partly shaped by recognition by others. He further explained that individual identity is formed and constructed through the interactive process with, quoting Mead (1934), the 'significant other'. This is why when others do not recognise, or misrecognise, one's identity, it "can inflict harm" (Taylor, 1994, p. 25) or distress an individual. It is through these

relationships and interactions that one can then determine whether people interact as equals or if there is domination or non-recognition. In that context, Taylor asserted:

Equal recognition is not just the appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society. Its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it...The projection of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress, to the extent that the image is internalized (p. 26).

Furthermore, according to Fraser (1997), recognition is a political and philosophical act as it is the acknowledgement of the presence of different social groups, cultures, individuals, including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged in society. It is about providing value and respect to the social groups and, in the case of marginalised social groups, the politics of recognition can take two forms: (a) deconstructing the categories which are at the source of the differentiation and marginalisation; and (b) inverting the marginalisation and stigmatisation of the group by making it “visible” and providing it with due respect (Power, 2012, p. 481). In a school context, recognition (a) can be seen in one of EFA’s goals which is gender equality at school and recognition, and (b) can be perceived through the use of an indigenous language in the national curriculum.

Closely related to cultural justice is the associational justice dimension which is the achievement of social justice through a process of democratic participation and the use of political power in decision making. Associational justice can be achieved through: a) participation or “representation” (Power, 2012) which acknowledges the individual or collective power and promotes community participation; b) decision making power which provides opportunities for the marginalised groups to be present and participate in decision making process; and, c) political power which provides the marginalised group with the opportunities to use the political powers of structures in order to be part of the decision

making process as well as empowerment strategies which provide opportunities to learn how to use the political power.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) debated the concept of power through their understanding of “power relations” (p. 4), which they defined as the presence of conflictual relationships amongst social groups. If, through these power relations, one of these social groups has unequal power status, then it is described as a *dominant and sub-dominant* relationship highlighting what is called, the “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p. 32) of power relations. The presence of power relations and symbolic violence can be seen through relationships such as coloniser-colonised; master-slave; or, upper and lower social class.

Foucault (1995) also identified the concept of disciplinary power which can be seen in society’s institutions such as schools, prisons or asylums. He claimed that in institutions such as schools, there are a series of disciplines which exert control on the learners and dictate one’s future role in society. Youdell (2011) provides an example of how Foucault’s discipline is applied in schools through the concept of ‘normalizing judgement’ which categorises, compares or differentiates learners in terms of ‘gifted’, ‘average’, ‘good’ or ‘hopeless’ with the aim of homogenising them.

Similarly, the school examinations create categories of learners according to their performance. Therefore, Youdell (2011) concludes that “schools can be understood as disciplinary institutions in which the practices that constitute school life are shaped and permeated by the localized effects of disciplinary power” (p. 37).

Lastly, Carspecken (1996) provides a typology of power which also identifies the dominant-subordinate (similar to sub-dominant) relationship:

- Normative (through cultural norms, subordinates consent to superordinate who has socially higher position);

- Coercive (subordinates consent in fear of sanctions/punishments from superordinate);
- Contractual (relationship is based as a transaction: subordinates act in return for favours);
- Charm (subordinates are loyal to superordinate whom they respect and admire).

These different understandings and forms of power are used as an analytical tool to explore an associational justice dimension. Gewirtz and Cribb's rationale (2002) of the concept of associational justice reinforces the need to underpin and achieve both distributive and cultural justices through the participation of the marginalised/subordinate groups in the decision making process or the elaboration of a recognition/empowerment structure. Therefore, associational justice is important in establishing a social justice which is founded on fundamental values such as inclusiveness of all stakeholders, equity and diversity of views.

According to Power (2012), Gewirtz and Cribb's model of plural conceptions of social justice offers the opportunity of solving the redistribution-recognition dilemma through the proposed associational justice which provides opportunities to marginalised or subordinate groups to be represented and participate in socio-economic, cultural and decision-making debates. This understanding and model of social justice, as proposed by Gewirtz and Cribb, was the analytical frame used by the researcher to examine the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education in the ZEP schools. This social justice framework is further developed at the end of the literature review.

The next section presents some of the approaches to achieving social justice in an educational context with the aim of identifying the key elements which can help the investigation of an inclusive education within a social justice perspective.

Social justice in education.

Just as society influences schools, the notion of social justice is largely dependent upon the prevailing values and beliefs of the society. In the words of Nieto and Bode (2012), “decisions made about education...are never politically neutral...they are tied to the social, political, and economic structures that frame and define our society” (p. 4). Through the discussion of social justice literature (Connell, 1993; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Nieto & Bode, 2012) which addresses schools and the education system, it is revealed that the underlying social and political beliefs of the society often determine the policies and practices of the education system, as well as its educational and socio-economic priorities.

According to Connell (1993), the education system is considered as a “public asset” (p. 14) of any government and, therefore, it is important for the public to know about the benefits of education system but, above all, the outcomes of this investment for society. In 2013, the Mauritian government spent 13% of its total expenditure on education, with an average of Rs. 12 million⁹ per year between 2011 and 2013 (Central Statistics Office, 2015). In the primary school sector, 320 primary schools catered for 108,853 children and this figure represents a Gross Enrolment Ratio (number of learners enrolled per 100 population aged 6-11) of 98%. In the ZEP school context, the existing research (Mahadeo & Mahomed, 2008; Panday & Li Xu, 2013) on the ZEP school project determined that one of the strengths of this project was the regular attendance of the learners at school and their access to free education through the project. From these figures, it is seen that most Mauritian children, including ZEP school learners, have access to, and can benefit from, education which is part of the “distribution of society’s resources” (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 8).

⁹ Around AUD 475, 000

Enrolment rates of primary school learners are critical for developing countries like Mauritius as they are evidence of their progress towards the achievement of one of the Millennium Development Goals (UNESCO, 2000), but, they are not just important markers for the advancement of education in developing countries. They also indicate progress towards social justice because the distribution of education is an element of social justice (Francis & Mills, 2012; Keddie, 2012; Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

However, Tikly and Barrett (2011) and Francis and Mills (2012) considered that children's access to education should not be the only concern of developing countries. The "relevance" (Tikly & Barrett, 2011, p. 10) of the education system is another important dimension in understanding social justice and the scholars defined the term as "...the extent to which learning outcomes are meaningful for all learners, valued by their communities and consistent with national development priorities in a changing global context" (p. 10). They contended that it is through the relevance of the education system that developing countries can alleviate school inequalities and enhance social justice. Similarly, Mills & Gale (2010) highlighted the fact that schools have often been criticized for not being relevant enough for the needs and interests of learners in disadvantaged situations because the schools tend to cater for a middle class, white and privileged background. This issue is closely related to Bourdieu's views (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) on the role played by schools in drawing from the knowledge, beliefs, traditions of the dominant groups in society and (re) transmitting them through schools without considering the other social groups. In the same way, Blackmore (2009) recommended that social justice becomes central to leadership training programs so as to turn schools into empowering institutions instead of reproducing the inequalities and prejudices of society.

The issue of relevance of learning within educational institutions sheds light on another important issue concerning the advancement of a social justice agenda in education, that is, the content and quality of the education provided (Connell, 1993; Keddie, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Tikly & Barrett, 2011). Schools have often been criticised for perpetuating social and educational inequalities and the need for schools to ensure that their learners are offered opportunities to take advantage of the education being provided has been emphasised (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Curtis & Pettigrew, 2010; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Tikly & Barrett, 2011). According to Tikly and Barrett (2011), schools have the responsibility of providing “quality education” which they described as “education that provides all learners with the capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being” (p. 9). Therefore, some of the sources of these inequalities which will be discussed are: a) curriculum; b) pedagogy; c) language of instruction; d) assessment methods and, e) relationships within schools.

The curriculum is described as the range of subjects which are taught in a school but, above all, it is an integral part of the educational knowledge and goals set by the national government and conveyed by the schools (Curtis & Pettigrew, 2010). In an Australian context, Connell (1993) as well as Gale and Densmore (2000) contended that schools play a determining role in society in terms of ‘who’ has access to ‘what’ type of knowledge, skills and employment. Criticising the curriculum content of the Australian school project known as the ‘Disadvantaged School Program’, Connell believed that, in general, the curriculum content “necessarily intersects with the relationships of inequality in society that constitute social interests” (p. 35). Similarly, Nieto and Bode (2012) highlighted the fact that many textbooks often lack the perspectives of “disempowered

groups” (p. 56) in society. In other words, the crafting and content of the curriculum often reflect the interests and views of those who have positions of power in the education system and society. The control of the curriculum by a particular group of people restricts the educational opportunities of learners who do not share the interests of the powerful group (Freire, 2000; Curtis & Pettigrew, 2010; Greene, 2000). It was also argued that imposing curriculum restrictions on learners also causes educational inequalities (Connell, 1993; Mills & Gale, 2010). For instance, by forcing them to choose between academic and vocational studies, or the case of having to choose between studying either sciences or humanities.

As opposed to an “hegemonic” (Connell, 1993, p. 34) or “monocultural” (Nieto & Bode, 2012, p. 56) curriculum, the literature proposed that the curriculum reflects multiple perspectives (Nieto & Bode, 2012) which take into account race, ethnicity, and the needs of learners from low socio economic backgrounds (Mills & Gale, 2010). It is further recommended (Connell, 1993; Mills & Gale, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2012) that a curriculum challenges gender or social class stereotypes and does not restrict the participation of the learners in the curriculum process (Curtis & Pettigrew, 2010), or limit their social and economic aspirations (Connell, 1993; Gale & Densmore, 2000).

In the area of pedagogy and learning, Freire’s writings (2000) have prompted many educational practitioners to adopt a more critical position vis-à-vis their teaching philosophy, its practice and praxis, as well as their relationship with their learners (McInerney, 2004). In the same way as Freire, some critical researchers (Apple, 2000; Greene, 2000; McInerney, 2007; Nieto & Bode, 2012) considered that teachers are either supporters of the status quo or facilitators of change so as to fight for those who are marginalised. Therefore, these scholars expressed the need for the political and social roles that teachers and the education system are expected to play in society to disrupt

oppression (Freire, 2000). There is also the consideration of teaching as a “political act” (Angus, 2012, p. 247) whereby teachers are called to bring social justice not only in education, but also in society. The rationale behind such a philosophy is to enable teachers and learners to be empowered and act critically in the learning process as well as in society (Freire, 2000; Hackman, 2005; Schoorman, 2011) through learning styles and teaching practices which are respectful of the learners. In this way, these innovative pedagogical strategies can challenge issues of oppression, domination and inequality (Apple, 2000; Freire, 2000; Nieto & Bode, 2012).

The choice of which language is used as the medium of instruction can also be an educational barrier to the advancement of social justice for the learners (Mills & Gale, 2010; Tikly & Barrett, 2011; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013). Tikly & Barrett (2011) claimed that the process of teaching learners in their native language is a socially just practice as it helps them to have access to the curriculum, improve their cognitive development and transform the educational opportunities into positive outcomes. Critical theory researchers (Gay, 2000; Keddie, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2012) highlight the fact that linguistic policies are largely determined by the dominant classes and cultures which prevent the minority or the marginalised group from being included.

The linguistic policy of the Mauritian education system is often criticised by local and international scholars (Bunwaree, 2001; Bunwaree et al., 2005; Rajah-Carrim, 2007; Si Moussa & Tupin, 1999) because the English language is used as the medium of instruction, the French language is studied and officially recognised within the education system, while the Kreol Morisien language, which is the mother-tongue of at least 75% of the Mauritian population, is excluded. The inclusion of the Kreol Morisien language as an optional subject in the national curriculum in 2012 is seen as a step towards the recognition of this local language but there is still more to be done in order to facilitate the learning of

the Mauritian learners in the education system (Harmon, 2012) and being respectful of their linguistic capital (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013).

Assessment methods have also been identified as a means of restricting the educational opportunities of learners in education and therefore affecting the achievement of social justice (Nieto & Bode, 2012). In the ZEP school context, it has been recommended (Condy, 2009; Haase, 2009; MOE, 2002) that the learners be taught through the use of innovative and creative pedagogical approaches. However, the evaluation method in the upper Grades (Grade Four to Six) does not match with the pedagogy. The national summative exams, particularly the CPE exams, are focussed on testing the capacity of the learners to memorise and replicate what they were taught (Chumun, 2002).

According to Nieuwenhuis (2010), social injustice is seen every day in society through the social relationships and structures that are founded upon unequal power relations and their maintenance. The literature (Apple, 2000; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Foucault, 1995) highlighted that those who have power will do their best to keep their privileges, to have more goods and resources, and will use their relationships to maintain their privileged conditions as well as their cultural and social control. In the Mauritian context, the education system is described as “hierarchical” in terms of the prestige and status attached to schools by the Mauritian society and the fee paying private tutoring sessions which “privilege the rich” (Bunwaree, 2001, p. 264). Bunwaree (2001) further observed that: “The inequalities are compounded because the best performers come from homes which possess the ‘cultural capital’ required by the school and attend the ‘star’ schools” (p. 264). It is then seen that the school system operates in a social and educational framework which ensures the educational success of those in power in the Mauritian society.

In light of these factors contributing to inequalities in education, it was shown that there are several structural factors within education systems which create and widen the gap in the educational achievement between the different social groups. It was further revealed that some structural barriers within the Mauritian education system prevented the achievement of Mauritian learners, including ZEP school learners. Seddon (2003) recognised the presence of “obdurate social structures” (p. 250) that shape and determine the goals and practices of education for social justice and, therefore, stated the importance of exploring new theoretical understandings and models of education which can contribute to greater social and educational equality. Therefore, the next section presents some of the new approaches to social justice in education.

New approaches to social justice in education.

Hyttén and Bettez (2011) claimed that for the past twenty years, there has been a growing influence of concepts such as multiculturalism, critical theory, post-structuralism, feminism and critical pedagogy in understanding social justice in education. From these perspectives, the educational field continuously “...critique vigorously the existing status quo of stratified school systems” (Zadja, Majhanovich & Rust 2006, p. 6). According to Smith (2012), schools can be used as models of a fairer society and as a means to grow and live together in trust and equality. It is still generally believed that schools offer the promise of social mobility (Curtis & Pettigrew, 2010) and that they are at the heart of enabling social justice because, in the words of Connell (1993): “The issue of social justice is not an add-on. It is fundamental to what good education is about” (p. 15). From that perspective, the literature (Adams, Jones & Tatum, 2007; Nieto & Bode, 2012) proposed some models for the implementation of a social justice perspective in education.

Adams, Jones and Tatum (2007) framed their understanding of social justice education within the theory of oppression to provide a better understanding and awareness

of the roots and consequences of oppression within individuals and society. In this way, they believed that people could take a critical stance towards an oppressive society and become agents of change through the development of anti-oppressive patterns and actions. By approaching social justice in education through a theory of oppression, they considered that educational practitioners are more conscious of their purpose and practices in the classrooms and at school and that areas of inequality can be reversed. They proposed a model of “equality of condition” (p.409) which is based on five principles:

- Equality of resources (economic equality);
- Equality of respect and recognition (recognizing diversity);
- Equality of power (democratizing education);
- Equality of love, care and solidarity (emotional dimensions of education);
- Right to satisfying working and learning experiences. (Adams, Jones & Tatum, 2007, p. 409).

This model strives to strike a balance between distributive and non-distributive dimensions of social justice, with an additional focus upon emotional dimensions such as care, resilience and self-respect. The model can be paralleled to the one suggested by Nieto and Bode (2012) whose model of social justice education is made up of four components:

- Education which challenges and disrupts current structural inequalities;
- Education which provides material and emotional resources;
- Education which rejects a deficit perspective of learners and builds upon their talents;
- Education which is conducive to critical thinking and agency for social change.

The approach to social justice education as proposed by Nieto and Bode (2012) focuses upon resources and culture to achieve social justice in education. They also challenged the traditional approaches to education by promoting social transformation and an emancipated philosophy of education.

In line with the new approaches to social justice education which have adopted a critical position to educational vision and policies (Polat, 2011; Tikly & Barrett, 2011) and teaching (Kaur, 2012; Mills, 2012), it is assumed that the underlying beliefs and goals about the concept are closely related to the success of their implementation. In summary, some of the main elements of a social justice perspective in education are:

- acknowledgement that social, economic and political contexts frame social justice perspective;
- importance of critical awareness of socio-economic and structural inequalities in education;
- the need to achieve a balance between the redistributive and recognitive dimensions of social justice;
- importance of engaging in a transformative approach to social justice education.

The next section presents the Mauritian-based research in education, with a focus on primary schools and the ZEP school project.

Literature Specific to the Mauritian Context

Most of the small amount of Mauritian-based research, which had as a focus primary and secondary school education, is critical of the primary school education system, in particular the inequalities embedded within that system.

The evaluation method at the end of primary school has been the recurring criticism of the Mauritian education system (Bunwaree, 2001; Bunwaree et al., 2005;

Dauguet, 2006; Foondun, 2002; Parsuramen, 2006). As stated in the previous chapter, the primary school learners in Grades One to Three are assessed through a school-based continuous assessment method. At the end of the school year, the learners in Grades Four and Five are assessed through national summative exams which not only monitor their progress but also prepare them for the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) exams which are written examinations on Mathematics, Science, History/Geography, French and English languages. The exams are held in English except for those assessing the foreign languages. Prior to 2001, there was a ranking system which ensured that the first 1,500 girls and boys secured a place in private and government secondary schools which are popularly labelled as “star” schools (Bunwaree et al., 2005, p. 159). These labels reflect their relative prestige and high academic focus which led to a race to be admitted to the best schools (Parsuramen, 2006). The names of the first 200 girls and boys were published in the local newspapers. The ranking system was abolished for a grading system (see Appendix C), which aimed at easing the pressure to perform at these exams but it led to another competition to score as many ‘A+’ as possible.

The CPE exams shed light on educational inequalities in Mauritius as they are used to determine access to secondary schools which are also categorised in terms of highest and lowest performing secondary schools or most prestigious secondary schools (Chumun, 2002). The informal labels attached to the primary schools, depending upon their performance at the CPE exams, leads to a categorisation and segregation of the Mauritian primary schools and their learners. The Mauritian literature (Bunwaree, 2001; Bunwaree et al., 2005; Si Moussa & Tupin, 1999) further explained that there is a direct correlation between the socio-economic status of the learners and their performance at these exams, meaning that those from a lower socio-economic class did not perform as well as those from the middle or upper classes.

Another educational barrier is the fee paying private tutoring sessions (Bunwaree, 2001; Bunwaree et al., 2005; Dauguet, 2007; Foondun, 2002) which are considered a “parallel industry” (Foondun, 2002, p. 509) in Mauritius. These sessions are officially banned for primary school learners in Grades One to Three, but they are run for learners in Grades Four to Six. Foondun (2002) reported that most Mauritian learners attended fee paying private tutoring sessions at both primary and secondary school levels. Some of the characteristics of these sessions for the primary school learners are: a) large class sizes, with often more than 25 school learners per session; b) often held by the class teacher; c) an average of five hours per week (after school hours); d) higher fees in prestigious primary schools or those located in the city, particularly at Grade Six. He further reported the socio-economic inequality of this practice as it is often children coming from middle-class families who can afford the fee paying sessions which “...erode any benefits that poor learners can derive from such a system” (p. 509).

The issue of the language of instruction in the Mauritian education system is another cause of educational inequality and is considered a politicised issue (Rajah-Carrim, 2007). The Education Act states that English is the language of instruction (Bunwaree, 2001) and this is reflected in the textbooks and the evaluation system. However, it is recommended in the national primary curriculum framework that class teachers use the language which will facilitate the learning and teaching process (MOE, 2007). Therefore, from their first year in primary school, learners are taught in English but teachers often use French and Kreol Morisien languages which creates confusion both at a linguistic level and in the learning process. Both linguists and non-linguists concur that young children cannot learn in languages which are foreign to them (Rajah-Carrim, 2007). The damage caused is reflected by the high rate of failures at CPE exams (Rughoonundun, 1990; Virahsawmy, 2002) and that the non-recognition of Kreol Morisien in the national

curriculum can create “a sense of alienation between their home environment and consequently, their culture; and their educational environment” (Rajah-Carrim, 2007, p. 54).

Therefore, it is seen that through the non-recognition of the Kreol language as the official language of instruction, Mauritian primary school learners cannot fully take advantage of the education provided since it is not conveyed in their mother-tongue. This linguistic issue can also create an alienating effect on the learners (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013) who are encouraged, by the education system, to consider the colonial languages as better than the Kreol Morisien language and of more value.

In light of some of these barriers within the structures of the primary school education, primary school learners of Mauritius have to navigate a system which endorses a highly competitive evaluation method, fee-paying private tutoring sessions and linguistic alienation. These issues highlight the presence of underlying dominant powers (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) within the education system which create and perpetuate these educational barriers. These educational barriers are magnified for most ZEP school learners who are further burdened by low socio-economic status in society.

Research on the ZEP school project.

There have been a few research projects which investigated the ZEP school project and were focussed upon the training of ZEP school class teachers and a broad evaluation of the school project.

Payneeandy (2014) investigated the transformation of ZEP school class teachers in their classroom practices and beliefs about teaching and learning, after a training course in new approaches in teaching literacy skills. According to her, after undertaking the course, the ZEP school class teachers underwent different types of transformation in their assumptions about the learning and teaching in ZEP schools, their classroom practices, as

well as their general attitudes. One group of teachers had a deeper understanding of the different pedagogical strategies of language teaching, was more motivated and creative in their teaching and eager to develop new strategies. It was shown that this group of teachers developed a “discursive consciousness” (Payneandy, 2014, p. 292) which made them change their assumptions about the potential of ZEP school learners as “they no longer believe that those learners are doomed to underachieve” (p. 292). The other groups of teachers were either resistant to change as they found differentiated instruction to be difficult, or they implemented the new strategy in “a mechanical manner” (p. 292) but could not develop a degree of autonomy in designing their own resources and be innovative in their teaching of literacy.

Therefore, this study revealed that ZEP school class teachers can be trained to become more inclusive and innovative in their approaches to learning and teaching and that such training was effective for a group of them. Others preferred the comfort of traditional methods or found the new strategies to be time-consuming or could not be creative in their approach to teaching in schools located in disadvantaged areas. This research shed light on the beliefs, attitudes and practices of some of the ZEP school teachers - three areas which are investigated in the context of this study.

In 2005, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) carried out an evaluation of the ZEP school project which identified some structural issues within the Ministry of Education which affected the school project, namely: a) a dual administration causing conflict between the ZEP school managing structure and the “mainstream” Ministry of Education; b) teacher retention and the loss of specialist staff trained for the ZEP school project to non-ZEP schools.

Mahadeo and Mahomed (2008) provided an overview of the success and challenges of the ZEP school project which they considered as “a lever for change, since it

enables the traditional schools to be inspired by the innovations in pedagogy and organization used in the ZEP schools to improve the quality of education in general” (p. 228). According to them, the innovative strategies were the different types of partnerships; the comprehensive childcare system; the parental involvement; and the trained staff specialised in inclusive education and special education needs. However, they also highlighted some of the obstacles faced by the ZEP school project: the low performance of the ZEP school learners at the CPE exams; pupil absenteeism; lack of communication and lack of evaluation of the ZEP school project. According to them, the ZEP school project was a new type of school which met the needs, expectations and realities of children from the local communities. They concluded their review of the school project by asserting that it has developed “interesting practices with respect to poverty alleviation and the quality of education” (p. 234) in Mauritian education system.

The working paper of Panday and Li Xu (2013) reported the successes and challenges of the school project as they aspired “to broaden the perspective of the community of practitioners operating in the promotion of inclusive education to help fight social exclusion and poverty through socio-pedagogical projects” (p. 3). They identified the strengths of the project as:

- an integrated approach between the school-home-neighbourhood as a way of compensating the environmental constraints of the learners;
- a “bottom-up” approach which encourages the head teacher of the ZEP school to “take the lead” (p. 31) in initiating projects and implementing them;
- an effective “screening” (p. 31) process which can help to detect and address health-related issues and learning difficulties;

- “fertile grounds that encourage innovations” (p. 32) in terms of involving the business sector, neighbourhood, and parents to support the head teacher and the ZEP school;
- the ZEP school unit prevents administrative delays and address urgent issues without the required bureaucracy.
- However, they also noted that the weaknesses of the project were:
- conflicting administrative roles between ZEP school unit and the Zone Directorate (Ministry of Education);
- retention of trained ZEP school class teachers and the recruitment of teachers which is not on a voluntary basis as articulated in the ZEP policy document (MOE, 2002);
- lack of commitment from the Zone Directorate to supporting the ZEP school project such as transferring trained ZEP school class teachers (before the six years cycle);
- lack of communication about the achievements, activities or challenges of the project to the rest of the education system;
- lack of institutional support from the Zone directorate and ZEP school head teachers;
- training of head teachers not adapted to the unique realities of ZEP schools.

The report concluded that adequate training of the teaching and administrative staff, as well as their re-valorisation by the Ministry of Education, could transform the ZEP school staff as agents of change. They also recommended greater accountability of the school project which can be achieved through a reliable monitoring and evaluation system.

Therefore, in reviewing the literature, it was seen that there are several obstacles to the achievement of the ZEP school learners including the curriculum, pedagogy, linguistic

policies, and assessment methods. Mahadeo and Mahomed (2008) called for “a comprehensive evaluation of the project” (p. 233) and Panday and Li Xu (2013) identified several weak areas within the ZEP school project. To date, there has been no research which has investigated ZEP schools as a strategy of inclusive education, or has used a social justice perspective to explore the project. Therefore, this study aims at filling this gap in the current literature of the Mauritian education context.

This study aims at investigating ZEP schools of Mauritius as an inclusive strategy which enhances social justice in the Mauritian education system. Therefore, the next section describes and explains the need to reframe an inclusive education within a social justice framework.

Reframing an Inclusive Education within a Social Justice Framework.

In their discussion of the idea of inclusion as social justice, Artiles, Harris-Murri and Rostenberg (2006) proposed a “transformative model of social justice” which “embraces participatory strategies in which distribution of resources, access, and social cohesion constitutes the foundation of democratic egalitarian alternatives” (p. 267). Their proposal is based on crafting a model of inclusive education which promotes social justice through a participatory approach which would take into consideration historical, social, cultural and structural forces. According to them, it is imperative to research the experiences of the principal actors who are involved in inclusive programs, that is, the class teachers, school leaders, parents and learners. Such research is part of what this study intends to do.

Artiles et al., (2006) also stated the importance of transformative models of an inclusive education for social justice that “tackle individual as well as historical and structural forces...avoid the contradictions created by economic-political (distributive view) or cultural (recognition or valorization) solutions” (pp. 266-267). One of the aims of

this study is to explore what a transformative model of an inclusive education for social justice could mean for ZEP school communities.

The ZEP school project of Mauritius was intended to be an inclusive strategy by the Mauritian government (MOE, 2002) and the question addressed in this thesis is whether it is, in practice, an inclusive education for social justice. Armstrong et al. (2010) are of the opinion that "...the social justice underpinnings of inclusive education have failed for the most part to be translated into effective policies and practices" (p. 26). This study proposes to explore the possibilities of reframing the concept of inclusive education within a social justice perspective which, according to this study, is at the heart of an inclusive education.

In that context, this study seeks to contribute to the literature and Mauritian research by investigating the concept of inclusive education and its practice through the ZEP school project from a social justice perspective. In this way, this study hopes to offer the opportunity of achieving a Mauritian education system which offers an inclusive education in a way that, in both process and outcome, is for the purpose of achieving social justice.

The next section presents the conceptual framework of this study.

The conceptual framework

A conceptual framework can be defined as narrative or graphic explanation of the main factors, variables or concepts which will be studied in the research and how they are related to each other (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This section presents the conceptual framework of this study which was developed from the discussion of social justice and inclusive education in this literature review. Figure 2.2 presents the main elements of the first stage of the conceptual framework for this study.

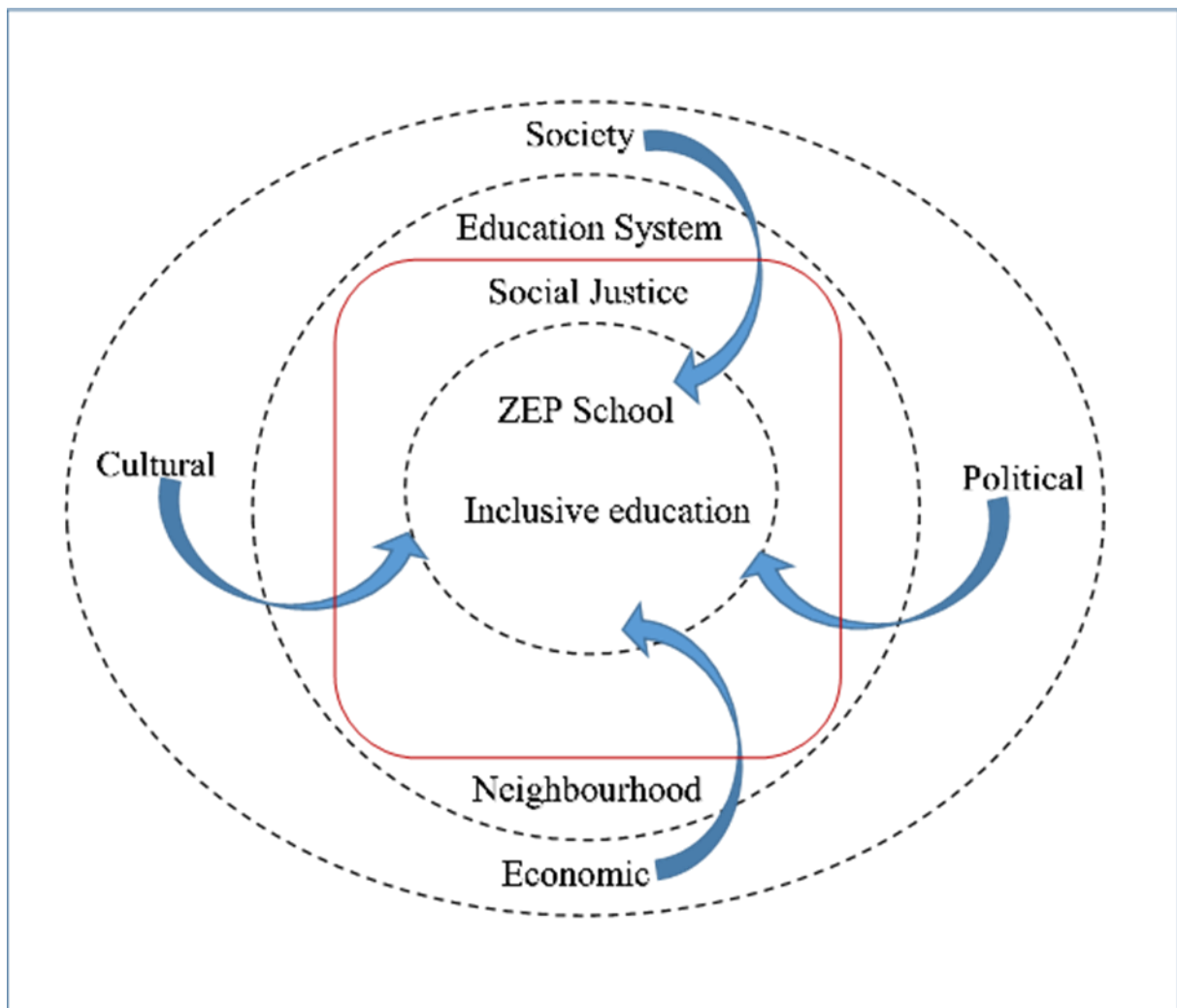


Figure 2.2. Main elements of first stage of the conceptual framework.

The first stage of the conceptual framework locates the ZEP school within the social, cultural, and political forces which have positive or negative effects on society as well as the education system and schools. These forces also influence the way of understanding and approaching the concepts of inclusive education and social justice which are socially constructed notions according to personal and cultural experiences of the individual as well as the country's unique socio-economic and historical context.

By beginning with these aspects, the conceptual framework acknowledges the impact of political, social and economic forces in the creation of inequalities and marginalisation (Fraser, 1997; 2008; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Keddie, 2012; Mills & Gale,

2010) in society and in the education system. For instance, the multicultural context of Mauritius, through the presence of different ethno cultural groups, affects policy making, decision making and society's understandings of equality (Ng & Bloemraad, 2015; Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2015). In the same way, this study acknowledges that the ZEP school project is influenced by these forces in many ways. Some of them are: the socio-economic disadvantages affecting the ZEP school neighbourhood; the perception of the Mauritian society about the school project; the socio-political reasons influencing the Mauritian government to implement the ZEP school project. These social, cultural and political forces have a significant impact on the understanding and approaches to an inclusive education and the conceptual framework of this study acknowledges such an impact. Furthermore, as a Creole Mauritian woman, I bring my personal experience of these forces which has contributed to an understanding of its significance for the research.

Investigating an inclusive education

From the presentation of the different perspectives and approaches to the concept of inclusive education in the Mauritian and international contexts, three components of inclusive education were identified as most relevant to this study: a) education for the diversity of learners by respecting their difference; b) education for marginalised and vulnerable groups; and, c) free quality education for all children. These components are shown in figure 2.3:

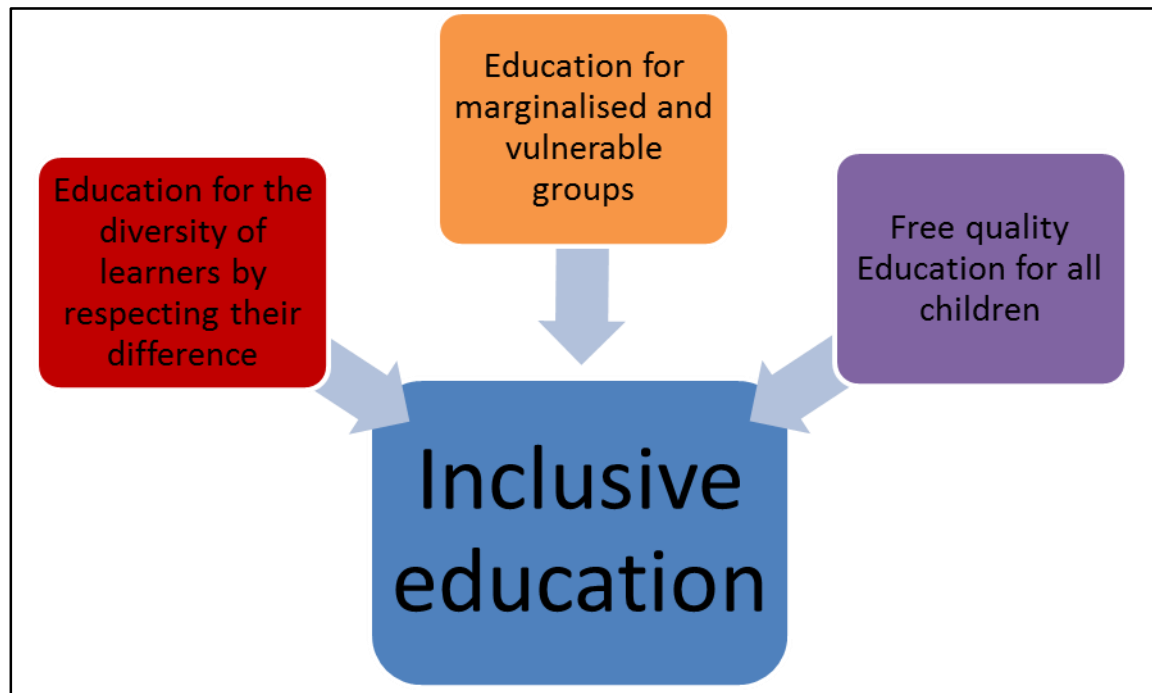


Figure 2.3. Components of inclusive education in this study.

It was presented in the first section of this chapter that UNESCO (1994) recommended the implementation of an inclusive education which is centred upon attending to the diversity of the learners' needs in education and that schools should ensure that no child is marginalised because of his/her difference. Informed by these recommendations and the literature (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Tikly & Barrett, 2011), the first component of inclusive education in this study highlights the importance of an education system which values the diversity of learners by respecting their differences. This component shows the importance of reaching out to learners' educational and personal differences by developing adequate structures which will cater to the unique needs of each learner as opposed to a concern with the uniformity of learners.

The other component of inclusive education which supports this study is an education system which addresses the social and educational marginalisation of children and other vulnerable groups. This study is driven by the beliefs that the educational policies, structures and practices of an education system can help in mitigating the effects

of social exclusion upon schooling (Armstrong et al., 2010). Social marginalization or exclusion affects educational opportunities of learners which lead to children being excluded (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006; Forlin, 2006). This is an example of how inclusive education connects with social justice which is critical of the structural barriers, found within the education system or the schools, which restrict access, participation and success of school learners located in less developed regions of Mauritius.

The last inclusive education component is connected to providing a quality education to all children in developing countries such as Mauritius. The term ‘quality’ refers to the “relevance” (Tikly & Barrett, 2011, p. 10) of the education system to the needs and aspirations of its citizens as well as the educational outcomes of that system. In the context of this study, UNESCO’s notion of universal free education for all children (UNESCO, 2000) is an important component as it aims at eliminating obstacles to schooling and is again grounded in both inclusive education and social justice beliefs. This component resonates with Ainscow and Miles (2008) who stated that “education is a basic human right and the foundation of a more just society” (p. 16).

Concurring with Armstrong et al. (2010) that “the discourse of inclusive education can provide a political space for contesting the wider agenda of social injustice” (p. 8), this study posits that the concept of an inclusive education should be re-positioned within a social justice framework. Both inclusive education and social justice aim at addressing issues pertaining to political, cultural and economic forces which prevent the implementation of an education for the marginalised and vulnerable groups. Therefore, in order to extend an inclusive education agenda, this study re-structures an inclusive education within a social justice framework. Consequently, the next element of this conceptual framework is social justice.

Social justice framework: Gewirtz and Cribb plural conceptions of social justice (2002).

Nieto & Bode (2012) described social justice as “...a philosophy, approach and actions that embody treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity” (p. 12). This holistic definition of social justice is the one which was used in the context of this research as this definition points toward the theoretical and practical aspects of social justice. It also provides essential values and beliefs which can adequately frame the conceptualisation and implementation of an inclusive education for social justice in Mauritius.

Reflecting my personal understanding of what is needed for social justice, I identified Gewirtz and Cribb’s (2002) plural conceptions of social justice as the most appropriate analytical framework used to examine the implementation of an inclusive education in ZEP schools. It reinforces my experience that a generalised understanding of social justice as equal access to education has not been sufficient to bring about a socially just school system and society in Mauritius. The review of the social justice literature showed that a comprehensive model of social justice is one which solves the redistribution-recognition dilemma (Fraser, 2008) and consequently, leads to a transformative approach to social justice in education. Informed by the need to move away from a unidimensional understanding to a plural conception of social justice, this study aligns with Gewirtz and Cribb’s (2002) plural conceptions of social justice, that is, distributive, cultural and associational justices. Figure 2.1 (reproduced here as Figure 2.4) is presented:

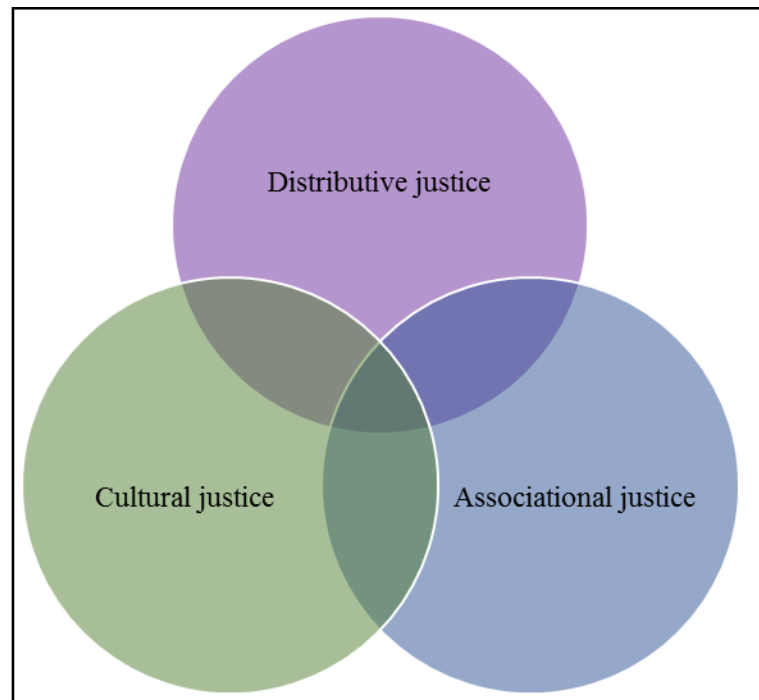


Figure 2.4. Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) plural conceptions of social justice.

The main aim is to use each social justice dimension as a lens to understand and analyse the key inclusive practices in ZEP schools and identify whether they enhance or prevent the achievement of social justice.

Therefore, this study proposes to investigate the ways that the ZEP school staff implemented practices of an inclusive education which enhance the distributive justice dimension for the ZEP school learners and their parents by examining how, through the provision of resources and funds from the ZEP school project, the effects of the socio-economic marginalisation and material deprivation are alleviated in the ZEP school neighbourhood. This study also seeks to identify how the cultural and social resources (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002) provided by the schools are distributed to the ZEP school learners and enable them to achieve educational success.

It is also proposed that the inclusive education practices of the ZEP school staff are explored through a cultural justice lens which is founded upon recognition and respect. The interactions and communicative practices between the ZEP school stakeholders will

be examined as well as the social and cultural forces which influence their perceptions and practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools. For instance, the interactions between the ZEP school staff and the parents can define the type of relationship between both groups: whether there is the presence of mutual respect or whether they share values and beliefs as well as revealing their strategies used to achieve this exchange as equals.

In this study, the practices in ZEP schools will also be examined through an associational justice dimension by investigating the stakeholders' understanding of participation, involvement and decision making power and whether they are provided with opportunities to implement or use their participative powers. Therefore, within the associational justice dimension, the researcher also examined the role and interplay of power structures in ZEP schools. Since power operates within relationships, the ZEP school class teachers, parents and head teachers will be questioned about their participative power in the decision making of the school; if they are consulted by the Ministry of Education; and, if their voice is heard by the authority. At the level of practices, by observing the interactions amongst the stakeholders in the classroom, school meetings or at the morning assembly, the sources of power and its interplay between the stakeholders will also be located.

Therefore, these three dimensions of social justice will be used to analyse the identified practices of an inclusive education of the ZEP school staff. It is through this understanding and discussion of the key inclusive practices from a social justice perspective that the researcher can identify whether ZEP schools are models of an inclusive education for social justice. It will also enable a discussion as to how the current model could be further developed to enhance an inclusive education for social justice.

In light of the proposal to study the ZEP school project as an inclusive strategy within a social justice framework, this thesis puts forward a conceptual framework which is shown in Figure 2.5:

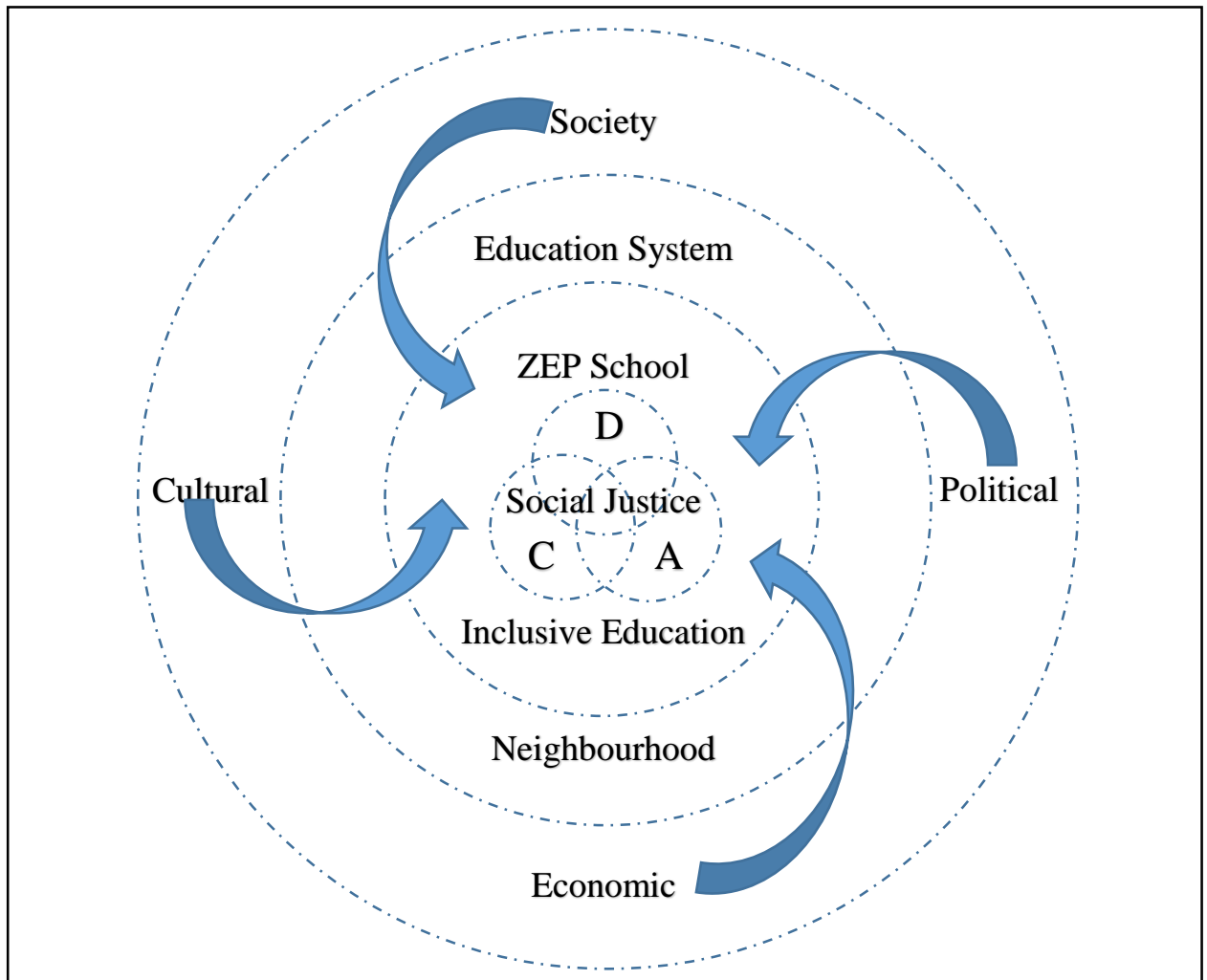


Figure 2.5. Complete conceptual framework for the study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has initially explored the two fundamental concepts within which I have framed my research topic, namely social justice and inclusive education. Within the review of the literature, it was seen that a social justice framework takes into consideration the following elements:

- Social, historical, cultural, economic and political context of the country and the education system;
- Acknowledging the influence of socio-economic powers and structural inequalities on the education system;
- Tension between the redistributive and recognitive dimensions of social justice;
- Recommending a transformative approach to social justice education.
- In the analysis of the concept of inclusive education, the following elements were identified:
 - Framed within a critical perspective as the aim is to find an alternative to current mainstream education system;
 - Identifies the impact of power, marginalisation, privilege and disadvantage in education and aims at addressing these sources of exclusion;
 - Educational systems have difficulties implementing an inclusive education because of structural, systemic and socio-economic barriers;
 - The substitution of integration practices for inclusion in schools is founded upon the premise of categorising and separating children instead of facilitating the process of learning together by considering individual difference as strength and not a threat within the education system.

Both concepts are founded upon a critical perspective with the aim of bringing an alternative view of education.

In exploring the Mauritian literature, it was seen that research in the primary education sector has identified and focussed upon the barriers to successful completion of primary schooling. However, none of the small amount of research on the ZEP school project has investigated this school project as an inclusive education strategy or from a

social justice perspective. Therefore, the focus of this study is to examine the perceptions of the ZEP school staff about an inclusive education and their practices of this approach in the ZEP school within a social justice framework.

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded within a social justice perspective through the use of Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) plural models of social justice which consists of distributive, cultural and associational justice. These dimensions ensure a balance between attending to material and physical needs of society as well as the cultural and participative rights of marginalised individuals or groups. It is viewed that the distributive, cultural and associational dimensions of social justice are important elements in ensuring the practice of inclusive education - areas which are investigated in the context of this study. In that perspective, the practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools are examined and analysed to identify in what ways these schools enhance or prevent the achievement of social justice. Therefore, the research question is:

“What are the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools of Mauritius?”

The investigation of both inclusive education and social justice in this chapter has led to an understanding of the phrase “an inclusive education for social justice” as meaning an inclusive education that is grounded in social justice principles in its practice in schools, and also enables the achievement of social justice in the wider Mauritian society.

Accordingly, in the context of this study, ZEP schools are examined in order to know how such an inclusive education for social justice is practiced by staff, and perceived by the stakeholders in the school communities. This requires:

a) investigating the understanding of the ZEP school staff about an inclusive education and social justice;

b) investigating the practices of an inclusive education of the ZEP school staff from a social justice perspective.

Based on these findings, further discussion will be developed around:

c) exploring the possibilities of an inclusive education for social justice through a transformative approach instead of being restricted to an affirmative redistribution approach.

This means that the three sub-questions guiding the research process are:

1. What are the perceptions of ZEP school staff about an inclusive education for social justice and how is it implemented?
2. What are the experiences of ZEP school stakeholders, including parents and learners, of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools?
3. What do these perceptions and practices mean for a model of an inclusive education for social justice in the Mauritian education system?

The next chapter discusses and presents the research design which was adopted to examine the ZEP school project as a model of an inclusive education for social justice.

Chapter 3 Research Design

In addressing the main research question, “What are the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in the ZEP schools of Mauritius?” the research study has been guided by the following sub-questions:

1. What are the perceptions of ZEP school staff about an inclusive education for social justice and how is it implemented?
2. What are the experiences of ZEP school stakeholders, including parents and learners, of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools?
3. What do these perceptions and practices mean for a model of an inclusive education for social justice in the Mauritian education system?

This chapter presents the research design which is summarised in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1.

Summary of the Research Design.

Paradigm	Interpretive
Epistemology	Social constructionism
Theoretical Perspectives	Symbolic Interactionism Critical Hermeneutics
Research Methodology	Case study
Participants	Purposeful sampling
Data Collecting Strategies	Questionnaires Semi-structured Interviews Focus Group Interviews Participant Observation Learners' drawings Documents
Data analysis process	Miles, Huberman and Saldana's Data Analysis process (2014) Stake's cross-case analysis (2006)
Trustworthiness and rigour	Data triangulation Member checking Use of thick descriptions Ethical considerations Reflexivity

Each step of the research design is presented and discussed in the following sections.

Paradigm

A research paradigm can be defined as a set of beliefs that provides the overarching framework of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) and guides the researcher in the way of apprehending and approaching knowledge and, therefore, in the set of practices used to carry out the research.

This study uses an interpretive paradigm based on the concept of "verstehen" (Flick 2006, p. 74), a German verb that can be translated as "to understand". The interpretive paradigm is inductive, context bound and does not seek to generalise

(Creswell, 2012; Flick, 2006). The use of an interpretive paradigm helps in achieving an understanding through interpretation of the viewpoint of the participants involved in the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). This research study aimed at understanding the perceptions of the ZEP school staff about an inclusive education for social justice and how this was implemented in daily school life.

The selection of a particular paradigm includes particular understanding about ontology and epistemology involving how the researcher views knowledge, his/her relationship with knowledge, as well as how to go about approaching the construction of knowledge. The ontology of a research design sheds light on the nature and characteristics of knowledge and, in an interpretive paradigm, this is understood as the world being full of meanings which emerge when human beings engage with it in a conscious way (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). It is this conscious engagement through the mind's reasoning and interpretations of the world that we start gaining understanding and construct our meanings. Therefore, the ontological assumption of interpretive research is that the world and knowledge are constructed in individual and multiple ways as Schwandt (2000) stated:

...we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. Most of us would agree that knowing is not passive—a simple imprinting of sense data on the mind—but active; mind does something with those impressions, at the very least forms abstractions or concepts (p. 197).

In investigating the ZEP schools, the aim was to understand the constructed meanings and experiences of the ZEP school staff in order to have an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of an inclusive education, as well as their implementation strategies which included their interactions with others, namely the ZEP school learners and parents.

From an interpretive perspective, reality is created and interpreted by a set of complex assumptions, beliefs, meanings and actions as constructed by human beings and, so, there are multiple realities which come through individual understanding and interpretation (Crotty, 1998) and these realities are also influenced by the unique social, historical or cultural context of the phenomenon (Crotty, 1998). In this study, the aim was to examine the realities of the ZEP school staff in different areas of Mauritius that vary in terms of socio-geographical and backgrounds. In order to get a better understanding of the social context of the schools, the researcher lived within the ZEP school neighbourhood, whenever it was possible, throughout the data collection period. Through this “immersion” (Hogan, Dolan & Donnelly, 2011, p. 46) process, the researcher was able to more deeply understand the unique social and school setting of each ZEP school.

Epistemology

The epistemology of a research study, also known as “theory of knowledge” (Habermas, 1987, p. 3), provides a set of assumptions about the relationship between the researcher and the knowledge being investigated (Creswell, 2012).

The chosen epistemological stance is social constructionism which posits that realities, meanings and understandings are socially constructed, and that the researcher also participates in these constructions through the interactions with the groups of participants (Creswell, 2012; Kukla, 2000). This collective construction is dependent upon the social, cultural or economic background of the individuals and influences their interpretations and understanding of the world as well as the way they interact with others. As stated by Schwandt (2000): “...there is an inevitable historical and sociocultural dimension to this construct. We do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language and so forth” (p. 197).

This study was oriented towards the construction of understandings about an inclusive education and social justice, as well as the reality of teaching or learning in ZEP schools, according to the views of each group of participants (class teachers; Head Teachers; system leaders; learners and parents). These multivoice reconstructions (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) were also “shaped by social interaction with others and from their own personal histories” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 40) and so the aim was to capture and explore the views of different ZEP school stakeholders involved in the teaching process or leadership of the school as well as the perspectives of those who experience the learning process.

In the context of investigating an inclusive education, this process resonates with the views of Ainscow & Miles (2008) about the dynamic constructions of meanings, values and beliefs amongst the participants which, in turn, create their relationships:

...we cannot divorce inclusion from the contexts within which it is developing, nor the social relations that might sustain or limit that development. It is in the complex interplay between individuals, and between groups and individuals, that shared beliefs and values exist and change, and it is impossible to separate those beliefs from the relationships in which they are embodied (p. 26).

In this study, by being present on the school site every school day for several consecutive days, the researcher was part of the interactive process and was able to observe the interactions between the ZEP school class teachers and the learners, or between parents and staff at events such as Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings.

Theoretical Perspectives

The use of a theoretical perspective guides the researcher throughout the research process. Crotty (1998) claims: “Different ways of viewing the world shape different ways of researching the world” (p. 66) which means that the philosophical position adopted by

the researcher will determine the methodology. The theoretical perspectives chosen for this research were symbolic interactionism and critical hermeneutics.

Symbolic interactionism.

The overarching theoretical perspective of this research is symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) which is “concerned with studying subjective meanings and individual meaning making” (Flick, 2006, p. 65) which arise from people’s practices, activities, actions and attitudes. Symbolic interactionism is founded upon three principles (Gray, 2014):

- People interpret the meaning of objects and actions in the world and then act upon those interpretations.
- Meanings arise from the process of social interaction.
- Meanings are handled in, and are modified by, an interactive process used by people in dealing with the phenomena that are encountered (p. 24).

In this research study, the first concern was to gain the perceptions of the ZEP school staff about an inclusive education and social justice and examine in what ways these perceptions align with their actions or practices (Blumer, 1969). This research purpose is in line with the views of Gewirtz and Cribb (2009) who stated that, at the level of practical research, symbolic interactionists study “actions and perspectives of individuals and groups living and working in particular settings, paying particular attention to the systems of meaning through which they account for their experiences and make sense of the world” (pp. 29-30).

Symbolic interactionism is grounded within a social constructionist epistemology as they are both concerned with the role of social interaction in the construction of meanings. Symbolic interactionism shows the active role played by the participants in the

construction of meanings, in their engagement and relationships with each other. As stated by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2002):

Interaction implies human beings acting in relation to each other, taking each other into account, acting, perceiving, interpreting, acting again. Hence, a more dynamic and active human being emerges rather than an actor merely responding to others (p. 26).

It was important to explore how the ZEP school staff engaged with the other participants in their practice of an inclusive education and examine how these practices contributed to the achievement of social justice in ZEP schools. In the same way, it was important to study how ZEP school parents related their actions and interactions to the practices and actions of the ZEP school staff.

Therefore, the perspective of symbolic interactionism guided the research process to achieve a better understanding of the constructed meaning and practices of inclusive education of the ZEP school staff in collaboration with the other participants.

Critical hermeneutics.

As a way of extending the understanding and analysis of the practices within ZEP schools, critical hermeneutics provided another theoretical perspective appropriate for this research concerned with social justice. It enabled a better understanding of marginalised groups and highlights the presence of unequal relationships in society.

Critical hermeneutics was developed from the combination of hermeneutics and critical theory (Jacobs, 2014). Hermeneutics, which is the theory of achieving understanding and interpretation (Gadamer, 2004), is complemented by critical theory which uncovers the assumptions and presence of dominant powers that prevent us from understanding and interpreting situations and phenomena (Jacobs, 2014). Critical theory

also aims at bringing change through the disruption of these dominant powers (Cohen et al., 2000).

By being aware and critical of the presence of power in the construction of meanings, the critical hermeneutics scholar “takes the grounds of interpretation to be essentially linked to social power and domination” (Kögler, 2008, p. 152). Such an approach to meaning making entails that language, texts, actions, images should not only be interpreted and understood by the researcher, but also be critiqued because they can serve as a “medium of domination and social force” (Wodak 2011, p. 626).

Through the use of critical hermeneutics during the interpretation process, this study aimed at “extending the boundaries of hermeneutics” (Jacobs, 2014, p. 305) by taking into consideration the influences of power in the construction of meanings and practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools as well as the understandings of the stakeholders about social justice. This approach is in line with Seddon (2003) who warned about the presence of “obdurate social structures” (p. 250) that shape and determine the goals and practices of education for social justice purposes. She further argued that it is the role of research to “document, interrogate, and critique historicized social practices to reveal the social movement and processes through which it is realized in the everyday practices...” (p. 250).

Therefore, in the construction of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools, the researcher *interrogated and critiqued* (Seddon, 2003) the influences of educational structures and the Ministry of Education upon ZEP schools and their stakeholders in their understanding and practices of an inclusive education; the impact of socio-economic and ethnic relations amongst ZEP school stakeholders; the impact of identified practices of power relations between the participants; and the participative power of each ZEP school stakeholder in decision-making. For instance, the literature

identified that the organisational structure of the Mauritian primary schools is hierarchical (Bunwaree, 2001) and quite rigid and, therefore, the perceptions and practices of the ZEP school Head Teacher and class teachers might reflect such hierarchy and rigidity or they may aspire to challenge such power relations. This is in line with Jacobs (2014) who claimed: “Critical hermeneutics grounds a critical research that attempts to connect the everyday troubles individuals face to public issues of power, justice and democracy” (p. 307).

Through critical hermeneutics, interpretation adopts a critical stance when providing a voice to those who are often unheard in social relations, that is, the marginalised or those who have been repressed. Since one of the concerns of this research study is about investigating practices of an inclusive education from a social justice perspective in education, critical hermeneutics can be considered as an appropriate framework within which to further interpret the understandings and practices of an inclusive education.

Furthermore, Kinsella (2006) considered that the use of a hermeneutical approach in itself can lead to simplistic interpretation by focussing upon “dualities” (p. 43) or oppositions arising from the constructed meanings without questioning the sources of these dualities. According to her, critical hermeneutics provides an intermediary to simple hermeneutical interpretation proposing a “critical approach that extends one's insight” (p. 41).

In this study, critical hermeneutics was central in grounding one of the key tensions in social justice, that is, the “redistribution-recognition dilemma” (Fraser, 1997; 2008) as well as the tensions arising amongst the social justice dimensions (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). The redistribution-recognition dilemma reveals that in trying to address the redistributive element of justice, the element of cognitive justice is hindered. Similarly,

the tensions arising amongst the distributive, cultural and associational justice dimensions (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002) highlight the need for interrogating power relations and educational structures which interfere in the achievement of social justice in ZEP schools. Through the use of critical hermeneutics, the researcher participated in constructing an understanding of social justice which can transcend the conflicts or “tensions” (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002) amongst the social justice dimensions with the aim of achieving a holistic understanding of the concept. Therefore, critical hermeneutics provided the possibility of extending interpretation by adopting a critical stance.

Case Study Methodology

A research methodology serves as the plan of action or design which guides the choice of methods and data collecting tools. The appropriateness of a research method determines the focus and mode of the enquiry, as well as the type of data which will be collected and the choice of the research participants (Flick, 2006).

The case study methodology was chosen as the most appropriate as this study is an inquiry aimed at investigating “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2003, p. 13). While a ‘case’ can be an individual, organisation, observed phenomenon, or a community (Flick 2006; Kumar 2011), the primary subject of analysis of this research was the ZEP school project through the study of four schools.

Gewirtz and Cribb (2009) advised that it is important to ground the research methodology within the theoretical perspective of the study. Since symbolic interactionism is concerned with people’s “micro-level interactions” (Gewirtz & Cribb 2009, p. 30), the case study method was chosen as the research methodology because it provides the possibility of undertaking an in-depth exploration (Savin-Badell & Major, 2013) of the case being studied which is, the ZEP school project of Mauritius as an

inclusive education strategy for children living in “less developed regions” of the Republic of Mauritius (MOE, 2002, p. 1). The case study methodology facilitated the detailed study of the perceptions and practices of the ZEP school staff about an inclusive education for social justice through their relationships with the learners and parents and enabled an understanding of the impact of the educational policy of the Ministry of Education concerning governmental support for disadvantaged schools. This methodology also offered the opportunity of investigating in situ the ZEP school context in all its complexity, taking into consideration the geographical, social, historical and cultural components.

Case study can be categorised into single case and multiple case studies (Yin, 2003). The selection of more than one case can be used for the purpose of comparison between cases (Flick, 2006; Savin-Badell & Major, 2013; Yin, 2003) or for replication purposes (Yin, 2003). In this study, a multi-site case study was chosen as it “investigates a defined, contemporary phenomenon that is common to two or more real-world or naturalistic settings” (Bishop, 2010, p. 588). The most important factor in the use of a multi-site case study methodology is that the “same unit of analysis of the unit(s) or phenomenon is studied in light of the same key research questions” (Bishop, 2010, p.588).

Through the investigation of more than one ZEP school, the multiple facets of ZEP schools in their individuality and their commonalities were explored and analysed. Since the ZEP schools are situated in different socio-geographic areas of Mauritius with unique social, geographical and cultural contexts, the multi-site case study enabled the examination of the unique characteristics of each ZEP school, located within its neighbourhood, and this enriched the understanding of the concept of inclusive education in ZEP schools in Mauritius.

Kumar (2011) cautioned against the use of random sampling when choosing a case study methodology as the most important aspect is about being provided “with as much information as possible to understand the case in its totality” (p. 127). In that context, the next section discusses the selection process of the ZEP schools in this research.

Selection of participants

Schools.

This section describes the process undertaken to identify and select the schools which participated in the multi-site case study and the participants who were involved in the research. Stake (2006) uses the term “multicase research” which he described as the close examination of several cases situated in different locations but are linked together. However, the term *multi-site case study* will be used throughout this research study.

Stake (2006) asserted that “balance and variety” (p. 25) are important in the selection of cases and for that reason a purposeful sampling method (Patton, 2002; Merriam, 2014) was used in this study. Purposeful sampling method is founded on the assumption that the researcher wants to “discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2014, p. 77).

There are 30 ZEP schools in the Republic of Mauritius¹⁰ which are clustered into four zones by the Ministry of Education (Zones A to D). As stated in the first chapter, all ZEP schools are located in less developed regions of the country and in this study, four ZEP schools on the island of Mauritius were selected according to the following sampling criteria:

- Location: investigating ZEP schools from the four different zones offered the possibility of a balanced understanding of the perceptions and practices inclusive

¹⁰ Composed of the island of Mauritius and the other related islands

education in ZEP schools according to the unique geographical, cultural and historical contexts.

- Percentage pass rate at CPE exams: since the Ministry of Education and the Mauritian society consider that the percentage pass rate at the CPE exams is an important element of educational success, schools were selected according to a high-average-low performance at the CPE exams.
- Specific attributes, events, and uniqueness (Merriam, 2014, p. 78) of each ZEP school.

Each school was provided with a pseudonym for confidentiality and anonymity. The following schools were selected for the specified reasons:

- Redrock School: This government school is one of the ZEP schools with an inconsistent percentage pass rate at the CPE exams over the previous eight years from 2006 to 2013 (see Appendix D). This school is situated in Zone A of Mauritius and it was important to collect data from this ZEP school as an example of a school which, according to its CPE percentage pass rate, has experienced progress and setbacks.
- Mountain School: This government school is situated in Zone B of the island and was chosen for its consistently high percentage pass rate at the CPE exams (see Appendix D) in the previous eight years, averaging 65% per year. According to the Ministry of Education and the local media, Mountain School is considered as a ‘successful’ ZEP school.
- Lady of the Sea Catholic School: This school is a Roman Catholic primary school, managed by the Bureau de l’Education Catholique (BEC). Located in Zone D, this school was selected as it offered the possibility of getting the perspective and practices of an inclusive education from a Catholic education framework. It is also

an example of a school which has experienced a relatively high performance in the CPE exams as seen in Appendix D.

- Sunflower School: Situated in Zone C of the island, Sunflower School is a government school located in an urban region, one of the reasons for its selection as all the other ZEP schools were situated in rural areas. Furthermore, prior to the data collection period, Sunflower School had a case of food poisoning through the 'Hot Meal' initiative of the Ministry of Education. It was considered that the impact of the incident with regard to the relationships between the MOE and other stakeholders would provide some important information about participation and decision-making.

Individuals and groups.

As several factors are at play within a school, one cannot understand the phenomenon or an organisation holistically if multiple perspectives are not examined. Yin (2003) claims that "a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence" (p. 97).

When selecting the participants, the main concern was about finding the appropriate participants who would enable an in-depth understanding of the area being investigated (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Since the focus of the study was about investigating the perceptions of the ZEP school staff and the experiences of the schools' stakeholders, it was important to collect data from both teaching and administrative staff and system leaders as well as the ZEP school parents and learners.

The research participants were the staff, parents and learners of the four ZEP schools. Table 3.2 shows the number of participants from the respective ZEP schools.

Table 3.2.

Number of participants from the respective ZEP schools.

Research Participants	Name of ZEP schools			
	Redrock School	Mountain School	Lady of the Sea Catholic School	Sunflower School
Class teachers	5	6	9	12
Head Teacher	1	1	1	1
Cluster Coordinator	1	1	1	1
Parents	6	8	7	7
Learners	2	2	3	2
System leaders	2			

All the ZEP school class teachers, Head Teachers and Cluster Coordinators of the four schools were invited to participate in the study through an invitation and information letter (see Appendix E).

The Cluster Coordinators of the identified ZEP school zones were invited to participate in the study because of their administrative role within the ZEP school project. Their participation in the study provided further insight into the structures, culture and practices of the ZEP schools.

The perceptions of the system leaders were also of significant value as they provided a general insight into the ZEP school project and the vision of their respective educational system, as well as their views on the concepts of inclusive education and social justice.

The choice of the learners was based on their age group and the teachers' evaluation of their overall academic performance at school. Three learners from Grade Six were selected as: a) they were the oldest children at school and, so, they were more articulate in expressing their views and experiences of learning in the ZEP school than younger learners; b) they were generally in their last primary school year and, so, they have had the opportunity to know and see any changes, progress or setbacks in their

respective schools; and, c) they were able to share the realities of the ZEP school neighbourhood.

For the selection of ZEP school parents, the Parent Mediator of the respective ZEP school was contacted so that he/she could help in reaching out to a group of parents, representative of the different Grades in the ZEP schools. As the liaison person between the school and the parents of the ZEP school neighbourhood, the Parent Mediator was considered to be the most appropriate person to act as the link between the researcher and the parents. Because of diverse difficulties in achieving this aim in three of the schools, the researcher contacted the President of the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) to establish contact with the parents. A focus group of at least four parents was formed in each ZEP school.

The next section describes the methods or strategies used to collect data from these different groups of individuals in the ZEP schools.

Data collecting strategies

In line with the theoretical orientation of this study, the data collecting strategies were chosen for being able to provide a range of qualitative data from the participants about their experiences, knowledge and views, as well as direct observations about their actions, interactions and behaviours (Patton, 2002). Through the use of different sources of data, as well as a variety of methods for collecting data, the aim was to achieve a holistic understanding of the different cases with a process of data triangulation (Gibbs, 2013; Merriam, 2014; Yin 2003) which is further discussed in the section on the trustworthiness of this study.

The data collecting strategies is shown in Table 3.3 along with the number of responses or participants involved:

Table 3.3.

Primary sources of data and number collected.

Data collecting strategies	Number	Descriptions
Questionnaires	35	Distributed
	32	Completed and returned
Semi-structured interviews	16	9 learners 4 Head Teachers 3 Cluster Coordinators 2 system leaders
Focus Group interviews	4	Total of 28 parents
Participant observation:		
Classroom lessons	20	Classroom lessons of 40 minutes each
PTA meetings	2	2 Head Teachers; 1 Cluster Coordinator; 2 President of PTA; 20 teachers; 100 parents
Drawings	18	9 learners

As shown in Table 3.3, the primary sources of data were semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, participant observation, questionnaires and learners' drawings. Reports from the Mauritian education system, school documents, as well as school information such as newsletters and census statistics, were used as secondary sources of data. The choice of the data collecting strategies for gathering primary sources of data is elaborated in the next section.

Semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research to obtain the participants' unique perspectives on their lived experiences, particular situations, relationships and strategies in their own words (Kumar, 2011).

In this study, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the ZEP school Head Teachers, Cluster Coordinators and learners of the identified ZEP schools as well as the system leaders. An interview guide was used and was composed of a mixture of structured interview questions and some notes concerning topics to be explored or followed up by the researcher. The interview schedules for each group of participants can be found in Appendix F. Topics which were explored were: understanding of inclusive

education and social justice and strategies to implement these concepts in ZEP schools; social and cultural realities of the ZEP school neighbourhood; collaborative strategies amongst staff; strategies used to involve parents in the school; main challenges faced when working in ZEP schools.

With the ZEP school learners, the aim of the semi-structured interviews was to explore the experiences of the learners on the use and availability of materials, facilities and infrastructure in the classroom and in the school; they were asked to relate their relationships with the teachers, Head Teacher and the type of support they received from the family/community; their learning experience; what they appreciated the most and the least about their school; their description of the neighbourhood in which they live; their hopes for the school and their career aspirations.

The questions were asked in no pre-determined order as it was also important to offer the respondents opportunities to discuss issues or new ideas on the topic as well as allow the “emerging worldview of the respondent” (Merriam, 2014, p. 90). Since most Mauritians are more comfortable using the Kreol Morisien language or French, the respondents were asked in which language they preferred the interview to be held. The semi-structured interviews were audio-taped and notes were taken during the conversation. The questions from the interview schedule were translated by the researcher into Kreol Morisien and French in order to facilitate the interview process.

Focus Group Interviews.

A focus group interview is a group interviewing technique which offers the advantage of also being able to observe the interactions of the group participants (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Such interviews were used to capture the experiences, attitudes and understandings of the respondents in a social and relaxed atmosphere as participants usually feel more at ease being part of a group (Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

Furthermore, this data collecting strategy is grounded in the constructionist stance of this study since the data which is collected in a focus group is socially constructed within the interactions of a group (Merriam, 2014).

Krueger and Casey (2015) provided a checklist of conditions which would ensure a reliable collection of data when carrying out a focus group interviews:

- A manageable group of 5-10 participants;
- A uniform group of participants;
- It is recommended that two persons are involved in the process: a facilitator/moderator and recorder;
- Focus- group interview sessions can last between one to two hours;
- The focus discussion should be a topic of interest to the group participant.

Most of these conditions were met during the data collection. Similar to the semi-structured interview schedule, a series of questions for the focus group interviews were prepared but, parents had the opportunity to talk about any relevant topic arising in these interviews. The discussion topics were related to issues such as the facilities and infrastructure of the ZEP school; the staff relationships with them as parents (teacher-parents; Head Teacher-parents; parents-parents); their aspirations for the school and their expectations; their involvement and decision making power in formal school meetings (for instance, PTA meetings).

The facilitator/moderator of the focus group interview was the Parent-Mediator at one school and, as the Parent-Mediators were not available in the other ZEP schools¹¹, the researcher assumed the dual role which was facilitated by the audio-recording of the interviews. Prior to the focus group interview, the researcher met the Parent-Mediator for a briefing session about the Parent-Mediator's role as facilitator/moderator of the session,

¹¹ Sunflower, Mountain and Redrock Schools

the questions set for the group discussion and any other relevant issues which ensured the smooth-running of the session. In the case of the ZEP schools where there was no Parent-Mediator, the researcher asked the questions and allowed for the parents to provide their opinions. Notes were taken to complement the audio-taped discussions for verification and correction purposes (Kumar, 2011).

Before the official commencement of the interview, the parents were fully informed about the way that the discussion would be held and the role of the researcher during the interview was also clarified. An interview schedule was prepared beforehand in English but it was translated into Kreol Morisien as most of the parents felt more comfortable speaking in their mother-tongue.

Although all the focus group interviews were carried out on the school premises during school hours (with the approval of the Head Teacher), the parents were reassured that the allocated room was private enough to provide the necessary confidentiality and anonymity needed so that they could voice their concerns as freely as possible.

Participant Observation.

Observation is a “purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place” (Kumar, 2011, p. 140). There are different degrees of observation in naturalistic types of research (Cohen et al., 2000) and, in this study, the researcher as “participant-as-observer” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 310) participated in the everyday life of the ZEP schools and had access to the participants, activities, events and all the necessary information. The observations were recorded as “field notes¹²” in a journal (Flick, 2006, p. 285) and included:

- classroom observations of pedagogical strategies; teachers’ instructions and communication strategies with the learners; interactions of learners with

¹² An example of the field notes is provided in Appendix H.

class teacher and amongst themselves; seating arrangements and classroom set up; use of audio visual equipment for teaching purposes;

- interactions of participants in school activities such as PTA meetings, Open days, class meetings, staff meetings; the verbal exchanges and interactions between the different groups of participants, most particularly the communication and interactions between teacher-learners and Head Teacher-learners;
- personal reflections and impressions of the daily events at the school;
- issues or emerging themes which needed further probing;
- researcher's personal observation and recording of the school life such as opinion on the general school environment, school infrastructure, curricular and non-curricular amenities available on site in the ZEP school;
- informal conversations between the researcher and the ZEP school class teachers, Head Teacher, parents, and local community members involved in the school.

These field notes were principally used in the category construction process within the case analysis. This step is further explained in the data condensation section of this chapter.

One of the major limitations of observation as a data collecting tool is that participants may behave differently or feel uncomfortable in situations of observation (Kumar, 2011). In order to counter this limitation, the researcher used her prior teaching experience to 'blend into' the school and establish a trusting relationship in an informal way with the research participants of the school. She participated in the daily school life by: attending the morning assemblies; participating as a teacher's aide in the lower Grades; attending and participating in other curricular or non-curricular activities, so that the

learners and teachers were used to seeing the researcher but also fully aware of her role as a researcher. In two of the ZEP schools, the researcher replaced absent class teachers after being requested to do so by the Head Teacher.

The approval of class teachers and Head Teachers were sought before undertaking the classroom observation of the lessons or being present at meetings such as a staff meeting. However, the researcher was aware that when writing field notes, there would be the risk of “biased observation” (Flick, 2006). One way of minimising such a limitation was to take photos and keep other visual materials which were added to the field notes.

Questionnaires.

A questionnaire is a written list of questions answered by the respondents in order to articulate their attitudes, feelings, beliefs or practices (Kumar, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkorie, 2009). In this case study, the questionnaire was an appropriate data collecting tool providing teachers with the required anonymity (Kumar, 2011) and enabling them to honestly share their perceptions of ZEP schools, inclusive education and social justice.

Most questions were open-ended and developed to enable the teachers to express their understandings of inclusive education, their personal strategies to achieve this concept, as well as the challenges faced by ZEP schools in ensuring the implementation of inclusive practices and social justice issues. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix G.

The major advantage of administering questionnaires was that teachers could share their experiences without fear of being judged or being reported and that they were less time-consuming than interviews (Kumar, 2011). The researcher personally administered the questionnaires since she was on the school site for at least ten consecutive days for the participant observation phase. With the approval of the Head Teacher of the respective

ZEP schools, she explained the purpose of the study to the teachers in a staff meeting and elaborated upon the ethical issues such as the formal consent of the teachers in participating in the study. Once the teachers who consented to participate in the study were provided with a questionnaire, they were informed that they could meet with the researcher to clarify any questions that they might have.

One of the disadvantages of questionnaires is that they fail to provide the rich, in-depth data of interviews, especially when investigating complex issues (Kumar, 2011). However, this limitation was addressed in this study by the fact that most questions were open-ended and the respondents were able to elaborate upon particular issues which needed further probing. It is often considered that questionnaires have a low response rate (Kumar, 2011) but, in this study, the questionnaires were distributed to the teachers who had previously consented to participate in the study. Therefore, 35 questionnaires were distributed and 32 were completed and returned.

Learners' Drawings.

A form of data collection which is becoming increasingly popular in qualitative research is visual data because it enables the researcher to “go beyond the spoken word” (Flick, 2006, p. 271). Such a data collection strategy is particularly recommended for children participating in a study.

Drawings by the ZEP school learners were used to gain a comprehensive view of their experiences and perspectives on learning and their neighbourhood to complement the semi-structured interviews. Examples of the drawings are included in the presentation of findings.

At the beginning of the interview with each learner, he/she was informed that the interview would be of 30 minutes duration and, in the other half hour, they had paper and crayons at their disposal to draw pictures based on the following themes: a) “What I like

the most about school?"; b) "What I like the least about school?"; c) "What I like the most about the neighbourhood?"; and, d) "What I like the least about the neighbourhood?".

Most ZEP school learners looked forward to doing the drawings and this strategy facilitated the exchange and made the learners feel comfortable.

Documents.

Another source of data was from documents, which are considered as standardised artefacts (Flick, 2006), and used in this study as a complementary strategy to the interviews, the questionnaires and observations. Amongst the documents were school statistics; school documents and reports; government reports; ZEP policy documents; school improvement plans.

School documents such as minutes of proceedings from various meetings, government statistics and any other relevant reports were included to have a better understanding of the communication systems within the ZEP schools as well as their main concerns. Authenticity and credibility were two important criteria which were considered when selecting documents (Flick, 2006). Official documents from the Mauritian government or from the ZEP schools were selected on the basis of their reliability, authenticity and credibility. All the documents from the Ministry of Education had the official stamp from this department of the Mauritian government. Some of the school documents were also used to learn further about the school history and the socio-geographical location of the ZEP school.

Data Management and Analysis

Having grounded the data collecting strategy in a qualitative framework informed by the chosen theoretical and conceptual frameworks presented earlier, a data analysis process was required that could shape a holistic understanding of each ZEP school and the

meaning makings of the participants of this study. This section presents how the set of data collected from the four ZEP schools were managed and analysed.

Data Management.

Grbich (2010) has described a process for the management and analysis of qualitative data:

The interpretive processes of data management and analysis...are fluid, involving an ad hoc process of building up and fitting together groups of information while regularly standing aside to allow the light of previous literature and the lens of various theoretical perspectives to provide insight (p. 474).

It is often mentioned that the qualitative researcher faces an overwhelming quantity of data (Grbich, 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002) which requires systematic data management in order to facilitate data analysis. Hence, it is recommended that management of data should start as early as the period during data collection, which is what occurred in this research.

Management of the data from semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and field notes.

The semi-structured interviews were carried out with the system leaders, Cluster Coordinators, Head Teachers and learners of the identified ZEP schools. All interview transcripts were translated from Kreol Morisien or French into English by the researcher or by a professional service provider whose translation was cross-checked by the researcher. The recordings from the focus group interviews with the parents were similarly transcribed. According to Grbich (2010), data generated from focus group interviews is not usually transcribed as member checking is not essential. However, in the case of this research, the audio-taped discussions from the focus group interviews were transcribed by

the researcher to enable the coding of the transcripts with the same rigour as the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews. Notes taken during these interviews helped to provide context and clarification.

Each respondent from each school was provided with a pseudonym and a number which were written on the folder together with the time, place and duration of the interview. Once the transcripts were translated into English, they were kept in the respective folder assigned for each ZEP school.

Management of questionnaires, learners' drawings and documents.

The questions in the questionnaires were grouped into three sections in order to facilitate the data coding. One section was related to the concept of inclusive education and its implementation strategies; the next section was concerned with aspects pertaining to teaching and learning in ZEP schools; and the last section focused on social justice issues and its practice in ZEP schools. Once they were all returned, the 32 completed questionnaires were sorted as per the respective ZEP school and provided with a number. For instance, T1 for Teacher One from Sunflower School or Lady of the Sea Catholic School. Then, the data editing (Kumar, 2011) process began through an examining process undertaken to ensure that there is no "incompleteness or inconsistencies" (p. 255).

The drawings from the ZEP school learners were kept in the respective ZEP school folder. Any important information concerning the respective ZEP schools about school improvement plans; minutes of meetings; statistics about the school and the learners were collected and filed.

Data analysis process.

The overall data analysis process of the research was adapted from Miles, Huberman and Saldana's data analysis process (2014) and informed by Stake's cross-case analysis (2006). This data analysis process is made up of three components: a) data

condensation; b) data display; and, c) discussion, verification and conclusion. The figure 3.1 describes Miles et al. (2014) data analysis process in the context of this study.

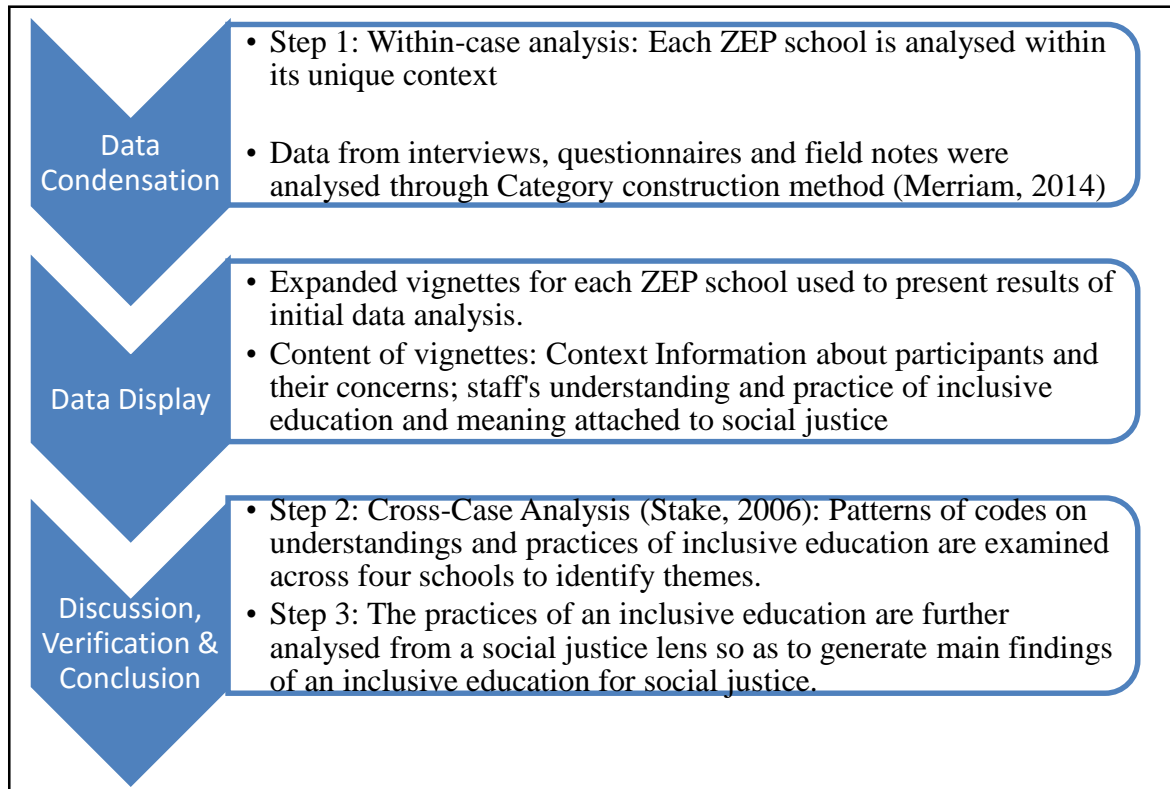


Figure 3.1. Miles, Huberman and Saldana's Data Analysis process (2014).

Data condensation.

The *data condensation* component of the data analysis can be defined as "...the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming..." (Miles et al., 2014, p. 12) the collected data. In the context of this study, the data condensation process assisted in carrying out both a *Within-Case analysis* (Ragin, 1987; Stake, 2006) and *Category construction* (Merriam, 2014).

Through the within-case analysis, each site of the case study was "...first treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself" (Merriam 2014, p. 204). Firstly, the collected data for each participating ZEP school was sorted. Through the analysis and coding data for each ZEP school, an expanded vignette for each school was constructed.

The *category construction* (Merriam, 2014) method was chosen as the medium of making sense of the data through a coding and categorising method. Merriam (2014) defined category as "...a theme, a pattern, finding, or an answer to a research question" (p. 178). Table 3.4 shows the adaptation of Merriam's *Category construction* (2014) where the different phases and aims of the analytical process are described:

Table 3.4.

Phases of Category construction (adapted from Merriam, 2014).

Phase	Aims/Description of Process
Data familiarisation	Reading and re-reading the interview transcript or field notes several times to have a general sense of the information.
Open coding process	Labelling group of words or 'chunks' of data by using "data-driven" or "concept-driven" codes (Gibbs 2007, p.44).
Analytical coding	Assembling the codes into groups.
Repeating Phases One-Three for other data sets	Phases I-III are repeated with other sources of data (field notes/qualitative data from questionnaires).
Creation of master list of groups of codes	Classifying the groups of codes across the different sets of data into a master list of groups of codes for each ZEP school.
Sorting groups of codes into categories	Groups of codes are compared across the different sets of data and sorted into categories for data display.

In the first phase (*data familiarisation*), the interview transcripts of the respective ZEP school's participants were read by paying attention to particular words, phrases or imageries relevant to the underlying concepts of this study. During that process, notes and ideas were included in the transcripts.

The second phase was *open coding*, whereby both data-driven and concept-driven codes (Gibbs 2007, p. 44) were used when examining the data collected from the ZEP school staff. With the *data-driven codes*, the aim was to “tease out what is happening” (Gibbs 2007, p. 45) from the texts and *concept-driven codes* were mainly framed from the conceptual framework of this study.

Excerpts of the coding process for inclusive education and social justice respectively are shown below:

Open Coding about the understanding of an Inclusive education

Interview transcript of CCI from Redrock School

...for me inclusive education consists of ¹*including everybody ...and¹ embracing everybody...to have¹ everybody along with oneself...* and...As far as ZEP is concerned, what inclusion means to me, ²*is to ensure that this child is happy when he comes to school.* ³*That s/he is acknowledged at school... as a child in her/his own right, yes, with his/her difficulties that s/he might be experiencing^{3 & 4} even if s/he smells bad, even if four buttons are missing off her/his shirt, even if s/he has not been combed or did not have a shower.* ³*No matter the background of the child, the teacher should be able to make abstraction of these... the headmaster should make abstraction of all these and² welcome her/him,* and provide the ⁶*child with the means to integrate into the school.* Perhaps this is the reason why, in the past, many children did not come to school because ⁵*they felt, probably unwelcomed...* I don't know but to get back to this attendance issue... today, our children are present at school. Except when there are festivities they would celebrate like Easter Monday, Good Friday when there is nobody... but they are here and I believe if they are here that's probably because we worked extensively on that right at the beginning... ²*we wanted them to be happy to be here. That they feel welcomed to be here.*

However, ²*welcoming them* is not all that matters. There is also another challenging counterpart which consists of making them, not only physically present, ⁷*but also engaged in the learning process and grow from where you are and who you are...* This is another mountain to climb! And it is quite a challenge to undertake.

END OF QUOTE

Data-driven and concept-driven codes

¹ *Including everybody/ social inclusion*

² *Welcoming the child/ensuring that the child is happy at school*

³ *Acknowledging the child-identity/background/uniqueness*

⁴ *Socio-cultural background affecting teaching*

⁵ *Barriers to learning*

⁶ *Integration through education*

⁷ *Learners' engagement in learning process*

Open coding of the definition of social justice

Interview transcript of CC3 from Lady of the Sea Catholic School

If you ¹*reach out to the children* or towards the family and...¹*bring those children to school, ²giving them the same education...* I think we're going towards *social justice* because if the ¹*ZEP unit wasn't here, the children would not have come to school.* You know, when the ZEP started, the rate of absenteeism in the school was about 20% and now in... how many years... less than 10 years, it has decreased to 10%. So, I would say we are going towards social justice: ¹*bringing them to schools, giving them broader opportunity to learn, the ²same opportunity, the same education, ³better adapted to them,* I think we're heading towards social justice in this way. So, for me, social justice is ²*about giving children the same education as others are having* but ³*in a way that these children can take it.* We might be ¹*giving education for all* but these children need something more... ³*a different pedagogy, adapted pedagogy to them* which ⁴*we're trying our best to give in our ZEP schools.*

Data-driven and concept-driven codes

¹*Access to education (Provision of education through ZEP schools)*

²*Same/Equal educational opportunities*

³*Providing what they need- adapting to their needs to achieve equality (equity)*

⁴*ZEP schools as a means to achieve equitable education*

The *open coding* process is a flexible one as the relevant sentences or paragraphs can be categorised under different codes. Throughout the data analysis process, the data-driven and concept-driven codes were “revised, modified, deleted, or expanded to include new codes...” (Miles *et al.* 2014, p. 77).

In the third phase (*analytical coding*), the codes of the respective groups of stakeholders were assembled and developed into analytical codes. Analytical codes are defined by Richards (2005) as “coding that comes from interpretation and reflection on meaning...” (p. 94). In the fourth phase, phases one to three were carried out with other sources of data, that is, field notes from observation records and qualitative data from the questionnaires. In the fifth phase, a master list of groups of codes was created for each ZEP school as way of comparing and contrasting the views from the different participants within the same school. An example of the master list of groups of codes of the perceptions of Redrock School stakeholders about an inclusive education is shown in Table 3.5. The other master lists of groups of codes for each ZEP school, of an inclusive education and social justice respectively, can be found in Appendix I.

Table 3.5.

Master list of groups of codes from Redrock School (Perceptions of an inclusive education).

Participants/sources of data	Groups of codes (per groups of participants)
Cluster Coordinator (semi-structured interview)	Social inclusion/Happiness at school/resources Escape marginalisation/ School's help & support Recognition of learner's identity & background/ Education for all/School care & welcome
Head Teacher (semi-structured interview)	Education for all children/Social inclusion/ resources School care & school as family/Escape marginalisation
Teachers (questionnaire)	Attending special educational needs/Social inclusion/ Order & discipline/ Education for all/Mixed ability groups/
Learners (semi-structured interview)	Order & discipline/ Need for extra-curricular activities/ Adequate school's infrastructure/educational support from relatives
Parents (focus group interview)	Caring staff/Empathetic & dedicated teachers/ Adequate learning & infrastructural resources/ Child's security & safety
Field notes	Importance of discipline/ Focus on literacy/ Adapting curriculum & pedagogy to learners/ Mixed ability groups/Teacher-learner relationship/ Challenges in catering to special educational needs
Group of codes for Redrock School	Social integration & inclusion Education for all & diversity Special educational needs of learners School care & welcome Recognition of learner's identity Escape marginalisation Adapted approach & resources Learners' happiness

In the last phase of the data analysis process, the groups of codes for each ZEP school were sorted into categories¹³ which Merriam (2014) described as “conceptual elements” (p. 181) assisting in the organisation of the different groups of codes. Two categories were constructed for the concept of inclusive education, namely, understandings (or perceptions) and practices of inclusive education. Similarly, the understandings of social justice were identified for each ZEP school. These categories provided a structure for the presentation of the two concepts (inclusive education and social justice) as interpreted and analysed.

Data display.

The second component in the data analysis process is *data display*, which assisted in the organisation and presentation of the data to facilitate the discussion of perceptions and practices of inclusive education in ZEP schools, and the subsequent analysis of the practices from a social justice perspective. In this study, the data was displayed through the use of expanded vignettes to present the reality of each ZEP school.

A vignette (Grbich, 2004; Richman and Mercer, 2002) can be defined as a “short, descriptive literary sketch” (Richman & Mercer 2002, p. 72) whose concise use of words help to provide a clear picture of a given situation. Some social researchers have used vignettes as a data collecting strategy with the aim of obtaining information from respondents. In data presentation, Grbich (2004) states that vignettes act as “illustrative stories” (p. 106) which highlight the area of investigation.

In the context of the study, the aim was to provide narrative snapshots of the realities of ZEP schools, with detailed information about the ZEP schools and the research participants of the respective schools. Therefore, the term *expanded vignettes* is more appropriate for the presentation of each ZEP school for two reasons.

¹³ In this study, categories were used as a means of extending analysis of groups of codes

Firstly, the expanded vignettes provide the reader with an overview of the setting of each ZEP school participating in the study. The setting provides important geographical and sociocultural information about each school to better understand the community which surrounds the ZEP schools. This purpose is in line with the epistemological stance and theoretical perspective adopted in the context of this study: understanding of the unique socio-cultural, economic and geographical context of the ZEP school neighbourhood enhances the constructions of meanings and the interpretive process about the ZEP schools. Secondly, the expanded vignettes were used to allow the voices of the different groups of participants to be heard and provide thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) which can “transport the reader” (Merriam, 2014, p. 262) to each ZEP school which participated in the study.

The structure of the expanded vignette for each ZEP school was:

- The socio-geographical setting of the school and a profile of its research participants. This method of providing meaning in context (Mishler, 1979) guided the way of understanding the meaning of events (Miles et al., 2014).
- The different groups of participants of the respective ZEP schools were also presented to provide a picture of the research participants in terms of their gender, cultural background and their number of years of service in education.
- After the presentation of the context is the presentation of the understandings and practices of inclusive education in the respective ZEP school. The understandings of the ZEP school staff about an inclusive education as well as their respective practices were presented through the use of the categories¹⁴ constructed in the *data condensation* component. One of the characteristics of the presentation of these categories is that it provides excerpts of the understandings of the ZEP school staff, enriched with the views of the ZEP school parents and learners, as well as the field

¹⁴ Categories such as “practices of an inclusive education” or “understandings/perceptions of social justice”.

notes of the *participant observation* sessions in the ZEP school. Several excerpts of the data were displayed in order to enable the data to ‘speak’ to the reader.

- A similar process was used for the presentation of the understandings of social justice in the ZEP school as the aim was to reveal the beliefs, ideas and descriptions associated with the concept by ZEP school staff.

Through these expanded vignettes, the reader is provided with “coherent within-case information” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 136) of each ZEP school before the cross-case analysis process.

Discussion, verification and conclusion.

The aim of the final stage of the data analysis process was to construct meanings from the data as well as verifying and assuring the quality of these conclusions and, therefore, the researcher examined the master list of the groups of codes for each ZEP school in order to carry out a cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006).

The aim of the cross-case analysis is to “build abstractions across cases” (Merriam, 2014, p. 204) and achieve “an understanding of the aggregate” (Stake, 2006, p. 39). In this study, the researcher aimed to have an overall interpretation of the way that school staff across the four ZEP schools understand an inclusive education in these schools and their strategies to implement the concept. A similar process was carried out for the practices of an inclusive education and understandings of social justice. The cross-case analysis process for the concept of inclusive education and social justice is presented in Chapters Five and Six respectively.

Stake (2006) recommended that each individual case, in this study each site of the case study, is not to be merged too quickly so as to maintain the integrity and “situationality” (p. 58) of the findings: “They [the cases] need to be heard a while, then put aside a while, then brought out again, and back and forth...” (p. 46). In line with this, the expanded

vignettes aimed to present the voices of the ZEP school stakeholders leading to a better understanding of each ZEP school in its uniqueness. The cross case analysis process provides a holistic synthesis of the perceptions and practices of the ZEP school staff about an inclusive education as well as their understandings of social justice.

After the cross-case analysis process and discussion of the perceptions and practices of the concept of inclusive education, the key practices were identified so that they could be further explored from a social justice perspective (Chapter Five). A total of four key practices were identified and analysed through the lenses of distributive, cultural and associational justice respectively (Chapter Six). The aim of this additional analytical process, which was concept-driven (Gibbs, 2013), was to examine how these key practices enhanced or restricted each social justice dimension. Finally, informed by the social justice discussion and the two theoretical perspectives, the main findings of the study were identified and discussed (Chapter Seven).

The analysis and discussion throughout the three chapters (Chapters Five to Seven) were guided by a “dialectic” approach (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 2) which can be understood as the use of theory to “talk” to practice and the use of practice to “talk” to theory. Through this dialectic approach, the discussion chapters contributed to enhancing the understanding and theory of an inclusive education for social justice in the ZEP school project, as well as the opportunities and challenges of its implementation. Similarly, the practices from the ZEP schools further informed the theoretical discussions and opportunities of achieving an inclusive and socially just education system for Mauritius.

Trustworthiness and rigour of the study

In qualitative research, “trustworthiness and rigour” are the corresponding terms of validity and reliability in quantitative research (Merriam, 2014, p. 209). According to Gibbs (2013), in order to ensure the quality of any type research, the findings should be:

- valid if the explanations are true or accurate and representative of the phenomenon under study;
- reliable if the findings are consistent irrespective of the circumstances or the researchers;
- generalisable if they are true and applicable in a broad sense.

Trustworthiness can be understood as the series of measures undertaken by the researcher to ensure that the findings are reliable and this can be achieved through a rigorous methodological framework and adequate presentation of findings. In this study, the researcher took a series of measures so as to ensure that the research process and the findings are accurate, representative of the multiple realities of ZEP schools, and rigorous.

Data triangulation.

The process of triangulation is a method of getting more than one view of the phenomenon so as to better understand the subject (Gibbs, 2013), and one way of achieving this is through *data triangulation*. Data triangulation is the process of capturing the phenomenon through multiple sources of data collected which can provide different perspectives upon the same phenomenon or event and “reveal new dimensions of social reality” (Gibbs, 2013, p. 94).

In this study, the researcher used participant observation as an additional primary source of data so as to complement the data collected from the ZEP school staff through the interviews and questionnaires. The understandings and perceptions of an inclusive education were examined in light of the field notes and the views of the ZEP school learners and parents about learning and teaching in ZEP schools. The use of *data triangulation* also enabled the researcher to achieve an in-depth understanding of ZEP schools.

The process of “investigator triangulation” (Gibbs, 2013, p. 94; Merriam, 2014, p. 216) can be considered as another form of ensuring the validity of the research process,

analysis and findings. In this study, the researcher believes that the presentation of her research to the doctoral supervisors, an expert panel, and at research seminars contributed to achieving *investigator triangulation*.

Member checking.

The process of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) or respondent validation (Gibbs, 2013) aims at verifying the “investigator’s representations of events, behaviors, or phenomena” (Teddlie & Tashakkorie, 2009, p. 213).

In this study, the transcripts from the data collected from the system leaders, Head Teachers and Cluster Coordinators were member checked. After translating all the semi-structured interviews, the researcher sent them by email to the respective participants so that they could confirm that there was no error or misinterpretation on the part of the researcher. Seven out of nine participants responded to the emails and expressed their approval of the transcripts. The other two participants did not respond to the emails and the researcher respected what Goldblatt, Karnieli-Miller and Neumann (2011) described as, “the participants’ rights to remain silent” (p. 393). They claimed that, at times, the participants are not willing to continue the relationship initiated during data collection and that “...it is reasonably common for only a few to respond to the researcher’s invitation to participate in member-check” (p. 393). Consequently, the researcher believed that since the majority of interviewees approved the interview transcripts with minor modifications, the two transcripts which were not member-checked were considered as reliable and valid. Furthermore, since the researcher used other strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, transcripts which were not member checked were not considered a threat to the trustworthiness and rigour of this study.

The researcher undertook an informal type of member checking during data collection with the transcripts of the focus group interviews with the ZEP school parents. After each

focus group interview in the respective ZEP school, the researcher took notes from the audio-recordings about the important issues and concerns which were discussed in the interviews. A copy of these notes was provided to the President of the PTA or the Parent-Mediator for their approval and they also had the opportunity to add any clarifications. The researcher considered that this process strengthened the trust of the ZEP school parents in the research process. It was also an opportunity for these parents to do a follow-up with the Parent-Mediator or President of the PTA on the matters raised in the focus group interviews. No member checking was carried out with the transcripts of the ZEP school learners.

Use of thick descriptions.

The interpretive rigour (Kitto, Chester & Grbich, 2008, p. 244) of the research was enhanced by providing *thick descriptions* or “large chunks” of interview excerpts and field notes which enable the reader to personally interpret and understand the participants’ meaning making. Thick descriptions are detailed descriptions of the research setting, or the responses from participants (Geertz, 1993), which are used to support the findings. Through the use of expanded vignettes, verbatim quotations from the research participants, as well as excerpts of the field notes from the observation method, it is shown how the main quotes from the analytical process and discussions of this study were expressed by the research participants (Gibbs, 2007).

Ethical considerations.

It is important for any researcher to be aware of the ethical considerations before undertaking any research project. These ethical considerations ensure that before, during and after the data collection, there are general ‘principles of conduct’ which frame the study. The ethical issues which were considered by the researcher throughout the study were:

- Gaining approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the university in order to ensure that the national and university ethical and safety requirements are respected by the researcher (Appendix J).
- Gaining approval from the organisations and institutions involved as participants: approval letters were provided by the Ministry of Education of Mauritius and the Bureau de l'Education Catholique (BEC) for collecting data in the identified ZEP schools and for the use of any other relevant documents (Appendix K).
- Seeking consent from the participants: Informed consent letters were completed and provided to the researcher from the Head Teachers of the respective ZEP schools so as to collect data in their schools as well as from each of the teachers, parents and learners. In the case of the learner participant, written consent was obtained from the parents and also verbal assent from the learners (Appendix L).
- Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity: During and after the data collection the identity of the respondents and the collected information were kept in all confidentiality. Moreover, pseudonyms were provided to the schools and the participants. The respondents were given the assurance of total anonymity and that the information provided by them would not be identifiable.
- Limiting identification of research sites and participants: Since the Mauritian population is a small community, the researcher made sure to restrict the identification of the ZEP schools and the research participants. However, it was challenging, particularly with regards to restrict the identification of the system leaders. Since there is only one institution in charge of the Catholic education system, and only one person in charge of the ZEP school project, these leaders can be easily identified in a small community as in Mauritius. The researcher tried to limit any identifying information about the participants through the assigned pseudonyms and, in the case

of the system leaders, this meant that at times comments could not be attributed to a particular participant.

- Ethnic issue: As stated in chapter one, Mauritius prides itself on being a ‘rainbow’ nation which recognises and values different ethnic groups. Therefore, issues pertaining to ethnic tensions or discrimination are usually avoided in public conversations and are considered sensitive. Consequently, in this study, questions pertaining to ethnic origins of the research participants were not included in the questionnaires or interview schedules because of the sensitive nature of the issue.

Reflexivity.

All good qualitative data needs to be aware of the fundamental issue of reflexivity defined as “the recognition that the product of research inevitably reflects some of the background, milieu and predilections of the researcher” (Gibbs, 2007, p. 91). In other words, Gibbs considers that no qualitative researcher can claim to be totally objective and unbiased in their analysis and report of the study.

Since the researcher had worked in the Mauritian education system, she was aware of the educational and social prejudices against the ZEP schools but she was, at no time, influenced by these prejudices and had no preconceptions concerning these primary schools. Guided by the ontological position of “*verstehen*” or understanding, she was mainly concerned with achieving an overall understanding of the practices in ZEP schools. All collected data was reported in a transparent and truthful manner. One of the ways of controlling personal bias was to write down the proceedings and thoughts during data collection as field notes in the journal.

During the data collection period, the researcher became aware that her identity as a Creole woman facilitated some of the participants, particularly the school staff from the Creole ethnic group, in expressing their views on the situation of Creole children in the

Mauritian education system as well as the socio-cultural prejudices concerning the Creole ethnic group. This occurrence is not unusual within a social constructionist epistemology as the identity of the researcher plays a vital role in the construction and co-construction of reality (Finlay, 2002; Hewitt, 2007).

The researcher did not consider that there was any element of bias due to her ethnic origin as the Creole participants' views on the Creole children and education were 'handled with care' and triangulated with the views of non-Creole participants. The perceptions and experiences of each participant, irrespective of the ethnic, social class or gender background were analysed.

Such interactions made the researcher reflect on the possibility that non-Creole participants may have abstained from voicing similar issues because of her ethnic identity. However, since the focus of the study was upon understandings and strategies of an inclusive education and not upon race or ethnic issues, the researcher did not focus on the "interpersonal process" which can shift the attention away from the research phenomenon (Finlay, 2002, p. 225). Therefore, she did not consider that her ethnic origin was a "crucial variable" (Mizock, Harkins & Morant, 2011, para. 39) that had the potential to impact the overall findings of this study. Another contributing factor ensuring the rigour of this research was that the researcher was self-aware (Hewitt, 2007) and attentive to the possible effect of the researcher-participant on interactions of people from different races (Mizock et al., 2011).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the research design for this study of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools in Mauritius. Grounded within an interpretive paradigm, this study used a social constructionist approach guided by the theoretical perspectives of symbolic interactionism and critical hermeneutics, using case study methodology and appropriate data collection and analysis methods and processes.

The steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness and rigour of the study, as well as the ethical considerations, were also presented. In the next chapter, the results of the first stage of the data analysis are presented in the form of expanded vignettes.

Chapter 4 Data Presentation: Expanded Vignettes

This chapter presents the results from the first stage of analysis¹⁵ in the form of expanded vignettes for each school. Each expanded vignette is presented according to the following structure: a) the socio-geographical setting of the ZEP school; b) profile of each group of ZEP school stakeholders; c) presentation of the stakeholders' understandings and practices of inclusive education; and, d) presentation of their understandings of social justice.

Following the presentation of the vignettes of the individual ZEP schools, the perspectives of the two system leaders, from the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Bureau de l'Education Catholique (BEC), are also presented including their insights into the Mauritian education system and social justice, as well as the challenges and possibilities of implementing an inclusive education in the ZEP school project.



Figure 4.1. Drawing, representing the school building and the Mauritian national flag, from one of the ZEP school learners of this study.

¹⁵ Step One of the Data Condensation phase.

Redrock School

School neighbourhood.

Redrock Primary School is situated in Redrock village and shares the name of the district in which it is found. Redrock district is one of the largest districts of the country and is mostly rural, composed of 13 villages. Beautiful colours catch the eye of visitors to Redrock village: the greens of its gorges and forests sit prettily next to the blue lagoons of this coastal village.

Redrock region is historically rich: local and international researchers and historians still walk around the neighbourhood to uncover the history of its Mauritian population. It has been discovered that maroon¹⁶ slaves found refuge in the gorges and mountains of Redrock area in the late 18th and early 19th centuries (UNESCO). Since 2008, one particular mountain of Redrock has been internationally recognised as the symbol of the slaves' fight for freedom and the Mauritians' connection to their slave ancestors.

The population of Redrock village is also rich in terms of ethnic and religious cultures. There is a numerically significant Creole community, mostly descendants of the maroon slaves, as well as several "gens-de-couleur", or mulattoes¹⁷, who settled in the late 1970s in the nearby areas. There are also descendants of Marathi people who are Indo-Mauritians of Hindu religion but speak the Marathi language. The first Marathi group settled in Redrock village after being brought in as indentured labourers (Mauritius Marathi Cultural Centre Trust, 2012). There is a small Franco-Mauritian¹⁸ community who were mostly owners of the Sugar estates of the neighbourhood and were named by the local community as the "Whites". In the past decade, a growing number of 'White' expatriates, coming mainly

¹⁶ Runaway slaves.

¹⁷ Ethnic group of people representing those who have both African and European ancestry.

¹⁸ Term used in Mauritius to describe those who have a stronger European ancestry.

from South Africa and Europe, have settled in Redrock village through their business investments or through their ownership of several upmarket residential settlements.

When visiting Redrock, one notices that the community is divided into two groups: an upper socio-economic group and a lower socio-economic group. Impressive villas and vehicles, luxurious resort hotels and shopping centres are promoted by the national government and private companies to attract more tourists and rich expatriates. But, in the shadow of this opulence, live the poorer people who strive to earn their living as fishermen, maids, bricklayers or hotel employees.

There are some social problems within Redrock village such as alcohol abuse, lack of an adequate housing system and unemployment. Attempts to address these problems are strongly supported by numerous Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and local companies. Through such initiatives the local companies, mainly from the hotel industry or sugar plantation industry, run programmes such as prevention of teen pregnancy, development of children's art skills, and vocational training for women.

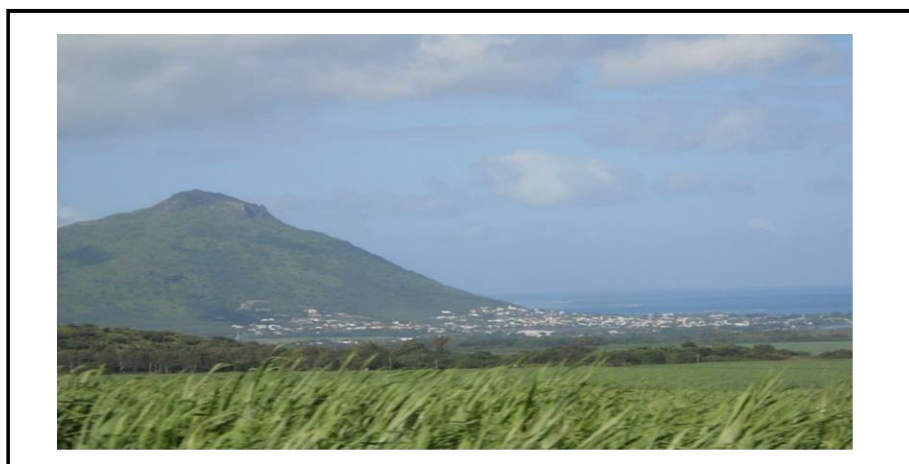


Figure 4.2. Redrock Village and other neighbouring villages at the foot of the Mountain.

School context.

Redrock Primary School is a Government school which welcomed its first learners in January 1968 and opened its pre-primary section of the school in 1990. It became a ZEP school in 2003, as was the case for 29 other primary schools which did not reach the average pass mark level of 40% at the CPE exams. The percentage pass rate of the CPE students at Redrock School in 2010, 2011 and 2012 was respectively 29.3%, 21.42% and 36.2%. There are about seven villages which are part of the school's catchment area. Table 4.1 shows some basic information about Redrock School at the time of the data collection in 2013:

Table 4.1.

Basic information on Redrock School (2013).

Characteristics	Numbers
Student Population	207
Management staff	2
Number of sections at each Grade	1
General Purpose (GP) teachers	6
Asian Language Teachers	2
Integrated Unit teachers	2
Pre-Primary school teachers	3
Part-time teachers (Kreol Morisien)	1
Volunteers (Catechism classes)	6
% Pass rate at CPE exams	50
% rate of students' school absenteeism	10

Redrock School is the only ZEP school of Mauritius having an Integrated Unit, which means that four learners (two boys and two girls) with hearing impairment are included in a

special class under the responsibility of two full-time teachers. The learners are aged between 11 and 14 and have reached the level of Grade Three (usually children of 8 years of age).

The Head Teacher of Redrock School (HT1), who was appointed in November 2010, is in charge of General Purpose and Oriental language teachers (Hindi & Marathi), the Integrated Unit, the Pre-primary section, part-time teachers and local volunteers. There is no staff room area, only a small, basic kitchen and teachers usually have lunch in their respective classes. The school has a library area which was not functional at the time of the study and looked more like a storage room for books and other school equipment (Field notes/Redrock School/13 March 2013) giving the impression that the library was not often used. The researcher was granted permission by the Head Teacher to use the unoccupied library for interviews as well as for a personal debriefing area.

On her first day at the school, the researcher noted the neatness of the schoolyard and the well maintained school buildings (Field notes / Redrock School/13 March 2013). Redrock School had its own school hymn which was sung on special occasions at the morning school assembly. This hymn, written in French and Kreol Morisien, was known by all the learners, even the youngest ones. The last lines of the hymn reflected the spirit of the school:

Ici nou dan nou lekol

Na pas rode nou anba pié lakol

L'édikation sa mem mo frer, sa mem simé la limiere

L'édikation pran compte mo noir pou tire nou dan maré noir.

(Field notes /Redrock School/4 April 2013)

(You will find us [children] at school/ And not under a Glue tree/ Brother, education is the pathway to light/ Mind your education, brother, as it will take us out of darkness)

School stakeholders and their concerns.

In this sub-section, the researcher presents the profile and concerns of the ZEP school stakeholders from Redrock School. The gender, socio-economic and ethnic profiles of the stakeholders are provided where possible.

The cluster coordinator

The Cluster Coordinator of Redrock School (CC 1) is a woman who has been working in Private and State secondary schools for twenty years as a French teacher. CC 1 taught students between 12 and 18 years of age and has also worked in adult education/training. Before Redrock School, she was teaching in a State secondary school and was “released to perform the duties of Cluster Coordinator” in 2008, employed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) on a full time basis to coordinate zone A. This zone is composed of nine ZEP schools found in the main island of Mauritius and two smaller islands, Rodrigues and Agaléga. CC1 described her supportive role in those terms:

“My role is to support the Head Teacher within his/her school as well as the setting up of her school project... it consists of making her understand how to work with all partners...be her support...telling her whenever there is a need for parents’ meetings... even if this is difficult or we only mobilise one or two parents... we should promote parents meetings. We are in a ZEP school advocating an open relationship with parents.”

CC1 tried to strengthen this “open relationship” with the parents by collaborating with local private companies which offered their financial and human resources so as to provide empowerment programmes for the parents. She also tried to implement a ‘Parents’ Club’, which she described as “the willingness of parents to invest themselves” in the ZEP school, but it has never been put into action:

“We are right to emphasize the importance of educating parents, we need to create parents’ clubs. We talk about parents’ clubs... mine was a fiasco, I scored 0 out of 10 in the parent clubs of my schools... You know, I’d have even preferred to invest myself more in the parents’ club but do you really think that I can invest myself that much? I’ve got my own job to attend...I can’t do the work of others...”

In this quote, CC1 is referring to the fact that it is the role of the Parent-Mediator to implement and monitor the Parents’ club. The Parent-Mediators, who are employed on a part-time basis by the Ministry of Education, are expected to build a bridge between the ZEP school and the parents, however, CC1 was realistic enough to know that being employed 15 hours per week to look after three to six schools is not achievable for the Parent-Mediator. She argued:

“...they had a lot of good intentions, well... others not that much. Some left by themselves realizing they had the will to improve things but did not have the means to do so... but so far these people, until now, haven’t realised anything for me and the Ministry of Education is paying them.”

According to CC1, establishing relationships between ZEP schools and the other stakeholders is a challenging task, especially if the resources are limited, or the specialist staff do not attend to their responsibilities. She further described the difficult collaboration between Redrock School and the local companies which, at times, dominated the relationship:

“...merely by saying you’ll (the private sector) be providing this particular amount of funds is not the way to sort things out... that was a lot of money... we couldn’t see the expected results...they smothered the school because, you know, there is a great deal of... how shall I put it? Voluntary work, sponsored

by private and public sectors, has a great deal of marketing. Corporate representatives make public appearances merely to add their involvement in their CSR¹⁹-related activity portfolio.”

Therefore, CC 1 felt that some of these organisations did more harm than good to the school and so she gave the following advice to the Head Teacher: “...it’s time for you Madam to create your own team. You need to constitute your own team in this school using your teaching staff”. It did not mean that CC 1 refused the help of the collaborators but: “...it consists of making her (the Head Teacher) understand how to work with all partners. For instance, not playing along companies’ game or setup and being able to assert your authority as the school’s Head Teacher”.

In summary, the concerns of the Cluster Coordinator about Redrock School were the importance of providing the necessary support to the current Head Teacher as well as the difficulties of establishing relationships with the other stakeholders, such as the parents and the corporate sector, or working with specialist staff such as the Parent-Mediator.

The Head Teacher

After teaching for more than 36 years, the Head Teacher of Redrock School was promoted to the role of Head Teacher in Zone A. She is supported by the deputy Head Teacher, a clerical officer and two caretakers.

Although never having worked in a ZEP school before, the new Head Teacher was not apprehensive about working at Redrock School as she had been used to working with children with multiple needs and difficult social backgrounds in other primary schools of Mauritius. Yet, she received several warnings from her colleagues who discouraged her from working in a ZEP school. She reported: “They warned me before coming to this school: ‘This

¹⁹ Corporate Social Responsibility

is not a school to go' or 'You will worry yourself sick there, don't go'...some people have told me such things: 'You'll die there'!"

Despite the warnings, HT1 accepted her new duties in that particular school as "it was small and looked like a nice school". However, on her first day at school, HT1 acknowledged that she was shocked by the lack of discipline. She narrated her first day of the term:

"The first day was like... chaos everywhere...the children were climbing on trees...They climbed everywhere like monkeys on the pergola. It was a real commotion, children screaming, fighting... there were several pupils on the football pitch. Others were in the small schoolyard...I asked myself what to do... there was no discipline and I cannot work without discipline."

In order to address this "chaotic" situation, the working strategy of HT1 was based on communication with the learners and the parents but, above all, she wanted to provide the appropriate school rules and regulations:

"I presented myself, I told them we would be working together... we form a family, etc. I tried to get them on board, to gain their understanding. I told them there are rules that need to be followed, without discipline we won't be able to work. Every day, I tried to make them understand that there is difference between how things work at home and at school..."

HT1 further described the change in behaviour and attitudes of the learners and their parents who have slowly adapted to the new school rules. She also acknowledged that the school neighbourhood and the difficult family situations affect the learners at Redrock School.:

"...children who were experiencing difficulties at home came to see me during recess and confided in me. These were rather crude confidences that'll shock

you. Fathers leaving their mother and going away or mothers abandoning the house... I always used to tell the teachers how much these children are innocent beings who suffer a lot at home. It is this suffering that helped me understand.”

HT1 considered that her work does not only consist of being in charge of the administrative and pedagogical concerns of the school, but also about having a vision for the school:

“I tell myself if I nurture love for these children, I’ll be able to achieve my aims. This is what motivates me on a daily basis, loving these children. As I tell the parents, my dream is to see these children succeed, to perceive some change... Previously, I’ve been told this used to be an excellent school. I’d like it to be as such again...that we remove this ZEP school label.”

Therefore, it is seen that HT1’s sense of care for the ZEP school learners goes beyond her duties as she used the term “love” of the children and helping the children to succeed. According to HT1, one of the strategies to bring change in the ZEP school project is to remove the label attached to it, which she considers as a source of prejudice, a way of marginalizing schools:

“I believe this whole idea of referring to ZEP schools is simply a label... we shouldn’t call schools as such...that the children attend a ZEP school! This negative connotation is very strong. It might be relevant to the Ministry of Education but why should we refer to it as a ZEP school”?

In summary, the concerns of HT1 in Redrock School were the lack of discipline amongst the learners and the parents, the labelling of the ZEP schools, the academic success of the ZEP school learners as well as the family difficulties in the ZEP school neighbourhood. Through her communicative and caring approach, HT1 gained the trust and respect from the

stakeholders of Redrock School. She aspired to pursue change within Redrock School by helping to get rid of the ZEP school label which harms the school more than supports it.

The teachers.

Redrock School has eight General Purpose (GP) teachers, including two teachers from the Integrated Unit. Two teachers in Asian languages held classes from Grade One to Six. The part-time teachers are the Kreol Morisien (KM) teacher and the Information Communication Technology (ICT) teacher. The KM teacher works with Grades One and Two learners twice a week. At the time of the study, there was no ICT teacher at Redrock School as the previous one had been transferred by the Ministry and, until the end of the first term, no ICT teacher had been sent there (Field notes/Redrock School/28 March 2013). Seven questionnaires (six GP teachers and one teacher from the Integrated Unit) were handed out to the teachers and five questionnaires were returned after a lot of reminders from the researcher. Table 4.2 provides some information about the class teachers of the school.

Table 4.2.

Profile of class teachers from Redrock School.

Redrock school	Gender Male-M/Female-F	Years of teaching experience	Years of Experience in ZEP schools	Years of experience in teaching at Redrock school
T1	M	37	3	3
T2	M	33	3	3
T3	F	33	5	5
T4	F	10	8	3
T5	F	2	6 months	6 Months

The issue of discipline was the most referred to the class teachers who dealt with difficult behaviours that occur on a daily basis and affect the learning and teaching process.

“Indiscipline²⁰ of learners; slow learners; poor background; broken families; careless parents; lack of learning materials”;

“Pupils lack values such as tolerance, solidarity, discipline, and respect for others: a generalised case for most pupils; ‘taming’ the kids by imbibing the notions of discipline, solidarity within them can be challenging.”

The teachers also expressed their difficulties in completing the national curriculum which does not meet the realities of the children in ZEP schools. Most of them were not satisfied with the curriculum as it did not match the reality of their learners at Redrock School. A teacher stated:

“Curriculum objectives and goals can only be attained by Star schools and high flyers. Other strategies should be devised to attain these objectives set in the curriculum. Most pupils here lag behind as they cannot cope with the load of work to achieve good results.”

²⁰ As written by the teachers

Three teachers out of five were in favour of a change of syllabus for the ZEP learners indicating that they acknowledged the difficulties of the learners concerning the curriculum and wished to see changes happening, including a lighter curriculum for the ZEP school learners and innovative teaching tools:

“Less bulky syllabus which is too tough for ZEP learners; remove ZEP tag and treat all schools the same because why do we need to categorise ZEP if curriculum is the same.”

The majority of the teachers had a negative opinion of the family environment of learners which is summarised through the quote of one of the teachers:

“Broken families; unstable family situations; daily quarrels in couples; not interested in their children (for most of them).”

In summary, the class teachers from Redrock School were concerned with the behavioural problems of the learners as well as the difficulties in completing the school curriculum as a result of the attitudes of the learners, or, because the curriculum is overloaded for ZEP school learners.

The parents.

A total of six parents were present for the Focus group interviews: four mothers, a grandmother and a father attended the meeting. The ladies were mostly housewives except for the President of the PTA who worked as a maid on a part-time basis in a ‘White²¹’ family. The gentleman worked in the local village hall and was also the school’s guard after working hours.

The parents who were interviewed for the study acknowledged that Redrock School was previously in a chaotic situation: “We cannot say that it was a school at that time...we

²¹ Local term used to describe Mauritians who have European ancestry

could say that it was more a... (finding her words) a struggle". Another parent shared that he was not happy with the behaviour of some of the children in upper classes:

"...Yes, some boys would pinch the cheek, the bottom, pull at the hair. I've told all of this to the Head Teacher and she said no about informing the police officers. But, I told her that if ever, the situation becomes more serious, I will come to school with police officers..."

However, most parents acknowledged the change brought by the Head Teacher particularly in regards to the discipline of the school:

"It has been hard for one or two years but now, it isn't. Madam [the Head Teacher] in fact, we have to thank her a lot because she is somebody who gives a lot of herself for the children... There were times, some parents did not accept that Madam would set such rules...I told her that parents are here to say a lot of things but you...you have to install the discipline in your school because it is you who's working here."

Therefore, it is seen that the parents welcomed the Head Teacher whose determination and dedication were appreciated. At the level of the learning and teaching process in the school, the parents positively evaluated the current teachers whom they considered to be doing their best to understand the children. Some of these teachers were seen to have a sense of care and collaboration with their respective learners:

"...We have some teachers who are quite understanding who do not come only to show their presence, no...on the contrary, they go towards the children, they try to look for children's problems, they are interested...because if a child doesn't come to school, they can say "Well, as long as at the end of the month I'm getting my salary, whether you come to school or not, that's your business."

Another mother commented: “His teacher is very welcoming and knows how to communicate...and is approachable...if there is a problem, she can be approached. I see that she is interested and I see that the teacher is empathetic.” However, there were also some complaints concerning the professionalism of one or two teachers. A mother reported that, as a volunteer teacher for catechism classes, she was not happy with a teacher who could not manage the class discipline:

“...I’ve been several times in her class, I’ve been observing her and she is sleeping... we get in there to do catechism...from the moment you enter that class, these kids are climbing one school desk to the other...the number of swearing words that are coming out of their mouth.”

Similarly, a few other parents questioned the dedication of some of the former teachers of Redrock School who had no sense of class management causing even more behavioural problems at school. Yet, the parents also recognised that some of these behavioural issues stem from the family background of the learners:

“...we do have our problems, we should not be afraid to voice out our problems. We do have a big problem in Redrock with alcoholism, drugs that have come in, also violence. So this is why the children are inheriting that, they live with it every day...So, everything comes down to the starting point, the parents.”

This mother is insisting that the social influence of the community has a major impact on Redrock School: some of the learners’ behaviours reflect what is actually happening in the neighbourhood. Another parent observed that the behavioural problems affected the learning and teaching process:

“The problem is that...when the teacher is explaining something, they will disrupt the class...As the teacher told me... it would take him a lot more time

to finish a textbook. Instead of finishing the book in a month, it would take him a month and a half.”

Therefore, the behaviour of some of the learners is problematic in Redrock School and some parents suggested that it might be related to the subjects being studied: they do not stimulate the interest of all learners as they are all focussed upon the academic aspects of the curriculum as commented upon by one parent:

“Maybe the child is turbulent because may be he can’t find his place in class because not every child has this capacity to follow or to write and remain focus for an hour...this is not for everybody but it doesn’t mean that the child is stupid... It is not something academic but it is something that children and parents could do together and having a closer connection. Doing some shows like those which are done, as we may say, in schools for ‘White’ children. They do many of such activities, music, theatre, plays, poetry recitation. And so, it is normal that if our child is doing something, we want to participate. At the same time, we start having parents getting closer...”

In this quote, the mother highlighted several issues upon which most parents agreed: the school curriculum is not adapted to the diversity of learners and it does not favour the overall development of their children. They were favourable to a more diversified curriculum which includes music, drama or sports and which could help to solve the behavioural problems because learners can do something that they like. Furthermore, doing such activities can also encourage parents to participate in the school activities and help in establishing closer relationship between school and parents. They also pointed out that these activities are carried out in “schools for ‘white’ children”, that is fee paying private schools.

Therefore, these parents acknowledged that the ZEP school does need to play its role in the learning process of their children, but they also recognised that the lack of parental

responsibility is an issue upon which both school staff and parents agree: the school is able to manage the children during school hours but the parents have an important role to play for the rest of the time. It is also understood that the family relationships are themselves very complex in the neighbourhood of Redrock village:

“We, parents...Nu base c’est dan nu lakaz²². We should be able to know how to talk to our children. It is our environment; we should have a good environment. If parents and children don’t have this interaction, the child will never have a good sense of discipline. The child will always be ill-mannered, of course, he will be vulgar...”

In light of this quote, it can be concluded that some of the major concerns of the parents are the school culture, particularly the school discipline and regulations, which had improved since the arrival of HT1. They were generally appreciative of the class teachers but they also identified that some of the class teachers did not have the capacity to manage disruptive behaviours of some of the learners in the classroom. The majority of the parents also expressed the desire of seeing a variety of subjects being taught at Redrock School and not only academic subjects. They believed that the teaching of other subjects such as music, dancing, Agriculture or handicrafts may help in solving some of the behavioural issues of the learners.

The learners.

Two Grade Six learners, Alice and Siven, were interviewed for 30 minutes each, and then they were asked to do drawings.

Alice was a 10-year-old girl who had just settled in Redrock following her mother’s divorce. She had an older brother and lived with her mother and her side of the family. Alice started school at Redrock School in term II of Grade Five after leaving a Catholic primary

²² The foundation is in our home

school situated on the eastern side of the island. Alice was asked her understanding of a ZEP school:

Researcher: “Alice, have you heard of ZEP schools before? Do you know what they mean”?

Alice (After some thoughts): “Zot pli faible ki banne lezot lekol” (They have a lower performance than the other schools).

Alice’s opinion of ZEP schools reflects the views of many people in the Mauritian society who look down on ZEP schools as their percentage pass rates at the CPE exams are often lower than the other primary schools. However, she also stated that she enjoyed Redrock School and its neighbourhood: she liked the beach and watching the fishing boats.

When being asked about whether the parents of Redrock village encouraged their children to study and attend school, Alice said that most of them do but that some parents would tell their children: “See whether you want to go to school or not...” and, so, the children actually decide about school attendance. She also gave the example of her cousin who would hide so as not to go to school. His mother would go to work as early as 5a.m and back around 10a.m. and, seeing her son at home, she would scold him and sometimes beat him up. Reflecting on the subjects studied at school, Alice wished that they could have Arts classes as she enjoys drawing and painting. Figure 4.3 is Alice’s drawing of what she liked best at school.

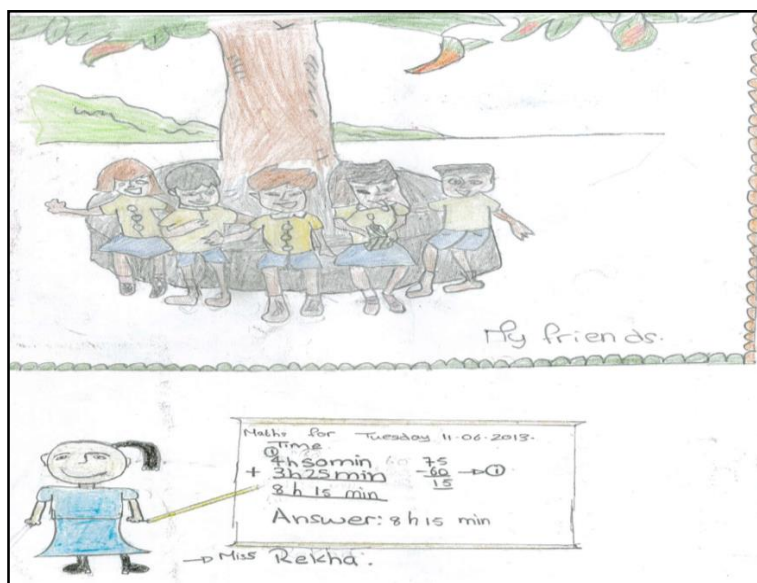


Figure 4.3. Alice's drawing of what she liked the most about Redrock School.

The other learner was 10-year-old Siven who was a native of Redrock village. He is the youngest of three children and his dad was a taxi driver and his mother worked as a maid “...dans la cour Blanc”²³. He has been a learner at Redrock School since pre-primary school.

Siven appreciated his class teachers, the renovated school buildings and the clean classrooms. His favourite subject was History/Geography and he enjoyed learning about the local rivers and mountains. He shared that studying English was hard for him, particularly writing short essays. At home, he would rather watch French movies and cartoons than English ones. He also wished that they could still study Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and attend Physical Education classes which were rarely held.

He further reported that nobody helped him with his homework and, so, he would try to do them on his own and would ask help from the teacher on the following school day. He attended fee-paying private tutoring sessions and was hoping to score good grades at the CPE exams so as to attend one of the prestigious Catholic secondary schools of the Zone. He did not know what the meaning of a ZEP school was and affirmed that he did not wish to change primary school. He was also aware that some of his school friends did not have food at home

²³ “...in the house of a White family”.

and they needed the Food Programme. He considered that most parents helped their children with achieving an education since “they send their kids to school”. Finally, he shared that he would like to be a policeman when he grows up.

Understanding of an inclusive education.

The teachers, Head Teacher and Cluster Coordinator of Redrock School were requested to provide their understanding of the concept of Inclusive education. Some of their responses were:

“An approach to educating pupils who have special educational needs.”;

“...aiming at bringing out the child from the margins of the society and integrating him/her in society.”;

“All children are taken on board whether they are sky flyers or children with special needs in the same class and provided with all the facilities to perform in class.”

In these definitions, it is seen that the class teachers acknowledged that an inclusive education is concerned with the multiple needs of learners who are unique, whether they have “special needs” or come from different “social backgrounds” or are at the “margins of society”. Therefore, an inclusive education attends to a diversity of learners. It also shows that class teachers understand the concept as a non-discriminatory approach to differences in social background or physical and mental abilities.

The Head Teacher and the Cluster Coordinator had a similar understanding of the concept of inclusive education. Firstly, HT1 talked of providing:

“...education to everybody...This implies including everybody. It’s not because you have a particular handicap or you might be intellectually less alert, we shall put you aside. No. We should help everyone... provide education to these children... get them involved into the system, helping

them...Especially, there are children experiencing issues, we can't leave them behind. We should welcome them regardless the environment they come from..."

The idea of "welcoming all children with different abilities" is reinforced by CC 1 whose definition of inclusive education is about "...embracing everybody" and to make sure that nobody is left aside in the process of providing education to Mauritian learners.

A teacher added a more precise perspective to inclusive education as catering exclusively for those having "special needs" and, thus, they need special attention or special care. This special care is echoed by HT 1 who claimed that inclusive education is:

"...to make the child understand that there is someone to look after him... who is here for him and...to include him with others... they need it. That's the first thing. I tell them, here at school we are a family. We are a big family and each class constitutes a small family."

According to HT1, it is important for the school to show this sense of care for the child and even work towards growing a 'family' relationship within the school so that they can respect and look after one another. Establishing a 'family' relationship is not all that is expected by CC 1, as she also referred to ensuring that the child is accepted for who he/she is, so that he/she is comfortable and happy at school:

"As far as ZEP is concerned, what inclusion means to me, is to ensure that this child is happy when he comes to school. That s/he is acknowledged at school... as a child in her/his own right, yes, with his/her difficulties that s/he might be experiencing... even if s/he smells bad, even if four buttons are missing off her/his shirt, even if s/he has not been combed or did not take a shower. You know, no matter her/his background, for me, the teacher should be able to make abstraction of these... the Head Teacher should make

abstraction of all these and welcome her/him, and provide the child with the means to integrate at school. Therefore, promoting a welcoming attitude is what we are aiming at. For me, this is inclusion and this is what we tried to work upon.”

Therefore, according to the ZEP school staff of Redrock School, the concept of inclusive education is an education catering for all children and their needs and difficulties. It is also about providing care and respecting the identity of the child so that he/she feels appreciated in the school system, as well as welcoming them irrespective of their family, social or ethnic background. They also used the term “integrate” to describe the role played by the ZEP school which is to provide learners with special needs a place in the primary education system.

Implementation of an inclusive education.

In implementing an inclusive education within Redrock School, HT 1 shared that she often guides her staff by providing advice:

“I tell my teachers: “I know in class, students cannot work at the same pace but try to identify those who are struggling and find a solution which corresponds to those children’s needs. They should not be left aside.”

She not only advised the staff, but also frequently visited the different grades to monitor the quality of the learning and teaching process. Sometimes, through these visits, she noticed that the implementation of inclusive education does not always happen:

“Not so long ago, when I went to Mrs A’s class... there is a small boy in her class...well, I asked her why she kept this child in the corner of the classroom... I don’t want to see him there...I’d like him to join others. She explained to me why. The child disturbs others... but I asked her whether he worked in class... Yes... she would always find something for him to do...”

because when I visit classes, I observe if the brightest students have all been clustered together. I don't like this as well. I don't like all the brightest on one side and the rest... I observed these things in class.”

Similarly, in one of the classroom observations of the Grade Five, it was seen that a group of learners were clustered in one area of the classroom:

“Half of the class actively participates & a quarter of it sometimes responds, participates or is easily distracted and the other quarter is daydreaming...almost sleeping or have blank looks. They do not disturb the class but they are not in touch with the class and it does not bother the teacher. Especially, two little ones, at the back of the class. I later learnt that one is usually physically violent at recess and the little girl often swears at other learners but never speaks in class.” (Field notes/ Redrock School / 20 March 2013).

As in the case above, some children may be present at school but their level of involvement and their participation at school is very low. CC 1 elaborated on this point and provided a key dimension to the implementing phase of an inclusive education:

“...welcoming them (the children) is not all that matters. There is also another challenging counterpart which consists of making them, not only physically present, but also engaged in the learning process and grow from where you are and who you are... This is another mountain to climb”!

The idea of “engaging” the child in the learning process and guiding him/her into a personal and cognitive growth is a challenging task, particularly for the class teacher. In their questionnaires, Redrock teachers shared their practices of an inclusive education:

“Identify the pupils who are in need of different approaches; by having formative assessment while introducing something.”;

“Allow every pupil to work at his/her own pace and taking on board all pupils during the lesson irrespective of their learning difficulties.”;

“Integrate my group of hearing impaired students in all the extracurricular activities such as Sports Day, Music day, Prize Giving ceremony, National Day, competitions organised by the ministry.”

Another challenge to the implementation of an inclusive education was mentioned by the Head Teacher who referred to the presence of ethnic and cultural differences within ZEP schools which were either valued or looked down by the class teachers:

“...a few teachers came to understand that the way you behave with children and the way you welcome them are some of the factors that would facilitate their work. I experienced a few issues with some teachers but I managed to make them leave. You see, those teachers who had trouble coping... it hurt me sometimes when I saw them handling these children, especially in Mauritius... you know, we live in a population, in multi-cultural one ... and, in those ZEP schools, if you scan the cultural profile of...the students, there were teachers who made very degrading remarks about these children. With the help of the Cluster Coordinator, the person left because seriously, his place was not here...”

The “degrading” remarks from some of the members of the ZEP school staff reveal that they have difficulties understanding the cultural background of the learners and their family and failed to provide a welcoming approach to the learners.

Further reflecting on her personal strategy of using an inclusive education approach, HT1 stated:

“The approach is important. The first step is to know how to communicate with others: the surrounding environment, that is the children, the parents and

even with the NGO's of the neighbourhood, you see. You should know how to communicate..."

Other important factors which are essential in the implementation of an inclusive education are human, structural and infrastructural resources as expressed by teachers. When being asked about the ways that Redrock School implemented an inclusive education, they responded as follows:

"Having helping hands from one or two parents and the liaison officer who liaise between parents & school.";

"Breakfast (cereal bars) is provided to needy students; teachers & school administration devote much time to pupils by lending an attentive ear to their problems; teaching is tailored to the needs of the pupils.";

"A special class for the Deaf children.";

"Teachers are dedicated to their tasks; all pupils are treated alike; good relationship between members of staff, pupils and teachers."

Amongst these strategies, it is important to mention that one of the respondents emphasised that the school does not practise an inclusive education as the deaf students do not follow the same classes as "their hearing counterparts":

"It does not happen in this school or in the class as there is a group of deaf students who are integrated in a special class but not with their hearing counterparts."

For that teacher, there is still marginalisation and exclusion within the school system, and the school's reality is far from the ideal notion of inclusive education.

Therefore, these ZEP school teachers attempt to implement an inclusive education in their daily classroom practices and through the support provided by the management and the Ministry of Education. Yet, the Head Teacher and the researcher saw that there were some

cases of learners with hearing impairment who had difficulties following the school curriculum. It was also seen that some class teachers ignored the ZEP school learners who are disengaged with the learning process.

Understanding of social justice

The teachers shared their understanding of ‘social justice’ in its broad sense mainly relating it to education:

“Education without any discrimination; Children should have access to education. Children should be provided with necessary equipment as in non ZEP schools.”;

“When each child is given whatever his counterparts are enjoying such as books, food, free transport, attention, tuition, enhancement programme.”;

“Equality in terms of social aspect and helping to make people stand on equal grounds.”

Important ideas such as ‘no discrimination’, ‘accessibility’, ‘the right to’, ‘equality’ are mentioned by the teachers whose understanding of social justice is related to contesting inequality within society as well as providing equal access to social and economic opportunities provided by society. There is also reference to possessing or having access to human basic needs and other requirements to survive in today’s world - an education, health facilities, care.

The Head Teacher and Cluster Coordinator emphasized the importance of equality of access to education, but issues related to ethnic and religious background, socio-economic power as well as social capital are also mentioned:

“...education should be the same for everybody at school... that was the case during classes... each child is unique but s/he still is a child. I can’t consider one child more than the other. From my perspective, it is the same for

everybody...but I can't sort out the pupils. Everybody has to be considered equally. Education is meant for everybody.”

CC 1 further argued that, beyond the idea of providing the same opportunities, social justice is also about “positive discrimination” in the context of the ZEP school project:

“...this project has...the overwhelming influence of positive discrimination. I realise the ZEP is a project solely based upon positive discrimination while inclusion is made possible by people's goodwill...we (the ZEP unit) are the only one involved and actually benefiting from extra money...”

CC 1 made a significant distinction between “positive discrimination” and “inclusion” but also brought some light to the relationship between these two concepts. According to her, “positive discrimination” is a step in the direction of social justice whereas “inclusion” depends on the people's “goodwill” or belief and, thus, implementing these beliefs into action so as to bring about more social justice. This relationship between these two key concepts is further explored in the discussion chapters.

CC 1 also emphasized that the other departments of the Ministry of Education are aware that those working in ZEP schools are provided with additional allowances to empower those schools. This ‘positive discrimination’ approach towards the ZEP schools is not always well appreciated by other public servants. They are also teaching or managing other primary schools with the same difficult conditions but are not compensated as they are not part of the ZEP school project. This is why the Cluster Coordinator often reminded those working within the ZEP project: ‘...I would tell them: “You know, you chose to be here...” so as not to say directly they receive financial allowances...’

To sum up, the understanding of the staff of Redrock School about social justice is founded on “equality” and fairness, “rights” and “access” to basic needs including education and healthcare. Moreover, there is also mention of circumstances of inequality due to socio-

economic disparity or cultural and religious differences. There is also reference to the concept of “positive discrimination”, which is understood by the cluster coordinator of the school, as the financial incentives provided to the ZEP school staff with the aim of addressing the disadvantages faced by the school and its students. According to her, social justice is achieved through the preferential consideration for those who are marginalised.

Mountain School

School neighbourhood.

Mountain School is found at the heart of Serenity Village situated on the south-east coast of Mauritius. Protected by a majestic mountain and facing the dark blue ocean, Serenity Village was probably named by the Dutch settlers for the peace and quietness of this region. Away from the hectic and buzzing life of the nearby town of Georgeville, Serenity Village attracts the tourists for its wild, unique coastline as well as its pristine natural beauty.

The Dutch first landed on the south-east coast in 1598 but they decided to develop the north-west area of the island. A few years later, the French settlement developed the south-east area with the expansion of Georgetown which is the most important town of the South-East in terms of trade, shopping, entertainment as well as public and private services. Serenity Village has a long pier which is a meeting place for the villagers who often sit by it for a friendly chat in the afternoons or simply to enjoy the gentle sea breeze on hot summer days.

The families at Serenity Village, comprising of around 1,200 inhabitants, are from low socio-economic groups and the population is mainly composed of Hindus and Creoles with marriages occurring between these two ethnic groups. The usual outings of families are shopping for the weekly groceries or market days in Georgetown as these services, and social opportunities, are quite limited in the village.



Figure 4.4 The jetty of Serenity Village

Most men and women work in the sugar estates as cane cutters but, since cane cutting is a seasonal job, they also work at sea. Other men are labourers, carpenters or brick-layers. Sometimes, in early mornings, one can find children helping their mothers and grandmothers digging the grey sand, looking for shellfish for the family before heading to school. There are very few entertainment and hobby activities in the village: children play on the sand or in the nearby sugar cane fields and, sometimes, a few men can be seen sharing a bottle of wine in the nearby tobacco shops. The elders of Serenity Village assert that there is complete security living there as they all know each other but their only regret is that there are not enough job opportunities in the region and, so, it becomes more and more difficult for the youngsters to remain in the area. They also shared that there are some cases of alcohol addiction largely attributed to the lack of leisure choices.

School context.

Mountain School is government school situated in a rural area of the Zone B area. With a student population of 140 in 2013, Mountain School welcomes children from the catchment area of the small villages neighbouring Serenity village.

On entering the Head Teacher's office, one first notices the impressive display of framed certificates and awards which the school has received across the years. The school has won different competitions such as painting, sports, recitations and best environment-friendly school amongst others. Next to the administrative offices, there is a notice board on which the annual School Development Plan was pinned for public display. Table 4.3 provides further information about Mountain School:

Table 4.3.

Basic information on Mountain School (2013).

Characteristics	Numbers
Student Population	140
Number of sections at each Grade	1
Management staff	2
General Purpose (GP) teachers	6
Asian Language (AL) Teachers	1
Pre-Primary section teachers	3
Part-time teachers (Kreol and ICT)	2
Volunteers (Catechism classes)	3
% Pass rate at CPE exams	80
% rate of students' school absenteeism	7.7

The school is built on terraced land because there used to be risks of landslide and, between 2011 and 2012, the school underwent some major infrastructural changes: a spacious parking ground, a newly-built sheltered area where school assemblies can be held away from the weather, as well as newly paved playgrounds and a fenced school yard. The Head Teacher of the school informed that the total cost of all these renovations was around \$AUD 300, 000, which was a significant amount of money invested by the Ministry of Education. At the lowest level of the school grounds can be found the local football pitch which is used

by the villagers and the school children. This pitch is not well kept with the football nets missing and no proper markings on the ground. Despite the poor sports facilities, the school boys and girls are very excited when their teachers accompany them to this pitch for training or for leisure activities.

School stakeholders and their concerns.

Cluster Coordinator.

The Cluster Coordinator (CC 2) of Mountain School has been working as a primary school teacher in the government schools for a few years before applying for the position of Cluster Coordinator which was internally advertised in the Ministry. CC 2 did not receive any formal training as a Cluster Coordinator but attended several workshops, learning about school administration and the management of a cluster of schools. He is currently in charge of seven ZEP schools from Zones B and C, including Mountain School, and when he took the leadership role of this school, the CPE exams percentage pass rate was nearly 70% increasing to 80% in 2013.

CC 2 shared that he has personally and professionally grown through managing the ZEP schools. He discovered diverse social environments of Mauritius, from the difficult suburbs to the isolated rural areas, and stated that he understood the adaptation difficulties of some ZEP school staff. He explained:

“...ZEP teachers are the same teachers who work elsewhere then come to our school. These people have been working for several years in...within a conventional environment, you see. They come here and, out of the blue, you start to tell them to implement social inclusion, etc. They get confused and can't adapt...”

Commenting upon the training of the ZEP school staff, CC2 acknowledged that the staff needs adequate pre-training sessions prior to working in these schools. He asserted:

“...we do not have pre-trained staff like who are readily available...it demands...a high level of commitment, a great deal of skills and a long period of training...”

CC2 further explained that Serenity Village is not as affected by social problems as the other suburbs of Mauritius and this could explain the good performance of the school at the CPE exams. He stated:

“Last year, Mountain School achieved 95% at the CPE exams but when you observe the specificity linked to the school, you’ll notice that it is a school... where the problems are not as serious as those found in the suburbs. Also...there are not a lot of schools in these regions so the majority of the population comes to Mountain School and you have average-level children who go there.”

Concerning the future of Mountain School in the ZEP school project, the Cluster Coordinator is in favour of reviewing the type of support offered to the school as Mountain School has been continuously progressing with more than a 50% pass rate at the CPE exams for the past seven years. Therefore, he described his views on the support provided through the ZEP school project and the type of changes needed to adapt to the future of the project:

“...we should review this project because there are some schools like Mountain school have overcome the low performance at CPE exams...On the other hand, there are non-ZEP schools which are in worse conditions with success levels below 20%. They face severe issues but are left on their own... We should evaluate what is necessary for the schools to be able to progress in the right direction.”

He further considered that the ZEP school project and the Ministry of Education are “...not in favour of providing support for ever.”

Head Teacher

The Head Teacher of Mountain School (HT 2) has lived in Georgetown ever since his childhood and knows the neighbourhood well. He was sent to the school in 2011 to replace Mrs L. who had been Head Teacher of the school for five years. Throughout his career, he has been working in the same zone but had never been appointed in a ZEP school before on his request. He accepted work in Mountain School as he heard that it was a small and quiet school which has been steadily progressing over the years.

The vision of HT2 for Mountain School is to ensure that the performance of the school at CPE exams keeps improving and that the overall development of the child is catered for by the school. He also shared some of the values which are at the heart of his leadership:

“One of my priorities is to maintain discipline at school. When there is no discipline there is no progress... and then, we have to inculcate respect, especially for the elders.”

However, he also stated that his leadership role is often limited to implementing the instructions of the MOE and that he is not expected to bring a special approach to the school management.

“The ZEP school has already been crafted...everyone has his or her scheme of duty but my role as a leader... In fact, we are called instructional leader...we don't really lead as we would like to. We lead according to how the Ministry of Education wants us to. So...it is a chain...we impose on others.”

CC2 further explained how the staff of the MOE has little say about their working conditions or the difficulties which they face in ZEP schools:

“...at the Ministry of Education you are nothing but a pawn...we are stuck between two authorities: the Zone Directorate and the ZEP school unit. The

real authority is the Zone Directorate and the ZEP school unit is not really an authority...it only provides advices to the schools. I think that ZEP schools should have their own authority...there is conflict...between these two departments. They are like two elephants and I, as the Head Teacher, I am like the grass, stuck in between.”

CC2 shared that the transfers of ZEP school teachers and the appointment of an administrative staff were some of the issues that he had to solve because of the conflictual relationships between the two departments. He then stated that there is little difference between managing a ZEP and a non-ZEP school, mainly because he considers Mountain School as a special case amongst the ZEP schools:

“The way I’m leading, I’ve always been doing it this way... In some ZEP schools there are many pupils are absent. That is a real issue with ZEP schools. But here we don’t have this problem.”

He also reported that other positive aspects about Mountain School were the general and continuous support of parents as well as its remarkable performance at the CPE exams. CC2 was satisfied with parental participation in the school activities and stated that parents can be involved in school life as long as “...they don’t create problems at the school.”

Teachers.

The teaching staff of Mountain School is composed of six GP teachers who are in charge of Grades One to Six, as well as two part-time teachers who are responsible for teaching Kreol Morisien and ICT. There is usually a Physical Education (P.E) teacher in the school but, at the time of data collection, there was no P.E. teacher as the previous one had been transferred by the MOE. In all, six questionnaires were handed out to the GP teachers who consented to participate in the study. All questionnaires were duly completed and returned to the researcher.

A profile of the class teachers of Mountain School is in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4.

Profile of class teachers from Mountain School.

Mountain school	Gender Male-M/Female-F	Years of teaching experience	Years of Experience in ZEP schools	Years of experience in teaching at Mountain school
T1	F	3	6 months	6 months
T2	F	15	4	4
T3	F	11	5	5
T4	M	8	1.5	1.5
T5	M	35	6 months	6 Months
T6	F	9	1	1

The majority of the class teachers of Mountain School referred to the difficult socio-economic context of the learners: poverty, lack of infrastructure, separated couples and single-parent families are some of the factors which they believe affect the learners' educational progress. One of the teachers stated:

“Pupils come from poor background; the majority of my pupils live with one parent; lack of motivation of pupils and parents.”

Most teachers also stated that the financial allowance is the motivating factor to work in ZEP schools but several of them also mentioned that the creation of a good relationship between teachers and parents was another important factor encouraging them to work in ZEP schools. Some of their responses were:

“Financial allowance for teacher and provide infrastructural facilities.”;

“A flexible and reliable relationship with all stakeholders... a helping hand from the parents to encourage their children towards learning.”

Half of the staff was satisfied with the teaching resources in Mountain School as there are computers and interactive boards as well as some games which are appropriate for

learners with special needs. However, the minority group of teachers considered that there was a low availability of resources such as clay for modelling, sand trays, no internet access or DVD players. In terms of the curriculum content, all teachers criticised its lack of relevance to the learners' needs and academic level. Some of their comments were:

“Curriculum is not apt for ZEP school learners”;

“Textbooks and syllabus should be reviewed”;

“The curriculum should include more activity-based lessons”.

Parents.

Eight mothers participated in the focus group interview: they were all housewives who were mainly from Serenity village but other villages were also represented. Some of these ladies did some volunteering work in the neighbourhood, worked as housemaids or as labourers in the nearby sugar cane plantation. Others would sometimes fish for the family. Since Serenity Village is situated in a remote area, there is no manufacturing or hotel industry in the neighbourhood. The age group of the parents was between 28 to 65 years old, including a grandmother whose grandson was in Grade One. The children of these parents were in various grades from One to Six.

The parents were satisfied with the general school improvements, improvement of the performance of the learners at the CPE exams, as well as the dedication of most teachers, and stated that the appointed teachers “always worked hard”. They were particularly happy with the improvement in the school infrastructure and the distribution of school materials and equipment to their children that was initiated under the leadership of the previous Head Teacher. All of them agreed to one of the parents' comments:

“She (previous Head Teacher) has done well...she has done all of this for our kids... she knew how to approach the community.”

They also appreciated the current Head Teacher, but, as one of them stated: “He also does his bit but the approach is different...he has a good contact with parents but it’s just that the personality of Mrs L. was different from his.”

Some of their concerns were the frequent absenteeism of some of the class teachers, the lack of responsibility of some parents, as well as the lack of local facilities which could enhance the personal, educational and social development of their children. One of the mothers explained:

“...it is at the level of infrastructures and activities in the neighbourhood that things have to move...it is only now that there are some authorities from Georgeville which have been seeking our opinion concerning the setting up of a kids’ corner...”

Learners

Two boys from Grade Six agreed to participate in the study: 10 year-old Yan lives in a neighbouring hamlet of Serenity Village and Pravesh who has lived in Serenity Village since birth.

Yan has two brothers who are both pursuing their secondary studies. His mother is a housewife and father is a bricklayer. Having followed all his primary classes at Mountain School, Yan enjoys being a student at Mountain School. His favourite subjects are Mathematics, French and History/Geography and he has difficulties in studying English. From the start of Grade Five, he found it hard to understand the diversity of new concepts in the different subjects but, now that he is in Grade Six, he felt that it was getting easier. His other classmates also have difficulties in understanding some subjects and he is of the opinion that a few others “can learn but they are lazy”. Yan’s appreciation of Serenity Village is the Mountains, the sea and going fishing in the week-end. He wished that they could have a basket-ball pitch in the neighbourhood.

Pravesh's mother rears cattle and his dad works as a labourer in the nearby sugar estate. He has an 18-year-old brother who has applied to the University of Mauritius and who sometimes helps Pravesh in studying Mathematics. Pravesh likes studying all subjects, except French Language in which he has some troubles in grasping the verb tenses and modes. He wished that they would go to the school library, as they used to do in lower classes, and follow Arts classes and Health subjects.

Pravesh dreams of becoming an aeronautic engineer or a policeman and believes that the school helps him in achieving his dream. Pravesh likes the sea, the neighbourhood and the people of Serenity Village but wished that people would not throw waste in the sea and that some of the men would stop drinking as they sometimes fight in their families.

Both learners shared that their teachers were strict but they also said that they knew that it was for their own good. They both agreed that the food programme was beneficial to the school learners as many of them had difficulties in bringing lunch. They personally did not mind eating bread, butter and cheese every day.

Pravesh and Yan also assessed the school leadership and stated that they preferred the former Head Teacher who "was strict but gave us good advices" and allowed them to play soccer which is prohibited by the current Head Teacher as he did not want them to get hurt.

Both boys enjoy playing in the sugar cane fields, running on the mountain and fishing, but they wished that there was a more adequate infrastructure with proper lighting systems, pavements, and a sports pitch for the neighbourhood.

In the next section, the researcher presents the views of the staff of Mountain School about an inclusive education.

Understanding of an inclusive education.

The Cluster Coordinator of Mountain School provided his perception of an inclusive education in light of his professional training as a teacher and as a mentor at the MOE, and

his understanding was closely associated with the CPE exams. He considered that all children have innate potential to acquire an education and, therefore, he described an inclusive education as "...not discarding any pupil out of the system. We should not discard any pupil...it's as if we should take everybody on board." CC 2 further stated that he was aware that there is a small percentage of children who have mental or physical abilities which may affect their personal and learning development but he was convinced that "...all children can reach the expected CPE level...".

The class teachers of Mountain School, when requested to provide their definition of inclusive education, gave responses such as teamwork, an approach involving teachers, parents and management. They stated:

"Involvement of all stakeholders so that learning & teaching can take place effectively; collaboration & teamwork of pupils, teachers, management and parents";

"Approach to educating all children despite their learning disability; providing the same learning opportunities";

"It refers to an approach where the school members cater for the needs, interests and competencies of pupils in the learning process";

"Including all stakeholders at school & outside school to enable pupils to develop irrespective of gender/home background/culture & religion";

"To cater for all pupils irrespective of their strengths and weaknesses."

It is seen that the class teachers offered different understandings of the concept of inclusive education but one of the most recurring ideas was the provision of education for all children irrespective of their learning difficulties, family and cultural background. However, the Head Teacher of the school considered that the teaching in the school was no different to non-ZEP schools and that there was no particular inclusive dimension:

“According to my experience, I have seen what we teach in this school is the same elsewhere because whether it is a big school, small school, star school, the teaching is the same.”

Therefore, for the most of the ZEP school staff of Mountain school, an inclusive education aims at embracing all the children in the learning process regardless of their social or educational difficulties. However, the head teacher of the school considered that there was no special pedagogy being implemented in ZEP schools compared to other primary schools where he worked.

Implementation of an inclusive education.

The class teachers were also requested to describe ways in which Mountain School practiced an inclusive education approach. Their responses were varied:

“activity based strategies where all pupils are involved and sitting arrangements where the high-flyer sits next to slow learner”;

“...pupils with disabilities are in the same class as normal pupils”;

“Group work with mixed abilities pupils.”

However, four out of six teachers of Mountain School considered that the school curriculum was too overloaded for the learners in ZEP schools. This issue was one of the most mentioned barriers to the implementation of an inclusive education in Mountain School.

Some of these barriers or challenges were:

“The school syllabus is quite bulky and it is difficult to give full individual attention to pupils with learning difficulties”;

“Low parental involvement in child’s education...the economic factor...illiteracy at home”;

“The education system- it is exams oriented...the syllabus is bulky...parents put pressure on teachers.”

From these quotes, the overloaded curriculum and the inability of some parents to understand their critical role in the education process of their children are perceived as obstacles to the effective implementation of an inclusive education. It is also seen that some of the parents have high expectations of the school teachers but, at the same time, there is also low parental involvement in Mountain School.

According to CC2, since an inclusive education is about involving all children in the learning process to achieve success in the CPE exams, the determining factor is the teaching staff and its pedagogical approach. He further explained that the ZEP unit organises training workshops which challenges these traditional pedagogical approaches used by some teachers with 20 to 30 years of teaching experience. He believes that, if the teaching staff adapt their approach according to the learners' realities and capacities, learning and success in ZEP schools are achievable. He asserted:

“...now, it is up to the teachers to adapt the pedagogy. We cannot keep on using the traditional way of teaching...we are past that. We can't work in that way. Now, by traditional, I mean that some teachers just simply follow the textbook, the page numbers...from one page to the other...we have to think out of the box.”

In line with this quote from CC2, the researcher recorded some notes about her classroom observation of Grade Six which was quite similar to the description provided by CC2, that is, the “traditional way of teaching”:

“...in an hour and thirty minutes, the teacher has been ‘teaching’ English, Mathematics, French and History/Geography. There is no in-depth discussion or explanation. It was ‘a revision-like’ presentation which consists of ten minutes of presentation of the topic with some examples, giving a class exercise and correcting it.” (Field notes/ Mountain School/ 29 April 2013).

This class observation session was not a revision session as it was the same method for each subject. After the class observation, the teacher shared some of her concerns with the researcher and it shed some light on her pedagogical approach. She did not go into depth in a particular topic because the syllabus was in itself “not adapted to the children” and “too bulky for them”. She acknowledged practising ‘rote-learning’ and did a lot of repetitive work as this approach can meet the demands of the CPE exams. Another concern was that the reality of the learner from Mountain School was often far from some of the topics or situations presented in the textbooks. The researcher noted:

“In the History/Geography textbook, the topic of ‘hotel industry’ is often an abstract concept for the learners as there is no hotels nearby and many of them have hardly gone in the north of the island²⁴. The teachers in Grade Four to Six wanted to visit a hotel with the learners so that they can understand what it means to be a cook/chef/receptionist...” (Field notes/ Mountain School/ 29 April 2013).

Therefore, it is seen that one of the challenges of the implementation of an inclusive education is that the content of the curriculum content is not suitable for the realities of all the ZEP school learners, especially those who live in the rural areas.

The parents interviewed all agreed that the teachers from Mountain School were doing their best to improve the performance level in the school. They were proud of the school’s performance at the CPE exams in 2012 in which Mountain School reached a record pass rate level of 95%. Many of them acknowledged the care of the teachers and time devoted to students, particularly with regards to private tuitions. They often mentioned how the teachers worked hard by holding private tuitions sessions in the week and the week-end. Like the majority of their classmates, both Pravesh and Yan stated that they attended private

²⁴ Where most hotels can be found

tutoring sessions because the class teacher completed the curriculum in these sessions. Since the class was struggling with completing the school's textbooks, their class teacher provided fee-paying private tuitions in order to complete the CPE curriculum.

Understanding of social justice.

The understanding of HT2 about social justice can be summarised as providing equal chances to each child. The quote below is his full definition of social justice:

“In my opinion, social justice means there is no sort of discrimination, i.e., children are given equal chance, at any level, school or personal...equal footing...we don't discriminate...Whatever the child can do, we give him the opportunity, the chance. In one way we are doing justice to the child.”

He also stated that Mountain School is an educational organisation which strives to offer social and educational opportunities to all the children attending the school. HT 2 was also specific in his definition of social justice at Mountain School: the school provided a 'discrimination free' education irrespective of religious or ethnic backgrounds. He stated:

“...here in this school, we don't look for religious faiths... Whoever he is, from whichever community²⁵ he comes... we care for him/her, we want them to progress. We want social justice for everyone.”

According to him, religious beliefs or ethnic background should not be barriers to equal opportunities at school. Several teachers of Mountain School had a fairly similar response to HT 2. They defined the term as:

“...providing equal opportunities to all pupils to succeed in their education irrespective of their family background, social status, religion, culture”;

“...same treatment for every individual.”

²⁵ In the Mauritian context, the term 'community' relates to ethnic and religious background.

Other teachers brought some new insights into the concept of social justice. One of them was concerned with the teachers' engagement towards the community in which he/she is working by stating:

“...appropriately engaged in society and getting along with other people, our locality, our surrounding.”

In that context, social justice means a social responsibility undertaken by the teacher towards the children and the parents of the neighbourhood. It is not only about teaching but also about a commitment to understanding and relating to this neighbourhood. Another teacher's approach to social justice was related to the role of the education system in empowering children through the notions of human values and the individual's respect and dignity:

“...providing children with education so that they both understand and value human rights, as well as recognising dignity of every citizen.”

Therefore, for Mountain School staff, social justice embodies principles of equal opportunities for accessing an education and they also believe that it is founded upon the provision of an education which respects the unique cultural and religious background of the child and reaches out to those who are less privileged. This type of education for social justice is also against all types of discrimination and it seeks to “value human rights.”

Lady of the Sea Catholic School

School neighbourhood.

Lady of the Sea Catholic School is a primary school found in the village of Beautiful Bay situated in the northern part of the island renowned for its soft white beaches, azure lagoons and busy nightlife and which attracts thousands of tourists every year. Beautiful Bay, a small fishing village and the most secluded village of this northern area, enables tourists to discover traditional Mauritian life.

The ethnic fabric of Beautiful Bay is quite mixed, with a large mostly Catholic Creole community, a significant number of people from the Hindu community and a few Chinese Mauritians who all peacefully live together. The residential areas of the Beautiful Bay are very diverse and the socio-economic background of its residents can be gauged by the quality and appearance of the streetscape. The beachfront bungalows are usually owned by the few wealthy “gens-de-couleur” who sometimes live there or rent them. In the village centre, the houses are less luxurious than the bungalows but they are still comfortable and are owned by middle-class Creoles or Hindus. Then, exploring further inland, one is surprised to see the tiny, corrugated iron-roofed houses which are crammed next to the other. Many learners from Lady of the Sea Catholic School come from these zones. Most of them live in low-income families, living in extremely poor conditions such as no running water or power supply. In the village, your socio-economic class is identified by stating which area of Beautiful Bay you come from.

Many inhabitants of Beautiful Bay earn their living by either fishing or working in some of the numerous hotels of the North. Some of the housewives in Beautiful bay often wake up at dawn to look for octopus or other seafood as means of helping out the family.



Figure 4.5. View of Beautiful Bay from Lady of the Sea Catholic School.

School context.

Lady of the Sea Catholic School was founded in 1913 by the religious order of “Les Filles de Marie”²⁶, a congregation founded in Reunion Island, a French overseas department located next to Mauritius. Lady of the Sea Catholic School is accountable to both the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Bureau de l’Education Catholique (BEC) through the Roman Catholic Education Authority (RCEA). The teaching and administrative staff are appointed by the BEC after teacher training at the MIE²⁷ and courses offered by the RCEA. However, the staff are paid by the MOE. The Catholic priest of the local parish is the manager of the school and he attends important school meetings and actively participates in the school’s decision making process. The position of ‘school manager’ is found only in RCEA schools and not in government schools.

In 2003, the school had the lowest percentage pass rate at the CPE exams with only 20.7%. As a result of its declining performance, and the fact that the school is situated in a low socio-economical area, the MOE included the school in the ZEP school project so that it can receive the additional support to improve its performance. Table 4.5 gives an overview of the school:

Table 4.5.

Basic information on Lady of the Sea Catholic School (2013).

Characteristics	Numbers
Student Population	140
Number of sections at each Grade	2
Management staff	3
General Purpose (GP) teachers	13
Asian Language (AL) Teachers	3
Part-time teachers (Kreol language)	2

²⁶ Literally translated as “Mary’s Daughters”

²⁷ The only recognised national teacher training college of Mauritius

Volunteers (Catechism & Special English classes)	4
Appointed Support Staff (Psychologist & Counsellor)	2
% Pass rate at CPE exams	54.69
% rate of students' school absenteeism	7.8

Throughout the years, some initiatives have been taken by the ZEP school staff in order to address the low performance of the school, including additional resources and training provided by RCEA. Several internal and external activities were implemented such as the School Development Unit (SDU), the launching of Activity Clubs, the school website and school magazine in 2004. The RCEA also sends extra human resources such as psychologists and counsellors to provide assistance to the school management and staff. By the end of May 2013, the school inaugurated an important wing of its buildings with brand new Conference, Audio-Visual and Arts Rooms as well as a new library facility.

Local private companies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are also active in assisting Lady of the Sea Catholic School by sponsoring events or providing pedagogical support. A few volunteers from the community offer their time and know-how in organising academic and extra-curricular activities and events as well as providing assistance to the school in collaboration with the management.

School stakeholders and their concerns.

Cluster Coordinator.

The Cluster Coordinator of the Lady of the Sea School (CC 3) is a woman who has been working in the Ministry of Education (MOE) as a General Purpose (GP) teacher in primary schools for twelve years. During her teaching years, she completed a Diploma in Remedial and Special Needs education which led her to join the ZEP school project as a Remedial education teacher in 2004. Her remedial work was mainly carried out in schools found in the northern part of the island, that is, Zone C. In 2009, she was appointed Cluster

Coordinator of this zone and she is currently responsible for seven ZEP schools. At the time of the study, CC 3 was completing her fifth year as a Cluster Coordinator.

According to CC3, the school has been steadily progressing as reflected through the decrease in the rate of students' absenteeism and an improvement in the academic performance at the CPE exams. She explained:

“As far as infrastructure is concerned, a lot has been done for the school infrastructure: the building, the environment amongst others. Absenteeism at Lady of the Sea Catholic School is no more a problem. As far as academic progress is concerned, you'll see the rate is going up. Last year, it decreased a bit...but this year, it will increase. They are on the right track but it all depends sometimes on the generation of the children. The children's behaviour...there has been a great change. They are more positive. We do have behaviour problem, but, these days, most of the children are very calm. They are more disciplined.”

She added that such positive changes have been made through the effective collaboration of the school staff with the dedicated parents and local volunteers and NGOs, as well as the regular presence of the Parent-Mediator:

“We do have a group... I'd say as far as community mobilisation is concerned, Lady of the Sea Catholic School has gone a bit further compared to my other schools...The Parent-Mediators do a great job... reaching out to parents... They have meetings with parents quite regularly. They organise meetings not only for Parents Clubs but also with parents within the community outside the school. They talk to parents, giving them some advice...”

CC3 further described her pride in the creation of a Parent's Club that gets the ZEP school parents “involved in school activities”. School meetings and Open Days are also

frequently organised at Lady of the Sea Catholic School, which is not common in other schools of the cluster. She was satisfied at the level of participation of the parents in such meetings:

“we have good parents who come and... even if we do class-wise meetings, parents do come and they listen to the advice of the teachers.”

She also explained that school-parent meetings and events are essential for the effectiveness of the ZEP school project as the parents develop a better understanding of what the school wants to achieve. Therefore, CC3 was of opinion that:

“So, if they really know what is happening at school, within the project... we’re going to guide the parents on how to help their children to do simple basic reading. They’re going to learn how it is being done by the teacher. Once they know it, they can use it with their children, with a group of children in their community, their neighbourhood. When we go towards them, talk to them, guide and educate them in a certain way, I can say, I think we’ll be able to decrease these problems of the clash between school and communities.”

CC 3 was also of the opinion that the good performance of some of the ZEP schools needs to be shown to the Mauritian society so that it is aware that learners in ZEP schools can excel in activities which are not necessarily academic ones.

Head Teacher.

The Head Teacher of the school (HT 3) is originally from the northern part of the island where she has been working for the majority of her professional years as a teacher and Head Teacher. HT 3 had worked in Roman Catholic schools ever since graduating. Since 1995, she had worked at Lady of the Sea Catholic School and was primarily responsible for teaching the upper classes (Grade Four to Six) and, at that time, the performance of the school was quite high. After spending twelve years in school administration as a deputy

Head Teacher and Head Teacher in many northern Catholic primary schools, HT 3 became Head Teacher of the Lady of the Sea at the start of 2013, that is, only two months before the researcher investigated the school.

HT3 stated that her main aim was to ensure that all children attend school by working within a specific framework which focuses upon maintaining a good relationship amongst learners-parents-teachers. In her words:

“This framework represents the essential relationship in a school...it is a triangle ‘learners-parents-teachers’ and the school is found at the heart of the triangle.”

In her leadership, she further explained that her role was not confined to the school’s walls, but that she was also concerned with reaching out to the parents and the whole community of Beautiful Bay. This is the philosophy that she tried to share with her teaching and administrative staff so that they not only provide academic excellence but also values such as care and empathy to the children so that they can grow into responsible, independent individuals:

“...my mission is not limited to the school grounds...I would tell them [teachers] that we need to have the vocation... I always tell the teachers...see the daily reality of the child. But also, the environment as well as the child’s aspirations so as to know what are they expecting from us.”

As the Head Teacher of the school, HT3 encourages the collaboration and partnership between the school and local companies by inviting a representative of the private companies into their School Improvement Unit (SIU) so that they can participate in the new school projects. Some companies have sponsored school visits and outings in factories and hotels, which are useful for the general knowledge of learners, as well as providing medical check-ups such as eye-test screening.

Teachers.

The teaching staff of Lady of the Sea Catholic School is composed of 13 General Purpose (GP) teachers, two Kreol Morisien (KM) teachers who work at the school on a part-time basis and three Asian Language (AL) teachers who teach mainly Hindi and Tamil. The school is also assisted by a number of volunteers such as the nuns of the religious order of “Les Filles de Marie” who hold catechism classes, as well as Mrs P., an Irish born lady living in Beautiful Bay and helping to run a ‘Special English’ class in collaboration with the CPE teachers.

Of the thirteen GP teachers from Lady of the Sea Catholic School, ten consented to participate in the questionnaire survey. At the end of the data collection period in the school, nine questionnaires were fully completed and returned to the researcher. Table 4.6 shows some of the characteristics of the teaching staff at Lady of the Sea Catholic School.

Table 4.6.

Profile of class teachers from Lady of the Sea Catholic School.

Lady of the Sea Catholic School	Gender Male-M/Female-F	Years of teaching experience	Years of Experience in ZEP schools	Years of experience in teaching at Lady of the Sea Catholic School
T1	M	18	4	4
T2	F	20	5	5
T3	F	5	2	2
T4	F	16	2	2
T5	F	23	1	1
T6	M	22	10	1
T7	M	4	1	1
T8	F	19	1	1
T9	M	9	6	6

Half of the school teachers who participated in the study stated that they shared a good relationship with parents of their respective learners: many parents would meet them once a term through school meetings or through Open Days. However, as stated by one of the teachers:

“Some parents are interested in attending the meetings but others never attend them.”

All nine teachers reported that the home environment was one of the barriers which prevented ZEP school learners from achieving their full potential, followed by an overloaded curriculum, the neighbourhood environment, the child’s motivation and financial problems. However, one of the teachers added that another barrier was:

“Teachers who worked only for their salary and not for pupils’ achievement.”

Related to this quote, the majority of the class teachers claimed that the financial allowance was one of the motivating factors for working in ZEP schools but several teachers also mentioned better teacher training as well as availability of pedagogical resources. Some of them referred to another motivating factor being “a good relationship with parents and learners who respect them.”

The class teachers also shared the difficult situations which they faced in ZEP schools such as “uncooperative parents”; “violence”; “dysfunctional families”; “lack of parental interest in child’s education”; “rude parents” amongst others. They considered that education for parents is needed as well as the support of additional psychologists and family counsellors for the community. They also suggested rewarding learners as an incentive for their attendance at school.

Most class teachers considered that their teacher training courses were satisfactory but they also thought that it was not adapted to help them work in ZEP schools. Some of their comments were:

“It is a training to become a teacher but not to work in a ZEP school”;

“The training received is not appropriate to work with pupils having special needs but with pupils who are considered as ‘normal’.”

Parents.

With the help of the Parent Mediator of the school, the researcher met with a group of parents consisting of seven mothers who were representatives for each of the Grades One to Six. Most were housewives, with a few sometimes fishing for the family. One of them is an active member of the PTA who is also in charge of an Early Childhood Centre. The interview was held on the school premises, in an isolated class which ensured complete confidentiality.

The parents first expressed their appreciation of the school renovation which had just been completed in the school: the construction of a new section of the school building as well as the new toilets for the learners were, according to them, examples that the school is heading in the right direction. On the other hand, a member of the PTA pointed out that school children were not respecting the school’s property and often damaged brand new equipment or resources. She stated:

“We need to educate the children...the education also needs to come from home...the parents need to talk to their kids about respecting school property...several items in the toilet have already been broken.”

The academic progress of the school was also another main concern of the parents who commented that the school’s percentage pass rate at the CPE exams in the previous year decreased and it caused some frustration. One of the mothers said:

“...it has been said that if the percentage pass rate increases, we will be out of the ZEP school project but now definitely, the pass rate is decreasing, we are

still stuck in the ZEP...I feel a bit frustrated that people are constantly talking down ZEP schools.”

In this quote, this parent is frustrated in two ways. Firstly, the low performance of the school from the previous year meant that Lady of the Sea Catholic School would remain a ZEP school, that is, a school which does not perform well at CPE exams. Secondly, the low performance of the school led to people looking down on their school as well as its learners.

Another parent complained about some class teachers at Lady of the Sea Catholic School who were not particularly happy to work in their neighbourhood as they heard that it had a bad reputation. Other parents also commented that they were frustrated as these unhappy teachers either refused to work in the school or they would listen to people’s stereotypes about their neighbourhood. Other mothers explained:

“Some teachers who come to work here, they sometimes say amongst themselves that they come here ‘zis pou kass poz²⁸’”;

“It’s like they have come here to sleep.”

Another parent provided the example of people’s hearsay affecting the perceptions of prospective class teachers at Lady of the Sea Catholic School:

“...when they [teachers] hear that they will be posted to Lady of the Sea Catholic School, the other teachers from other regions would ask them: “Do you know where you are going? People say that parents in Beautiful Bay often come to school to argue and fight with teachers.”

In order to challenge such damaging remarks about the school, one of the parents suggested that it would be good for newly appointed teachers to have a presentation about the social and cultural aspects of the school prior to working with the learners and parents to

²⁸Only to have a rest

avoid any kind of bias towards the children and their parents. In the words of one of the parents who was part of the interview:

“...there are some good teachers who like the work they are doing...they are working with love and the children are also happy to have such teachers... But on the other hand, there are also some teachers who are, sometimes, discouraged...because they are having problems with some parents...then, they forget that there are other parents who are with them, who trust them and who count on them...”

Learners.

Three learners, Julio, Lorena and Daphne, participated in the study representing the three sections of Grade Six: Julio (Repeaters section) and Lorena (Blue Section) who are both considered ‘low-achieving’ learners by their teachers. Daphne is a ‘high-achieving’ learner from another Grade Six. They all lived in Beautiful Bay but came from different residential areas in the middle class and lower middle-class areas of the village.

Julio is twelve years old and has been living with his mother and two brothers since the separation of his parents. His mother works as a pastry assistant in a nearby supermarket. Two years ago, Julio joined Lady of the Sea Catholic School to pursue Grade Five after his parents separated and, thus, he left his former school situated in a nearby village. He is one of the five learners who have decided to sit for the CPE exams for a second time as he failed them the previous year. He scored E ($\geq 40\% \leq 50\%$) in Mathematics and English language but failed in French language, Science and History/Geography ($\leq 40\%$). He wanted to attend a Pre-vocational school but his mother insisted that he repeat Grade Six so that he has a “good foundation”.

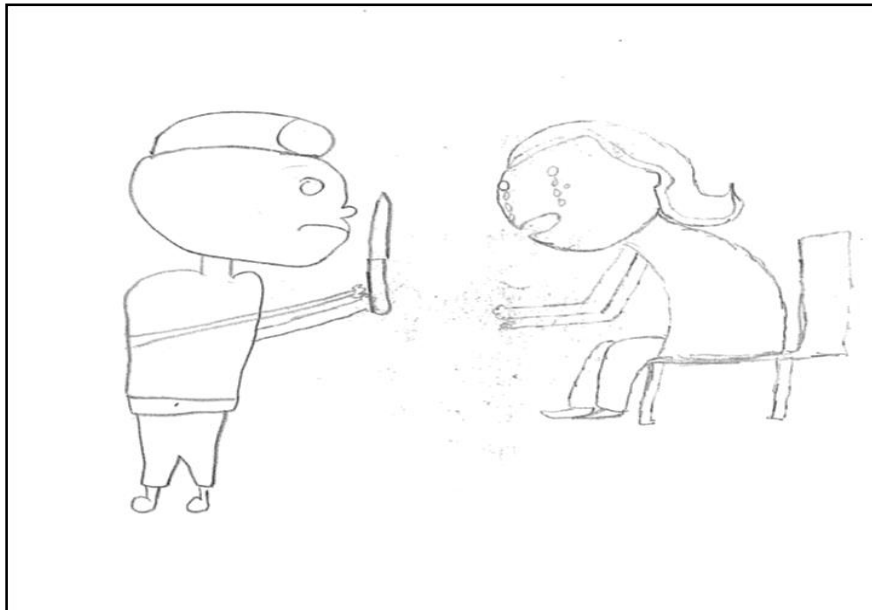


Figure 4.6 Julio's drawing of what he disliked about his neighbourhood

Lorena is a ten-year-old girl who lives with her parents and her fourteen-year-old sister in one of the low middle-class areas of Beautiful Bay. Her mother is a housewife who sometimes goes to sea fishing, and her father is a bricklayer working mainly in the northern area of the island. At the end of Grade Five, Lorena failed in Mathematics, English and French. Her mother informed the researcher that she was often sick and could not always catch up on what she had missed on days that she was absent.

Ten-year-old Daphne who lives in the middle class area of the village. She is the third child of a family of four children and has attended the school since Grade One. Her mother is an educator and owner of an Early Childhood centre and her father works in service delivery. She was the only learner of this study who preferred to use French language for the interview. Figure 4.7 shows a drawing made by Daphne who portrayed what she liked best at school.

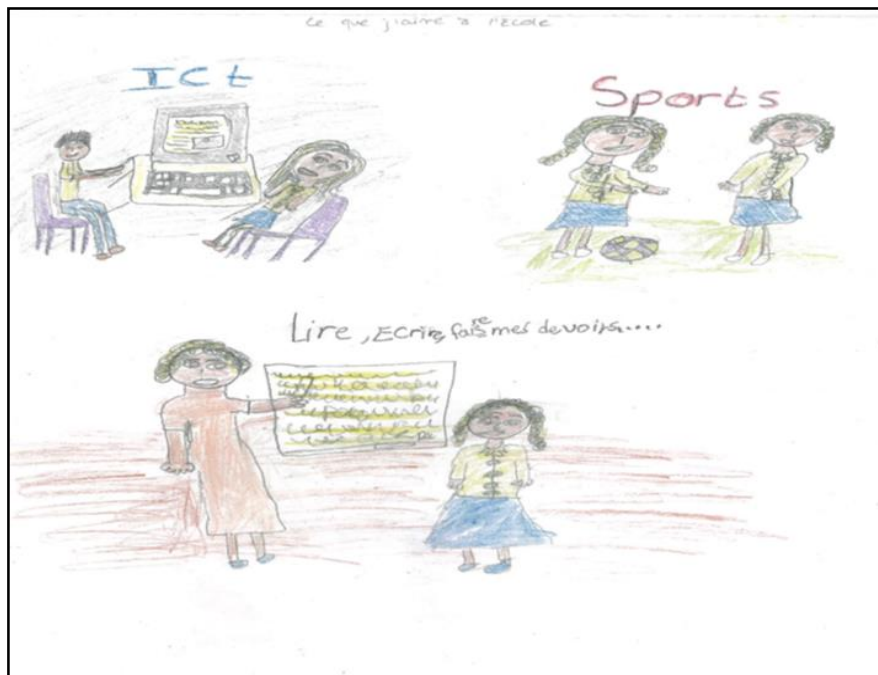


Figure 4.7 Daphne's drawing of what she liked best at school.

The three learners of the school were all proud of their school, particularly because the school had been renovated and two of them stated: “We are the only school which has a view of the Sea”. They expressed their appreciation of their school teachers they have had since they started attending Lady of the Sea Catholic School who they described as being patient and dedicated. The children stated that their school was a good one as they know many people of the neighbourhood who attended the school in the past and are now attending university or have good jobs.

All learners also shared their joy of participating in extracurricular activities and the ‘Special English’ class in which they can also do some arts and crafts. Lorenza and Julio reported that they had to study a lot before sitting for the CPE exams and, even if they liked studying the subjects, they do not always understand the way that the question is set. Julio specifically referred to Section B of the Mathematics question paper which he finds hard to read and difficult to understand.

Julio also shared that he knew some ZEP school parents who did not send their children to school so that they can go to work and bring money back home. He said that some of these children caused a lot of problems at school and it is largely due to their parents who were often violent or in trouble with the police.

In terms of career, the learners had a clear idea of what they would like to achieve in the future: Daphne aspired to be a lawyer to help the poor families and Julio wanted to attend cooking classes so as to bake cakes like his mother. As for Lorena, she said that she would be happy if she could do some ironing work in a hotel like her next door neighbour.

Understanding of an inclusive education.

The Head Teacher of the school (HT 3) understood an inclusive education as:

“...putting the child first and the overall development of the child.”

She explained that she always reminded the administrative and teaching staff about the need to encourage the learners to attend school and to be attentive to the needs of each child as an individual:

“...Not only at the academic level...when a child is under your responsibility, the child has his/her own history, his/her family...the child is an individual...each child has his history, his joys, difficulties, sorrows”.

From the perspectives of the class teachers, five out of nine teachers described inclusive education as being “child-centred”:

“...Inclusive education is used to denote teaching and learning as child-centred whereby all the children are taken on board, enabling them to develop according to their needs and capabilities”;

“...is the method where there is a mixed-abilities education that is child-centred”;

“...it takes into account the variety of levels of children and which adapts pedagogy to cater for different levels”;

“It is a child centred education where the child is given all attention.”

In other words, these teachers considered that the needs of the learners are the priority of the class teacher. Other teachers provided diverse definitions of the concept such as:

“An approach that provides pupils with different backgrounds and abilities with the proper academic and social achievement”;

“Including children with special needs along with average and high-flyer children”.

In these definitions, the teaching staff highlighted the need for them to acknowledge the multiple needs and abilities of every learner and the importance of embracing them and catering for them in class. Therefore, the teaching and managerial staff acknowledge the unique social and academic background of the learner.

All the school learners who were interviewed expressed their appreciation for their teacher: Delphine described her teacher as “patient” and “smart” and Lorenza understood her class teacher who was “irritated by the troublemakers of the class”. The three CPE learners shared that they enjoyed both academic and non-academic activities but were mostly grateful to the ‘Special English’ classes where they practised their oral English skills as well arts-related activities. Their joy of participating in these school activities reflects the vision of the Cluster Coordinator (CC3) about an inclusive education. Her understanding of inclusive education is the care and dedication offered at the ZEP school to each individual learner so that the child is happy to attend school and develop his/her inborn skills. She stated:

“For me, inclusive education would mean taking everyone on board. Giving equal opportunities: social or educational... because the children coming to our school they already come from a deprived region. They (learners) have to

feel welcomed at school...in the ZEP school, it is not just academic. They have different talents...they get the opportunity to excel in different fields they are good at.”

Therefore, for the ZEP school staff of Lady of the Sea Catholic School, an inclusive education is about an education system which is focussed upon the needs and abilities of the child. It is also about the importance of establishing a sense of welcome and care for the learners.

Implementation of an inclusive education.

CC3 also explained the way that Lady of the Sea Catholic School tries to implement an inclusive education strategy:

“...we have mixed ability classes so everyone is taken on board. It’s not that we have put the brighter students separately...everyone is given the same opportunity.”

In other words, CC3 considered that the practice of an inclusive education practice was not in line with the traditional Mauritian educational system which had been using the ‘streaming’ method where high-achieving learners were grouped together in a specific section and a similar process for the low-achieving learners.

The Head Teacher (HT3) was of the same opinion concerning the importance of ‘mixed abilities’ classes where they “...teach the children how to learn and work together” irrespective of individual’s capabilities, learning difficulties or intellectual gifts. She further explained how it is achieved in the school:

“...we do a lot of peer learning...the teacher no longer remains seated...he or she needs to move...checking and maybe organising so that children with different intelligence types are seated together. Going in the direction of mixed abilities...peer learning.”

HT3 also stated that the RCEA has been promoting an inclusive education since 1999 and every year they would provide training in ‘inclusive education pedagogy’ to the newly appointed teachers. According to her, this ‘learning and working together’ is achieved by ensuring that the child has acquired the Essential Learning Component (ELC) so that the learner:

“...knows how to write his name, to know which bus he/she should catch...
learning less but better.”

The school teachers shared some of the strategies that they used in the implementation of an inclusive education. Some of these strategies were:

“Preparation of special lessons and other teaching materials”;

“Involving all children in extra-curricular activities”;

“...encouraging a lot of oral discussions.”

Both administrative and teaching staff stated that the pupil-teacher ratio was a major barrier to putting into practice an inclusive education as teachers sometimes have to cater for 35 or 40 learners in a classroom which can accommodate only 30 learners. The limited space also prevents collaborative approaches to learning and limits teachers from moving in the classroom and attending to the learners with different needs. The majority of the staff also mentioned other barriers of an inclusive education such as an “overloaded curriculum” and “lack of parental cooperation”.

Besides these factors, the Cluster Coordinator mentioned that she sometimes faced the negative attitude of some teachers who are unwilling to work in the ZEP project. She pointed out that:

“We do have good teachers in the ZEP project...but we still have some teachers who do not have the right attitude to work with these types of pupils.”

According to her, the main reason for their resistance might be that they have been working in a “good school” for quite some time and they have difficulties adapting to the ZEP framework. There is also the fact that the education system does not provide them with sufficient motivation to work in the ZEP schools:

“Besides the allocation, they don’t have anything much to come in the ZEP schools. So, you have to be really dedicated, you have to really want to go and help those pupils to be able to teach in ZEP schools...”

Thus, even if there is additional support, the inclusive education approach and its implementation can be an overwhelming task for the staff at Lady of the Sea Catholic School. As per the words of the Cluster Coordinator, the success of the learners in ZEP schools depends entirely upon the motivation and dedication of the staff of the school.

Understanding of social justice.

CC3 defined social justice in education as:

“...giving children the same education as others but in a way that these children can take it...a different pedagogy, adapted pedagogy to them...which we’re trying, our best, to provide in our ZEP schools.”

Further explaining her point concerning the achievement of ZEP schools, CC 3 stated that the ZEP unit and its schools were currently actively working towards bringing social justice in education. According to her, one of the indicators of this achievement is the decrease in the rate of students’ absenteeism:

“...when the ZEP school project started, the rate of absenteeism in the school was about 20% and now in... less than 10 years, it has decreased to 10%. I would say we are going towards social justice: bringing them [the learners] to schools, giving them better opportunities to learn, the same opportunity, the same education, better adapted to them...”

Therefore, CC3 considers that social justice in education is about providing a uniform education system in terms of curriculum content and assessment methods, but altered by adopting a different pedagogical approach which would cater for the needs of the learners in ZEP schools.

The philosophy of social justice of the Cluster Coordinator is shared by the Head Teacher of the school. HT 3's construction of the concept is related to having the adequate financial or infrastructural resources which can help the learners in ZEP schools to have the same educational opportunities as any other children from other schools or neighbourhoods of Mauritius. She provided examples of how it is achieved in Lady of the Sea Catholic School:

“...it is about all children having the same facilities...by providing lunch...hot meal or packed lunch...but it's not only about the food...the same medical facilities...So, it is about learning and having an education with the same conditions.”

The Head Teacher also explained that, across the years, the school and its learners have thrived with the help of the human and infrastructural input despite the declining performance of the school at the CPE exams in the previous year (2012). The sponsorships of local companies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as well as the dedication of the staff, some dedicated parents and the Parent-Mediator, were some of the diverse types of support provided to the learners on a daily basis. Therefore, according to HT3, Lady of the Sea Catholic School was able to deliver a socially just education since learners have access to the same educational opportunities as any other regions in Mauritius and this was made possible with the goodwill of all the stakeholders and the funds received. Two teachers also associated the concept with the distribution of resources and referred to the “Hot lunch”

programme or the “special attention to needy pupils” in terms of financial assistance or medical care provided in the ZEP school project.

The majority of the ZEP school class teachers associated social justice with “equal rights” and “same opportunities” for education for all learners as well as being respected in society. The notion of ‘equality’ was recurrent in the definitions of this group of class teachers. Some of their descriptions of the term were:

“The right to be considered equal to everyone”;

“...all children have equal chance of success in their studies provided that they put in sufficient effort.”

In a similar tone but through the use of a metaphor, another teacher stated:

“Each having his/her share of the cake in society.”

Only one teacher associated the concept with “...the preferential option for the Poor” but, for the majority of class teachers, social justice is about equal rights and opportunities to what is provided by society. However, a teacher considered that “no ZEP school is practising social justice in the true sense” and his definition of the concept was “equal rights” for everyone, whether rich or poor. Therefore, for the ZEP school class teachers of Lady of the Sea Catholic School, the principles of equality and fairness are the recurrent notions associated with social justice. They also aspired to equal opportunities for all Mauritians to have a decent living standard which is made possible through access to education or jobs.

Both the management and teaching staff of the Catholic school defined social justice as related to equal rights and having access to resources and opportunities so as to have a better life.

Sunflower School

School neighbourhood.

Sunflower School is located in Sunflower Village, a suburban area of almost 15,000 inhabitants. The village is mainly an agricultural and farming area with the cultivation of sugar cane and the rearing of cattle. Since the village is situated not far from the capital city of Mauritius, the coastal area, and several important towns of the country, the number of inhabitants is gradually growing with people working in the tourism or sugar cane industry as well as those who work as labourers, tradesmen and farmers. There is a heterogeneous group of people living in Sunflower Village, from the middle and lower social-economic class, as well as a mixed ethnic group of Hindus, Creoles and Muslims.

However, there is also an area of Sunflower Village which is quite secluded from the village centre. Families live in small houses, almost like a slum area, as the place is crowded with very little basic amenities, many having no power supply or water. In fact, the Sunflower village has been identified as one of the 'pockets of poverty' in Mauritius' (CSO, 2013) whereby families have difficulties making ends meet because of inadequate income which leads to poor housing facilities and lack of food.



Figure 4.8. One of the fast growing areas of Sunflower village

School context.

Sunflower School was selected to be part of the sample for this study because it is situated in a suburban area of important towns of Zone A and it is the second most populated ZEP school with a student population of 528 in 2013. It is also relevant to note that the class numbers are high in this school with an average of 35 learners per classroom. Another reason for the choice of this ZEP school was that, at the beginning of the school year 2013, Sunflower School caught the attention of the public because of a case of food poisoning at the school which led to angry parents venting their frustration by causing physical damage to the school property. This incident, which happened prior to the data collection period, was related to the Food programme strategy and caused tensions in the relationships between the ZEP school and the parents. Consequently, the researcher considered that it was important to include the school in the study.

It was later indicated that the case of food poisoning was due to the fact that food caterers did not strictly observe the sanitary and hygienic protocols. As a result of this incident, angry parents confronted the school administration and staff and even damaged the Head Teacher's office. Consequently, the MOE had temporarily suspended the Hot Meal

programme and substituted a ‘Packed Lunch’ option which is made up of a loaf of bread, butter and a slice of cheese as well as a bottle of water and a piece of fruit. Although an unfortunate incident, it did provide the researcher with the opportunity to find out how school staff managed the relationship with parents after such an event. Information on Sunflower School is provided in the Table 4.7.

Table 4.7.

Basic information on Sunflower School (2013).

Characteristics	Numbers
Student Population	528
Number of sections at each Grade	
Lower classes (Grade One-Three)	3
Upper classes (Grade Four-Five)	2
(Grade Six)	3
Management staff	3
General Purpose (GP) teachers	16
Asian Language (AL) Teachers	5
Part-time teachers (Kreol Language& Physical Education)	2
% Pass rate at CPE exams	51.58
% rate of students’ school absenteeism	9.7

School stakeholders and their concerns.

The Cluster Coordinator.

Since Sunflower School is found within the same zone as Redrock School, that is, Zone A, CC 1 is also the Cluster Coordinator of this school. During the data collection period, CC1 visited the school once a week for her usual appointments with the teachers from Grade Six and the Head Teacher. CC1 shared her experiences of working in Sunflower

School, as well as her perceptions of the Sunflower community, including her observations about the food poisoning incident.

According to her, prior to that event, the school was perfectly run. There was a very good level of school discipline, teachers were eager to improve the performance of the school at exams, and the school management was well established and had the respect of the parents. She described the situation in Sunflower School:

“The Head Teacher there was a role model. He welcomed parents with open arms...He introduced a card system so that parents were welcomed and could explain their issues...A welcoming relationship.”

However, the food poisoning incident triggered anger amongst several parents of the community and led to the assault on the school causing damage to the office of the Head Teacher.

“...he could have made a mistake. Perhaps he should have sacked the food supplier a long time ago... I mean we are all to be blamed in such circumstances, I told him: “We are all to be blamed, Sir” and this is what he reaped. He had to manage this crisis with parents... we had to grant him protection.”

CC1 further acknowledged that a consequence of this event is that the level of trust between the parental community and the school was shattered and the Head Teacher had to start building that trust once again to restore the parents’ faith in the school.

Despite the upsetting events at Sunflower School, CC1 was satisfied with the overall progress of the school, whether in terms of the annual percentage pass rate at the CPE exams (see Appendix D), or the increase in learners’ school attendance. She believed that her regular presence at school and class visits encourages teachers to be more mindful of their teaching approaches, especially in the case of pupils with learning difficulties.

The Head Teacher.

Sunflower School's Head Teacher (HT4) is a man, with a rich experience of forty years in the Ministry of Education (MOE). He started his career as a teacher, in 1971, at Sunflower School where he worked for twelve years. After working for thirty-eight years as a teacher in different schools found in the rural and urban areas of Zone A, he was appointed deputy Head Teacher in 2002 before being promoted to Head Teacher six years later. His motivation to accept the appointment as Head Teacher at the school was because he started his career in that school and wanted to finish it there.

HT4 provided an overview of the socio-cultural realities of Sunflower village which influences the daily practices in Sunflower School. He claimed that managing a ZEP school is very different to managing a non-ZEP one and stated:

“There is a world of difference. It's far more... difficult to work in a ZEP school because we deal with children having issues. Here you have more down to earth problems because we have children who are emotionally affected. Therefore, this requires more work, comprehension and attention; may it be regarding students or parents.”

He also considered that some of the characteristics needed to work in ZEP schools are: “love for one another”; “good communication skills with respect to parents, the staff...everybody”.

Describing the ZEP school reality, HT4 depicted the social difficulties of the learners related to family issues, socio-economic poverty and violence:

“The majority of children do not have a family life because there is the father who has several partners or the mother who has several partners...they are children who are emotionally hurt children. Moreover, these parents are violent in nature. Therefore, at the slightest spark, a fire is set...there is a lot of

violence that needs to be managed and violence prevailing at home is spilled over at school.”

Therefore, HT4 explained that one of his priorities at Sunflower School is to monitor the school discipline because of the high level of violence amongst learners who often get into fights and are injured:

“I personally encourage my teachers to impose discipline in class. I firmly believe we can do nothing without discipline... In my school, discipline is a priority... It is only when we impose discipline at school or in the classroom that we can move forward otherwise performance will decline and I won't allow this.”

HT4 was equally concerned about the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) of the ZEP schools as set by the Ministry of Education. He aimed at reducing the rate of absenteeism of the learners to less than 10% yearly and increasing the percentage pass rate at the CPE exams. In order to achieve these goals, HT4 stated that it was fundamental for him to build a “team spirit” in Sunflower School which acts as a supportive framework in his managerial role in the school. He explained his vision of the relationship between school management and the ZEP school class teachers:

“The Head Teacher on her/his own can do absolutely nothing. If s/he is not backed up by the staff, s/he would not be able to do anything. The first thing to do is to build a team. Teachers should be aware that the Head Teacher is on their side.”

He also stated that he had the trust and respect from the parents of neighbourhood who were familiar with his way of doing things and educational objectives for the school.

The teachers.

Sunflower School's teaching staff is made up of 16 General Purpose (GP) teachers and five Asian Language (AL) teachers who taught from Grade One to Six. The part-time teaching staff were two Kreol Morisien (KM) teachers who worked with learners in Grade One and Two, and a Physical Education (P.E) teacher who worked with each Grade once a fortnight. There was no Information Communication Technology (ICT) teacher at the school at the period of the data collection. Questionnaires were distributed to the GP teachers who had consented to participate in the survey from Grade One to Six. Eleven teachers consented to participate in the study and completed the questionnaires. The Table 4.8 provides a brief profile of the class teachers from Sunflower School who participated in the study.

Table 4.8.

Profile of class teachers from Sunflower School.

Sunflower School	Gender Male-M/Female-F	Years of teaching experience	Years of Experience in ZEP schools	Years of experience in teaching at Sunflower School
T1	F	4	4	4
T2	F	4	4	4
T3	M	3	1	1
T4	F	14	10	5
T5	F	11	6	6
T6	F	8	8	8
T7	M	6	4	1
T8	F	4	4	6 months
T9	F	4	4	4
T10	F	7	3.5	5 months
T11	F	10	8	8

Most of the class teachers expressed their satisfaction about the school management and the discipline at school which contributed to the gradual progress of the school.

According to them, the ZEP school project adequately supports the learners from Sunflower School in achieving an education. Some of their responses were:

“The school administration ensures that each pupil, irrespective of their background finds his/her place in the school setting”;

“Here, in this school, we work to support every child in such a way so that when he/she comes out of school as a good citizen who is able to depend on himself.”

The majority of the class teachers reported that the major challenges that they faced in the school were: high rate of learners’ absenteeism; the disruptive behaviours of learners;

lack of parental engagement in the learning process; the high pupil-teacher ratio, lack of space in the classroom; the neighbourhood's violence. Some of the comments were:

“Indifference of some pupils and parents towards education”;

“We [teachers] need to have a lot of patience and courage to deal with difficult situations such as aggressive parents or pupils who are victims of abuse”;

“Inability of parents to understand that teachers want the best for their children...the mistrust between parents and teachers.”

All teachers complained about the overloaded curriculum but only some of them stated that even though the current curriculum was not suitable for the low achieving learners, they would try to involve them by designing particular tasks. However, they all explained that it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to bring the necessary changes in the curriculum. Some of their responses were:

“The curriculum demands a lot but the level of ZEP school learners does not at all fit the curriculum”;

“The Ministry of Education should ponder about reorganising the curriculum content for ZEP schools”;

“Topics should make sense to learners and the curriculum content must not be exams-based.”

The parents.

Seven parents attended the focus group interview, among which were three board members of the Executive Committee of the PTA including the school's President and Vice-president of the PTA. The other parents present had their children in different grades from One to Six. Most of the parents were men of the neighbourhood who were either self-employed or a government employee, as well as two mothers who were housewives.

The parents interviewed at Sunflower School firstly shared their appreciation of the school improvement which, according to them, is largely due to the management of the Head Teacher. One of the parents stated:

“The general overview of the school is that it has progressed... It has taken quite some time to get to where we are today and we hope we will have another Head Teacher who will be able to follow the same direction...”

They acknowledged that, under the new management, the school children have become more disciplined and the percentage pass rate at the CPE exams has increased.

The parents reported that the members of the Executive Committee tried to provide some important advice to the other parents in the PTA meetings such as encouraging them to send their children to school and monitoring their progress once they come back from school, and reassuring the parents that they can provide the necessary attention even if they are illiterate or do not know much in particular subjects. According to the President of the PTA, the members of the Executive Committee also believed that the school learners have the capacity “to educate their parents” from the advice that they receive at school.

The other important issues raised by the parents were the quality of the food distributed at school through the Ministry’s ‘Food Programme’ and the school renovation project. They believed the packed lunch was not of good quality on a daily basis and thought of protesting to the authorities. The parents also refused the school renovation project because it meant that their children would be displaced in different primary schools of the Zone and that situation might disturb the children’s learning process. The parents also stated that they were fully aware of their right to protest to the MOE and will do so if their children’s welfare is at stake.

The learners

Anouschka is 11 years old and comes from Rodrigues Island which is part of the Republic of Mauritius. Her parents had separated when she was in pre-primary school and, consequently, her mother decided to settle in Sunflower town which is also the residence of her relatives. Anouschka's elder sister lives in Rodrigues with her father and she also has a younger brother of 11 months. Her mother works on an organic farm owned by the nearby sugar estate and she usually leaves for work at 6 a.m. Anouschka belongs to Grade Six (Blue section) and her favourite subjects were French and English but found Mathematics, especially topics involving calculus, difficult.

The second learner is Malia who is 11 years old and originally from Sunflower town. Her parents have always lived in Sunflower: her mother works in a textile factory and her father is employed in the town council. She has an elder brother of 14 years old. Malia used to be in Grade Six, Green section, but was then transferred to Six, Red section, after her teacher's appointment to another primary school. At first, it was quite difficult for her to adapt to the new class but, with the teacher's encouragement, she now feels that she belongs in Grade Six, Red section. Her favourite subjects were Mathematics and Science but found History/Geography difficult to grasp. As an adult, she hopes to become a primary school teacher as she is inspired by her own teachers.

Both learners were happy to be at Sunflower School and in their respective classes, even Malia who had to change teachers. Anouschka and Malia had difficulties in a few specific subjects but they felt free to ask their teachers for help when in need. The learners acknowledged that there were a few of their friends who had trouble following the curriculum but, their respective teachers paid them special attention.

They wished that they could study additional subjects such as music, arts or cookery. Anouschka also stated that they did not practice enough Sports at school compared to

Rodrigues Island where she used to run marathon. Both learners stated that the school lacked an adequate playground, even though they rarely played at recess time because they either did additional classwork or, in Malia's case, helped the teacher to create learning tools.

The girls liked to live in Sunflower for its shops and clean environment but considered that some children do not respect the value of education. Malia suggested that parents should be sensitised about the importance of education.

Understanding of an inclusive education.

In the questionnaires, the class teachers gave their definition of inclusive education. Several of them referred to the concept as:

“an approach to educating children with special needs in an environment where they are allowed to integrate the mainstream”.

A majority of them mentioned the importance of recognizing the abilities of each child and developing their personal potential. One teacher highlighted the importance of:

“giving access to quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives.”

It is seen that the teachers have a broad notion of the meaning of inclusive education. Their main concern was to include children of different abilities and backgrounds so as to cater to their needs, develop their potential and get them involved in the mainstream system which allows them to have access to quality education.

HT4 also related an inclusive education to attending to learners with special needs and the importance for the education system, through educators and experts, who should be trained to detect any learning difficulties that the child might have. He explained a common situation in ZEP schools:

“...a child beginning school in Grade One...encounters some difficulties...visual impairment, emotional or psychomotor issues, etc. Our

current education system does not take these into consideration...We should perform a diagnostic of potential issues and refer the child to relevant professionals.”

Therefore, his understanding of an inclusive education is an education system which can help to identify the learning difficulties of a child at an early age and provide the necessary expertise to help the child integrate into the system and develop his/her potential. He also related an inclusive education to the capacity for schools to:

“...help children become independent so that they can manage by themselves...Knowing how to read and count in order to cope with their own life.”

Implementation of an inclusive education.

The Cluster Coordinator (CC1) of Sunflower School provided a copy of the School Improvement Plan for the year 2013 which was designed by the School Development Unit (SDU). The SDU is composed of the Cluster Coordinator and Head Teacher and some senior class teachers. The objective of the school was:

“...to improve the KPI of ZEP schools so as to reduce inequality between high and low performing primary schools.”

The members of the SDU formulated several specific goals such as the creation of a positive school climate, improving communication and parental involvement, or designing pedagogical strategies so as to improve academic results amongst others.

The ZEP school teachers affirmed that the school practised an inclusive education by providing individual attention to each child through the design of specific tasks. Two teachers highlighted that “each child has different needs”. Three teachers considered the fact that children of different levels of abilities are put in the same class were examples of inclusive education as there is no ‘streaming’ (differentiation by abilities) system. Two other

teachers considered that the implementation of the concept was carried out through the provision of school materials, food and other types of support.

In terms of their personal strategies to using an inclusive education approach, two teachers stated that they grouped learners who had the same educational needs together so as to provide individual attention. The majority of teachers asserted that they designed special work or adopted the “graded teaching method” so that the learners can work according their potential. A few teachers provided some of their personal approaches:

“...having regular talks about the importance of education and encourage pupils to look at their problems differently”;

“use of reward system and allowing pupils to watch cartoons which motivate them to come to school and increase their interest in learning”;

“use of Kreol Morisien language in class so that everybody understands, then translating so as to make sure that the low achievers can follow the classes and instructions”.

Hence, it is seen that whether in terms of school or personal strategies for implementing an inclusive education, the approaches at Sunflower School aim at embracing all learners and encouraging them to fully participate in the learning process.

Through the classroom observations of two different classes at Grade Four at Sunflower School it was revealed that they were very different to each other. In the first class:

“...the class setting is arranged so that learners can participate in group work and peer-learning...Quite a number of visuals and children are disciplined...even the low achieving learners are interested in the class and actively participate...” (Field notes/Sunflower School /29 May 2013).

As for the other Grade Four, the class set up was a traditional one with rows facing the teacher and many learners did not have their school materials and they were seated on the left hand side of the rows. These children were described by the teacher in those terms:

“...they are those who don’t want to follow the class and who don’t even want to copy what is going on” (Field notes/Sunflower School/3 June 2013).

This teacher said that she has been working with the same class for four consecutive years and she witnessed that the percentage pass rate kept decreasing each year: 95% in Grade One, 80% in Grade Two, 50% in Grade Three and 40% of learners passed the first term test in Grade Four (Field notes/Sunflower School /3 June 2013).

Understanding of social justice.

According to HT4, social justice is achieved by providing education to children coming from a disadvantaged background. He stated:

“There are parents who are poor...they have several children...in the same environment of violence, poverty, teenage pregnancy, abortion, drugs...It is a vicious circle that keeps looping. It is only through education that we can save a few children.”

He further considered that he would have accomplished “a very good job” towards the achievement of social justice if he managed to save some children from the “vicious circle” of poverty. Therefore, HT4 understands the concept of social justice as escaping marginalisation by offering an education which in turn helps students to escape poverty and other social ills.

Only two class teachers associated the idea of escaping poverty and marginalisation through education as an element of social justice. Their responses were:

“Providing same education to the nation at large so that each and everyone has the same potential to succeed”;

“addressing poverty so as to bring all people on a rather same level on a social basis.”

The last quote, which referred to the idea of equality, is another common theme amongst teachers, as the majority of them described social justice as achieving equality amongst people despite their different social, ethnic, religious or economic differences. There were other facets of equality such as “equality of opportunities” or “equality in treatment” as well as “equality on a social and financial ground”. Therefore, almost all teachers from Sunflower School associated the notion of social justice with the principles of equality amongst people of diverse backgrounds.

The teachers also described the ways social justice was enacted in the school. Most teachers considered that social justice is achieved through the provision of free education to all children, free food and school materials which can ensure that the children find themselves “...at the same level of the rest of pupils”. Other teachers related the concept to the special pedagogy, curriculum and attention provided for the school children which portray the school as attending to the needs of ‘mixed abilities’ learners and developing their potential. One teacher was of the opinion that the ZEP school did not achieve social justice as school management would prefer to ignore social problems faced by the children so as to avoid problems with parents and the community. This teacher identified the social problems as “bullying, improper sexual behaviours or violence” amongst others. Another teacher was very specific in ways that Sunflower School practised social justice and explained:

“In this particular school, most children are from the Creole ethnic background and they are somehow helped.”

She elaborated that the learners are given free food, even free tuition and so, are helped to “...achieve a proper education” provided that “...they have will power.”

Therefore, according to the teachers, Sunflower School practised social justice for its learners through the distribution of food and school materials, a specialised pedagogy and curriculum, as well as opportunities to achieve an education the same as any children from other places of Mauritius.

Similarly, the Head Teacher believed that the ‘Food Programme’ as well as a meaningful learning and teaching approach are means of attaining social justice:

“...providing food to children in ZEP schools is an extremely important project and one way to attract children towards school is to provide food.”

The idea of helping the learners to “cope with their own life” is echoed by the CC4 who described social justice in ZEP schools as a means to “...benefit from the opportunities provided by free education for all children from different levels in Mauritius.”

From the above ideas, it can be said that that social justice is perceived as the means to achieve the same opportunities for people of different backgrounds by addressing the root causes of inequality understood as the lack of resources or lack of opportunities in education and in society.

This chapter has presented the views and concerns of the main stakeholders in the four ZEP schools, as well as their understandings of an inclusive education and social justice. In order to provide an additional understanding of the ZEP schools and the practices of an inclusive education in this school project, the next section presents the perspectives of two system leaders.

Perspectives from the system leaders

The perspectives of the system leaders of the government ZEP schools and the Catholic ZEP school are presented in this section. Their general insights on the Mauritian education system and the ZEP school project provide another layer of understanding to this study. They both provided an overview of the ZEP school realities as well as the possibilities

and challenges of implementing an inclusive education in the ZEP school project. They also contributed to offering rich contextual background concerning the Mauritian education system and the Mauritian society. The two system leaders were designated as SL1 and SL 2 in the collection of data but, for reasons of confidentiality, their comments will not be individually identified. In order to achieve this, the plural pronoun ‘they’ is used instead of the single pronoun as would be grammatically correct.

Profile of the system leaders.

One system leader has worked as a teacher and school rector for more than thirty years in several Catholic secondary schools of the Republic of Mauritius. This person accepted the leadership of ZEP school project several years before the data collection period.

The other system leader coordinates the administration of primary Roman Catholic Authority (RCA) schools, as well as the general policies of the Catholic secondary schools. This person has more than 25 years of experience in education, working as a secondary school teacher and school rector in several Catholic secondary schools.

The Mauritian education system.

One system leader was highly critical of the current Mauritian education system which was described as “elitist” and still deeply rooted in the “colonial days”. This leader provided an overview of how they believe the education system excludes a significant percentage of children:

“Let’s be straightforward about it: The actual Mauritian education system is a very good one for approximately 20 to 25 % of the Mauritian children. From a general point of view, almost another 30% will be able to fit in...but generally, with weak and low achievement but who would succeed in the exams even if the results are just ok. This means that about 50% of children are totally at a loss within the system.”

According to this system leader educational policy makers, management and teaching staff generally refuse to bring change within the education system as it enabled them to achieve educational and socio-economic progress. They declared:

“...most of the people who are responsible for the system have benefitted from the system and their kids are also benefitting from it. It is very difficult for them to challenge the system and to provide solutions...”

It was further explained that the Mauritian educational policy makers have designed the Mauritian school framework with a strong influence from the British education model of the 1950s. According to this leader, such an outdated model is no longer adequate for the demands of 21st century Mauritius as the prevailing educational goals and pedagogical approaches were restrictive and devoid of innovation in the Mauritian schools:

“The official papers talk of Learner Centred Pedagogy but then, if you enter any class, you know immediately that the teacher is into didactic teaching. People are reproducing the words from documents but have not understood the gist or they haven’t even thought about it. They are just reproducing what they did, what their teachers did for years. It shows the extent to which we are still colonised in our minds. Whatever the British has set up, we don’t even think of discussing/critiquing it...”

It is clear that this system leader contests the status quo within the Mauritian education system and perceived it as divided between those who succeed at school and, subsequently, in society and those who are “at a loss” and need to “fit in” education and society. They added that teachers were expected to bring innovation in their pedagogy and approach the curriculum in a critical way so as to adapt it to the needs of the learners. They stated: “...we need teachers and school leaders who are ready and keen to try, who are willing to go outside their books, their class, their usual ways of doing things.”

Therefore, this system leader is in favour of bringing changes within the education system which they believe is exclusionary and prevents the educational and socio-economic progress of all Mauritians while privileging a few. They also criticised the teachers who were not creative and critical enough in their approach towards the pedagogy and the curriculum.

The other system leader did not criticise the current education system of Mauritius and did not approve of primary school staff always blaming the education system:

“You will hear teachers and Head Teachers...always blame the education system...I don't really blame the education system as such, if one wants to make a child learn, if you have a good teacher, we can achieve our goal...because...what does this education system tell us? The end-result should be for the child to pass the CPE exams... OK, but you still have six years where you find yourself...with enough time to navigate in between the curriculum, from one textbook to another to know exactly if the child can proceed to chapter 2, level 2, level 3 or step back a little to take a better leap.”

From this quote, it can be understood that this leader considered that all teachers were able to help every learner succeed within the current education system, but it depended upon them, as teachers, to closely monitor the progress of the learners and provide the adequate support throughout their schooling years.

In summary, the system leaders had opposing views concerning the education system: one criticised the elitist structure of the system while the other considered that teachers are the key to help all Mauritian children to be successful within it. The next sub-section shows their understandings of the ZEP school project.

Understandings of ZEP schools.

When being asked about their beginnings in the ZEP school project, one system leader said:

“I decided very quickly that the project in itself was a very good one...in the sense that it gives enhanced opportunity to those that are in need, low performing and low achieving; those who are not taken up wholly by the existing education system.”

According to them, since the current Mauritian education system excludes some of the children, they considered that the ZEP school project should help to get them back into the system by providing additional support for these learners located in less developed regions. According to this system leader, the additional support provided in ZEP schools is not limited to resources, but it also involves special pedagogies:

“A ZEP school becomes a place where we are able, where we should be able to try out different school models and differentiated pedagogies until we find the right way of doing things...”

However, this leader acknowledged that ZEP schools cannot function independently from the national primary curriculum framework and needed to follow the same national curriculum and that their school learners sit for the same national summative exams (Grade Four to Six). It was further stated that since the percentage pass rate of ZEP school learners at the CPE exams was one of the two “indicators” of the progress of the school, they were favourable to additional indicators which can monitor the overall progress of ZEP school learners:

“I find that...the two indicators (absenteeism & CPE results) encompass the whole school... But it is obvious that in order to have good CPE results, it would be good to have good rate of learners’ attendance at school, that teachers are regularly at school, that the syllabus is followed in an intelligent manner, that the different tests or evaluation are satisfactory and so on.”

In other words, this system leader did not want ZEP schools to be isolated from the current education system but to be fully part of an improved system by following the same curriculum through specially adapted pedagogies and be evaluated through the same evaluation method as the rest of the country.

The other system leader was also favourable to additional methods of evaluating the progress of ZEP schools and not focussing solely upon the CPE results. According to them, there are some members of the ZEP school staff who "...keep the performance on an average low because they want to stay within the ZEP which has more facilities". They highlighted the importance of a variety of KPIs being set for the ZEP schools and not just academic performance indicators. This leader also referred to the fact that currently within the ZEP school project, ZEP schools faced a "double-edged" knife:

"...if you work well, you are no longer considered a ZEP school and the associated financial support is cut."

In other words, whether a ZEP school progresses or not, the school and the staff still benefit from the advantages of additional resources and earning additional income. Therefore, this system leader questioned the motivation of the staff to work hard so that the school progresses and gets out of the ZEP school project, with the risk of losing the additional benefits. They further considered that ZEP schools needed to be accountable as they are benefitting from financial and infrastructural resources, but, the progress of the learners should not only be measured in terms of CPE exams. Therefore, this system leader affirmed that it would be fair to take away some financial aids from the ZEP schools which are progressing with the aim of supporting other primary schools of Mauritius that might need such financial help.

However, this system leader also pointed out that primary schools situated in low socio-economic areas were striving to improve their performance despite their difficult

conditions and the fact that they were not part of the ZEP school project did not prevent them from making good progress. They gave the example of several Catholic primary schools which were situated in low socio-economic areas and had progressed without being in the ZEP school project. In that context, this leader further reflected that these primary schools in need of help could be supported “without necessarily labelling the school as a ZEP school” which undermines the ZEP school project considered as an encouraging initiative from the Ministry of Education.

Therefore, both system leaders considered that the ZEP school project was effective for the primary school learners who are excluded from the education system or are marginalised from a socio-economic perspective. The extra support provided to ZEP schools was essential but they were both favourable to other methods of evaluating the learning development of the learners as well as additional ways of assessing the accountability of the ZEP schools.

Understandings of an inclusive education

One system leader emphasised the “elitist” nature of the Mauritian education system and acknowledged that, even though the education system provided free education to all children, several of them were still at the margins. They declared: “Today access is not a problem but quality is...quality in terms of rethinking the system for it to be inclusive”. From the light of this quote, it is understood that this leader defined an inclusive education as an education system which can provide quality education for the benefit of all its citizens and not one which causes discrimination and educational disparity amongst learners.

They added that the ZEP school project filled the educational disparity in the Mauritian education system since it was a project that helped “...the disadvantaged from vulnerable neighbourhood”. Therefore, they explained:

“The aim was that ZEP schools would provide a helping hand to these children who were taken on board but could barely benefit because the system was kind of alien to them. That’s a very good challenge but at the same time very difficult because we have an educational model that we have inherited from the colonial days...”

For one system leader, ZEP schools help to reach out to children who had access to education but could not adapt to the system which they described as “alien” to them. Therefore, this leader recognised that the current structures and culture within Mauritian education system are creating educational exclusion and ‘alienation’ for some of the primary school children.

The other system leader defined the concept of inclusive education as: “...including everybody... From all ethnic backgrounds, from all social economic backgrounds” and related their definition to the views of the Mauritian Diocese of Port-Louis and its definition of inclusion in education. They stated:

“One of the key documents for the Mauritian Diocese of Port-Louis is the Synod 2000 report within which one of the major recommendations coming from grassroots level... from the members of the Church has been precisely on this Preferential Option for the Poor...Therefore, when it refers to the “poor”, we are talking about inclusion, inclusion of all, especially the poor, it is also taking into consideration all those who are in financial distress, all those facing emotional or psychological difficulties or even those facing difficulties in various abilities or handicaps.”

In this quote, the other system leader referred to two important publications which are used by the BEC as guiding principles: the Vatican’s Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education document (1997) and the Synod 2000 report from the Diocese of Port-Louis

(2000). The first document describes the importance for the Catholic Church to practice a policy of “Preferential Option for the Poor” which is one of the basic principles of Catholic Social Teaching and it calls for the concern and care for the most vulnerable in society

(1997). The second document highlights the need for Mauritian Catholic education to be at the service of the Mauritian children, especially those who face difficulties. Therefore, according to one of the system leaders, the BEC aspires to address these different facets of poverty through its primary and secondary schools in order to implement an inclusive education.

One system leader identified ZEP schools as a strategy which can cater for the needs of those who need financial and educational support and was of the opinion that: “...the ZEP school is concerned with particularly the socioeconomically weak category... but eventually when you analyse the situation, there are also those with borderline learning difficulties or learning disabilities”. From that perspective, they reflected on the support provided to Lady of the Sea Catholic School by the ZEP school project and the BEC through the resources and the additional specialist staff such as the school counsellors or school psychologist who are employed by the BEC. Therefore, from the perspective of the Catholic education, an inclusive education is about attending to different kinds of poverty – material, educational as well as emotional:

“I have always been in favour of inclusive education. It is in line with who I am personally and professionally and this goes hand in hand with the mission of the Church.”

In other words, this system leader considered that the underlying principles and values associated with an inclusive education correspond with professional duties of the leader of Catholic education in Mauritius and, so, they tried to implement these personal and

professional values by providing the necessary support to the Catholic primary and secondary schools of the country. This issue is further discussed in the next section.

In summary, one system leader considered that an inclusive education is one which is founded on quality and takes on board all the needs of the Mauritian children. Similarly, for the other system leader, the concept is oriented towards embracing all Mauritian children irrespective of their social, ethnic or economic background.

The next sub-section discusses their views on the implementation strategies of an inclusive education.

Implementation of an inclusive education.

According to one system leader, the ZEP school project has pioneered a few strategies of an inclusive education in its schools and these strategies have had a positive impact on the curriculum and pedagogical methods at primary school level. They described the initiatives in those terms:

“I initiated, with the help of the Minister, a project called ZIIS (Zone of Inclusive & Integrated Strategy). We introduced extra-curricular activities in the schools after school hours... We wanted to demonstrate the importance of co- and extra-curricular activities in education. Teachers could not or did not want to help, we started a project outside school hours with Resource Persons in a few ZEP schools. At the end of two years, the Enhancement Programme was implemented in all primary schools.”

Besides the Enhancement Programme, the ZEP school project initiated a Literacy Programme which has been adopted by the non-ZEP schools under the name of ‘Silence, on lit²⁹’. This leader considered that these pedagogical initiatives introduced in the ZEP schools, and then implemented in the other primary schools of Mauritius, were strategies such as those

²⁹ ‘Silence please! We are reading’

recommended in the national primary curriculum framework (MOE, 2008), but, very few primary school teachers implemented these strategies in the daily school time table.

Therefore, this system leader was of the opinion that the implementation of an inclusive education was largely dependent upon the willingness and enthusiasm of the primary school teachers. They explained:

“I wanted to introduce singing classes. Actually singing is on the time table but almost nobody sings in class. While the MIE (Mauritius Institute of Education) tells you that songs are part of the syllabus, teachers would say: ‘No way! We can’t do it’...”

Furthermore, they asserted that an inclusive education in Mauritius is achievable, not only in ZEP schools but also in other primary schools as all primary school teachers had followed pre-service training to work with the diversity of learners. However, both system leaders pointed out that, even though the class teachers had such pre-service training, most of the class teachers do not believe that an inclusive education can be achieved in practice. This leader compared the implementation of an inclusive education to the implementation of a mixed-ability approach:

“...mixed abilities, for the huge majority of the teachers in our system, is a technical term that we learn, almost rote-learnt at courses and workshops... Seeing mixed abilities in action in the classroom and adopt the pedagogy to ensure that the children better understand their topics, is something that they have never seen...The only way to do this is to demonstrate this to teachers but above all to demonstrate that it actually works, make the class livelier and bring results.”

One system leader also reflected upon the crucial role that primary school teachers are requested to play in the implementation of an inclusive education. Consequently, this was

one of the reasons why the BEC had provided adequate in-service training to all its primary school teachers since the 1990s. They described this initiative:

“This dated back in the 1990s. Mrs I³⁰ undertook the training of a great deal of our primary school teachers some of whom, now are deputy Head Teachers or Head Teachers. A few of our Pedagogical Advisers also received this training. It was not an easy task. We’ve had trainers, local or overseas, who tried their best to make educators understand the concept of inclusive education. How, through an inclusive pedagogy, the child learns more efficiently. Moreover, there are lots of booklets on inclusive education. But, to be realistic, theory and practice do not always go hand in hand.”

This quote shows that the practice of an inclusive education is subject to what happens within the classrooms as well as the pedagogical approach which the class teacher decides to adopt. According to this system leader, teachers may receive the pre-service or in-service trainings but it all depends on the underlying beliefs and attitudes of the class teachers and how they perceive their role as teachers. They considered that teaching is a vocation:

“...if it is a vocation you should consider each child as if he/she were your own. You should make sure this child, every child improves and is not being neglected. This is the most important point. Therefore, such consideration and perception, the teacher ought to nurture...it is her/his responsibility to make all his children succeed...Each teacher ought to ask him-/herself, when I have forty or thirty students in my class, it is my responsibility to make all thirty children, not necessarily succeed, but at least improve. It is about vocation and love for your job.”

³⁰ A Mauritian, living in Australia, whose expertise and experience in education led to providing help to BEC through trainings and workshops

In other words, it was believed that the practice of an inclusive education demands a sense of care, respect and responsibility from the adult (teachers) towards each child (learner) with the aim of enhancing the development of the child.

One system leader further argued that the teaching and management staff too often blamed the family background of the learners for their underachievement instead of being self-critical in their approach to teaching. They reported:

“...you’ll hear that parents are to be blamed. Parents do not take their children in hand, everything depends on the family unit. I agree but it is not family that does it all.”

This system leader was of the opinion that, although the learners may be confronted with complex family situations, class teachers are required to ensure a meaningful learning experience for the learners when they are at school.

Lastly, one system leader suggested that, in order to ensure the implementation of an inclusive education, there were some other important elements which play a vital role. Some of these elements are: a) “supportive framework” within the school and the Catholic education system; b) “continuous training because it is a means of renewing oneself...”; c) “enhancement of the status of the teacher by recognising his/her importance vis-à-vis the child”; and, d) “lines of accountability” within the structure.

One system leader associated the concept of an inclusive education with the implementation of a “Mauritian model of schooling”, which they distinguished from the colonial model of education, so as to keep up with the needs of 21st century Mauritius. They described this inclusive model of schooling in the following terms:

“... the Mauritian model of schooling should be able to cater for the needs of all our children. This is not exactly the case...the problem is not access but quality, relevance and pertinence. The Mauritian model needs to teach English

language as a foreign language, which it is for a large majority of our children...”

They were also vocal with regards to the use of the child’s mother-tongue which “...doesn’t necessarily mean the Kreol language”. They further explained that there were small groups in the Mauritian population whose mother-tongue was not Kreol language. For instance, the Bhojpuri³¹ language is one amongst other ancestral languages which should be recognised by the Mauritian education system. They also suggested more extra-curricular activities such as singing, drama, dancing or painting classes which are not only “theoretically” in the curriculum but also accepted and included by the school teachers in the daily class context. In terms of pedagogy, this system leader asserted that the inclusive model of school would be equipped with teachers who are willing to try new pedagogical ideas and go out of their way to reach out to children with different abilities. In that context, they declared:

“...we need teachers and school leaders who are ready and keen to try...who are willing to go outside their books, their class, their usual ways of doing things... I see teachers... rejecting all those who cannot fit into their system.”

The quote shows that one system leader referred to the root of the problem with the implementation of an inclusive education as the need for the ZEP school learners to “fit into” the current education system. Therefore, they declared: “It’s our school model and pedagogy that need to be reviewed.”

With regard to the perceptions of the system leaders about the implementation of an inclusive education, both system leaders asserted that it was possible to implement such an approach to education but that it was subject to the beliefs, attitudes and readiness of the class teacher. They also identified some factors, such as adequate teacher training or the medium

³¹ An Indo-Aryan language largely spoken in the northern part of India and brought to Mauritius by the Indentured labourers. 65,000 Mauritians considered Bhojpuri as their home language (CSO, 2011).

of instruction, within the educational structure which needed an adequate supportive framework so as to facilitate an inclusive education approach because, in the current education system, the learners are required to adapt to it. The next sub-section presents their understandings of social justice.

Understanding of social justice.

In providing their understanding of social justice, one system leader associated the concept with the “cohabitation between the different socioeconomic strata. This cohabitation should exist between different communities as well as between distinct ethnic groups”. The other system leader declared that Mauritius was quite successful in ensuring a peaceful “cohabitation” between the different ethnic, socio-economic and religious groups of the island and this has been partly achieved through the education system.

According to one system leader, the national primary curriculum framework reflects such diversity:

“...in our school textbooks...we teach all the Mauritian festivals...it adds value...even though each one stays within her/his group. At least, we’ve learned something about this other group...eventually, we observe after several generations there starts to be some mixing up.”

Therefore, for this system leader, one way of achieving social justice in schools is by learning about the ‘Other’ and they were of the opinion that the Mauritian primary schools encouraged children to learn about each other:

“I am pleased to know that within our [schools], everybody mingles with each other from all social strata, except a few families that choose to put their children in private fee-paying schools.”

Without providing a precise definition of social justice, the other system leader explained that social justice in education can be understood through the aspiration to

“...provide the academic opportunity to all our children” and stated that their aim was to help ZEP schools achieve this aspect of social justice. However, they further declared that the Mauritian education system was not successful in doing so and considered that the system needed to be more self-critical: “The question is how to get the most vulnerable to benefit from the existing school model.”

This system leader further argued that, within the education system, there is an important need to:

“find a school model for those who are in need, who do not have money or bargaining power, whose parents cannot help out, who do not have the prerequisites for the existing school life.”

They considered that the change within the education system can be achieved through a change in the mindset of the Mauritian educators. This system leader wished for the emancipation of the Mauritian policy makers, educators and administrators from the colonial era and their participation in the creation of a totally new education system:

“how could we make the teachers, even the school leaders, understand that the school model that he/she has known throughout his/her life is not a good model. It is extremely difficult...The difficulty is to get people to think out of the box.”

Therefore, for one system leader, social justice is understood in the context of education as a new school model which caters for the needs of the marginalized children; those who have neither the financial, social or cultural power to make it through the current education system. The other system leader considered that when an education system enables children of various ethnic, religious, socioeconomic and cultural groups to live together and know about each other as a way of achieving harmonious diversity in the schools, then, it was

social justice in education. In summary, for both system leaders, social justice can be achieved through the education system.

These views on social justice conclude this section which focussed upon the perspectives of two system leaders in Mauritius about: a) the Mauritian education system; b) the ZEP school project; c) the understandings and implementation of an inclusive education; and, d) understanding of social justice.

The next chapter describes the analytical process of the data collected across the four ZEP schools as well as from the system leaders with the aim of identifying the themes in inclusive education. These themes are then discussed, informed by the conceptual framework.

Chapter 5 Cross-case analysis and Identification of Key practices of inclusive education in ZEP Schools

In the previous chapter, the researcher presented data collected from the Cluster Coordinators, Head Teachers, class teachers, parents, learners and system leaders of the four ZEP schools of Mauritius in the form of expanded vignettes about each ZEP school community.

In this chapter, the researcher presents the second phase of the analysis, the cross-case analysis. After understanding the uniqueness of each ZEP school through the analysis of a single case (Stake, 2006), the cross analysis process is undertaken in order to construct the themes around perceptions and intended practices of an inclusive education which are then discussed with the aim of identifying the key practices of an inclusive education in the four ZEP schools. These key practices will be analysed from a social justice perspective in the following chapter.

Cross-case analysis process

This section presents: (a) the steps taken to identify and generate the patterns of codes in inclusive education across the four ZEP schools; (b) the identification of themes from the patterns of codes in the data about inclusive education

Analytical steps to cross-case analysis.

A five-step approach to cross-case analysis was adapted from Stake's Cross-Case analysis method (2006) in order to identify the themes in inclusive education and social justice:

Step One. Re-reading the master list of groups of codes for each ZEP school and assigning them with colour codes.

In step one, the researcher systematically read through the master list of groups of codes for each ZEP school, as well as the codes from the perceptions of the system

leaders, assigning them with colour codes developed from some of the key words, concepts and ideas derived from the data-driven and concept driven codes as presented in the methodology chapter.

Step Two. Identifying patterns and repetitions in the colour codes so as to generate a pattern of colour codes.

In step two, a pattern of colour codes was constructed from the repetitions of colour codes across the ZEP schools and the views of the system leaders. Table 5.1 shows step one and two, whereby, for instance, the code ‘social integration and inclusion’ was assigned the colour pink.

Table 5.1.

Patterns of colour codes for the four ZEP schools and codes from system leaders (inclusive education).

Pattern of codes	Coloured codes
Redrock School	<p>Social integration & inclusion</p> <p>Education for all & diversity</p> <p>Special needs</p> <p>School care & welcome</p> <p>Child’s recognition & identity</p> <p>Escape marginalisation</p> <p>Adequate facilities & resources</p> <p>Learners’ happiness</p>

Mountain School	Social integration & inclusion
	Working with mixed abilities
	Education for all & diversity of needs
	Encouraging learners' development
	Collaboration/working together
	Importance of resources & activities
Lady of the Sea Catholic School	Special needs
	Child's recognition & identity
	Working with mixed abilities
	Creative pedagogy
	School care & welcome
	Collaboration/working together
Sunflower School	Social integration & inclusion
	Education for all & diversity of needs
	Escape marginalisation & functional in society
	School care & welcome
	Importance of infrastructure & resources
	Special needs
	Encouraging learners' development
Codes from system leaders	Education for all/diversity of needs
	Needs of the "poor"
	Ethnic and social backgrounds
	Adapted pedagogy & training

Step Three. Analysing and interpreting the patterns of colour codes across the ZEP schools by looking for similar ideas and relationships as well as identifying differences.

The third step further examined the patterns of codes to identify the repetition of codes in the data around understandings of inclusive education including the four sets of patterns of codes from the schools as well as those from the system leaders. After identifying any shared meanings of inclusive education, the same process was undertaken around their shared practices.

Step Four. Re-arranging the patterns of codes according to the number of times they occurred and noting down isolated topics.

In step four, the researcher ordered the refined pattern of codes in terms of most repeated topics but also noted those which were the least mentioned across the schools. These isolated topics, which are seen in purple font, were not discarded but were identified as being the unique codes respective to the ZEP school in its understanding and implementation of an inclusive education.

Then, these patterns of codes were presented in the descriptive categories, that is, perceptions and intended practices of inclusive education. The term *perceptions* refers to the understandings and beliefs of the ZEP school staff, parents, learners and system leaders about an inclusive education in the ZEP school context. The term *intended practices* refers to the way that the ZEP school staff meant to implement their understanding of an inclusive education in their respective classrooms and daily school practices. Table 5.2 shows the categorised pattern of codes in inclusive education after the Cross-case analysis.

Table 5.2.

Categorised patterns of codes in inclusive education after the Cross-case analysis.

Categories	Ordered patterns of codes in inclusive education after cross-case analysis
<i>Perceptions</i>	<p>About recognising & catering for different needs of learners special/educational/economic/emotional</p> <p>Integrating education system & society</p> <p>Sense of welcome</p> <p>Education for all</p> <p>Encouraging learners' autonomy in society</p>
<i>Intended Practice</i>	<p>Inclusive classroom strategies & pedagogy</p> <p>Adapting to learners' needs & identity/difficulties</p> <p>Welcoming & caring for the learners</p> <p>Distribution of resources</p> <p>Collaboration and synergy amongst stakeholders</p>

Step Five. Further analysing the patterns of codes and refining them into themes.

In step five, the categorised patterns of codes were further analysed to have a better understanding of the conceptualisation, experiences and strategies of the research participants of an inclusive education. This last process led to the identification of themes and sub-themes which are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3.

Perceptions and intended practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools.

Perceptions	Intended practices
<p>1. <i>Attending to the diversity of learners</i></p> <p>Learners with special educational needs</p> <p>Learners from less developed regions</p> <p>Learners from different religious, ethnic and family backgrounds</p>	<p>1. <i>Inclusive classroom strategies</i></p> <p>2. <i>Caring for the emotional and social needs of learners</i></p> <p>3. <i>Providing resources and materials</i></p> <p>4. <i>Building relationships amongst stakeholders</i></p> <p>Staff-learners' relationship</p> <p>School-parents' relationships</p>
<p>2. <i>Integrating the ZEP school learners into mainstream education</i></p>	<p>5. <i>Collaboration amongst stakeholders</i></p> <p>Internal collaboration at school</p> <p>External collaboration and ZEP schools</p>
<p>3. <i>Importance of a welcoming and caring relationship</i></p>	

The next section discusses the identified themes and sub-themes in the light of the conceptual framework underpinning this study.

Perceptions of inclusive education in ZEP schools.

As explained earlier, the term 'perceptions' refers to the aspirations, beliefs and understandings of an inclusive education as articulated by the ZEP school teaching staff, school leaders (Head Teachers and Cluster Coordinators) and system leaders.

From the literature review, a conceptual framework was developed for the understanding of inclusive education which frames this study as:

- (a) education for the diversity of learners by respecting their difference.

The notion of an inclusive education which embraces the diversity of learners recognises that, whether in the context of special education or mainstream schooling, class teachers and school leaders are bound to come across learners with multiple needs, talents or backgrounds (Dei, Asgharzadeh, Bahador & Shahjahan, 2006; Polat, 2011; UNESCO, 1994). Such diversity at schools

highlights the need for an education system which recognises and caters for the differences of ZEP school learners as well as those in non-ZEP schools.

(b) education for marginalised and vulnerable groups.

The literature (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; UNESCO, 2012) also highlights the need for an education system which enables marginalised children to have access to education and to successfully complete each Grade leading to participation in the education system and society.

(c) free education for all children.

The concept of an inclusive education is founded upon the understanding of an education system which provides free education to all children which addresses their social, intellectual and emotional growth at school.

Informed by these notions of an inclusive education, the understandings and intended practices of the ZEP school staff about an inclusive education in the ZEP school context are presented.

Attending to the diversity of learners.

The ZEP school leaders and class teachers expressed a common understanding of inclusive education as attending to the diversity of the ZEP school learners through the recognition of their individual differences. As discussed in Chapter Two, the concept of diversity at school is closely related to the notion of catering for difference amongst the school learners (Polat, 2011; Swain & Cook, 2005) and, in that context, Dei et al. (2006) asserts:

The community is made up of differences, so it requires that the educator, learner, parent, guardian, caregiver, community/social worker, and administrator come fully aware of the multiple desires, goals, and ambitions

inherent in that social space, as well as the contradictions and tensions that are experienced in everyday life” (p. 5).

In this study, the ZEP school staff acknowledged the diversity of their learners and expressed their desire to cater for those (a) with special educational needs (b) from less developed regions and (c) of different religious, ethnic and family backgrounds. These three areas of differences of ZEP school learners are now discussed.

Learners with special educational needs.

In the inclusive education literature learners with special educational needs are usually described as those who not only have a disability or learning difficulties but, also, those who are discriminated against because of poverty, gender or race (UNESCO, 1994; Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010).

The majority of the teachers and leaders of ZEP schools in this study understood an inclusive education as attending to learners with special educational needs which they defined as learning difficulties. These learning difficulties were either low literacy or numeracy levels, mild intellectual disabilities of the learners or inability to progress from one Grade to another. Most of the ZEP school class teachers considered that it is their duty to try to attend to these learners to the best of their ability describing an inclusive education as:

“Approach to educating all children despite their learning disability and providing the same learning opportunities”;

“...learning process and difficulties faced by children are noted”.

Most of the class teachers across the four ZEP schools identified ZEP school learners in terms of their academic abilities and they often referred to having classes with ‘Mixed-Abilities’ groups of learners, and students as “slow learners”; “high-achievers” or “high-flyers” and “average” according to their performance in class and in the exams:

“All children are taken on board whether they are sky flyers or children with special needs in the same class and provided with all the facilities to perform in class”;

“Approach to educating all children despite their learning disability; providing the same learning opportunities”;

“Inclusive education means including children with special needs along with average and high-flyer children.”

In light of the above examples of the special educational needs of the learners from ZEP schools, it is seen that the ZEP class teachers and school leaders seek to cater for the learning difficulties of the learners as well as providing support for those who have mild learning disabilities.

Learners from less developed regions.

All ZEP schools are located in the “less developed regions” (MOE, 2002, p. 1) of Mauritius, and the project was initiated based on evidence from the Ministry of Education (MOE) that “there is a positive correlation between low school performance and delayed development of regions” (MOE, 2002, pp. 1-2).

In this study, several ZEP school leaders and class teachers of ZEP schools stated that they wanted to cater for the ZEP school learners who live in the less developed regions of Mauritius, often equating poverty with family dysfunction:

“There are parents who are poor...they have several children. These children would be raised in the same environment of violence, poverty, teenage pregnancy, abortion, drugs, etc...It is a vicious circle that keeps looping.”

Other ZEP school staff identified: “lack of learning materials”; “malnutrition” “no pencils or exercise books” as typical of learners in less developed regions.

The ZEP school staff aspired to achieve an inclusive education, through the ZEP schools, by the provision of material and physical assistance to the ZEP school learners in less developed regions so that these students can participate in the Mauritian education system and ultimately participate more positively in society. As stated by one of the Head Teachers:

“Through education, we have the potential to disrupt this vicious circle. It is only through education that we can save a few children.”

This aspiration is shared by the ZEP school learners and parents, who agreed that the distribution of resources facilitated the opportunities for the ZEP school children to pursue their studies. A parent provided her appreciation of the resources:

“...at the level of school materials, we didn’t have a library before, so now we have it...the interactive board, we didn’t have this before, so we have it now. So, for resources, there are a lot of positive things. Even infrastructures, they have been renewed ...They are provided with lunch ...”

The perceptions of the ZEP school stakeholders resonate with the goal of the Mauritian government of providing universal education to Mauritian children, with a particular emphasis upon children from less developed regions of Mauritius (MOE, 2002, p. 1). This shared understanding of an inclusive education amongst the stakeholders also reflects the conceptual framework of this study in that an inclusive education reaches out to the most vulnerable groups of society (Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006; UNESCO, 1994).

Learners from different religious, ethnic and family backgrounds.

Within the Mauritian society, it is generally understood that acceptance and tolerance of all religions and ethnic groups is essential in ensuring the social and ethnic cohesion of the country (Bunwaree, 2001; Si Moussa & Tupin, 1999).

Similarly, several members of the ZEP school staff understood an inclusive education as respectful of the religious and ethnic backgrounds of all ZEP school learners:

“Education for all children. Children from different social background”;

“...an education which enables pupils to develop according to their needs and capacity irrespective of their gender, home background, culture and religion”;

“...to enable pupils to develop irrespective of gender, home background, culture and religion.”

Leaders from the Catholic school considered that learning about other religious faiths and customs is part of their school ethos and is in line with the vision of Catholic social teaching (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997). It was shown in the expanded vignette of the school that it is customary for non-Catholic staff members and learners to present and explain the meanings of non-Catholic festivals and religious celebrations in the morning assembly. The Head Teacher (HT3) shared that it is about:

“...inviting those of different religions to join in and explain the celebration.”

Both Catholic school leaders agreed that these learning experiences contribute to the aspiration of Catholic schools to be inclusive. In the same way, the Head Teacher of Mountain School (HT2) asserted that the school staff worked for learners from different religious beliefs and stated:

“...here in this school, we don’t look for religious faiths... this child is Catholic or this one is a Hindu and I will work more for this child! No! Whoever he is, from whichever community he comes, like... we care for him/her, we want them to progress.”

Therefore, it is shown that the ZEP school staff members understood the concept of an inclusive education as an education which attends to learners from different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

In their understanding of an inclusive education, the ZEP school staff members also wished to assist ZEP school learners from difficult social and family backgrounds. According to them, these difficult social and family backgrounds are reflected in the complex family structures as well as unique social realities and community life. The Cluster Coordinator from Mountain School explained the difficulties of ZEP school parents in these terms:

“...there is a large majority who are so deeply absorbed by their family or personal issues, these people find themselves marginalised with respect to their set of priorities...their priorities are defined by living from hand to mouth, finding food...”

Likewise, the majority of the class teachers from the four ZEP schools complained about the high rate of learners who mostly come from a single-parent background or those with complex family dynamics. One of the teachers described the family background as:

“...divorced parents...unstable family situations...daily quarrels in couples.”

Similar descriptions were provided by most class teachers from the other ZEP schools of this study who depicted a portrayal of the social and family background of the learners in those words:

“Too many children in a family...lack of love and attention given to the children”;

“Children are often unattended or brought up by grandparents”;

“Parental responsibilities are shouldered by the teachers.”

However, while the ZEP school staff acknowledged these complex family situations and expressed their desire to attend to the needs of the learners, most of them blamed these complex family structures as the cause of most behavioural and learning difficulties experienced by the learners. For instance, most teachers stated that the lack of discipline of

ZEP school learners was one of the most significant challenges as expressed by one of the teachers:

“Kids have to deal with personal family problems that, the only place where they can vent their frustration, is at school...over their friends.”

In each of the four schools, ZEP class teachers referred to the complex family background of the learners and would blame the parents for not being responsible enough. They mentioned “parental neglect”, “lack of parental support” or “careless parents”. However, one of the system leaders acknowledged that “it is not the family who does it all” and criticised school staff for putting all the blame on the family.

In summarising this sub-section on the aspiration to attend to the needs of ‘learners from different religious, ethnic and family backgrounds’, the ZEP school leaders and class teachers acknowledge the uniqueness of each ZEP school learner, identifying their specific needs and difficulties. However, their descriptions of the family and social realities of the learners portrayed the families as dysfunctional and unsupportive to the development of the learners.

In summary of the theme of ‘Attending to diversity of learners’, it was shown that the class teachers and school leaders from the four ZEP schools believe that an inclusive education in the ZEP school context is principally about attending to learners:

- with special educational needs determined by their academic abilities;
- coming from less developed regions of Mauritius and affected by socio-economic difficulties of the neighbourhood;
- with different religious, ethnic and family backgrounds.

However, it is important to note that, while considering that an inclusive education needs to cater for children from difficult backgrounds, staff generally put the blame upon the

family of the learners for the academic underachievement and difficult behaviour of the children.

Integrating the ZEP school learners into mainstream education.

This study identified that the ZEP school staff aimed at integrating ZEP school learners into the mainstream Mauritian system. In reviewing the inclusive education literature, it was shown that the concept of integration (Armstrong et al., 2010) usually refers to the physical placement of learners with a disability in mainstream schooling with the hope that they will both adopt, and be accepted into, the mainstream culture. In this study, integration is understood by the system leaders, ZEP school leaders and class teachers as the opportunity to be fully part of the education system through access to education and success in it:

“...everybody on board... not discarding any pupil out of the system.”

In the same way, a Head Teacher stated that the aim of an inclusive education is to:

“...provide education to these children... helping them... we can't leave them behind.”

Most ZEP school class teachers also stressed the importance of:

“...educating children with special needs in an environment where they are allowed to integrate the mainstream system”;

“...allowing every pupil to work at his/her own pace and taking on board all pupils during the lesson irrespective of their learning difficulties”;

“A process of addressing the diversity of needs of all learners...students with special needs spend most or all of their time with students who don't have special needs.”

A few ZEP school class teachers across the four ZEP schools made the distinction between “children with special needs” or children who have “learning difficulties” and those from “mainstream system” or the “non-disabled students”. They described the ZEP schools as “schools with more children who are low achievers compared to normal schools” and stated that “Pupils in ZEP schools do not learn in the same way as in non-ZEP schools”.

According to a small group of ZEP school staff, another reason for integrating the ZEP school learners into the education system is because they are currently marginalised by the Mauritian education system due to difficulties in achieving the national average percentage pass rate at the high stakes test - the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) exams. The responses of two class teachers explained the importance of an inclusive education in the light of the CPE exams:

“...when teaching, I have to spell out everything...because I want to make sure that everybody passes the exams”;

“...the tough competition of getting higher grades seems to have overcome the purpose of educating the needy ones.”

Since the education system is focused upon the level of achievement in these exams, primary school learners who cannot perform well are marginalised within the system (Bunwaree, 2001; Panday & Li Xu, 2013; Si Moussa & Tupin, 1999). The lower their grades at the CPE exams, the less likely students will be to have access to one of the national or regional secondary schools of the country. However, ZEP school learners are no longer encouraged by the MOE and the school management to repeat a year at their school before sitting for the CPE exams again, as used to be the case, but they are catered for in Pre-vocational schools which are located in several areas of Mauritius.

Most ZEP school leaders considered that the ZEP school project is inclusive because it assists the ZEP school learners to achieve better results, especially at the national

summative exams. In other words, prior to the ZEP school project, the learners who attended the low performing schools were provided with free education but they were not supported to be successful within the education system. Therefore, the ZEP school staff believed that the ZEP school project is inclusive as it enables the ZEP school learners to achieve at the CPE exams and have access into secondary schools.

However, it was also shown that, by providing additional facilities to the ZEP schools, and giving them the distinctive name of 'ZEP schools', the MOE has indirectly participated in the marginalisation of the ZEP schools within the education system and society. At policy level, ZEP schools are mainstream primary schools which were identified as having lower performance at the CPE exams and, therefore, they were provided with additional support to improve their performance. However, in practice, the society and some of the employees of the MOE have attached a negative label to the ZEP schools by focussing upon their inferior performances at the exams as opposed to 'average' or 'Star' primary schools. These negative perceptions were intensified by the fact that most of these schools are located in disadvantaged areas. According to one of the parents who is frustrated because of society's prejudices against ZEP schools:

"I must admit that sometimes...I feel a bit frustrated that people are constantly talking down of ZEP schools."

Most of the ZEP school leaders also expressed their concerns pertaining to the stigma attached to the ZEP schools and those who work within them. A Cluster Coordinator reported the social prejudice experienced by the ZEP school learners and staff because the Mauritian society does not understand the uniqueness of the project:

"This label has a derogatory connotation. It bears a negative label...the Mauritian population does not understand the term Zone of Education with utmost Priority. They can't appreciate the meaning of the word Priority...ZEP

for Zebra! The letter Z, those who can't read, who can't learn...who attend such schools.”

The prejudice also influences the general perception of the teachers and school leaders working within the MOE. One of the Head Teachers expressed her disapproval of the label attached to ZEP schools: “I believe this whole idea of referring to ZEP schools is simply a label...This negative connotation is very strong”.

The issue of labelling leading to stigmatisation has been posed by Lauchlan & Boyle (2007) in their review of such processes with regards to special education and they concluded that:

Labels may serve some limited educational functions and be a supportive resource for parents and children (and perhaps some teachers), but the potential negative impacts are huge: stigmatisation; bullying; reduced opportunities in life; a focus on within-child deficits to the exclusion of other, often more significant, factors; misclassification; and lowered expectations about what a ‘labelled’ child can achieve (p. 41).

This finding suggests that ZEP schools marginalise ZEP school learners instead of helping them to be integrated in the education system as the Mauritian society and the education system focus upon the “dysfunctions” (Smyth & Wrigley, 2013, p. ix), or difficulties experienced by the schools, instead of them being understood as an “inclusive strategy” (MOE, 2002, p. 1) for learners in less developed regions. Yet, it is also important to note that, despite the educational label attached to the different primary schools of Mauritius and society’s bias, none of the ZEP school learners interviewed referred to their willingness to change schools because it is a ZEP school. All learners loved their schools and were not aware of society’s bias against them.

To summarise the theme of ‘Integrating ZEP school learners into mainstream education’, it was shown that:

- ZEP school staff sought that no ZEP school learner is to be excluded from the education system but, instead, be fully integrated into it and, therefore, considers that ZEP schools are an inclusive education initiative;
- the ZEP school learners are marginalised because of (a) their special educational needs and individual uniqueness; (b) their low performance at the CPE exams; (c) the ZEP label which reinforces negative societal perceptions of the ZEP school learners, and because of these things it is perceived Mauritian society ‘looks down’ on the ZEP schools.

Importance of a welcoming and caring relationship.

Across the four ZEP schools all the ZEP school staff, leaders and parents believed in the importance of nurturing through a welcoming and caring relationship as part of an inclusive education.

School leaders at one school expressed that they associated inclusive education with a welcoming and caring approach and the Cluster Coordinator and Head Teacher of the same ZEP school also expressed their aspiration to see the ZEP school learner feel “welcomed”. The Head Teacher went further in her conceptualisation of care by using the term “love” several times in her response demonstrating her belief that: “One should have love for these children”. A Cluster Coordinator from another ZEP school acknowledged the caring approach of his staff in the ZEP school:

“...in our ZEP school, you will see that they do feel welcomed because when they are not at school we go and look for them where they are. I would say the children are well cared for in our school.”

The caring approach of the Head Teacher and teaching staff across the four ZEP schools was confirmed by the parents interviewed who described them as: “empathetic”; “...gives a lot of herself...”; “approachable”; “welcoming”; “understanding.”

Most of the ZEP school parents were appreciative of the teaching staff as seen through the response of one of parents:

“...there are some good teachers who like the work they are doing...they are working with love and the children are also happy...they are happy to have such teachers.”

From the perspectives of the parents, the ZEP school staff members are perceived as caring and welcoming if they engage with the community and show their commitment towards the learners. One of the parents described the case of her child:

“My daughter was doing CPE and despite the fact that she had failed CPE exams once, the second year, she failed again but I don’t blame the teacher...but it’s my child who has not succeeded. The teacher was doing well and was working a lot...but my child has not done well.”

This quote indicates that, for this parent, the caring attitude of that particular teacher was more important than academic achievement.

All learners who were interviewed asserted that they liked their class teachers and that they felt at ease in the classroom. Similarly, parents described the class teachers as “dedicated” and “hard-working”. A group of parents further commented on the importance of care from the school management: they appreciated the current Head Teacher but they often made reference to the dedication and care of the previous Head Teacher whom they described as a “mother” to them. The use of the word “mother” highlights the care and gentleness of the school leader who had such an impact on the parents that they were still talking about her even after she had been retired for almost two years. The “maternal

attitude” is in line with the “spirit of care” mentioned by Noddings (1992, p. 197). Another group of parents even described some class teachers as “social workers” as a way of referring to their commitment to the learners and their community.

This perception of an inclusive education associated with caring echoes one aspect of Nodding’s theory of care which posits that the perception of the cared-for upon the carer (Noddings, 1992) is an important factor.

Most ZEP school parents and school staff also perceived the rigour and strict discipline of the ZEP school staff, including the physical punishment of learners, as expressions of care and commitment. The ZEP school learners were asked if their class teachers were strict in class and most of them said yes, but they respected the rigour of their class teacher because, in that way, they can better follow the class lessons. They also appreciated the strict attitude of their class teachers because, at times, some of their friends would misbehave and disturb the class.

Likewise, several management staff stated that working in a school without the appropriate discipline is an impossible task. One of them asserted:

“In my school, discipline is a priority... without discipline we can do nothing. It is only when we impose discipline at school or in the classroom that we can move forward otherwise performance will decline and I won’t allow this.”

Only one Head Teacher referred to the fact that he allows corporal punishment at school as a way of ensuring discipline, and that the school parents approved of his initiative, and he explained:

“They [parents] know what I want to achieve here. Therefore, if I take a rattan stick³²... they encourage me to use a rattan stick because children are punished

³² A thin bamboo-like cane commonly used in Mauritius as corporal punishment

at home. There are certain parents who tell me in the event their children fool around, disobey or whatever... you can go-ahead.”

It was found in the literature (Brooker, 2010; Macfarlane & Macfarlane, 2011; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Noddings, 1992; Wentzel, 1997) that the sense of care is significant in establishing a relationship between learners, parents and the staff.

In the context of this study, the theme of a ‘welcoming and caring relationship’ as part of an inclusive education has been identified because:

- the sense of care was reflected through the staff’s dedication; hard work and professional attitude; commitment towards the community;
- parents and learners associated care with the strictness of the ZEP school staff and their capacity to ensure discipline in the ZEP schools.

Summary of the perceptions of an inclusive education

This section presented and discussed the understandings and perceptions of class teachers and school leaders from ZEP schools about the concept of inclusive education which can be summarised as:

- attending to the diversity of learners in terms of (a) those from less developed regions; (b) those from different ethnic, religious and family backgrounds, and (c) those with special educational needs;
- integrating ZEP school learners into the mainstream education system in terms of (a) providing access to primary education, (b) attending to their special educational needs, and (c) ensuring their success within the primary school system;
- the importance of providing a welcoming and caring relationship for the ZEP school learners and parents through the dedication and engagement of the ZEP school staff; the sense of discipline and order; the positive response of the cared for towards the carer.

Intended practices of an inclusive education in ZEP Schools

Following the discussion of the perceptions and understandings of inclusive education in ZEP schools, the aim of this section is to examine the themes and sub-themes related to the intended practices of an inclusive education of the ZEP school staff. Both perceptions and intended practices are again set out in Table 5.4:

Table 5.4.

Perceptions and intended practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools.

Perceptions	Intended Practices
<p>1. <i>Attending to the diversity of learners</i></p> <p>Learners with special educational needs</p> <p>Learners from less developed regions</p> <p>Learners from different religious, ethnic and family backgrounds</p>	<p>1. <i>Inclusive classroom strategies</i></p> <p>2. <i>Caring for the emotional and social needs of learners</i></p>
<p>2. <i>Integrating the ZEP school learners into mainstream education</i></p>	<p>3. <i>Providing resources and materials</i></p>
<p>3. <i>Importance of a welcoming and caring relationship</i></p>	<p>4. <i>Building relationships amongst stakeholders</i></p> <p>Staff-learners' relationship</p> <p>School-parent relationships</p> <p>5. <i>Collaboration amongst stakeholders</i></p> <p>Internal collaboration of ZEP schools</p> <p>External collaboration of ZEP schools</p>

Informed by their understanding of the concept, the ZEP school class teachers and school leaders articulated what they considered to be their practices of inclusive education and these views of the ZEP school staff aligned with those of the learners and parents. The researcher has also included excerpts from her participation observation of the classroom practices and interactions between the stakeholders from the four ZEP schools.

Inclusive classroom strategies.

Most of the ZEP school class teachers explained in their questionnaires that they used differentiated work for learners, particularly those with academic difficulties. They stated that they provided:

“...individual attention to low achievers and encourage repetition of work”;

“...give different worksheets for pupils with learning difficulties so they are not left behind”;

“...use different resource persons for a variety of strategies and for motivation.”

The researcher also recorded in her observation of a Grade Six class:

“The teacher provides graduated exercises for the children: those whom they described as ‘high-flyers’/average/ ‘slow-learners’...Two children who are seated in front of his table are doing something else: words and drawings-choice of particular words which are similar in sounds. These children do not seem to be bored but pleased to be doing a task like the rest of the class (Field notes/Sunflower School/ 28 May 2013).”

In line with Armstrong et al. (2010), who described these pedagogical methods as “differentiated”, the ZEP school class teachers used these methods “for students who are experiencing difficulties so that they can access the mainstream curriculum” (p. 111). The class teachers stated that these inclusive teaching methods were learnt in their general teachers’ training courses, but most of them acknowledged that they would have preferred to receive additional training when working with ZEP school learners. Some of their suggestions with regards to the type of pedagogical support that they wished to receive from the MOE were:

“How to prepare and work on an Individualised Education Programme (IEP) with practicals in the school itself using the students in the class”;

“Teachers need to invest their own money in teaching aids or request help from PTA which sometimes is hard in ZEP schools”;

“We do not have many materials which cater for kinaesthetic learners, for example, clay for modelling, puppets for role play.”

According to these quotes, the lack of adapted resources, which can help teachers in providing a differentiated pedagogy, is an important barrier to an inclusive pedagogy.

However, a few ZEP school class teachers stated that they used visual and creative aids crafted by themselves and the learners. In the expanded vignette of Sunflower School, it was shown that the classroom of a particular Grade Six was filled with visual aids related to subjects studied. Yet, most class teachers of the ZEP schools seldom made use of audio-visual or technological devices such as the ‘interactive boards’, even though the researcher personally saw the enthusiasm of the learners when class teachers made use of them. In one of the staff meetings that the researcher attended, the Head Teacher had to remind her staff that it was important for them to make use of the interactive boards which, according to the book entry³³, were under-utilised. Therefore, it was identified that the use of differentiated pedagogy through the use of visual aids and technology, which were particularly appreciated by the learners, were seldom used by the ZEP school staff. As seen in the previous paragraph, the preparation of creative visual aids is at the personal financial cost of the teachers; however, the technological pedagogical tools which are provided by the MOE are not used well by the ZEP school class teachers.

Furthermore, in terms of curriculum and pedagogy, only three ZEP school class teachers from the four ZEP schools acknowledged using Kreol Morisien language as an

³³ A special book which is used to record in the staff room

inclusive education strategy believing it can facilitate the learning of the learners. One of the teachers explained:

“I often use Kreol Morisien so that everybody understands and then I translate.”

Similarly, only one Head Teacher stated the importance of learning in the mother-tongue. She claimed that the use of the “popular language such as Kreol” was an example of inclusive education. Most of the Head Teachers usually addressed the learners in French at the morning assembly but often switched to Kreol Morisien for important information, or to clarify a message communicated in French or English. The use of a combination of three languages (French/English/Kreol) at school was mentioned in the Mauritian literature (Auleear-Owodally, 2014; Aumeerally, 2005; Rajah-Carrim, 2007) concerning the linguistic realities in the Mauritian schools. There is no consistency within the MOE with regard to the use of the Kreol Morisien language: the MOE has endorsed the study of Kreol Morisien as an optional language in lower classes but not the official use of Kreol Morisien as the medium of instruction. All textbooks and examinations (except for the study of other languages) are set in English. In this study, most of the ZEP school learners interviewed shared that the subjects that they found the most difficult to comprehend were English and French. They also had difficulties in other subjects such as Mathematics, History or Geography which are written in English. Moreover, at the end of the school year all school learners, from Grade Three to Six, are expected to answer in English at the national exams for all subjects except for French. Therefore, the linguistic policy of the curriculum can be seen as a barrier to the learning process of the ZEP school learners. However, the majority of the class teachers and Head Teachers interviewed in the context of this study did not question the policy of the language used as a medium of instruction as a barrier to an inclusive education.

The researcher also observed some inclusive practices in the lower Grades, such as modifying the classroom seating arrangements which facilitate peer or collaborative learning. It was recorded that, in one Grade Three classroom, seating arrangements were different as this particular class teacher “didn’t like rows by rows” (Field notes/Sunflower School/ 3 June 2013). The class teachers sometimes used “ability grouping” (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2011, pp. 192-193) which one of the class teachers described as “grouping the children with educational needs together and working with them on a 1-1 basis”. Several class teachers in the lower Grades mostly used “heterogeneous grouping” models, which is having children with different abilities working together. Brown (2010) claims that collaborative or cooperative learning supports academic and social learning, and when adopting such a pedagogical approach, “...the goal structure of the classroom is cooperative rather than competitive or individualistic” (p. 22).

However, the study also identified that the pedagogical practices of ZEP class teachers, particularly in the upper Grades (Grades Four to Six), were not always inclusive. It was recorded in the Field notes that the higher the Grades, the more didactic was the pedagogy and less active participation was expected from the learners. Most teachers from the upper Grades used the traditional ‘talk and chalk’ teaching model and were preoccupied with completing the school curriculum before the national summative exams. Most of them stated:

“...the curriculum is overloaded and at times it is required that children memorise the facts and other details”;

“...the curriculum does not allow educators to attend to the individual needs of every student”;

“...the curriculum is too bulky and the level of the ZEP school learners does not at all fit the curriculum”.

The researcher also recorded her observation of a Grade six class:

...in an hour and thirty minutes, the teacher ‘taught’ English, French and History/Geography. There is no in-depth discussion or explanation. (Field Notes/ Mountain School/ 29 April 2013)

When it came to the classrooms’ physical environment, many teachers did not change the “traditional expository teaching seating plan” (Loreman et al., 2011, p. 190), described as learners being seated in rows of desks facing the teacher. This traditional seating plan was seen in classes composed of large groups of learners (more than 30), and particularly in upper classes.

This difference in pedagogical practices between the lower Grades and upper Grades classroom practices is mainly due to the class teachers’ focus upon the preparation of ZEP school learners for the national summative exams. The upper Grade class teachers and the Head Teachers stated that their main aim was to ensure that middle and low achieving learners achieve the Essential Learning Component (ELC) level at the CPE exams. The ELC refers to a section in the questionnaire of each subject examined at the CPE exams, which aims at evaluating the basic literacy and numeracy skills of the learners. Some of their responses were:

“A ZEP school learner is someone whose objective is to pass rather than aspiring to high grades. When a ZEP school learner leaves primary school if he knows how to write and read...may be that would be success for him”.

Most ZEP school leaders believed that the pedagogical practices in ZEP schools should be focussed upon ensuring the success of the learners at the CPE exams. One of the system leaders stated that, if there is adequate monitoring of a child for six years, he/she should pass the CPE exams and that it is up to the teachers to make a difference:

“...if you have a good teacher, we can achieve our goal.”

Similarly, a Cluster Coordinator expressed his conviction about the success of the majority of the ZEP school learners at the exams:

“I am convinced that all children can reach the expected CPE level. It is expected that these children should be able to pass the CPE exams...having attained a basic education.”

All the ZEP school parents also believed that the goals and practices in the ZEP schools should be focussed upon academic success and the preparation towards the CPE exams. Some of the parents explained the strategies used to help their children to achieve success:

“They [teachers] are doing remedial work...to solve problems...children who are a bit lost... but I know that the school is doing the efforts”;

“An overview of the school is that it has progressed...our children are now disciplined and if you look at the percentage pass rate at CPE exams, we have increased the rates as the HT had promised us”;

“...it’s largely thanks to the teacher who was giving tuitions...all CPE learners of the neighbourhood would come and he would give tuitions, especially on the eve of the exams...the previous teachers also worked hard.”

From these quotes, it is seen that ZEP school staff and parents agree upon the standards of success at school and the importance of working hard to ensure that the school learners pass the CPE exams.

Therefore, through the analysis of the pedagogical practices in ZEP schools, it is understood that teaching and leadership practices are mostly focussed upon the success of ZEP school learners at the national exams, even if it is just at the basic level of success. In other words, the ZEP school class teachers are content with ZEP school learners acquiring literacy and numeracy skills which are the basic skills needed to pass the CPE exams. The

national summative exams drive the pedagogical practices and they are a symbol of educational success in the minds of ZEP school staff.

The majority of the ZEP school class teachers also said that they were confronted with several challenges which prevent them from implementing inclusive education practices: disparate abilities of the ZEP school learners; inadequate teacher training; and a high pupil-teacher ratio. Some of the teachers described their challenging situations in their daily practices:

“No specialist teachers to help the special needs students in the mainstream class. The mainstream teachers are not trained”;

“...caring for pupils with special needs while having limited training or inappropriate training.”

Nearly all ZEP school class teachers asserted that their pre-service teacher training was not enough, or was not adapted to the social and academic realities in ZEP schools, such as “dealing with alcoholic and drug addicted parents”. Another teacher explained:

“The training received is not appropriate to work with pupils having special needs but more for working with pupils who are considered to be ‘normal’ or having a good family background.”

The researcher also recorded that there were at least two or three low-achieving learners who could only copy sentences from the classroom whiteboard; those who often lost their school materials; those who, despite spending six years at primary level, were still struggling with the alphabet or writing a complete sentence. Class teachers were also expected to cater for 35 or 40 learners in a classroom which is meant to accommodate only 30 learners. The researcher recorded that, in three of the four schools of this study, all upper Grades had more than 35 learners. The high pupil-teacher ratio in these classes limits the classroom space which, in turn, prevents collaborative approaches to learning and personal

interaction between class teachers and learners. Since the chairs and school desks were too close together so as to accommodate the maximum number of learners, it was difficult to set up a collaborative classroom setting and class teachers could hardly move across the classroom to check on the issues faced by the learners (Field notes/Sunflower School/ 29 May 2013).

Another challenge to the successful implementation of an inclusive education, and identified in the literature review, is the practice of fee-paying private tutoring sessions. These fee-paying sessions are held after school hours for the ZEP school learners. These sessions are not compulsory but, in Mauritius, they are predominant (Dauguet, 2007) and have become part of the culture of the Mauritian education system and society (Bunwaree, 2001). Most of the teachers in Grades Five and Six offer fee-paying tutoring sessions in which they sometimes cover the school curriculum or they practise exam questions and papers with the learners. These fee-paying private tutoring sessions are institutionalised in Mauritius despite the fact that the MOE is trying to put an end to such a culture (MOE, 2008).

It has been identified in previous studies that these tutoring sessions have a negative impact on the learning opportunities of the ZEP school learners. While the ZEP class teachers are expected to teach and complete the school curriculum during the school hours, in reality, because of the overloaded curriculum, many of them cover the curriculum in these sessions and therefore learners who cannot afford fee-paying private tutoring sessions are disadvantaged within the Mauritian education system (Bunwaree, 2001; Dauguet, 2007) which allows these sessions. However, the researcher observed that, throughout the data collection, none of the ZEP school leaders or class teachers and parents questioned the practice of fee-paying private tutoring sessions. This issue indicates that the Mauritian society has adopted such practices as part of the educational culture.

The data also revealed that there is no appropriate school or system structure which enables teachers and Head Teachers to carry out an educational diagnostic assessment of the learners. Some of the class teachers stated that they had identified some of the learners who were having learning and behavioural difficulties but did not know how to do a follow up, or, they did not have the support and tools to help these learners. One of the Head Teachers described the issue in those terms:

“Consider a child beginning school in Grade One. As he starts this class, the child encounters certain difficulties. These could be visual impairment, emotional or psychomotor issues, etc. The teacher works with the child... he knows that there is an issue. However, the teacher does not have the necessary skills to sort this issue. The teacher is in charge of 30 to 40 pupils. Therefore, we should perform a diagnostic of potential issues and refer the child to relevant professionals.”

Therefore, the lack of availability of the specialised staff is another barrier to an inclusive education.

It was further identified that other forms of learning experiences, apart from academic ones, were not privileged. Many school learners stated that they liked creative arts sessions or attending physical education classes. Yet, even if these classes are included in the formal time-table, it is at the teachers' discretion to actually follow it. Very often, the learners reported their disappointment at not having Physical Education or ICT classes as the class teachers needed to complete the curriculum. Some parents suggested that musical or dance skills, or handicrafts, could be taught to the learners and these skills could then become a means for the children to earn their living. One of the parents described the type of curriculum that she wished to see in the school:

“There used to be a gardening corner at school where the children could cultivate...yes, I used to do it at school. We would plant vegetables, sell them and then, the money that we received that was for school. Such kind of activities attract kids...there are so many kids who have potential. There is potential in Redrock, a lot of potential. It all depends on the way of managing it...”

It is apparent from this quote, therefore, that the practices of the class teachers and leaders of ZEP schools are almost solely directed to the academic needs of the learners at the expense of developing other skills – creative, sports or technological.

Despite these challenges in the implementation of an inclusive education in the ZEP schools, these schools have also succeeded in bringing some changes within the education system promoting a learner friendly pedagogy. As stated by Armstrong et al. (2010), “...what works with students identified with special education needs works with all students” (p. 111). Some of the research participants from the ZEP school staff stated that ZEP schools have pioneered a few pedagogical and curriculum changes within the national education system which have now been included within the national curriculum. An example of this was the introduction of the Zone of Inclusive & Integrated Strategy (ZIIS) project where extra-curricular activities were held after school hours with specialised resource persons, as well as a Reading Programme. Both activities are now fully implemented within the mainstream education system and, thus, support aspirations for ZEP schools to become a place to test new models of schooling which may work for all Mauritian primary schools.

Furthermore, a few ZEP school class teachers introduced new pedagogical techniques as they were not totally satisfied with the training provided by the MOE. They adapted their teaching styles and methods according to the abilities and needs of ZEP school learners. These ZEP school class teachers dedicated a lot of their personal time to carrying out

research or creating visual pedagogical tools or looked for other materials which suited the needs of their learners.

Caring for the emotional and social needs of learners.

Some of the ZEP school class teachers and school leaders stated that they implemented an inclusive education approach in ZEP schools by being attentive to the emotional and social needs of ZEP school learners and by providing a welcoming environment to the ZEP school learner. They stated that they tried to motivate the ZEP school learners through advice and guidance such as:

“Counselling pupils in morning assembly”;

“Lending an attentive ear to their problems”;

“Regular talks about the importance of education...educate and motivate pupils and try to make them see their problems differently.”

Therefore, some of the ZEP school class teachers tried a variety of approaches to an inclusive education to motivate the ZEP school learners about their learning experience, encourage them to attend school, or develop their self-esteem.

In difficult cases, the school leaders and class teachers refer the learners to the specialist staff such as school psychologists, Parent-Mediators, school counsellors and social workers. This is in line with the ZEP school project policy document (MOE, 2002) based on Panday and Li Xu’s research (2013) which highlights the importance of having a pool of professionals assisting the project in order to “...help broaden the circle of opportunities of the pupils” (p. 12). The specialist staff are all part-time employees, and social workers can be contacted for further assistance by the school Head Teachers. ZEP schools also work closely with different local NGOs which aim to help the community. However, many ZEP school class teachers and leaders felt that the ZEP schools were not supported enough by the specialist staff.

The work of the school psychologist is greatly valued by school staff and parents of the four ZEP schools but their only occasional visits prevent adequate follow-up. Most of the Head Teachers of the ZEP schools considered that there should be a full-time psychologist attached to each ZEP school and that currently their random visits prevent them from properly taking care of the learners. The irregular visits and lack of close monitoring of the specialised staff are some of the factors which prevent the learners from being adequately helped at an emotional and psychological level. As expressed by another Head Teacher:

“We should always have a psychologist at school not one visiting several schools, she would be coming once in a month...but we don't have the necessary follow-up required. We need to have a psychologist who should always be present”.

Some of the class teachers expressed the same concerns, except in one ZEP school which benefitted from weekly visits of a fee-paying privately employed school psychologist who finds that this makes “a great deal of difference”. Similarly, the role played by the Parent-Mediators is essential in ZEP schools but they were not considered to participate enough with the ZEP schools. Several ZEP school parents stated that they were not introduced to the Parent-Mediator or had never seen them at school. The researcher noted that she received the help of only one Parent-Mediator out of the four in meeting with the parents of the respective ZEP school.

In the one ZEP school which welcomes and integrates learners with a physical impairment, in this case loss of hearing, into ‘mainstream’ schools, there were difficulties in catering for these learners. Although the learners attend morning assemblies and participate in the school's events, extracurricular activities and celebrations, they are not physically in the same class as the other learners. The class teacher working within this particular unit stated:

“It [inclusive education] does not happen in this school or in the class as there is a group of deaf students who are integrated in a special class but not with their hearing counterparts”.

Furthermore, the researcher noted in her journal that the replacement of a trained teacher in this school was done by the Zone directorate which provided a teacher who had neither been trained in teaching or communicating with learners with hearing impairment.

Therefore, in terms of the emotional and social care provided to the ZEP school learners, the ZEP schools have established the necessary structures and employed the specialist staff to ensure the social and emotional development of the learners. However, the small number of Parent-Mediators and educational psychologists, as well as their lack of availability, failed to provide the supportive structure needed for the ZEP school staff and learners, including the learners with a hearing impairment, were not provided with adequate care and respect for their individual needs.

In summary, this section presented the inclusive classroom practices of the ZEP school class teachers as well as the general approaches adopted by the management of ZEP schools in their approach to attending to the social and emotional needs of the learners.

These are summarised as follows:

- the ZEP school class teachers used some inclusive practices in order to attend to the diversity of needs of ZEP school learners and facilitate the teaching and learning process which is driven by high-stakes summative exams;
- some of the challenges to the implementation of an inclusive education are the focus upon summative exams; non-recognition of Kreol Morisien language as medium of instruction; fee-paying private tutoring sessions; lack of adequate training of the staff; limited curriculum content; high teacher-pupil ratio;

- a couple of innovative pedagogical skills initiated by ZEP schools have been fully implemented in mainstream primary schools;
- occasional visits from specialist staff such as educational psychologists or Parent-Mediators but there is little follow-up; the integration of hearing impaired learners in ZEP schools is not adequately implemented for their unique needs.

Providing resources and school materials.

Another strategy for an inclusive education in ZEP schools is the provision of resources and school materials. In the ZEP schools of this study, the school leaders and teaching staff claimed that the majority of the parents of ZEP school learners cannot provide for basic needs, particularly food, due to poverty. The three Cluster Coordinators of the ZEP schools often referred to the important financial investment in the implementation of the ZEP school project by both Mauritian State and private companies (MOE, 2002).

In this study, it was seen that the Mauritian government provides free lunch, school materials and textbooks to all ZEP schools. The distribution of meals in the ZEP schools is considered an important inclusive initiative even though there was a change from the 'Hot meal' programme to a packed lunch. The government has also introduced the 'New Child Allowance Scheme' of Rs. 750³⁴ offered to each learner of disadvantaged families, with some conditions applied. The MOE has also carried out school renovations and improved existing infrastructure.

In addition to government assistance, the management of many ZEP schools is able to provide school uniforms, breakfast programmes or financial aid with the help of scholarships. In one ZEP school area, some of the neighbourhood hotels have sponsored several extra-

³⁴ About 15% of the average wage in Mauritius

curricular activities with the help of the corporate sector and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).

In two ZEP schools, a small group of stakeholders stated that the learners and their parents received too much financial support. For instance, one Cluster Coordinator and the parents from the same school acknowledged that there were many cases of poverty and deprivation amongst the learners, but they believed that there was also wastage and over-reliance of the parents upon these resources. CC2 reported:

“In the ZEP schools, we provide food to children but I have witnessed children playing football with an apple... because among these children...some of them do not need food or aid...”

Another Head Teacher asserted that many parents of the school’s neighbourhood have developed a mindset where “everything is free of charge” leading to wastage. This view was confirmed by one group of parents who reported cases of food wastage because many learners refused to eat bread-butter and cheese every school day for several weeks:

“The kids are fed up with bread and butter...”;

“Yes, it is a waste...the children are fed up...they should offer a variety”.

However, in the same school, another parent said:

“For me, even if my child is having a piece of bread and butter, a little bit of water but at least I know that their stomach is full until they get back home”.

Therefore, it is seen that the distribution of resources and food is generally appreciated by all the ZEP school stakeholders, but, a minority of them reflected on the wastage of food in some schools.

In summary of this section, another strategy for implementing an inclusive education in ZEP schools is through:

- the distribution of resources, school materials and additional funds which enables the ZEP schools and the learners to achieve the national education standards.

However, it was also noted that

- better monitoring of the system of distribution is needed to avoid wastage and abuse;
- there was a risk of parental over-dependence upon these extra resources leading to some parents neglecting their parental duties and responsibilities.

Building relationships amongst stakeholders.

It is argued that relationships are at the heart of the ZEP school project as they are the elements which can make inclusion possible and successful. The different types of relationships amongst the stakeholders were identified as (a) ZEP school staff and learners and (b) ZEP school communities and the corporate sector and NGOs.

Relationships between ZEP school staff and learners.

One aspect of the understanding of ZEP schools about inclusive education is the development of the school-learner relationship founded upon a caring and welcoming approach. One of the Head Teachers hoped that, through her leadership, she could encourage the class teachers and deputy Head Teachers to adopt a closer relationship with the learners and parents. She reported that her actions are guided by her motto which is: “I’ve come to serve and not to be served”. Likewise, some of the ZEP school class teachers emphasised the need for strong positive relationships:

“Creating good relationships with pupils and parents”;

“Act as a facilitator and hoping for interactions with the learners...at the same time engage them so that they become good citizens”.

Another class teacher described how she developed a special relationship with her learners, who used to be violent and frustrated in class, by sharing her high academic expectations for them as well as her behavioural expectations. The learners saw her commitment towards them by the fact that she often devoted her recess time to them. This development of positive relationships contributes to the sense of care being enacted through developing academic rigour (Cooper & Miness, 2014; Keddie, 2012) and personal interactions with students. The caring relationship motivated the learners in their studies and transformed their class behaviour. This teacher used a communicative style and focused upon developing the self-esteem of the learner transforming the classroom into a positive environment and having a positive effect on the academic performance and behaviour of the ZEP school learners. Therefore, it was seen that the staff-learner relationship is founded upon a sense of care for the learners as well as a relationship founded upon the practice of clear communication and the expression of positive attitudes. The sense of care in the practices of the ZEP schools echoes Smyth and Wrigley's (2013) notion of a "relational school" whereby the leadership promotes a learning environment where students believe that "teachers really care about them, their lives, and families. Only then are students prepared to make the social, emotional, and psychic investment necessary for learning" (p. 170).

Another important element in the construction of staff-learner relationship is the sense of order and discipline within the school. Several Head Teachers explained that no teaching or learning can happen without discipline and one of them described her strategy:

"I told them [parents and learners]: "We shall work together...we form a family...I tried to get them on board, to gain their understanding. I told them there are rules that need to be followed, without discipline we won't be able to work."

Both parents and learners of one of the ZEP schools were frustrated by the inability of one class teacher to establish enough discipline in the classroom. There was no respect between teacher and learners or amongst the peers and, thus, the lack of respect and discipline affected the relationships. A parent reported:

“I’m suffering a lot this year! My daughter is in CPE and has difficulties in her studies but there are some kids who are seriously disturbing the class...I understand that it sometimes happens...but it happens every day! Every day, she comes back in tears back home and in her class, the kids can’t work.”

In this quote, the parent highlights the stress of her daughter and the other classmates who found it hard to participate in class because the teacher failed to impose classroom discipline.

Therefore, it has been seen how the notion of discipline is closely related to the idea of respect between the staff and learners as both groups of participants associated the lack of discipline of ZEP school learners with a lack of respect for the schools and those working within them. Hence, the school and class rules and discipline are implemented as a means to ensure better staff-learner relationships.

School-parent relationships

Across the four ZEP schools, the most common method of reaching out to the ZEP school parents and establish a relationship with them was through school-parent meetings, a variety of school events, as well as verbal or written communication. Some of the school events were: the Annual General Meeting of the Parent-Teacher-Association (PTA); the annual class meeting which provides the opportunity for parents to meet their child’s teacher in an official way; a prize-giving ceremony and the Open Day. Besides these occasional meetings and events, most school leaders stated that they adopted an ‘open door’ policy and

that parents are welcome to meet the school management if they have any queries or problems.

In this study, both school leaders and parents asserted that they have often worked in partnership for fund-raising activities, with the aim of renovating the school infrastructure, through school cleaning and painting activities or in the organisation of Sports day or Open Day. A ZEP school parent described one of their school-parent initiatives:

“It was parents who had contributed to paint the classes. Yes, we collected money as per each Grade... Even if parents do not give much...they give whatever they can so that the child has a beautiful environment to learn...”

All the parents interviewed agreed that the ZEP school parents often responded positively to such types of school initiatives and were happy to engage with the schools, even if they know that it is often the same group of parents who help out. As one mother explained in the interview:

“It’s always the same parents...those who want to help out, they do...those who want to attend meetings, they will be coming...those who won’t attend meetings, they will never attend...”

It can be seen that a common characteristic of Head Teachers, whose leadership is founded upon their personal values and this sense of care, is that they are not only concerned with school management but also with the welfare of the community including care for the involvement of the parents. A Head Teacher shared her determination to show to the community that the school can progress:

“I tell the parents: ‘my dream is to see these children succeed...to perceive some change’... Previously, I’ve been told this school used to be an excellent school. I’d like it to be as such again. That we remove this ZEP school label.”

The school parents of this particular school agreed that this Head Teacher had brought a lot of positive changes and that “she is somebody who gives a lot of herself for the children”. Similarly, another group of parents from another ZEP school acknowledged and appreciated the enthusiasm and consideration of the previous Head Teacher who was greatly esteemed by the learners and the community. This Head Teacher organised free remedial sessions for children with learning difficulties as well as free literacy sessions for members of the community. It is seen that the ‘caring’ approach of most of the school leaders for the parents or learner helps in establishing greater trust and a stronger relationship between the school and the parents.

However, there was also the report of a few cases of tense relationships between the ZEP school staff and the parents and learners. The school leaders of one school had mentioned cases of appointed Head Teachers asking for their immediate transfer as they could not cope with the educational and socio-economic difficulties arising from the ZEP schools and their neighbourhood, or some class teachers who had made offensive ethnic remarks about the learners. The Head Teacher reported some ethnic prejudices of a few members of the teaching staff against the Creole community - cases which affected the working practices and school-parents relationships in her school:

“...some [teachers] used to pinpoint the fact these were predominantly Creoles...the majority of pupils are Creoles...they said these kind of things: ‘You need to work better than Creoles... Creoles cause much more troubles... The Creoles smell...’”

In such cases, the Head Teacher managed to divest the school of these ethnically biased class teachers. The Cluster Coordinator of this particular school talked of the “alienating environment” for the members of the ZEP school staff whose social and cultural realities are different from the realities of the ZEP school parents and learners. She further

stated that she organised meetings for the Head Teachers so that they can learn how to welcome ZEP school parents and calmly listen to their complaints. She described her own strategies with the ZEP school parents:

“I prompt them [the parents] to sit down... I give them a nice smile and ask them how I could help...I keep quiet...listen to them and take down some notes. We talk to each other and I tell them that I understand that they are upset. They need to be listened to.”

Only a few ZEP school teaching staff referred to the issue of ethnic background of the learners and parents, as the majority stated that they treated all the school learners in the same way irrespective of their ethnic or religious background. However, it has been seen that, at times, ethnic and social prejudices affect the relationships between the ZEP school staff and the parents or the ZEP school neighbourhood and are barriers to a trusting and respectful relationship between the ZEP school staff and the ZEP school community.

To summarise this section, it was shown that one of the strengths of the inclusive practices of the ZEP schools is the creation of relationships amongst the ZEP school staff, parents and learners. These relationships are summarised as follows:

- many ZEP class teachers build positive relationships with the learners by their sense of compassion and concern for them expressed through the actions and attitudes;
- the personal dedication and the sense of welcome given by most of the ZEP school leaders consolidate positive school-parent relationships;
- the commitment to positive relationships of some members of the staff is acknowledged and appreciated by the ZEP school parents and learners;

- ethnic, cultural and social prejudices of some members of the ZEP school staff were identified by some of the ZEP school parents and school leaders as a barrier to the relationship of the staff with the learners and parents.

Collaboration amongst stakeholders.

Another theme constructed from the perceptions of the ZEP school staff about an inclusive education is the importance of collaborative practices between the ZEP school staff and the parents, as well as with the local organisations. As explained in the ZEP school policy document (MOE, 2002), the ZEP school project was founded upon the premise that collaboration and partnership become essential features of this school project (Panday & Li Xu, 2013). In this study, the collaboration and partnership amongst the stakeholders were seen both within the ZEP schools and through the staff's external collaboration.

Internal collaboration at school.

On the school premises, teaching and non-teaching staff members are expected to work closely with the school management. Most Head Teachers asserted the importance of a “cohesive team” which was observed in several ZEP schools. For instance, in all four ZEP schools, school management and teachers worked together for events such as the organisation of the Open day, group lunches or outings or the preparation of the annual PTA General Assembly. One of the Head Teachers stated:

“Teachers should be aware that the headmaster is on their side. If there is an issue, the headmaster will try to solve the issue”.

The Cluster Coordinators also played a decisive role in ensuring the development of a cohesive team within the school structure. All the Cluster Coordinators described their supportive role to the school management, teaching staff and parents. One Cluster Coordinator described her goal as:

“I go there mostly to empower the Head Teachers. We support Head Teachers in different activities”.

It was reported that Cluster Coordinators significantly contribute to the creation of a supportive framework for schools by meeting with the respective school’s Head Teacher and the class teacher to discuss and develop the educational targets. These personal sessions enable the teachers to voice their unique teaching situation and the difficulties of ZEP school learners so that, as a team, they can find solutions together or develop a School Development Plan. These frequent visits not only took away the school staff’s feelings of isolation but also provided them with a “unity of purpose” (Peters 2005, p. 155), that is, the whole school is working towards achieving a shared vision for the school.

However, two of the four Head Teachers reported that there were some significant challenges in achieving the teamwork spirit in the schools, with one of the main issues being the lack of support in their managerial tasks. They stated that they were not always supported by their respective deputy Head Teacher, but, on the other hand, the other two Head Teachers stated that they could delegate some of the school responsibilities amongst the senior staff members of the ZEP school management. This included tasks such as organising extra-curricular activities or class visits and reflected the collaborative practice meant to be part of the ZEP school culture. The trust of the Head Teachers in his/her teaching and administrative staff is a vital element in ensuring an inclusive practice based upon collaboration and is not always achievable.

Another weakness of the teamwork and collaboration amongst ZEP schools is the limited collaboration amongst teachers. In their questionnaire, the ZEP school class teachers claimed that they sometimes worked in collaboration, especially in situations where they needed clarifications about the school curriculum or about an exam question. Yet, in their responses pertaining to their inclusive practices, no teachers mentioned the importance of

collaborative teaching, particularly at the level of sharing of pedagogical practices, their difficulties or problem-solving strategies. Neither the teachers nor the school leaders complained about the lack of this important element in the practice of collaboration. The ZEP school class teachers may have good relationships with each other, but they have limited professional collaboration. Ainscow and Sandhill (2010) suggested that schools need to initiate collaboration stating:

...comparisons of practices can lead teachers to view underachieving students in a new light. Rather than simply presenting problems that are assumed to be insurmountable, such students may be perceived as providing feedback on existing classroom arrangements (p. 410).

A Cluster Coordinator also stressed the importance of class teachers working together so that they can monitor the progress of ZEP school learners over the years:

“...the teachers should be working coherently...working together as a team...there need to be these necessary conditions so that the cohort [group of learners] can keep on progressing and not each teacher do their work in isolation...”.

Therefore, collaborative teamwork is important in the creation of an inclusive school culture (Peters, 2005) in ZEP schools and happens to varying degrees.

External collaboration and ZEP schools.

The managers of the ZEP school project, the school management and the teaching staff are called to introduce strategies which encourage parental participation and, above all, parental engagement in the learning process. Furthermore, networking of the ZEP schools is encouraged by the Cluster Coordinators of the schools so as to provide support to the stakeholders and encourage sharing of good practices.

One of the pillars of the ZEP school project is the establishment of a partnership between the ZEP schools and the parents (Mahadeo & Mahomed, 2008). Most schools in this study organised meetings with the parents at least twice a year as mentioned earlier. However, the researcher noted in her observations of the PTA meetings of two of the ZEP schools that parents rarely responded to suggestions or questions asked by the Head Teacher or a member of the teaching staff, even if the language used in the meeting was Kreol Morisien language.

The informal structure called ‘Parents’ Club’ was another initiative undertaken by the ZEP schools to facilitate the school-parents partnership. One of the Cluster Coordinators shared the philosophy of this collaborative initiative:

“involving parents in the school activities... take them on board at school make them feel that it’s their school... they have to contribute and get them involved and it’s a way also to go towards other parents who do not come to school.”

However, the expanded vignettes also showed that not all ZEP schools were successful with their ‘Parents’ Club’, and that it was quite challenging to get the parents on board, especially if the Parent-Mediator does not play an active role in the community. Another Cluster Coordinator described the ‘Parents’ Club’ of her schools as a “fiasco”, mainly because the Parent-Mediator was not committed to setting up and developing this school-community strategy.

Most ZEP school parents understood the importance of working together with the school staff. The parents interviewed described their collaboration as their “parental responsibility”:

“You know, as a parent, nobody has taught...nobody has been prepared to become parents but...little by little...I’m a mother and you are a mother...we take our responsibilities. But some parents could not care less”.

However, there were several criticisms from the ZEP school teaching staff and the parents interviewed about some negligent parents who expected the school to do everything for them, even attending to the basic needs of their children. Some class teachers described the lack of parental collaboration in those terms:

“In general, children are victim of parental negligence”;

“...many parents are not much concerned as there is a high rate of students’ absenteeism...children are left on their own...homework is not done”.

All participating parents of the study disapproved of parental neglect and stated that they could understand why some class teachers and Head Teachers were discouraged from working in their community and would rather work in other areas. The parents further acknowledged that there were sometimes professional responsibilities or family obligations but, as one of the parents pointed out:

“...if we, parents...we don’t want to make efforts...how much efforts will the Head Teacher make?”

As a result of the lack of parental collaboration of many ZEP school parents, the ZEP school staff has a negative perception of the parents and, sometimes, this poor opinion about the parents of the ZEP school community is generalised and remains throughout their appointment in these schools.

ZEP school teachers and leaders expect parents to attend to their basic duties of providing security, care and concern for the educational development of ZEP school learners. In the community, there is a similar desire for more parental responsibility but the parents from this study recognized that parents from their communities needed more support not only

in terms of material resources, but also parental guidance so that they learn how to better attend to the educational and developmental needs of their children. Therefore, it is seen that collaborative strategies involving the ZEP school staff and parents are focussed upon the formal and informal structures of the primary schools and are opportunities for both parents and teachers to establish and maintain school-parent collaboration.

The other element in the school-community collaboration is the role played by the social workers, religious leaders and local businesses who are important members in the ZEP school project as they provide a supportive framework to families. Three out of the four Head Teachers reported that they had met some of the religious leaders of the neighbourhood such as the parish priest or the local nuns, as they are closer to the community than to the school leaders. However, two of the school leaders expressed their disappointment as they felt that these community leaders were reluctant to provide their support because they do not fully trust the institutions, particularly the government ones. Therefore, the ZEP school leaders sometimes attempted to nurture a relational approach towards the community but it was seen that the element of trust, which is one of the fundamental factors, is sometimes lacking.

In a similar collaborative initiative, the local entrepreneurs and businesses were often approached by school leaders for sponsorship of school activities or programmes. Even though the ZEP school project benefits from extra funds from the MOE and Ministry of Finance (MOF, 2012), the financial resources are not enough to support 30,000 ZEP school learners on a long-term basis. This is why the Ministry of Finance formally encouraged the development of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative so that business organisations can contribute to the social and environmental welfare of the country by donating 2% of their profits to CSR activities (Gokulsingh, 2011; MOF, 2009; Ragodoo,

2009). The CSR initiative in Mauritius "...feeds into the notions of sustainable development and the longing of a fair, stable, just and inclusive society" (Gokulsingh, 2011, p. 230).

In the ZEP school context, there is evidence that the school-business partnership shows the willingness of ZEP schools to establish relationships with the community through its local organisations, and that there is a mutual engagement in their commitment towards the educational success of the local children. For example, local businesses helped through the sponsorship of educational sessions for the parents of ZEP school learners, financing some school projects, or remedial education sessions for some learners in Grades One to Three. However, it was also reported that ZEP schools-corporate sector collaboration created some difficulties in the daily management of the schools. For instance, one of the Cluster Coordinators advised the Head Teacher to stop the collaboration with one of the business organisations since they were interfering with the running of the school saying "...their input did not reach our expectations".

A final aspect of external collaboration was networking sessions for ZEP school staff which were organised by most Cluster Coordinators of this study as part of their responsibilities. The researcher had the opportunity of attending one of the working sessions organised by one of the Cluster Coordinators for the twelve Grade Six class teachers of her cluster (Field notes/23 may 2013). This session was focussed upon sharing good practices whereby the host class teachers presented their pedagogical strategies which they designed to reach 'borderline pupils³⁵' and 'slow achievers³⁶'. Through some informal conversations with the teachers, the researcher noted their appreciation of such initiatives which they described as being "too short" (1/2 day session). This working session showed the possibilities of collaboration through workshops challenging the isolation of ZEP school class teachers. In the words of the Cluster Coordinator, the ZEP school staff will feel "...that they

³⁵ Pupils who nearly reach pass mark grades

³⁶ Those who have learning difficulties

are not on their own". Thus, it is seen that cluster meetings are empowering networking sessions that encourage collaboration and mutual support amongst stakeholders.

In summary of this section, it was shown that another aspect of inclusive education in ZEP schools is the concerted effort of the school staff and business organisations to work for the welfare of the schools and the community. These intended inclusive practices can be summarised as follows:

- ZEP schools initiate collaborative approaches with parents by involving them in school meetings and events;
- business organisations and some local NGOs work in partnership with the ZEP schools;
- teachers are encouraged to collaborate amongst themselves and the Head Teachers of ZEP schools are generally supported by their deputy and the staff.

Yet, some of the barriers to the collaborative practices were:

- low rate of parental attendance at school meetings;
- dominance of the ZEP school staff in meetings;
- two of the Head Teachers could not totally rely upon the support of their administrative staff or deputy Head Teacher;
- some relational tensions between community leaders or business organisations and the ZEP schools.

The next section discusses the intended inclusive practices in the light of the perceptions of the ZEP school staff about an inclusive education in order to identify the key practices of inclusive education in these schools.

Synthesis of the main understanding about an inclusive education and identification of the key practices in ZEP schools.

In the previous sections, the perceptions and intended practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools were discussed. The aim of this section is to examine the relationship between the understandings of the concept and its enactment in ZEP schools in order to identify the convergences and divergences leading to a synthesis of the key practices of inclusive education in ZEP schools.

The discussion begins by reviewing the themes and sub-themes as summarised in Table 5.5:

Table 5.5.

Perceptions and intended practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools.

Perceptions	Intended practices
1. <i>Attending to the diversity of learners</i>	1. <i>Inclusive classroom strategies</i>
Learners with special educational needs	2. <i>Caring for the emotional and social needs of learners</i>
Learners from less developed regions	3. <i>Providing resources and materials</i>
Learners from different religious, ethnic and family backgrounds	4. <i>Building relationships amongst stakeholders</i>
2. <i>Integrating the ZEP school learners into mainstream education</i>	Staff-learners' relationship
	School-parents' relationships
3. <i>Importance of a welcoming and caring relationship</i>	5. <i>Collaboration amongst stakeholders</i>
	Internal collaboration at school
	External collaboration and ZEP schools

Main understanding of an inclusive education.

One of the purposes of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the ZEP school stakeholders about an inclusive education. As seen in Table 5.5, the ZEP school staff stated that they aspired to attending to the diversity of ZEP school learners: (a) those who have special educational needs; (b) those from less developed regions; and, (c) those of different family, ethnic and religious backgrounds. They also aspired to see the integration of the ZEP

school learners into the Mauritian education system and acknowledged the importance of a caring and welcoming relationship as part of an inclusive education in ZEP schools.

Through these perceptions of an inclusive education, it is argued that the ZEP school staff aspire to an integrated model of an inclusive education in which the main aim is to ensure that the ZEP school learners achieve the national standards of the education system as set by the MOE so that they are no longer marginalised within the education context.

Similarly, the ZEP school learners and parents hope for academic achievement which they consider as a step towards socio-economic advancement. The marginal status of the ZEP school learners is mainly due to their low performance at the CPE exams, as well as the lack of socio-economic development within their neighbourhood. Furthermore, the ZEP school staff acknowledged that the ZEP school learners are in need of additional support because of their special educational needs and other social and emotional difficulties that they face.

Therefore, it is understood that the aspiration of the ZEP school staff is to provide a place for the ZEP school learners within the education system by helping them to achieve well at the CPE exams which are the standard of the successful completion of the primary school level. Moreover, by recognising and trying to attend to the unique needs of the ZEP school learners, the ZEP school staff hope to provide education to the ZEP school learners and facilitate their success in education.

Therefore, the overall understanding of the ZEP school staff about an inclusive education is the integration of the ZEP school learners into the Mauritian education system and society by welcoming them at school and attending to their unique social and educational needs. Through the enactment of these perceptions of an inclusive education, the ZEP school staff believe that they can facilitate educational achievement for the ZEP school learners.

Identification of the key practices of an inclusive education.

Another key purpose of this research study was to identify the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice. This chapter has presented the results from the data analysis in light of the conceptual framework in order to respond to the first part of the research question regarding perceptions and practices of an inclusive education. The final task of this chapter is to synthesise the discussion and articulate the key practices to be further analysed from a social justice perspective in the next chapter.

In line with the current literature, one of the intended practices of an inclusive education of the ZEP school staff is the practice of respecting the individuality of the learners by providing them with access to education as well as engaging them in the learning process for social and academic achievement (Hyde, Carpenter & Conway, 2010).

At the level of practice, despite their limited specialised training, the ZEP school staff tried to attend to the diverse needs of learners. In the classroom, it was shown that the class teachers devised some inclusive strategies, including student collaboration, different seating arrangements and differentiated pedagogy in order to provide a richer and more meaningful learning experience for the ZEP school learners. Furthermore, in order to attend to the social and emotional needs of the learners, the ZEP school staff and the specialist staff provided both material and psychological support to the learners and their family. It can be argued that the practice of the ZEP school staff aligns with the staff's views and beliefs about an inclusive education. However, the implementation of the inclusive education practices in ZEP schools, and the educational outcomes of the ZEP school learners, are only partly achieved in ZEP schools because of several issues arising within the education structures as well as in the actions and interactions of the ZEP school members.

One of the issues is that the ZEP schools focus more upon academic achievement than providing a holistic education which caters for the unique and individual needs of the

learners. The data showed that the inclusive strategies initiated by some of the ZEP school class teachers are collaborative and innovative, but they are practised almost exclusively in lower Grades (Grades One to Three). ZEP school class teachers working in lower Grades operate in an educational framework where they believe they have more flexibility in their pedagogical approach because they are not judged according to the performance of ZEP school learners at the CPE exams. On the other hand, the ZEP school class teachers working in upper Grades occasionally use collaborative methods, but, because they must finish the coverage of an “overloaded” curriculum before the national exams, they believe that they cannot sustain these collaborative pedagogical methods which are perceived as more time-consuming for both teachers and learners.

The ZEP school class teachers, like many non-ZEP school class teachers, are more concerned with completing the syllabus and use ‘rote-learning’ techniques or drilling exercises to make sure that the learners are prepared for the national summative exams. Furthermore, the class teachers focus upon subjects which will be examined at the national summative exams and disregard subjects such as physical education or creative arts.

The focus on preparation for assessment by examination, the limitations in the curriculum content and the fee-paying private tutoring sessions are factors that interfere with the practice of an inclusive education. Societal expectations and the goals of the education system are based on competition and academic performance which prevent a genuinely inclusive practice in line with the views of inclusive education scholars (Armstrong et al., 2010; Opertti, Brady & Duncombe, 2012; Slee, 2011). Although the ZEP school staff aspired to cater for the needs of ZEP school learners through the use of some inclusive education strategies, they operate in an education system which favours educational achievement and high grades at the national exams and not the holistic development of the child. ZEP school class teachers are imbued within this system and largely contribute to perpetuating it.

Since the beliefs of ZEP school class teachers guide their pedagogical practices, and their choice of teaching practices reflects their understanding of inclusive education which is about promoting educational success at the CPE exams, the prevailing teaching style is teacher-focused and very often, “students become passive receptors of knowledge rather than active participants in the learning process” (Loreman et al., 2011, p. 191). It is therefore argued that the current evaluation method and the current teaching practices force the ZEP school learners to fit into the mould of the education system when it should be that the system adapts to the learner’s individual needs (Armstrong et al., 2010). Therefore, from this discussion of the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education, the first Key practice identified is:

Key Practice 1: Teaching practices focussed upon the academic achievement of students measured by success in examinations.

The discussion of the practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools also revealed that the provision of additional material and financial resources to ZEP schools, including improved infrastructure and school equipment, provide the ZEP school learners with improved educational opportunities despite their socio-economic difficulties.

For the ZEP school staff, the fact that ZEP school learners are provided with free essentials and other resources means that the learners have all the necessary facilities to achieve at primary school. The MOE is committed to also providing the necessary staff to the ZEP schools in order to ensure both the academic and emotional development of ZEP school learners. In addition to government funds, the corporate sector financially helps ZEP schools with the organisation of educational and social activities for the learners and the neighbouring community.

Despite some flaws in the recruitment of the staff, and the lack of accountability of some ZEP school employees, the ZEP school project helps in providing access to education

for the ZEP school learners and facilitates their educational success through the distribution of resources and materials. In the light of this finding, the next key practice is:

Key Practice 2: The provision of resources and materials for the ZEP schools.

ZEP school staff perceived that inclusive education is also about the importance of establishing a welcoming and caring relationship with the ZEP school learners and their families. Informed by this perspective, their practice aimed at initiating, building and maintaining the relationships between the ZEP schools and the learners as well as the parents. The ZEP school staff are also assisted by specialist staff to address the social and emotional needs of the ZEP school learners.

Most of the ZEP school learners and parents appreciated the dedication, the sense of care and empathetic approach of the ZEP school staff. It is argued that the personal approach adopted by the ZEP school staff contributes to the implementation of an inclusive education by establishing relationships based on trust and a sense of engagement.

However, the creation and nurturing of relationships depends upon the way that the ZEP school stakeholders perceive one another. It was revealed that some of the challenges that the ZEP schools face are at the level of cultural differences between the ZEP school staff and the ZEP school learners, parents and their neighbourhood. Despite the potential negative effects of the cultural challenges, the strong school-community relationship has a significant positive impact on the working practices of the ZEP school staff and the educational achievement of ZEP school learners. Therefore, another key practice in the ZEP schools is:

Key Practice 3: Most ZEP school staff attempt to create and maintain relationships with the learners, parents and local community.

Another important inclusive practice is the collaborative approach recommended by the policy document of the ZEP school project (MOE, 2002, p.4). The distinctiveness of the ZEP school project was about including and embracing the community so that they are part

of the school community and, thus, have a sense of belonging to the school. Many ZEP school class teachers and school leaders emphasised the benefits of collective efforts of all educational partners to build relationships with each other and work in collaboration for the success of ZEP school learners. The ZEP school project depends on the establishment of such relationships which support the school staff to work together as a team towards the same goal. The practices of the ZEP school staff reflected such understandings through the different partnerships and collaboration amongst the ZEP school stakeholders.

It was seen that ZEP schools tried to use collaborative strategies through formal and informal structures within the education system with the aim of involving the parents in the school's life and encouraging them to work in partnership with the school. This strategy echoes Mahadeo and Mahomed's views (2008) that parental involvement aims at improving the relationship between ZEP schools and the families, as well as a way of "creating a place for them within the school, giving them an opportunity to talk..." (p. 231) amongst other benefits. These interactions also enabled the staff to better understand the contextual and social background in which they are working. ZEP school communication with the parents and community is seen as another important factor in establishing school-community rapport. Communication is also characteristic of a "collaborative, distributive leadership style" and was associated with effectiveness, particularly in disadvantaged schools (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll & Russ, 2004). The ZEP school staff and parents across the four schools were generally satisfied with the current collaborative strategy proposed in ZEP schools. In light of the above discussion, another key practice is:

Key Practice 4: Initiating collaborative practices amongst the ZEP school communities.

Chapter Summary

This chapter first presented the perceptions of an inclusive education in ZEP schools identified from the views of the ZEP school system leaders, school leaders and class teachers

with observations from school parents, learners and researcher observation. The ZEP school staff believed in an inclusive education which aims at providing an education to all Mauritian children and attending to the diversity of needs of the ZEP school learners. The staff also believed in the importance of ensuring the integration of the ZEP school learners into mainstream education system by providing them with a sense of care and welcome.

It was also shown that the class teachers and school leaders of the four ZEP schools developed different practices to cater to the diversity of the academic, material, and social needs of ZEP school learners. The ZEP schools also practised a sense of care and welcome; initiated school-community collaboration and distributed food and other school material as a way of implementing an inclusive education.

From these practices informed by perceptions of an inclusive education, the researcher identified four key practices which were synthesised as:

- Key Practice One: Teaching and learning for academic performance measured by success in examinations;
- Key Practice Two: Provision of resources;
- Key Practice Three: Creating and maintaining relationships;
- Key Practice Four: Initiating collaboration amongst stakeholders.

In the next chapter, the identified key practices in inclusive education are analysed through the social justice framework.

Chapter 6 Key Practices of an inclusive education from a social justice perspective

In the previous chapter, the perceptions and key practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools were identified in response to the research question:

“What are the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in the ZEP schools of Mauritius?”

The key practices were named as:

- Key Practice One: Teaching and learning for academic achievement measured by examinations.
- Key Practice Two: Provision of resources.
- Key Practice Three: Creating and maintaining relationships.
- Key Practice Four: Initiating collaboration amongst stakeholders.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse these key practices of an inclusive education from a social justice perspective in order to establish to what extent the inclusive education practices in ZEP schools can be said to be enabling social justice in Mauritius.

But first, the views and understandings of the ZEP school staff and system leaders about the concept of social justice, identified from the cross case analysis, are presented, as these perceptions inform “how” and “why” the ZEP schools are implementing an inclusive education. The four key practices of inclusive education are then analysed through Gewirtz and Cribb’s (2002) social justice dimensions, that is, distributive, cultural and associational justice.

Cross Case Analysis Process

The researcher followed the same cross case analysis process as the one used for inclusive education (Chapter Five) by adapting Stake’s Cross-Case analysis method (2005) in order to identify the themes pertaining to the perceptions of the ZEP school staff about the concept of social justice. Through this thematic construction, which Grbich (2013) calls the

researcher's "interacting interpretation" (p. 81), the researcher first examined the master list of the groups of codes for each ZEP school and established a pattern of colour codes related to the concepts attached to social justice. The identification of the patterns of colour codes is shown in Table 6.1. For instance, the concept-driven code "equality" was assigned the colour yellow.

Table 6.1.

Patterns of colour codes for the four ZEP schools and codes from system leaders (social justice).

Pattern of codes	Coloured codes
Redrock School	<p>Equal consideration</p> <p>Educational opportunities for poor children</p> <p>Right to education for all</p> <p>Provision of resources</p> <p>ZEP project challenges social justice ethos because of 'labelling'</p> <p>ZEP project as positive discrimination</p>
Mountain School	<p>No discrimination based on religious faith or ethnic group</p> <p>Learners' social and educational progress</p> <p>Educational and social participation</p> <p>Valuing & respecting human being</p> <p>social engagement</p> <p>"equal footing"</p>

Pattern of codes	Coloured codes
Lady of the Sea Catholic School	<p>Same educational success & opportunities as other regions</p> <p>Getting out of poverty through education</p> <p>Preferential option for the poor</p> <p>Rights to education</p> <p>Sharing of food and resources</p> <p>Equality and solidarity</p> <p>Participating in society</p>
Sunflower School	<p>Educational rights and opportunities for the poorest to achieve social equality</p> <p>Educational equality and success</p> <p>Sharing of food and resources</p> <p>Participating in society</p>
Codes from system leaders	<p>Education for all Mauritian children</p> <p>Education for those who are disadvantaged</p> <p>Social and cultural interaction</p>

The patterns of colour codes were further refined by looking for similarities and differences with the aim of categorising them in order of most recurring codes. This categorisation is shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2.

Categorised patterns of codes in social justice after the cross-case analysis.

Categories	Ordered patterns of codes in social justice after cross-case analysis
<i>Perceptions</i>	<p>Equal consideration and same treatment at school</p> <p>Equality in society through alleviation of poverty and marginalisation and education</p> <p>Living together as a multi-ethnic and religious nation</p> <p>Distribution of food/school materials and other resources</p> <p>Additional teaching and specialist staff</p>

In the final step of the cross-case analysis, the categorised patterns of colour codes in social justice were further analysed in order to identify two major themes of the perceptions of the ZEP school staff and system leaders about their understanding of social justice which are shown in table 6.3.

Table 6.3

Identified themes of the perceptions of ZEP school staff about social justice.

Category	Identified themes in social justice
<i>Perceptions</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social equality within a diverse community 2. Enabling equality in, and through, education

These constructed themes are now presented and, then, synthesised in the light of the conceptual framework of this study.

Perception Theme One: Social equality within a diverse community.

The word “equality” was often used by the ZEP school teachers, Head Teachers and system leaders in their understanding of social justice: they aspired to be a country where equality is enacted in society and in education. They understood social justice as the achievement of a society where all Mauritians are considered equal, without any type of discrimination.

The class teachers across the four ZEP schools shared a similar understanding of social justice which they defined as equality of treatment and consideration:

“...social justice is achieving equality amongst people despite their different social, ethnic, sexual, economic differences”;

“same treatment for every individual irrespective of social background, culture and religion”;

“It is concerned with equal justice, not just in courts, but in all aspects of society. This concept demands that people have equal rights and everyone, from the poorest person at the margins of society to the wealthiest, deserves an even playing field”.

Similar views were shared by the school leaders from the four ZEP schools as with one Head Teacher who explained that she was driven by the belief that “...everybody is to be considered equally”. Therefore, the majority of the ZEP school staff understood social justice as equality in respect, treatment and consideration for all Mauritian citizens irrespective of their religious or ethnic groups, socio-economic or gender. They also expected ZEP school learners to receive the same education as any other learner from other areas of Mauritius.

The ZEP school staff also described social justice as the ability for all members of the Mauritian society to have the same social and economic opportunities. As described in the previous chapter, the staff across the four ZEP schools acknowledged that many ZEP school learners live at the margins of the economic and social prosperity of Mauritius. This economic poverty creates several types of disadvantage for the ZEP school learners and their families through social marginalisation and vulnerability to social ills such as drug addiction, violence and other crime. The majority of ZEP school class teachers understood social justice as the capacity to achieve social and economic equality through equal opportunities. Some of these descriptions were:

“Giving opportunities to each and everyone to reach a level of standard of living which is sufficient for living well”;

“All citizens must have the same right and privilege to have the right to education, a job according to meritocracy and facilities to amenities in the environment”.

Therefore, the ZEP school staff aspired to achieve social equality in Mauritian society by helping those who are marginalised to have equal opportunities in accessing social and economic benefits in society.

Summarising Perception Theme One, social justice is described by the ZEP school staff as being about the achievement of social equality which is made up of two aspects:

- no discrimination amongst Mauritian citizens, irrespective of their different religious, social class, gender, ethnic or cultural background; all Mauritians should be treated and considered equally;
- all Mauritians should have the same right to social and economic opportunities to achieve socio-economic advancement in society.

Perception Theme Two: Enabling equality in, and through, education.

In this section, the two identified aspects of the relationship between equality and education are discussed – enabling equality *in* and *through* education.

Firstly, ZEP school teachers and leaders defined social justice as equal rights *in* education for ZEP school learners. Two Head Teachers asserted that social justice was: “about all children having the same facilities” and that “Education is meant for everybody”. One of the system leaders defined the concept as “providing academic opportunity to all Mauritians”. A Cluster Coordinator also believed that, through ZEP schools, the Ministry of Education (MOE) was progressing towards social justice for all Mauritian children because they were encouraged to attend school:

“I would say we are going towards social justice: bringing them to schools, giving them broader opportunity to learn, the same opportunity, the same education, better adapted to them...”

This quote refers to the fact that the Mauritian government provides access and opportunities for all Mauritian children to attend school regardless of background, religion or socio-economic group. Therefore, many ZEP school staff considered that social justice is linked to the idea of equal rights in the access to education for all Mauritian learners.

The other aspect of equality and education is that equality can be achieved *through* education. A large number of ZEP school staff considered that since all Mauritian learners have equal rights to education, they also have the opportunity to achieve social and economic equality through education. All Cluster Coordinators articulated the same idea about equality being achieved through education:

“...to benefit from the opportunities provided by free education for all children in Mauritius”;

“We want to show them that through education they are going to get out of poverty”;

“There is only education to help these people out...when these children get an education, their situation gets better, they get a decent job”.

All ZEP school parents and learners agreed with the notion that education can help them to achieve social and economic advancement. All learners asserted that they attended school with the aim of having a “good job” and, in the rural areas, they also aimed at attending a “good secondary school in towns”. Some parents from one of the ZEP schools expressed their appreciation of the motivating words and advice from the previous Head Teacher who taught them the importance of education: “...she would tell us to send our kids to school, to do a proper follow-up at home”.

Part of social and economic advancement is understood as becoming independent and actively participating in civil society to achieve equality. There is the general aspiration that, through education, ZEP school learners can become functional citizens who do not need to depend socially and financially upon Mauritian society. A Cluster Coordinator articulated his vision of social justice through the ZEP school project in those terms:

“We are not in favour of providing support for ever. We are for providing education...a sense of responsibility and conferring autonomy. Now that you are no longer disadvantaged, you should manage on your own. This is the aim of education...”

A Head Teacher also shared that she often reminded her staff of ensuring that the learner:

“...achieves something before leaving school...at least to know how to write his name, to know which bus he/she should catch”.

Another Head Teacher stated that one of her aims was to ensure that the learners

“...become independent so that they can manage by themselves”.

One of the class teachers had a different way of expressing this aim:

“Through education, the children are expected to rise to the level of ‘normal’ citizens who can exercise their rights to utilise social structures, consequently forming part and contributing to society”.

Furthermore, a few members of the ZEP school staff considered equality *in and through* education as an aspect of social justice that can be achieved through the implementation of a uniform and standardised education system. A Head Teacher emphasised the importance of having:

“...the same educational opportunities as any other children from other schools or neighbourhood”.

In the same way, another class teacher defined social justice as: “Providing the same education to the nation at large so that each and everyone has the same potential to succeed”.

These quotes show that some of the ZEP school staff associated equal educational opportunities with “same education” as opposed to a differentiated one.

Some of the ZEP school staff were favourable to ensuring that ZEP school learners follow the national curriculum framework, use the prescribed national textbooks, and sit for the same national exams at the end of primary education, that is the CPE examinations, as any of the other learners of Mauritius. In terms of curriculum and assessment, some of the ZEP school class teachers stated:

“the curriculum should be the same for all schools as at the end of primary schooling, all students take part in the same CPE exams”;

“Facilities are offered...so what’s the problem? They should not be apart.

They should follow where every child is going not a different way”;

“Children in a ZEP school and non-ZEP school are exposed to the same curriculum, so I believe the CPE exams will provide information in the progress of learners in ZEP schools”.

Only one of the Head Teachers stated the belief that ZEP school learners should also be evaluated through the CPE exams:

“The evaluation should be on a standard level. We can’t create another level for them. Otherwise, we won’t be able to monitor their progress”.

However, the idea of “same education” was not understood in the same way by all members of the ZEP school staff. The majority of ZEP school class teachers and Head Teachers was in favour of equal access to educational opportunities but, at the level of practice, this majority was favourable to a different curriculum for ZEP schools and suggested an alternative method of assessing the progress of ZEP school learners. The ZEP school class teachers described the national curriculum as “too bulky”; “not relevant to slow learners”; “level is too high”. These class teachers also demanded a different evaluation method:

“Another test paper is needed for ZEP school learners...they are running a race which is unfair”;

“they [the ZEP school learners] understand the concepts in their mother tongue but the exam papers are set in English and so, they have difficulties to understand the exam paper. The failure does not reflect their inability to understand”;

“The exams act as a barrier to their progress. If they fail at the CPE exams, they think they are worthless”;

“ZEP schools should have a separate examination that won’t be a competition but rather a way of improving”.

Three out of four Head Teachers also acknowledged that other methods of evaluating the progress of ZEP school learners are needed and that the current examination methods have a narrow academic focus. They also stated that the curriculum was overloaded and restrictive for ZEP school learners and they proposed a diversified curriculum.

Therefore, most of the ZEP school staff were favourable to a different assessment method for the ZEP school learners but, interestingly, they understood evaluation solely through exams. While most of the ZEP school staff believed in a uniform and standardised education system in order to provide equality in education, there were different understandings as to how this could be achieved.

Perception Theme Two has shown that equality *in* and *through* education was associated with social justice by the ZEP school staff who believed that the concept is about:

- equal access and rights to education for all Mauritian children and therefore equality *in* education;
- an education *through* which the ZEP school learners and their families can achieve social and economic advancement in society;
- an education system which ensures that all Mauritian children are provided with the same educational opportunities, although for some educators this means a uniform and standardised education system and for others a differentiated curriculum and assessment.

In summary, the themes of ‘social equality within a diverse community’ and ‘equality *in* and *through* education’ have been identified from the responses of ZEP school leaders, class teachers and system leaders about their perception of social justice in ZEP schools. These themes reflect an understanding of social justice as providing equality in education and society so that learners are to be treated fairly - an aspect of equality that is often found in education (Gale & Densmore, 2000; Nieto & Bode, 2012).

The ZEP school staff and system leaders also considered that the ZEP school project provides the ZEP school learners and their parents with additional support in order to achieve educational and social equality. This understanding of social justice can be associated with the notion of *equity* which is often considered as a characteristic of social justice (Connell, 1993; Rawls, 1972; Smith, 2012).

However, this thesis presents a view of social justice beyond that of *equality* and *equity* as it also argues that social justice needs to be understood in broader terms to achieve an *inclusive education for social justice*. It is also based on the premise that inclusive education and social justice are inseparable in practice, with inclusive education being a response to achieving social justice (Gerrard, 1994; Lalvani, 2013; Polat, 2011; Riddell, 2009). This idea can be found in the connections made by the participants between an inclusive education and social justice through notions such as respect for the diverse backgrounds of the learners and education for all learners. These understandings from the participants indicating that an inclusive education is embedded within a social justice philosophy is echoed by Lalvani (2013) who found that: “Teachers who expressed a strong willingness to implement inclusive practices held beliefs about inclusive education as related to democratic societies, equitable education, and social justice” (p. 14). Since both concepts are interconnected at the level of their underlying beliefs and perceptions, it is important to examine the influence of these perceptions on the practices in the ZEP schools.

Therefore, the key practices of inclusive education in ZEP schools are now discussed from the lens of the plural conceptions of social justice (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002) as presented in the conceptual framework.

Key practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools from a social justice perspective

The identified key practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools are:

- Key Practice One: Teaching and learning for academic performance measured by examinations.
- Key Practice Two: Provision of resources.
- Key Practice Three: Creating and maintaining relationships.
- Key Practice Four: Initiating collaboration amongst stakeholders.

As presented in the conceptual framework derived from the literature review, Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) presented a model of social justice with three facets or dimensions: distributive justice, cultural justice and associational justice.

This model is founded upon Fraser's theory of social justice (1997; 2008) which is concerned firstly with economic justice, defined as the absence of: "exploitation" (appropriation of one's efforts/benefits by others); "deprivation" (being denied an adequate standard of living) ; and, "economic marginalization" (no access to employment or being confined to low wages) (Fraser, 1997).

Distributive justice is achieved by addressing what is needed for economic justice, but also through the opportunities provided to the marginalised groups to have access to the social and cultural capital of the dominant group (Keddie, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2010; Mills, 2012).

The cultural justice dimension (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002) highlights the importance of recognising different cultures and cultural groups as well as the presence of a dominant (or mainstream) cultural group. In line with Fraser's theory of social justice, Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) considered that for cultural justice to be achieved, the issues of "non-recognition" (being rendered invisible by culturally dominant group/s), "cultural domination" (being subjected to cultures or interpretations which alienate one or disrupt one's own culture); and

“disrespect” (being constantly subjected to maligned or stereotypical interpretations in daily life) must be addressed.

Associational justice was proposed by Gewirtz and Cribb as they believed that cultural justice and associational justice can only be achieved if founded upon representation and participation of the marginalised group (Fraser, 2008). According to Fraser (2008), minority groups must be provided with opportunities to voice their opinion on matters which directly concern them. In that way, they are enabled to participate in the decision making process (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Keddie, 2012).

Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) also highlighted the tensions arising between the social justice dimensions as a result of attempting to satisfy all the social justice dimensions. One of their suggestions for “engaging with the tensions” (p. 500) in order to create socially just schools is the importance of collective responsibility whereby, not only is the State responsible for the enactment of social justice, but so is the whole of society through people’s daily interactions and relationships. In an educational context, addressing tensions amongst the social justice dimensions means that all school stakeholders share the responsibility of working towards greater social justice.

In the next sub-section, the Key Practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools are examined through the lens of these dimensions of social justice. From this analysis, the main findings of this study will be identified.

Key Practice One: Teaching and learning for academic performance measured by examinations.

Key Practice One of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools showed that the teachers and Head Teachers across the four ZEP schools were primarily concerned with the academic performance of the learners at the national summative exams for learners in Grades Four and Five, and the CPE exams for the learners in Grade Six. The teaching and

leadership practices are focussed upon ensuring that the ZEP school learners achieve success in these exams. These practices and understandings of learning are shared by the ZEP school learners and their parents who all believed that the successful completion of primary schooling can provide them with access to greater educational and socio-economic opportunities in Mauritian society. Key Practice One is now analysed from the three dimensions of social justice.

Distributive justice.

Gewirtz and Cribb (2002) suggested that the distributive justice dimension could be achieved through the provision of resources and services which can support marginalised groups and help them to escape “economic marginalisation”, “exploitation” and “deprivation” (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). They also claimed that distributive justice was about the distribution of “social and cultural resources” (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002, p. 502) to the ZEP school learners and families with the aim of enabling them to succeed within the education system. The social and cultural resources refer to social skills, attitudes and relationships which can promote the personal development of the learners and their social networks, as well as their academic performance.

Key Practice One enables the distribution of what the Mauritian society and the education system value the most: academic achievement. Through the ZEP school project, the ZEP school learners are provided with a pathway to educational success and opportunities to escape from economic marginalisation and deprivation. Across the four ZEP schools the school staff, parents and learners appreciated the provision of food, resources and equipment which helped to reduce the socio-economic obstacles of learners located in less developed regions of Mauritius and assisted them to have access to education as a valuable resource (Tikly & Barrett, 2011). In the words of one of the Cluster Coordinators:

“They’re [the ZEP school learners] being given lunch, the material they need when they come for the project... everything is given, they just have to come and take advantage of what is being offered in terms of the project”.

The ZEP school staff also distributed and shared the cultural and social resources, valued and promoted by the Mauritian education system and society, with the ZEP school learners and parents. For instance, the majority of the ZEP school teachers reported that they provided advice, guidance and motivation to the learners with the aim of enabling them to progress in education and in society:

“Motivate pupils and encourage cultural interactions among pupils”;

“...provide learning to pupils so they become good citizens”;

“Instil moral values in children”.

Similarly, all ZEP school Head Teachers considered that adequate school discipline, rigour, and competitive spirit, as well as motivation to do well, are some of the social and cultural resources, established as school norms and beliefs, which they share with the ZEP school learners. According to one of the Head Teachers, she reprimands the ZEP school learners for their bad behaviour but would explain the reason for doing so:

“I make them understand that the reason I scold them... I make them understand, when you love somebody, you are always encouraging that person so that, in the end, this person will be able to succeed in life. I always tell them that’s because I love them.”

Furthermore, all the school leaders of the ZEP schools claimed that they not only want the learners to improve their academic performance but also to succeed in their personal life and in society.

The school leaders also considered that it is by sharing the social and cultural resources promoted by the MOE and the ZEP schools that the ZEP school learners and family

can achieve social advancement through education. This practice is confirmed by one of the ZEP school parents who explained how the Head Teacher of the school taught them how to motivate and develop high aspirations for their children through guidance and instilling a competitive spirit which can help them and their children to attain social mobility and financial security. Therefore, through the sharing of these social and cultural resources with the ZEP school learners, the distributive justice dimension is enhanced.

However, the distributive justice dimension is restricted because of a major obstacle, that is, the fee-paying private tutoring culture which limits the effectiveness of the actions taken to address distributive justice. ZEP school learners, who do not have the financial means to pay for the best private tutor, cannot be competitive in the CPE exams “race” (Bunwaree, 2001) and are excluded from opportunities for success. Therefore, the practice of fee-paying private tuitions, which is common across all socio-economic groups of Mauritius, leads to further marginalisation of the ZEP school learners as the parents are prepared to “sacrifice” their limited income to pay tuition fees and therefore have less resources to provide for other family needs. One of the parents Mountain School described the case of her daughter:

“...last year, I did not have the financial means to pay private tuitions for my child but this year, I am doing my very best, a kind of sacrifice so as to send my child to private tuitions, with the class teacher and now, I’m waiting to see the results, to see if my child can work more, can progress.”

As seen in this quote, ZEP school parents and learners have to “navigate” (Keddie, 2012, p.55) in a system which places them in a situation of financial dependence on the class teachers, or Head Teachers who provide this fee paying private tuition. It is argued that fee-paying private tuition is embedded within the education system of Mauritius and contributes to further economic marginalisation and deprivation (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002)

of the ZEP school learners and parents who are already socio-economically disadvantaged. Since none of the ZEP school class teachers and school leaders mentioned or questioned the practice of private tutoring sessions as a barrier to inclusive education or social justice, it implies that this practice is endorsed by all Mauritian social groups and the staff of the MOE even though it causes particular disadvantage to the poor. This finding about fee paying private tuitions restricting distributive justice in ZEP schools reinforces the literature pertaining to the adverse effects of private tutoring sessions in education (Bunwaree, 2001; Bunwaree et al., 2005; Dauguet, 2007; Foondun, 2002).

In summary, Key Practice One enhanced the distributive justice dimension because it distributes educational access and academic success to ZEP school learners. It is understood that in Mauritius, access to education and academic success are two significant factors for learners from disadvantaged areas which can "...facilitate students' future access to the material benefits of society" (Keddie, 2012, p. 158). Similarly, the ZEP school staff considered that their approach, as educators, is about distributing to the ZEP school learners the social and cultural resources as well as "the academic skills and competencies required to enable their students to succeed in mainstream societies..." (Mills & Gale, 2010, p. 11). Yet, none of the ZEP school staff critiqued private tutoring sessions as a limiting influence in the achievement of Key Practice One from a distributive justice perspective.

Cultural justice.

Key Practice One was analysed from a cultural justice perspective using Fraser's concepts of "cultural domination", "non-recognition" and "disrespect" (1997) which are considered obstacles to cultural justice (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). The analysis of the practice of teaching and learning for academic performance measured by examinations identified a culturally dominant group (education system and staff) and a sub-dominant group

(ZEP school learners and parents) whose needs, identity and uniqueness are disrespected and not recognised.

The linguistic policy of the National Primary Curriculum Framework (NPCF) hinders the enhancement of cultural justice in ZEP schools because of the non-recognition of the Kreol Morisien language as a medium of instruction at primary school level. The NPCF is the framework within which all primary school teachers and Head Teachers work. By preventing the use of Kreol Morisien language as a medium of instruction in primary schools, or its usage in the examination system, the Mauritian government and the MOE are practicing non-recognition of the linguistic and social identity of the ZEP school learners whose mother-tongue is Kreol. Furthermore, the preferential use of English and French languages as media of instruction instead of the Kreol Morisien language indicates that the MOE encourages ZEP school learners to favour colonial languages over the Kreol Morisien language, which is a symbol of the linguistic and cultural heritage of most ZEP school learners. In doing so, the MOE is perpetuating practices of cultural domination, contributing to the invisibility and disrespect (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002) for the Kreol language and culture, and which can be interpreted as cultural injustice. Similarly, Mills & Gale (2010) described “the cultural capital of others’ homes and communities is significantly under-valued” (p. 58) through the exclusion of the linguistic and cultural competencies of marginalised groups in schools.

Furthermore, the current pedagogical approach in ZEP schools, which focuses upon the teaching of examinable subjects and disregards non-examinable ones, does not enhance cultural justice. This practice, which was undertaken by all the ZEP school class teachers in upper Grades, does not recognise and respect the learning and curriculum needs of the ZEP school learners. Most of the ZEP school learners interviewed wished that they could attend ICT, Arts and Physical Education classes as they did in the lower classes. Although these

non-assessed subjects are found in the official class timetable, they are not always taught in the classroom and, therefore, the holistic education of the learners is ignored. Only one group of ZEP school parents expressed the need to offer non-academic subjects to learners:

“If they organised sports activities for children, it would attract the children. Doing something that they like doing”.

Only two Head Teachers were of the opinion that other subjects should be introduced within the national primary curriculum framework to address the interests, abilities and knowledge (Keddie, 2012) of the ZEP school learners. In these ways, the curriculum needs and interests of the ZEP school learners are made invisible (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Power, 2012) and, therefore, the needs and the aspirations of the ZEP school learners are not recognised (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Fraser, 1997).

Lastly, the current assessment methods in upper Grades do not enhance the cultural justice dimension of Key Practice One. The extended vignettes presented the fact that most ZEP school class teachers and school leaders acknowledged that the CPE exams are not appropriate to evaluate the progress of ZEP school learners. Yet, most class teachers believed that it is the learners who are not capable of sitting for these exams, rather than the test being inappropriate for the learners. In other words, the class teachers have a “deficit” perspective about the academic achievement of ZEP school learners and rarely question the evaluation method. With this “deficit” perspective (Gale & Densmore, 2000; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013) of the ZEP school learners, whom they considered as “below average” and therefore not fit to sit for the CPE exams, the ZEP school class teachers do not consider the evaluation system as the cause of the inequality between those who succeed and those who do not succeed at the CPE exams. This indicates they have an attitude of disrespect towards the ZEP school learners because they perceive those who fail at the exams as not ‘normal’ (Peters & Oliver, 2009).

Associational justice.

Examining the Key Practice of “teaching and learning for educational performance” in ZEP schools from an associational justice dimension led the researcher to analyse in what ways the MOE provides opportunities for political power to the other stakeholders (Head Teachers, teachers, parents, learners and business organisations) so that they can fully participate in the decision making processes of school management as well as the teaching and learning process. In a positive enactment of associational justice, the less powerful groups of stakeholders are not only represented, but they are also empowered to take full responsibility and ownership of the decision-making process. Therefore, the key words which guide the analytical process of Key Practice One from an associational justice dimension are: participation; decision-making power, and political power which means being represented and able to voice concerns.

Most of the curriculum policy makers and ZEP school staff have culturally assimilated the colonisers’ languages which makes them a privileged group having linguistic power, within the education system, which they assert through the use of French and English languages in preference to the Kreol Morisien language. In that context, the sub-dominant group has limited linguistic power, as well as restricted associational power, as they cannot participate in the decision making process concerning the linguistic status of Kreol Morisien in the education system. Those whose mother-tongue is Kreol Morisien language are a minority voice, with restricted power, as opposed to the dominant voice of the policy makers of the MOE and that of the ZEP school staff. As stated by a ZEP school manager:

“...the 20% who find themselves very comfortable in the system, are those who run the State. Why changing what is working...Why change... my system is working for my kids”.

Therefore, the parents and learners, whose mother-tongue is the Kreol Morisien language, neither question the linguistic status of the language nor seek its recognition as the foreign languages have been imposed for several decades as the languages of education. The sub-dominant group have “internalised” their own subordination (Connolly & Healy, 2004) and do not seek to participate in the linguistic debate.

In designing the national primary school curriculum, the MOE does not provide the opportunities for other stakeholders, including ZEP school class teachers, Head Teachers, the school learners and their parents, to contribute to the development of the curriculum. All ZEP school class teachers also criticised the fact that they are not provided with the opportunity to voice their difficulties concerning the curriculum, which is not always appropriate for the ZEP school context and the realities of ZEP schools. All ZEP school class teachers wished that their opinions and views were sought by the MOE on matters such as:

“...the curriculum and the examinations”;

“...the Ministry should seek teachers’ advice when the percentage pass rate at school is low”;

“...before bringing any change in the curriculum or education system”.

Therefore, the associational justice dimension is limited for the ZEP school class teachers who have limited decision making power in the design of a curriculum suitable for their pedagogical realities in ZEP schools.

Table 6.4 summarises the results of the analysis of the first Key Practice of ‘teaching and learning for academic performance measured by examinations’ from the three dimensions of social justice, and indicates the ways in which social justice dimension is enhanced or limited:

Table 6.4.

Summary of Key Practice One from a social justice perspective.

Practices of inclusive education in ZEP schools	Dimensions of social justice		
Distributive justice	Cultural justice	Associational justice	
<p><i>KPI:</i></p> <p><i>Teaching and learning for academic performance measured through examinations</i></p>	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <p>- provides the learners with opportunities to attain academic achievement;</p> <p>-ZEP school staff share, and therefore, distribute, <i>cultural and social resources</i> with ZEP school learners and parents.</p> <p><i>Limited:</i></p> <p>-fee paying private tutoring sessions further marginalises the ZEP school learners and parents at a socio-economic level as they need to find money to pay for these services.</p>	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <p>-non-recognition of Kreol Morisien language in linguistic policy of the national curriculum;</p> <p>-pedagogical approaches which do not recognise the curriculum needs and interests of learners;</p> <p>- current evaluation system which is not respectful of the learning needs of the ZEP school learner and reinforces the teachers' <i>deficit thinking</i> about the learners.</p>	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <p>-non-recognition of Kreol Morisien by educational policy makers and MOE restricts participation of the ZEP school learners and parents in voicing their views about its status in the education system;</p> <p>-no consultation or sharing of decision-making process with ZEP school staff and parents in the development of the national curriculum or evaluation system.</p>

Key Practice Two: Provision of resources.

Key Practice Two addresses the resources provided by the Ministry of Education (MOE) of Mauritius with the aim of alleviating the social and educational inequalities at primary school level. The assistance provided by this practice is here discussed from the distributive, cultural and associational justice dimensions.

Distributive justice.

The examination of Key Practice Two from a distributive justice stance required the identification of the strategies implemented by the MOE through the ZEP school unit to distribute material resources needed by the ZEP school learners to alleviate their socio-economic inequality and contribute to the elimination of the different types of economic “oppression” (Young, 1990). This includes addressing economic marginalisation, exploitation and deprivation in order to facilitate the ZEP school learners’ access to the socio-economic benefits of Mauritius.

The free education provided by the MOE is an example of the distribution of resources which enhances the distributive justice dimension. The implementation of the ZEP school project is a distributive justice initiative as the MOE and other educational stakeholders have joined forces to provide the financial means and resources to address the social and economic disadvantage of the primary school learners attending schools in less developed regions of Mauritius. The majority of the ZEP school parents and learners asserted that the distribution of food was beneficial to the ZEP schools. Similarly, a Cluster Coordinator explained how the ZEP school project helps in providing free educational opportunities to learners affected by socio-economic disadvantages:

“...we believe poor children from [our school] should also benefit from opportunities provided by free education. This conveys a strong message... this is part of my struggle. I ask myself why is it children from Richland or

Bardos³⁷ do not succeed from the opportunities brought about by free education. Just like the Hindus have succeeded. For the Hindu, for him, he has succeeded; free education made it possible...”

This quote from one of the representatives of the upper management of the ZEP school project emphasises two elements concerning the enhancement of cultural justice through the provision of free education. Firstly, free education through ZEP schools can help in alleviating socio-economic poverty, especially through the additional distribution of school materials, food and financial allowances to the ZEP school parents. Secondly, free education provides the possibility of achieving socio-economic and social success for those who aspire to make the most of this free education. Therefore, this study showed that free educational opportunities provided by the Mauritian government, the ‘Food Programme’ and the provision of school resources and materials, as well as the improvement of the infrastructure and environment of ZEP schools, helped to reduce the material deprivation experienced by the ZEP school learners.

Key Practice Two also challenges the perpetuation of economic marginalisation within the less developed regions of the country. According to Gewirtz and Cribb (2002), Fraser’s concepts of economic marginalisation (1997) sheds light on marginalised groups of people who are forced to accept low wages or undesirable jobs or have no opportunities for employment. For the ZEP school learners and their families, the distributive strategy and the educational support provided by the ZEP schools enhance opportunities for employment or better paid jobs. In the words of the Head Teacher of Sunflower School: “to disrupt the vicious circle” of economic and social poverty. As stated earlier, the need for distributive justice within the Mauritian education system indicates the presence of “macrostructural” conditions within society (Kanu, 2007; Keddie, 2012; Rothstein, 2004) which act as barriers

³⁷ Other primary schools part of the ZEP school project

to the socio-economic achievement of ZEP school learners. According to Kanu (2007), the macrostructural conditions are the “structural inequalities and inequities that cause school failure” (Kanu, 2007, p. 24) and, in the case of Mauritius, these conditions were not only related to poverty or social class differences but also to the fact that hundreds of children from less developed regions of Mauritius do not succeed at the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) exams. The ZEP school project aims to challenge the macrostructural conditions within the educational context of Mauritius through organised activities such as: free health checks for the learners; literacy sessions and free remedial education sessions.

The employment of specialist staff is another example of this distributive justice strategy. However, the data also showed that the absence or lack of availability of enough specialist staff prevented the ZEP school learners from benefitting from these other distributive strategies. For instance, the educational psychologist from the MOE cannot carry out the follow-up of the ZEP school learners due to the pressing demands of trying to cover more than 10 schools. The extended vignettes also showed that, out of the four ZEP schools, only one Parent-Mediator was regularly present on the school premises. As for the other Parent-Mediators, the ZEP school parents hardly knew them. This issue will be further discussed in the associational justice dimension.

Cultural justice.

Cultural justice is founded upon a “politics of recognition” (Fraser, 1997; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Power, 2012). By officially recognising the socio-economic disparity between the learners from ZEP schools and non-ZEP schools, the MOE acknowledged the need to distribute material and cultural resources through the ZEP school project. However, the study also showed that, within Key Practice Two, the cultural justice dimension is restricted because of the interactions between the ZEP school staff and the ZEP school learners and parents which, at times, reflect disrespect and cultural domination.

The MOE considers that the support provided by the ZEP school staff and the specialist staff can help the ZEP school learners to understand and benefit from the education system, considered as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, Gale & Densmore, 2000). Across the four ZEP schools, the majority of the staff and parents reported that, despite the efforts invested by the MOE and the ZEP schools to provide these distributive justice strategies, still some learners and parents would not take advantage of these opportunities. Some parents and learners reported that a few of the ZEP school learners would prefer to play by the sea or roam in the neighbourhood instead of attending school. They also stated that a number of parents did not attend the school meetings and were not actively involved in their children's education.

The majority of ZEP school leaders believed that they needed to teach the ZEP school learners and parents about the value of educational opportunities, society's expected norms and beliefs, as well as the importance of good parenting practices. They may have some good intentions in sharing these social and cultural resources and providing advice to the ZEP school learners and parents, but their approach may be perceived by the learners and parents as cultural domination and disrespect, particularly if it is not done in a respectful and collective way. The parental outbursts at two of the Parent-Teacher Association meetings, as well as their frustration and anger as expressed by one of the system leaders and Cluster Coordinators, sheds light on the tension in the interaction between these two cultural groups, that is, the ZEP school staff (CG1³⁸) and the ZEP school learners and their family (CG2³⁹).

The distribution of advice and other social and cultural resources is important (Gale & Densmore, 2000; Mills & Gale, 2010), but it is the approach used by some ZEP school staff members which affects the cultural justice dimension. The sharing of social and cultural resources is a valuable asset (Mills & Gale, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2012) for the enhancement

³⁸ See page 316-317

³⁹ See page 317

of cultural justice in ZEP schools, but the approach taken by the ZEP school staff prevents the complete achievement of this social justice dimension. This approach can lead to a reverse effect whereby the ZEP school learners and parents feel that they do not relate or belong to the ZEP school because they have no possibility of sharing their own values, knowledge and culture.

The lack of respect and recognition of a few members of the ZEP school staff towards the learners and their parents restricts the enhancement of cultural justice (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002), particularly in terms of ethnic and socio-geographic prejudices and, therefore, restricts the opportunities for the enhancement of distributive justice dimension.

According to one of the parents:

“...they [ZEP school class teachers] often say that parents in Beautiful Bay often come to school to argue and fight”.

However, only two out of five school leaders reported the ethnic prejudices of some members of the staff.

Associational justice.

In this section, the researcher looked for the enhancement or restriction of associational justice by examining the participative powers of the different groups of stakeholders and their capacity to contribute to the decision making process of the distribution of resources in ZEP schools, as well as the presence of political powers which interfere.

The associational justice dimension demands that people should participate “fully in decisions which affect the conditions within which they live and act” (Power & Gewirtz, 2001, p. 41). While the distribution of resources such as the ‘Food programme’ was used as a strategy to compensate for the economic marginalisation of the ZEP school learners and their families, no ZEP school Head Teachers or parents were called to participate and discuss the

conceptualisation and implementation of this strategy. Two groups of parents out of the four complained about the hasty decision of implementing the 'Hot Meal' programme and its sudden interruption without communicating the possibilities of its resumption.

The school renovation project in one of the ZEP schools was another example of restricted opportunity for the participation of the ZEP school Head Teacher and parents. The MOE did not provide them with the necessary political power to be further involved in these important decisions. The school renovation project is an example of missed opportunity for the enhancement of associational justice in ZEP schools whereby all stakeholders could have had equal participation and say in the implementation of the project.

It is argued that the representative and participative powers of these important ZEP school stakeholders were restricted due to a lack of consultation between them and the MOE, as well as the executive decision-making at the political and upper management level.

According to Power (2012), associational injustice or the "politics of representation" promotes a "bottom-up" approach as opposed to a "top-down" approach (p. 485). In this case, the MOE has used a "top-down" approach in its distributive justice strategy which has led to several issues: complaints about the quality of the food; food wastage; little accountability and control over the distributive strategy at ZEP school level. It is argued that such approaches to the provision of resources shows the rigid control of political and decision making power of the MOE and the disempowerment of the other stakeholders. Not only are the ZEP school Head Teachers and parents made invisible (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002), but they are subjected to the hierarchical powers and decisions of MOE. This aspect is further discussed in 'Initiating collaboration amongst stakeholders'.

The non-availability of the Parent-Mediator and other specialist staff also limits the realisation of associational justice in ZEP schools as their absence restricts the educational and social opportunities for ZEP school learners and parents. Concerning the limited

attendance of the Parent-Mediator, one Head Teacher stated: “We should have recruited Parent mediators for individual schools on a full-time basis...Don’t send me a Parent mediator intervening once per month to try to solve absenteeism issues, this cannot work”. It is argued that not having an active Parent-Mediator means that the voice of the ZEP school learners and parents cannot be heard at the level of the ZEP school management and the ZEP school unit and, therefore, there is no “representation” for them (Power, 2012, p. 485).

Table 6.5 summarises the main issues arising from this analysis of Key Practice Two, ‘provision of resources’, from the three dimensions of social justice:

Table 6.5.

Summary of Key Practice Two from a social justice perspective.

Practices of inclusive education in ZEP schools	Distributive justice	Cultural justice	Associational justice
<i>KP2: Distribution of resources</i>	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ZEP school project contributes to the alleviation of the socio-economic difficulties of ZEP school learners by providing them with access to free educational opportunities; -the additional resources and support challenge the perpetuation of social marginalisation and macrostructural conditions in society affecting ZEP school learners and family; -additional staff reduces the social and educational hardships of ZEP school learners. <p><i>Limited:</i></p>	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <p><i>Limited:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -cultural domination and disrespect of ZEP school staff towards ZEP school learners and parents in the distribution of <i>social and cultural resources</i>. 	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <p><i>Limited:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -no <i>representation</i> and consultation with less powerful stakeholders for the distribution of resources; -disempowerment of less powerful stakeholders due to <i>Top-Down</i> approach & rigid control of decision making power of the MOE in the distribution of resources.

Key Practice Three: Creating and maintaining relationships.

This section examines the relationships amongst the different ZEP school stakeholders from a social justice perspective. The researcher looked for the kinds of interactions amongst the different groups of participants and the role played by power in these relationships, as well as significant tensions and conflicts arising from these relationships and interactions.

Distributive justice.

In analysing Key Practice Three from a distributive justice stance, the researcher took into consideration how the relationships and the interactions between the different groups of stakeholders promote the distribution of goods and resources to the ZEP school learners and their families. Through these relationships, the researcher also examined aspects which contributed to, or prevented, the alleviation of the socio-economic difficulties of the ZEP school learners and their neighbourhood, as well as the distribution of social and cultural resources.

The data showed that some of the classroom practices such as collaborative learning, the caring relationships of some of the class teachers, as well as discipline in the school, can distribute learning opportunities and academic achievement which contributes to socio-economic progress. The ZEP school learners not only have the opportunity to progress academically but they can also benefit from the distribution of these social and cultural resources. For example, one of the Cluster Coordinators described the ways that ZEP school parents can learn about these social and cultural resources:

“This is what I tell to students as well as parents: we need to have a common vision... you need to earn your living...Teaching my child some ordinary everyday tasks: such as washing one’s hands, taking a shower, to be clean

before coming to school, to have clean and well-combed hair...These ordinary aspects of life...”

According to CC1, both ZEP school parents and learners can learn about these social skills which can facilitate the relationships between them and the school staff.

Similarly, the data also revealed that some ZEP school staff members freely shared, with the ZEP school parents, recommendations and strategies to better support their children in the learning process. In other words, the ZEP school parents are offered some practical ‘insider’s knowledge’ of how to find their way through the education system which can enhance the educational achievement of the ZEP school learners. This practice is supported by Mills & Gale (2010) who stated that “exposure to the educative effects of the cultural capital of dominant groups is necessary for success at school” (p. 75).

Cultural justice.

Key Practice Three was examined through the cultural justice lens to identify features which restrict or enhance the presence of cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). The researcher identified the perceptions, interactions and exchanges in ZEP schools which enhanced the recognition, respect and appreciation amongst the stakeholders or caused marginalisation and stigmatisation. The researcher focussed upon the relationships between the ZEP school staff and the ZEP school learners and parents, but also took into account the social and cultural context of the Mauritian society which influences these relationships and the achievement of cultural justice.

Most of the teachers and school leaders of the ZEP schools belonged to a middle class group (CG1) having significant socio-economic power. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Mills & Gale, 2010; Nieto & Bode, 2012). Not only are they educated, but they also have an insider knowledge of the education system and can make the most of this knowledge transmitting it

to their own children. This insider knowledge is part of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). On the other hand, CG2 is composed of ZEP school learners and parents and belongs to the lower class/low middle class and are mostly from a Creole background. The ZEP school parents and learners aspire to educational achievement but have little knowledge of how the education system works. This last point was raised by one of the system leaders who recognised that some of the people “feel alienated within this system”.

The ZEP school staff (CG1) represents the culturally dominant group because it has social and economic power and has succeeded within the education system. The ZEP school learners and parents (CG2) are the sub-dominant group which has neither social class power nor the knowledge to be successful within the system. The presence of these cultural groups and its impact on their relationships and interactions was apparent in this research.

It has been established that both the MOE and the ZEP school staff acknowledged the socio-economic, cultural and environmental context of ZEP schools and their neighbourhoods. The ZEP school policy document (MOE, 2002) recognised the presence of “children living mostly in less developed regions” as well as the “social inequalities” (p. 1). Similarly, in the previous chapter, it was shown that the ZEP school staff (CG1) is aware of, and tried to be understanding about, the unique social and cultural realities and difficulties of the ZEP school learners and parents. Therefore, it is argued that this recognition of the realities of the ZEP school learners, as well as the fact that they face socio-economic disadvantages, enhances the cultural justice dimension in ZEP schools as these realities were “made visible” and recognised (Fraser, 1997, p. 14).

However, it was also seen that many ZEP school staff perceived the ZEP school learners and their family structures, lifestyle and values as ‘abnormal’ and even ‘wrong’. Cultural justice can be enhanced if the sub-dominant groups are perceived and considered without social stereotypes or misrepresentations (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). In

this study, the ZEP school staff misrecognises (Fraser, 1997; Power, 2012) and disrespects the identity of the ZEP school learners and their families. Such perceptions also affect the relationship between ZEP school staff and learners/parents as well as the approach to learning and teaching in ZEP schools. The misrecognition of the ZEP school learners and their family by the ZEP school staff also reveals cultural domination in the deficit way that the majority of the ZEP school staff described the ZEP school learners (Gale & Densmore, 2000; Nieto & Bode, 2010):

“Very few parents are concerned with the academic aspect of their wards.

They consider schools as day care and that’s all”;

“Few parents are keen for the academic aspect of their children”.

Through a deficit perspective and misrecognition, the school staff develop an attitude of low expectations (Keddie, 2012; Nieto & Bode, 2010) towards the learners and their parents, thinking that they do not value education. The low expectations of the ZEP school staff have an impact on their relationships with the learners in class or in parent meetings. Therefore, the culturally dominant attitude of the ZEP school staff, as well as their deficit perspective and low expectations of the potential of the ZEP school learners, act as barriers to the enhancement of cultural justice through Key Practice Three.

The cultural domination of the ZEP school staff members further affects the relationships between the ZEP school learners and staff because the staff does not value and respect the knowledge and culture that these stakeholders can bring to school. For instance, one of the parents stated that some of the children “do not find their place” in class and that the school does not know how to develop the “potentials” of the learners. It is argued that cultural justice is restricted in many ZEP schools because the ZEP school staff members do not recognise and value the culture and knowledge of the ZEP school learners. Furthermore, the lack of cultural understanding of the Mauritian society with regards to the ZEP school

neighbourhood prevents cultural justice for these schools. Mauritian society looks down upon the geographical environment of the ZEP schools and attaches stereotypes to their neighbourhoods and the people. Such damaging perceptions are nurtured within the Mauritian society which has categorised some areas and localities of the country as 'dangerous' or 'rough'. Consequently, not only do the ZEP school staff members bring such societal values into their relationships with the ZEP school learners and parents, but they also perpetuate these negative opinions about the learners and their community, particularly if they are faced with some disruptive behaviours from the learners or frustrated parents.

Ethnic prejudices against the Creole ethnic group also affect the enhancement of cultural justice in ZEP schools. In the Mauritian society, the Creoles are often routinely maligned as lazy and present-oriented (Laville, 2000) and stereotypically represented (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). It is also often heard in society that it is mostly Creole learners who attend ZEP schools. That fact was acknowledged by the Truth and Justice Commission Report (2011) which stated: "...the deprived zones of the country where ZEP schools have been set up...have important conglomerations of families of both indentured and slave descent but the latter are more predominant" (p. 297). A similar comment was made in this study by one of the Head Teachers who associated the Creole community to the Roman Catholic religion and stated: "...the main priority for Roman Catholics living in Sunflower area, or elsewhere, is to have fun. They like to eat, drink and party... education will come later". Only one ZEP school teacher mentioned that she considered that the ZEP school practised social justice as "most children are from the Creole ethnic background and that they are helped". No other teaching staff referred to societal prejudices against the Creole ethnic group.

Therefore, since some of the ZEP school learners are subject to ethnic stereotypes from some of the ZEP school staff members, it is seen that it affects the relationship between

staff and learners. The deficit perspectives from some of the staff members highlight the presence of three factors contributing to cultural injustice, namely, disrespect, non-recognition and cultural domination.

Associational justice.

The analysis of Key Practice Three from an associational perspective led to the identification of practices which supported or inhibited the equal participation of the groups of stakeholders in the decision making process of the ZEP schools. The researcher also identified the power interplay in the different relationships by examining: who had most power; in what ways the MOE delegates power in its relationship with the other stakeholders; and whether the ZEP school parents and teachers are empowered through their relationships.

The MOE has delegated part of its decision making power to the ZEP school project through the ZEP school unit, but the resources are provided by the Zone Directorate to whom the ZEP school staff is accountable. Most of the ZEP school class teachers and Head Teachers stated that they are never consulted in the decision making process and are simply provided with instructions from the MOE with the expectation of immediate compliance. A Head Teacher expressed his dissatisfaction with this type of relationship: “We lead according to how the MOE wants us to” and, therefore, he works according to a “protocol” crafted by the MOE.

In the MOE-ZEP school staff relationship, the ZEP school class teachers and Head Teachers have the least power, whether it is in the decision making process or in their daily relationships with the MOE. However, very few ZEP school staff challenged this type of relationship as it is the prevailing attitude in all the Ministries of Mauritius. For instance, no ZEP school class teachers responded to the question which asked in which instances they shared the decision making process with the MOE. Therefore, the unequal power

relationship between the ZEP school staff and the MOE restricts the staff's involvement, participation and empowerment as they are under the rigid control of the MOE.

As argued in the section on cultural justice, the ZEP school parents and learners are not recognised at meetings where the ZEP school parents and learners are in situations of “powerlessness” (Young, 2011, p. 56). Their voices are not valued and they feel subject to labelling and a deficit perspective (Nieto & Bode, 2012) which restricts both their power and their willingness to be politically involved in the decision making. The ZEP school parents are in an unequal power relationship with the MOE which does not enable them to be participative or empowered.

Table 6.6 summarises the main issues:

Table 6.6.

Summary of Key Practice Three from a social justice perspective.

<i>Practices of inclusive education in ZEP schools</i>	<i>Distributive justice</i>	<i>Cultural justice</i>	<i>Associational justice</i>
<i>KP3: Creating & maintaining relationships</i>	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <p>-creation of relationships between some of the ZEP school staff and learners and parents has led to the staff being able to share their knowledge of the education system and other social and cultural resources with the parents and learners.</p> <p><i>Limited:</i></p>	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <p>-attempts by ZEP school staff to understand the cultural and social realities of ZEP school learners and family through a sense of care.</p> <p><i>Limited:</i></p> <p>-misrecognition and disrespect of the cultural capital of ZEP school learners and parents by the ZEP school staff; -deficit perspectives of ZEP school staff about the learners, their families and neighbourhood; -societal and ethnic prejudices against the ZEP school learners, families and community.</p>	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <p>-constrained and hierarchical relationship between MOE and the ZEP school staff due to lack of recognition of the ZEP school staff and resulting in unequal power relationships; -parents are disempowered and disengaged relationship with the ZEP school staff which acts as a culturally dominant group.</p>

Key Practice Four: Initiating collaboration amongst stakeholders.

Key Practice Four is about collaboration between the ZEP school staff, parents, learners, community-based organisations and the corporate sector which helps in creating a “collective focus” (MOE, 2002, p. 6) with a view to achieving the Key Performance indicators (KPI) set for the ZEP school.

Distributive justice.

In examining Key Practice Four from a distributive justice perspective, the researcher identified some of the strategies used to “reduce the obstacles caused by socio-economic inequalities through either eliminating economic barriers or reallocating resources to redress the deficit” (Power, 2012, p. 475). As the achievement of distributive justice is enacted through the absence of economic marginalization, deprivation or exploitation (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002), the researcher looked for aspects which reduced the socio-economic hardships of the ZEP school learners and enhanced their opportunities to access economic independence through the collaborative strategies of the ZEP school stakeholders.

The main collaborative strategy of the ZEP school was meetings with stakeholders through the formal PTA Meetings and other school improvement meetings. The data revealed that the ZEP school management, parents and local business representatives often held meetings to discuss issues such as school renovation projects, fund raising events and strategies as well as general information about the school progress. Through these meetings ZEP school staff and parents work together to improve the physical environment, infrastructure and resources of the school. This common goal amongst the stakeholders advances the distributive justice agenda as it seeks to reduce the material deprivation of the ZEP schools through the school improvement projects. It also seeks to address the economic marginalisation of the school by fundraising which can assist the school financially. Even though the MOE largely contributes to the maintenance and renovation of the school

buildings, the collaboration of the ZEP school stakeholders can be seen in their commitment towards the welfare of the school.

Through these collaborative meetings, the ZEP school staff also shared with the parents the social and cultural resources (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). This distribution of cultural resources (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Pomerantz, Moorman & Litwack, 2007) through the collaboration between ZEP school staff-parents is very important for the ZEP school parents as it enables them to establish and maintain a relationship with the ZEP school class teachers and help their children in their educational achievement, thereby distributing access to academic success (Keddie, 2012).

The presence of representatives from the local corporate sector also improves the social networks (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) of the ZEP school parents, which can lead to socio-economic opportunities. This issue was raised by one Head Teacher who stated that several former learners of the school were now employed by the local hotels.

Through the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme, the business organisations not only offer material resources, funds and other donations to the ZEP schools but they are involved in improving the educational opportunities of the ZEP school learners through scholarships and remedial education projects. This collaborative practice helps to “eliminate the economic barriers” (Power, 2012, p. 475) of the ZEP schools and their learners who can aspire to pursue their studies.

Cultural justice.

In examining Key Practice Four from a cultural justice perspective, the researcher looked for aspects linked to recognition and respect between the different stakeholders and the absence of cultural domination. The researcher was also concerned with the impact of collaborative practices and interactions as a way of enhancing or restricting the achievement of cultural justice in the ZEP schools.

Open Days, school fêtes or parental participation in school renovation projects are collaborative strategies which foster interactions and exchanges between the school stakeholders. These interactions, allowing for the sharing of understandings, are the foundation of recognition and respect and trust between stakeholders - elements which are fundamental in establishing cultural justice in ZEP schools. It is argued that this type of informal collaborative practice enhances the achievement of cultural justice as, not only can ZEP school parents and learners share their knowledge within the school, but they also have the opportunity to challenge the “deficit perspective” of some ZEP school staff about ZEP schools. In this way, cultural justice can be enacted through the collaboration of the ZEP school staff and the parents and learners.

The collaborative practices such as Annual General Assemblies of PTA meetings, or class meetings between the ZEP school parents and the school staff, also challenge the stereotypes that ZEP school parents are not interested or involved in their children’s education. The data revealed that the ZEP school staff interpreted the physical presence of ZEP school parents at school as their participation and commitment to their children’s education. The ZEP school parents who were interviewed agreed with the views of the staff and considered that it is their responsibility to attend school meetings as it showed their willingness to be involved and engaged in their children’s studies. It is through the regular participation of parents in these meetings, as well as their commitment to interact with the ZEP school staff, which facilitates the sharing of cultural and social resources. As stated by Mills and Gale (2010): “cultural capital cannot be transmitted instantaneously; that its accumulation requires an investment, above all, of time” (p. 43). Therefore, regular parental participation at school meetings and events is an example of collaborative practice between ZEP school staff and parents which enhances the cultural justice agenda, as they provide opportunities for both ZEP school parents and staff to interact with and understand each

other. In other words, the ZEP school staff recognise and respect ZEP school parents who aspire to collaborate and are fully involved in the school matters and the learning process of their children.

Associational justice.

The analysis of Key Practice Four from an associational perspective involved looking for aspects which enhance or impede the participative power of the stakeholders, as well as the representation of their respective voices in the decision making process of the ZEP schools. The interplay of power in the collaborative process amongst the ZEP school stakeholders was also examined.

According to the ZEP school policy document (MOE, 2002), the ZEP schools are encouraged to invite the participation of other stakeholders, namely ZEP school parents, local business organisations and community-based organisations, so that they can work as a collective force. The data from the four ZEP schools showed that there are two main types of collaboration: between the MOE and the ZEP school, and between the ZEP school leaders, the parents and local business organisations.

The study revealed that ZEP school teachers and school leaders have limited participating power in the decision making process of the MOE with regards to management decisions and curriculum needs of the learners. The Zone Directorate oversees the implementation of the national curriculum framework and is responsible for the allocation of human resources and infrastructure of each primary school. The leaders of the ZEP school unit oversee the implementation of the project but the ZEP school staff is employed by, and accountable to, the Zone Directorate. The decision making process in the ZEP school project is shared between the Zone Directorate and the ZEP unit, but the Zone Directorate has greater power.

Two of the four ZEP school Head Teachers explained that they were in the middle of the power tension between the MOE and the ZEP school unit, and complained about the difficulty of leading the school when decisions are imposed by the MOE. The ZEP school class teachers stated that their opinions were never sought by the MOE and that they were also expected to abide by decisions which were made by the ministry.

The relationship of the ZEP school staff with the MOE is more coercive (Carspecken, 1996) than collaborative and their lack of recognition and representation, and therefore powerlessness, at the level of the MOE prevents the achievement of associational justice. Although the MOE aspired to achieve “decentralisation” which would enable “immediate actions at the school level” (MOE, 2002, p. 7), the Ministry of Education, in fact, keeps rigid control over the decision making process which neither empowers the ZEP schools’ management nor encourages it to be innovative in the leadership of ZEP schools.

Lastly, the collaboration between ZEP school management and local businesses, community leaders and NGOs is part of the daily practice of ZEP schools but the participative power of the locally-based stakeholders in the meetings is restricted to the level of their presence, sponsorships and other financial help, particularly in the three government schools. Most of the Head Teachers were reluctant, or felt restricted, in allowing the community leaders and NGOs to be further involved in the school as they needed the approval of the MOE. However, one of the schools had a strong collaboration with the local NGO which helped in remedial education. Therefore, the ZEP schools collaborate with the local businesses, community leaders and NGOs which are represented in the meetings but are not actively involved in the decision making process of the ZEP schools.

The main issues arising from this discussion of Key Practice Four from a social justice perspective is summarised in Table 6.7:

Table 6.7.

Summary of Key Practice Four from a social justice perspective.

Practice of an inclusive education in ZEP schools	Distributive justice	Cultural justice	Associational justice
<i>KP4:</i> <i>Initiating collaboration amongst stakeholders</i>	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <p>-formal meetings, gatherings and fund-raising activities are collaborative strategies which reduce the material <i>deprivation</i> of ZEP schools and their learners to enhance their educational opportunities.</p> <p><i>Limited:</i></p>	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <p>-informal meetings and events facilitate sharing of cultures between both cultural groups and eliminate negative assumptions about both groups;</p> <p>- presence of local companies can improve the social networking of ZEP school learners and parents.</p> <p><i>Limited:</i></p> <p>-staff's <i>disrespect</i> and <i>non-recognition</i> of the cultural knowledge of ZEP school parents in formal meetings and gatherings.</p>	<p><i>Enhanced:</i></p> <p>ZEP school management encourage parental involvement through existing structures.</p> <p><i>Limited:</i></p> <p>-voice of ZEP school staff stronger than the voice of parents at formal meetings;</p> <p>-rigid control of decision making by MOE which disempower both ZEP school staff and parents;</p> <p>- participative power of the locally-based community leaders and companies is restricted to the level of their presence and sponsorships of activities.</p>

Chapter Summary

This chapter firstly presented the results of a cross-case analysis process which identified the perceptions of the ZEP school staff about social justice and identified that the understanding appeared to be limited to the ideas of equality and equity to be achieved through the provision of resources. In order to further investigate how their inclusive practices might address a broader understanding of social justice, the Key Practices of an inclusive education, identified in Chapter Five, were then analysed through the lens of Gewirtz and Cribb's (2002) plural conceptions of social justice, namely distributive justice, cultural justice and associational justice.

This analysis revealed that the Key Practices of inclusive education had elements which enhanced the achievement of social justice in the ZEP schools, particularly in the area of distributive justice (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). However, a number of limitations were identified at the level of the enhancement of cultural and associational justice which led to a partial approach to an inclusive education for social justice.

The next chapter synthesises this discussion of an inclusive education in ZEP schools from a social justice perspective in order to identify the main findings of this study. These main findings are then discussed in light of their implications, after which some recommendations are offered.

Chapter 7 Discussion of Main Findings and Recommendations

The purpose of this chapter is to identify, present and discuss the main findings of this research study in response to the question:

“What are the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools of Mauritius?”

The establishment and discussion of the findings lead to initial recommendations for the achievement of an inclusive education for social justice in Mauritius. A suggested model for the understanding and “re-visioning” (Slee, 2011, p.162) of an inclusive education from a transformative social justice perspective is then presented. The initial recommendations are then refined through consideration of this model leading to suggested recommendations that address both policy and practice from the level of the Ministry of Education (MOE) to the ZEP school classrooms.

Finding One

The previous chapters presented the perceptions of the ZEP school communities about an inclusive education (Chapter Five) and social justice (Chapter Six).

These perceptions are summarised in Table 7.1:

Table 7.1.

Identified themes related to the perceptions of an inclusive education and social justice.

Perceptions of an inclusive education	Perceptions of social justice
<i>Attending to learners' diversity.</i>	<i>Social equality within a diverse community.</i>
<i>Aspiring to integrate the ZEP school learners into mainstream education.</i>	<i>Equality in, and through education.</i>
<i>Importance of a welcoming and caring relationship.</i>	

It has been established in Chapter Five that the perceptions of the school staff and system leaders about an inclusive education are founded upon their aspiration to attend to the diversity of needs of ZEP school learners with the aim of integrating them into the education system in order to achieve success within it. This educational integration into the system can then provide the learners with the opportunity to achieve social, educational and economic equality within society in alignment with the identified conceptualisation of social justice of the ZEP school communities. Similarly, the participating ZEP school parents and learners aspired to achieve academic success through the support of the ZEP schools and their staff. In other words, the ZEP school communities hope that, through the ZEP school project, the learners and their families achieve educational and social equality in the education system and the Mauritian society. Therefore, the first finding of this study is:

Finding One:

ZEP school communities aspire to achieve social and educational equality for the learners and their families by integrating the learners into the education system through the ZEP school project.

Finding One identifies an intertwining relationship between an inclusive education and social justice through the notions of integration and equality.

As explained in the literature review (Chapter Two), the notion of integration usually means the physical integration of learners with special needs into the mainstream schooling system and structures (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010; Polat, 2011), while an inclusive education calls for a change in the social and educational structures enabling learners with special needs to fully participate. It was found in this study that integration is understood as providing a place for the ZEP school learners within the Mauritian education system. The ZEP school staff and system leaders considered integration as a “tool, mechanism, or a measure” (Tannenbergerova, 2013, p. 552) achieved through the ZEP school project, which acknowledges the special needs of the learners and provides the supportive structures which can help them to participate in the same way as other Mauritian school learners in the education system.

The concept of equality was “conventionally” (Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 150) understood by the ZEP school staff and system leaders as the equal treatment of people, irrespective of their social or ethnic backgrounds, as well as the provision of equal opportunities which can end the social marginalisation and educational exclusion of the ZEP school learners. The notion of equality of opportunities and outcomes was also associated with the concept of social justice and the notion of equity, and aimed to be achieved through the ZEP school project as an example of a compensatory strategy. According to the MOE and the ZEP school staff, such additional support to ZEP schools is expected to offset the presence of educational inequality, as judged by the low academic performance of learners from less developed regions. Equality was also understood as equality of outcome (Tikly & Barrett, 2011), that is, the ZEP school staff and system leaders considered that equality for the ZEP school learners meant success at the CPE exams which are the national endorsement

of achievement at primary school level in the Mauritian education system and society. In other words, Finding One establishes that social justice is perceived by the ZEP school staff as equality and the achievement of an equitable education through the ZEP school project. This finding about equality and equity as the underlying beliefs of the concept of social justice confirms the literature around this concept (Connell, 1993; Rawls, 1972; Smith, 2012).

Therefore, according to the ZEP school communities, the notion of an equitable or a socially just education is realised by integrating the ZEP school learners into the education system. This conceptualisation of an inclusive education for social justice, which is founded upon the notions of integration and equality, highlights the good intentions of the Mauritian government of challenging marginalisation in education by implementing the ZEP school project. Therefore, in the context of this study, Finding One suggests that the ZEP school project can be considered as an accomplishment of the Mauritian education system in its aspiration to eliminate educational and social marginalisation and achieve an inclusive education for social justice.

Furthermore, Finding One indicates that even if the notion of integration does not have the desired theoretical and practical impact as an inclusive education, as it does not change the deeply rooted structures causing segregation and inequality in education, integration is a positive attempt to provide opportunities for the ZEP school learners to participate in the mainstream education system. Therefore, an initial recommendation arising from this discussion is:

1. The MOE continues to promote the ideal of challenging exclusion and marginalisation in the education system by ensuring that each child is provided with the resources to have a place within in it, and is adequately supported to achieve academic performance.

Finding Two

The results of the analyses presented in Chapters Five and Six revealed that the ability of ZEP schools to achieve integration as well as social and educational equality for their learners is constrained by educational structures and school practices which are, in turn, constrained by the perceptions of the participants with regard to the purpose and practice of schooling.

In this study, the concept of integration is established upon the normalisation⁴⁰ and standardisation of the ZEP school learners and it goes against the notion of inclusive education (Armstrong et al., 2010; Slee, 2011; Thomazet, 2009). Similarly, the concept of equality is founded upon a narrow understanding of social justice focused on compensation and retributive justice. Therefore, the second finding of this study is:

Finding Two:

ZEP school staff have a partial understanding of an inclusive education for social justice and this leads to its limited enactment.

These partial perceptions of the ZEP school staff about integration and equality are now further explored.

The concept of integration is established upon the normalisation and standardisation of the ZEP school learners.

“ZEP schools are schools with more children who are low achievers compared to normal schools” (A ZEP school class teacher).

The ZEP school staff and system leaders stated their aim of ensuring that ZEP schools become like the “normal schools” of Mauritius through education, but they also recognised the diversity of needs and realities of the ZEP school learners and their school neighbourhoods. While part of this understanding resonates with a social justice approach

⁴⁰ Concept similar to Ainscow, Booth & Dyson’s “homogenous normality” (2006, p. 42) which is associated to assimilation as it forces learners with diverse needs to adapt to the system.

involving “diversity”, “integration” and “recognition” (Bentley-Williams & Morgan, 2011; Kaur, 2012; Keddie, 2012; Nieto & Bode, 2012), the findings of the study indicated that the ZEP school staff recognise the diversity of needs and individual differences of the learners, however, it is from a *deficit perspective* (Keddie, 2012; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013) and do not aim to develop and celebrate these differences. These findings reflect Mittler’s (2000) descriptions of education policies and practices which often operate within a “defect” (p. 3) model of the child so as to:

...help the child to fit the system and to benefit from what the school has to offer. There is no assumption that the school needs to be changed to accommodate any particular child or to respond to a greater range of diversity in its student population (p. 3).

This study’s findings establish that the approach adopted by the ZEP school staff with regards to the diversity of needs of the learners is about “normalization of difference” (Slee, 2001, p. 173) which aims at ensuring that the learners integrate into the education system without disturbing it. One of the reasons for such limited understanding of diversity and difference is that the ZEP school staff work within what Norwich (2008) described as a “dilemmatic framework” (p. 302) in regard to the practice of an inclusive education. On one hand, the ZEP school class teachers are confronted with the mixed-abilities of their learners as well as their emotional and social needs and, on the other, an education system which is “...dominated by competition, benchmarking and target-driven accountability” (Bhopal & Shain, 2014, p. 646). This means that the ZEP school class teachers are forced to ignore the individual social and educational needs of the learners and are more preoccupied with integrating them into the competitive education system.

Similarly, the study revealed that the majority of the ZEP school staff was critical of the CPE exams which they considered as too difficult for the ZEP school learners. However,

they also thought that these exams were an adequate evaluation system which can promote equality of academic performance of all learners – both ZEP and non-ZEP school learners. This paradoxical understanding of the role of assessment methods in achieving an inclusive education for social justice highlights the primary concern of the ZEP school staff: to ensure that the ZEP school learners adapt to the education system and succeed within this system. Learners who can't succeed at the CPE exams are perceived by most staff as the problem within the education system, and not the pedagogy or the evaluation method. By adhering to an evaluation method which does not allow room for the educational and social development of the individual learner, the Mauritian education system and its staff promote an exam-oriented education system which endorses elitism and the exclusion of those who fail. Once again, such an understanding and approach to evaluation in the context of an inclusive education for social justice highlights the staff's focus upon standardisation and normalisation (Peters & Oliver, 2009) of the ZEP school learners.

Such approaches to inclusive education for social justice distort or misrecognise⁴¹ (Fraser, 1997; 2008) the principles of an authentic approach to inclusive education, and make it “a synonym for assimilation and normalization” (Slee, 2011, p. 174). An authentic inclusive education challenges normality or normalisation of learners (Gale & Densmore, 2000; Polat, 2011; Slee, 2011). In the case of this study, the ZEP school learners may be perceived as being included as they are given free access to education and receive additional resources to aspire achieving educational equality. However, the ZEP school learners are also excluded as, within the Mauritian education system, the deficit thinking of some staff members, as well as the elitist and inequitable evaluation system, do not truly enable the learners to fully participate in the education system. According to Young (2000), such a

⁴¹ Fraser (1997) considered that misrecognition is embedded in cultural domination and restricted participation in social life.

situation is known as “internal exclusion” which involves people lacking the “effective opportunity” to participate fully in diverse settings (p. 55).

Similarly, Slee further argued that the uniqueness or difference of the learners cannot, and should not, be sacrificed or ‘normalised’ so as to “enable schools to remain the same” (p. 173). By forcing the learners and their parents to operate within the system’s standards of normality (Gay, 2000), the education system and ZEP school staff perpetuate the trend within the educational system which is to blame the learners’ background and label it as culturally deficient (Gale & Densmore, 2000; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013). The ZEP school communities may declare their aspirations to attend to the diversity of learners and recognise their differences, but their construction of integration is based on a deficit perspective of the learners and is not critical of the structural forces of the system. Therefore, their understanding of the concept of inclusive education is partial and does not reflect the authentic inclusive education being argued for in this thesis.

Moreover, the difficulties of the ZEP school staff when they do attempt to implement an inclusive and socially just education in a performance-driven education reinforces the observations made by Hardy and Woodcock (2015) about the vital role of the education system in ensuring that the different needs of the learners are recognised, valued and catered for: “Respect for difference can only be cultivated in educational systems if those responsible for enacting educational practices are supported by consistent and coherent policy messages which value diversity and challenge deficit” (p. 162). This quote emphasises the importance of national education policies in articulating authentic inclusive education goals and providing the adequate support to inform and guide recommendations for practices at school level. In the words of Keddie, Gowlett, Mills, Monk and Renshaw (2013), “...working with ‘difference’ means working with complex, non-stereotypical and dynamic identity constructions” (p. 94).

From these considerations, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The MOE reconceptualises its thinking about the educational goals at primary school level in order to broaden its vision of educational success from an academic performance focus to a more holistic vision of education and achievement.
2. The MOE establishes new educational structures and a culture which embraces the learners' diversity by recognising and developing each learner's potential without the need for them to "fit into" the mainstream.
3. The ZEP schools adopt a critical stance with regard to their current pedagogical approach in order to develop a learning culture which values the learner's uniqueness and cultural strengths.

The concept of equality is founded only upon compensation and retributive justice.

"All citizens must have the same right and privilege to have the right to education; a job according to meritocracy as well as facilities and amenities." (A ZEP school class teacher).

Finding One showed that the core perception of the ZEP school staff about social justice is related to equality as their understanding was focussed upon aspiring to achieve equality of opportunities, treatment and consideration irrespective of social class, ethnic or religious background. This understanding of equality resonates with Hay and Beyers' (2011) principle of "simple equality" (p. 238) which states that all individuals have equal needs and rights to education and that they should be provided with equal resources. Moreover, Finding One also established that in order to achieve this aspired equality, the MOE mainly uses compensation with the aim of realising an equitable education system through the ZEP school

project. Simple equality and the distribution of resources are forms of distributive justice which are often supported through a compensatory strategy.

Although the ZEP school project is considered as a strategy for equitable education, the school project on its own does not provide “the real possibility of an equality of outcomes” (Nieto & Bode, 2012, p. 9) since the dominant educational structures and some of the ZEP school practices act as barriers to an equality of outcomes for the ZEP school learners. For example, the language of instruction or the exam-focussed pedagogical practices are some of the identified barriers to the aspired equality of outcomes. In understanding equality and equity as the main attributes of social justice, the ZEP school staff adhere to the vision of the MOE that, by addressing the economic disadvantage of the ZEP school learners, the children can be expected to attain the same high academic achievement as non-ZEP school learners, in other words, a parity of status amongst the primary school learners of Mauritius. Yet, this study’s findings showed that despite the aspiration to achieve equality and the distributive approach, the ZEP school learners are confronted with cultural and associational injustice, at school and within the education system, which prevent the achievement of this parity of status.

In its use of a simple equality approach to an inclusive education for social justice, the MOE focuses upon the material and economic inequalities of the ZEP school learners. The social and cultural difficulties of the neighbourhood are acknowledged but are not adequately addressed, and the barriers posed by the educational structures and policies are not acknowledged. Evidence from this study established that, despite the distributive justice approach, there were still various “forms and contents of exclusion” (Operti & Belalcazar, 2008, p. 118). For instance, several participants of the study considered that equality and equity are not achieved in the ZEP school project because of societal prejudices against the ZEP schools and their learners, as well as the “low expectations” (Keddie, 2012, p. 32) of

some ZEP school staff in relation to the learners. The presence of stigmatisation and labelling of ZEP schools within the Mauritian society and the MOE is evidence of the culturally exclusionary perceptions and practices about the ZEP schools. This finding concurs with Panday and Li Xu (2013) who found that labelling and negative branding were one of the weaknesses of the ZEP school project. Therefore, the achievement of equality is undermined by the lack of culturally responsive (Banks and Banks, 2013; Gay, 2000; Keddie, 2012) approaches and practices within ZEP schools despite the distribution of resources.

It is further argued that the ZEP school project, considered as a compensatory strategy, is used by the MOE and the ZEP school staff to achieve an equal status or a type of “normalization” (Hay & Beyers, 2011, p. 238) which can help the ZEP school learner to be part of the “mainstream” (Gale & Densmore, 2000; Riddell, 2009, p. 289). This understanding of ‘compensation to attain equal achievement’ is a partial endeavour to realise an inclusive education for social justice and one which Mills (2012) describes as a “deficit model of social justice” (p. 273). Such an approach to equality aims at ‘normalising’ (Hay & Beyers, 2011; Mills, 2012) the ZEP schools so that they become the same (Cuervo, 2012; Mills, 2012) as non-ZEP schools reflecting Riddell’s (2009) description of “redistribution emphasising sameness” (p. 285). The implication of this culture of ‘normalisation’ is that the contextual and cultural realities are not taken into consideration and there is the desire to impose a “cultural homogeneity” (Operti & Belalcazar, 2008, p. 118) which is not only unachievable, but also stigmatises the ZEP schools.

Furthermore, Finding Two demonstrates that the approach used by the ZEP school communities to achieve an inclusive education for social justice through the ZEP school project operates in an affirmative/redistribution framework (Fraser, 1997; 2008). This framework promotes group differentiation and misrecognition and contributes to Fraser’s notion of the redistribution-recognition dilemma (1997; 2008) and Gewirtz and Cribb’s

identification of tensions (2002) between the three dimensions of social justice. Confirming Fraser's (1997; 2008) observation that "affirmative redistribution can stigmatise the disadvantaged, adding the insult of misrecognition to the injury of deprivation" (p. 33), this study's findings showed that the ZEP school project is an example of the redistribution-recognition dilemma because, as shown in Chapter Six, the ZEP school project is founded on the group differentiation and integration of ZEP schools and is also subjected to misrecognition within the education system and the Mauritian society which consider these schools as primary schools of a lower status.

Therefore, this study establishes that, operating within an affirmative redistribution framework, the ZEP school staff have a partial understanding of inclusive education for social justice which leads to its limited enactment. The notion of integration is about seeking the normalisation of the ZEP school learners which devalues the notions of diversity and differences; it reduces the possibilities of providing an individualized care and an adapted pedagogy and curriculum; it limits the opportunities of alleviating educational inequality with the aim of enhancing social justice. In other words, the endeavour of the Ministry of Education and the ZEP school staff to integrate the ZEP school learners into the education system is limited as it is founded upon an inauthentic perspective of an inclusive education.

Lastly, the association of equality to meritocracy, also known as retributive justice (Gale & Densmore, 2000), emphasises the inauthentic nature of equality as understood and implemented by the ZEP school staff and the MOE. For instance, the practice of evaluating the ZEP school learners through the CPE exams and the focus upon their academic performance may indicate an apparent equality and meritocracy but the teaching and learning practices as well as the learning contexts within the ZEP schools do not enable the ZEP school learners to be evaluated through a just evaluation method. The unique cultural, learning and environmental contexts of the ZEP school learners are not recognised by those

who prepare and design the CPE exams. The focus is upon measuring, rewarding or sanctioning the ZEP school learners.

An inclusive education for social justice which is founded only upon equality, compensation and retributive justice does not respect the individual's needs, strengths and uniqueness. Equality restricted to compensation and retributive justice prevents the opportunities of a holistic approach to social justice and leads to exclusion. In the words of Nieto and Bode (2012), equality as social justice "is not enough" (p. 9) because it lacks the cultural and participative elements which are fundamental components of a socially just approach to education (Gale & Densmore, 2000; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Keddie, 2012; Nieto & Bode, 2012). This finding supports Gale and Densmore's (2000) criticisms of retributive justice and an approach limited to distributive justice because "they tend to confine their interests to the economic spheres and ignore the cultural politics of social institutions..." and their "impartial treatment" of people whom they consider as the same (p. 18).

The implication of a partial approach to inclusive education for social justice is that the notion of integration to achieve equality rejects the recognition of difference (Meshulam & Apple, 2014; Riddell, 2009; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013) and disregards diversity (Gerrard, 1994; Nieto & Bode, 2012) in the context of attending to the needs of the ZEP school learners. The needs of the ZEP school learners are affirmed but not valued by the ZEP school communities who are mostly concerned with ensuring that learners adapt or fit into the dominant social and educational system. The differences of the ZEP school learners are stigmatised and misrecognised instead of being celebrated and developed. The educational structures and the ZEP school communities misrecognise and want to change the ZEP school learners when they should adapt to the ZEP school learners. This approach to an inclusive education for social justice does not provide an authentic and complete understanding of the

concept as it forces the ZEP school learners to assimilate and fit into the education system with little regard for their uniqueness. This limited approach to an inclusive education for social justice reflects the views of Phillips (2008) who cautioned against equality which ignores difference as this process “will end up reinforcing the dominance of already dominant groups...” (p. 113). In that context, Phillips (2008) recommended “heterogeneity rather than homogeneity, diversity rather than sameness, with the prior recognition of difference a crucial stage in the achievement of equality” (p. 113).

It is therefore argued that the MOE needs to broaden its understanding and vision of an inclusive education for social justice as the limited perception of the concept is inevitably reflected in its practice. In the words of Smyth & Wrigley (2013): “...we all need to insist on a wider vision - that schools are also a place for growing up, for cooperation, for developing social concern and solidarity, for critical thinking, physical activity, and creative and cultural development” (p. 11).

From these considerations, the following recommendations are proposed:

4. The MOE and the ZEP school staff broaden their views of social justice, from equality of consideration, treatment and opportunities to a culturally sensitive and participative approach.
5. The MOE reviews the current curriculum and evaluation system, in particular the CPE exams, to bring about change in the education system: from an exam-oriented system to one that values the learners’ social and academic interests and needs, as well as progress, through the use of a wide range of teaching and assessment practices.
6. The MOE sustains its efforts to recognise the needs and uniqueness of each primary school learner and reinforces this approach in all primary schools of Mauritius.

Finding Three

Another result of the limited perception of an inclusive education for social justice is a focus upon the distributive justice dimension of social justice but little enactment of opportunities to enhance the cultural and associational dimensions. Therefore, the third finding of this study is:

Finding Three:

The current practices of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools address more the distributive justice dimension and less the cultural and associational justice dimensions.

In discussing the practicalities of ensuring a socially just education system, Gewirtz (2006) stated: “it is unrealistic - or utopian - to imagine that we can pursue policies and practices that are ‘purely’ just.... In practice, pursuing certain dimensions of social justice will inevitably mean neglecting, or sacrificing others” (p. 70).

The findings of this study support the claims of Gewirtz and Cribb (2002), and those of Fraser (1997), because the analysis of the Key Practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools from a social justice perspective revealed that there were several tensions in the process of satisfying the different social justice dimensions. It was shown in Chapter Six that the implementation of inclusive practices in ZEP schools puts emphasis on the distributive justice dimension and neglects the cultural and associational justice dimensions of social justice.

Practices are focussed upon distributive justice.

The discussion of the Key Practices of an inclusive education in the ZEP schools from a social justice perspective showed that the MOE and the ZEP school staff have significantly contributed to the distributive justice dimension through the (re)distribution of both physical and human resources for ZEP schools.

The investment of the Mauritian government and other non-governmental organisations in the ZEP school project can be considered as a distributive justice initiative in itself. With the implementation of the ZEP school project, the MOE not only ensured access to education to children from less developed regions of Mauritius, but it also aimed to distribute academic success. Furthermore, the findings showed that distributive practices such as the 'Food Programme', provision of school materials and additional equipment, as well as improved school infrastructure, support the ZEP school learners, parents and neighbourhood in their pursuit of education and better life prospects.

The recruitment of specialist staff (Parent-Mediator, Cluster Coordinator, school psychologist) is another element of the distributive practices implemented by the MOE. As indicated in Finding One, most of the ZEP school staff are concerned with ensuring the academic success of the learners and, therefore, teaching for educational performance is a priority. However, it was also shown that several ZEP school class teachers and Head Teachers were conscious of their pastoral role in ZEP schools, and tried to attend to the emotional, social and cultural needs of the learners as much as they could. If ZEP school class teachers and Head Teachers could not attend to the social and emotional needs of the learners, the help of the Cluster Coordinators, Parent-Mediators and educational psychologist was sought. Therefore, the human resources within ZEP schools are part of this distributive justice strategy implemented by the MOE with the expectation that they will help ZEP school learners to take advantage of the educational opportunities available.

This practice which focuses upon distributive justice in the ZEP schools reflects Power's (2012) analysis of how the education system in the UK has attempted to address economic injustice as an obstacle to educational achievement by removing the financial barriers, reallocating resources, and providing compensatory education programmes, giving more children formal access to education and alleviating disadvantage. Moreover, the

implementation of the ZEP school project as a distributive initiative supports the views of Riddell (2009) who claims that "...putting inclusion policies into practice necessitates redistributive measures...a child is defined as having additional support needs if they require additional resources to benefit from education, so that redistribution is intrinsic to its definition" (p. 291).

However, in trying to improve the educational opportunities of the ZEP school learners through the distributive initiatives, some tensions were identified within the cultural and associational justice dimensions. Previous studies (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2002; Cuervo, 2012; Gewirtz, 2006; Riddell, 2009) investigating the impact of the distributive justice dimension on educational institutions reached a similar conclusion: focussing upon a distributive approach is not enough to ensure the anticipated educational achievement. In his study on the disadvantages experienced by rural schools, Cuervo (2012) asserted: "...distributive justice neglects the deep roots of inequality...achieving social justice in schools is not possible when focussed *solely* on the redistribution of resources..." (p. 89). Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the dimensions of cultural and associational justice.

Practices neglecting cultural and associational justice.

The analysis of the Key practices of an inclusive education through the cultural justice and associational justice lenses showed that the majority of the ZEP school staff and the policy makers of MOE do not value the cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) and knowledge of the ZEP school parents and learners. For instance, even though the ZEP school staff claimed that they accepted and attended to the academic and cultural diversity of the ZEP school learners and their parents, in practice, most of the staff still judged them in a negative way from their own culturally dominant frame. Their descriptions of the families often depicted the instability of the family structure, lack of values or an uncaring attitude

towards education. Such judgemental perceptions of the ZEP school staff of the ZEP school learners is framed within a culturally deficient (Gale & Densmore, 2000; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Smyth & Wrigley, 2013) perspective of the learners and their family background. Moreover, the ZEP school staff criticised the lack of parental interest and participation in the school meetings and learning process of their children. Yet, the views from the parents interviewed for this study indicated that most parents are concerned with the academic progress and overall development of their children, even if there is only a small group of parents who usually participate in the school events or involved in the decision making process of the ZEP schools.

Therefore, the different views of ZEP school staff and parents indicate a lack of mutual understanding and the presence of misrecognition amongst the staff (Fraser, 1997; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). The relationship between ZEP school staff and parents is founded upon deficit thinking, misrecognition and blame on the part of the staff and this finding supports the observations of Smyth and Wrigley (2013):

There is a long history of seeking to place the blame of academic underachievement outside the school system. This can occur on various spatial scales: the micro or individual level (blame the student); the meso levels of families (blame the parents), and, on a slightly larger scale, whole neighbourhoods, as manifested in the culture of poverty (...) What is missing in all these localized explanations is the macro scale- the impact of economic structures and relationships. (p. 57).

In their argument, Smyth and Wrigley challenged the practice of blaming learners and parents for academic underachievement, or lack of interest in education, when the onus should be upon the school system. This finding contributes to the understanding that blame, misrecognition and deficit thinking are effects of cultural domination (Fraser, 1997) or

cultural imperialism (Young, 2011) where the culturally dominant group has little recognition or respect for the sub-dominant group.

The lack of recognition of the policy makers of the MOE for the cultural capital and knowledge of the ZEP school learners and parents is reflected in the monocultural curriculum (Nieto & Bode, 2012) for the learners, with the non-recognition of the Kreol Morisien language, and the focus upon examinable subjects at the expense of non-examinable subjects. As stated by Nieto and Bode (2012), a monocultural curriculum gives only “one way of seeing the world...” instead of encouraging learners to “understand multiple perspectives and not only the viewpoints of the dominant groups” (p. 56). In a similar way, Klenowski (2014) is of the opinion that: “The recognition of the cultural knowledges and experiences that students bring to their learning contexts constitutes important access and social justice issues” (p. 468). Once again, the employees of the MOE work within a framework of cultural domination (Fraser, 1997) and cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971; Connell, 1993) which alienates the ZEP school parents and learners. Issues concerning the lack of relevance of the school curriculum to the needs and realities of the primary school learners have previously been mentioned by Mauritian and international scholars who criticised the use of only one dominant language (Bunwaree et al., 2005; Dauguet, 2007) and the drafting of educational policies by an educational elite (Bunwaree et al., 2005). This study’s findings confirm these criticisms and claim that the Mauritian education system perpetuates an unequal education system which does not include the cultural capital of the ZEP school parents and learners and restricts their opportunities to participate in the decision making process.

The implications of these tensions at the level of cultural and associational justice dimensions are that, despite the distributive measures, the ZEP school staff prevents ZEP school learners and parents from integrating into the school culture and from engaging with ZEP schools. As described by Mills and Gale (2010), the ZEP school staff members become

“agents of hegemony” (p. 58) who do not value and allow for the cultural knowledge and practices of the ZEP school. Similarly, the policy makers and decision makers at the MOE exercise complete control and power over the ZEP school parents and learners perceived as a sub-dominant cultural group. Such an approach to inclusive education and social justice is inadequate as it uses domination (Fraser, 1997) and coercion (Carspecken, 1996) in the relationship with ZEP school learners and their parents as opposed to respect and recognition. Therefore, the practice of an inclusive education for social justice in the ZEP schools is partial and restrictive.

It is thus important for the ZEP schools to find strategies to value and include the community’s culture in order to create a new collective school culture. In that context, Kugler (2011) described her experience of the school-family partnership in South Africa: “In reality, many families without formal education have lessons to teach and much to share...many of our students’ families have dreams no one is asking about. Many are eager to help their children but don’t know how” (pp. 33-36). The ZEP school staff need to provide the possibility for the ZEP school neighbourhood, parents and learners to share their values and knowledge within the school culture. By encouraging the community to share their knowledge and experiences, the ZEP schools can develop a stronger and richer school culture, inclusive of the community’s values and beliefs. Furthermore, it is equally important to create “a common curriculum” (Connell, 1993), with the collaboration of all stakeholders, which can promote an inclusive education for social justice.

Therefore, with regards to the creation of shared school culture in ZEP schools, the following recommendations are made:

1. Steps are taken to promote activities that raise the awareness and appreciation of the values and knowledge of the local community and, therefore, provide for

the integration of local values and knowledge into the culture of the ZEP school contributing to a new and collective school culture.

2. The Mauritian government endorses the Kreol Morisien as the language of instruction in the education system with the same status as English and French.
3. The curriculum designers from the MOE work collaboratively with ZEP school communities to adapt the national curriculum so that it reflects the needs and knowledge of the ZEP school areas.
4. Pre-service teacher training programmes contain training in social justice awareness and enactment as well as organisation of ongoing professional development training in the dimensions of social justice in the local context.
5. The ZEP school class teachers adapt the curriculum to the contexts and knowledge of the ZEP school learners.

Closely related to the cultural justice dimension, associational justice is defined as “patterns of association amongst individuals and amongst social groups which prevent some people from participating fully in decisions which affect the conditions within which they live and act” (Power & Gewirtz, 2001, p. 41). Since the achievement of associational justice depends upon the interactions, actions and participation of the different social groups, the tensions arising at the level of the cultural justice dimension are also seen in the enactment of this social justice dimension.

The ZEP school project aims to initiate collaboration between the MOE and the ZEP school staff (MOE, 2002) with the support of the ZEP school unit, and these schools were expected to have a degree of autonomy of decision making. According to Panday and Li Xu (2013), the management structure of the ZEP school project “is sensitive to a bottom-up approach” (p. 9). However, the findings of this study indicated that ZEP school teachers and school leaders have limited power to initiate new strategies or decisions without the consent

of the Zone Directorate. The implications of such limited power in decision making for both ZEP school teachers and Head Teachers are pedagogical constraints, limiting opportunities to be innovative and the ability to take into consideration contextual realities. The restrictive power in decision-making of the ZEP school staff reflects Young's concept of "internal exclusion" whereby the "participation of some people is dismissed as out of order" (2000, p. 53).

Furthermore, with the issue of adhering to the strict control of the Zone Directorate, the study showed the unwillingness of some ZEP school staff to implement inclusive practices and a socially just approach to education. For instance, the findings indicated that many ZEP school class teachers preferred the 'talk and chalk' method to the interactive board, a tool which demanded more research and preparation, even if they were aware of the benefits of such a pedagogical tool. It is argued that their limited decision making power and lack of freedom of actions leads to a situation where ZEP school teachers develop an attitude of sticking to their 'comfort zone' instead of being inventive and self-critical in their teaching. Therefore, staff are also involved in tension at the level of associational justice which limits the achievement of the distributive justice dimension as ZEP school class teachers are not empowered, or equipped, to provide the best pedagogy adapted to the needs of the learners in order to enhance academic achievement.

It was also shown that the school renovation plan in one of the ZEP schools is another example of the unequal power relationship between the MOE and the ZEP school management and parents. The MOE had already promoted the school renovation plans without including the parents in the elaboration of the plan. However, the MOE was willing to involve the school's Head Teacher and the members of the PTA at the end of the consultation process with the expectation that they would agree to the plans. Therefore, parents are led to believe that they have access to equal power in decision making but, in fact,

it is the MOE which has the power. The sharing of power in the decision making process with the ZEP school parents and staff is superficial as it is still located within the control of the MOE. Moreover, since most ZEP school parents come from a disadvantaged background, it appears that the MOE assumes that the parents lack "...the knowledge and experience to offer valid and meaningful input" (Cooper & Christie, 2009, p. 2269). From these observations, it is argued that associational justice is not enhanced and there is the presence of tensions in trying to achieve this social justice dimension. The tension arises when having to balance between sharing the decision making power with ZEP school parents and addressing the systemic constraints related to distributive justice.

Lastly, the discussion from Chapter Six showed that the ZEP school teachers are disempowered in that they are not consulted at the level of the curriculum, assessment methods or other ZEP school realities because of the rigid control of the MOE over decision making processes. Similarly, ZEP school parents are not encouraged to voice their concerns and they receive few opportunities to participate in an authentic way in the ZEP schools. Their opinions and knowledge are disregarded by the MOE and the ZEP school staff.

In the above arguments, it was shown that both ZEP school parents and teachers are not empowered to engage in the collective process of decision making as the MOE does not provide them with opportunities to do so. It is important that the ZEP school stakeholders are provided with genuine participative power to satisfy the associational justice dimension. They need to be: represented (Power, 2012) at decision making meetings; provided with authentic opportunities to voice their opinions; and given opportunities to exercise power including being informed and advised how to use their right to participate in the decision making process. As stated by Power (2012), one of the ways of ensuring representation and "political rights of the disadvantaged" stakeholders, is by setting up "mechanisms to mobilise

greater community participation” (p. 485). In light of these considerations, it is recommended:

6. The MOE allows all stakeholders in ZEP schools greater autonomy in the decision-making process.
7. The MOE improves its communication process with the ZEP school teachers and leaders by consulting with them and allowing them to propose solutions to their unique contextual issues.
8. Effective communication strategies are further developed between the MOE and the ZEP school parents to enhance trust and engagement.
9. The MOE sets up appropriate accountability procedures to ensure that local decisions are based on the requirements of each school and teaching and learning decisions are in the best interest of the students.
10. The ZEP school management and staff empower and engage the parents and the local community in the learning process and the means to actively participate in the local decision making.

In summary of the above discussion concerning the enactment of inclusive education practices from a social justice perspective, this study confirms the literature that distributive justice is important in ensuring inclusive education (Riddell, 2009) as well as social justice (Cuervo, 2012; Fraser, 1997; 2008; Meshulam & Apple, 2014). Moreover, this study (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Power, 2012) highlighted the emergence of the tensions arising between achieving the distributive justice dimension and satisfying the cultural and associational dimensions and these tensions were echoed by the findings of this study. The analysis of the practices of an inclusive education in ZEP schools from a social justice perspective highlighted the difficulties of satisfying and implementing the three social justice dimensions for the authentic enactment of the concept in ZEP schools and the Mauritian

education system. This finding supports Power's (2012) claims that "many different domains of injustice need to be confronted" and that "the task of building a more socially just education system" is a difficult one (p. 489). Therefore, authentic participation in the learning process, or authentic collaboration in the decision making process of the ZEP schools, is imperative as they take into consideration the learners and enhance their opportunities to progress in education and in society. It is recommended that:

11. The MOE and the ZEP schools provide an authentic space and opportunities to the ZEP school learners and families to be consulted and participate in the creation of a collective decision making process.

Finding Four

This research study was based on a conceptual framework that included a multi-dimensional understanding of social justice. The discussion of Findings One to Three has established that the ZEP school communities have a narrow understanding of an inclusive education for social justice, which is restricted to equality, compensation and retributive justice. This partial or restrictive understanding of the concept is reflected in the practices of the ZEP schools which are focused upon the distribution of resources and disregards the cultural and associational justice.

Since the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice are both restricted, a transformative approach to social justice is being offered in this study as it provides a more authentic understanding of, and approach to, the concepts of inclusive education and social justice. It also offers the possibility of re-framing both the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education in the context of education in the ZEP school project.

This social justice approach is founded upon Fraser's (2008) transformative model of social justice which takes into consideration issues linked to the distributive, cultural and associational justice dimensions but, in this study, the model to be presented in Figure 7.1

makes cultural justice the starting point for a transformation of education leading to a truly inclusive education for social justice in its broadest sense. Therefore, the last main finding of this study is:

Finding Four:

In order to promote the achievement of an authentic inclusive education for social justice in Mauritian schools, especially ZEP schools, there is a need for a transformative model of an inclusive education for social justice which is structured around a recognitive⁴² framework.

The discussion of the previous findings presented the limitations of the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice as it is framed within an affirmative/redistribution structure which reinforces group differentiation leading to stigmatisation and misrecognition (Fraser, 2008). Although Rancière (2010) stated that “there is nothing to know” (p. 4) about inequality, in the context of this study, it is important for the Mauritian government and public to be informed about the sources of exclusion and marginalisation within the country’s education system, especially because the Ministry of Education is aspiring to reduce educational inequalities.

In order to provide an inclusive orientation in its education system with the purpose of achieving social justice, it is important for the education system to review its current educational values and goals so that the Mauritian education system promotes values where “all children can participate in teaching and learning” (Miles & Singal, 2010, p. 11). It is argued that, by broadening its perceptions of both inclusive education and social justice, the MOE and the ZEP schools can re-align their practices so as to emphasise the cultural justice dimension which will have positive effects upon associational and distributive justice in ZEP schools.

⁴² A recognitive approach to social justice proposes the valorisation, representation and participation of marginalised groups in social life.

In light of the limited perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools, Finding Four proposes a “profound transformation” of the Mauritian education system which “requires a paradigmatic change” (Thomazet, 2009, p. 558) to implement an inclusive education for social justice in the context of ZEP schools. The proposal of a transformation of the Mauritian education system is in line with contemporary approaches to inclusive education which argues for the disruption of normative and assimilating practices to inclusive education (Armstrong et al., 2010; Thomazet, 2009; Slee, 2011).

The Mauritian education system has the capacity to undertake a transformation of its educational vision, structures and culture which can challenge the normalisation of the learners and propose an alternate education system which “celebrates difference, and refuses the equation of poverty plus education equals failure” (Thomson, 2010, p. 134). Firstly, the education system wishes to reduce educational inequality and improve academic performance; secondly, it has the financial resources and the staff who can be adequately trained to achieve an inclusive education for social justice. By undertaking a transformation of its educational vision from an elitist, exam-oriented education system to a holistic and culturally responsive one (Cartledge, Singh & Gibson, 2008; Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke & Curran, 2004), the Mauritian education system will show its commitment to an authentic inclusive education for social justice. In light of the above discussions, it is recommended that:

1. The MOE and the ZEP school communities promote an authentic diversity and celebrate the learners’ differences by reflecting upon its educational goals and modify them with the aim of bringing about the necessary restructuring of the primary school system.

2. The MOE, in collaboration with the ZEP school communities, reviews the vision and goals of the ZEP school project so that its different stakeholders and communities can share their unique culture and aspirations, as well as have more participative power in the practice of an inclusive education for social justice.

In line with these findings, this study proposes an alternative framework of an inclusive education for social justice which aims at disrupting the previous model of an affirmative redistribution model of social justice. The new model is informed by Gale and Densmore's recognitive justice (2000) and Fraser's matrix of the redistribution-recognition dilemma (2008). It is founded upon a transformative framework which challenges misrecognition and group differentiation, and disrupts the hegemonic structures of the Mauritian system which is founded upon social class power, elitism and 'monoculturalism'.

The transformative conceptual framework will enable schools to become sites of "counter-hegemonic possibilities" (Meshulam & Apple, 2014, p. 666) by enabling the children to experience a broader curriculum with an adequate balance between curricular and extra-curricular subjects. The learners will no longer be assessed through summative exams at the end of their primary school years, but through a dual evaluation method: continuous assessment throughout primary school and, at the end of the primary school, a certification that the primary school learner has the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake secondary schooling.

Under the new education structure, there will be no discrimination between the primary schools because they would not be categorised according to their performance at exams or status. The aim is to eliminate any type of stigmatisation, labelling or stereotypes attached to the schools and learners and to help in constructing new identities for the schools, staff and learners. The training of the teachers and the overall vision of this transformed

education is to challenge deficit thinking, misrecognition and blame. In the words of Mills and Gale (2010), teachers will have the capacity to “act as agents of transformation rather than reproduction” (p. 3). The model for this transformative framework of an inclusive education for social justice which disrupts the hegemonic structures of the Mauritian education system is shown in Figure 7.1.

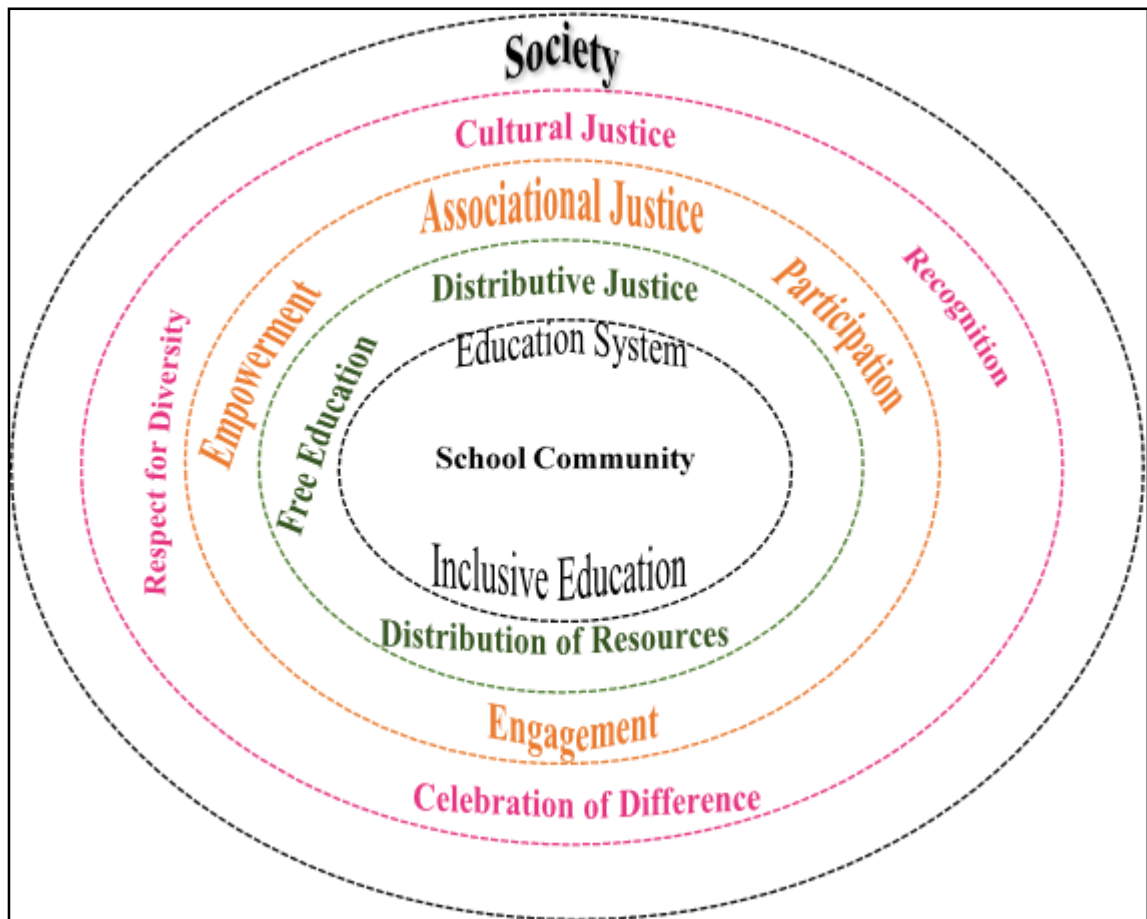


Figure 7.1. Transformative framework of an inclusive education for social justice.

This model emphasises that any approach to an inclusive education for social justice in schools must begin with the aim of achieving cultural justice throughout the whole of Mauritian society. This approach requires an understanding founded upon recognitive justice (Gale & Densmore, 2000) through the recognition of the unique needs, aspirations or realities of each individual (Taylor, 1994) and leading to the practice of recognition (Fraser, 1997;

2008) with the intention to “foster interaction across differences rather than to enforce separatism, conformism and intolerance” (Fraser, 2008, p. 140).

Beginning with schools, the model proposes that educational policies and practices are focussed upon enhancing cultural justice through recognition, respect and celebration of difference. In Figure 7.1, it is shown that it is through the recognition of difference and diversity that social justice can be achieved, since the aspiration is no longer to “normalise difference” but to embrace and respect it - an approach which echoes Riddell (2009) who claimed that recognition emphasises differences. The cognitive framework involves a broadened curriculum which is collectively designed by the educational stakeholders, as well as respect for the linguistic identities of the people of the country. Within such a framework, the respect for the cultural knowledge and background of the primary school learners and their families is paramount; through discussions with the school stakeholders and authentic participatory initiatives between the MOE and the stakeholders, strategies to build a shared school culture and structure can be reflected upon and proposed. It will then lead the Mauritian education system and its staff to take a step towards inclusiveness and social justice in education. Moreover, within this new framework, there would be no need for ZEP schools as all primary schools of Mauritius would be adequately supported through the renewed educational goals and structures of the MOE.

Furthermore, the cognitive framework ensures that cultural, social and educational differences and diversity are celebrated within this transformative model of the Mauritian education system. This means the personal skills and knowledge of the school learners and parents will be valued by the staff and shared amongst the school communities. Such strategies at school level must be supported at policy making level so that the knowledge and resources of the school learners and parents can be included in the national curriculum.

These cultural justice initiatives, located within a recognitive framework of the model, will have positive effects upon the next stratum of the model, that is, associational justice.

The associational justice dimension is the next stratum of this transformative model as it is closely related to the cultural justice dimension: the recognition and respect of all educational stakeholders can lead to their right to be represented and their participation in the decision making process. Their participative powers can be enhanced through the collective empowerment of these stakeholders (Power, 2012) so that they can learn how to use the cultural and social resources (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002) in order to “navigate” (Keddie, 2012, p. 55) the education system. This stratum of the model means an authentic collaboration and sharing of decision making between the MOE and the ZEP school staff and parents can be achieved if the ZEP school teachers, leaders and parents are represented in decision making forum and discussions. Furthermore, through adequate workshops and training, the ZEP school parents can be informed about the educational structures and taught how to navigate the structures so that they can actively engage in the decision making process. It is through such training that the empowerment process of these educational stakeholders can be achieved and enable them to take responsibility and ownership of the learning process of their children.

The achievement of cultural justice and associational justice dimensions can then reinforce the distributive justice dimension since the economic needs as well as participative rights of all educational stakeholders will be recognised. In practice, the impact of cultural justice and associational justice dimensions on distributive justice will strengthen the current implementation of free universal education at primary school level through the distribution of resources and equipment to socio-economically disadvantaged groups of learners. The distributive justice dimension will also be enhanced through the provision of adequate pre-service and on-going training programmes which can broaden the pedagogical and cultural

approaches of prospective and current teachers. Moreover, training programmes can be organised for parents and community leaders so that they can be empowered to understand the education system and fully participate in it. The intertwining of these relationships between the social justice dimensions, focussed upon recognition, will then promote an inclusive education for social justice in the Mauritian education system.

In light of the discussion of Findings One to Four, several initial recommendations were proposed at policy level for the MOE and they have been refined to the following recommendation:

- The MOE reframes its educational vision and goals upon a broader perspective of inclusive education and social justice which can challenge sources of exclusion within the system and promote a learning culture which values difference and authentic participation.

This transformative model and the altered education system will also have positive implications at the level of practices as identified in the initial recommendations proposed throughout the discussion of Findings One to Four. These recommendations at the level of practice have been refined to the following recommendations:

- The MOE enacts its broader educational vision by implementing measures to address goals which: a) promote a culturally respectful and responsive education system; b) enhance the participative powers of the school staff and parents in the decision making process, curriculum design and evaluation methods;
- The practices at school level recognise and value the cultural background of all learners and their families and enhance their participation and engagement in the school life through: a) an authentic collective decision making process; b) co-creation of meetings and activities which can contribute to shared school

culture by the school staff, parents and learners; c) empowerment training programmes for both staff and parents so that they can initiate and monitor school activities for the benefit of school communities;

- The practices at classroom level welcome the uniqueness of each learner by: a) adapting the curriculum and pedagogical tools to the needs of the learners; b) recognising the current knowledge and skills of school learners and building on them; c) adopting a ‘blame-free’ perspective towards the learners and their parents;
- The training of the primary school teachers and the management staff is reviewed and restructured so that the staff: a) are empowered to develop innovative strategies and independent decision making; b) are equipped to be respectful of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds; and, c) are trained to challenge sources of inequality and exclusion within the education system.

Summary of main findings

This sub-section ends the discussion of the main findings of the study which investigated the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in the context of ZEP schools in Mauritius.

The first finding is that the system leaders, ZEP school staff, parents and learners (ZEP school communities) all aspire to achieve social and educational equality for the learners and their family by integrating the learners into the education system through the ZEP school project. This ideal of an inclusive education for social justice is founded upon equality and integration for the ZEP school learners into the education system and society. Although there are limitations in the understanding of the concept since the ZEP school

communities do not challenge the unequal educational structures, their intention is to achieve an equitable education system through an inclusive education.

The second finding revealed that this understanding of the ZEP school communities about an inclusive education for social justice is partial and restrictive as integration means normalising and assimilating the ZEP school learners so that they can fit into the education system. Moreover, the concept of social justice is associated with equality achieved through compensation and retributive justice whereby ZEP school learners can attain academic achievement equivalent to that of non-ZEP school learners. Once again, the aim is to achieve normalisation of the ZEP school learners whose differences and needs are neither recognised nor attended to.

The third finding is related to the practices of the concept which reflect the limited understanding of an inclusive education for social justice: the practices address more the distributive justice dimension and less the cultural and associational justice dimensions. The norms, values and beliefs of the MOE and that of the ZEP school staff have an overwhelming influence over those of the ZEP school learners and parents whose knowledge and values are disregarded. In addition, the participative powers of the ZEP school staff and parents in the decision making process of the ZEP school project were constrained by the overarching influence of the MOE. Therefore, it was argued that the concept and practices of an inclusive education for social justice is partial and inadequate as it is founded upon the normalisation, assimilation and misrecognition of the ZEP school learners and their family.

Informed by Findings One to Three, the fourth finding argues for the construction of a new model of an inclusive education for social justice which disrupts an assimilationist and normalising view of the concept to one which is structured around a recognitive framework of social justice. This transformative model of an inclusive education for social justice founded upon recognition will then inform the vision and educational policy measures of the

Mauritian education system in order to value diversity and differences as well as provide authentic participative powers to the school stakeholders. A diagram of this model has been presented in support of this finding.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This chapter reviews the research journey which set out to investigate the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools of Mauritius.

The context, conceptual framework and research design of the study are outlined, followed by an overview of the main findings and recommendations, with a consideration of the practical implications for the ZEP school project and the Mauritian education context arising from these recommendations. The significance and limitations of the study are then presented leading to recommendations for further research.

The chapter ends with a vignette portraying a school setting in which inclusive education for social justice is enacted in a transformed Mauritian education system.

The research journey

As a researcher, I was interested in exploring the possibilities of achieving a socially just schooling in Mauritius based on my experience of seeing Mauritian schools considered differently because of their performance at summative exams or young learners primarily concerned with being ranked first instead of finding the joy of learning and discovering. I have always believed that schools and their staff have the capacity to bring social and educational justice despite the overwhelming influences of international and regional demands for performance-driven educational outcomes. Therefore, I decided to investigate in what ways the Mauritian education system can achieve greater social justice in its schools and the society.

In its quest to achieve both economic and social development, Mauritius has aligned its education system with the “global agendas for education” (Silva, Santos & Pacheco, 2015, p. 979) which are often established as priorities and goals for developing countries by

international organisations such as UNESCO, African Development Bank or the World Bank (Colin, 2015). One of these agendas was the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) amongst which the Education for All (EFA) goals which were endorsed by most developing countries with the aim of providing universal primary education so as to alleviate poverty. Founded upon social justice principles, the MDGs and EFA goals have driven the Mauritian education system and, according to the Education for All National Review (UNESCO, 2015), the country has met almost all of the goals.

Through the ZEP school project and other educational initiatives, the Mauritian education system has endeavoured to work towards providing quality education to all Mauritian children. Since the implementation of the ZEP school project in 2002, there has been a lack of research exploring the contribution of the ZEP school project to the Mauritian education system, particularly with regards to examining the inclusive education practices of these schools in the context of social justice education. Therefore, the following research question was developed:

“What are the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools?”

The research process was informed by three sub-questions which were:

1. What are the perceptions of ZEP school staff about an inclusive education for social justice and how is it implemented?
2. What are the experiences of ZEP school stakeholders, including parents and learners, of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools?
3. What do these perceptions and practices mean for a model of an inclusive education for social justice in the Mauritian education system?

A review of the literature on inclusive education and social justice led to the development of the conceptual framework presented in Figure 2.4 (reproduced here as Figure 8.1):

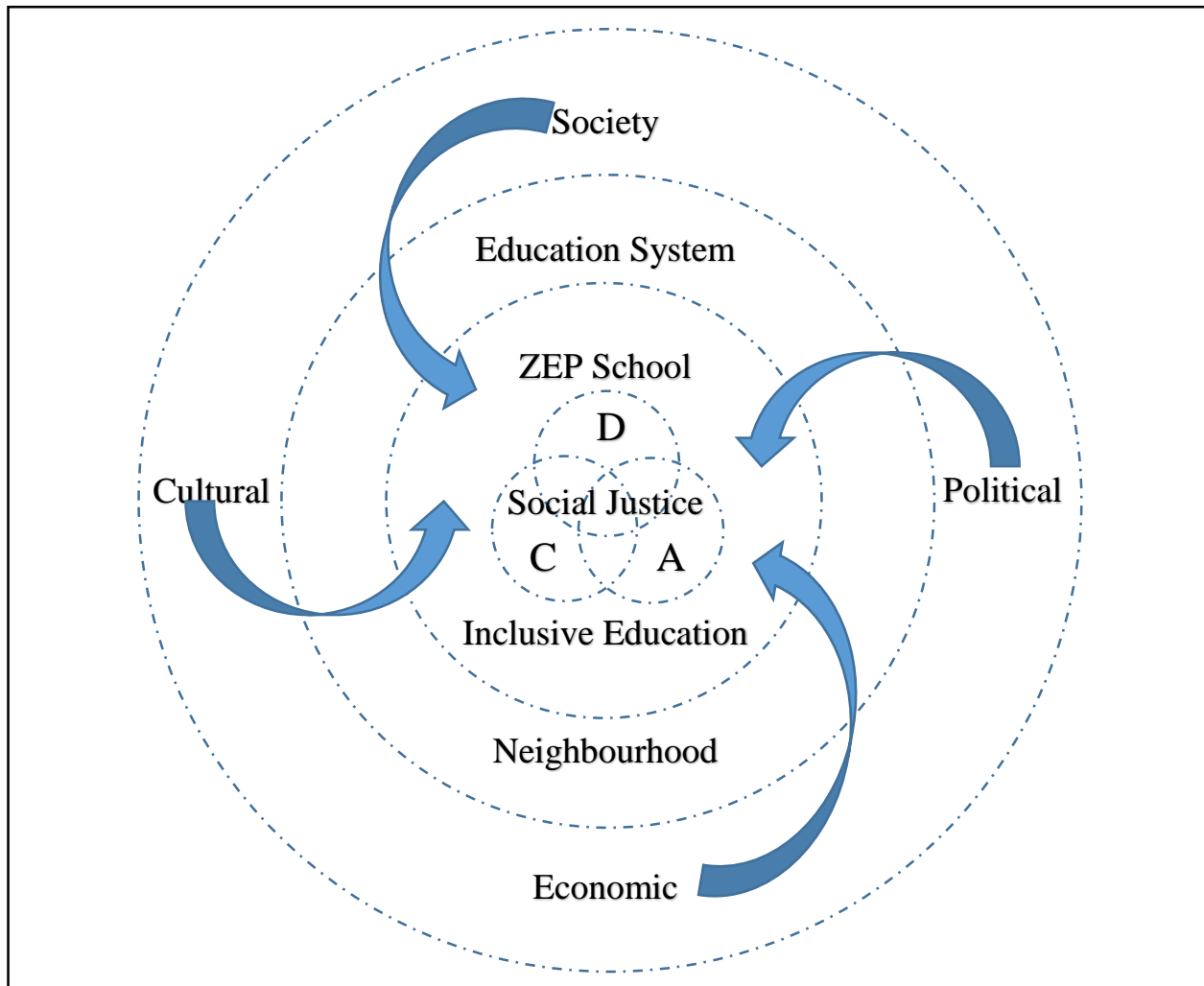


Figure 8.1. Conceptual framework of the study

This framework informed the development of the research design and the understanding of an inclusive education as: a) education for the diversity of learners by respecting their difference; b) education for marginalised and vulnerable groups; and, c) free quality education for all children. These understandings and approaches to an inclusive education were in turn framed within Gewirtz and Cribb's (2002) model of plural conceptions of social justice which is composed of three dimensions: a) distributive justice -

the absence of economic marginalisation, deprivation and exploitation; b) cultural justice - the absence of non-recognition, disrespect and cultural domination, and c) associational justice – through the promotion of representation, participation of previously marginalised groups in the decision making process. It is through the lens of these dimensions that the researcher sought to analyse and interpret the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education for social justice in the ZEP schools.

The research design

The epistemology underlying this qualitative research study was social constructionism, which acknowledges the individual and multiple meanings constructed by the research participants about their understandings and practices of, in this case, an inclusive education for social justice. Symbolic interactionism and critical hermeneutics were the theoretical perspectives which informed the method of investigating and understanding the ZEP school realities. A case study methodology was used involving multiple sites, and the methods used to collect data were: interviews, questionnaires, participant observation, learners' drawings, as well as school documents and reports from the MOE and the respective ZEP schools. The data collected from each ZEP school was individually analysed to provide an understanding of each school and its community which was presented in expanded vignettes. A cross-case analysis of the data was then undertaken.

Research findings and recommendations

A cross-case analysis of the identified key perceptions and practices of an inclusive education were further analysed from a social justice perspective. This second analytical process elicited the main findings of this study which were:

- Finding One: ZEP school communities aspire to achieve social and educational equality for the learners and their families by integrating the learners into the education system through the ZEP school project.

- Finding Two: ZEP school staff have a partial understanding of an inclusive education for social justice and this leads to its limited enactment.
- Finding Three: The current practices of an inclusive education for social justice in ZEP schools address more the distributive justice dimension and less the cultural and associational justice dimensions.
- Finding Four: In order to promote the achievement of an authentic inclusive education for social justice in Mauritian schools, especially ZEP schools, there is a need for a model of transformative framework of an inclusive education for social justice which is structured around a recognitive framework.

Therefore, this thesis identified the partial approach of an inclusive education for social justice in the ZEP schools and proposed the construction of a transformative framework of an inclusive education for social justice for the Mauritian education system represented in Figure 7.1 (reproduced here as 8.2).

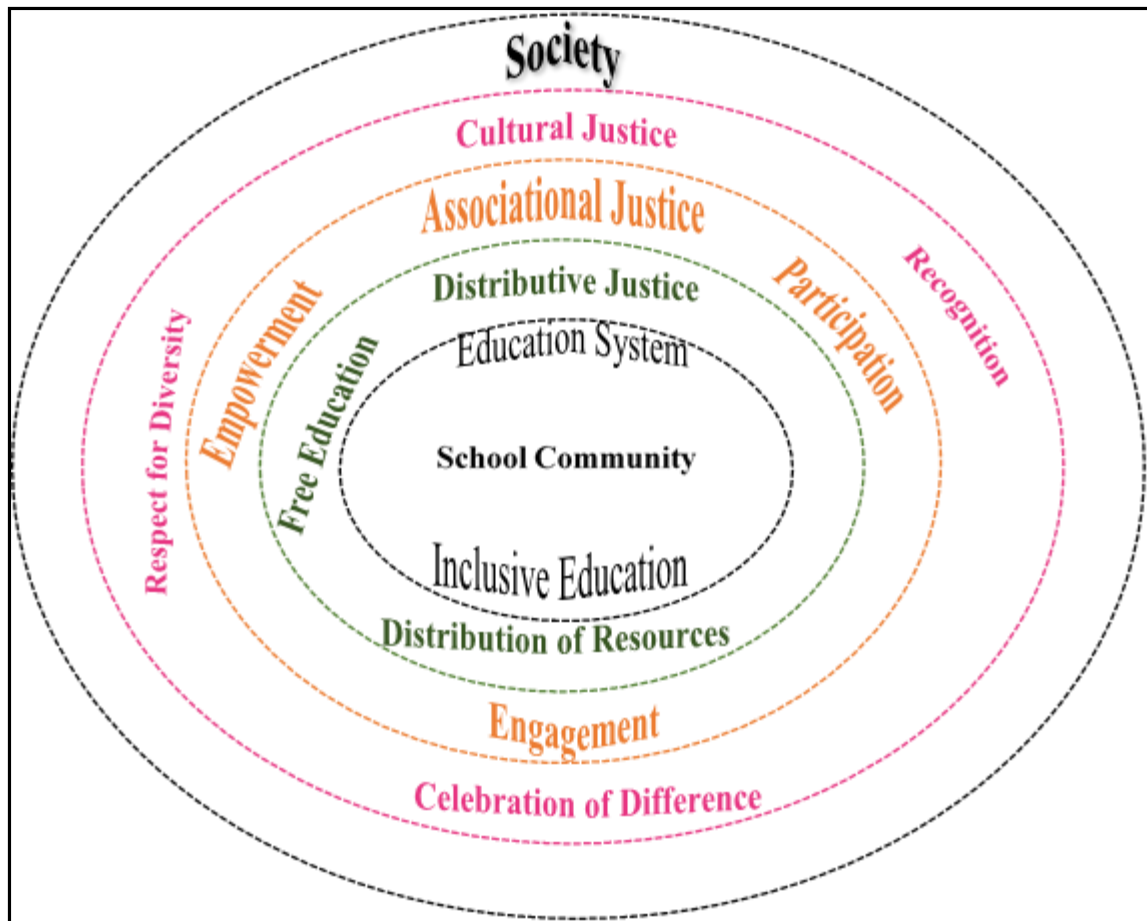


Figure 8.2: Transformative framework of an inclusive education for social justice

The main findings of this study realign an authentic model of an inclusive education to its social justice roots by: a) challenging educational exclusion caused by rigid educational structures with an assimilation focus; b) promoting diversity and the recognition of the uniqueness of each learner and their cultural context. If this transformative philosophy were to be endorsed by the MOE, it would have the potential to have a positive influence upon the pedagogical practices and general educational approach in ZEP schools and in all Mauritian schools. Therefore, in response to these findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The MOE reframes its educational vision and goals upon a broader perspective of inclusive education and social justice which can challenge sources of

exclusion within the system and promote a learning culture which values difference and authentic participation;

2. The MOE enacts its broader educational vision by implementing measures to address goals which: a) promote a culturally respectful and responsive education system; b) enhance the participative powers of the school staff and parents in the decision making process, curriculum design and evaluation methods;
3. The practices at school level recognise and value the cultural background of all learners and their families and enhance their participation and engagement in the school life through: a) an authentic collective decision making process; b) co-creation of meetings and activities which can contribute to shared school culture by the school staff, parents and learners; c) empowerment training programmes for both staff and parents so that they can initiate and monitor school activities for the benefit of school communities;
4. The practices at classroom level welcome learners' uniqueness by: a) adapting the curriculum and pedagogical tools to the needs of the school learners; b) developing the current knowledge and skills of school learners; c) adopting a 'blame-free' perspective towards the school learners and their parents;
5. The training of the primary school teachers and the management staff is reviewed and restructured so that the staff: a) are empowered to develop innovative strategies and independent decision making; b) are equipped to be respectful of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds; and, c) are trained to challenge sources of inequality and exclusion within the education system.

One possible, and positive, implication of the reframing of the Mauritian education system upon a transformative framework of an inclusive education for social justice focused on recognition is that such an inclusive vision will permeate government policy as well as other social and cultural areas of the country and hopefully contribute to a true ‘rainbow society’.

At the level of practice, the recommendations made about these authentic inclusive education practices for social justice provide the opportunities to recognise the values and knowledge of all stakeholders at school and within the neighbourhood. The transformative framework will model recognition and inclusion of the local community beyond the school and hopefully contribute to the cultural and associational justice dimension of the whole of Mauritian society. Furthermore, this new framework offers the possibility for management and teaching staff to work in more respectful and caring way; learners’ differences can be better recognised and valued; and, the neighbourhood’s realities can be understood respectfully and their aspirations heard.

Another implication of these recommendations is that teacher training institutions will need to reframe their courses within a cultural justice perspective. This means appropriate training for their own staff in order to develop culturally sensitive content at the conceptual and practical level and, strategies to encourage the teacher-students to affirm their personal identity and recognise their misunderstandings about other cultural identities. These implications are examples of how a social justice approach in schools and the training of staff can have a positive impact on the thinking and practice in the wider society.

In conclusion, within this model of transformative framework, there would no longer be the need for ZEP schools as all primary schools of Mauritius would be adequately supported through the renewed educational goals and structures of the MOE.

Contributions to current areas of research

The findings of this study, as well as its conceptual approach, offer some theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of inclusive education and social justice education, particularly in the context of Mauritius.

There are a few international research studies (Hay & Beyers, 2011; Lingard & Mills, 2007; Polat, 2011; Tikly & Barrett, 2011; Shyman, 2015) which have explored the relationships between inclusive education and social justice. However, most of them were focussed upon special education needs or disabilities. None of them used a social justice lens such as that presented in Gewirtz and Cribb's (2002) plural conceptions of social justice to examine the perceptions and practices of an inclusive education in mainstream primary schools.

Furthermore, no research in the Mauritian education system investigated the ZEP school project, or any other primary and secondary schools of the country, for its inclusive practices or from a social justice perspective. The findings of this study offer some insights into an inclusive education for social justice in the context of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and how the Mauritian schools could improve the educational achievement for these learners and other Mauritian school learners through the transformation of their practice. This study has contributed to a new conceptualisation of an inclusive education grounded in a social justice perspective in the context of Mauritian education, an aspect which has not been investigated before.

This study has also contributed to Gewirtz and Cribb's (2002) social justice theory as the findings have not only affirmed the presence of the three social justice dimensions in a school project concerned with implementing an inclusive strategy, but they also offered an alternative framework which can address the emerging tensions amongst the social justice dimensions. The transformative framework of an inclusive education for social justice

provided both conceptual and practical avenues to implement an inclusive education for social justice as presented in Figure 8.2.

The research design of this study has also added to Mauritian research in education by framing the research within social constructionism and enabling the voices of the different school stakeholders to, firstly, be heard and, secondly, contribute to an understanding of an inclusive education for social justice. Through the lens of symbolic interactionism and critical hermeneutics, the everyday actions and practices in ZEP schools, as well as the views of ZEP school parents and learners, provided a balance to the views of the ZEP school staff and the MOE which are the dominant voices in the education system and in Mauritian education research. As stated by Smyth and Wrigley (2013), through the use of symbolic interactionism, the dynamics of “social and school relationships” (p. 198) were explored and connected instead of separated. It is hoped that through this study, the perceptions and experiences of ZEP families can encourage more parents to be actively involved in schools and participate in the decision-making processes at school.

The theoretical contribution of critical hermeneutics provided another theoretical perspective appropriate for research concerned with social justice issues such as the type of support required by those who have been marginalised, or revealing and challenging the presence of unequal relationships in society. The combination of symbolic interactionism and critical hermeneutics extended the knowledge about interpretive process during data analysis and the construction of meanings.

Finally, this study offered a new use of vignettes, which are mainly used for data collection purposes, as a data presentation strategy. Through the use of extended vignettes - a new term developed in the context of this study - the validity and reliability of this qualitative study was enhanced through the detailed raw data and contextual information.

Limitations of the study

The use of case study methodology can be considered as one of the limitations of this research study since this methodology, being context bound, does not allow for generalisation of findings to other contexts (Yin, 2003), and only four schools were examined from a total of 30 ZEP schools. However, the main aim of investigating four ZEP schools was to achieve a deeper understanding of the unique situations and realities of ZEP schools and not to establish the generalisability of the results (Yin, 2003), which is the concern of a quantitative research paradigm. The epistemological and methodological approaches taken to the study have guided the researcher towards the use of a multi-site case study which enabled an in-depth understanding of the ZEP schools in different geographical areas and socio-cultural contexts of Mauritius about the concept of inclusive education for social justice.

Another limitation of the study is that the ethnic and religious component has not been explored further with regards to its relevance to the cultural justice dimension in ZEP schools, and this is due to the following reasons. One is the sensitivity of the Mauritian population concerning ethnic and religious differences or tensions, as it prides itself on being a cohesive and “rainbow” nation (Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2012, p. 680) although, according to Bunwaree (2001), it is more “a collage of diverse people who have been for a long time united by a sense of economic nationalism” (p. 262). Issues such as ethnic or religious prejudices were taken into consideration in the data analysis only because the participants referred to them. The second reason is that the researcher wanted access to government schools through the official approval of the MOE and, anticipating that probing the ethnic issues would be considered too sensitive by the MOE, the researcher did not include questions related to the ethnic and religious backgrounds of the participants. The third reason is that Mauritius is a small country and, for confidentiality and anonymity

purposes, the ethnic component was not mentioned in the interview schedules and teacher questionnaires.

Another limitation is in the make-up of the focus group interviews with the ZEP school parents, as the researcher depended upon the support of the Parent-Mediator of the respective ZEP schools to get into contact with the parents. However, since in three of the participating ZEP schools, none of the Parent-Mediators could provide their help, the researcher had to seek the support of the President of the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) who contacted parents already engaged in the school and those who were available during school hours. Therefore, the sampling of the focus group interviews was mostly composed of housewives who were usually free during school hours and parents who were actively involved in the ZEP schools. This sampling composition was only partially representative of the majority of ZEP school parents.

Recommendations for future research

There is room for further research to explore a bigger sample of ZEP schools or examine whether there is a difference between the rural and urban ZEP schools. Further investigation into the strengths and weaknesses of the ZEP school project, in the context of an inclusive education for social justice, could establish the benefits of eliminating them as a separate category with the mainstream system.

Similarly, further research could explore the relevance and impact of ethnic and religious difference within a recognitive framework, such as the model provided in this thesis of an inclusive education for social justice in the Mauritian education system.

It is also suggested that additional research could focus on the role and impact of the PTA groups and other informal 'school-parents' groups in primary schools and how these parent groups could be further engaged in the decision-making and educational processes. It would also be important to investigate parental perceptions of their role, aspirations,

expectations and challenges concerning their involvement in the school and the learning process of their children.

Further research could also explore the leadership values, practices and challenges of Head Teachers in ZEP schools, especially with regards to their multiple roles that they are expected to play within the schools, in collaboration with the parents, community leaders and corporate sector. Their successful practices could inform the MOE and future school leaders about leadership practices in disadvantaged areas and the type of supportive framework which they require.

It is also recommended that further research be undertaken with regard to the educational journey of ZEP school learners who were successful or unsuccessful at the CPE exams, with the aim of investigating their ensuing personal and educational achievements either in secondary schooling or pre-vocational schools.

As noted in Chapter One of this study, at the time of finalising this thesis, a new government was elected in Mauritius and it proposed a major educational reform at primary school level. Some of their proposals were: a) Nine Year Continuous Basic Education; b) revised curriculum; c) introduction of remedial education; d) replacement of the CPE exams with a new evaluation method (a combination of written examinations and school-based assessment); and, e) elimination of the prevocational stream. All these proposed reforms are expected to be implemented as from 2017 and some of them are similar to three suggested recommendations of this study.

Concluding note: “Re-visioning” the Mauritian education system

Reflecting upon alternative ways of understanding and implementing an inclusive education, Slee (2011) proposed an alternative vision of the process of education which looks at the different facets of schooling for young people and claims that this process is a “collective engagement” (p. 162). Therefore, the last section of this chapter articulates a

transformed Mauritian education system through the presentation of a vignette. The vignette presents Annie, a nine-year-old girl from a suburb of Mauritius, reflecting on her environment and her experience in a transformed Mauritian education system.

Annie from Blue Sky School

Annie is nine years old and lives in Starlight town, one of the suburbs of Port-Louis, the capital of Mauritius. She has two younger siblings, a mother who works in a nearby tuna factory and a father who is a car mechanic.

Annie has often heard people say that Starlight town is not a nice place to live in, but she likes this place and its people. It is true that Starlight town is a crowded area and that it is not always very clean. This is because not everybody has running water and the people from the town council do not always collect their garbage. In her street, the houses are very small, with rusty corrugated iron roofs which often leak on rainy days but the families do their best to keep their house nice and tidy. Annie also does not mind the muddy lanes or the neighbour's loud music; she likes the friendly people of her neighbourhood. Here, most people know and care for each other. If her mother finishes work late, her neighbour Mrs. Françoise, keeps an eye on them until their parents are back. However, her school friend Ryan believes that Starlight town is a really ugly place where there are lots of drug addicts and families always fighting. In his own family, every day, his dad used to fight with his mother about money. His mother was fed up and decided to take him and his two stepsisters to live at his auntie's place, not far from Starlight town. Luckily for Ryan, public bus transport is free for all school learners but, sometimes, when his mother has gone to work, he does not feel like going to school and he stays home. Even though Annie tells him that school is important, he is still not convinced why he should be at school all day.

But for Annie, what she loves the most is her school. It is called Blue Sky School and is located at the heart of Starlight town. Most of the boys and girls of the neighbourhood attend Blue Sky School which is a government school. Since the MOE has introduced the nine-year schooling programme in Mauritius, all Mauritian children attend primary school for nine years until the age of fourteen. Annie's mother told her that Blue Sky School used to be

a ZEP school but, with the changes in the education system and a lot of meetings between the important people from the MOE and the parents of Starlight town, it has become a Primary and Vocational School which is a new type of school in Mauritius.

For Mr. Pierre, who works at the MOE, the change in the structure and culture of ZEP schools is an important step forward for many Mauritian children. He was himself a learner in a ZEP school and had difficulties being understood by the teachers. So, he decided to become a school teacher with the aim of making a difference in schools located in low socio-economic suburbs. After working for ten years as a teacher, he is now employed at the MOE as an advisor in inclusive education. He spent several weeks meeting and discussing issues and ideas with the teachers, school leaders, parents and community leaders of Blue Sky School. He also wanted to know more about life in Starlight town and what the parents wished to see in the new school. The parents explained that they wished to see a balance between academic subjects and vocational ones which would, hopefully, facilitate job opportunities for their children. Mr. Pierre and some policy makers from the MOE also established a strong relationship with the nearby Catholic School. Through their frequent consultations, both government and Catholic schools have agreed to work in partnership based on a shared vision: *To be at the service of the learners and their community through care and excellence.*

In Blue Sky School, the learners are divided into three levels: Lower primary level; Intermediate primary level; Senior primary level. Every three years, if the learners have made good progress, they are upgraded to the next level. In Lower primary level, Annie studied Mathematics, Science, and Civic education which were all taught in Kreol Morisien language which nearly all the learners speak at home. She also attended classes about the three main languages which are spoken in Mauritius: Kreol Morisien; French and English. At the end of Lower Primary level, Annie's class teacher met with her and her parents

separately for a special meeting. After a long conversation, her parents and teacher told Annie that she was making good progress in all her subjects but, since she had difficulties in writing and reading, she would also attend an extra class called 'Fun with Words' in Intermediate primary level.

Annie is currently in Year two of Intermediate primary level and now, she feels more confident in reading and writing. She attended only one year in the 'Fun with Words' class and is no longer afraid to write down the words on the Interactive board. At Intermediate primary level, Annie and her classmates not only study the same subjects as in Lower primary level but they also attend co-curricular classes which are part of a flexible time-table. While the class teachers prepare collaborative lesson plans for team-teaching, learners can attend Creative Arts, Music or Physical Education classes. In Annie's class, there are 25 learners and her class teacher, Ms Marie, is sometimes helped by a teacher aide, Mr. Kamal. After following a special training which qualified them to teach in schools which cater for students needing extra academic support, Ms Marie and Mr Kamal applied to work in Blue Sky School. An interview panel consisting of the Head Teacher, a Ministry representative, a current staff member, and a parent, all ensured that the applicants were keen to work in this community and had high expectations for the students and community. Annie likes the help provided by Mr. Kamal: he sits next to the children and helps them whenever they have not understood the teacher's instructions. The other day, the Physical Education teacher and Mr. Kamal organised a special class: the class learnt about metres and kilometres by doing sprints and long distance races. This special class made learning so much fun!

Her mother and many other parents from Blue Sky School are part of a team called *Parents Engazé*⁴³ which aims at providing parental support to the activities and decision making process at Blue Sky School. For example, Annie's mother and other parents of the

⁴³ Engaged parents

neighbourhood introduced Starlight town to newly appointed and current staff. In this way, the school teachers and leaders learnt more about the social and cultural realities of the learners without any prejudices or presumptions. Every alternate month, two members of the team *Parents Engazé* attend a consultative meeting with the officers of the MOE so as to provide an update of the school's progress and participate in educational debates of the Mauritian education system. Furthermore, with the help of *Parents Engazé*, the staff of Blue Sky School often organise non-formal meetings such as “fancy fair” (or fête) as well as cleaning and painting days at the school. Such school-community initiatives are in line with the motto of *Parents Engazé* which is “Nu lavwa, Nu lekol⁴⁴”. At the end of each school year, learners and teachers from Blue Sky School organise and present a free Talent Show as a way of thanking the parents and community of Starlight town for their continuous support. It is through such initiative that Blue Sky School won an award for “The most innovative primary school of Mauritius” in the previous year.

Since Blue Sky School used to be a ZEP school, it is still benefitting from the ‘Hot Meal’ programme and the help of private public companies which sponsor the school activities. However, Annie and some of her friends have opted to be part of the ‘Hot Meal’ programme only three times a week. For the rest of the school days, their parents provide them with a packed lunch because they do not want to be seen as dependent on ‘charity’ and are aware that other needier learners would benefit from the ‘Hot meal’ programme. Some of the learners, from Blue Sky School, who experience difficulties at home and are often absent from school, also benefit from the weekly visit of the Parent-Mediator, a resource person from Starlight town. The Parent-Mediator also organises monthly training sessions at Blue Sky School for the parents of the neighbourhood: courses such as ‘Household Budget’; ‘How to preserve fruits and vegetables’; ‘Sewing and cooking skills’ are freely offered. Annie’s

⁴⁴ Our Voice, Our School

father and other parents also attend 'English and French literacy programme' which is held on Saturday afternoons for parents and any community member who wish to learn how to read and write these languages.

The school management and teachers of Blue Sky School have learnt to work as a team; it was not an easy task for the school's Head Teacher to create this team spirit. With the help of the Cluster Coordinator, the Head Teacher held several training sessions with the teachers to reflect on their teaching and pastoral roles at Blue Sky School. One of the key challenges for some of the teachers, who were in the school before the new employment policies, was to let go of their cultural prejudices concerning the academic ability of the learners and what to expect from the community of Starlight town. For instance, Ms Valerie, one of the teachers from Senior Primary level, declared in one of the meetings: "As teachers, we can receive thousands of sessions on Cultural Competency but at the end of the day, the plain fact remains that these parents are only preoccupied with getting 'high' and collecting partners!"

However, a younger teacher Ms Sunita replied: "I am grateful for these sessions as I also used to think that parents from Starlight town only wanted to party, but, by taking more time to meet with them and talk to some of the community leaders I realised that, just like us, these parents want the very best for their children but don't know how to do it. For instance, you all know the difficulties that I had with Ryan this term and his mother told me that she could not cope with him anymore. But by giving her some tips and by providing Ryan with this special attention which he needed, he is now progressing both in behaviour and his studies. Last week, he even told me: 'Miss Sunita, I won't skip school anymore...I want to learn more about Maths'. So, for me, these meetings between management, experienced and early career teachers really make me grow as a teacher...we share our difficulties and together, we can find strategies to deal with them".

Sharing the enthusiasm of many teachers from Blue Sky School, Annie is looking forward to undertaking Senior primary level when she will also have the option of studying either 'Food & Nutrition', 'Woodwork', 'Mechanics' or 'Tourism'. She is aware that she needs to work hard as, at the end of Senior primary level, she will sit for an entrance examination for Secondary School. However, the results of this exam will count for only half of her overall results: the evaluation system also takes into account her progress monitored through continuous assessment.

In the future, Annie would like to be a Physical Education teacher for primary school children. The Physical education teacher told her that she was doing well at long distance running and that she should continue running when attending secondary school. She liked the idea of becoming a teacher: teaching in a school like Blue Sky School where she could help children who, like her, want to make their family proud and improve their community.

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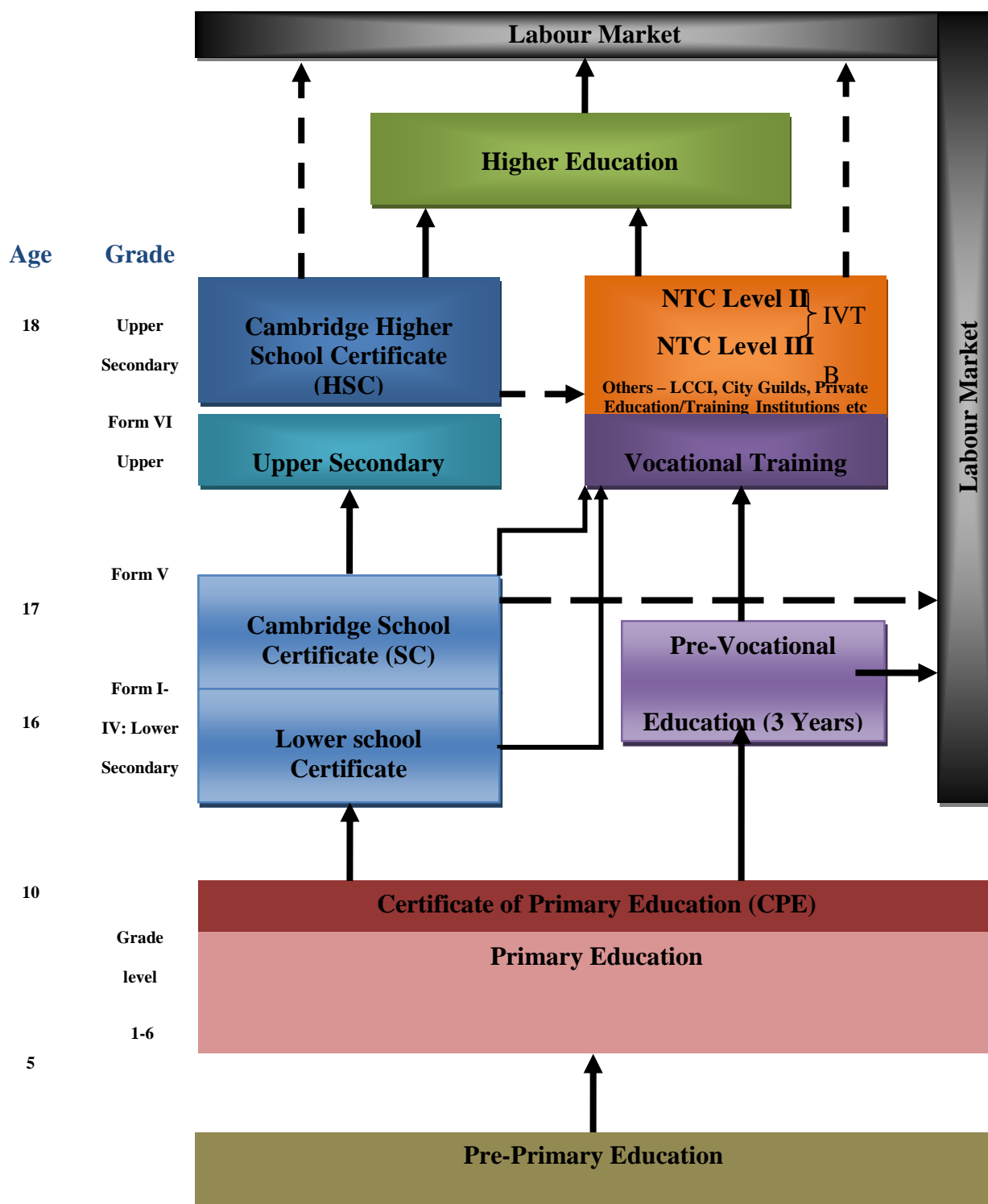
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Appendices**Appendix A: Number of ZEP school learners examined at CPE exams and****Percentage pass rate**

(2006-2014)

Number	Examined	% Pass
2006	2521	36.5
2007	2271	36.0
2008	2197	35.9
2009	2123	35.2
2010	1958	36.2
2011	1956	35.6
2012	1867	40.6
2013	1517	46.4
2014	1332	46.8

Appendix B: Structure of the Mauritian education system⁴⁵



⁴⁵ Structure prior to educational reform of the year 2015

Appendix C: Current grading system of results at CPE exams (prior to reform proposed by the Ministry of Education in 2015)

Grade	Units	Marks (Total:100)
A+	6	90 and above
A	5	75 and above but less than 90
B	4	60 and above but less than 75
C	3	50 and above but less than 60
D	2	40 and above but less than 50
E	1	30 and above but less than 40
U	-	Under 30

**Appendix D: Percentage pass rate of the four ZEP schools at the CPE exams
(2006-2013)**

Performance of the participating ZEP schools at CPE exams (2006-2013)

Percentage pass rate at CPE exams (%)								
Schools	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Sunflower	28.2	27.6	30.2	29	32.7	35	37.3	51.58
Redrock	34.7	44.4	61.1	48	29.3	21.42	36.2	50
Lady of the								
Sea	48.5	N/A ⁴⁶	53.6	48.8	45.3	49.04	36 ⁴⁷	54.69
Mountain	57.5	58.3	69.5	61.1	79.1	61.9	95.65	80

⁴⁶ Not available

⁴⁷ Italics show less than 40 % which is minimum national average pass mark

**Appendix E: Information & invitation letters to school staff to participate in
study**



**INFORMATION LETTER TO HEAD TEACHERS PARTICIPATING IN
INTERVIEWS**

PROJECT TITLE: Perceptions and Practices of Inclusive Education for Social Justice:

The case of ZEP schools in Mauritius

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr. Deborah Robertson

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Lily-Claire Deenmamode

STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

This is a formal request to seek your permission, as the Head Teacher of (Name of school), to participate in interviews conducted by me, Lily-Claire Deenmamode, a student researcher.

The interviews will consist of two sessions of no more than one hour each.

The information collected in the interviews will contribute to a research project which seeks to explore the perceptions and strategies of the learners, parents, teachers and leaders of the schools which are part of the 'Zones d'Education Prioritaires' (known as the ZEP schools).

The research project will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Australian Catholic University under the supervision of Dr. Deborah Robertson.

The ZEP project aims to provide an inclusive education through specially supported schools by improving the academic performance of the learners who come from low socio-economic areas. We hope that this research project will be significant for teachers, learners, parents and school leaders of ZEP schools by offering the opportunity to reflect on the achievements and challenges of these models of inclusive schools.

If you agree to participate, data will be collected through in depth interviews which will be audio-recorded. While the identity of the participants will be known to the researcher, privacy and confidentiality will be maintained according to ACU's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). All interview participants will be provided with a code name. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this project; however, prior arrangements have been made with the Ministry of Education so that any participant has access to the Ministry's educational psychologist if desired.

The duration of each interview session with the participant will be approximately one hour and all sessions will be held during school hours, following prior arrangements made with you, as the Head Teacher, and on the school's premises. I will personally approach you so as to validate the interview transcripts.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time without adverse consequences. Any withdrawal will not prejudice in any way the participants' future care and involvement with the researcher.

The study will be published as a thesis for assessment and the results from the study may be summarized and used at conference presentations and appear in publications. All respondents

and schools will receive feedback of the results of the research and they are assured that their participation in this research will not be identified.

If you have any questions regarding this project you should direct them to the Principal Supervisor:

Dr Deborah Robertson,
Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, St Patrick Campus,
(61) 39953 3730
deborah.robertson@acu.edu.au

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Principal Supervisor has not been able to satisfy, you may write to:

Chair, HREC
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY, VIC, 3065
Ph: 03 9953 3150
Fax: 03 9953 3315
Email: res.ethics@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome. If you agree to participate in the study, please sign both copies of the consent form and retain a copy for your own records. The other copy must be given to the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Deborah Robertson
Principal Supervisor

Lily-Claire Deenmamode
Research Student

INFORMATION LETTER TO TEACHERS PARTICIPATING IN A SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE



PROJECT TITLE: Perceptions and Practices of Inclusive Education for Social Justice:

The case of ZEP schools in Mauritius

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr. Deborah Robertson

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Lily-Claire Deenmamode

STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

This is a formal request to ask you to complete a questionnaire designed for teachers working in ZEP schools. This is part of a research project being conducted by me, Lily-Claire Deenmamode, a student researcher.

The information collected in the survey questionnaire will contribute to a research project which seeks to explore the perceptions and strategies of the learners, parents, teachers and leaders of the schools which are part of the 'Zones d'Education Prioritaires' (known as the ZEP schools). The research project will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Australian Catholic University under the supervision of Dr. Deborah Robertson.

The ZEP project aims to provide an inclusive education through specially supported schools by improving the academic performance of the learners who come from low socio-economic areas. We hope that this research project will be significant for teachers, learners, parents and

school leaders of ZEP schools by offering the opportunity to reflect on the achievements and challenges of these models of inclusive schools.

The conduct of the research will be predominantly qualitative. You have heard the brief presentation of the project at your school's staff meeting and data will be now collected through questionnaires which will be administered to all teachers willing to participate in the research project, from Standards 1-6. The questionnaire will be provided to you after receiving your consent letter attached to this document.

The expected completion time of the questionnaire for teachers is about 45 minutes. The data collection will be held during school hours, following prior arrangements made with the Head Teacher and on the school's premises. Teachers will not be required to declare their personal details such as their names and address. Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained according to ACU's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this project, however, prior arrangements have been made with the Ministry of Education so that any participant has access to the Ministry's educational psychologist if desired.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. However, you cannot withdraw after submitting your survey questionnaire as surveys are non-identifiable. Any withdrawal, prior to administering the questionnaires, will not prejudice in any way the participants' future care and involvement with the researcher.

The study will be published as a thesis for assessment and results from the study may be summarized and used at conference presentations and appear in publications. All respondents

and schools will receive feedback of the results of the research and they are assured that their participation in this research will not be identified.

I am providing you with two copies of a consent form which I kindly request you to read, sign and return in the provided envelope to the Head Teacher within a week of the staff meeting. I will then sign them both and return a copy for your records.

If you have any questions regarding this project you should direct them to the Principal Supervisor:

Dr Deborah Robertson,
Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, St Patrick Campus,
(61) 39953 3730
deborah.robertson@acu.edu.au

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Principal Supervisor has not been able to satisfy, you may write to:

Chair, HREC

c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY, VIC, 3065
Ph: 03 9953 3150
Fax: 03 9953 3315
Email: res.ethics@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome. If you agree to participate in the study, please sign both copies of the consent form and retain a copy for your own records. The other copy must be given to the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Deborah Robertson
Principal Supervisor

Lily-Claire Deenmamode
Research Student

INFORMATION LETTER TO CLUSTER COORDINATORS



PROJECT TITLE: Perceptions and Practices of Inclusive Education for Social Justice:

The case of ZEP schools in Mauritius

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr. Deborah Robertson

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Lily-Claire Deenmamode

STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

This is a formal request to seek your permission, as a Cluster Coordinator of (Name of Zone) for myself, Lily-Claire Deenmamode, as a student researcher, to participate in two interview sessions of one hour each.

The research project seeks to explore the perceptions and strategies of the learners, parents, teachers and leaders of the schools which are part of the 'Zones d'Education Prioritaires' (known as the ZEP schools).

The ZEP project aims to provide an inclusive education through specially supported schools by improving the academic performance of the learners who come from low socio-economic areas. We hope that this research project will be significant for teachers, learners, parents and school leaders of ZEP schools by offering the opportunity to reflect on the achievements and challenges of these models of inclusive schools.

This project, which is being conducted by Lily-Claire Deenmamode, will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Australian Catholic University under the supervision of Dr. Deborah Robertson.

If you agree to participate, data will be collected through in depth interviews which will be audio-recorded. While the identity of the participants will be known to the researcher, privacy and confidentiality will be maintained according to ACU's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). All interview participants will be provided with a code name. There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this project; however, prior arrangements have been made with the Ministry of Education so that any participant has access to the Ministry's educational psychologist if he/she feels the need to.

The duration of each interview session with the participant will be approximately one hour and all sessions will be held during school hours, following prior arrangements made with the Head Teacher and on the school's premises. The researcher will personally approach you so as to validate the interview transcripts.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time without adverse consequences. Any withdrawal will not prejudice in any way the participants' future care and involvement with the researcher.

The study will be published as a thesis for assessment and the results from the study may be summarized and used at conference presentations and appear in publications. All

respondents and schools will receive feedback of the results of the research and they are assured that their participation in this research will not be identified.

If you have any questions regarding this project you should direct them to the Principal Supervisor:

Dr Deborah Robertson,
Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, St Patrick Campus,
(61) 39953 3730
deborah.robertson@acu.edu.au

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Principal Supervisor has not been able to satisfy, you may write to:

Chair, HREC
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY, VIC, 3065
Ph: 03 9953 3150
Fax: 03 9953 3315
Email: res.ethics@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome. If you agree to participate in the study, please sign both copies of the consent form and retain a copy for your own records. The other copy must be given to the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Deborah Robertson
Principal Supervisor

Lily-Claire Deenmamode
Research Student

Appendix F: Interview schedules

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE- SCHOOL LEADERS & SYSTEM LEADERS

1. The ZEP project is considered as a model of inclusive education. What do you understand by the concept of inclusive education?
2. Describe how your ZEP school uses strategies which are in line with the concept of inclusive education.
3. What is the importance of using an inclusive approach within ZEP schools?
4. One approach to inclusive education is to enhance social justice within the schools. What do you understand by the idea of social justice in education? Do you think that ZEP schools are models of inclusive education for social justice?
5. What barriers prevent ZEP schools from implementing an inclusive education?
6. What are the changes needed within the school structure which contribute / would contribute to the implementation of an inclusive strategy?
7. As a school leader of a ZEP school, what are the values which guide your leadership?
8. What leadership practices are effective in leading a ZEP school?
9. As the school leader of a ZEP school, what kind of additional support is needed to facilitate your leadership?
10. How do you include the parents and the community in the school life/ decision making?
11. Within this particular neighbourhood, how the family and community help in the educational achievement?

12. What are some of conflicts/clashes (if any) between the parents' background and school's ways of doing things?
13. How are the curriculum & pedagogy practiced in ZEP schools linked to the needs and realities of the learners & community?
14. How is the current assessment practice adapted to the realities (learning styles, cultural & educational experience) and needs of the ZEP learners?
15. What other criteria would be helpful to measure success of ZEP schools?
16. As a school leader, how do you see the future of the ZEP project? Can you propose any recommendation?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE- PARENTS

1. What do you understand by the ZEP project?
2. In what ways is the project contributing to learning?
3. Describe how the school provide support to the learners and the community?
4. What barriers prevent learners in ZEP schools from successfully passing CPE exams?
5. How does the school involve you in the school life?
6. In which areas would you like to be involved further?
7. In what ways are you involved in the decision making? Do they often contact the Parent-Mediator? In which circumstances?
8. Do the school's resources and infrastructures meet the learners' needs? What is further needed? Do you think that ZEP schools are doing the maximum to help the kids?
9. Describe the school- parents' relationship/teachers and parents' relationship/teachers and learners' relationship. How can it be improved?
10. How does the family's and community's culture hinder or favour educational achievement?
11. How are the curriculum & pedagogy practiced in ZEP schools linked to the needs and realities of the learners & community? What other topics/subjects/activities are needed?
12. How is the current assessment practice adapted to the realities (learning styles, cultural & educational experience) and needs of the ZEP learners?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE- LEARNERS

1. This school is part of the ZEP project? Have you ever heard of the ZEP project?
What is it about?
2. Are you happy to be in this school? Would you prefer to go to another school?
3. What are the things that you like the most about the school?
4. What are the things that you like the least about the school?
5. How does school help you to learn/to pass the CPE exams?
6. Are there subjects that you would have liked to discover?
7. Does the school help you in your daily life? How?
8. Can you describe some resources that you school possess? What types of other resources would you wish to see in your school?
9. If you could, what are some of the things that you could change in the school?
Why?
10. How do your family and the community help you to learn at school? Draw your school environment?
11. What are the things that you like with the neighbourhood?
12. What are the things that you don't like?
13. What job would you like to do when you grow up? Do you think that the school helps you to achieve your dream?

Appendix G: Questionnaire

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRES

**TITLE OF STUDY: Perceptions and Practices of Inclusive Education for Social
Justice:**

The case of ZEP schools in Mauritius

SECTION A- INCLUSIVE EDUCATION & SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. The ZEP project is considered as a model of inclusive education.

What do you understand by the term “inclusive education”?

2. In the current school in which you are working, how does the school implement an inclusive education?

3. What are the barriers which prevent this school from achieving an inclusive education?

4. How do you personally implement an inclusive strategy in the classroom and in the school in general?

5. What are the main challenges that you face when working in a ZEP school?

6. What factors would encourage teachers to work in ZEP schools?

7. (a) What type of training did you receive? (You may tick more than one)

- Special Needs Behavioural Curriculu
 Community relationships Other (please specify):-----

(b) How would you rate the training received?

- Excellent Satisfactory Poor Inadequate

(b) Why?

8. What other type of training would you wish to have in order to work in ZEP schools?

9. (a) How would you evaluate the teaching resources available in ZEP schools?

- Excellent Good Satisfactory Poor Inadequate

(b) Why?

10. What types of teaching resources would you wish to have in order to support the special pedagogy used in ZEP schools?

11. (a) Is the curriculum relevant to the needs of ZEP learners?

Yes No

(b) Why?

Please suggest what is needed to improve the curriculum content so as to meet the needs of learners in ZEP schools?

12. (a) Are the CPE examinations an adequate way of evaluating the progress of learners in ZEP schools?

Yes No

(b) Why?

13. What do you understand by the term “social justice”?

14. In what ways can ZEP schools be considered as a means to achieve social justice?

15. In what ways does this ZEP school practise social justice?

16. How would you describe your relationship with the parents? (How often would you meet them? For what reasons would you meet the learner's parents? Are they interested to meet teachers and be involved in academic and non-academic issues of the school?

17. How would you describe your relationship with the parents? (How often would you meet them? For what reasons would you meet the learner's parents? Are they interested to meet teachers and be involved in academic and non-academic issues of the school?

18(a) What are the barriers which prevent learners in ZEP schools from realising their full potential? (You may tick more than one)

Home environment Neighbourhood Overloaded curriculum

Type of assessment Pedagogy Child's motivation & personal

Other (Please specify):-----

18. (b) How can the school help to overcome these barriers?

19. (a) As a teacher, are you consulted by the Ministry of Education when it comes to decision-making in the ZEP school where you are working?

Yes No

(b) If yes, please provide situations when your advice was sought.

20. In what situations, should the Ministry of education seek the teachers' advice?

21. (a) Are parents from ZEP schools consulted by the school?

Yes No

How would you describe the family environment of learners in ZEP schools?

22. How does the school reach out to the learners and their family?

23. How do you see the future of ZEP schools? Any recommendations that you could make to improve learning and teaching in ZEP schools?

24. Any other comments related to how the ministry can bring more social justice within ZEP schools?

SECTION B- DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender: M F

How many years of service in the Ministry of Education? -----

How many years of experience in working in ZEP schools? -----

How long have you been working in this particular ZEP school? -----

Appendix H: Excerpt from Research Journal

Sunflower School

Day 1- 27/05/13

As per my arrangements with CC1 and SL1, I have identified Sunflower School as the 4th and last ZEP school where I'll be collecting data. Since I have been looking for a ZEP school with a bigger population compared to the other three ZEP schools of the study, Sunflower was the most appropriate one as it is the most second most populated ZEP school of the project. It has a population of 528 learners: 271 boys and 257 girls...

I have first visited the school on the 23.05.13 for a half day workshop organised by CC1 for the teachers working in Grade Six in her particular cluster/zone. I was personally invited by CC1 to attend the meeting and share the objectives of the research with the teachers.

...Day one here and I have already scheduled two classroom visits in two sections (Blue & Green) of Grade Six with Ms Julia & Romina respectively. The last section (Red) of Grade Six will be scheduled for the following day if the teacher is agreeable to it.

...Mondays are Physical Education (P.E) classes for the learners in upper grade levels. It is the first time since the beginning of the data collection in the ZEP school that I have met a P.E teacher. The learners do not have special clothes during these classes- they wear their school uniform.

...there is no green strip in the school yard of Sunflower School...

...informal conversation with P.E teacher who works once a fortnight at Sunflower School but is a full-time employee at the MOEHR and so, she works in four other primary schools. She complained about the fact that, in some primary schools, the Head Teacher

was not in favour of sending their learners for regional or national sports competitions (such as Mini Soccer tournaments) or even organising the Sports Day for the school as it is not a compulsory event in the school calendar. She also described the timetable for P.E classes at Sunflower School: a flexible one and has a good support from HT4 and the class teachers. She run classes with the lower grade levels (Grade level 1-3) and upper grade levels (Grade levels 4-6) every alternate week. She considered that the learners from Sunflower School do well at sports and that she hardly had disciplinary issues with them. In fact, the learners wish to do more P.E classes and found that the class duration of 25 minutes was too short.

Appendix I: Master list of groups of codes

Master list of groups of codes for the definition of social justice across four ZEP schools

Groups of codes	Equal consideration; educational opportunities for poor children;
Redrock School	right to education for all; participating in society; ZEP project challenges social justice ethos because of ‘labelling’
Groups of codes	No discrimination based on religious faith or ethnic group; learners’
Mountain School	social and educational progress; educational success; valuing & respecting human being; social engagement; “equal footing”
Groups of codes	Educational success & opportunities as other regions; getting out of
Lady of the Sea School	poverty through education; recognising and respecting the learners’ identity; rights to education; educational rights for the poorest to achieve social equality
Groups of codes	Educational rights and opportunities for the poorest to achieve social
Sunflower School	equality; educational equality and success.

Master list of groups of codes for the perceptions of inclusive education across four ZEP schools

Groups of codes	Social integration & inclusion; Education for all & diversity; Special
Redrock School	needs; School care & welcome; Child's recognition & identity; escape marginalisation; Adapted & adequate facilities; Learners' happiness
Groups of codes	Taking everybody on board; Social integration & inclusion;
Mountain School	Involving all stakeholders & partners; Catering for all pupils irrespective of strengths & weaknesses & background
Groups of codes	Education for all children: high/low academic abilities/backgrounds
Lady of the Sea School	to achieve academically & socially; Child's recognition & identity- Learning in mother tongue for better comprehension; School care & welcome; Taking everybody on board; Providing equal social & academic opportunities
Groups of codes	Engaging the child in the learning process to integrate school; social
Sunflower School	integration & inclusion; escape marginalisation; Education for all learners; Recognizing each child's abilities and developing their potentials

Master list of groups of codes for the intended practices of inclusive education across four ZEP schools

Groups of codes	Sense of welcome & care; Recognising learners' identity &
Redrock School	difficulties; Distribution of resources; Stakeholders' collaboration; Inclusive classroom strategies
Groups of codes	Inclusive classroom strategies; Stakeholders' collaboration;
Mountain School	Distribution of resources; Adapting to learners' needs
Groups of codes	Adapting to learners' needs; Inclusive classroom strategies; Sense of
Lady of the Sea School	welcome & care; Staff's understanding & goodwill; Distribution of resources; Stakeholders' collaboration; Recognising learners' identity & difficulties
Groups of codes	Being literate & functional in society; Adapting to learners' needs ;
Sunflower School	Distribution of resources; Stakeholders' collaboration; Recognising learners' identity & difficulties

Appendix J: Approval from Human Research Ethics Committee

Human Research Ethics Committee

Committee Approval Form

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Deborah Robertson Melbourne Campus

Co-Investigators: Geraldine Larkins Melbourne Campus

Student Researcher: Lily-Claire Virginie Deenmamode Melbourne Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:

Perceptions and practices of inclusive education for social justice: the case of ZEP schools in Mauritius

for the period: 18/12/2012-30/06/2013

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: 2012 284V

Special Condition/s of Approval

Prior to commencement of your research, the following permissions are required to be submitted to the ACU HREC:

The following **standard** conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007)* apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:

- security of records
- compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
- compliance with special conditions, and

(ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:

- proposed changes to the protocol
- unforeseen circumstances or events
- adverse effects on participants

The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.



Signed: Date:19/12/12.....

(Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)

**Appendix K: Official consent from Ministry of Education and Human Resources prior
to data collection & official consent from BEC Mauritius**



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Ref: ME/0/305/343

23 July 2012

Mrs Lily-Claire Deenmamode
71, Robinson Pde, Narre Warren South
Melbourne, 3805

Dear Madam,

Request to undertake research project in ZEP Schools

Please refer to your letter dated 14 June 2012 on the above.

2. I am pleased to inform you that the Ministry has given its approval to your request for carrying out the above study in the ZEP schools in Mauritius.
3. It is, however, understood that:
 - (i) The Ministry will not be required to provide any financial or logistic support.
 - (ii) You will have to undertake to submit a copy of your findings to the Ministry.
 - (iii) All information will have to be treated with utmost confidentiality.
4. You are invited to contact the Ministry for all necessary arrangements prior to starting your survey.

Yours faithfully,

for Senior Chief Executive

Official consent from Ministry of Education and Human Resources during data collection

GOVERNMENT
OF
MAURITIUS

MEMORANDUM

M.G. Form 4 (M)

REF: ME/ 305/ 3 T1
Date: 22 April 2013
From: Ag. Senior Chief Executive, Ministry of Education and Human Resources
To: [REDACTED]

Request to undertake research: Lily-Claire Deenmamode

Please note that the above named student researcher has obtained permission to undertake research work in ZEP schools including [REDACTED].

2. The Ministry would be grateful if you would provide help as appropriate in the context of the research.
3. Thanking you for your collaboration.



For. Ag. SCE

Official request by BEC to school leader of Lady of the Sea Catholic School to support researcher

BUREAU DE L'ÉDUCATION CATHOLIQUE
Incorporating
 Roman Catholic Education Authority
 Roman Catholic Secondary Education Board
 Service Diocésain d'Éducation Technique

11 February 2013

[REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]


Dear Madam

Please note that Mrs Lily-Claire Deenmamode, has been authorised to undertake a research study at [REDACTED], as part of her degree of Doctor of Philosophy with the Australian Catholic University.

You are kindly invited together with the personnel of [REDACTED] to extend the necessary support and assistance to Mrs Deenmamode.

Thank you for your collaboration.

Yours faithfully


 [REDACTED]
 Director



Appendix L: Information letter to parent whose child will be interviewed & Consent form from the parents

**INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENT WHOSE CHILD WILL BE
INTERVIEWED**



PROJECT TITLE: Perceptions and Practices of Inclusive Education for Social Justice:

The case of ZEP schools in Mauritius

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr. Deborah Robertson

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Lily-Claire Deenmamode

STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

Dear Parents

I, Lily-Claire Deenmamode, am carrying out a research project in (name of school) looking at how the ZEP school project is helping children with their learning. Your child has been nominated to participate in this research project if you are willing to give your permission.

Why take part in this research project?

I want to listen to students in ZEP schools so that they tell me about their experience of learning in their school. We hope that this will lead to improving education in Mauritius.

Researchers

This research project is being carried out by me, Mrs. Lily-Claire Deenmamode, who is supervised by Dr. Deborah Robertson from the Australian Catholic University. I have worked for 8 years as a secondary school teacher at the Loreto College of Rose-Hill and 3 years as a lecturer at the University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM).

What is involved?

If you give permission for your child to participate in the study, your child will be asked to participate in 2 sessions of about 1 hour each, on a one-to-one basis with me. Photos of your child might also be taken during our interviews.

All the interviews will be done at school, in a special room which is open but safe from people hearing their conversations. The interviews will be carried out during school time but you can be sure that your child will not miss any school lessons.

I will use French and Creole but your child can use either language in which he/she feels more at ease. The interviews will be recorded by using a mini radio cassette. In order to keep all the information safe, your child's real name will not be used; a code name will be given.

What will happen to the information I collect?

The information will be treated with great confidentiality. Transcripts of the interviews will be explained to your child so that he/she can approve the content before the information is used in the research.

No names will be used and all information, including audio recordings, electronic files and photos will be destroyed after a period of 5 years.

Your child is not under any obligation to participate. If he/she agrees to participate, he/she can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

Information from the interviews will be summarized and published as a thesis for assessment or it may be used at conference presentations and appear in publications. Your consent will be sought before using photos of your child. If the photos are used, your child will not be identified.

All participants and schools will receive feedback of the results of the research and they are assured that their participation in this research will not be identified.

If you have any questions regarding this project you should direct them to the Principal Supervisor:

Dr Deborah Robertson,

Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, St Patrick Campus,

(61) 39953 3730

deborah.robertson@acu.edu.au

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Principal Supervisor has not been able to satisfy, you may write to:

Chair, HREC

c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)

Australian Catholic University

Melbourne Campus

Locked Bag 4115

FITZROY, VIC, 3065

Ph: 03 9953 3150

Fax: 03 9953 3315

Email: res.ethics@acu.edu.au

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in the study, please sign both copies of the consent form and retain a copy for your own records. The other copy must be given to the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Deborah Robertson

Principal Supervisor

Lily-Claire Deenmamode

Research Student

and information letter to learner & and Written assent from the learners

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Researcher's Copy

TITLE OF PROJECT: Perceptions and Practices of Inclusive Education for Social Justice:
The case of ZEP schools in Mauritius

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr. Deborah Robertson

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Lily-Claire Deenmamode

I (the parent/guardian) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understood the information provided in the Information letter to Parents whose child will be interviewed. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree that my child, nominated below, may participate in the interview with the researcher which will include answering questions, doing drawings about his/her schooling and photos taken during the interview session .

I agree that information collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify myself or my child in any way.

I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time without adverse consequences.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN:

SIGNATURE DATE:.....

NAME OF CHILD

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:.....

DATE:

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Participant's Copy

TITLE OF PROJECT: Perceptions and Practices of Inclusive Education for Social Justice:
The case of ZEP schools in Mauritius

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr. Deborah Robertson

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Lily-Claire Deenmamode

I (the parent/guardian) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understood the information provided in the Information letter to Parents whose child will be interviewed. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree that my child, nominated below, may participate in the interview with the researcher which will include answering questions, doing drawings about his/her schooling and photos taken during the interview session .

I agree that information collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify myself or my child in any way.

I understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time without adverse consequences.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN:

SIGNATURE DATE:.....

NAME OF CHILD

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:.....

DATE:

INFORMATION LETTER TO LEARNERS



ACU|education 
Transforming learning communities

PROJECT TITLE: Perceptions and Practices of Inclusive Education for Social Justice:

The case of ZEP schools in Mauritius

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr. Deborah Robertson

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Lily-Claire Deenmamode

STUDENT'S DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

Dear learner

I am asking you to participate in a research project which will look at the good things and difficulties of ZEP schools.

Researchers

I am Mrs. Lily-Claire Deenmamode (Miss Lily) and I am a student at Australian Catholic University.

Why participate in this research project?

In this project, you are invited to talk and draw about your everyday activities inside and outside of the classroom, at recess time and after school time. You will be asked some questions about school resources and learning in a ZEP school.

How and where do I participate?

If you agree to take part in the study, you will be asked to talk to me in two interviews of no more than one hour where I will ask you some questions about what your life at school is like. I will also ask you to do some drawings about school and I might take some pictures of you if you are willing.

All the interviews will be done at school, in a special room which is open but safe from people hearing our conversations. The interviews will be carried out during school time and you can be sure that you will not miss any class lessons.

I will use French and Creole but you can use either language. The interviews will be recorded by using a mini radio cassette. In order to keep all the information safe, your real name will not be used; a code name will be given.

What will happen to the information?

The information which you will provide to Ms. Lily will not be reported to teachers, school leaders or any other person. After listening once again to the interview, Ms. Lily will write all the information that you gave her and she will ask you if you are happy with what she has written.

All the information that you have provided will be destroyed after a period of 5 years. Some of the information that you provide will be used for my university work but it can also be used in some workshops, conferences or when writing articles.

You can accept or refuse to participate in this research project. If you agree to participate, you can still tell me if you wish to stop the interviews. You can be sure that if you no longer want to participate in the research project, Ms Lily or your teacher and Head Teacher will not be angry at you and you will not be punished for stopping the interviews.

If, during or after the interview, you want to talk to the school psychologist because you feel upset in any way, please inform the teacher or the Head Teacher as arrangements have been made with the Ministry of Education so that you can meet him/her.

Your parents have already given permission for me to speak with you. If you are happy to take part in my research interviews, I need you to sign the assent forms and give one copy to me.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Deborah Robertson

Principal Supervisor

Lily-Claire Deenmamode

Research Student

ASSENT OF PARTICIPANTS AGED UNDER 18 YEARS

Researcher's copy

TITLE OF PROJECT: Perceptions and Practices of Inclusive Education for Social Justice:

The case of ZEP schools in Mauritius

NAME OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Dr. Deborah Robertson

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Lily-Claire Deenmamode

I (the participant aged under 18 years) understand what this research project is about. What I will be asked to do has been explained to me.

I agree to take part in the interview with the researcher which will include answering questions, photos taken during interview sessions, doing drawings about my schooling.

I understand that I can stop participating in the project at any time without having to give a reason for my decision.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT AGED UNDER 18:

SIGNATURE: DATE:

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:.....

DATE:

ASSENT OF PARTICIPANTS AGED UNDER 18 YEARS

Participant's copy

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SIGNATURE:DATE:

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:.....

DATE:.....