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Inclusive practice, cultural contexts and perceptions of disability in a Christian foundation special needs school in Bangalore, India.

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With funding awarded by the University of Cumbria and also St Christopher's Trust, the principal investigator was able to collect data in two mainstream and two special educational needs schools in Bangalore, India.

The purpose of this case study is to contextualise how the concept of disability is understood by a sample of children, their parents and teachers in one of the schools - a Christian foundation Special Needs School in Bangalore, and how these perceptions are informed by cultural contexts and belief systems. The case study also identified perceptions of effective educational provision for special needs children and provided a forum for sharing good practice.

The philosophical stance adopted is constructivism utilizing an interpretive approach. Through an ethnographic lens perceptions of disability were explored, as understood by the sample of individuals from the Christian foundation Special needs school in Bangalore. Also perceptions of good practice were investigated. The case study involved data collection from a range of participants in the school community - teachers, staff, parents and the children themselves.

The project gained ethical approval from the University of Cumbria and adhered to BERA guidelines. The multi- disciplinary research team (Special Educational Needs, Religious Studies, Geography and occupational therapy colleagues) designed a range of fit for purpose data collection tools, collecting rich data through the variety of sociological and anthropological field methods - focus groups, interviews, participant observations, collection of documentary and photographic evidence and narrative reports. Data was analysed using a grounded theory constant comparison method to identify emerging themes from the data.

The study provides insights and understandings from teachers, parents and children concerning effective educational provision for SEN children.

The study maps views onto frameworks found in the literature to consider how inclusive practice is identified in different contexts. The study draws on the findings to facilitate a forum for sharing good practice in terms of strategies, techniques and resources for inclusive practice. Indeed during workshops in India there was an opportunity for exchange of views concerning perceptions of effective inclusive practice in UK and India.

The case study findings have wide appeal as they can inform a variety of audiences including teachers, parents, teacher educators, occupational therapists and policy makers in the SEN, RE and occupational therapy spheres.

