India's education system:

Challenges of Policy into practice

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Kolkata Bishop's college India 2019

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Policy into practice in Christian foundation schools in India

India's education system is one of the largest and most complex in the world with more than 1.4 million schools and more than 230 million enrolments (British Council 2014:6). Recent policies have sought to reform India's education system but some have argued with variable success. This presentation offers some insights into how policies are worked out in practice in a sample of Christian foundation schools in India with a particular emphasis on provision for special educational needs children. *In different countries attitudes vary towards inclusion or segregation of children with special educational needs. Educating special educational needs (SEN) children in special schools is the norm in India but there is a growing trend towards inclusive practice since the introduction of the Right to Education Act 2009. This keynotes draws on findings from a research project undertaken in Banagalore, India. Perspectives were sought from children, their parents and teachers to investigate perceptions of effective provision for SEN children using an interpretative approach to provide 'thick descriptions'. Findings suggest that integration of SEN children in mainstream schools was not the preferred model for both the children and adults in the study, despite this being the aim of the Right to Education Act. Separate schooling was cited by the majority of respondents as the most appropriate model for reasons of unsuitable pedagogy and curriculum, a lack of individualised attention for children and difficulties of social interaction. The study reveals that teacher dedication, passion and care for the SEN children in their classes is juxtaposed with an acknowledgment of their professional training and development needs. These findings provide teachers and policy makers with an in depth insight from this sample case study into the perspectives of children, their parents and teachers on appropriate SEN provision and the challenges of implementing inclusive practice.*

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India – education system – school- perspectives of stakeholders

India: Culturally geographically, politically and religiously diverse

Education system: attempts to meet the needs of diverse population- legislation

Variety of schools: fee paying, governmental, faith based

Case study: how a sample of special needs schools meet the needs of SEN learners

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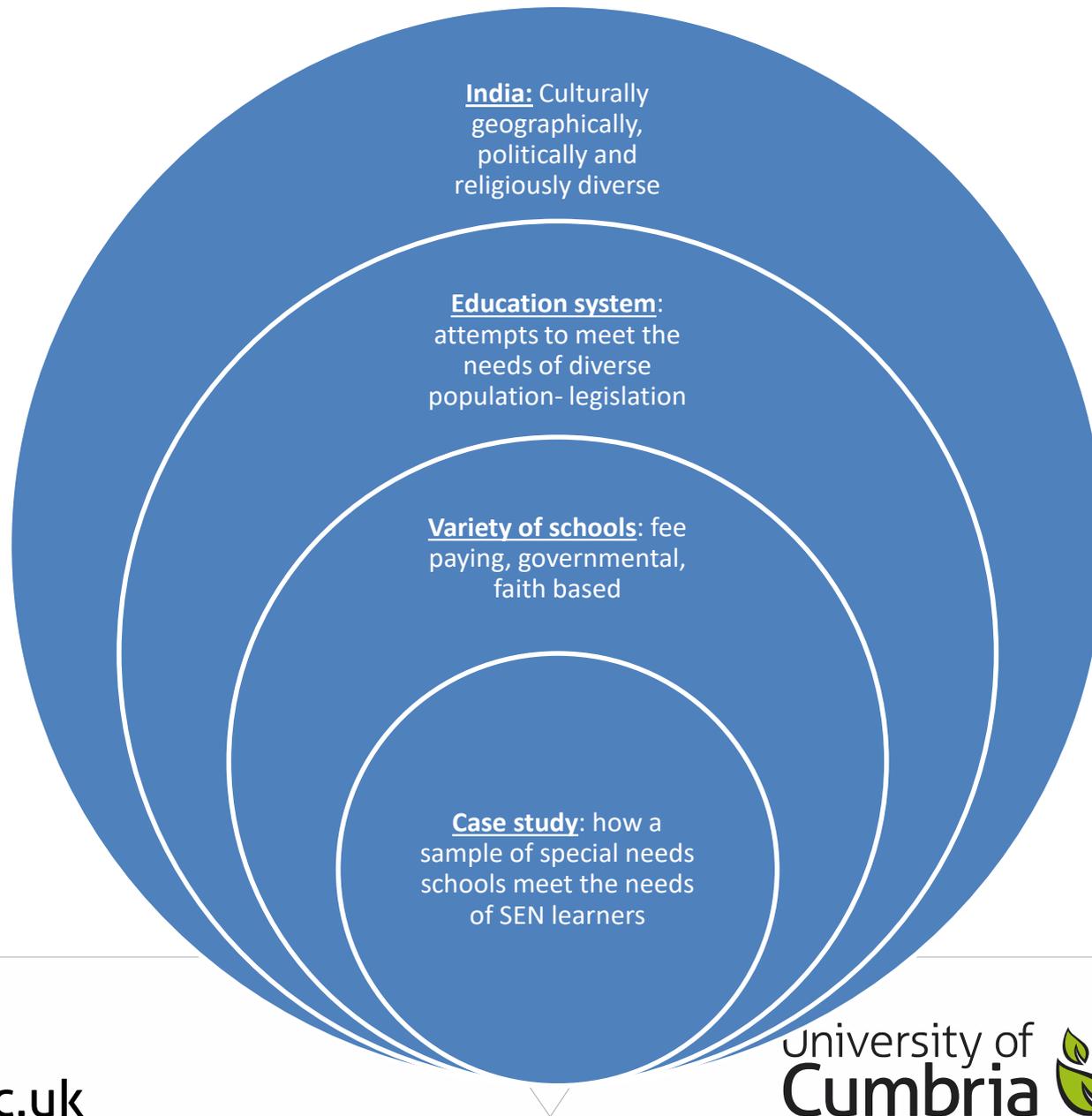
Fig 1 map of states of India http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/india_map.html Andra Pradesh is now divided –Telangana +AP

Fig 1 map of states of India

India : Diverse languages

Over 25 states in India each with their own community language (Karnataka state language = Kanada, Tamil Nadu state = Telagu)

English is the *lingua franca.* Indians from different states can only communicate through English. Highly educated and elite Indians speak fluent English. Every Indian knows a few words of English.

In a 'good school' lessons are taught in English

In England there is not the same necessity to learn a second language

India Diverse religions

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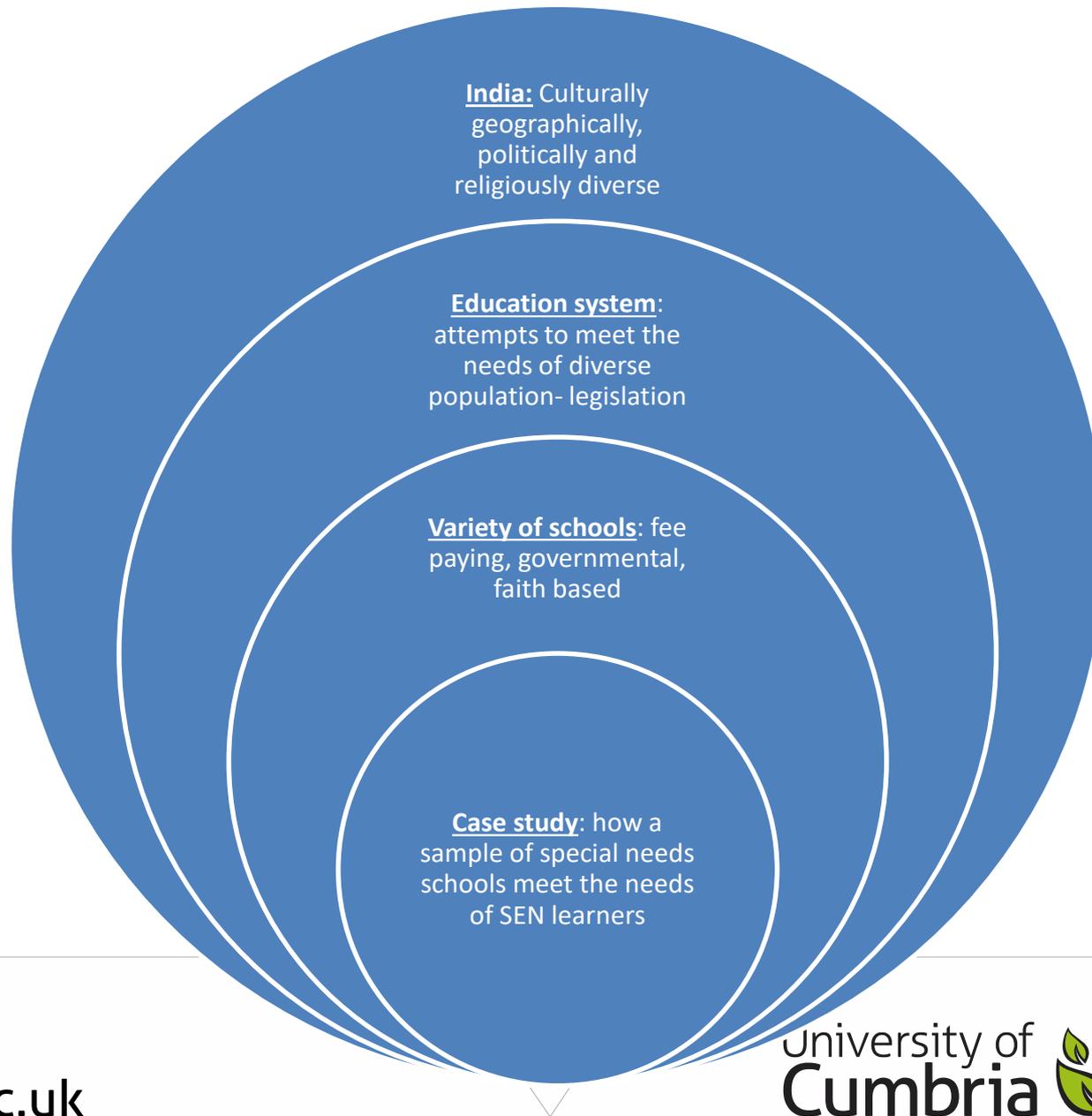
India's Education system

- National policy on education   1986
- Mid day meal programme   1995
- Girls secondary education   2008
- Enrolment ration (Rashtriya
  Madhyamik Shiksh Abhiyan (RMSA)   2009
- Right to Education Act   2010
- Inclusive Education for disabled   2010

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To what extent is India successful in implementing the Right to Education Act 2010?

<u>Special report</u> evaluating the 'Right to education' Act's implementation

Has India's education system lived up to the aims of the Act?

1. **Vision NOT implementation**
2. **Reasons for non attendance**
3. **Infrastructure**
4. **Mid day meals**
5. **Trained teachers**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiiqrIf2xT0

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Education is sinking India

Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Managing director

Education can hurt and hinder

education is a fantastic resource

Jesuit Headteacher-.

Absenteeism in government school

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Contextual point: Appointment of teachers in India

Who works in SEN ?

Training for mainstream: Student teachers with highest grades are allocated teaching posts in the most prestigious schools

Those with the lowest grades are appointed in governmental schools

There is low status of SEN

British system – adverts, interview process

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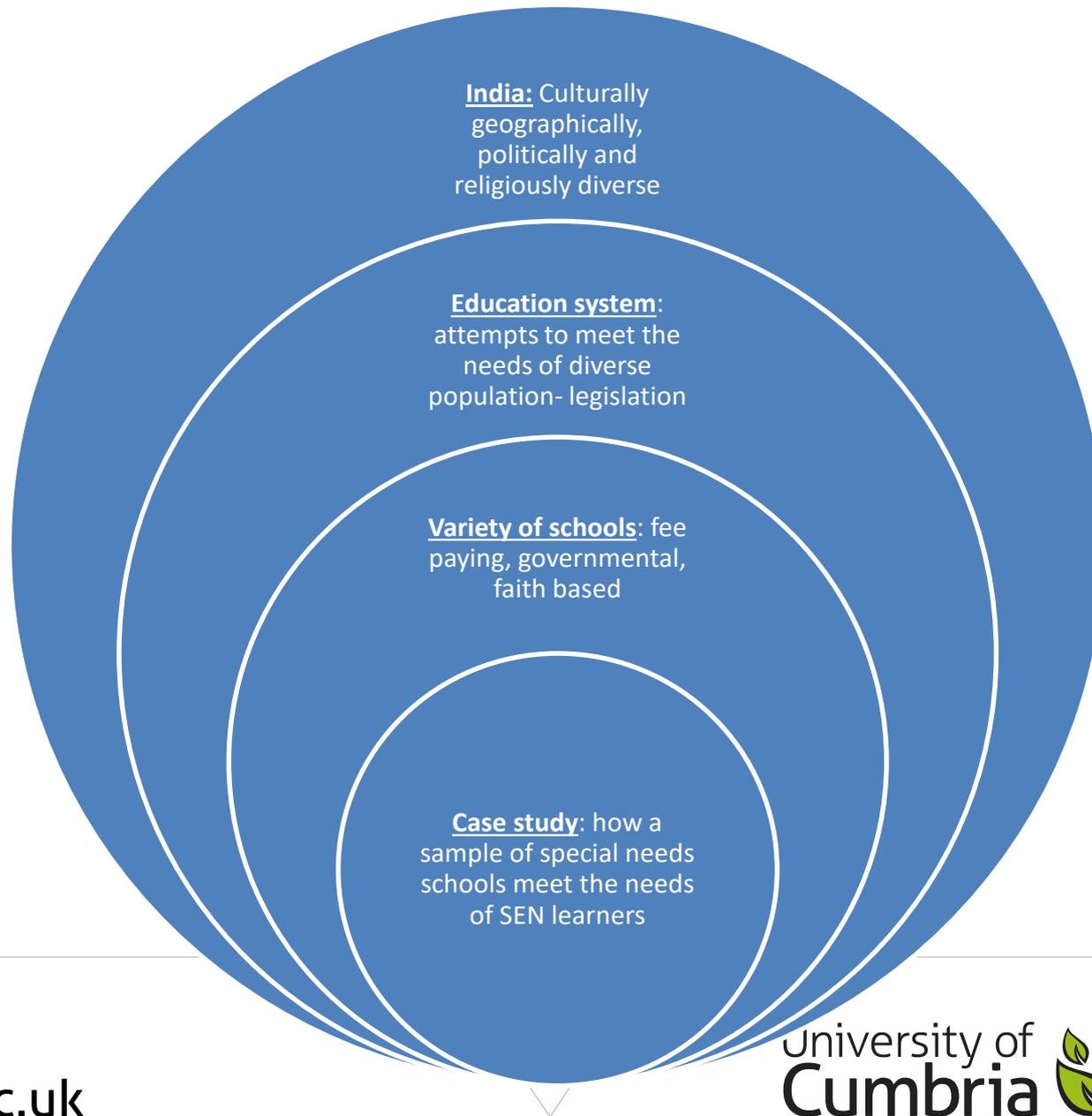
Case study : Context and literature

Fundamental shift in India in the education of children with special educational needs (SEN) away from segregated provision towards a more inclusive approach – is this positive for Global South?

(Das, Sharma and Singh, 2012; Singal 2019)

Factors inhibiting effective inclusion:

- structural aspects of education policy- most Indian schools are private
- lack of adequate inclusion policies in many schools
- restrictive practices limiting SEN students to enrol in mainstream schools
- poor physical infrastructure -access difficulties etc
- funding does not meet basic needs
- large class sizes

(Bhatnagar and Das 2014

Sharma et al., 2009).

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Focus of research in Bangalore

- **Perceptions of effective provision**
- **– what parents and teachers say**
- **Models of inclusion**
- **Influence of culture**

Project funded by St Christopher's Trust and University of Cumbria

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Data collection

4 schools in Bangalore

2 special needs schools

2 mainstream schools
- (with a resource centre)

Observations
- Lessons
- break times

Discussions
- Principal
- Superintendent

Interviews/questions
- children
- parents
- teachers

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Models of inclusion in India

After observations the researcher discovered that in many Indian schools SEN children (those with an 'intellectual disability') were either

❑withdrawn from their mainstream class to receive extra help (withdrawal)

❑they were removed from the mainstream school and sent to a special school (segregation)

❑This contrasts with England where most SEN children are integrated in the mainstream class (inclusion/ inclusive practice). But in some English mainstream schools SEN children are sometimes withdrawn.

(Elton-Chalcraft et al 2016; Singal 2019)

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Models of inclusion- 1 INCLUSION

Option 1 INCLUSION <u>Mainstream school</u>: inclusion of all children in one

 class (typical English

classroom)

Special needs

➕ ➡ One classroom

Non-special needs

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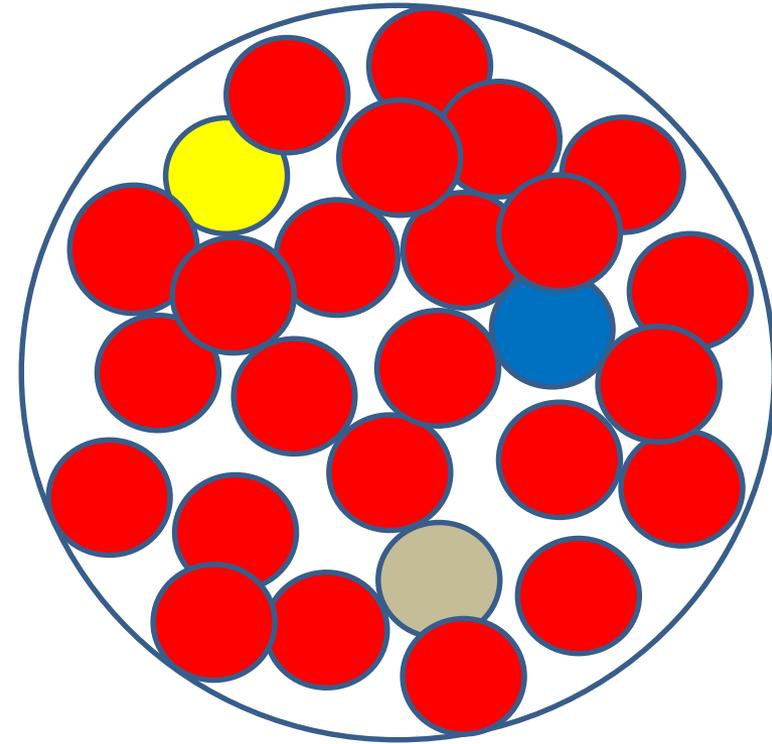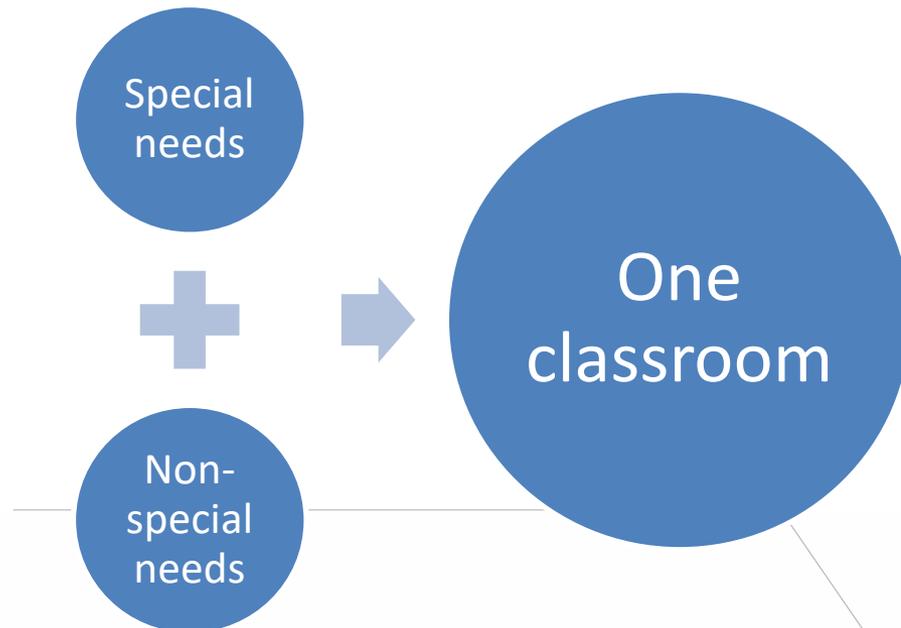
Models of inclusion- withdrawal

Option 2: SEN from each

Mainstream class
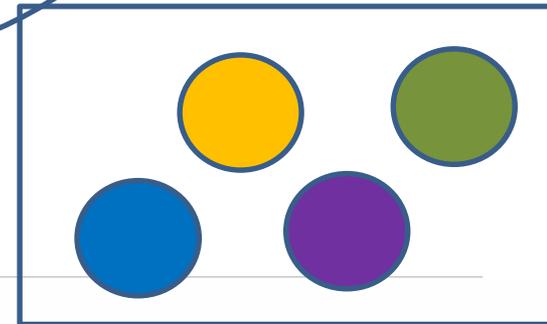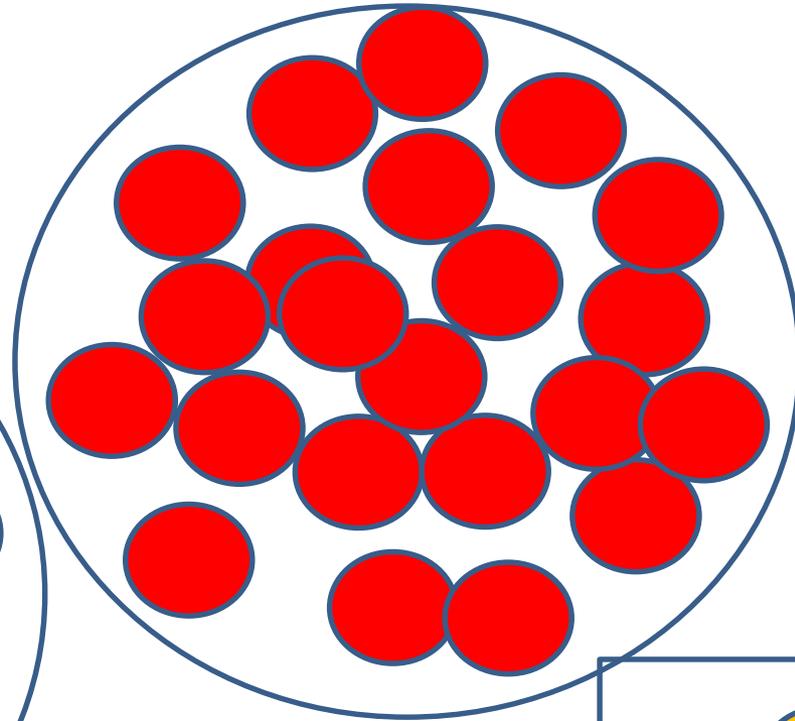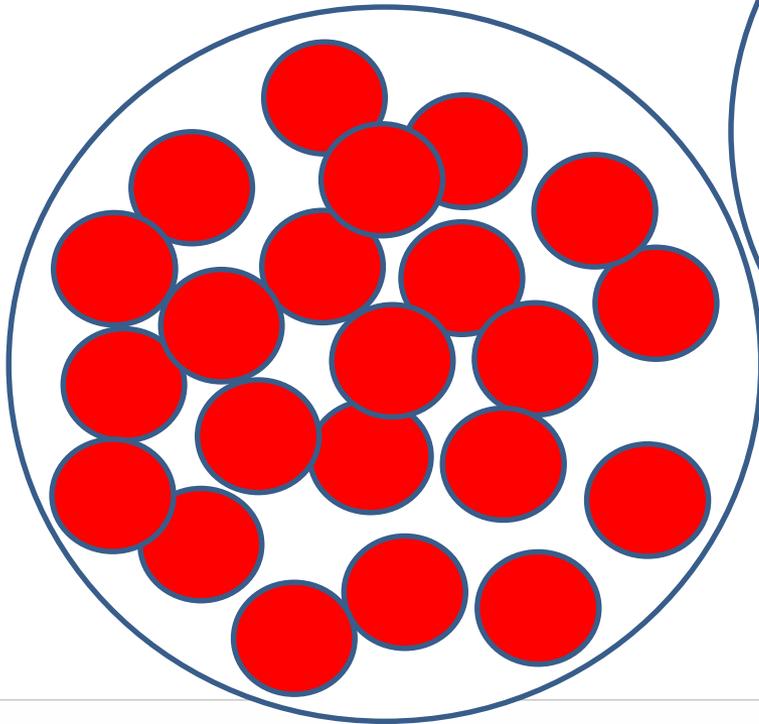
Withdrawn   - to a Resource centre - typical of some English and
some Indian schools

Models of inclusion

Option 3- special needs school

Each class made up of SEN children

Typical of many Indian schools

Special needs in each class

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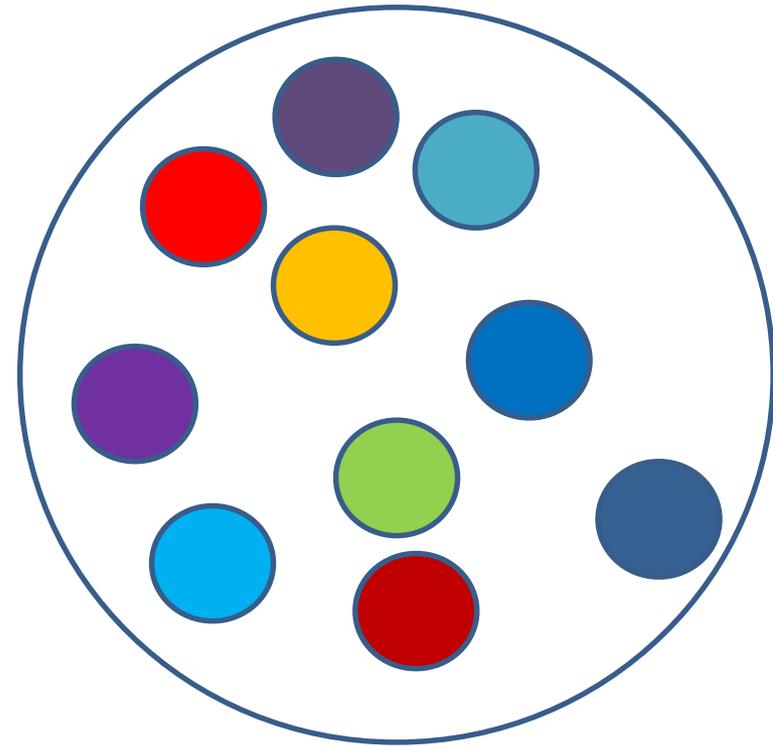
Findings from Indian case study

1. **Models of inclusion/ justification for segregation**

2. **The role of education for SEN children in India**

3. **Meeting the perceived needs of the SEN child**

4. **Training and development needs of Indian teachers**

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1. Models of Inclusion/ justification for segregation

- Segregated model as opposed to an inclusive model
- From all stakeholders there seemed to be support for a segregated model because:

a) **Teaching methods in mainstream schools not suited to SEN child**

b) **Children unlikely to receive adequate, individualised attention because their needs would not be recognised or understood**

c) **Curriculum inappropriate in mainstream school in India**

d) **Children with special needs were often bullied in mainstream schools in India**

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a) Mainstream schools use methods which are not suited to the SEN child

- Teachers teach the whole class from the front, no differentiation

- desks all face the teacher, no group learning

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1.Justification for segregation (b)

b) **Children unlikely to receive adequate, individualised attention because their needs would not be recognised or understood;**

- "I was called into *[my daughter's mainstream]* school with complaints that this child was just being pure lazy, because she could answer everything when it was done orally, but she couldn't put anything down onto her piece of paper; and the teachers refused to accept that there was something that could be wrong with her so she went into a severe depression; and she was below standard. She just started moving within; and …. I decided that enough was enough, and I pulled her out of the school.

   (parent in SEN school)

- This parent placed her daughter in the special school where she made huge progress because her needs were met

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1.Justification for segregation (c)

C) **Curriculum inappropriate in mainstream school**

"there was a Principal there[at the mainstream school] who knew something about …….children who could learn in a different way, but her hands were not opening up to take a decision, to do something for these kids. So although she would empathise with me – she said the syllabus does not allow me to do anything for these children. So she also washed her hands. So these were very trying times for us because we looked around; we didn't know where to place her so definitely there is [lack of understanding]. …..I think more and more people are aware and more and more teachers, but in a class of 40 [it is hard].

Parent, special school

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1.Justification for segregation (d)

d) **Children with special needs were often bullied**

(Teenage girl, A school)

Sally :How did you know they [the children in the 'normal' school] hated you?

J: They're hitting

Sally :Hitting?

J: Yeah

Sally: They were hitting you in the 'normal' [mainstream school] school?

J:They didn't like me."

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2. The role of education for SEN children

The specail school provided preparation for a 'productive' life as a 'contributing' citizen in a competitive world

Eg data handling initiative to employ SEN special school leavers with a job

Many SEN children made products to sell

- "……we need to train them properly to be thorough. They 9the computer company employers) don't mind that the children are slow but they should be perfect. The work should be perfect, for accuracy."

Parent, A school

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- **Qualities of the special needs school teachers: acceptance, care, compassion and empathy - features of Schools A and B that were less available or missing in mainstream schools**

- **Environment: interactive displays**

B school
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4.Training and development needs of teachers

Many of the teachers from the two special needs schools and also the resource unit in C school were trained as classroom teachers not SEN specialists. India has a problem in educating sufficient numbers of required teachers (Singal 2019

Conclusion

Literature said : Good progress with inclusion but much work needs to be done (Das et al) and our findings support this view. But should India copy the Global North? (Singal 2019)


Teachers and parents feel strongly that there is a need for social change.

Need for training and development of teachers in India, to address problems of inequality caused by a complex education system

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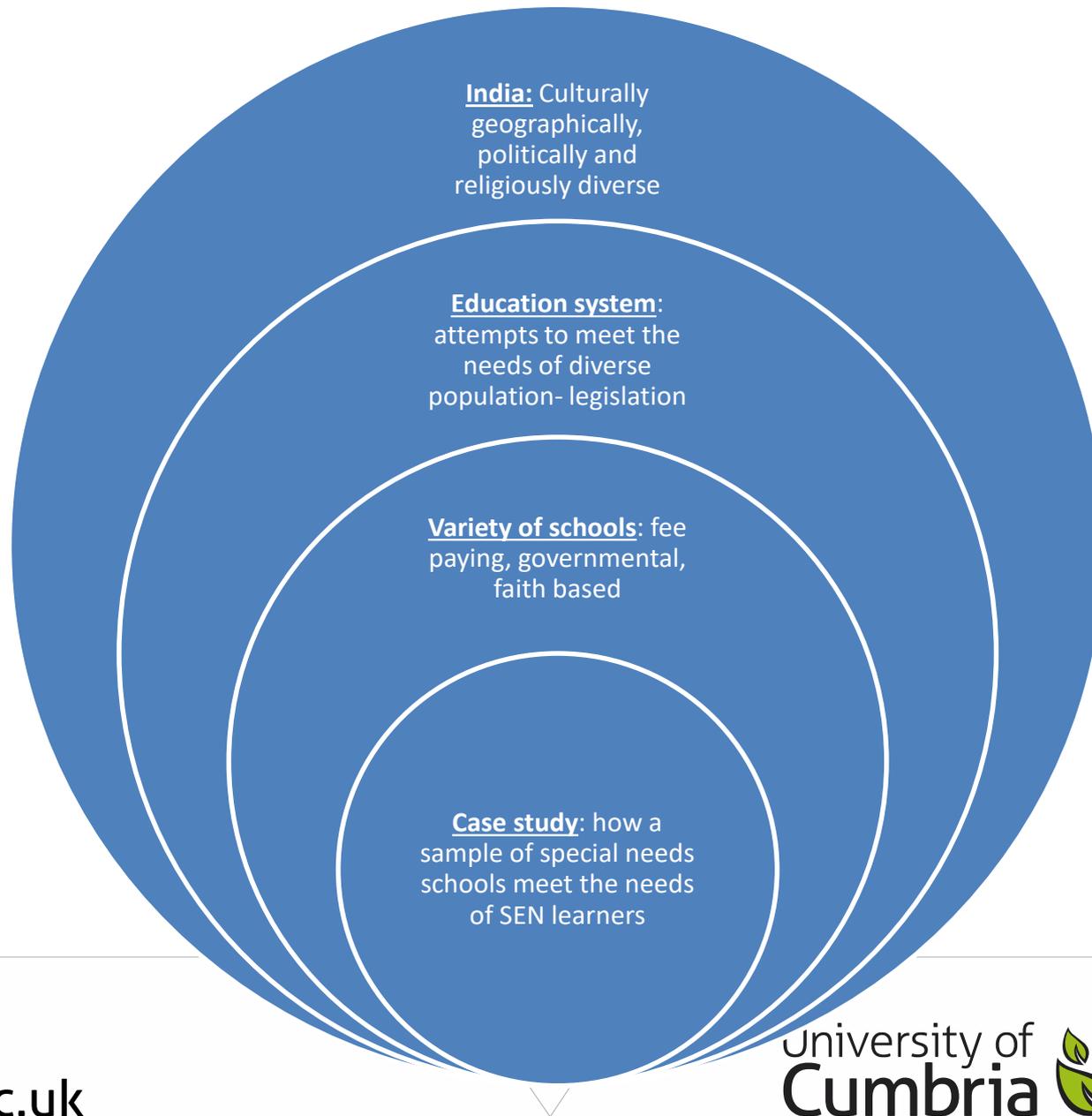
Positionality – insider outsider

White western woman ,	Interviewing Indian participants
educator,	Have different attitudes towards SEN etc
Christian? mother,	Parent, priest
vegetarian,	Eat meat in Assam and Mizoram
Indian dress,	Traditional Ba, Ch, Western Miz, Assam

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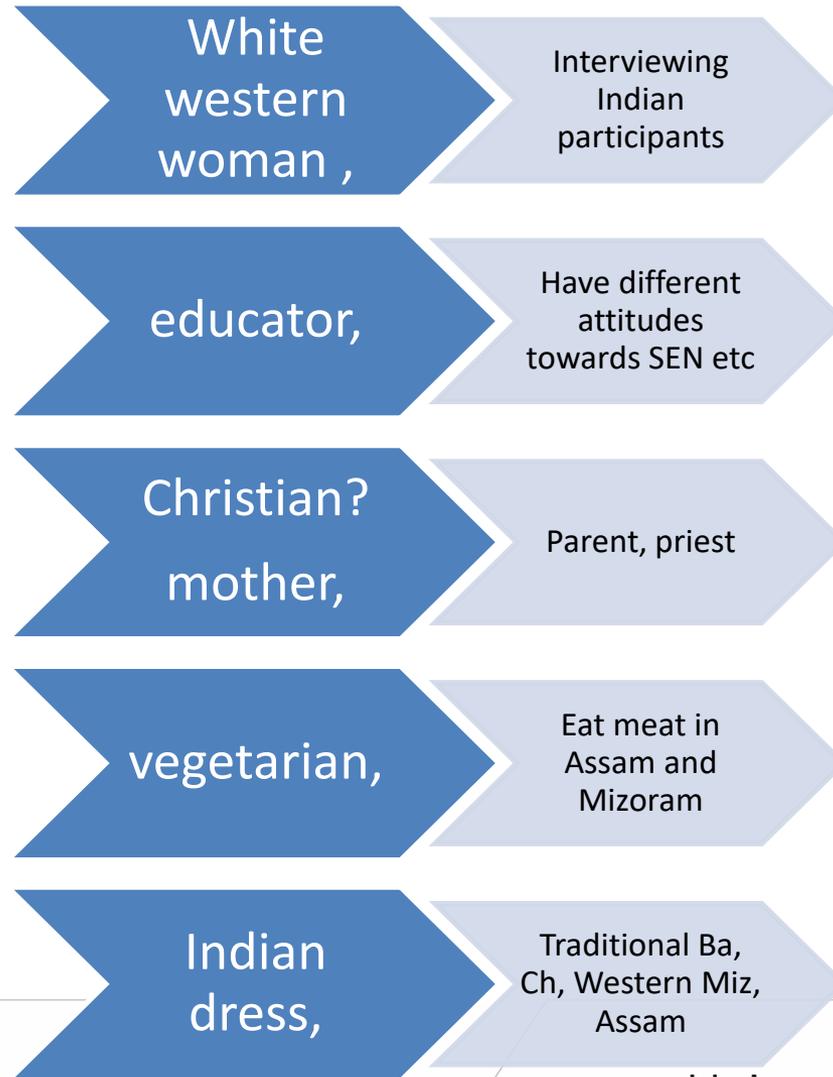
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