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**POLICY DEVELOPMENT: SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES IN FIJI**

**A Thesis Presented to The University of New England**

**In Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Educational Administration (Honours.)**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

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People with disabilities have the same fundamental rights, freedoms and responsibilities as their non-disabled peers, and in terms of education, all students have the right to the most appropriate educational programmes available to meet their individual needs. Students with special needs often need specialized support services to provide them with opportunities to achieve their potential and to become contributing members of society in a dignified and meaningful way. Often, the promotion and delivery of effective and efficient special education services necessitate an active partnership between local and national governments and the community, and warrant the formulation of specific, clear and responsive policies. If the task of teachers and educators is to encourage in students high expectations for themselves, and a sense of mastery and control in enabling them to reach their educational goals, there is indeed a place for the provision of a carefully designed and well formulated education policy to facilitate such a task.

This thesis examines the existing special education policy of the Ministry of Education in Fiji, with the goal of investigating its impact and influence on the delivery and practice of special education services in all special schools in the country, as well as the Special Education Unit in the Ministry's headquarters. The effect of this special education policy is explored within four contexts: existing service delivery systems, personnel and organizational development, international trends and practices, and policy developments. The author argues for participation by all special educators and policy-makers in active efforts to shape the future of special education in Fiji in ways that will promote best policies and practices for the education of all individuals with special needs, learning disabilities and difficulties.

In preparing this forecast of the future of special education in Fiji in terms of the development of an appropriate special education policy, the author has considered the implications of the existing policy provisions and related documents on the actual special education services in the country, reviewed the literature on current international trends, research findings and programme practices in the area of special education, and reflected

upon his own personal and professional experiences in the field. The challenge in this research project is to ascertain the relevance and effectiveness of the current special education policy of the Ministry of Education by examining its policy documents and through a process of structured interviews with thirty-two (32) subjects in sixteen (16) different sites nominated for this study. By searching and citing pertinent literature, the author hopes to present the special education practices and policies in the three countries under study, namely, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, and also identify worldwide trends in this field. Being uncertain of the present condition of special education in Fiji, the main purpose of this particular research activity is to establish a true and reliable picture of the situation in the country, and to sensitize the special education policy-makers and leaders to the widely acknowledged practices and trends in the field. Apart from trying to satisfy the expectations of a good and credible thesis, the author hopes that this document shall also have the capacity to provide valuable information and meaningful insights to the Ministry of Education and disability organizations in Fiji, particularly in their efforts to develop an appropriate special education policy for the country.

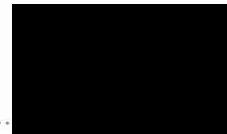
## DECLARATION

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I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree, and is not currently being submitted for any other degree.

I certify that to the best of my knowledge, any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.



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Setareki S. Macanawai

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Date

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