# 1. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

## A Case Study

This case study presents a scenario which describes for the most part the practice and challenges often experienced in the delivery and promotion of special education in Fiji from its inception until today. Although major progress has also been achieved in this field during this period, the case study seeks to demonstrate the scope and effectiveness of special education services in the country.

Ulamila was born into a Fijian family in a remote village situated in one of Fiji's outlying islands. This little girl was born with a severe visual impairment which was left untreated due to her parents' fears and ignorance, difficult financial situation and the inadequate medical facilities available in the rural medical centre situated in her island. Nevertheless, Ulamila grew up in her village where she was raised by her own parents who attempted to minimize the stigma and stereotype of having a child with a disability by providing her with a variety of rich and meaningful learning experiences that they thought would enhance her growth and development. As a result, she developed during her infant and kindergarten years like any other child in her village. However, Ulamila's environmental awareness was significantly limited compared to that of her peers as she had restricted contact with the physical surroundings beyond the security of her own home. When Ulamila turned six, it was time for her to attend the local primary school. To her parents dismay, she was refused enrolment into this school because of her visual disability. The school headteacher informed Ulamila's parents that the school had no facilities to educate children with disabilities and the training teachers received at Teacher's College focused mainly on the education of "normal" children, and not special students like Ulamila. Since this was the only primary school in the island, and that the special schools were located mainly in the urban centres, Ulamila had to stay home while her sighted peers went off to school to begin their education and pursue their goals in life. It was not until the arrival of a social worker into Ulamila's village that she was referred to a special school for blind children in Suva for assessment and placement.

Ulamila also had two cousins named Albert and Leba who lived with their parents in Suva, the main city and capital of Fiji. Unlike Ulamila who was visually impaired, Albert was born with a mild intellectual disability which affected his mental functioning, while Leba had to rely on a wheelchair for mobility purposes after being involved in a paralyzing motor accident during her first year at a high school. But like Ulamila, her cousins too had difficulty in finding welcoming primary and secondary schools that were prepared to make necessary adjustments within the school and classroom environment so that the special needs of these two potential students could be addressed. Albert was advised by some headteachers to seek admission into the special school for intellectually handicapped children or visit the mental hospital as they believed these were more appropriate institutions where individuals with mental health problems should be placed. As for Leba, the excuse was that classrooms in nearly all the secondary schools she visited with her parents were inaccessible and unfriendly to wheelchair users. More than once, these two capable and fairly independent students were also advised by some of the principals and headteachers of the ordinary schools they visited to contact the special education schools, Social Welfare Department and organizations like the Red Cross and Save the Children for more information and assistance. Eventually, Leba and Albert were accepted into different special schools in Suva where the environment seemed more friendly and where there were teachers who knew something about their learning needs and disabilities. Because of Leba's continual high academic achievement in class, her specialist teacher searched for a local ordinary high school that would accept her as a student, and one that was more responsive and sensitive to the concept and challenges of inclusive education.

Ulamila's parents were thrilled that she could receive formal education, be supported by specialist teachers and specialized equipment, and given an opportunity to reach her goal in life. However, they missed having Ulamila at home and wished their local school was equipped to receive, and teachers trained to teach all children, including those with special educational needs. Albert and Leba's parents also share these sentiments, and were quite amazed at the effect of an obvious physical disability on the education of their capable daughter. They soon realized the importance of having an education policy that guarantees and facilitates the enrolment of any student into any school in the country.

# The Background, Purpose, Goal and Objectives of the Study

This study is introduced by a hypothetical case study which hopes to demonstrate the status of special education in Fiji and highlight some barriers and challenges often encountered by students with disabilities as they endeavour to participate in and benefit from the country's existing general education system. This education system is then discussed in some details for the purpose of establishing Fiji's education philosophy, structure, policy and administration, which in turn guide the affairs and activities of all its sectors and units. One of these sectors is the Primary Section, and under which a unit pertaining to special education is placed. This Special Education Unit (hereinafter SEU) has been nominated by the author to be the focus of this study, with a particular research interest in the development of an appropriate policy on special education services in Fiji. Presently, the provision of such services in the country is founded to a great extent on a partnership between the government's Ministry of Education (hereinafter MOE) and the various non-governmental, charitable organizations known as Societies. This partnership mirrors the practice within the general education system as discussed in a later section of this chapter. The government provides teachers and minimal financial assistance towards recurrent expenses while the non-governmental organizations establish and maintain the special schools, related services and organizational structures. However, the initiatives designed and implemented under this partnership arrangement seem to lack the sanctioning, support and guidance of an effective special education policy. Hence, there is a need to conduct a study to ascertain the effectiveness and relevance of this policy, and if necessary, make recommendations for the development of such a policy that will provide the mandate for the provision of appropriate, meaningful and efficient services within the country's special education structure and network. To obtain some perspectives on global trends, practices and policy development in special education, the experiences of three countries, namely Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom will be examined and discussed in this study by way of review of pertinent literature. Since these three countries have been through the process of developing and implementing special education policies, a process which this study is embarking on, it is sensible for this study to draw on their rich and valuable experiences so as to make realistic comparisons, identify widely accepted benchmarks and

formulate meaningful assumptions and recommendations. Such are the intentions of this ambitious research project which is better understood in the context of its goal and objectives.

The goal of this study is to develop an appropriate, responsive, clear and practical policy on special education services in Fiji, and to be constructed within a strong but simple framework of the Ministry of Education so as to make a clear link between the values and beliefs of special education institutions (service providers) and their practices. The process shall involve the:

(a) investigation of the effectiveness, relevance and impact of the existing policy on special education services in Fiji;

(b) study of the delivery, outcomes and challenges of current global special education practices and trends;

(c) consultation of a wide range of pertinent literature to support this study and provide a relevant theoretical framework; and

(d) extrapolation of the information gathered above for the purpose of making recommendations towards the development a policy on special education that is more conducive to the vision, culture and needs of the country's special education system.

The realization of this goal is contingent upon the systematic, proper and full implementation of the following objectives:

(a) To identify the existing policy on special education in Fiji and describe its place within the structure, mission and strategies of the Ministry of Education (MOE).

(b) To investigate the effect and implications of this policy on the delivery of special education services in special schools, ordinary schools and the Special Education Unit (hereinafter SEU).

(c) To ascertain the responsibilities and procedures in policy-making, implementation, standardization and evaluation within the Ministry of Education and Special Education Unit in Fiji.

(d) To adopt a comparative approach by discussing the special education practices, trends and policy provisions in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom by consulting relevant literature.

(e) To utilize the rich and valuable experiences of these three countries in supporting the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this study.

## The Statement of the Research Problem

This study will ascertain the effectiveness and relevance of the existing special education policy of the Ministry of Education in Fiji by investigating its implication and influence on the provision and delivery of special education services in all special schools in the country. Consequently, the development of a more appropriate policy may be necessary to support such services, or to sponsor the implementation of new special education initiatives.

## The Statement of the Subproblems

The above research problem shall be divided into six manageable subproblems so that the goal and direction of the entire research effort can be clearly seen and understood. The subproblems are as follows:

(a) What is the current education policy in Fiji, and how is its general education system designed and implemented?

(b) What is Fiji's existing policy on special education, and how are the related services organized and delivered?

(c) What do special education teachers and administrators in Fiji perceive as important components of a good and clear special education policy that is responsive to the needs and challenges of special education services in the country?

(d) How is special education practised in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom?

(e)  What trends, practices and policy provisions on special education exist in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom that can benefit the special education services in Fiji?

(f)  What do the analysis and interpretation of the treated data reveal?

Now that the background and purpose of the study have been established, and the research problem and subproblems articulated, the remaining sections of this introductory chapter focus on the history and perspectives of both general and special education in Fiji in order to lay a clear platform on which the discussions, findings and implications of the remaining chapters shall be based.

## Education in Fiji After Independence (1970)

The introduction of formal education in Fiji was largely the initiative of European missionaries who arrived in the country after Fiji had been ceded to Great Britain in 1874.  This work of enlightenment proved quite laborious, difficult and often life-threatening particularly when tribal wars, cannibalism and traditional worship dictated the livelihood of the indigenous people.  However, the task of ushering Christianity into the country was well executed in that it targeted the then paramount chief of Fiji and, after his conversion, the work of Bible translation into the Fijian language as well as teaching of reading and writing to the local people gained momentum.  After the Cession, the British government also deployed its own people in Fiji to govern and manage the affairs of the country and consequently, the place and role of formal education in Fiji became more prominent.  Describing this turn of events, the Fiji Education Commission Report (1969, 6) claims that the history of education was founded largely upon private initiative and effort.  However, aid to the private sector by the Fiji Government continues to increase steadily instead of the latter creating a state system of education for the country.

> It appears that the main reason for this unusual state of affairs is that the thirst for education amongst the communities in Fiji has consistently outstripped the Government's ability to satisfy it.  Consequently, the various Christian missions, and more recently various other religious and secular organizations, have stepped into the breach.  This proliferation of private schools has both relieved the Government of the obligation to provide state-owned schools and has caused it to evolve an elaborate system of Government aid.

Thus at present the Government meets about two-thirds of the total cost of primary education in Fiji, although the control and management of all but a few primary schools remains in the private hands.

As compiled by Nainima (1997, 1) for the Ministry of Education, Women and Culture, the vision of education in Fiji calls for:

A quality Education and Training System for All That is Responsive to Changing Needs.

The mission statement as described by Nainima (1997, 1) is:

To Promote, Develop and Facilitate Education and Training within the Framework of Government Policies and Priorities.

The overall education system is governed by a bureaucratic structure under the auspices of the present Ministry of Education, Women and Culture. At the helm is the Government appointed Minister responsible for this portfolio who is in turn deputized by a Permanent Secretary and Deputy Secretaries. The heads of each sector together with the previously mentioned Ministry officials constitute the management arm of the Ministry. The different units and various levels of administrative staff make up the base of the hierarchy who, along with other personnel of the Ministry (except the Minister), are appointed by the Public Service Commission. An Education Advisory Council is established for the purpose of advising the Minister on the organisation of educational facilities, proposed legislation concerning education and any other educational matter referred to it by the Minister. Fiji is divided into nine education districts and four divisions, each of which is under the supervision of an Education Officer. Apart from kindergartens, schools in Fiji are given either primary, secondary or tertiary classification. Generally, children remain in primary schools for eight years, that is, from Class 1 to 8 and between the ages of six and fifteen. Secondary schools offer Forms 3 to 7 although some of them begin at form 1, and take children aged thirteen up to nineteen. Tertiary education in Fiji is well served by technical, vocational, commercial, medical, teacher and agricultural institutions as well as the Suva-based University of the South Pacific. Most primary, secondary and tertiary schools take day students only and are co-educational in nature but there are some boarding schools located throughout the country and a few even offer single-sex education. Although the majority of schools in Fiji are managed by local committees

or Missions, the Government extends considerable financial and material aid to most of them by way of salaries of trained teachers, annual contributions towards the salaries of untrained 'licensed' teachers and 'reserved' teachers employed by controlling authorities, annual payment towards the remittance of school fees, donation of a limited number of textbooks and teaching materials/resources and provision of building grants towards the cost of approved new buildings or extensions. A centralized curriculum is prepared at the Curriculum Development Unit with corresponding national examinations to be taken by both primary and secondary school students. These are: Fiji Intermediate taken in Class 6 and Eighth Year examinations in Class 8 for entry into a secondary school; the Fiji Junior Certificate Examination taken in Form 4; the Fiji School Leaving Certificate Examination taken in Form 6 and the Form 7 examination for entry into most tertiary institutions. The School Broadcast Unit prepares daily educational programmes for different classes in primary schools which are presented over the national radio service during school days only. Inspection and supervision of all teachers employed in Fiji are undertaken by officers of the MOE.

After World War II and until 1990, the Fiji government embarked on a new nationwide initiative of formulating development plans to cover a period of five years towards nation building, economic growth and national development. Commenting on this initiative, Singh (1987) believes that the first four development plans were primarily expenditure based but the fifth (1966-70) and final plan in the colonial era addressed for the first time broader social and economic issues. After Fiji gained its independence from Great Britain in 1970, Development Plans (DP) 6-9 were formulated for the period 1971 to 1990, and embedded in these national plans were the education policy, broad aims and objectives for the country. For instance, the DP8 which covers the period 1981-85, defines the overall purpose of education as providing the basis for the development of the person, both as an individual and as a productive member of society. On the other hand, the DP9 (1986-90, 137) had the following educational objectives:

a. Provide a balanced programme of both academic and practical courses for the full development of children in a rapidly changing society.

b. Focus the education system towards full development of Fiji's human resources.

c. Continually assess and revise the school curriculum for the changing needs of the nation.

d. Increase access to education especially for the rural and urban poor.

e. Encourage greater understanding of different cultures to promote national unity.

However, neither special education services within special schools nor inclusive education initiatives to encourage the participation of persons with disabilities in ordinary school settings received any significant attention in any of the documents cited above. This oversight may well account for the lack of recognition and support given to the education of children with disabilities in Fiji today. Like the initiatives of different committees, missions and the private sector in the establishment of most ordinary schools in Fiji, the formation and provision of special education services in the country was first recognized by secular organizations rather than the government. Yet, the recommendations made in the 1969 Commission Report, the country's education policy described in the Development Plans, and the recently published Policies, Strategies and Programmes, for the most part have failed to address the education of students with learning disabilities and difficulties. Instead, their primary focus is academic excellence in schools which creates an education system that is highly performance-oriented, competitive and more concerned with the products rather than the intricacies of learning. It is not surprising, therefore, that such an education system is witnessing a large number of 'school drop-outs' and erroneously categorizing non-achievers as 'slow learners'. In the eyes of special education advocates, this education system is discriminatory in nature, highly ineffective and stands in opposition to the full-inclusion model currently trumpeted by many leaders in special education who recognize the role of schools as promoting individual achievement of maximum potential.

## Special Education in Fiji

The author believes that it is essential to briefly discuss at this juncture some common traditional methods of treating disability and disabled persons in Fiji prior to the introduction of rehabilitation, educational and vocational programmes by disability agencies in the late 1960s. However, even after three decades of such medical, educational, social and

rehabilitation measures, combined with increased public awareness-raising activities, these traditional methods of treating children and adults with disabilities are still prevalent today. Some of the popular methods are massive neglect, denial, rejection or isolation since the person with the disability brings shame and disgrace to the family; a disabled person becomes an object of pity and must be spoon-fed and overprotected; a recipient of charity and good-will as th s person with a disability is totally incapacitated; and the practice of witchcraft and traditional rituals since the onset of a disability is perceived to be caused by an evil spell, curse or ancestral misdeeds. Generally, both rural and urban communities in Fiji assign huge responsibilities and set high expectations for their members, and because such demands are not equally placed on those members who may have a disability, they become unproductive and eventually end up as additional, long-term family responsibilities. Nevertheless, societal attitudes and expectations have improved during recent years and the participation of persons with disabilities in almost every walk of life is no longer a novelty.

Special education services in Fiji began in the early 1960s by the Fiji Red Cross Society which operated a care centre for a rapidly increasing population of children suffering from poliomyelitis as a result of a nationwide epidemic, and were in need of some rehabilitation and educational interventions. With the support of the MOE, and the formation of a Suva based organization known as Crippled Children's Society, the first special school was established in Suva in 1967. Even though this institution was established primarily to serve those children with physical disabilities, other children with sensory impairments and intellectual disabilities were also absorbed into the country's only special school, under the management of the Crippled Children's Society and with support from the MOE which provided teachers for the school. As the population of intellectually disabled, vision and hearing impaired children increased, two other non-governmental organizations, namely the Fiji society for the Blind and the Intellectually Handicapped Children's Society were formed in the early 1970s and established special schools for children with the particular disability groupings they represent. Hearing impaired children, however, remained at the first special school until today. In the 1970s, and particularly around the mid 1980s, several special schools and units sprang up, mainly in the major urban centres of Fiji. However, these special schools and units offer cross-disability generic

programmes and attract children with varying disabling conditions from nearby villages and settlements, with teaching staff provided by the MOE. Inclusive education initiatives whereby students with disabilities attend ordinary schools, are taught alongside their non-disabled peers and receive specialist support services from their trained special education teachers, are largely promoted by special schools themselves. Vocational training, work experience and job placements are also undertaken by each special school either within a sheltered workshop environment or in open employment.

Today, the country has thirteen special schools, two sheltered workshops and a special unit, all of which together with the SEU are placed under the Primary Section of the Ministry of Education. The SEU is managed by a government appointed senior education officer (SEO) who is based in the headquarters and supervises the entire special education operation comprising 16 special education institutions, 77 civil servant teachers and 40 licensed teachers. Figure 1 shows the current arrangement and partnership involved in the delivery of special education services in Fiji. Recently, an introductory course in special education has been offered in one of three primary teacher training colleges in the country, and the Suva based University of the South Pacific (USP) is in the process of offering a Diploma level course in special education too. Hence, only a very small percentage of teachers in special schools have received further training in special education and they had to attend colleges and universities abroad for such training. Because all 16 special education institutions are located in urban centres, and since not all of the inhabited islands in the Fiji group have townships, those children with special needs from remote areas have to attend the special school closest to them. As a consequence, some of these special schools have boarding facilities to cater for this need by assisting those children from remote parts of the country.

Although there is no established, explicit policy on special education in Fiji, it adheres to the education policies regulating the affairs of primary schools such as staffing, funding and classification patterns. This obligation has arisen from the placement of special education services under the Primary Section of the Ministry of Education. However, special education has been given some recognition in the country's national Development Plans; the most recent and elaborate being DP9 for the period 1986-90, Section 10.2.18 of which states that:

Government will continue to encourage private organizations in expanding special education for physically and mentally handicapped children by:

(a) assisting in the payment of fees and provision of special facilities;

(b) providing supervisory staff, and specially trained teachers, for detecting and coping with children with special needs; and

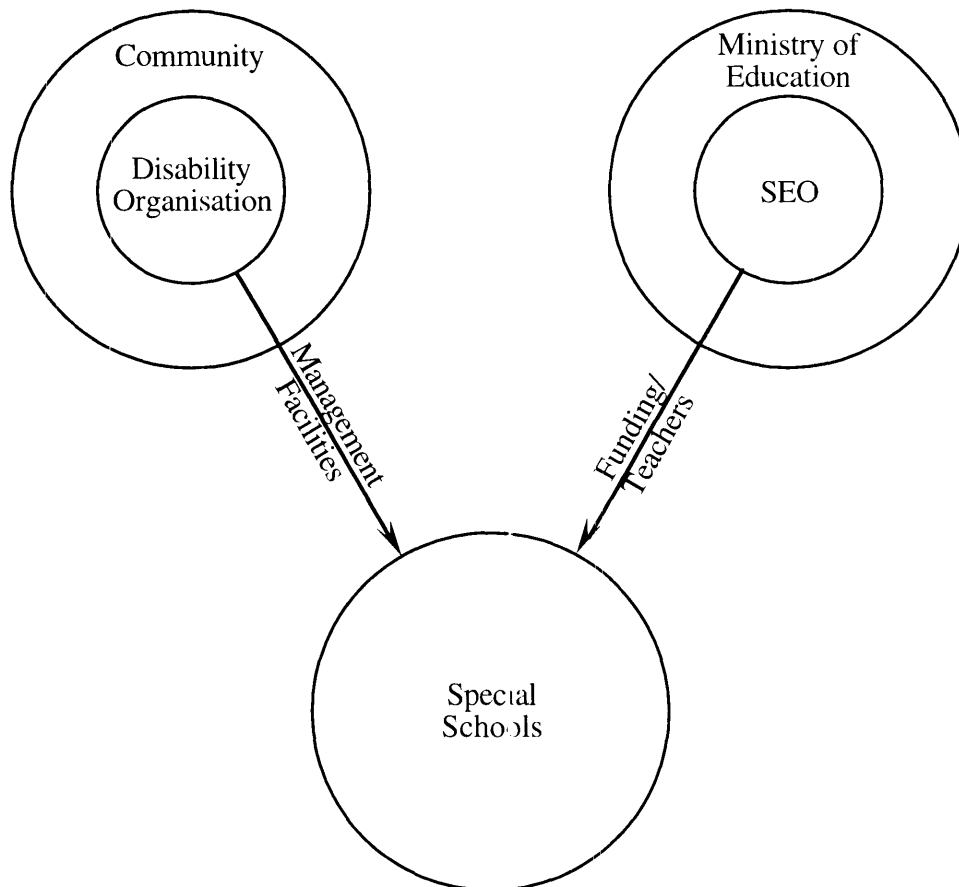(c) strengthening diagnostic, prescriptive and guidance services to parents and teachers in schools. (138)



**Figure 1: Special Education in Fiji: a Partnership Model**

Like most ordinary schools in Fiji, each special school is established and managed by a charitable organization or Society which has a management board of prominent community figures who have retired or are holding influential positions either in the government or private sector. Because of this ownership factor, these non-governmental organizations have to raise their own funds to meet the capital and recurrent costs of their special schools. The Government's contributions to these special schools come in the form of annual per capita, building and special grants as well as salaries and inservice training for teachers. As a result of networking

with similar overseas non-governmental organizations, particularly from Australia, New Zealand, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, some financial and technical support has been secured by the local charitable organizations. Provision and delivery of special education services are still largely centre-based, although there is a growing interest amongst national disability agencies to offer community based programmes. In Fiji today, the major trends in this field seem to be the establishment of special schools under the Government-Society partnership arrangement and active public awareness raising campaigns by most disability agencies. An important landmark for the country's disabled population and those agencies that serve them was the passing of a bill in Parliament in 1994 which was later gazetted in the Fiji Republic Gazette Supplement No. 3 (1995) which states:

> (Legal Notice 18.) Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons Act 1994.
>
> Pursuant to the provisions of subsection (2) of Section 1 of the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons 1994, I hereby appoint the first day of December 1994 (1.12.94) as the date of coming into force of the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons Act. ...

Central to the achievement of this significant milestone is the Government's recognition and concern for the aspirations and welfare of disabled persons in the country. The functions of this national body as stipulated in the FNCDP Act No. 21 of 1994, Part II are as follows:

(a) be a co-ordinating body for all organizations dealing with the care and rehabilitation of the disabled;

(b) formulate a national policy that would ensure that services are provided to all disabled persons in Fiji;

(c) draw up a national plan of action for rehabilitation services and implement such a plan;

(d) seek financial assistance from government and aid donors for itself and registered organizations providing services to disabled persons;

(e) maintain a register of all the organizations providing services to disabled persons and ensure that the independence of such organization is maintained;

(f) organize national seminars and workshops relating to the problems and needs of disabled persons and assist in the training of personnel involved in the care, training, education and rehabilitation of disabled persons;

(g) create public awareness of the problems and the aspirations of disabled persons through educational media;

(h) regularly inform the appropriate Ministries of the government of the problems and needs of disabled persons and seek solutions to such needs;

(i) work towards the elimination of causes of disability;

(j) establish a National Rehabilitation Fund the purpose of which will be to attract national and international contributions in terms of funds, expertise, material and equipment to be used in implementing a national rehabilitation plan; and

(k) periodically review the national policy and national plan of action for the purpose of determining their continuing relevance to local, regional and international realities. (748)

To date, the FNCDP has not yet developed a national policy in accordance with its function (b). However, significant inroads have already been made in its other areas of responsibility. In retrospect, Fiji has come a long way during the last three decades in its intentions to recognize, address and be sensitive to the needs, plight and aspirations of its citizens with disabilities. To this end, it is envisaged that the findings, discussions and recommendations presented in this document will provide sensible directions to the development, formulation and design of a policy on special education services in the country that will enhance, consolidate and strengthen the current efforts and commitment of its government and private sectors to this neglected field. Deeply rooted attitudes that are ingrained and reinforced by tradition, as well as institutional and social structure and practice are not changed except over a long period of time. The concept of inclusion, whereby persons with disabilities are mainstreamed into every area and level of community life in Fiji, is no exception.

In the next two chapters, an extensive search and a critical review of related literature are undertaken for the purpose of analyzing and illuminating the research topic and its subproblems in a methodical and sequential manner. Whilst Chapter 4 presents the theoretical framework and key concepts relating to this study, Chapter 5 describes the research methodology and treatment of the data. Although the description, analysis and presentation of these data are tabulated in Chapter 6, it is to be pointed out here that some anomalies are to be anticipated in the research findings. The summary, conclusions and recommendations of this study are given in Chapter 7, while the bibliography and appendices constitute the final two chapters.

# 2. SPECIAL EDUCATION: PRACTICE AND TRENDS IN AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

## Introduction

In this chapter, special education initiatives in the three countries under study are discussed for the purpose of establishing widely accepted practices and internationally recognized trends in the field of special education. In recognition of the title of this thesis, the focus of the second chapter of this literature review concentrates on the practice, rationale and framework for development of general but particularly special education policies, and like the first chapter, the experiences of the aforesaid countries will also be utilized. Central to the findings and discussions in these two chapters is the author's desire to unearth and particularize current global practices and trends in, firstly, the special education services and, secondly, the policy provisions to mandate and promote the implementations of such services. It is also anticipated that in some instances, special education policy may be associated with, generated from or embedded in general education regulations, for it is within a country's general education system that any provision for special education is often recognized, determined, formulated and evaluated. Since the present education scenario in Fiji has been portrayed in the previous chapter, the author envisages that the discussions in these two chapters will set the benchmark against which Fiji can gauge the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency and success of its existing special education policy and, it is hoped, model its future initiatives and directions.

Many useful insights and meaningful discussions can emanate from a document entitled the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education which was drawn up (1994) by representatives of 88 national governments and 25 international organizations under the auspices of UNESCO. This landmark document opens with a reiteration of the rights in respect of education which are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) and the United Nations Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UN, 1993). It then proclaims five principles which are held to issue from these rights:

- every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning,

- every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs,

- educational systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs,

- those with special educational needs must have access to ordinary schools who should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs,

- ordinary schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire educational system.

(UNESCO, 1994, par. 2)

## Special Education in Australia

In Australia, education is traditionally a State responsibility while the Federal Government has direct responsibility for education in the Territories. According to Drummond (1978), organized Special Education in Australia owes its beginnings to voluntary organizations whose practice in setting up separate schools to meet the children's special needs had been one of segregation. However, their public contacts have helped to develop a public awareness of the needs of handicapped children and their families, which have also been accompanied in recent years by a growing sense of public responsibility towards persons with disabilities. While some generalizations concerning special education are applicable to the whole of Australia, the pattern of services varies from State to State, and to some extent from region to region. Prior to the 1930s, the State Departments of Education did not make special provision for those children with disabilities to participate in the rigid programmes of the normal school. As a result, such students were exempted from compulsory school attendance which meant that their parents were left to shoulder the burden of providing for their education. About the 1930s, there was a change of attitude in Australian education towards children with disabilities which introduced limited administrative action to provide for their educational needs, either individually or in groups. This

development was boosted by the establishment of Guidance Services in various States and facilitated by the country's education policy articulated by Drummond (1978, 16) as:

(1) to make provision for the education of all children of school age;

(2) to educate handicapped children in ordinary schools, subject to provision of support services to schools and class teachers to enable them to cope with the difficulties of integration of handicapped children in ordinary schools; and

(3) to continue the provision of special schools and special classes or units attached to ordinary schools, along with the development of associated paramedical services for the children in need of them.

Bailey (1992) states that, in the 1980s, the nation witnessed the consolidation and maturing of special education and describes some issues from this same decade that had a significant impact on Australian special education. The employability and employment of adolescents with disabilities, new curricular emphases on social skills and cognitive training, a few personal and instructional technical innovations pertaining to the advent of the personal computer, constant preoccupation with principles and practices of mainstreaming as well as attitudes toward mainstreaming and people with disabilities, and the recognition of the advocacy role of parents of children with handicaps were considered important milestones and significant achievements during this period. Even though Australia does not have a law like Public Law 94-142, or its later version P.L.99-457, or even an Education Act as in the United Kingdom, it does, however, have anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws which should help in the battle for a fair share of resources to special education. Since the benefits offered in a school can be wide-ranging, the exclusion of a student with learning difficulties from attending a regular school is to limit that student's access to the benefits of schooling in a regular classroom. In Australia, Williams (1996) points out that the far-reaching developments in the last two decades regarding laws that are of particular significance to students with learning difficulties pave the way for the country's federal and state parliaments to pass similar laws outlawing discrimination in education on the basis of impairment or disability. This is stated in the Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 which encompasses statutes that deal primarily with direct or indirect discrimination. The anti-discrimination statutes outlaw discrimination on specified grounds and in specified situations. Such a specified ground

for discrimination is impairment/disability, and education is included in the various situations in which discrimination is outlawed. Discriminatory practices can occur in many ways, either intentionally or unintentionally, and in many situations like entry into and removal from schools, curriculum offerings, practices in teaching, teacher attitudes, mechanisms of assessment, organizational rules and conditions, and the provision of facilities and services for students. Typical of this approach to outlawing discrimination in education in Australia is Section 22 of the Federal Act. However, direct discrimination in relation to disability is typified by Section 5(1) of this Federal Act, which generally implies a person treating another person with a disability not differently, but less favourably (involves the notion of detriment or negative impact) than he would treat a person without the disability in the same circumstances. Conversely, indirect discrimination or disparate impact as typified by Section 6 of the Federal Act is not quite concerned with discriminatory behaviour, but with policies or practices that have a discriminatory effect, and often occur without any intent or knowledge on the part of anyone. Indirect discrimination on the basis of disability is generally said to occur when a person imposes a neutral requirement which has a discriminatory impact on persons with the disability because they cannot comply with the requirement, and because the requirement is unreasonable in the circumstances.

According to Dimmock and Bain (1991), the idea of self-managing schools and the concept of self-renewal in schools through a process of decentralization (structural reform) and devolution (the delegation of authority and power) received keen interest from educational systems in most developed countries, and eventually made their way into most states in Australia in the latter part of the 1980s. Although education in Australia is extensively decentralized to district level, there is still co-operation and co-ordination in certain aspects of policy. The government's influence on local practice concerning integration is not reduced as a result of this decentralization. This is demonstrated by the introduction recently of a 'Disability Reform Package' which has set the pattern for all the country's federal services for persons with disabilities (Evans et al. 1995).

## Special Education in New Zealand

According to Mitchell and Singh (1987), neglected and destitute children were the first exceptional children in New Zealand to come to the attention of both provincial and national authorities and, in 1863, the first special school for exceptional children was established. At the national level, the House of Representatives passed the Neglected and Criminal Childrens Act in 1867, but there have been marked shifts in the philosophies and practices of service delivery to exceptional children in New Zealand since then. The following shifts have been identified: from charity and voluntarism to the state's assumption of responsibility; from segregation to integration and from institutionalization to community care; from an assertion of parents' responsibilities to a recognition of parents' needs and, more recently, parents' rights; from the amateurism of on-the-job training to the professionalism of full-time training of staff; from uncoordinated policies and services to the beginning of co-ordination; from a negative to a positive view of persons with handicaps; from a medical to a developmental model of services for persons with handicaps; from a school focus to a concern for life-long education commencing at birth and, more recently, proceeding through the adult years; from a focus on the person with a handicap to the family with a handicapped member; from a concern for obvious handicaps to a differentiation of more subtle handicapping conditions; from a subject-centred, abstract curriculum to a child-centred, life-skills curriculum; from an intuitive to a scientific evaluation of the quality of provisions; from a centralized to a decentralized model of administration (Mitchell and Singh, 1987, 28). In considering how special education intersects with education reforms in general, Mitchell (1996) recognizes the events which have taken place in New Zealand since the institution of major reforms in educational administration in 1989. Particular reference is made to issues such as choice, contestability, decentralization and accountability. Stimulated by the 1988 Picot Taskforce Report which was set up by the then Labour Government to review the administration of education in the country, the New Zealand government introduced extensive changes to the administration of all sectors of education on October 1st, 1989. These reforms were subsequently expressed in a government White Paper, *Tomorrow's Schools* and also in the Education Act of 1989 and its subsequent amendments (Mitchell, 1996).

In brief, the Tomorrow's Schools reforms were characterised by a substantial devolution of responsibility and authority from the centre to the individual learning institutions, which were to be governed by boards of trustees working within the framework of charters negotiated with the Ministry of Education, funded through bulk grants (not yet implemented), and monitored by an independent review agency. Intermediate-level Education Boards were abolished. (56)

As far as special education is concerned, Mitchell (1996, 59) states that:

the original intent of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms was to disburse responsibility among several different agencies, all under the general oversight of the Minister of Education. Boards of trustees were charged with ensuring that their school's policies and practices sought to achieve equitable outcomes for all students, irrespective of their ability or disability. Schools are required to include the following goal in their charters:

To enhance learning by ensuring that the school's policies and practices seek to achieve equitable outcomes for students of both sexes; for rural and urban students; for students from all religions, ethnic, cultural, social, family and class backgrounds and for all students, irrespective of their ability or disability. (Department of Education, 1989, 10)

The Ministry of Education was responsible for ensuring that this objective was appropriately addressed in schools' charters, the Education Review Office for seeing that schools met the objective, and the Special Education Service (SES) for assisting schools in carrying out their obligations with respect to learners with difficulties in learning or development.

According to Mitchell (1996), the SES was established as an independent Crown Agency (now Crown Entity) and employs specialist staff to provide advisory services to schools and parents under a contract with the Minister of Education. The prime function of the SES as specified in the 1989 Education Act is to "provide advice, guidance, and support for the benefit of people under 21 with difficulties in learning or development". (58). In discharging these responsibilities, the SES was initially set up to be free, non-contestable, and national service to learning instructions and parents. However, in 1991, according to Mitchell (1996, 59),

... the Government published the Statement of Intent (Ministry of Education, 1991), a major review of special education in New Zealand, the outcomes of which are only now beginning to filter through into firm policy (Ministry of Education, 1994). The proposals advanced in the Statement of Intent were claimed to reflect the following principles: families will be able to make informed choices about their children's education; learning institutions in which students are enrolled have the primary responsibility for providing an appropriate education for all

students; there must be clear accountability lines, mechanisms for monitoring performance, and an independent, objective method of determining eligibility for services; the new service must be decentralised so that it can be responsive to all consumers at the local level, particularly to the needs of Maori; and decentralisation should enable maximum delivery of resources to students, with few resources tied up in administration, while retaining opportunities for coordination across sector boundaries.

## Special Education in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom the practice of Special Education has come a long way since its inception in the late 18th century. Much of the work and development in special education in Britain is well documented by Cole (1989) in a chapter entitled 'From Crosland to Baker: 1965-88'. Through government involvement and work of leading special education writers, the concept of schools for all was increasingly encouraged, and until the 1980s, the numbers at least on the rolls of special schools and classes grew, even though the progress of integration was limited. However, the growth in numbers was explained by the inclusion of the mentally handicapped in special schools and the explosion in numbers of the maladjusted who were classified under the emotional and behavioural disorders category. After 1983, there was clear evidence of increasing segregation whether in official special schools or units on and off the sites of ordinary schools. In the autumn of 1973, Margaret Thatcher, then Prime Minister, announced the Warnock Enquiry, and in 1974, the Department of Education and Science had issued a cautious pamphlet known as Integrating Handicapped Children, and a major step towards integration occurred when the Labour Government passed the 1976 Education Act.

The Warnock Report was published in 1978 under the title 'Special Educational Needs'. In its cautious style, thorough and wide-ranging recommendations were welcomed by most professionals, and one of the areas the report considered to be requiring particular attention was the inclusion of a special education content in the courses of all student teachers. A section of the Report is devoted to providing more effective special help to the broad range of children who will need some form of special help at some time during their school careers – approximately 20 per cent of the school population has been suggested. It discussed individualized integration on a full-time or part-time basis, special class

placement with some time spent in ordinary class and special class placement combined with social contact with the main school. According to Norwich (1996), the SEN concept is:

> ... associated with placing everyone along a continuum, based on the assumption that there is no clear and categoric distinction between the handicapped and the non-handicapped. It was introduced to replace the categories of handicap which were seen to be negative in their focus on deficits, devaluing in their terminology and educationally irrelevant in terms of learning plans and programmes. The intention was that the SEN concept would do many things but chiefly, in my opinion, to connect and include those with disabilities and difficulties into the mainstream of education. The concept was intended to be integrative, with the implication that SEN was not a separate part of education, but integral to it. This is the principle associated with the concept of SEN.

In 1981, the new Conservative Government passed the Section 5 1981 Education Act which adopts much of the philosophy of the Warnock Report and requires the education of all children in ordinary schools, and subject to parental wishes, the efficient use of resources and the efficient provision of education for those children with special needs and their non-handicapped peers. The thinking supported the use of children with special educational needs terminology rather than assigning them to categories of handicap which was introduced by the 1944 Act and later abolished from 1 April, 1983. Another important feature of this Report which supports children who are being placed in either a special school or class, or educated in ordinary classes with necessary support provided, is the maintenance of a statement of needs which is to be drawn up by teachers, psychologists, other professionals and with the active involvement of parents. Such Statement is to be reviewed annually.

In a departure from the 1944 and earlier Acts, every Education Authority has been prescribed a duty to educate all children in ordinary schools where this is compatible with parental wishes, the efficient education of other children and the efficient use of resources. This implies that only the children with the most severe difficulties will need separate special schooling while the others can obtain properly supported integration in mainstream settings. In practice, these constraints ensure the continued existence of the vast majority of special schools and help the cause of those who still believe in the usefulness of such schools for some children. Initially, many mainstreaming developments manage no more than locational integration, but the forging of links between special schools and

ordinary schools increases due to the support of the 1981 education Act for children with special needs to remain in ordinary schools. In the 1980s, a number of local education authorities have moved towards some functional but more commonly locational and social integration for the hard of hearing and visually impaired children by way of units attached to ordinary schools. Special education is never a stagnant field in the United Kingdom as demonstrated by the replacement of the former Section 5 of the 1981 Education Act by Section 167 of the 1993 Education Act. On October 26, 1993, Mr Eric Forth, then Schools Minister, launched in the House of Commons the consultations of the Draft Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs which lays down a five-stage procedure for responding to special educational needs (Special Education in Parliament, 1993). This Code took effect from September 1994 and has been described both as a major step forward and setting a whole new framework for special education in the future. It draws on the five stages of assessment recommended in the 1978 Warnock Report, but schools will play the leading role in assessing pupils' needs during the first three stages and share responsibility for the final two stages with local education authorities. Furthermore, the procedures carry statutory weight, are more rigorous than what teachers previously experienced and the first three stages are to be observed before any statutory assessment of the pupil's needs is considered. This document also summarizes the five stages of assessment as stipulated in the Draft Code:

> Stage 1: class or subject teachers identify a child's special educational needs and, consulting the school's SEN coordinator, gather information and take initial action.
>
> Stage 2: the school's SEN coordinator takes lead responsibility for managing the child's special educational provision working with the child's teachers.
>
> Stage 3: teachers and the SEN coordinator are supported by specialists from outside the school.
>
> Stage 4: the LEA consider the need for statutory assessment and, if appropriate, make a multi-disciplinary assessment.
>
> Stage 5: the LEA consider the need for a statement of special educational needs, and, if appropriate, make a statement and arrange, monitor and review provision. (134)

Reflecting on the growth of special education in the United Kingdom, Vincent et al. (1995) indicate that the Education Acts of 1988 and 1993, along with those elements which have direct implications for special education such as the Code of Practice (1994) and the Special Education Tribunal, have been enormously influential in that they have heralded an unprecedented rate of development and change in special education like the introduction of Local Management of Schools, the National Curriculum, the push towards Grant-Maintained Status, and legislation limiting the powers of local government and local education authorities.

Now that special education services in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have been discussed, the remainder of this chapter describes the various global trends and practices witnessed and experienced by this specialized field in the recent past.

## Trends and Developments in Special Education

As documented in some of the literature being consulted for this chapter, some major worldwide trends and developments are having significant impact on the focus, delivery and scope of special education in recent years. Not only do these trends enlighten and broaden this study, but they will also provide useful comparisons to its findings and guidance to its recommendations, so as to keep special education initiatives in Fiji on par with global practices and developments in this rapidly expanding field.

(a) **The decentralization and devolution movements of the education system in most English-speaking developed countries.** Being a part of a country's education system, these movements also affect the structure, implementation and organization of special education services in that country. The feature common to devolving systems, according to Dimmock and Bain (1991, 3)

> ... is a shift of power to make certain kinds of decisions from a central authority to schools. While such systems have initially focused largely on handing over financial and budgetary control to schools, there is a common intention to provide schools with more widespread powers and responsibilities. These usually include areas of curriculum and personnel administration as well as management of human and nonhuman resources (grounds, buildings, and plant). The guiding principle underlying these policies of decentralization has been that the school itself should assume a greater measure of control for the decision-making and resource allocation central to its operation.

The argument behind decentralization is based on the premise that the effectiveness and efficiency of an education system can be improved when schools have control over the quality of education they provide, for it is only at this level, according to Dimmock and Bain (1991, 4), that:

> (1) the professionalism of teachers can be exercised; (2) meaningful decisions about the educational needs of each student can be made; and (3) programs can be devised which reflect the wishes and circumstances of local school communities.

Henderson (1995) reaffirms that devolution and decentralization in the administration of educational programs have constituted a major reform movement in many countries throughout the world. In the United States, one form of it is termed building based management. In New Zealand, the adoption of the 1988 Picot Report essentially eliminated most district and regional programs, moving budget and administrative responsibility to individual schools and to a newly established school council. Similarly, the Government of New South Wales in Australia recently moved much of the administrative responsibility from the centralized Special Education Directorate to regional control; while in England and Wales there has been a shift in recent years from the Local Education Authority (LEA) concept to the direct funding of individual schools through grant maintained status. Also in the United Kingdom, Vincent et al. (1995) point out that government legislation has encouraged local authorities to move away from the traditional role as direct providers of services to a more attenuated position as facilitators of externally-provided or semiautonomous services. In education, this process has been structured by the requirement to delegate money to schools. In relation to special education, an increasing number of LEAs are delegating funds for their special education services, which means that their role revolves around statutory identification, assessment, purchasing of services, and monitoring of school provision. Despite the attractiveness of this concept of moving decision-making concerning the control of school funds closer to the students and faculty involved in the educational process, Henderson (1995) argues that it can also pose serious problems for students with disabilities, particularly those in low prevalence categories. He claims that a majority of the education reform movements over the past 20 or 30 years have not only been trendy and superficial, but have also been instituted with little thought as to their effect on students with disabilities.

The key to understanding this apparent dilemma is in the availability of resources to meet the student's specific needs. One controversial aspect of federally mandated programs for students with disabilities in the United States is the requirement that the schools identify what the child actually needs; not what resources the school has available to offer. Thus if a pre-determined school budget is faced with a student with many special (expensive) needs, they might serve to bankrupt the school by forcing a reduction in services for non-disabled children in order to afford the additional costs of a student with disabilities. It seems apparent to me that while decisions regarding an individual child's special educational needs are best determined by those who deal with the student daily, the resources needed to provide such services must be retained at a higher administrative level ... (Henderson, 1995)

**(b)    The inclusive education approach.** This trend recognizes that persons with disabilities should not necessarily be educated in segregated special education settings, but be given the opportunity and relevant support to attend their own local community schools. Such a movement originated in Scandinavia and is known in the past three decades by different names – each name reflecting somewhat the underpinnings of the core values of that particular movement. For instance, the early 1970s saw wide discussion of the Swedish concept of normalization (Evans et al. 1995) emphasizing the belief that disabled people should enjoy the same privileges, rights and opportunities as everyone else. This concept also paved the way to the deinstitutionalization of individuals with mental and emotional disabilities and encouraged the shift from segregated and single-category special schools to ordinary primary or secondary schools in the neighbourhood (Henderson 1995).

Most English-speaking countries (and many others) now accept the need to provide educational services for students with disabilities in as normal a setting as possible; usually in the ordinary classroom with appropriate special education aids and services brought to the student and the teacher, rather than pulling the student away from his or her peers into a special setting.

Mainstreamed or integrated education became popular terms in the '80s whereby students with disabilities were taken from special schools, placed in ordinary classrooms, taught by ordinary teachers and also received specialized assistance from qualified special education teachers. The other format involves the establishment of special classes in ordinary schools environment with allocated periods for academic and social interaction purposes with their non-disabled peers. Cole (1989) defines integration as a dynamic process whereby a child with special needs increasingly

participates in ordinary society. He also believes that there are many degrees of school integration. The process can be either full functional integration or partial integration, where the latter can be provided through special needs departments situated in comprehensive schools, special centres sharing sites with an ordinary parent school or special classes for children with severe learning difficulties set in infants' schools. In an OECD/CERI study, Evans et al. (1995) state that the agreed definition of integration is the process which maximizes the interaction between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers.

However, in the '90s, the movement has progressed beyond the concepts of mainstreaming and integration into inclusion and inclusive education. Even inclusion and inclusive education are often used interchangeably but, in essence, the term inclusion is most often used by special educators to describe students brought back from pull-out programmes or separate placements, while inclusive education embraces and accepts students from the moment their educational careers commence. The latter is increasingly becoming accepted as the principle of educating special needs students, and a more holistic approach to the process of placing such students in ordinary schools within their own neighbourhood. Worldwide trends towards more inclusive approaches to education suggest that special educators need to work closely with their ordinary education colleagues. It should be recognized and understood that inclusive education is not the same as integration, a concept with which special education is generally more familiar. Whilst integration is concerned with the placement of students and with the bringing of students who are different into a more ordinary situation, inclusive education on the other hand should be seen more as a philosophy in which it is believed that schools should accept the diversity of society and work towards meeting the needs of all learners in that particular society. According to Boscardin and Jacobson (1997), an inclusive school is best described as being less hierarchical, embracing community and celebrating diversity. Furthermore, these authors claim that such a school is:

> ... supported by Sergiovanni's (1993) concept of community and Maxwell's (1994) concept of continuity-based solidarity. We use inclusive in a manner that encompasses the term inclusion commonly used in special education but is conceptually, more far-reaching. Whereas, inclusion is most often used by special educators to describe students brought back from pull-out programs or separate placements, the term "inclusive" embraces and accepts students from the moment their educational careers

commence. The "inclusive" school is supported by the concepts of community and continuity-based solidarity. Sergiovanni's (1993) organization-community continuum is used to depict the structure of schooling and Maxwell's (1994) contrastive elements of similarity-based and continuity-based solidarity are used to convey the purpose of schooling. The "inclusive" school is located where continuity-based solidarity (where diversity and solidarity are complimentary and coexist) and community intersect. (468)

Describing one view of inclusive education, Mittler (1995) argues that it:

... starts with radical school reform, changing the existing system and rethinking the entire curriculum of the school in order to meet the needs of all children. It is also taken to mean education in an ordinary class in a neighbourhood school which a child would normally attend, with support as needed by the individual, and extra attention to address specific needs, such as the teaching of self care or communication skills, not easily taught in the ordinary classroom.

An inclusive approach to education facilitates and promotes equity in education. Dimmock and Bain (1991) provide some insights concerning the equity notion in suggesting that to some people, it implies equality of output or achievement by minimizing the differences in achievement between children of different abilities. The second perspective suggests the equal distribution of resource inputs across the ability spectrum while the third view, which they claim to be probably the most workable and acceptable, is predicated on equality of opportunity and access: "recognizing that children start their education from different points, depending on ability and socio-economic background.' (4)

Thorley et al. (1995) believe that two factors contribute to the rapid expansion in acceptance of the inclusion model of educating individuals with disabilities. The obvious human rights and freedoms portrayed by the concept of inclusive education and a growing disillusionment with existing forms of special education. However, Henderson (1995) points out that some school reforms, especially those that are motivated by economic reasons, have served as a deterrent to inclusion instead of playing supportive roles. For example, he notes that:

In New Zealand, the well established program to shift from segregated special schools to educating students with disabilities in ordinary primary and secondary schools was effectively halted as a result of the adoption of the Picot Report (1988). The first barrier encountered was that funding for the special schools could not be transferred with the student if he or she was 'mainstreamed' into an ordinary school. Also, since each school (whether ordinary

primary, ordinary secondary, or special school serving only students with a specific categorical disability) receives a budget directly from the Ministry, a decline in enrolment results in fewer dollars for succeeding years. An additional problem has surfaced in New Zealand and other settings where local school councils (the governing bodies) are given total responsibility for determining the expenditure of the educational funds allotted. School councils may well feel that the needs of the non- disabled majority outweigh those of the very costly special education program students. Also, the needs of a student with severe, multiple disabilities may require a wide variety of specialized aids and services which are foreign to the faculty and to the school governors. In many cases, therefore, obtaining the correct match becomes problematical, since regional and national agencies which formerly housed the needed expertise were abolished in the name of administrative reform. In Britain, local management has resulted in a reduction of LEA support services, which formerly supplied direct teaching for some pupils with special needs in mainstream schools.

In validating their argument for inclusive education, McLeskey and Waldron (1996) point out that during the past 30 years, the effectiveness of separate class placements for students with disabilities has been frequently addressed.

The primary question posed is: When compared to placement in general education classrooms, do separate class placements improve the academic and social progress of students with disabilities? Intuitively, it would seem that taking a student with a disability out of a general education classroom, placing the student with a small and homogeneous group of students in a less distracting setting, reducing the teacher student ratio, and providing individualized instruction would be beneficial. However, in contrast to what one might expect, the vast majority of available research has failed to demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs. Probably the most obvious reason that separate class programs have failed is that these programs have not met the high standards that have been set by those who have described the ideal program. For example, it has proved very difficult to individualize or differentiate instruction for students in these separate class programs. Furthermore, the "curriculum" offered by special education often lacks coherence, consisting instead of disjointed activities that are used to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills; it often does not focus on higher-level cognitive skills; and it often lacks the richness of the general education curriculum. Finally, the curriculum offered in separate special education classes is usually not coordinated with or supportive of the general education curriculum. (150)

McLeskey and Waldron (1996) also identify three stages in the development of inclusive programmes. The stages are not necessarily sequential, but are intimately interrelated and influence each other greatly. First, the addressing of teacher beliefs and values concerning inclusive

schooling which must be examined, reflected on, and changed if inclusion programs are to be effective. The single best method for dealing with this issue is to visit a good inclusive school programme, observe in classrooms, and discuss with teachers in the host school the beliefs and values that guide their programme. Second, a full year of careful planning which entails extensive meetings, discussions, staff development, visits to good inclusion sites and detailed analysis of the local school resources, activities on the part of school faculty members and administrators. The third and most difficult stage is the actual implementation and maintenance of the inclusive programme. The many changes in role and function that are required of all teachers who are involved in the programme will cause frustration and anxiety, but they will soon realize that changes will be ongoing as they modify the programme to better meet the shifting needs of students and faculty members. Continuing time for joint planning will also be required to enable teachers to adapt their work as they carefully plan changes and improvements.

An outgrowth of this inclusive education movement has been the focus on the empowerment of individuals with disabilities which, according to Polloway and Patton (1997), is a multifaceted concept that embraces many essential aspects of what it actually means to be respected and given dignity. The central feature of empowerment is self-determination and involves the need to give more attention to assessing how well students with disabilities are developing the ability to make choices, become advocates for themselves and to exercise control over their lives. Consistent with an inclusive approach to education is a move towards an integrated collaborative model of service delivery to students with disabilities. Fisman (1996) defines the term integrated as the participation of students with disabilities in the instructional program of the mainstream classrooms, and the term collaborative as the team work between professional staff for compensatory programmes such as special education with classroom teachers in the delivery of specialized education for which those students are eligible. Since the 1950s, Evans et al. (1995) report that in more economically developed countries there has been a steady shift away from the concept of people with disabilities as a relatively unchanging group and requiring fixed provision different from that of the majority. It is now realized that such persons can respond flexibly if their learning opportunities are appropriate and that they can lead normal lives in numerous ways even though living relatively normal lives requires

some adjustments from them and from people without disabilities. Also, their needs can best be met through a continuity of special provision.

**(c) The apparent move towards employing effective strategies for curriculum development and programme design.** As the delivery of meaningful, appropriate and effective special education services has become increasingly important in recent years, the schooling experiences of students with disabilities have also come under close scrutiny. The cause of concern is not only the provision and maintenance of conducive learning environments in schools, but the creation and application of suitable curriculum as well. Polloway and Patton (1997) remark that the most critical programming component for individuals with disabilities is the curriculum. Although the term curriculum can refer to the different courses offered and taught in schools or to the document containing the design others have developed for teachers to implement in the classroom, the importance of a comprehensive curriculum should be recognized when educational programmes are designed for students who possess varying degree of disabilities. This comprehensive curriculum, according to Polloway and Patton (1997, 177) is:

> ... a programme that is guided by the reality that each student is in a school on a time limited basis. The real test of the value of the curriculum is how students fair once they exit the programme. As a consequence, educators must consider what lies ahead for their students. That requires a perspective that is sensitive to the environments in which students will need to adapt and function.

The primary concern for a comprehensive curriculum should be its functionality in meeting the needs of each student which is to be defined by the degree to which students are prepared for the environments in which they will live and learn. Its central attributes include responding to the needs of an individual student at the current time and accommodating the concurrent needs for maximum interaction with non-disabled peers and attention to critical curricular needs. The development of comprehensive schools, as argued by Evans et al. (1995), marked two fundamental changes in thinking:

> ... firstly towards the idea that the intelligence of all children could be made increasingly effective through education; secondly towards the idea that individual schools could provide effectively for children of a very wide range of ability. The first change involved abandoning the idea of the constancy of the IQ: the belief that intelligent action was determined through the relatively straightforward application of biological principles of genetic

inheritance. Within this context, diagnosis of handicap had been a medical rather than an educational matter, the scientific term for children with learning difficulties had been "subnormal", differences in their educational needs were not fully understood and they tended to be "treated" as though they were "suffering" from some "condition". The second change emphasized the importance that had to be attached to modifying school organisation and the curriculum to meet this wider range of ability. New attitudes, methods and resources were developed, and they appeared to be successful. (17)

**(d) The ever-increasing and significant role of parents in the education of their children.** In most countries cited so far in this chapter, the involvement of parents as full partners in the educational decision-making process becomes more visible when specific decisions concerning the kind and amount of special education services are now being made at the child's level. Also contributing to this trend is the market force approach to education, which enables parents (the consumers of the service) to be more aware of their rights in the education of their children and to have increased power to influence the schooling system. This view is also shared by Doyle (1994) who draws attention to the 'new right' in education policy formation which she believes offers logical and valuable insight to the current practice in this field.

> The decade of the eighties witnessed a conservative leap from liberal-democratic principles of "equality of educational opportunity" to rightist discourses in educational policy in Western capitalist countries – discourses of "parental choice", "educational standards" and the "free markets". In other words there has been a radical move from the "ideology of meritocracy" to what Brown calls the "ideology of parentocracy" or the "third wave". To date, the "third wave" has been characterised by the rise of parentocracy, where a child's education is increasingly dependent upon the wealth and wishes of parents, rather than the ability and efforts of pupils. (54)

Foreman (1992) points out that although the general pattern appears to be one of increasing availability of special education services, parents still have a number of concerns about current and future provisions. Therefore, it is important for service providers to be aware of the viewpoints of the users of those services if the services they offer are to achieve their intended goals. The recent education policy in Britain has been influenced by the Government's determination to give greater power to consumers (parents) in determining school policies. In the United States, it has been suggested that the most effective way of achieving excellence in education is to give parents and students the power to choose

their own schools, where the responsibility and decision making is shifted from the control of central government to that of the individual students and their parents. Although parents were frequently uninformed about what was happening to their children prior to the advent of federal regulations, they now have a mandated right to be involved and encouraged to participate actively in the decision making process. Boyd and Smart (1987) point out that in the United States under the Reagan Administration, parental choice covers three distinct interests:

> (i) parental control over where their children attend school; (ii) parental influence on what is to be taught, by whom, and how; and (iii) parental involvement in the schooling process for their children. (69)

The cornerstone of this policy preference, according to Boyd and Smart (1987), is the creation of conditions under which parents can choose their child's school and, in the United States, the necessary condition is some form of educational vouchers where the tactics employed include supporting state initiatives to establish voucher plans and a national plan targeted to children eligible for assistance. The Australian experience, as described by Bailey (1992), highlighted much stronger roles taken by parents in schools and in teaching as a result of the strengthening of most of the parents' action groups as well as the acceptance by the general community of the rights of persons with disabilities to fair and reasonable service provisions. With the emphasis on parent rights and parent participation, many schools have fashioned open-door policies, a far-cry from the closed shops which persisted in many schools in the 1960s (Bailey, 1992). Parents are now more assertive about the rights of their children to a life of dignity and equitable treatment and seem less self-conscious about having a child with handicap. However, Knill and Humphreys (1996) argue that parents in special schools appear to formulate decisions about educational issues primarily on the basis of their children's social and emotional satisfaction, rather than on their intellectual development, and such views have significant implications if the main criteria for provision is based only upon parental demand. With the availability of the market force approach to education, which is based on the notion of self interest, the needs of the individual will consequently drive the system and ultimately should lead to higher standards and greater cost effectiveness. Furthermore, the privilege given to parents of children with special education needs to articulate opinions, make demands and assert effective influence over the quality of education

on offer will encourage them to make educationally informed decisions and choices. The literature also suggests that if parents are unaware of the quality of education being offered to them or their new found rights and responsibilities as consumers, special schools have a role to play to ensure that they do not end up with substandard services. Knill and Humphreys (1996) point out that parents need clear and accurate information to help them in making informed choices about their children's schooling, and it is the responsibility of special schools to define the quality of education which they provide, and in the process help parents to take on the role of consumers. The argument raised by Boyd and Smart (1987) concerning parental choice and control are indeed valid and noteworthy. They believe that the combining of parental control and social, philosophical and religious values can be problematic, and when the choices exercised by parents clash with community or societal norms, controversies arise. The only solution to non-conflicting parental choice, according to these authors, is home schooling.

**(e) Legislation and legal provisions for special education.** The reactions and interactions between the legal and educational communities in recent years have shaped the educational process and opportunities for individuals with disabilities throughout the world, particularly in Britain and the United States. Legislative, administrative and judicial activity which allows or excludes children with disabilities to attend public education has permanently intertwined the fields of law and education, and this is quite apparent in the training and placement of such children. For instance, in 1975, the Congress of the United States promulgated Public Law 94-142 or the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act in reaction to the fact that so many disabled children were being denied access to the nation's public schools. The legislation, now renamed the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was written to assure that all children with disabilities would have access to a free appropriate education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs  IDEA provides that each state in America establish procedures to assure that, to the maximum extent possible, children with disabilities are educated with non-disabled children.

> Disabled students' educational rights are created and protected primarily by IDEA. Extensive, detailed substantive and procedural rights and protections for disabled children and their parents are

> provided by the Act. The fundamental premise of IDEA is that all disabled children are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). A free appropriate public education encompasses special education and related services provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE) in compliance with other requirements of IDEA. IDEA contains extensive procedural requirements that centre around the development by the local education agency of an individualized educational program (IEP) for each disabled child. The IEP must state the child's present level of educational functioning and contain both long and short-term educational goals and objectives. (Daniel, 1997, 402.)

However, legal mandates such as IDEA, which facilitate the integration of a population with a history of segregation, are likely to generate much controversy in special education, and can become the subject of much debate and litigation. During the late 60s and early '70s, it was generally accepted in economically developed countries that only a small proportion of school aged children had disabilities that warranted education in special institutions. This estimate was far from reality as an increasing number of students were found to be requiring this service too. As a result, the scope of the legal definition of disability was extended. For instance, in the United States, the Public Law 94-142 of 1975 was implemented for school aged children, and was amended in 1986 (P.L. 99-457) to include children from birth, and in 1990 (P.L. 101-476) to incorporate transition services from the age of sixteen (Evans et al. 1995). In the United Kingdom, however, the 1978 Warnock report advocated the abolition of categories of disability for educational purposes and to replace them with the much broader term 'special educational needs' which has become the preferred term in many countries today, and considered by this Committee to be applicable to some one sixth of the population at any one time (Evans et al. 1995). Furthermore, Vincent et al. (1995) point out that in Britain the Code of Practice (1994) has helped in the clarification of the balance of responsibilities between schools and a LEA, by stating that a child remains primarily the responsibility of the school, and that only at Stage 3 do LEA support staff become involved. Moreover, the introduction of the 1993 Education Act, and the requirements of Local Management of Schools have contributed to a narrowing of LEA responsibilities for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and the concomitant broadening of those of the school.

In the recent past, an increasing worldwide concern about human and civil rights was reflected in the United Nations Year of Disabled Persons

1981, and in the Children's Charter of 1989. Moreover, concern was expressed about the negative aspects of labelling but this remains a dilemma in the field of special education. "While identifying children as disabled is administratively necessary if the resources they need are to be directed their way, this labelling process implies low expectations and can lead to lower achievement." (Evans et al. 1995, 17). Any legal mandate concerning special education or for provision of related services can never be completely effective until the educational and legal communities work together with parents to resolve the conflicts endemic to any statutory language. Even though meaningful tools which insure a free appropriate education for children with disabilities are found in special Acts in different countries, parents, teachers, administrators, and attorneys must still work together to achieve optimal results. This means that knowledge about the alternatives available is crucial to achieving the highest possible standard of education for these students.

**(f) Economic rationalism in Special Education.** Education is centre stage in a country's national attempts to overcome economic problems and secure a better future for its citizens, but the context of policy-making is shaped by certain constitutional, financial and philosophical issues. According to Fasano and Winder (1991), important changes were witnessed in the Australian Commonwealth's attitude to education policy development in the 1980s. Although the objectives of growth, equity, efficiency, and national consistency have remained, the Commonwealth has not simply continued the funding trends of the 1970s even though the total Commonwealth education outlays have increased by 19.6 per cent in real terms since 1980-81.

> The important change that has occurred, and whose effects are beginning to be felt, is the realisation that increasing the supply of funds – the focus on inputs – is no guarantee that education policy objectives will be achieved. The Commonwealth's commitment to education funding remains, as does its key role in the elaboration of education policies and programs. What has changed is the Commonwealth's attitude to the links between funding and policy objectives. What interests the Commonwealth now is not just funding levels but the use to which Commonwealth funds are put. What has happened to Commonwealth education policy, gradually during the 1980s but quite markedly and rapidly over the last two years, is that its main concern has shifted from calculating the appropriate level of inputs to monitoring and assessing the levels of performance and outputs. ... But the Commonwealth's recent emphasis on performance and outcomes is not simply the result of a change in management style. Nor does it simply reflect the need for greater accountability when budgetary conditions are tight. The

> concern with performance and outcomes is the direct consequence
> of our realisation that the earlier preoccupation with levels of input,
> both student numbers and public expenditure, failed to produce the
> results Australia expects and needs from its educational and
> training system. This realisation, which had been developing
> through the early 1980s, was brought sharply into focus by the
> economic shocks of the mid-1980s. (110)

Commenting on the adverse effect of stressing administrative efficiency, academic excellence and greater accountability, Henderson (1995) claims that at their core is the desire to obtain the same or better educational outcomes with less economic cost. He argues that decision-makers devote little thoughts to the effects of these reforms on the education of students with disabilities; and while in many cases, the effect will be to halt the growth and implementation of well established movements in special education; in other cases, the economic and social costs may well be disastrous. Sage (1992) also raises an issue that is becoming increasingly important today. It is a policy issue concerning the sharing of costs between local and state agencies, or among all applicable agencies. This issue has intensified by the public human service system increasing acknowledgment of broad responsibility for individuals and for services that can be described as constituting the margins of that system – preschool children, those in transition from school to adult status, and students with the most severe disabilities. Although established policies as manifested in legislation, regulation and litigation suggest general acceptance of no limitation from birth to adult status and a zero reject perspective, what remains unsettled is who pays. According to Sage (1992), because of the ambiguity encountered in finding boundary lines between educational services, related services, and medical services, the creation of coordinated policies with well-defined responsibilities across agencies is warranted.

**(g) Reform Implications on Special Education.** The literature consulted acknowledges significant reforms to both general and special education, some of which have been noted in this section. Henderson (1995) points out that those school reforms which are motivated by economic reasons have served as a deterrent, as exemplified by New Zealand's halting the well established mainstreamed education program as a result of the adoption of the Picot Report in 1988.

> The first barrier encountered was that funding for the special
> schools could not be transferred with the student if he or she was
> 'mainstreamed' into a regular school. Also, since each school

(whether regular primary, regular secondary, or special school serving only students with a specific categorical disability) receives a budget directly from the Ministry, a decline in enrolment results in fewer dollars for succeeding years. Few special school principals wanted to preside over a dwindling faculty, staff and other resources, as their school's population moved into regular primary or secondary schools, and little leadership to maintain the move to non-special schools was available from the very small Ministry staff. An additional problem has surfaced in New Zealand and other settings where local school councils (the governing bodies) are given total responsibility for determining the expenditure of the educational funds allotted. Thus there is considerable pressure for parents to keep their children with severe disabilities in special, segregated schools. Also, the needs of a student with severe, multiple disabilities may require a wide variety of specialized aids and services which are foreign to the faculty and to the school governors. In many cases, therefore, obtaining the correct match becomes problematical, since regional and national agencies which formerly housed the needed expertise were abolished in the name of administrative reform.

Kauffman (1993) believes that these attempts to reform education will make little difference until there is a keen understanding of the dual role of schools; they must exist as much for teachers as for students. This premise is based on the belief that schools will be successful in nurturing the intellectual, social, physical and moral development of children only to the extent that they also nurture such development in teachers. Furthermore, Ludlow and Lombard (1992) claim that modifications in the way that students with special needs are identified and assigned to educational programmes in the future will necessitate new roles for school administrators, classroom teachers, special educators, and related service personnel. Also, advances in technology will alter the educator's responsibilities for planning and implementing instruction, while increased parental participation in schools will add new duties in the area of family involvement and training. Changing roles and responsibilities will require alterations in the content and methodology of both preservice and inservice programs to prepare personnel. The changes predicted for special education in the next decade will result in sweeping changes in the goals and operating procedures of elementary and secondary schools, as well as colleges and universities across the country.

Describing the growing demand for special education services for individuals with disabilities in Mexico, a situation with which Fiji can easily identify, Fletcher and Kaufman de Lopez (1995) state that services are being provided to only one percent of individuals with disabilities who

require them, and of this population, two thirds have learning disabilities. However, the Mexican government has addressed these concerns by passing legislation to restructure service delivery to individuals with disabilities, and to urge greater collaboration between general education and special education to better plan for the educational integration of all children. In step with worldwide trends, special education in Mexico:

> ... is in the process of transformation. The role of special education is critical for ensuring equal opportunity and a quality education for all children with special educational needs in the least restrictive environment. In Mexico, as elsewhere, this requires a reconceptualization of the role of special education and its relationship to general education, retraining of both general and special education teachers to meet the new demands of an integrated system, and time for the articulation of services in general and special education. (534)

Kauffman (1993), however, raises a startling reality by noting that special educators, like many other professional groups, tend to be ahistorical in that too often they fail to recognise that special education is being swept along by the currents of its sociopolitical environment, and if lessons from its past are not learned, special education could end up 10 years from now almost precisely where it was some years ago. The deinstitutionalization movement is pointed out as a cautionary example in that during the 1960s and 1970s, the movement in the United States and elsewhere was embraced as a progressive and humane way of responding to mental illness leading to dramatic reduction in the number of people living in institutions. But now, the homelessness and incarceration of people with mental illness are approximating the conditions of the 19th century.

> In assessing the sociopolitical context of special education we must recognise that reform has become the status quo in education. But most of the reform in education has taken us in circles, not forward; the change has seldom been truly beneficial in the long term. Truly radical reform would mean a departure from the status quo. It would mean substantive reform unlike anything we have seen since special education emerged as a part of general public education about a century ago. The currents of our present-day sociopolitical context are in my opinion threatening to sweep us into a continuing cycle of unproductive change and away from substantive reform. I see three currents as particularly dangerous or problematic. The first of these is disbelief in the efficacy of the social welfare programs of government. There is a disenchantment with social welfare programs of many types, of which special education is just one example. Special education, like many other programs designed to enhance social justice, is said by reformers to have failed. A second sociopolitical current is preoccupation with image and the abandonment of ideas as the bedrock of policy decisions.

Never mind what words and sentences mean, just make sure that they sound good and appeal to the fantasies that produce sales or get votes or applause. A third sociopolitical current is growing fundamentalism and fanaticism. Fundamentalism and fanaticism in special education are characterized by oversimplification of both problems and proposed solutions, ideas pushed beyond rational analysis, appeals to image and emotion, and primitive ethical analysis. Given these dangerous currents, the challenge of reform in the 1990s will be to avoid the mistakes of past reform movements. (Kauffman, 1993, 3-4)

So far in this chapter, references have been made to special education services, trends and challenges in the three countries under study. The author believes that unless there is greater commitment from all those involved to the purpose of special education, and a willingness on their part to embrace and uphold its principles and values, the education of persons with disabilities will not become a national responsibility, but remain a recipient of good will, sympathetic individuals and concerned citizens. In view of the educational reforms cited in this chapter, and probably those being overlooked or yet to come, Mitchell (1996) sounds out a warning bell that must not be ignored.

In a climate of education reforms there are major challenges facing those who wish to ensure that students with special educational needs experience and attain the best possible quality of life. The overall theme is that education reforms must give careful consideration to students with special educational needs. In particular, this draws attention to four principles. First, considerable effort must be put into making all educators aware of the reconceptualisations of special education that have taken place in recent years and are continuing. To some extent, this means that the special education community will have to engage in "counter propaganda" to undo some of the misconceptions surrounding the education of students with special needs that many special educators have promulgated so successfully in the past. Second, it behoves all special educators to become aware of the philosophies underlying the education reforms and, where appropriate, any associated fallacies. The challenge is to find ways to make the reforms work for students with special educational needs. Third, education policy makers must give careful consideration to the negative consequences-mostly unintended-of some aspects of education reforms on students with special educational needs. This may mean tempering ideology to accommodate to a minority interest-sometimes a difficulty to the purist who abhors making exceptions to a principle lest they undermine its general application. ... the tenets of decentralisation: accountability, choice, and contestability, while having sound pedigrees in general, require some fine-tuning if they are to accommodate students with special educational needs. In the case of decentralisation, such students' interests must be protected by clear, enforceable national/state legislation or guidelines. The principle of accountability must be enforced in such a way that decisions at all levels-national/state

and local-demonstrably contribute to enhancing the quality of life of students with special educational needs and do not have undesirable consequences. Similarly, the principle of choice must be implemented in such a way that it does not negatively impact on such students. A related point is that if parents of students with special educational needs are also to be given choice, then their choice should not be unduly constrained by resources distribution favouring one option more than another. The principle of contestability, too, must be modified, with a key issue revolving around the size of the unit which should be funded to support students with special educational needs. The individual school is probably not the optimum unit. (72)

In the OECD/CERI study, Evans et al. (1995, 16) point out that the achievement of such a goal is highly complex.

It requires changes in laws, policies, organisational structures, definitions, curriculum, pedagogy, teacher training, attitudes and financial arrangements. From educationalists it also requires cooperation with parents, with members of voluntary agencies and with professionals from health ard social services. Despite the obvious difficulties in stimulating change across such a wide range of issues, Member countries of the OECD have embarked on this process of social and educational reform, which in 1987 also became the official policy of the European Community. Inevitably OECD Member countries are at different stages in the process.

Now that an understanding of special education practices in the countries under study has been acquired, and the above contribution from Evans et al. (1995) has set the stage for the next chapter, the literature yet to be reviewed pertains to special education policy with particular interest on areas like framework, practice and rationale for policy development, formulation, implementation and evaluation.

# 3. SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY: PRACTICE AND RATIONALE

## Introduction

Many aspects of the organisation of any country's education system can influence the extent to which children with special needs receive their education and maximize their opportunities to learn and excel in the field. These may include the government's delegation of the running of education, legislation and policy provision for education, the organisation of the schools themselves, the nature of the college and university training centres, as well as outside-school support services available. In particular, some kinds of education organisation and policy provision can enhance full participation, whereas others can inhibit or even prevent it. According to Meijer (1995), three kinds of structures are generally adopted in the organization of education in most countries today. In countries where education is administered centrally, the government can in principle exert a strong influence on certain education priorities, but in practice, they often delegate much of the responsibilities to regional authorities or to district boards, with the government taking direct responsibility only for aspects such as curriculum, examinations, teacher training, recruitment and the like. In some countries, regions function autonomously and carry their own legislative responsibilities with considerable variations in their practices. In other countries still, education is largely decentralized to district level, though co-operation and co-ordination remain with respect to certain aspects of policy. The deliberations in this second part of the literature review encapsulate a major interest of this study as it endeavours to unravel the rationale and practice of policy development in education, particularly special education, so as to construct a relevant framework and identify the important components as well as salient features of a good special education policy.

Special education in most countries is not an isolated or fully independent entity, but generally embodied in the overall education system, and therefore, guided by the policies and regulations governing that particular system. Thus, any significant change to the structural, economical, physical, political, or administrative arrangements of the overall education system is most likely to have some repercussions on its sectors

such as special education. However, much can be learned about policy development in special education by examining what special education entails and by understanding the 'type' of people it serves. According to Sage and Burrello (1986), the discussion of any major function of society requires the establishment of some definitions and parameters of the subject matter, and as far as special education is concerned, the primary policy question has to deal with inherent ambiguities regarding the concept and definition of special education.

## Special Education: Purpose and Scope

Understanding the purpose, process and scope of special education is fundamental to the formulation and realization of sound policy decisions, and the author believes that two underpinning schools of thought best describe this phenomenon. Firstly, the kind of education that special education provides, and secondly, the definition of the term 'special' in special education. However, Sage and Burrello (1986) claim that the following factors determine the scope of special education at any time and place: terminology, philosophical beliefs, history, local tradition, legal foundations and fiscal constraints. For the most part, the literature associates special education with the creation and provision of meaningful, relevant and individually prescribed learning programmes to an individual who may possess special educational needs as a result of the onset of a disabling condition that is either congenitally or adventitiously acquired. All special education provision is based on individual needs, and a child's needs are interpreted in relation to a continuum of special education needs, and in the context of his or her unique environment. However, Sarason and Doris (1982, 53) clarify the nature, reality and challenges of such education by acknowledging that:

> Handicapped and nonhandicapped students are human beings, not different species, and their basic makeup in no way justifies educational practices that assume that the needs they have for social intercourse, personal growth and expression, and a sense of mastery, are so different that one must apply different theories of human behavior to the two groups. If we respond to the handicapped as if basically different, we rob them and us of the experience of similarity and communality.

As for the second ideology, the term 'special' in special education is a relative label ascribing some peculiarities in a person's behaviour and

connoting both the academic threshold and learning requirements of a person whose educational needs, as determined through formal or informal assessments, cannot be solely and totally accommodated through ordinary education in an ordinary school. This terminology implies a person's different ability in the learning process and exposes his/her hidden potentials in such situations. It categorizes people according to their specific learning needs, suggests some deviations from the 'acceptable norms' of life and learning, and often the recipients of negative stereotypes, discriminatory behaviour and over sympathetic treatment. The terminology also puts the person in a category that is loaded with social meanings and preconceptions, making him or her a special person. Sadly though, the characteristic of being disabled is often ascribed to the whole person and all his or her other characteristics are interpreted in the light of his or her disability. Hence, the personality freezes in the format and name of disability.

According to Soder cited in Booth (1992), disability is not to be seen as a physical, bodily state but as the way a bodily impairment affects an individual in a particular social context. This social nature of disability as described by Soder includes the epidemiological approach which uncovers the relationship between the occurrence of disability and environmental factors such as pollution or poverty; the adaptability approach which views disability as relative to the demands of particular settings including psychological and social demands (disabilities are reduced when the physical environment is adapted for or responsive to the needs of people with disabilities); and the social constructionist approach which draws attention to the significance of the personal and cultural understandings of disability for the betterment of and interactions between people with and without disabilities. An important purpose of integration is to create mutual understanding and acceptance between individuals with disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts in the context of equality of opportunity. Clearly, this involves give and take on both sides, as typified by the following three relevant processes of adjustment identified by Evans et al. (1995, 18):

> Assimilation emphasises that the disabled should take on the ways of the majority. Accommodation recognises the rights of the disabled to be themselves and puts the pressure to adjust onto the majority. Adaptation requires both the disabled and the non-disabled to adjust.

## Policy and Policy Development: Definition and Rationale

To establish and maintain effective special education services in any education system, the formulation, implementation, standardization and review of an appropriate policy is almost mandatory. Before proceeding any further, it is appropriate at this point to define policy as suggested in the literature consulted, and investigate its implications on education, particularly special education. A particular and pertinent way of understanding policies, according to Ball (1992, 22) is that:

> Policies are pre-eminently, statements about practice – the way things could or should be – which rest upon, derive from, statements about the world – about the way things are. They are intended to bring about idealised solutions to diagnosed problems. Policies embody claims to speak with authority, they legitimate and initiate practices in the world, and they privilege certain visions and interests. They are power/knowledge configurations par excellence.

Edwards II and Sharkansky (1978) argue that there is no single definition of public policy, but suggest that it is what governments say and do, or do not do. It is the goals or purposes of government programmes, the important ingredients of such programmes, and includes the implementation of intentions and rules. Policy may either be stated explicitly in laws or in the speeches of leading officials, or implied in programmes and actions which means that it will be apparent only to those who are intimately familiar with the programme details and able to discern patterns in the sum total of what is being done. A change in policy may be proposed and debated in public with the full participation of interest groups and the mass media, or done covertly under a cloak of secrecy or with a contrived explanation designed to mislead the public. However, Cunningham (1989) claims that any policy is considered within a group of policies to which it is subordinate, and within another group of policies for which it becomes the over-arching policy context. Kogan cited in Ball (1990) believes that policy is clearly a matter of the authoritative allocation and operational statement of values as well as a statement of prescriptive intent. These values, as Ball (1990) points out,

> do not float free of their social context. We need to ask whose values are validated in policy, and whose are not. Thus, 'The authoritative allocation of values draws our attention to the centrality of power and control in the concept of policy'. Policies project images of an ideal society (education policies project definitions of what counts as education) ... (4).

Cunningham (1989) argues that the ability of any organisation to create coherent policies will depend on its ability to rethink its concepts and to regroup or reclassify its functions. However, Ball (1992) points out that education policy is neither a direct response to dominant interests nor reflecting the interests of one social class, but a response to a complex and heterogenous configuration of elements which include ideologies that are residual, emergent or currently dominant. Education policy-making in the United Kingdom had been taking a clientist approach (Ashford in Ball, 1992) where the teacher unions and education authorities had wielded considerable influence, but the orientation is now towards the consumers of education (parents and industrialists) while the producer lobbies are almost totally excluded. Furthermore, policy-making in England's Department of Education and Science

> for the most part limited to framing decisions to do with finance, or
> target setting; direct impact on the curriculum or the organisation of
> local provision was rare. (Ball 1992, 10)

Even though the desire for a fair, responsive and sensitive society or government remains paramount today, the tendency to exclude provisions for equity has proven detrimental to full participation and active involvement of its members. With regard to education, its policies are classified as public policies and embedded in these structures will be any policy on special education. Positive constitutional democratic governments as explained by Gilbert (1984) are guided by public policies which may be found in natural law, or are more clearly defined by constitutional charters and agreements, and are established over time by precedent or situation. Such policies are shaped by environmental factors by way of the influences, rationales, pressures and adjustments with political systems. However, it must be pointed out here that those individuals who will benefit from any policy governing special education services are in the minority in terms of population, decision-making and political influence, and therefore their rights to receive education in whatever way, shape or form have to be protected. In this way, the domination of other issues that those in the majority may consider to be more beneficial or of greater importance will be minimized and eliminated. The greatest challenge here is for those holding the reins of power, who for the most part represent those in the majority group, to recognize and encourage the valuable input and participation of those for whom a policy is designed, and in this instance, special education teachers,

special needs students, their parents and other prominent stakeholders. Furthermore, the provision of a policy on special needs education is indicative of an education system's concern, response and recognition of the rights of a less privileged and marginalized group in that society to gain access into and take full advantage of formal and informal educational opportunities within that system from which they may have been deprived and possibly excluded for some time. In justifying the need for legislation and policy provision to enhance the quality of life and opportunities for persons with disabilities, Burdekin (1994, 9) argues that:

> One cannot legislate tolerance, but the law is sometimes a necessary precondition for initiating more tolerant attitudes and more equitable policies and programs in the community. That is to say that the law is sometimes a necessary, but not a sufficient precondition to achieve the sort of social change that we must see in our community if people with disabilities are to be treated in the manner that they deserve. It is imperative that we are prepared to confront ourselves with the inadequacy and be prepared to indulge in a total rethink, if you like, of the adequacy of some of the fundamental social, political and economic institutions of our society. We have taken these for granted.

According to Dimmock and Bain (1991), the quest for equality of educational opportunity dominated education policy agendas in the United States from 1955 to 1980 but is now losing momentum due to rising national concern for greater school productivity, the push for student achievement and the raising of academic standards. Dimmock and Bain (1991) also point out that in Australia there is an existing policy-practice gap in the service delivery to special needs students which is characterized by low funding and service delivery levels and a general low awareness level of special education practice in the ordinary education system. This new right poses a real threat to the interests of minority groups, particularly special needs students who are less likely to achieve high academic success and will most probably be neglected. Realizing this danger, the British government through its Department of Education utilizes the five stages of assessment recommended in the Warnock report (1978) to formulate the Draft Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs which took effect from September, 1994. This Code of Practice presents a five-stage procedure for responding to special educational needs whereby schools take the lead in assessing pupils' needs during the first three stages while the responsibilities for stage four and five are shared with the local education authorities. The first three stages will need to be observed before any

statutory assessment of the pupil's needs is considered under Section 167 of the 1993 Education Act, which replaces the former Section 5 of the 1981 Education Act. Ludlow and Lombard (1992) identify three major social and educational policy developments which they believe will have major implications for the future of special education. First, the federal or national mandates related to special education are directing schools to implement programs for even younger children and to provide increased opportunities for parental involvement. Second, the impetus of the school reform movement has prompted professional educators and community leaders alike to propose sweeping changes in schooling and teacher training practices, and third, the growing demand for publicly supported day care raises new questions about the role of the school as the primary community agency in the delivery of social services to all children and their families. Another development that will have remarkable impact on special education policy is the legalization of education policy-making. Sungaila (1994) states that this development is creeping into the Australian education system particularly when federal, state and local governments are increasingly required to scrutinise and justify every area of public expenditure. Thus, new choices have to be made in the educational arena, not only because of new government funding and management policies, but also because of new laws. According to Sungaila (1994), this aspect of government intervention has legalized educational policy-making in Australia, even to the extent where planning has to be carried out under legal sanction. She also suggests that this trend will not just fade away and die, particularly when technological change in education will create new dangers to the rights of privacy and access.

## The Framework for Policy Development

Policy development in schools must be interesting, practical and straight-forward, and the framework it adopts must make a clear link between the values and beliefs of these schools and their practices. This framework becomes useful when it reviews the schools' present policies and provision in a coherent way, exposes inadequate organisation and reinforces good practice. It needs to be clear enough to be able to identify those schools' arrangements and practices which reject the views they uphold concerning a particular issue, and when the policy statement and everyday practice in these schools diverge, a credibility gap opens up. Palmer et al. (1994) attribute this credibility gap to generally framed policy

statement, resource levels inhibiting full implementation and colleagues being non-committal. For a policy to be credible, two requirements are suggested by the literature: its preparation must involve colleagues to create that sense of ownership, and secondly, it must relate to what actually happens day-by-day in schools. Furthermore, Boyd and Smart (1987) identify two criteria relating to the development of education policy. Firstly, the criterion encompassing the substantive content of the policy preferences in education being discussed and acted upon at federal, state and local levels, and to include both what education should be about, and how education should be conducted. The second criterion concerns procedural issues that deal with the role of governmental levels in policy development and administration.

March and Simon's rational model of policy-making cited in Cunningham (1989) is said to have a utility in that it reminds the active policy-maker and administrator of the ground rules to which they ought to be working. This framework, however, does not add new explanatory perspectives for the policy analyst. A different framework is identified by Hughes in Cunningham (1989) and is known as disjointed incrementalism – a process involving the establishment of political priorities through the bargaining of the interested parties so that decision-making is based on small, incremental shifts towards a desired policy rather than on any radical re-orientation. It is superficially attractive in that it certainly bears a closer correspondence to normal policy-making conditions where the complete scrapping of existing structures that were designed to fit earlier policies and circumstances is rare. However, the normal practice for facilitating a radical change via this framework is to propose modest changes that will reorientate an existing structure towards a new end, rather than proposing the abolition of existing structures which will only invite solid opposition to and possible defeat of the proposals. Vickers in Cunningham (1989) acknowledges the applications of systems theory to administration and proposes yet another framework in policy-making: a systems framework which is typified by two distinctive characteristics. First, the values of policy-makers are identified as critical facets in the process of policy-making, and second, appreciative judgment which is the faculty all politicians, administrators and managers use is described as being composed of inseparable constituents of appreciation. Vickers believes that the components of appreciation are reality judgment which encompasses the policy-maker's understanding of a particular area

as relevant to the issue, and that value judgment reflects the policy-maker's own normative set of attitudes about the issue in question. The nature of this value judgment, according to Cunningham (1989, 26),

> accepts that the value judgments of men and societies cannot be proved correct or incorrect: they can only be approved as right or condemned as wrong by the exercise of another's value judgement. ... What Vickers is describing is the interaction between value judgment and reality judgement, progressively affecting the appreciative judgment of the policy-maker.

The process of policy development, according to Palmer et al. (1994, 4-5), can be better understood in a four-line framework which they claim to encompass all policy development.

> Where do we start from? – Philosophy. A policy must start with statements about belief which relate to the school's respect for the individual needs of its pupils, the attitude it takes towards such needs and the view it takes of its own responsibilities. ...

> What should we do? – Principles. This section relates principles immediately to putting philosophy into practice. Statements here will include expectations about differentiation in schemes of work, responsibilities of special needs coordinators and ways in which parents will be involved in the process. ...

> How do we do it? – Procedures. This section is the most practical of all. It indicates the actions to be taken by staff in the school. It may specify times for meetings, forms of recording or informing, the location of resources or the placing of responsibility for an action or arrangement. ...

> Is it happening? – Performance. This will deal with questions about whether or not the policy is working effectively. It will indicate what quantifiable evidence can be collected and how it might be presented to senior management, colleagues or governors. This might be the number of pupils at different stages, the amount of money spent on specialist resources or the number of meetings with parents.

The strength of the policy depends on its clarity, and each level in the policy can be clearly distinguished from the level from which it is derived. The four Ps of policy as discussed previously provide some useful insights into the design of an effective framework for policy development. For example, the philosophy can be used to raise the profile of some particular aspects of the policy. Principles are explicit statements of arrangements and responsibilities through which pupils' needs will be identified and met. The language of the policy needs to be kept as simple as possible and should embrace all aspects of the policy to promote the importance of

accountability within different levels of the school organization. Procedures apply to all those who will be involved in the implementation of the policy like the principals, departments, individual teachers, students and parents. It is important that when policies are being developed, they will have to be negotiated with those persons to be involved, since policies often stipulate who will do what, what needs to be done and when it is to be completed. Performance provides a useful check on the concreteness of the policy and identifies those indicators which can be quantified. The performance statements emphasise the practical nature of the other elements of the policy and imply an inbuilt system of review. As pointed out by Walker (year unknown), no matter how well thought-out a policy might be, or how closely committed staff and pupils are to its operation, no policy can be said to be adequate unless it has built into it mechanisms for its own change. There is always a danger that policies, programmes and procedures will calcify and become the fossils of a life that once existed. No policy can remain unaltered for long as it will come under continual questioning due to the very nature of changing conditions. The policy is never static because each procedure leads to quantifiable consequences. Review is implied by the structure of the policy but the policy framework is neither developmental nor a reviewing process, but a framework to which such processes may be applied. Furthermore, schools need to build on their present arrangements and beliefs although it may be inevitable that when developing a policy within this framework, the functions and responsibilities of staff will be reviewed and reconstructed. However, the final shape of the policy will depend on the school concerned.

Cunningham (1989) identifies certain features of policy-making that stand out in recent decades.

> First, policy-makers are motivated more by what is generally perceived, or appreciated, by other policy-makers than by evidence, even when evidence is easily available. Second, those perceptions, or 'appreciations', are most influenced by the dominant values of the culture in which the policy-makers operate. Third, values-personal and cultural change very slowly, and the policy conflicts between those with a high personal investment in the existing system and those with intentions for radical change, will be necessarily intense. (41)

The principles of policy-making identified by Cunningham (1989) further illuminate the discussions in this section. Such principles include the priority of the values of the policy-makers over the available evidence; the

power of received wisdom that is shared by other influential policy-makers, the interaction of an individual's reality and value judgements with those of colleagues to create a consensus; the law of Cleopatra's nose whereby the particular attributes of policy-makers significantly affect the outcomes; the discrete strands of policy-making which can affect significant initiatives and make continua of policy difficult to identify; and the covert agenda where a new and potentially contentious policy is disguised by more acceptable and uncontentious terminology.

## The Process and Responsibilities

Howell and Brown (1983) point out that policy making in education does have certain features which distinguish it from policy making in other fields. Notably, it manifests a concern for specifically educational values which at times takes precedence even over considerations such as resource costs, professional self-interest and political prerogatives; and secondly, it takes place in a decentralized system of government whereby the providing institutions and those associated with them have considerable autonomy. Being a derivative of a government's public policy on education, any special education policy remains vulnerable to the discretion of the bureaucratic system in which the government operates. At the top of the fulcrum are the policy makers while the remaining levels in the hierarchy perform different roles and in different stages of the implementation process. Nevertheless, a policy statement should be designed to promote a truly collaborative and consultative approach to special education. Such a view is promoted by the NSW special education policy to ensure that:

> educational outcomes for students with disabilities are of the highest quality; teachers are able to develop competencies which enable them to teach children with a range of educational needs; parents and caregivers are actively involved in educational programming for their child. (3)

In the classic policy/administration dichotomy, Gilbert (1984) claims that the role of administrators is to develop and implement the will of those who set policies, although they may have been actively involved as are other interest groups in the making of policy in its formative as well as its implementation stages. It is advantageous to any institution or organization that the role of administrators include the formulation, implementation and adjudication of policies. This provision is beneficial

since administrators are able to influence policy in its early formation stage through active campaigning, selective interpretation of technical information and through their own program designs, strategies and tactics. Often, they are able to rearrange or modify the intent of legislative enactments as a program is formed and structured, or they can extend or reduce the policy terrain upon which their programs rest. Recent legislation and local priorities must also be considered in the process of policy formulation and the widest possible dissemination and negotiation of the policy is to be encouraged. Those involved in policy formation should familiarize themselves with the process so as to get better insight into the future, ascertain the policy implications for the work concerned and recognize the degree to which a policy is representative of the pluralistic society they live in, and the degree to which a given policy initiative is potentially stable. It is also essential that they are more knowledgeable about the contextual environment of policies and their own influence and power on that environment. This means that while policy makers face severe challenges, they do have a major opportunity to create constructive and effective governmental responses to societal problems, and avoid a deadly form of ambivalence which may result in governmental non-policies, non-actions and paralysis. Echoing these views, Cunningham (1989) emphasizes the importance of individual policy-makers' own value and reality judgments which illustrate the critical role of the characters of policy-makers themselves.

> Coherent policies, where they exist, may then be modified significantly by the perceptions and characters of individual policy-makers: they are also subject to the happenchance of coincidence – what else is on the political agenda. Factors outside the educational issues under consideration had quite significant effects for the final policies examined. Time is a factor both of the process of policy-making and of the environment in which that policy can be implemented. (34)

Two role models of policy-making are described by Gilbert (1984): bureaucrats and managers; both of which regard policy analysis and evaluation as important decision-driven techniques. However, the bureaucratic perspective sees analysis and evaluation to be more likely conducted by others external to the organization, who view policy formation as separate from their jobs. On the contrary, managers recognize these functions to be integral parts of their decision domain and the making of policy to be central to their role, occurring as a result of strategic and operational planning. The emphasis of the bureaucrat role

model is placed on administering resources in accord with grander policies set forth by government legislators and political executives. Administrators react to policies articulated by others and act to implement such policies through sound administrative practices like setting guidelines, rules and regulations, and are subject to continued oversight and modification by others beyond their domain of control.

In the manager role model, the emphasis is placed on planning, organizing and controlling processes to accomplish organizational goals through people. Here, policy makers work in a more emergent environment where change, uncertainty and instability abound and within given legal guidelines. Contrary to the bureaucrat model, the manager tends to lean more towards a rational decision making style rather than incremental decision making. The manager is committed to making, enacting and evaluating policy. However, such policies serve as rules, procedures, and guidelines to enable subordinate members of their organizations to make uniform decisions and conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the goals and objectives of the organization. Policy guidelines are used as controls to assure that organizational performance will meet their expectations or standards. Politics dominate the public sector and, as such important policy decisions in government are made on the political anvil. Interest groups have a legal role to play in shaping policy in this kind of public sector. Goals and objectives in public sector organizations are broad and more plentiful and less likely to lend themselves to strategic plans which have long-range objectives. Thus, planning for policy formulation in the public sector is more difficult and less realistic. Evaluation criteria are less clear, making them more difficult to use to assess alternatives and decisions and the base criteria used are tied to public interest political efficiency and cost-benefit analysis. Both public interest and political efficiency are vague terms and are not easily measured. Also, the time horizons for public managers often differ from those of politicians who play a key role in the formation of public policy. Thus for purposes of political expediency, politicians may legislate programs that deter strategic planning and analysis on the part of professional public managers.

In the next chapter, a theoretical framework for this study is presented and discussed.

# 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND KEY CONCEPTS

The discussions and documentations in the three previous chapters have brought to life three broad issues which, for the most part, have laid a solid platform and contributed to the lifeblood of this thesis. First, the case study depicts the setting and focus of this thesis, which is accompanied by the statements of the purpose, background, goal and objectives of this study. Included in this introductory chapter is the description of special education in Fiji, both as a Government (MOE) responsibility and an initiative of registered non-governmental charitable agencies (Societies). Second, with the attention remaining on special education, the focus shifts to the practice and trends in other countries, namely Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Third, the rationale and framework for policy development in education, particularly special education, are discussed. However, several key concepts emanate from these three major issues which provide an appropriate theoretical framework for this project. Not only do these issues summarize major ideologies already established, they also forecast the pattern and format of the development of the research problem in the ensuing chapters. They link and connect the introduction and findings from the literature to the methodology being employed, the type of data to be collected, and the process by which these data will be analyzed, treated and presented. The key concepts are outlined below.

(a) Special education services in Fiji are not solely the responsibility of the government, but guided by a partnership agreement between its Ministry of Education and registered non-governmental organizations (Societies). It is clear from the discussions in the first chapter that special education initiatives in Fiji are presently dictated by those regulations formulated specifically for the establishment, provision and maintenance of primary education in the country. That is, the different religious, private and charitable organizations establish and manage the schools while the government through MOE provides human resources (teachers) and restricted financial aid towards capital and recurrent costs. It has also been noted that this arrangement is detrimental to special education as there are certain issues which are peculiar to special education alone and require the creation of special policy provisions, management procedures and

organizational structure. This study will investigate this matter from the standpoint of those who currently work in special education settings as well as those who are involved in management at the MOE and Society levels. The data collected from this investigation will reflect the nature and effectiveness of this existing arrangement, and probably highlight the need to create a system that is more conducive to the vision, goals and strategies concerning the education of Fiji's disabled population, and the support network for those who serve them.

(b) Special education in Fiji is not quarantined from, but is influenced by international trends and practice in the field. Although special education services in Fiji, as presented in the introduction, can be seen as obsolete and out of touch when contrasted against the progress and achievements of the three countries studied in this thesis, it must not be forgotten that special education has a much longer history in these same countries than in Fiji. More likely than not, what Fiji is experiencing today in its special education initiatives would have been encountered by these countries at one time or another in the immediate past. However, each country is different and responds differently to issues pertaining to special education, but the attraction and impact of worldwide trends and developments even on Fiji cannot be ignored, denied or underestimated. For instance, the concepts of integration, equalization of opportunity, human rights, empowerment, consumerism, greater parental participation, adaptive technology and even inclusive education are slowly making their way into Fiji and finding their places in the country's government departments and private sectors. Fiji as a nation is very much a part of the international scene and is often obligated to ratify, observe and implement internationally recognized resolutions and conventions established by prominent organizations like the different United Nations (UN) bodies, World Health Organization (WHO) and International Labour Organization (ILO). It must also be borne in mind that other factors such as national economy and interest, the public welfare system, socio-economic status, education and political representation and affiliation contribute to the importance and ranking of special education and related issues in a country's national agenda and, therefore, the actual implementation of these international trends and the realization of their goals often depend on the position held by special education in the prioritization of this national agenda. At the outset, this thesis has identified recent global trends and practices as well as cross-fertilization in

special education, particularly in the delivery of appropriate services and formulation of effective policies. The goal is to publicize the findings of this study and sensitize authorities concerned to the current thinking and practice in the field of special education. The bottom line is that pitfalls and weaknesses in the Fiji special education policy and practice will become more apparent, and thus the partners (MOE and Societies) are challenged to improve the existing arrangement in the name of effective, efficient and equitable special education services.

(c) Special education initiatives and policies are not static but reactive and progressive. Since its inception, the special education movement in the countries cited in this study has undergone significant changes and reviews in direct response to a nation's ability and willingness to address the increasing and diverse special needs of its disabled population. While most of these countries base their initial response to special education on their experience with ordinary schools, they soon realize that the educational needs of children with disabilities deserve special attention and require specific treatment. Hence, one witnesses the formulation of specific special education legislations and policy provisions, as well as the establishment of specialized educational programmes and procedures. The rising population of persons with disabilities due to such reasons as (seemingly paradoxically) better medical facilities, technical advancement as well as man-made and natural affliction inevitably leads to the recognition and promotion of their needs. This in turn encourages local and national governments to respond accordingly for social, ethical, economical and political reasons. It is envisaged that this study will ascertain the relevance and effectiveness of current special education policies and practice in Fiji, and draw from the experiences of other countries cited so far in recommending some alternatives which have been found to be successful and relevant.

A diagrammatic representation of this theoretical framework as shown in Figure 2 illustrates the current placement of special education in the MOE, demonstrating the contextual, ideological, economical and political influence of its macro environment, and depicts the opportunity and extent of cross-fertilization between the two.
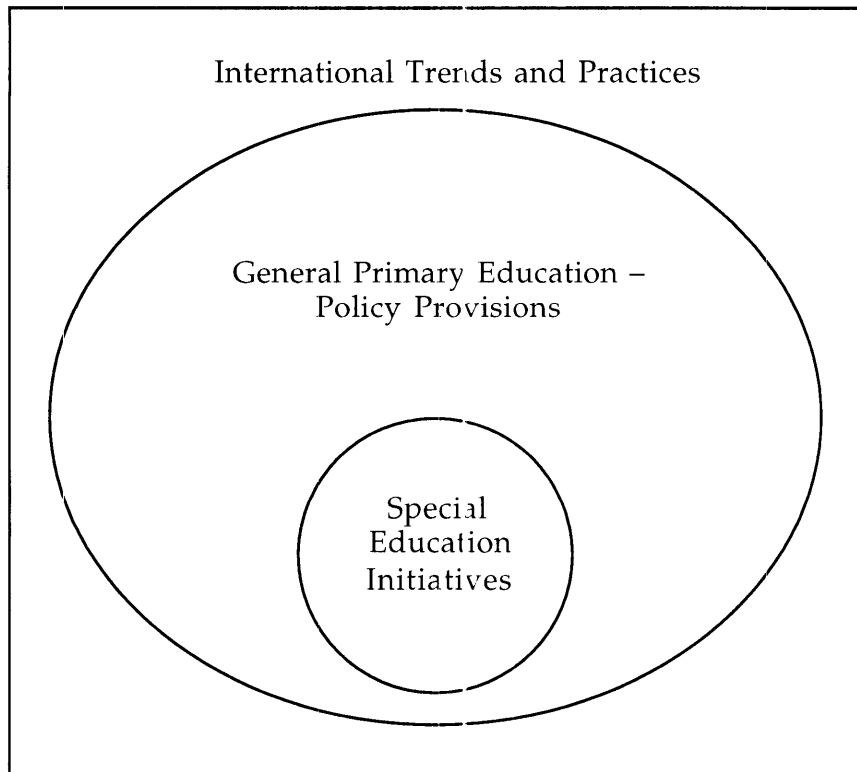
**Figure 2: Special Education in Fiji: Placement and Cross-fertilization**

## Conclusion

Now that special education has been established in Fiji for about thirty years, certain key questions need to be asked, and the ones given here are the driving force behind this study's design. Are the structure, regulations, policy, vision and objectives of special education still relevant today? Does the education of individuals with disabilities require special attention and warrant specific policy provisions? Is special education in Fiji responsive and on par with international trends and practices? Does the future of special education in Fiji look promising for the population it serves and those it employs? The purpose and objectives of this thesis, therefore, provide a formidable challenge as well as a unique opportunity to take a comprehensive view of the way in which special education policy provisions in Fiji have been developed and implemented, and how they should develop in the future.

In the next chapter, the research methodology is discussed, starting with a description, justification and rationale of the methods employed in the processes of data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with a close-up view on the descriptive data to be collected and treated in this study.