

**Final Report to the Ministry of Education on  
Curriculum Policy  
and  
Special Education Support**

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## **Abbreviations**

DOPs – Desirable Objectives and Practices

IEP – Individual Education Plan

MOE – Ministry of Education

NAGs – National Administrative Guidelines

NEGs – National Education Guidelines

NEMP – National Evaluation and Monitoring Project

NZCF – New Zealand Curriculum Framework

ORRS – Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Scheme

SES – Special Education Services

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this project was to assess how well national curriculum policy in New Zealand articulates learning outcomes for students who have special educational needs.

The project addressed five questions that demanded descriptive responses:

1. What general learning (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values) outcomes are particularly important for students who require adapted or specialist learning support?
2. How have overseas education systems provided curriculum support for these students?
3. How does the early childhood curriculum and national curriculum support student's transitions between early childhood and schooling?
4. What particular policy issues or opportunities arise from the work completed to date for the *Curriculum Stocktake Report*?
5. What is the relationship between curriculum and assessment for the students in question?

This final question was not signalled in the original project brief but emerged as a key issue during the first phase of the project.

A sixth question required an evaluative response:

1. How well does the New Zealand National Curriculum articulate the learning outcomes for the students in question?

The lack of research evaluating the effectiveness of different curriculum policies means that this report is focused on description.

The project addressed a further four questions which, on the basis of the first six questions (above), generated the recommendations of this report:

2. Should particular provision be made vertically through the learning/skill achievement levels, or horizontally across the learning and skill areas, or both?
3. Should a foundational achievement level be developed for students who may not progress to level 1 learning objectives?
4. What principles should underpin curriculum support materials?
5. What are the implications of the above for teacher education, professional development and specialist support?

The project was conducted in two interwoven phases: first, a review of the national and international literature pertinent to curriculum policy and special educational needs, with a particular emphasis on empirical studies demonstrating the link between policy and outcomes; second, structured interviews were carried out in five schools that accommodate students with special educational needs. These schools were selected to provide a range of demographic characteristics and a variety of arrangements for students with special educational needs but, in all cases, the interviews included discussion of curriculum arrangements (including assessment) for students and the schools' use of the New Zealand Curriculum Framework.

The report describes the context for the project, including: the cultural context in which schools operate in New Zealand, the regulatory context in which schools operate in New Zealand; growing recognition of the importance of community involvement in curriculum determination for all students (particularly for Māori and Pasifika students and students with special education needs); tensions surrounding the place of functional skills in a predominantly academic curriculum milieu; the relationship between curriculum and assessment; and debates about inclusion.

A characteristic of the literature reviewed was the dearth of studies that have explored the link between curriculum policy and the impacts of such policy on outcomes for students. Much of the literature reviewed regarding students with special educational needs focused on practical aspects of provision, particularly processes to support participation

in educational settings, rather than the outcomes of educational participation per se, and on structural arrangements (particularly resourcing).

The other significant gap in the literature is investigation of outcomes for Māori and Pasifika students who also have special educational needs.

No strong signals were identified regarding the benefits or implications of vertical versus horizontal provision of curriculum policy or learning outcomes. Overseas authorities that have made such provisions have used various models but the efficacy of one model versus another has not been explored. Nor did the school personnel participating in the interviews have strong feelings about these options.

There was some support amongst the participating interviewees for the development of a foundational achievement level for students who may not progress to level 1 learning objectives. It was evident from the interviews that, in effect, such foundation levels already exist, albeit on a school-by-school basis as some schools have responded to what they perceive as the lack of suitable achievement objectives within existing curriculum policy documents.

Perspectives on the usefulness of current national curriculum documents, particularly the *NZCF* and *Te Whāriki*, showed enormous variation across the participating schools. In one setting, detailed curriculum planning for students with special educational needs had been carefully identified on the basis of the *NZCF*; in another setting, the national curriculum framework had been, in effect, set aside several years ago (although whole school reporting still conformed to the requirements of the NAGs). In all cases, however, the IEP formed the cornerstone of curriculum planning and reporting for students with special educational needs.

For students with moderately high to high needs, the participating interviewees identified functional curriculum outcomes (principally life skills) as particularly important.

As with the literature overall, investigation of the transition to school for students with special educational needs has tended to focus on processes and resourcing, rather than on the relationship between the transition and specified curriculum outcomes. Participants in

the interviews had a wide range of views about the general usefulness of *Te Whāriki*. The small amount of literature (including commentary) that investigates the relationship between early childhood curriculum policy and schools curriculum policy concurs with the current thrust of the *Curriculum Stocktake Report*, that of the need for better integration between the two sectors.

The principles suggested for curriculum policy in this area are that a curriculum to support students with special education needs should:

- Enable students with special education needs to access the regular curriculum but not be constrained by it;
- Require wide consultation and active partnership between educational agencies, schools, parents, students and communities;
- Enable students with special education needs to reach a level of skill and knowledge to allow them to participate fully in society;
- Take account of and attend to the specialised teaching, material or access needs of these students;
- Offer a range of opportunities, challenges and choices that are appropriate to students with special education needs' physical, social, emotional, intellectual and age-related needs;
- Recognise the differing levels of pace, concentration, time and effort as well as the alternative routes to experience success in the curriculum; and
- Recognise, record and celebrate the achievements and value of students with special education needs.

The report concludes with recommendations for future directions in the areas of curriculum policy, teacher development, and research.

## Introduction

The purpose of this project was to assess how well national curriculum policy in New Zealand articulates learning outcomes for students who have special educational needs. The report proposes key principles that need to be considered in designing a curriculum that supports students with special education needs and concludes with a series of recommendations for future work.

Part of the focus of this research was to investigate how the curriculum supports students with special education needs who are unable to achieve Level 1 in any of the essential learning areas. A further question was whether *Te Whāriki* (MOE, 1996) might also have relevance to students with special education needs within the compulsory schooling system who are unable to achieve Level 1 of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*.

The project was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, a review was conducted of the national and international literature that addresses curriculum policy for students with special education needs. We sought material that:

- Articulates curriculum policy for students with special education needs;
- Describes curriculum support and the provision of the support;
- Describes outcomes and how these are determined;
- Evaluates or assesses the implementation of curricula.

We also paid attention to assessment, to the extent that it impacts on curricular decision-making for students with special education needs. As well as reviewing the selected literature, we attempted to note where there were explicit or implicit references, as well as where there are silences or absences, in policies and frameworks.

A characteristic of the literature reviewed was the dearth of studies that have explored the link between curriculum policy and special education. Much of the literature reviewed regarding students with special educational needs focused on practical aspects of provision, particularly processes to support participation in educational settings and resourcing questions. While there are a range of models of curriculum policy identified in

the report we were unable to locate any literature that evaluated how well these articulated the general learning outcomes for students with special education needs or the impact of these models on the general learning outcomes of these students. We noted significant absences and silences around special education in literature related to curriculum policy. Similarly we noted significant absences and silences around curriculum in the special education literature. These silences and absences may reflect the fact that many curriculum policy initiatives linked to special education are relatively recent in both inception and practice and thus there has been insufficient time for them to be systematically investigated. Consequently this report is descriptive of the range of approaches to, and views about, curriculum, curriculum policy and special education both nationally and internationally, rather than evaluative of the effectiveness or otherwise of any of these particular models.

In the second phase of the project, interviews were conducted in five schools across a range of demographic profiles. Each of the schools accommodates students with a wide range of special education needs, in a variety of arrangements. Participants in the interviews were asked to describe curricular provision for students with special educational needs, including assessment strategies, and to offer advice and views about curriculum policy in this area.

Given the small sample size, the data gathered from the school site visits constitutes supporting information that illustrates a possible range of experiences, views and opinions related to curriculum policy and special education support held by teachers in New Zealand schools.

## CONTEXT FOR THE PROJECT

This project is located within the context of a range of debates about curriculum in general, special education in general, curriculum provision for students with special education needs, as well as general debates about curriculum policy. In particular, we were mindful of: the cultural context in which schools operate in New Zealand; the regulatory context in which schools operate in New Zealand; growing recognition of the importance of community involvement in curriculum determination for all students (particularly for Māori and Pasifika students and students with special education needs); tensions surrounding the place of functional skills in a predominantly academic curriculum milieu; the relationship between curriculum and assessment; and debates about inclusion.

### The Nature of Curriculum

As with many areas of academic study the concept of curriculum has multiple and contested meanings. This is exemplified in the New Zealand context by our two key documents. The *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (p. 4) states:

The term “curriculum” has several meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. ...

The New Zealand Curriculum comprises a set of national curriculum statements which define the learning principles and achievement aims and objectives which all schools are required to follow.

The school curriculum consists of ways in which a school puts into practice the policy set out in the national curriculum statements. It takes account of local needs, priorities, and resources, and is designed in consultation with the school’s community.

*Te Whāriki* (MOE, 1996, p. 10) defines curriculum as, “the sum total of the experiences, activities, and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development.”

Many curriculum writers (see, for example, those cited in McGee, 1997) highlight this dichotomy between prescription and implementation. The focus taken in this study recognises that how a curriculum is interpreted and implemented is a key part of the teaching and learning process but the focus here is on the written prescription provided at a national or state level. In more recent times these documents have organised the curriculum into learning areas and strands and provided achievement levels or benchmarks against which to measure achievement and progress.

Curriculum support documents are those that aid classroom teachers to bridge the gap between broader curriculum goals and classroom practices. They could provide more specific guidance on particular aspects of a curriculum or cross-curricular adaptations. Some provide concrete examples of unit and/or lesson plans, resources, assessments activities and exemplars of student work. The curriculum support documents for children with special education needs from Victoria, Australia are an example of what this range of support might be.

### The Cultural Context

Durie (1995) discussed diverse Māori realities and this phrase is particularly relevant when describing the backgrounds of Māori students with special needs. These include their differing locations, socio-economic status, and iwi and hapū affiliations. The settings in which they are being educated may vary from total immersion, bilingual or English- medium and they may be in mainstreamed classes or special units. These factors have implications for the ways in which curriculum support materials need to be developed to ensure that this diversity is acknowledged and appropriately catered for.

The *Kura Kaupapa Report* (Bevan-Brown, 2000), which evaluated the extent to which SE2000 had addressed the needs of students with special needs in kura kaupapa, surveyed 32 kura.

Amongst its findings were

- The value placed on face-to-face presentations by people with special education, te reo and kura kaupapa Māori expertise in disseminating information;

- The shortage of special education personnel with expertise and the lack of culturally and linguistically relevant resources and services;
- A belief that a Māori concept of special needs differed from a Pākehā perspective, placing greater value on a holistic approach, encompassing a wider range of needs and operating in a whānau context;
- The need for more resources in te reo Māori;
- The view of some kura that the information provided was too difficult, irrelevant, lengthy or uninteresting.

*Te Whāriki* (MOE, 1996) takes a holistic approach through its principles of empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships. Its strands of Mana Atua (Well-being), Mana Whenua (Belonging), Mana Tangata (Contribution), Mana Reo (Communication) and Mana Aotūroa (Exploration) emphasise the importance of developing and respecting a child's mana. The development of *Te Whāriki* modelled a bicultural process in which Māori were fully involved from the outset. This has resulted in the Māori worldview being fully embedded in its framework, principles and content. Reedy (2003, p. 74) states that *Te Whāriki* “encourages the transmission of my cultural values, my language and tikanga, and your cultural values, your language and customs”. Its holistic approach ensures that the child's mana is developed and respected, and that all children are recognised as unique and special.

Wilkie (2001) in her report *Matauranga Motuhake* investigated the views of whānau on special education. She points to the lack of inclusion of Māori in policy-making, which has usually been developed outside of kaupapa Māori. She applied the principles of partnership, participation, protection, empowerment, equity, and access, derived from the Treaty of Waitangi by the fourth Labour Government, as the basis for carrying out her research into special education. The principles could equally be applied to the process by which curriculum support materials are developed for students with special needs in order to ensure a Māori worldview is consistently represented in them.

The whole area of Special Education and Pacific families with special needs children is not well researched or visible at the early childhood education level or indeed in the compulsory sector.’ (Coxon et al, 2002, p37). Fa’amausili-Banse, and Mara, (cited in Coxon, 2002) reported the low referral rates to SES from Pacific Island Early Childhood Centres in the early childhood sector. This was attributed to the mono-cultural paradigm in which the area of disability operates.

### The Regulatory Context

The New Zealand *National Administration Guidelines (NAGs, MOE, 2001)* set out the planning and reporting requirements for schools. These guidelines are addressed to the Boards of Trustees, and indicate the expectations the Board should have of the principal and staff. The first two guidelines address curriculum and reporting on student progress:

#### NAG 1

Each Board of Trustees is required to foster student achievement by providing teaching and learning programmes which incorporate the New Zealand Curriculum (essential learning areas, essential skills and attitudes and values) as expressed in national Curriculum Statements.

Each Board, through the principal and staff is required to

- i. Develop and implement teaching and learning programmes:
  - a. To provide all students in years 1-10 with opportunities to achieve for success in all the essential learning and skill areas of the New Zealand Curriculum;
  - b. Giving priority to student achievement in literacy and numeracy, especially in years 1-4;
- i. Through a range of assessment practices, gather information that is sufficiently comprehensive to enable the progress and achievement of students to be evaluated; giving priority first to:

- a. Student achievement in literacy and numeracy, especially in years 1-4;  
and then to:
  - b. Breadth and depth of learning related to the needs, abilities and interests of students, the nature of the school's curriculum, and the scope of the New Zealand curriculum (as expressed in the National Curriculum Statements);
- i. On the basis of good quality assessment information, identify students and groups of students;
  - a. Who are not achieving;
  - b. Who are at risk of not achieving;
  - c. Who have special needs; and
  - d. Aspects of the curriculum that require particular attention;
- i. Develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students and aspects of the curriculum identified in iii above;
- ii. In consultation with the school's Māori community, develop and make known to the school's community policies, plans and targets for improving the achievement of Māori students;
- iii. Provide appropriate career education and guidance of all students in year 7 and above, with a particular emphasis on specific career guidance for those students who have been identified as being at risk of leaving school unprepared for transition to the workplace or further education/training.

## NAG 2

Each Board of Trustees with the principal and teaching staff is required to:

- i. Develop a strategic plan which documents how they are giving effect to the national education Guidelines through their policies, plans and programmes, including those for curriculum, assessment and staff professional development;

- ii. Maintain an ongoing programme of self-review in relation to the above policies, plans and programmes, including evaluation of information on student achievement;
- iii. Report to students and their parents on the achievement of individual students, and to the school's community on the achievement of students as a whole and of groups (identified through 1 iii above) including the achievement of Māori students against the plans and targets referred to in 1 v above.

These two *NAGs* signal that school Boards, principals and staff are accountable for the delivery of the curriculum to all students.

### Community Involvement

There has been a noticeable shift away from curricular-decision making resting solely in the hands of professionals towards an understanding that 'the community' will have expectations of the skills and attributes of graduates. Voices in this community that have been specifically mentioned include students, their families, employers and the state (e.g. Vaughn, 2003), as well as the disability community (e.g. the *New Zealand Disability Strategy*).

### The Place of Functional Skills in the Curriculum

The literature around the substance and form of curriculum that will clearly articulate important learning outcomes for students who require adapted or specialist learning support raises a number of issues, including:

- Whether or not access to the general curriculum and access to a functional curriculum are mutually exclusive ideologies (Sands, Adams & Stout, 1995); what are the relative emphases that should be given to functional, social and academic skills within the curriculum?
- Tensions, in inclusive settings in particular, between an academic and a functional focus (Sands, Adams & Stout, 1995). Some literature shows that students with

severe disabilities in regular classrooms have more academic objectives and fewer functional skills objectives (Nietupski & Hamre-Nietupski, 1997);

- Trends in research into curriculum that suggest that there is a move away from research into functional curriculum and that in inclusive environments the focus is on social and communicative skills (Nietupski & Hamre-Nietupski, 1997).

### The Relationship Between Curriculum and Assessment

As Carr, et al (2000) state, interpretations of the official curricula “begin when supporting material (of all kinds) is devised to provide an official curriculum” (p. 11). Although consideration of the place of assessment was not signalled in the original brief for this project, we consider the relationship between curriculum policy and assessment practice to be integral to any debate about curriculum.

### Inclusion

Historically, special education has been associated with the provision of education of students with particular categories of disabilities, impairments or difficulties. Previous to the amendment of the Education Act (1989), students with special needs either had no provision, or either attended special schools or attached units to a regular school (Davies & Prangnell, 1999). Since 1989, The Education Act (section 8) specifies, “people who have special needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same right to enrol and receive education at the state schools as people who do not” (see Mitchell, 2000).

In the past 30 years there have been considerable changes in the way people view disability and special education in general. These changes have resulted in two different ways in which disability and special education is viewed. This change has been described as a clash of paradigms (see Mitchell, 2000; Davies & Prangnell, 1999; Karagiannis, Stainback & Stainback, 1997). The previous or old way of viewing disability was from a deficit model known as the functional limitation or medical model. This is where blame on some defect or inadequacy is located from within the person; this usually leads to intervention and remediation on the part of ‘professionals’. The current

view of disability is viewed from an ecological perspective where there is a focus on the external factors that create barriers to learning. To assist in learning, attention is placed on the quality of the instructional environment and the identification of bringing about structural changes. Instead of focusing on what is wrong with the student, the focus now is placed on acknowledging the influence of the social and physical environments that occur around the student and making changes to these to meet the needs of the student (see Mitchell, 2000; Davies & Prangnell, 1999; Stainback & Stainback, 1997).

The term inclusion has many different meanings. Stainback & Stainback's (1990) definition (cited in Davies & Prangnell, 1999, p. 2) suggests that schools should be "a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met." This ecological approach emphasises meeting the needs of all students within the regular classroom environment. Davis & Prangnell (1999) suggest teachers altering, adapting and improving the educational organisations and environment to suit the needs of individual students can achieve this.

Inclusion has been shown to provide positive gains for students, teachers and society in general. Karagiannis, Stainback & Stainback (1997) found that including students with special needs in the regular classroom was beneficial for all students as all students gained academically and socially and they all had a greater understanding of diversity. Positive gains were also noted for teachers when they had students with special education needs in their classes. They increased their professional skills, worked more collaboratively with others and had a greater awareness of policies and change. In society, inclusion also reinforces the idea that difference is accepted and respected and that despite difference, we all have equal rights.

In New Zealand, the government has taken an equivocal approach to inclusion (Mitchell, 2000). The Education Act (1989), Human Rights Act, section 57 (1993), The National Education Guidelines, the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework, The Revised Desirable Objectives and Practices* (MOE, 1998) and *Te Whāriki* (MOE, 1996) all have statements which make provision to include students with special education needs. Moreover,

Special Education 2000 policy aims “to achieve, over the next decade, a world class inclusive education system that provides learning opportunities of equal quality to all students” (MOE, 1996, p. 5).

The *New Zealand Disability Strategy* (Ministry of Health, 2001) further illustrates the contested nature of inclusion and participation. Without using these particular terms, what the *New Zealand Disability Strategy (NZDS)* is arguing for is a socio-political analysis of disability, disability as oppression, disability as a human rights issue. What the *NZDS* is arguing against are the dominant discourses of disability. These are the dominant discourses that inform our everyday practices as policy makers, curriculum writers, writers and publishers of curriculum support materials and resources, as educators and teacher trainers, as neighbours, members of Boards of Trustees, as classmates, as parents. These dominant discourses of disability are the medical discourse, the charity discourse and the lay discourse (Corbett, 1996).

The most pervasive and influential of these is the medical (or expert) discourse of disability, with its professional and clinical focus on the body. The themes of the medical discourse are defect and deficit – and these are inherent to, located within, the individual – a personal problem, a defining identity. The individual is less, less than normal. The goals of the professional are to fix and cure; the assumption that the goal of the individual is to be fixed. This makes the professional the expert, with great authority to pronounce upon the individual, the client. Within the expert or medical discourse, the needs of the individual are seen as beyond the understanding of the lay person, and indeed most professionals, and so the ability to ‘work with’ individuals depends on specialised training. These roles are seen as the natural state of affairs. When a deficit is unable to be fixed, there is an aura of failure. Discourse analysis of special education language reveals expert and medical discourse at work in the highly specialised ‘treatments’ and ‘interventions’ developed for students who have particular labels or diagnoses (Skrtic, 1991) or as specialised curricula for students with ‘special educational needs’ (Corbett, 1996).

The second dominant discourse of disability is the charity discourse. The themes of the charity discourse are dependence and helplessness, the perpetual child who is needy. Moreover, the individual, and their families, should be grateful for whatever it is they receive. The charity discourse is also closely connected to the medical discourse, particularly with its institutional and organisational focus. People with impairments, particularly those that cannot be fixed, remind us too much of our own frailties and mortality – best out of sight, out of mind. Their care was traditionally as recipients of charity. As recipients of charity, they – and their families – were expected to be grateful, to ‘know their place’, and to refrain from being critical of services. Within the charity discourse, people with impairments are perceived to have ‘empty and useless lives’ (Morton & Munford, 1998). This discourse might be translated into practice through curricula that focus on compliance and normalisation (Corbett, 1996, p.12) advocating training in “acceptable behaviours.”

The third discourse is the lay discourse, emerging from the medical and charity discourses. This is our ‘everyday’ knowledge of disability and difference. In the lay discourse, impairments mean that people are inferior, dependent, weak, isolated, to be feared, childlike, whose adult lives will require close supervision – who are unlikely to be part of the wider workforce or live in our neighbourhoods; to be shunned and rejected; life with impairment must be awful and not worth living (Morris, 1990). Corbett further elaborates on the “language of patronage” that is consistent with the idea of ongoing dependency – the person with special education needs is seen as requiring training that will make them useful and so “avoid being seen as nothing more than a burden” (p.12).

Debates about inclusion, appropriate provision of services, and the desired outcomes for students with special educational needs take place within these discourses of disability.

## **APPROACH TO THE REPORT**

The project was conducted in two interwoven phases: first, a review of the national and international literature pertinent to curriculum policy and special educational needs, with a particular emphasis on empirical studies demonstrating the link between policy and outcomes; second, structured interviews were carried out in five schools that accommodate students with special educational needs.

### **Phase 1: Literature Review**

A cornerstone of the review was the examination of relevant New Zealand Curriculum policy documents produced since the Education Act of 1989, including: the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF)*, the National Education Guidelines, the National Administrative Guidelines, *Te Whāriki*, the *Revised Statements of Desirable Objectives and Practices for Early Childhood Services*, and *Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki*, the 10-year strategic plan for early childhood education.

Curriculum policy documents at a comparable level to *NZCF* (at both the state and federal level) were examined. These were mainly drawn from the United Kingdom, North America, and Australia, but some European policy documents were also identified as the review progressed.

The second focus of the review was evidence-based research (and commentary on evidence based research), pertinent to the relationship between curriculum policy and outcomes for students with special educational needs. The review attempted to locate and examine all relevant international and New Zealand research, dating from the passing of the 1989 Education Act. This included literature relevant to Māori and Pasifika students with special educational needs.

The review sought, in particular, studies that examined the intersections between curriculum policy, curriculum design and use, special education, pedagogy and/or empirical studies of curriculum adaptation for students with high support needs.

It was hoped that this review would identify debates around policy and curriculum implementation for students with special educational needs, including horizontal or/and vertical provision, the role of the Individual Education Plan in the adaptation of the curriculum, arrangements for transitions between different levels of the education sector, and the professional development of teachers.

### *Search strategies*

Initial sources for the literature reviewed included:

- International databases (ERIC, International ERIC, Professional Development Collection [EBSCOHost], and Digital Dissertations [ProQuest]);
- New Zealand databases (Te Puna National Bibliographic Database [previously NZBN, this database includes significant international content], and Index New Zealand);
- The ‘Union list of Higher Degree theses in New Zealand libraries’;
- National and federal government websites provided the source of many of the curriculum policy documents reviewed and, when available, links from these sites to relevant research projects were pursued;
- The MOE website provided access to a range of New Zealand material, including recent Best Evidence Syntheses.

### *Descriptors*

Lists of descriptors, tabulated according to database and numbers of ‘hits’ are attached as Appendix 1.

### *Exclusion criteria*

Literature was excluded that

- Focused primarily on early childhood education (except in the area of transition to school);

- Dated from prior to 1989.

### *Approach to analysis – literature review*

Items were initially sorted and collated according to the project research questions, then evaluated for relevance and quality.

A template, providing a standard format for summary and critique of individual items, was developed and used by the research team (Appendix 2) and items were allocated to team members for review according to each member's area of expertise.

As items were selected, bibliographic details were recorded using EndNote software and this was used to produce the final bibliography (attached). This bibliography shows all material reviewed for the project even though the majority of the literature examined was not cited in this report.

An initial report was produced and disseminated to the External Advisory Group and MOE personnel. The report identified tentative themes in the literature reviewed up to that date and proposed interview questions for the second phase of the project.

### *Determining the quality of the evidence*

The literature review involved critical appraisal of policy documents and research studies, using a combination of *value of evidence* and careful judgment regarding its *relevance* to the research questions and the New Zealand context.

For quantitative research, criteria included employment of an equivalent control or comparison group; presentation of baseline data for all individual/groups recruited into the intervention; presentation of follow-up data on all individuals/groups remaining in the study; and, reporting on all outcomes targeted in the aims of the study.

For qualitative research, criteria were adopted from the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and co-ordinating Centre. These criteria included an explicit theoretical framework and/or literature review; clear aims and objectives; a clear description of the context; a clear description of the sample (including recruitment methods); a clear description of methods (including those for data analysis); analysis of data by more than

one researcher; and, inclusion of sufficient original data to mediate between data and interpretation.

## Phase 2: Interviews at School Sites

Six schools were identified, with the assistance of the External Advisory Group, and invited to participate in a structured interview, which attempted to address questions from the project brief and tentative themes arising from the literature review (including assessment).

An interview schedule was developed (Appendix 3) and ethical approval (information and consent forms are in Appendix 4) for the fieldwork was received from the Christchurch College of Education Ethics Committee.

Each of the six sites that consented to participate in the project accommodates students with special educational needs but the arrangements for provision of education varied across the schools, to include

- One regular primary school with an attached unit;
- One special school;
- One kura kaupapa Māori;
- One middle school;
- One regular high school;
- One site, which supports students from throughout New Zealand.

The students in these schools had a range of special educational needs. In the special school, all but five students currently had funding from the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Scheme (ORRS), which means they were considered to have high or very high needs under this scheme. These students included children with multiple disabilities, physical, intellectual and/or sensory impairments. Four of the settings had students with and without ORRS funding. Staff described students that they had identified with “behavioural issues that got in the way of learning and learning issues

that affected behaviour.” They mentioned students with attention deficit disorder and autistic spectrum disorder. In one setting “special education needs” was very broadly defined to include “anyone not achieving to their potential.” One site had only one child with particular special education needs that required support by a teacher aide, although they also had students with some need for support around behaviour.

The school sites were spread across New Zealand and represented a range of demographic profiles (including major and minor urban centres).

The interviews were conducted with personnel whom the school identified as having responsibility for curriculum planning, adaptation and implementation for students with special educational needs.

Some of the interviews were conducted with simultaneous involvement of the participants; others were conducted as a series of interviews with different personnel at the same school site. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

#### *Approach to analysis – interviews at school sites*

Data from the transcribed interviews was sorted and assigned to categories, using constructs identified in the project research questions.

Team members wrote sections of the report, either individually or in pairs, drawing both on the literature reviewed and interview data that provided commentary on the specified research questions.

#### **Challenges Arising During the Project**

The project team met at regular intervals during the project to clarify objectives, assign tasks, review progress, and to discuss tentative themes. As the project progressed, these meetings increasingly identified limitations and challenges within the work.

The principal challenge encountered was the dearth of empirical studies explicitly exploring the link between curriculum policy and educational outcomes for students with special educational needs. Much of the literature reviewed focused on practical aspects of educational provision for students with special educational needs, particularly

processes to support participation, rather than the outcomes of educational participation per se. There is also a considerable literature focused on structural arrangements (particularly resourcing) that does not make explicit links to curriculum outcomes.

It was also noted that the curriculum policy initiatives introduced in other countries are very recent; insufficient time has passed for these to receive systematic investigation of the links between policy and outcomes (assuming that such work will be conducted).

Where curriculum policy initiatives involved identifiable models of vertical or horizontal provision of learning outcomes, no research or commentaries could be located regarding the relative limitations or benefits of either (or both) approaches; nor did the interview participants have strong feelings about the relative merits of either approach or a combination of the two.

A further significant gap identified was investigation of the experiences of Māori and Pasifika students who have special educational needs.

Overall, a great deal of reading was undertaken in order to identify and review only a small amount of literature that was evidence based. This suggests that there are significant areas for further research investigation.

## Findings

### **RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT GENERAL LEARNING (KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ATTITUDES, AND VALUES) OUTCOMES ARE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS WHO REQUIRE ADAPTED OR SPECIALIST LEARNING SUPPORT?**

In identifying the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are particularly important for students who require adapted or specialist learning support, it must first be acknowledged that these students make up an heterogeneous group distinguished more by their diversity, differences and individuality than by their similarities.

Despite this diversity there appears to be some consensus as to what general learning outcomes at the global level are particularly important for students who require adapted or specialist learning support. Generally these are described in terms of relationships, meaningful and valued activities, independence and personal fulfilment (Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Park, 2003; Dymond & Orelove, 2001; Ford, Davern, & Schnorr, 2001; Kleinert & Kearns, 1999; Giangreco, 1997; Hunt & Goetz, 1997; Nietupski, et al, 1997; Jorgensen, 1997, Patton & Cronin 1997; Shriner, Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Honetschlager, 1994).

The objectives articulated in the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* were arrived at in consultation with the disabled community. Inherent in these objectives are key knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are important for students with special educational needs. These include:

- Participation in community with particular reference to disabled Māori and Pasifika;
- Presence in community;
- Partnership;
- Equal opportunity;
- Employment;

- Choices;
- Self-determination;
- Recognition of the importance of relationships and interdependence;
- Equity.

These values coincide with the five “accomplishments” (Kincaid, 1996) that have been identified in the literature as being essential to a disabled person’s quality of life. These accomplishments are; being present and participating in community life, gaining and maintaining satisfying relationships, expressing preferences and, making choices in everyday life, having opportunities to fulfil respected roles and to live with dignity, and continuing to develop personal competencies.

In the New Zealand context, important general learning outcomes for students with special education needs must also reflect the cultural diversity of New Zealand society and incorporate the aims of Māori, “to live as Māori, to actively participate as citizens of the world, to enjoy good health and a high standard of living” (Durie 2001 p.6) and those of Pasifika people.

Durie proposed a framework for considering Māori educational achievement in his opening address to Hui Taumata Mātauranga in 2001, which has broad implications for curriculum. He identified three principles for Māori education that required further discussion. These are

- The principle of best outcomes: this signals the need for more work to assess what are best outcomes for Māori. He proposes that rather than focusing on the traditional benchmarks of non- Māori, more relevant benchmarks may be sought from ‘other iwi, other Māori schools, other indigenous communities, or in the best schools of Asia’;
- The principle of integrated action: this indicates the need for greater cooperation between institutions such as homes and schools and across sectors;

- The principle of indigeneity - the Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides a more comprehensive approach to the rights of indigenous peoples, and in Durie's view, will need to be viewed along with the Treaty to understand its implications for the type of education Māori children might expect.

Participants in the school site visits identified similar general learning outcomes at the global level. Common themes that emerged in response to the question about what the participants viewed as important outcomes for this group of students were; relationships, feeling valued and useful, skills for interdependent living, communication, participation, highest level of independence, cultural appropriateness and experiencing success in present and future settings. Essentially, at the global level, the general learning outcomes described as important for students with special education needs are not dissimilar to those described for students who do not have special educational needs. When asked how the important outcomes for students with special needs compared with those for students without those needs, interview participants made comments such as “much the same”, “no different” and “exactly the same”. Some participants commented that for students who did not have special educational needs these outcomes would be measured through the achievement of academic goals, that is that in the general population academic performance stands as a “surrogate measure” for global school outcomes (Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer & Park, 2003). There appears to be no such agreed “surrogate measure” for global school outcomes for student with special education needs.

Hughes (1998) in her study of children with intellectual disabilities in regular classes in New Zealand reported that parent' expectations of the goals for their children with moderate intellectual disability focused on social, behavioural and independence outcomes over academic outcomes. Hughes noted that friendships were mentioned by the majority of parents as being an important part of their child's development and education.

In an American study Westling (1996) examined the question of what parents of children with moderate and severe mental disabilities wanted their children to learn. From a review of four studies examining parental concerns Westling arrived at the following conclusions:

- Instructional goals for children will vary with age and degree of severity;
- Parents will desire different services and have different concerns based on the ages of their children; and
- most parents seem to believe that instruction in functional skills, perhaps especially domestic and vocational skills, is most relevant for their children (p.97).

He also found that:

- Many parents of students with moderate disabilities rated functional academic skills quite high, higher even than the development of social skills and friendships; and
- Parents of students with more severe disabilities rated social development and friendships higher than functional skills (p.98).

Although these conclusions are derived from a small number of studies, they have some credibility in that the views of 3900 parents or guardians of children with intellectual disabilities from pre-school age to adulthood were cumulatively reported in the studies.

The term “general learning outcomes” can refer to both the global outcomes achieved as a result of schooling per se (e.g. socialisation) and to the more specific and immediate educational outcomes resulting from educational experiences during schooling (e.g. the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed for all students to enjoy independence and quality of life during adulthood). There appears to be consensus about what are the important general learning outcomes for students with special learning needs in terms of the results of schooling per se. There is, however, a greater range of opinions as to what are the important general learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) for students with special educational needs when these outcomes are specifically related to the curriculum that these students experience during schooling. To some extent, the range of opinions can be seen to vary with the range of support needs and ages of the students in question.

This is illustrated by the range of comments made by the participants in the school site visits where more specific outcomes described included; functional skills, life skills, and essential skills; having rich experiences, movement, motor planning, going to the toilet, living arrangements, greeting people, having a conversation, learning to tie shoes, using leisure time, functional literacy, visual literacy, reading the newspaper, basic numeracy, and shopping. This range mirrors the diversity of needs found in students with special education needs.

Billingsley and Albertson (1999) argue that the literature shows that “Functional skill development has been found to play a substantial role in residential independence, overall community adaptation, vocational stability and perceived quality of life” (p. 298). They further observe, “Functional skills remain critical to improving the quality of life of students with disabilities” (p. 301).

An educational outcome can be defined as “an important result of interactions between individuals and schooling experiences” (Ysseldyke et al cited in Bruininks, Thurlow, and Ysseldyke, 1992, p. 98). The question of what educational experiences students with special educational needs should interact with to achieve important outcomes is central to any discussion of the nature of curriculum that will support the learning of these students. Similarly that question is central to describing outcomes in the curriculum that are relevant and meaningful to those students.

The most significant factors that impact on what are considered to be important general educational outcomes are the level of support needs of individuals, their age and culturally and socially derived expectations of current and future needs (Knowlton, 1998; Patton & Cronin, 1997; Westling, 1996; Edgar & Polloway, 1994). As students reach secondary school, the divergence between the outcomes identified in the curricula and those seen as important for students with special education needs grows. It has been argued that “the curricula currently offered at the secondary level for students with mental retardation and developmental disabilities often do not promote the development of skills that will lead to independence during adulthood” (Smith & Puccini, 1995, p. 277).

This statement succinctly demonstrates the tenuous relationship between global outcomes measured in terms of quality of life in adulthood and the general learning outcomes currently specified in the curricula as those needed for all students to enjoy independence and quality of life during adulthood when these are applied to some students with special needs. Issues raised in the literature and the interviews suggest that curriculum policy needs to more clearly articulate the general learning outcomes that are linked to quality of life and independence in adulthood for students with special education needs. These general learning outcomes would need to reflect those identified as valued by disabled people, their whānau and families. It is not sufficient for the *NZCF* to state that it is for *all* students. This point is taken up in the next section.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 2: HOW WELL DOES THE NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL CURRICULUM ARTICULATE THE LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE STUDENTS IN QUESTION?**

The *New Zealand Curriculum Framework (NZCF)* (MOE, 1993) sets out the structure of the curriculum. It allows for seven essential learning areas that ascend vertically from basic knowledge to more sophisticated and complex understandings as students progress through the schooling system. This progression is described and assessed through a series of levels from Level 1 (lowest) to Level 8 (highest). Over the course of primary/intermediate and lower secondary schooling it is envisaged that students will take approximately two years to progress through the Achievement Objectives at each level. Levels 6, 7 and 8 correspond to the three final years of secondary schooling where schooling is impacted upon by external qualifications and credentials.

The *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* sets out:

- A definition of curriculum that balances both national prescription and school interpretation;
- A set of principles which underpin the vision for this and future documents;
- Seven essential learning areas;
- Eight groupings of essential skills; and
- New Zealand’s commonly held attitudes and values.

Throughout the document it refers to “all students” and “individual students” with a focus on schools and communities being flexible and adapting the curriculum to enable individual students to meet their needs and all students to achieve their potential. That students will be different in ability is recognised in statements such as, “all students, irrespective of... ability or disability”, (MOE, 1993, p. 3) “will enable all students to achieve the learning objectives to the best of their ability” (MOE, 1993, p.6) and “The school curriculum will recognise, respect, and respond to the educational needs, experiences, interests, and values of all students: students with different abilities and disabilities” (MOE, 1993, p. 7).

The section on essential skills highlights in bold that “The curriculum will challenge all students to succeed to the best of their ability. Individual students will develop the essential skills to different degrees and at different rates” (MOE, 1993, p. 17). The essential skills, which are to be developed through the essential learning areas and in relevant real-life contexts, ensure that the focus of this framework is not simply on academic achievement. For students with special educational needs the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* does, *in theory*, provide and encourage the adaptation of the curriculum to individual requirements. Nevertheless, the *Curriculum Stocktake Report* (addressed by question 5 to follow) is critical of the over-emphasis on academic skills, which may disadvantage students with special education needs, particularly in the secondary setting.

In the individual curriculum documents, statements giving guidance on adaptation of the curriculum vary. It has been argued that these documents are also not helpful for teachers attempting to adopt inclusive pedagogical practices (Hulston, 2000).

*Mathematics in the New Zealand Curriculum* (MOE, 1992) makes a specific statement about “students of lower ability.” *Science in the New Zealand Curriculum* (MOE 1993) includes a section on “Students with Special Needs and Science” which encourages the students, their peers, teachers, families and communities to work together to provide emotional, educational and resource support to ensure students could achieve in this area. While the science document avoids mentioning specific disabilities or solutions, *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (MOE, 1994) refers to, for example, “visual communication in deaf culture; technology, such as Braille; and special intervention, for example in the Reading Recovery Programme, and in the provision of readers, writers, or interpreters” (p. 15). *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* includes a section on “Meeting the Needs of Students with Special Needs and Abilities” and specifically mentions adaptations and access for “students who have a temporary or permanent disability (whether sensory, physical, social or intellectual)” (MOE, 1999, p. 51). In general, statements are global and give support to the idea of adapting the curriculum but are light on specifics related to how that could or should be done.

Despite the New Zealand National Curriculum being, apparently, inclusive of “all” students there is a range of views as to how well it articulates important general learning outcomes for students with special educational needs. McGee et al (2002) conducted a survey of 1,997 New Zealand compulsory sector teachers on their experiences in curriculum implementation. One section of the questionnaire related to the importance and usefulness of the curriculum in

- Providing direction for preparing students to live and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- Planning the classroom programme;
- Developing (specific) learning outcomes based on the achievement objectives;
- Meeting the needs of Māori students;
- Meeting the needs of Pasifika students.

While responses from 21 teachers in special schools accounted for only 1.1% of the completed questionnaires, these responses do give some insight into how well the curriculum articulates the learning outcomes for that group of students with special education needs.

77.8% of the special school teachers who participated in the survey rated the NZCF important in providing direction for preparing students to live and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

52.4% of the special school teachers who participated in the survey rated the NZCF as sometimes useful/sometimes not in terms of planning the classroom programme, while 47.6% found it useful.

19% of the special school teachers who participated in the survey rated the NZCF as not at all useful in terms of developing (specific) learning outcomes based on the achievement objectives, 33% rated it as sometimes useful/sometimes not, 38.1% rated it as useful, while only 9.5% rated it as very useful.

57.9% of the special school teachers who participated in the survey rated the NZCF as sometimes useful/sometimes not in meeting the needs of Māori students, 15.8% rated it as not at all useful, 15.8% rated it as useful, while 10.5% did not know.

47.1% of the special school teachers who participated in the survey rated the NZCF as sometimes useful /sometimes not in meeting the needs of Pasifika students, 17.65% rated it useful, 17.6% rated it not at all useful and 17.6% did not know.

What these figures most clearly demonstrate is the disparity between teachers' view of the importance of the curriculum in the global sense and their view of its usefulness in terms of meeting the more immediate educational needs of students. While 77.9% rated the document as important in providing direction for preparing students to live and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when asked to rate its usefulness in terms of classroom planning, developing learning outcomes and meeting the needs of Māori and Pasifika students, the responses were more ambivalent with the majority of responses rating the *NZCF* generally as being “sometimes useful/sometimes not”.

Similar ambivalence can be seen in the responses of the participants in the interviews when they were asked how well the New Zealand National Curriculum articulates the important learning outcomes for students with special educational needs. A number of participants responded that the curriculum generally articulated the learning outcomes “well” and one answered that it was “excellent” in this respect. Other positive comments referred to the usefulness of the multi-level nature of the outcomes and the essential skills. There were, however, many comments that indicated a less favourable view of how well the curriculum articulated the learning outcomes for students with special education needs. These comments included such remarks as; “levels not helpful”, “goes part way”, “documents vary widely”, “not specific enough, too vague”, “a reference point” “not helpful, legally constraining” and “not very well”.

More trenchant criticisms of the New Zealand National Curriculum, in relation to the question of how well it articulates important learning outcomes for students with special

needs, including Māori and Pasifika students with special needs are made by New Zealand researchers.

Hulston (2000) examined the New Zealand National Curriculum within the context of a study about inclusion in a secondary school. Hulston argued that “the *NZCF* underpinned by a set of developmental levels of achievement, potentially provided teachers with expectation levels for their students based on constructions of ‘average’ and ‘normal’” (p. 134).

Clearly if expectations in the New Zealand National Curriculum are based on such constructions then it is unlikely that important learning outcomes for students with special education needs will be well articulated within that curriculum. Hulston posited that the “rhetoric in the curriculum documents was not easily transferred into practice” (p. 222).

Davidson (1999) examined curriculum adaptation and teaching programmes for students who have intellectual and multiple disabilities in New Zealand, England and America. Davidson found that although there is a framework of progression from level one onwards in the *NZCF*, no explicit links are made between early developmental levels and subject specific knowledge, skills and understanding. Davidson argues that as a result of the absence of these links being made explicit in the curriculum, the responsibility for making them falls on individual schools (and teachers) leading to a range of interpretations across the country. Furthermore, the success of these processes is dependent on the expertise of individual teachers and groups of teachers and in some cases teacher-aides (Hulston, 2000). Davidson also reported that many teachers question the relevance of the prescribed National Curriculum for students with severe/profound disabilities. This would suggest that, despite the rhetoric in the National Curriculum, important general learning outcomes for those students are not well articulated in the curriculum.

There is limited literature that focuses specifically on curriculum for Māori students with special needs. Themes from this literature emphasise the failure of the current curriculum documents to represent a Māori world view despite the *New Zealand Curriculum*

*Framework's* assertion that it “applies to all New Zealand schools, including kura kaupapa Māori and special education schools” (p 3). MacFarlane (2000, p. 94) states that “In New Zealand, to a large extent, the curricula, teaching methodologies, and teacher training associated with schooling are based on a world view that does not recognise or appreciate Māori concepts and values, and the central place of whānau in Māori society”. MacFarlane suggests that the over-representation of Māori students, amongst those students needing special education support, can be attributed in part to the failure of schools and teachers to affirm their cultural identity in the delivery of the National Curriculum. A report by Glynn, Atvars, Berryman and O'Brien in 1999 (cited in MacFarlane, 2000) noted that Māori cultural content across the curriculum was extremely limited with a particular lack of coverage of contemporary Māori culture and society. In developing curriculum support materials both generally, and for students with special needs, there is a need to ensure that this failure is addressed.

The importance of a holistic approach in curricula in which hinengaro, tinana and wairua (mind, body and spirit) are interwoven is recognised in the concept of hauora in the Health and Physical Education document, but is not addressed in other curriculum documents in the years of compulsory schooling.

The *Literature Review on Pacific Education Issues* (2002) covers research carried out across early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary settings. While there is a dearth of research in the compulsory years of schooling on the needs of Pasifika students with special needs the review does address issues wider around curriculum resources. Rogers (cited in Coxon et al, 2002) interviewed six Māori and six Samoan teachers, and school principals, teachers and parents within two primary schools. Both Māori and Samoan teachers were dissatisfied with the lack of a holistic approach to education and the failure to include Māori and Samoan languages. The increase of reading resources available in the Samoan language is noted as an important way of including Samoan indigenous knowledge in the curriculum. Samu argues, “textbooks (and by implication, other printed resources and materials) bridge the gap between the national curriculum and the school curriculum” (cited in Coxon et al, 2002, p. 52).

Samu critiques the current New Zealand Social Studies curriculum stating that its focus on the Pacific as a setting has led to schools developing simplistic and stereotypical learning programmes that fail to recognise the cultural and social diversities of Pacific nations. This hinders what Pasifika students learn about themselves in the school curriculum.

It would appear then, that practitioners, the community and researchers alike hold concerns about how well important general learning outcomes for students with special education needs are articulated at both the global level and in the more specific detail of the New Zealand National Curriculum. To reiterate, despite the stated intentions of the *NZCF* that it should be for *all* students, it is yet to be articulated in a way that indeed applies to all students at either the global or specific levels.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION 3: HOW HAVE OVERSEAS EDUCATION SYSTEMS PROVIDED CURRICULUM SUPPORT FOR THESE STUDENTS?**

The literature selected for review for this section of the report concentrated on curriculum policy and curriculum support for students with special educational needs in the United Kingdom, Australia, North America, Canada, and Europe.

In the following examples where resourcing is seen to impact on the definition of these students and the relationship to curriculum it is included: what underpins the curriculum decisions that are made for particular groups of students? Who controls the resourcing and the decisions about which students have access to what kinds of resources? In different policies we can see which students have been excluded from the mainstream, and how policy can be used to justify exclusion on the basis of “who has access to what” – the “what” being resources and curriculum. Educators will make sense of policy at a local level based on the resources available – including decisions about curriculum implementation and adaptation. Policy writers and educators – as discussed earlier – also bring their beliefs and values about difference – and students with special education needs in particular – to the decisions they make about curriculum.

#### **The United Kingdom: Policy**

A range of parliamentary acts (for example, the 1996 Education Act, the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act and the Special Educational Needs and Discrimination Act) all signal the importance of providing fair access to and quality provision of the education of students with special education needs. These Acts are supported by policy and guidance documents such as *The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice* (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2001) or the *National Standards for Special Education Needs Co-ordinators* (Teacher Training Agency, 1998) but the *Index for Inclusion* (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2002) claims that “students continue to be excluded from a mainstream education because they have an impairment or are seen to ‘have learning difficulties’ [and] mainstream education has sometimes been ‘blocked’ for ‘trivial and inappropriate’ reasons” (p. 4). Since the *Statutory Guidance* (DfES, 2001) has

been released it is anticipated that such exclusion will be more difficult and Local Education Authorities will be obliged to make appropriate provisions where possible.

### The United Kingdom: Curriculum

Two approaches to curriculum support in relation to students with special education needs are apparent. One is the provision of a series of support documents entitled *Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties*, published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The series has *General Guidelines*, *Developing Skills* and *Emotional and Behavioural Development* as well as support material for each area in the National Curriculum and at each of the UK curriculum's key stages.

Another approach is that of the *Index for Inclusion* (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2002) which describes an integrated and inclusive approach to teaching and learning across the curriculum, through a school development plan which involves parents/carers and the community in developing a cohesive vision and inclusive philosophy towards education for all. The *Index* focuses on three dimensions:

- creating inclusive communities;
- producing inclusive policies;
- evolving inclusive practices.

Although the purpose behind the *Index* was to address the issues related to students with impairments and special education needs, the philosophy behind this approach is that addressing the barriers to learning and participation for these students is a wider issue and such work will ultimately benefit all students.

### Australia: Policy

According to Jenkinson (2001) the changes in special education in Australia reflect changes in the wider social context as well as changes in the educational context. In the wider context there have been moves to increase the participation of people with disabilities in the community and this is reflected in legislation to remove discriminatory

practices. In the educational context, the focus has been on improving equitable access to education for students with a wide range of educational needs and this has required new funding mechanisms to support students with special education needs in a variety of school settings. Because of the high cost of providing special education services there has been a need for transparency in identifying students and allocating resources. This move is also part of the wider emphasis on assessment and accountability arising from changes within educational administration and the review of the curriculum.

Jenkinson (2001) states that state governments have backed away from prescriptive enrolment policies for the following reasons:

- Uncertainty about the practical implications of policies relating to equity and social justice;
- The differing interpretations of anti-discriminatory legislation;
- Opposition from parents and teacher unions.

This has led to some rationalisation but with local educational authorities determining the range and emphasis of educational settings available. As Jenkinson (2001) states, “Special education is now, indeed a matter of choice, although whose choice is another question as policies and practices in each of the states and territories, as well as school culture and climate, may act either to facilitate or constrain these choices” (pp vii-viii).

Jenkinson (2001) summarises the situation in each of the states and territories:

- Victoria: After a review in the early 1990s, the Victorian government continues to maintain a stance in favour of inclusive education within regular school settings. Funding mechanisms have been set in place to support the full adoption of this inclusive approach;
- New South Wales: The McRae report (1996) identified issues relating to the varying nature of support, inequity of service delivery and the implications of various funding models. McRae recommended new identification, enrolment and funding procedures. By 2000 the New South Wales Department of Education and

Training had adopted many of McRae's recommendations including a common enrolment policy. Although based on parent choice, the District Placement Panels are the main decision-makers;

- South Australia: Policy in South Australia is based around the neighbourhood school concept and focuses on curriculum needs rather than type of student or disability. Once students are identified, a Negotiated Curriculum Plan between the parents, the school and related agencies is the focus for enabling children to access the curriculum;
- Queensland: The focus in Queensland is on an inclusive curriculum and the Action Plan for the years 1998-2002 clusters disabilities, and the services to support them, at specified schools. Students are classified at one of six levels and specialist and support services allocated on this basis;
- Western Australia: The policy in Western Australia is based on principles of social justice and the delivery of services is provided along a continuum from special schools to full inclusion. At the time of writing Jenkinson explains that this policy was under review;
- Tasmania: An Inclusion Policy in 1995 led to significant restructuring of services to meet the needs of students with the highest supports needs (Category A) and those requiring generalist services (Category B). The preferred setting for students with special education needs is the regular school but issues relating to resourcing, specialist facilities, dual enrolments and funding are currently under review by a Special Education Advisory Committee;
- Northern Territory: There are three support options for students with special education needs in mainstream settings – consultative and in-service support, additional support, and withdrawal support. A fourth option is enrolment in a special school. Students in mainstream settings have their programmes determined by a Negotiated Inclusion Plan.

Jenkinson (2001) concludes that, while there are differences in the range of options and the ways states/territories define ‘integration’ or ‘inclusion’, there are many similarities. She highlights that each state/territory provides a range of options, includes parents in the decision making and is moving towards more equitable systems for allocating resources.

#### Australia: Curriculum

Australian curriculum development is the responsibility of state/territorial educational authorities, with the Commonwealth (national) government taking an interest in broader issues rather than specific detail. This has led to the adoption of eight key learning areas nation-wide with allowances for local variation. Jenkinson (2001, p. 114) explains, “Within this framework, states and territories have adopted a broad and flexible interpretation of curriculum that has facilitated the participation of students with disabilities in the eight key learning areas while ensuring that specific learning needs are addressed.” Jenkinson (2001) continues: “All states emphasise the need for curriculum for students with disabilities to be age-appropriate and relevant, broad and balanced, focussed on outcomes and the enhancement of life choices, and both realistic and achievable” (p. 115).

What is relevant and achievable has led to including essential life skills and individualised programmes for students with special education needs across all states/territories but beyond that there are significant differences (Jenkinson, 2001). South Australia has adopted statements and profiles prepared by the Commonwealth, and uses the Negotiated Curriculum Plan to adapt programmes for students with special education needs to fit within the eight key learning areas. Tasmania takes a similar approach but with more emphasis on linking resources and support needs to curriculum requirements. In New South Wales, learning experiences and teaching activities “must be designed to be appropriate to the student’s chronological age, oriented towards functional and life skills in the home, school and community, and should address both present and future needs as well as specific needs associated with each transition point (Jenkinson, 2001, p. 118).

*Australia: Victoria, an example of a vertical model*

The model used in Victoria is cited here because it provides an example of curriculum support following a vertical model; that is, each curriculum area is treated distinctively as a progression from a lower level to a higher level, and is based around eight key learning areas (similar to New Zealand's seven essential learning areas). In Victoria, government schools follow the *Curriculum Standards Framework*, which provides guidelines for the key learning areas, but allows schools to make decisions about course planning, curriculum organisation and classroom practice.

The *Curriculum Standards Framework* is supplemented by a series of "Companions to the Course Advice – Students with Disabilities and Impairments" which support each key learning area. The Companions include an overview of support materials, planning forms for teachers to develop unit plans, case studies and exemplars at a range of levels, and references and resources.

**United States of America**

The *No Child Left Behind Act*, passed by the Bush administration in January 2002 is directing the most recent developments in the USA. The four principles underpinning the Act are: stronger accountability for results; increased flexibility and local control; expanded options for parents; and an emphasis on proven teaching methods (Hayes, 2002). Improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged, who are identified on the basis of poverty, race and ethnicity, disability and limited English proficiency, is the central theme of this legislation. Indigenous groups are identified as American Indian, Native Hawaiian and Alaskan Native peoples.

New developments as a result of *No Child Left Behind* are that each state is required to define Adequate Yearly Progress for all students, and the achievement of students with disabilities must be reported on separately against measurable objectives. Although the impact of this Act on curriculum policy is in its early stages, a recent paper by Popham (2003) indicates that attempts are being made to modify and limit curriculum objectives to facilitate the application of assessment procedures.

It is too early to ascertain the impact of the *No Child Left Behind Act* on the curriculum for students with special needs. Giroux (2003) expresses his concern that the current emphasis on standardised testing in a climate of budgetary constraint in the USA will lead to money being diverted from “much-needed institutional resources, smaller classes and challenging curriculum” (p. 22). His view is supported by current policy development in special education that focuses on the assessment of educational achievement rather than curriculum support.

Pihana Nā Mamo is a Hawaiian Special Education project to improve outcomes for native Hawaiian students with special needs. It emphasises partnerships between school, family and community to provide a strong cultural base for students, from which they can contribute to their community and be empowered to set goals. This project includes a component on curriculum and materials adaptations, which appears to be still under development.

### Canada

Canada has followed a similar path to the USA in recent years, with an emphasis on assessment through standardised testing. The School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP), which assesses the achievement of 13 and 16 year-old students in reading, writing, mathematics and science across all Canadian states, was introduced in 1993. Concerns about the narrowing of the curriculum, the impact on the self esteem of low achieving students, and the risk that students with special needs can be seen as a liability because their low scores influence averages are being expressed by teachers' organisations (British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 2003; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2003). There does not appear to be a requirement to disaggregate the results of students with special needs in Canada.

In 2002 the Department of Education in New Brunswick published a policy document: *Guidelines and standards: Educational planning for students with exceptionalities*. It provides principles for inclusion and, similarly to Ontario, has set standards for special education plans. A 'Quality Learning Agenda' has been announced for New Brunswick in 2003 that includes the need to 'challenge and support students with particular needs'.

Along with students who require additional support, a focus on First Nations students has been announced. Developing curriculum support materials is not specifically mentioned.

The provisions for curriculum support for special needs students made by other Canadian states including British Columbia, Ontario and Manitoba were also investigated for this report. The Ontario Ministry of Education lists ways in which curriculum content can be modified for exceptional students in Grades 9-12 by

- Providing a module on learning and study skills to help students acquire such skills as formulating a work plan, taking notes, reading, and studying;
- Providing additional material to reinforce learning, if necessary;
- Providing additional material to extend learning, if appropriate;
- Providing modified curriculum expectations or alternative expectations (i.e., expectations that are alternatives to the provincial curriculum expectations), as appropriate, to ensure that the individual needs of exceptional students are met;
- Modifying the delivery of cooperative education programs for exceptional students;
- Providing exceptional students with opportunities to gain the knowledge and skills they need to make a successful transition to post secondary education, apprenticeship programs, work, or living independently in the community;
- Providing opportunities for exceptional students to acquire self-advocacy skills.

Wagner (2000) summarises the current situation in North America by arguing that, for more than a decade, the integration of special needs children has concentrated on the practical aspects of inclusion. She states that education policy has yet to address what the learning expectations are for special needs students and how to clearly demonstrate that they have been achieved.

A widening gap between the achievement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in Canada is leading to increased examination of the education system from the perspectives of First Nations people. The British Columbia Human Rights Commission Literature Review (2001), which focuses on barriers to equal education for First Nations students, states that “The problem of exclusion is perpetuated by the system’s failure to acknowledge that curriculum is very much contested terrain and to examine the relationship between the production of knowledges and power” (Mattson & Caffrey, 2001, p. 39).

In a report entitled *Our children – Keepers of the sacred knowledge*, a working party on Canadian education concluded that “when we examine First Nations education historically, a pattern emerges that consists of a system of education that for the most part has been imposed on First Nations students with blatant disregard for First Nations languages, cultures and collective knowledge and wisdom (Minister’s National Working Group, 2002, p. 1). In reference to curriculum generally, these reports acknowledge the need for decolonisation of the curriculum and recognition of First Nations languages and knowledges within the state education system. The failure to incorporate holistic approaches to curriculum, particularly in relationship to spiritual, ethical and intuitive dimensions of learning, is noted. The impact of the hidden curriculum on First Nations students is emphasised, along with concerns about their under-achievement in reading and maths.

Particular concern is expressed over the over-representation of indigenous students in special education categories in Canada. Questions are raised about assessment, inappropriate labelling, and the negative consequences of inadequate support and resources for First Nations students.

Recommendations from these reports related to curriculum support materials include:

- The integration of First Nations knowledge and wisdom into curricula and pedagogy, through

- The acknowledgement of First Nations languages as the first languages of Canada and ensuring adequate resourcing for delivery of language and culture programmes;
- The recognition of the importance of parental, family and community involvement, where parents, the extended family and the role played by grandparents are integral and valued;
- The provision of opportunities for students to serve in the community, the promotion of community dialogue and the involvement of parents through practical measures;
- The involvement of elders in the planning and implementation processes respecting their wisdom and role as professional advisors;
- The necessary resourcing for the delivery of special education programs to meet the needs of students in First Nation schools. (No funding is currently provided for special needs students in First Nations schools);
- An immediate joint investigation to ensure First Nations students with special needs are accurately identified and receiving effective and relevant support and remediation to ensure improved academic success in the long-term;
- A joint review, every five years led by First Nations, of the effectiveness of programs, policies and services for First Nations special needs education.

The themes from these reports indicate that the current focus is on ways of incorporating First Nations knowledges and languages into both the formal and hidden curriculum. The need for the accurate identification, resourcing and support of special needs students is a priority within this context and, while Canadian educators are grappling with these issues, they do not appear to be at the stage of producing specific curriculum support materials.

## Europe

The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education published a report in 2003 that reviews *Special Needs Education in Europe*. It describes common characteristics of policies and practices. It concludes that

the current tendency in the EU and the candidate countries is to develop a policy towards inclusion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) into mainstream schools, providing teachers with varying degrees of support in terms of supplementary staff, materials, in-service training and equipment (p. 7).

It also summarises common trends in Europe related to funding, teacher training and ICT. No specific mention is made of curriculum support although it does indicate that most countries develop individual educational programmes for students with special needs. These specify the degree and type of adaptations to the mainstream curriculum and are used as a tool for evaluating the progress of pupils with special needs. The report states that the developmental stage of countries with regard to inclusion varies considerably. For example, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, and Norway developed and implemented clear inclusive policies some years ago and important changes have not occurred in the last few years.

One of the main areas of concern expressed in the report relates to the provision of special needs at the secondary level. Various countries reported that ‘inclusion generally progresses well at the primary education level, but at secondary level serious problems emerge...[I]ncreasing topic specialisation and the different organisation of secondary schools result in serious difficulties for inclusion at the secondary level. It was also reported that generally the ‘gap’ between pupils with special needs and their peers increases with age.

An overview of special education in individual European countries was located on the Eurydice web-sites. In Denmark students with special needs are included in ordinary school environments where possible, and instruction is adapted to their ‘prerequisites, possibilities and needs’. The objectives of teaching are identical to the ones applying to all students at the different levels of the education system.’ However there are

supplementary provisions for students with special needs that are based on special rights for some pupils as defined by the Danish Education Act, which specifies the number of lessons per subject per year that must be delivered in schools.

In Finland the national core curriculum is currently being renewed and implemented. Students with special needs are catered for either in conjunction with the mainstream or in special classes. The national core curriculum is the basis for individual education plans. The curriculum for the most seriously disabled is organised into functional domains of motor skills, language and communication, social skills, activities of daily living and cognitive skills. The Vocational Education Act (1998) introduced 'preparatory and rehabilitative instruction and guidance' for students with disabilities, which aims to provide students with daily living skills, clarify their future plans and support future placements in education or work. Education for work and independent living is practically oriented, and lasts between one and three years depending on individual needs.

Inclusion of almost all students with special needs into regular schools was mandated in Italy in 1994. The general curriculum objective is 'the development of the potentials of the handicapped person in learning, communication, relationships and socialisation.' The students follow the timetable and lessons of their school class and also have individual educational plans.

In summary, the literature on special needs education in Europe seems to indicate that the focus is currently on inclusion of children into the mainstream with the support of individual education plans. Material on providing curriculum support beyond this does not yet appear to be readily available.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 4: HOW DOES THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM AND NATIONAL CURRICULUM SUPPORT STUDENT'S TRANSITIONS BETWEEN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOLING?**

Curricular support for transition between early childhood settings and school for students with special educational needs is a neglected area of research in New Zealand. Several New Zealand researchers have investigated the issue of transition between the early childhood and primary sectors for students with special needs but have focused on the practical processes involved (the where, what, how and when) in order to make this transition successful, rather than the relationship between transition and curriculum (Rietveld, 2002; Higgs, 2001; McDonald & Caswell, 2001; Cullen, 2000; Ledger, 2000; Rietveld, 1999; Barwick, 1998; Wartmann, 1997). Rietveld (2002) suggests that the curriculum is only one aspect of the transition process and argues that, as learning is a social process, “children need to become a valued member of a class first in order for them to benefit optimally from the curriculum and if children do not understand the how the classroom works, feel included and supported then they don't engage in learning” (p. 62).

The MOE (2000) has provided the resource *Including Everyone – Te Reo Tataki* for the early childhood sector, which makes suggestions for how transition to school for students with special needs may be supported. In both *Te Whāriki* and *NZCF* there are broad statements implying that the diverse needs of all students will be met under each curriculum, but there is no specific mention of how this will be achieved for students with special educational needs.

*Te Whāriki* (MOE, 1996) sets out the links between the strands of the early childhood curriculum framework, and the essential learning areas and essential skills of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*. It does not specifically describe how these links might be made in practice at the time of transition to school. While the particular needs of Māori and Pasifika students, and of with special educational needs, are signalled in *Te Whāriki*, the needs of Māori and Pasifika who also have special education needs have not been explicitly addressed. Bevan-Brown (1999) strongly recommends that Māori perceptions of special needs should be taken into account when working with students

with special needs and their families/whānau. The Māori world-view considers that all children are special and special abilities are valued and nurtured (Bevan-Brown, 1999). This has particular implications for how curriculum documents might signal support for the transition of Māori students with special educational needs from early childhood settings to school.

A high proportion of Pasifika children are also expected to require significant intervention both during and after their transition from Pasifika early childhood services to school (ACNeilson, 1998). Although not explicitly addressing students with special needs, Sauvao, Mapa and Podmore (2000) argue that parents and teachers need to liaise and discuss the relevance of the different curricula and policy documents such as *Te Whāriki*, *DOP's*, *Ta'iala* (the Samoan Language Curriculum) and *NZCF* so that successful transitions can take place.

In summary, the literature suggests that, in terms of the early childhood curriculum and the national curriculum, support for students with special educational needs transition from the early childhood to the school sector appears to be a neglected area of research in New Zealand. However, two documents – the *Curriculum Stocktake Report* (2002) and the 10 year strategic plan for early childhood education services, *Pathways to the Future/ Ngā Huarahi Arataki* (2002) – appear to address, in general terms, the issue of the two curricula supporting students' transition between the two sectors. This support is expressed in terms of identifying the skills and resources required for teachers, parents/whānau and other professionals working in the area to make transitions for young students with special needs successful. However, more specific information is required so that students with special educational needs – as they transition from early childhood to the primary sector – have a curriculum to support them that is reflective of their special needs and designed so that their individual learning needs are met.

### Interviews at School Sites

For the purposes of this review, participants in the school site interviews were asked: “What issues arise around the transition from early childhood to primary settings for these students?”

This question was not seen as relevant by all settings (e.g. the high school). Where the question was relevant, the interviewees noted a gap between the two curriculum documents – “a huge gap” according to one educator. Bridging the gap was made easier through good communication between settings and staff. Good documentation – such as through individual plans – was helpful, but a close relationship between staff was better. One interviewee described “the little steps” in *Te Whāriki* as more useful, but was not clear about how these could be used in the primary setting.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 5: WHAT PARTICULAR POLICY ISSUES OR OPPORTUNITIES ARISE FROM THE WORK COMPLETED TO DATE FOR THE CURRICULUM STOCKTAKE REPORT?**

The *Curriculum Stocktake Report* (MOE, 2002) contains a number of recommendations, which, if accepted, provide significant opportunities for aligning curriculum policy and special education support. Central to these opportunities is the chance to infuse principles of special education support throughout the *NZCF* and thus create a more flexible and truly inclusive document.

Recommendations 3, 4, 5 and 10 relate to the revision of specific aspects of the *NZCF* – Recommendation 3: principles; Recommendation 4: essential skills and values and attitudes; Recommendation 5: the essential learning areas and Recommendation 10: the curriculum statements and *ngā tauākī marautanga mō te mōtu*. The Report emphasises the need to involve teams of cross-disciplinary specialists and to consult with representative groups in the revision of the *NZCF*. The opportunity arises in this process to include people with expertise in special education in the cross-disciplinary teams and to consult with members of the disabled community and parents/whānau of students who have special education needs. In doing this it is more likely that meaningful and valued outcomes for all students will be defined and described in the curriculum.

The rationale, in the Report, for the revision of the essential learning areas includes the need to move towards a more holistic view of learning where the development of connections between the outcomes across and within essential learning areas/*ngā tino waahanga ako* is valued and promoted. Further it is argued that the outcomes of national curriculum should acknowledge that students develop at different rates, that a student's learning can be asynchronous and that the New Zealand student population is diverse. It is suggested that “foundation learning’ should be emphasised in Level One and Two outcomes for each learning area. These suggested revisions provide the opportunity to ensure that the outcomes reflect the range of achievement and priorities for students who have special education needs. The definition of foundation learning provides the opportunity to include outcomes for students who do not currently achieve level one objectives, however the issue of how to ensure that the definition of foundation learning

is sufficiently flexible to incorporate a variety of abilities and to facilitate rather than impede progress in student learning, would need to be addressed.

Recommendation 10 concerns the legal status of the current curriculum statements, which, it is recommended, should change to that of curriculum support materials if the *NZCF* is gazetted. This recommendation, if followed, would provide the opportunity to make the curriculum statements a more useful resource for teachers by including descriptive content such as exemplars of curriculum adaptation across a broad range of student need and a range of effective pedagogies to meet both the cultural and educational diversity of students.

Recommendations 7 and 8 refer to the contexts of pre- and post-compulsory schooling. Recommendation 7 describes the need for a section on the relationship between the *NZCF* and *Te Whāriki* to be developed in the *NZCF*. The development of this section could provide the opportunity to extend the principles of *Te Whāriki* into the *NZCF* and align the outcomes of the two documents. This would provide the flexibility to use *Te Whāriki* as the guiding curriculum where it was more appropriate to students' needs irrespective of their chronological age. This would also support the transition of students with special needs from early childhood centres to primary schools.

Recommendation 8 addresses the need for further work on the issues the curriculum poses for secondary schools. The report identifies the lack of guidance in the current framework in terms of the curriculum and post-secondary pathways. The issue of transition to adult life is recognized to be highly significant for students with special education needs. Any further work on the links between secondary school, work and post-school outcomes provides the opportunity to consider these issues with particular reference to the experiences and needs of students with special needs. The development of a section on transition provides the opportunity to make explicit reference to students with special needs in relation to senior secondary schooling, qualifications and work, and to provide guidance as to how links can be made between school and post-school for students with disabilities.

Recommendation 11 refers to the provision of professional development and guidance for teachers. The development of high quality professional development and guidance materials for teachers provides the opportunity to ensure that teachers have the support necessary to deliver the curriculum effectively to all their students. Provision of this support provides the opportunity to include resources and professional development programmes specifically related to catering for students with special education needs in relation to curriculum. The development of this support also offers the opportunity to canvass teachers about the type of support they need in relation to the curriculum and students with special needs, which should result in that support being highly relevant to and useful for teachers.

The Report recommends that assessment in the *NZCF* be revised (p. 20). Part of this recommendation addresses the tentative links between early childhood education and school. Because the New Zealand early childhood curriculum is holistic by nature, an implication is that students with special educational needs are incorporated in this recommendation. The report suggests that a smooth transition between sectors is important “so to minimise the barriers to learning faced by young children” (p.21). There is a recognition that a “disjunction in approaches to teaching and learning by the early childhood and school sector can hinder a child’s ongoing development and reduce the gains made in early childhood education” (p.21). From this, the report recommends that a section on the relationship between the *NZCF* and *Te Whāriki* be developed.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 6: WHAT ARE THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT: *WHAT GETS TESTED, GETS TAUGHT; WHO GETS TESTED, GETS TAUGHT?***

This section of the report looks at the issue of the impact of assessment on curriculum decision-making and design for students with special education needs. Burgess and Kennedy (1998) have captured the debates about assessment of students in their provocatively titled review *What gets tested gets taught, who gets tested gets taught: Curriculum framework development process*. These authors summarise the debates around the high stakes national and state-wide testing regimes adopted in North America and introduce some accommodations and adaptations made for participation of students with special education needs in the United States, Australia, and Canada.

Earlier literature (e.g. Thurlow, Elliott & Ysseldyke 1998) has pointed out that claims to be able to talk about the achievement of *all* students are flawed, due to the systematic exclusion of a group of students from standards-based assessment. Most of the efforts to be able to describe the progress or attainment of groups of students has taken place in the context of national and international drives to be more competitive in a global economy – to ensure that our students are adequately prepared to perform in this environment. Thurlow et al (1998) outlined five reasons for including students with disabilities in the assessment and accountability systems that were developed in the drive for standards-based reform:

1. To have an accurate picture of education;
2. To allow students with disabilities to benefit from all reforms;
3. To make accurate comparisons;
4. To avoid unintended consequences of exclusion;
5. To promote high expectations.

These reasons were offered as a counter to the experiences, for example, of students from low socio-economic status, or students with disabilities, or students from diverse first

languages, not really being included in the aims of these reforms, despite the rhetoric of *all* students.

Thurlow (2002) has identified three ongoing challenges of standards-based reform for students with special education needs:

1. Reaching agreement that content and performance standards should apply to all students, including students with disabilities;
2. Determining how to extend existing assessment systems to students who may need accommodations or other modifications;
3. Translating assessment results into instructional changes and interventions.

Content and performance standards have usually been set without the participation of special educators. Two outcomes of this lack of collaboration at this level are that the standards themselves may not be inclusive, or sufficiently broad in nature to be meaningful for students with special education needs. Even if the standards are appropriate, there may not be sufficient ‘buy in’ from special educators

Klienert & Kearns (1999) undertook an expert validation of Kentucky’s alternate assessment for students with significant disabilities. Two concerns that they identified included the “extent to which more limited learner outcomes had been identified for students with significant disabilities, and whether the alternate assessment was sufficiently aligned to the general curricular expectations for all students” (p.100).

Thompson & Thurlow (1999, cited in Thurlow, 2002) reported that - in those states that collect such information – between 8% and 82% of students use accommodations during external assessments. Many states did not know how to handle or report scores obtained using alternate assessments or assumed that accommodations to assessments changed the standardisation of the assessment. Further, others did not include students, because they argue that it would be too stressful for students to participate.

Thompson & Thurlow (2001) suggest another possibility for a lack of accommodations. In their survey of all 50 states discussions with teachers about how to make

accommodations for assessment revealed that many did not know how to do this – because they were not applying accommodations during instruction. For many students, their first exposure to these accommodations was during an assessment.

Ford, Davern & Schnorr (2001), and Dymond & Orelove (2001) both argue that the “mandate for assessment and accountability of students with significant disabilities will influence curriculum decision making for years to come” (Ford et al, p.214). Dymond & Orelove (p.119) state that we should be analysing the impact of such reforms

have on the curriculum focus for students with severe disabilities. In particular, one might explore the relation between students achievement on the standards to post school outcomes and whether difference exist among states on the standards chosen.

Ford et al (2001, p.214) set out the implications of various responses to the challenge of standards-based reform.

The outcomes identified and assessed by the states surely will become a part of the daily routines of students. A major question facing educators and parents is How can those concerned with the education of students with significant disabilities ensure a continued and focused emphasis on full membership *and* meaningful outcomes during this era?

One such response might be to develop a separate set of standards. Ford et al ask, “... is it suggesting that there is no overlap between the 98% of students included in the regular assessment and the remaining 2% of the students? Do not some areas, such as language and literacy, have universal value?” On the other hand, the adoption of identical standards can result in “unintended consequences such as disregarding legitimate areas of emphasis because they are not addressed by existing standards” (p.215). Who do we really mean when we say all students?

Burgess & Kennedy (1998) describe the approaches of six states to the “challenge of creating links with the state adopted curriculum frameworks.” All six states posed a question to themselves along the lines of “is this standard meaningful?” All six states stressed the importance of professional development for regular and special educators.

Similar debates take place in Australia and in Canada. The Canadian Teachers' federation (retrieved August 2003) identified these concerns about the impact of high stakes testing for students with special education needs:

- High stakes testing results in test performance being shaped by factors other than content knowledge;
- High stakes testing is used as the basis for decisions around tracking, grade promotion and retention;
- High stakes testing creates a situation in which students struggling with material or who have special needs can be seen as a liability because their low scores influence averages;
- High stakes testing squeezes out 'non-tested' subjects thereby narrowing the curriculum;
- High stakes tests are frequently biased against certain groups of students.

They argue against following the "lead of the US, Great Britain, New Zealand and several other 'restructured' economies ... in reverting to high stakes testing [because] all students are affected, but some students are affected more than others."

The NSW Board of Studies (1999) set out its intentions to offer an alternative to the Higher School Certificate programme of study from 2001. Dowrick (2002) describes a model for assessing learning outcomes "for young people with learning difficulties" against a background of concern for that "education services fail to prepare students ... for the demands of adult life" (p.189). The model involves consensus building amongst stakeholders that include parents, students and professionals to identify, target and assess desirable educational outcomes.

Students with special education needs feature in the research and literature on assessment to varying degrees, in New Zealand and internationally. In New Zealand, Carr, McGee, Jones, McKinley, Bell, Barr, & Simpson (2000) undertook a review of literature looking at *The effects of curricula and assessment on pedagogical approaches and educational*

*outcomes*. They considered the “appropriate relationship between curriculum and assessment” while looking at “curriculum content, the provision of different curricula for different groups, [and] the development of high stakes subjects and activities...”; these authors looked at “the crucial and strong relationship between curriculum and assessment... with a focus on the influence of high stakes assessment procedures” (p. 2). Their review reports on students from “different groups in the school sector”, in the main focussing on gender and ethnicity.

Ideally, as Carr et al argue, the relationship between curriculum and assessment is one of simultaneous development:

In this way the curriculum and assessment processes would enhance each other. The experience in many countries has been that this complementarity has been lost, particularly when a major function for assessment procedures has been to measure teacher and school performance. Then conflict can arise between assessment to enhance learning and assessment for measuring achievement. It would appear therefore that assessment regimes have a powerful effect on school curricula (Carr, et al, 2000, p. 16).

These authors cite Lewis (1996) and Dorn (1998) on the effect of judging schools on national test scores when students with special education needs are included. One outcome is that these students’ scores are excluded, or even the students themselves are excluded: “This phenomenon indicates that high stakes testing regimes perpetuate the pattern in which minority or low income students receive a diminished share of educational resources and opportunities” (p. 27).

The authors conclude that the “intentions of a curriculum can be distorted by an assessment process which gives high stakes to some aspects of the curriculum, or which narrows its potential” (p. 42). They call for further research that addresses

- Teachers’ formative assessment skills and processes; and
- The “crucial need” to understand what actually happens in classrooms by way of formative assessment.

It was of particular concern to the authors that

No research findings on assessment activities, which could provide valid, reliable, trustworthy and fair information about Māori, Pacific Nation or other minority students, was found in the review. There is little if any research (particularly in New Zealand) on whether national testing and other accountability measures promote education change or development (p. 47).

McGee et al (2002) surveyed 1,997 teachers on their experiences in curriculum implementation. This survey provides an opportunity to look at simultaneous development of curriculum and assessment. One section of the questionnaire looked at assessment, achievement, progress, reporting and review. The questions in this section were:

- What has influenced your assessment practices in the last few years?
- How much has your teaching from the curriculum statements resulted in improvement for all students? Māori students? Pacific students?
- Comment on how your teaching based on the curriculum statements has impacted upon your students' achievement;
- Have curriculum changes influenced how you report student achievement and progress to parents/caregivers?
- How have each of the following processes influenced what and how you teach?
  - School self-review;
  - External review/evaluation (from outside the school, e.g. ERO);
- Please explain how school self-review and/or external evaluation has had an impact on your teaching or assessment practices.

Teachers in special schools accounted for 21, or 1.1% of the completed questionnaires. There is no further reporting of special education needs in the survey questions or analysis, so it is not possible to tell if other teachers were responding with students with

special education needs in mind. The results for some questions are reported in brief, with an emphasis on comparing the percent responses from the teachers from special schools with the total % responses.

- What has influenced your assessment practices in the last few years?

Response option	% special schools	% total
The focus on achievement objectives in the curriculum statements	61.9	65.5
Professional development	76.2	58.2
Changes in national assessment policy	4.8	33.7
Changes to qualifications	0	23.5
School-wide assessment and self-review	47.6	57.5
External review/evaluation (e.g. ERO)	28.6	25.1
Availability of new tools/materials	19.0	30.9
Syndicate/school policies	52.4	45.2
Other (e.g. alternative English, maths, etc. for disabled students)	33.3	6.3

The authors do not comment on the choice of “other.” One possible interpretation is that most teachers, particularly outside of special schools, have not (recently) been influenced in their assessment practices by the participation of students with disabilities. This may be a mixed blessing for these students. It may mean that many of these students are not being assessed in any way that contributes to the overall reporting of achievement in a school, or enables the school to report on particular groups of students.

The National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) annually assesses the progress of children at year four and year eight in New Zealand schools. The aim is to gather information about the educational achievements of New Zealand pupils within the

context of New Zealand education. NEMP's aims include the development of tasks that are meaningful and enjoyable for students, and that allow them to demonstrate their capabilities. A further aim is to “take full account of differences of language, culture, gender, ability and disability in the design and administration of assessment tasks” (NEMP Pamphlet). NEMP currently collects data and reports on the subgroups of gender, ethnicity, location, type of community and type of school. A study by Overton (2003) indicates that students with special education needs are indeed participating in the NEMP assessments. Data on students with disabilities are not gathered or analysed as a subgroup. Consequently, it is not yet possible to determine which students with disabilities, and types of disabilities, participate in the NEMP studies, nor how they perform on the tasks.

### Interviews at School Sites

For the purposes of this review, participants in the school site visit interviews were asked: “How do you report on student progress?”

Where schools were teaching students with high or very high needs – still working to achieve skills described at Level 1 or prerequisites to those skills – most described reporting on these students on an individual basis only. They acknowledged that this could make it difficult to meet their requirements to report to ERO on a school wide basis, and it was difficult to produce a report that was “meaningful.” These students did not participate in any national assessment programmes; these were seen as “a nonsense” and that students would “skew the results.” Other teachers suggested that there was a “problem with aggregated reporting because students with special education needs dramatically lower the means.”

The IEP plays an important role in assessment and reporting for many of these students. Teachers drew on other tools (such as developmental checklists) to gather information and choose next steps. One school described their aim of using attainment of IEP goals as the basis for school-wide reporting on students with special education needs. However the teacher cautioned that there could be as much danger in “teaching to the checklist” as there is in “teaching to the test.”

Teachers also described the importance of relating IEP goals to the curriculum goals. One school had elaborate school and teaching plans (including plans for assessment) detailing the connections between various assessment tools and the curriculum statements – mostly at level 1 achievement objectives, with some level 2 for science and maths, and many at a ‘preparatory’ level.

Three schools described how – in addition to reporting to IEP goals – data for their students were included in milestone reports for the MOE. One school kept testing and re-testing data “to see if we’re making a difference.”

At the secondary level, participation in NCEA was seen as problematic for various reasons:

- Individual student performance could be negatively affected as students with special education needs could have more frequent absences (e.g. due to higher health needs), including missing testing;
- For some students NCEA could be achievable with appropriate support;
- For other students an alternative assessment was more appropriate.

One school reflected on the lack of an assessment or award which would allow students with very high needs to celebrate what they had achieved in their years at school, and all of the work that could go in to achieving at Level 1.

In summary, there appears to be considerable work to do in the development of meaningful methods of reporting on students’ progress, at the level of the individual student as well as in any aggregated form. The few studies that have paid attention to the relationships between assessment and curriculum for students with special education needs have put forward two arguments in particular. First, there needs to be better collaboration between educators with expertise in teaching diverse range of students and teachers with expertise in curriculum development. Second, there needs to be similar collaboration between the development of assessment and curriculum policy and resources.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 7: SHOULD PARTICULAR PROVISION BE MADE VERTICALLY THROUGH THE LEARNING/SKILL ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS, OR HORIZONTALLY ACROSS THE LEARNING AND SKILL AREAS, OR BOTH?**

The organisation of curricula across countries or states takes several forms with the main being either horizontal or vertical. A horizontal organisation focuses on the links across curriculum areas at each level. The way that the key stages of the *National Curriculum* are presented in England and Wales is an example of this. A teacher at Key Stage 1, for example, is presented with the curriculum packaged for that achievement level with the content and expectations for each curriculum area set out alongside each other. In New Zealand a teacher working at a similar level, would instead have each document belonging to the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* provided individually in a vertical organisation. Here the focus is on the relationship between each of the levels of a curriculum area – and the progression from one to another – rather than links across curriculum areas.

The Victorian model of curriculum support for students with special education needs, which was one of the most comprehensive that we found, follows the vertical structure, that is, focuses on material to support each curriculum area rather than organising the support across the achievement levels.

The implications for adopting either organisational structure for students with special education needs depend on the purpose behind the curriculum support. If the purpose were to support the curriculum as set out in the *NZCF* then the vertical model would be appropriate as teachers are already familiar with this style of organisation. If the purpose were to provide a more integrated curriculum, especially at a foundation level, with more emphasis on skills or processes than academic achievement, then a horizontal structure provides the opportunity to do this.

For the purposes of this study, no clear conclusion can be drawn in relation to this question. Participants in the interviews expressed no definitive views about the benefits or implications of either option or a combination of both although some mention was

made of the benefits of students experiencing a progression through the curriculum and the consequent experience of success and completion that derives from that progression.

Neither was there any strong indicators regarding the benefits or implications of vertical versus horizontal provision of curriculum policy or learning outcomes found in examination of international provisions. Overseas authorities that have made such provisions have used various models but the efficacy of one model versus another has not been explored.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 8: SHOULD A FOUNDATION ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL BE DEVELOPED FOR STUDENTS WHO MAY NOT PROGRESS TO LEVEL 1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES?**

Participants in the interviews expressed a range of opinions related to this question ranging from unqualified agreement to describing the idea as a “mediocre solution”. Support for the idea of a foundation level centred on the usefulness of having some generic guidelines and indicators that would be age-appropriate and designed to meet the needs of student with high and very high support needs. Concerns raised related to what happens for students who are below the foundation level, the adequacy of current Level 1 achievement objectives if a foundation level is needed, age-appropriateness, and what would happen in terms of students’ progression through the curriculum over time.

Some participants also expressed concerns in relation to providing an appropriate curriculum for high school students. Related to this was the strongly articulated concern about how the achievements of these students are acknowledged particularly at the time of leaving school. What did the students have to show for what they had achieved?

Some discussion was had with participating interviewees regarding the place of *Te Whāriki* in terms of developing a foundation level. The *Curriculum Stocktake Report* (2002) is timely, as knowledge of *Te Whāriki* amongst primary school teachers appears to be limited or confused. In one of the interview settings, the teachers had only just started using *Te Whāriki* for setting goals for their students with special needs. They described Education Review Office and MOE confusion as to the legality of using the document in the compulsory sector but they have since clarified this situation and are now using it successfully in the primary area. These teachers described their school’s curriculum as learner-centred, focused on what their students can do rather than what they cannot do, which is in keeping with the ‘competent child’ model promoted by *Te Whāriki*; the teachers argued that *NZCF* Level 1 does not meet the needs of most of their young students.

Teachers in two further schools participating in the interviews also found *Te Whāriki* relevant for their students with special needs because it is descriptive rather than precise, and can be related more easily to students with special needs. In the second of these

schools, the teachers found *Te Whāriki* to be relevant, child centred, and potentially helpful to them, as well as to the children.

The *Curriculum Stocktake Report* makes the case for a better integration of *Te Whāriki* and the *NZCF*, which may offer an alternative to a separate foundation level.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION 9: WHAT PRINCIPLES SHOULD UNDERPIN CURRICULUM SUPPORT MATERIALS?**

A review of the overseas literature shows that principles exist at a range of levels – global, school, teacher, and student.

### The Global Level

At a global level the *Index for Inclusion* from the UK (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, p.3) makes statements such as inclusion in education involves:

- Valuing all students and staff equally;
- Increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools;
- Restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality.
- Reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as ‘having special needs’;
- Learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely;
- Viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than problems to be overcome;
- Acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality;
- Emphasising the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement;
- Fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities; and
- Recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.

## The School Level

At a school level *The Curriculum and Standards Framework for students with disabilities and impairments* (Victoria, Australia) states that schools will provide for all students:

- A foundation for education and learning;
- A high-quality education;
- Access to a range of educational opportunities;
- A program through which all students can progress;
- Curriculum content that has breadth and balance;
- Genuine choices for students;
- Opportunities for students to contribute and to develop personal relationships and friendships; and
- Preparation for life in adult society.

Schools should provide educational programs that:

- Will enable students to develop particular knowledge, skills and processes;
- Provide maximum flexibility and adaptability;
- Allow students opportunities to reach significant standards of learning;
- Offer students appropriate career education and pathways to post-school options;
- Promote the personal health and physical fitness of students;
- Equip students to be active and informed citizens; and
- Enable students to gain an understanding of and respect for society's cultural heritage.

## The Teacher Level

At teacher level the *National Curriculum* online (UK) states that there are three principles for inclusion:

1. Setting suitable learning challenges:
  - Teachers should aim to give every pupil the opportunity to experience success in learning and to achieve as high a standard as possible. The *National Curriculum* programmes of study set out what most pupils should be taught at each key stage – but teachers should teach the knowledge, skills and understanding in ways that suit their pupils’ abilities. This may mean choosing knowledge, skills and understanding from earlier or later key stages so that individual pupils can make progress and show what they can achieve. Where it is appropriate for pupils to make extensive use of content from an earlier key stage, there may not be time to teach all aspects of the age-related programmes of study;
  - For pupils whose attainments fall significantly below the expected levels at a particular key stage, a much greater degree of differentiation will be necessary. In these circumstances, teachers may need to use the content of the programmes of study as a resource or to provide a context, in planning.
2. Responding to pupil’s diverse learning needs. Teachers should take specific action to respond to pupils’ diverse needs by:
  - Creating effective learning environments;
  - Securing their motivation and concentration;
  - Providing equality of opportunity through teaching approaches;
  - Using appropriate assessment approaches; and
  - Setting targets for learning.

3. Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

A minority of pupils will have particular learning and assessment requirements which go beyond provisions described in sections A and B and, if not addressed, could create barriers to learning. These requirements are likely to arise as a consequence of a pupil having a special educational need or disability or may be linked to a pupil's progress in learning English as an additional language.

- Teachers must take account of these requirements and make provision, where necessary, to support individuals or groups of pupils to enable them to participate effectively in the curriculum and assessment activities. During end of key stage assessments, teachers should bear in mind that special arrangements are available to support individual pupils.

Pupils with special educational needs

- Curriculum planning and assessment for pupils with special educational needs must take account of the type and extent of the difficulty experienced by the pupil. Teachers will encounter a wide range of pupils with special educational needs, some of whom will also have disabilities (see paragraph C/4 and C/5). In many cases, the action necessary to respond to an individual's requirements for curriculum access will be met through greater differentiation of tasks and materials, consistent with school-based intervention as set out in the SEN Code of Practice. A smaller number of pupils may need access to specialist equipment and approaches or to alternative or adapted activities, consistent with school-based intervention augmented by advice and support from external specialists as described in the SEN Code of Practice, or, in exceptional circumstances, with a statement of special educational need. Teachers should, where appropriate, work closely with representatives of other agencies who may be supporting the pupil.

Teachers should take specific action to provide access to learning for pupils with special educational needs by:

- Providing for pupils who need help with communication, language and literacy;
- Planning, where necessary, to develop pupils' understanding through the use of all available senses and experiences;
- Planning for pupils' full participation in learning and in physical and practical activities;
- Helping pupils to manage their behaviour, to take part in learning effectively and safely, and, at stage 4, to prepare for work; and
- Helping individuals to manage their emotions, particularly trauma or stress, and to take part in learning.

The Ontario Ministry of Education (2001) in *Special Education: A Guide for Educators*, offers these guidelines:

To achieve at the highest possible level, some exceptional students may need to participate in special programmes.

Curriculum implementation for these students requires:

- Careful and perceptive adaptation of courses and programmes developed from curriculum guidelines;
- A constant awareness of standards and expectations;
- Flexible organisational structures;
- Selection of the strategies, resources, activities, and assessment procedures most appropriate to the student's needs;
- Accommodation for individual differences; and

- An Individual Education Plan.

### The Student Level

At a student level the New Brunswick Department of Education (2002) in its document *Best Practices for Inclusion* provides the following principles

- All children can learn;
- All children attend age-appropriate regular classrooms in their local schools;
- All children receive appropriate educational programs;
- All children receive a curriculum relevant to their needs;
- All children participate in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities; and
- All children benefit from cooperation and collaboration among home, school and community.

The focus that we have chosen to take is based on the research question that asks us to identify key principles when designing a curriculum that supports students with special education needs at a *national policy* level. This focus is informed by reading the international literature across the levels identified. At a national policy level we have selected the statement from *The Curriculum and Standards Framework for students with disabilities and impairments* (Victoria, Australia) and the principles outlined by Ford, Davern & Schnorr (2001).

The following principles are from *The Curriculum and Standards Framework for students with disabilities and impairments* (Victoria, Australia). Three significant factors have provided the foundation for the guidelines:

- An awareness of current community expectations for students with disabilities and impairments as members of society;
- An acknowledgement of the unique educational needs of students with disabilities and impairments; and

- A recognition of recent major trends in both general curriculum development and specific curriculum for students with disabilities and impairments.

The two fundamental beliefs central to all processes for developing, implementing and evaluating curriculum for students with disabilities are:

- That all children can learn and be taught; and
- That educational planning requires an active partnership between the school, parents and students.

Students with disabilities and impairments require curriculum that:

- Is broad and comprehensive and enables access to the eight key learning areas;
- Is relevant to the student's physical, intellectual and social/emotional needs;
- Is age-appropriate;
- Is part of the continuum of learning for life;
- Offers opportunities, challenges and choices;
- Encourages independence while recognising the inter-dependence of members of the community;
- Values individual learning styles and preferred learning styles;
- Provides for different rates of learning;
- Enhances the student's self-esteem, worth, identity and dignity;
- Provides a range of opportunities for individualised and group learning of skills, knowledge and attitudes;
- Provides a broad range of experiences, processes and approaches;
- Is realistic, achievable and has clearly stated goals; and

- Anticipates the student's future needs.

Ford, Davern & Schnorr (2001) identify five principles for students

1. Every student should receive priority attention to the development of foundational skills;
2. Individualisation is at the core of a good education;
3. Educational priorities should be pursued through schedules and locations that are respectful of the student's membership in a learning community;
4. Students should have an opportunity to experience a sense of mastery or accomplishment over the tasks that they undertake;
5. Being attentive to the quality of a student's immediate experience is as important as our concern for the future.

From these and other sources we have suggested a set of principles as a framework, which is open to confirmation, refutation or amendment. These principles can be interrogated using the following questions:

- How **relevant** are these principles to the aims of the research, that is, to provide a set of national policy guidelines to underpin curriculum support for students with special education needs?
- How **useful** are they at the level for which they are intended, that is are they too broad, too specific, too wordy?
- How **culturally appropriate** are they for the New Zealand setting?
- Are they **informed by credible research**?
- Are they **future-focused**, that is do they help inform future decision-making rather than focus on past practices?
- Do all relevant stakeholders endorse them?

## The Principles

A curriculum to support students with special education needs should have these seven features:

1. Enable students with special education needs to access the regular curriculum but not be constrained by it;
2. Require wide consultation and active partnership between educational agencies, schools, parents, students and communities;
3. Enable students with special education needs to reach a level of skill and knowledge to allow them to participate fully in society;
4. Take account of and attend to the specialised teaching, material or access needs of these students;
5. Offer a range of opportunities, challenges and choices that are appropriate to students with special education needs' physical, social, emotional, intellectual, cultural and age-related needs;
6. Recognises the differing levels of pace, concentration, time and effort as well as the alternative routes to experience success in the curriculum; and
7. Recognises, records and celebrates the achievements and value the diversity of students with special education needs.

From the school interviews a number of principles were identified. The participants identified that the curriculum should:

- Be holistic and encompass the diverse needs of all students (school site visits 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6);
- Encompass a Māori world-view (school site visits 1, 4);

## Curriculum Policy and Special Education Support

- Be authentic and meaningful (school site visit 2), realistic and achievable (school site visits 1, 6) and prepare students for an education beyond the school years (school site visits 1, 2, 5);
- Be functional – incorporate both functional academic skills and social, communication and life skills (school site visits 1,2,5,6);
- Empower students – a flexible curriculum that is responsive to their needs and provides them with a sense of autonomy, independence, an opportunity to develop meaningful relationships and fully participate as a member of their community (school site visits 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6);
- Provide exemplars of inclusive practice (school site visits 1, 6); and
- Provide for the best teachers to teach the students with the most needs (school site visits 1, 3, 4).

**RESEARCH QUESTION 10: WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIALIST SUPPORT?**

Participants in the interviews were asked about previous individual professional development, including initial teacher education, that they had received, related firstly to teaching students with special education needs, secondly to curriculum delivery for that group and thirdly to Māori and Pasifika students with special education needs.

Participants' views were also sought on what they would like or felt they needed in the way of professional development around curriculum and students with special education needs.

Few of the participants made reference to having had specific teacher education related to special needs either through initial teacher education or the Diploma in Teaching Students with Special Needs. In terms of teacher professional development, participants' responses indicated that they had experienced little in the way of professional development related to students with special needs, including Māori and Pasifika students with special needs, or curriculum delivery and adaptation for students with special needs.

In terms of professional development from external sources, participants identified the Special Education Association Conference, professional supervision, a Te Mana course run by the MOE, training in implementing IEP's, a sign language workshop, a course on literacy across the curriculum provided by college of education support services, Picture Exchange Communication Systems, Makaton, non-violent crisis intervention, Te Reo Māori, an autism workshop and the internet. Comment was made that training, appropriate for teachers working with students with high and very high needs, was rarely offered.

Professional development provided within the school was described as occurring in the context of planning and staff meetings, and more informally through sharing and talking with other staff. Some teachers referred to self-directed learning such as "learning on the job", "self-taught," "own training" and "learnt on the trot". In their *Statewide exploration of the nature and use of curriculum in special education*, Sands, Adams and Stout (1995) reported "on-the-job training was cited as the source of training by the highest number of

Colorado special education teachers, for both curriculum development and adaptation and modification” (p. 72).

Participants in the interviews identified a range of professional development needed by teachers to support students with special education needs. These included training in a range of teaching strategies for diverse students, specific training to meet the needs of Māori and Pasifika students, collaboration, curriculum and curriculum adaptation, peer tutoring, reciprocal teaching, classroom management, behaviour management, inclusion, assessment and planning, and literacy and numeracy. Teachers also expressed the need for professional development by way of the resourcing of specialist support for classroom teachers, as well as more guidance in the curriculum documents themselves.

One significant feature of the responses was that in addition to discussing the professional development of teachers, a number of participants talked about the importance of professional development and training for teacher-aides who were described by one participant as “key to all of this”.

There are a number of implications for professional development inherent in the findings of this project.

- In order for teachers to meet the diversity found in classrooms in New Zealand schools there may need to be a greater focus on special education in initial teacher education;
- The lack of professional development available for teachers that is relevant to the development, delivery and adaptation curriculum for students with special needs, including Māori and Pasifika students with special needs, means that teachers have few opportunities to gain the skills necessary to develop appropriate curriculum for students with special needs;
- Models of professional development need to be provided that address teachers need for support through both courses and regular access to specialist knowledge and expertise;

- Models of professional development need to be provided that specifically address how the curriculum can be adapted for students with special needs and the type of strategies best used to do this;
- Professional development for teacher-aides needs to address the pivotal role they often play in the delivery of curriculum to students with special education needs;
- Professional development currently available is largely unaffected by principles of inclusion. Professional development programmes related to curriculum need to better reflect the diversity of students in New Zealand schools in order to meet the needs of teachers supporting students with special education needs, including Māori and Pasifika students with special needs;
- To ensure support for the transition of students with special needs between early childhood settings and the school sector, professional development for early childhood and primary teachers and other professionals needs to address the similarities and differences between *Te Whāriki* and the *NZCF*.

Bevan-Brown (2000) lists six solutions to improve educational services for children from ethnic minorities that have relevance in terms of professional development:

- More pre-service teacher education in multicultural and special education;
- In-service professional development courses that have a compulsory Māori component;
- Cultural audits of schools to address the attitude and skill levels of all those involved in working with Māori students with special needs;
- Home-school projects such as 'Hei Awhina Matua' that show how parents and staff can work collaboratively to benefit children and develop their own skills and attitudes;
- Full service education initiatives that involve social and health workers to overcome barriers to learning and meet the full needs of communities.



## Future Directions

This report has identified significant gaps in curriculum policy, research, and teacher development. The findings of this report suggest that the principles and purposes of the curriculum could be reviewed consistent with the recommendations of the *Curriculum Stocktake Report* and *Pathways to the Future*. Future directions for this work include:

### **CURRICULUM POLICY, INCLUDING ASSESSMENT**

- That the recommendations of the *Curriculum Stocktake Report* and *Pathways to the Future*, with regard to curriculum for students with special educational needs be followed;
- That outcomes for students with special educational needs be identified, with the proviso that care is taken to achieve a balance between functional, academic and social development;
- That investigation of the benefits and/or limitations of vertical and/or horizontal curriculum arrangements be conducted;
- That curriculum policy identify explicit links between the education (and other relevant) sectors in order to facilitate effective transitions;
- That a national curriculum that is presented as *inclusive* is more explicit about its aims; and
- That schools are given specific support to interpret *NZCF*, such as through the development of a variety of exemplars of sound inclusionary practices in the interpretation of curriculum (including assessment).

### **RESEARCH**

- That explicit evaluation be conducted regarding the links between curriculum policy and outcomes for students with special educational needs;
- Dymond & Orelove (2001) identify six core areas that deserve attention

- Methods for addressing functional skills in inclusive settings;
  - Methods for making instruction in the community inclusive;
  - Curriculum emphasis in inclusive classrooms;
  - Post-school outcomes;
  - Access to the general curriculum and student progress; and
  - Impact of standards on curriculum design;
- That priority support be given to research, including practitioner research, that examines curriculum adaptation at the classroom level; and
  - That curriculum policy be developed simultaneously with assessment policy.

#### **TEACHER DEVELOPMENT**

- That all teachers be provided with training in the notion of inclusive curriculum, including curriculum adaptation, rather than focusing exclusively on individual needs; and
- That pre-service and in-service training is provided so that teachers can consult and collaborate with parents/whānau and professionals on the way in which curricula can be used, as well as the ways in which transition can best be achieved for students with special needs.

## **Glossary of Terms**

### **Curriculum**

A school curriculum is each school's programme of teaching and learning. The national curriculum for all New Zealand schools is set out in the *National Curriculum Statements*.

### **Disability**

Two meanings of disability are present in the literature cited in this document.

1. Disability is understood as the effect of a particular impairment (known or unknown) as in a “student with an intellectual disability.” This is consistent with the World Health Organization distinctions between ‘impairment’, ‘disability’ and ‘handicap.’
2. Disability is understood as the relationship between a person and the environment, particularly as this relationship is expressed through forms of discrimination. This use is consistent with the *New Zealand Disability Strategy*.

### **Early Childhood Services**

In New Zealand the term early childhood education refers to the provision of education and care for young children and infants before they begin school. Services are offered by a range of providers, for example, playcentres, kindergartens, te kōhanga reo.

### **Early Intervention**

Support for young children with special education needs which is available from birth to the child's successful transition to school. The support is also available to families and early childhood services.

### **Ecological Model**

An approach which recognises that the student does not operate in a vacuum, but that surroundings and context also have an impact on abilities and needs. Ecological assessments, for example, include a study of the student's physical environment and their interactions with the people in close contact with them

### **Exemplars**

Models and examples of teachers work that act as a guide to the quality of work expected.

### **Functional curriculum**

Curriculum focused on the skills of daily living and vocational skills.

### **Horizontal curriculum**

A horizontal organisation focuses on the links across curriculum areas at each level. The way that the key stages of the *National Curriculum* are presented in England and Wales is an example of this

### **Inclusion**

Inclusion is a term used world wide and has many definitions - the most common refers to the philosophy and practice of providing learning opportunities for all children according to their needs. For example, the aim of the Inclusive Curriculum is to fit the learning programme to the student rather than the student to the programme.

### **Learning Outcomes**

The knowledge, skills, attitudes and values a student has achieved as a result of an education programme - learning, teaching and other forms of intervention.

### **National Administration Guidelines**

Statement of school operation requirements that are addressed to boards of trustees. A component of the *National Education Guidelines*. Amended in 1993, 1996 and again in 1999.

### **National Curriculum Statements**

The statements are the documents which schools use to ensure that teaching and learning programmes enable all students to meet the requirements of the New Zealand Curriculum. The statements define in more detail the knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values described in the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*.

### **National Education Guidelines**

Statements for education in New Zealand. Made up of four components: the National Education Goals (NEGS), the Foundation Curriculum Policy Statements, the National Curriculum Statements and the National Administration Guidelines (NAGS). First developed in 1990 and substantially revised in 1993.

### **New Zealand Curriculum**

This is a set of national curriculum statements setting out the learning principles and achievement aims and objectives. All schools are required to follow these statements.

### **New Zealand Curriculum Framework**

The policy document which sets out the policy direction for the New Zealand Curriculum.

### **New Zealand Disability Strategy**

A Government-led strategy released in 2001 to promote a society more inclusive of disability and disabled people.

### **Professional Development**

Training for those involved with students (including those with and without special education needs) - teachers, paraprofessionals, principals, trustees, specialists, parents and caregivers.

### **Resourcing**

Refers to the level of funding and assistance provided to students. The funding is provided either to the school or to the “fundholder” to manage the funds for students with special education needs.

### **School curriculum**

These are the ways in which a school puts into practice the policy set out in the national curriculum statements.

### **Special Education 2000 (SE 2000)**

Special education policy, launched in 1996 and implemented in phases over three years.

### **Special Education Policy Guidelines**

Guidelines developed by the National Advisory Committee on Special Education to assist early childhood services and schools with achieving the *National Education Guidelines*.

### **Special School**

A school providing specialist education or support for students with specific physical, behaviour, sensory or intellectual support needs.

### **Students with special education needs**

Students with special education needs are students who have a disability, learning difficulty, or behaviour difficulty and may need extra assistance, adapted programmes or learning environments and/or specialised equipment or materials to support them in special or regular education settings.

***Te Whariki***

The curriculum specific to the early childhood sector.

**Transition**

Usually refers to the time when the child or young person is changing their educational environment for example from an early childhood centre to school, between schools, or from primary to secondary school or from school to the community.

**Vertical Curriculum**

Each curriculum area is treated distinctively as a progression from a lower level to a higher level, and is based around eight key learning areas (similar to New Zealand's seven essential learning areas).