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## A Study of Special Education in New Zealand

Report No 5

Gunnar Stangvik





# Finnmark University College

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<b>Summary:</b> This is the fifth of six reports from the project. The report consists of two parts. Part one is a study of special education based on available literature. The second part contains results of interviewing parents, teachers and researchers. When information from the two parts of the study is compared it is found that New Zealand has made a vigorous attempt to develop as special education policy based on principles of inclusion and non-categorisation. However, this policy may be jeopardised by a number of mechanisms in the field of practice. The study distinguishes a number of difficulties at the practice level and the macro level for the successful implementation of progressive practices.	
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*Gunnar Stangvik*<sup>1</sup>

A STUDY of SPECIAL EDUCATION in  
New Zealand

Report No. V  
from the project:  
Special Education at the Bottom Line.  
A cross-cultural study of the quality of special education practice<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The address of the author is Gunnar Stangvik, Finnmark University College, Follums vei 31, N-9509, Alta, Norway. Phone (+47) 78 45 0150 and Email address [gunnar.stangvik@hifm.no](mailto:gunnar.stangvik@hifm.no)

<sup>2</sup> This is the fifth report in a series of six reports from the project. All six reports are listed at the end of this report..



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## **PART ONE. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

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Aims, design and methods of the project have been described extensively in the first report from this project (Stangvik 2002a). Stangvik (2002b) discusses special education issues and perspectives and is thought of as a theoretical platform for interview studies. A complete list of reports is found at the end of this report.

This report consists of two parts. The first part of the report presents an outline of special education in the New Zealand based on available sources. This outline serves as a background for the analysis of interviews in the second part of the report.

### **THE COUNTRY**

New Zealand is a one chamber parliamentary democracy with a monarchy as the nominal lead of government. Its population of 3.6 million people lives in a country about the area of the British Isles or two-thirds the area of Japan. According to the 1991 Census, the major ethnic groups comprise those of European - mainly British Isles - origin (74%), the indigenous people of New Zealand - the Māori - who make up approximately 10% of the population, people from the Pacific Islands (4%), and those of Chinese (1%) or Indian (1%) descent. The remaining 9% have other ethnic origins or are recorded as having two or more ethnic identities.

In recent years, New Zealand has more explicitly recognised that the Treaty of Waitangi, which was signed by the British Crown and the Māori tribes in 1840, should be honoured. Consequently, bi-culturalism is increasingly being pursued in all facets of society.

### **CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND**

The organisation and methods of special education is strongly dependent upon the school system. This system has undergone rather dramatic changes during the last decade with vast implications for special education.

### **The education system<sup>3</sup>**

Education is compulsory for all students aged 6 to 16 years, although in practice almost all 5 year-olds are enrolled. During the compulsory education period, there are three main tiers of schools: primary schools (5-11 year-olds) intermediate schools (12-13 year-olds) and secondary schools (14-19 year-olds). Some schools, usually in rural areas, retain intermediate-age students as an integral part of a full primary school and some, called 'area schools', provide schooling for all three levels in the one school. Of the 724,579 students enrolled in the compulsory school sector in July 1998, 65.4% were New Zealand European; 19.9% were Māori; 7.4% were of Pacific Island origins; 1.9% were Chinese, 1.3% were Indian; 2.6% were other Asian, including South East Asian, and 1.6% were 'other'. There are high participation rates in pre-school education, with 92% of 4-year-olds and 71% of 5-year-olds enrolled in some form of early childhood education program. The class-size is 25-30 students in primary and intermediate schools and 25 at the secondary level. There are three types of schools in New Zealand: State schools; integrated school (driven by religious congregations); and private schools. 10.9 % of the schools were integrated in 1997. 3.53 % of the student population was in private schools in 1997. These figures haven't changed very much up to this year (Wylie 1999, p.103). New Zealand has a national curriculum. There has been a proliferation of teacher education programs in New Zealand. In the early nineties teacher education was dominated by six institutions with three year primary programs also offering a one year diploma for graduates preparing for secondary teaching. In the last decade there have been several amalgamations between universities and teacher colleges. In 1998 there were 20 institutions in New Zealand offering teacher education programs leading to teacher registration. An increasing number of students are completing a four year Bachelor of Education degree (Alcorn 1999 p.110-113).

In spite of these programme developments interviewing in New Zealand told me that it is still possible to pass through education training without getting any experiences

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<sup>3</sup> For further information on the New Zealand education system refer to:

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/Schools/Guide/guide.pdf>

of special education. As pointed out by Mitchell (2001a) guidelines to be met by teacher education providers make no mention to students with special education needs. However, 1998 to 2000, professional development programs with respect to students with special education needs were made available throughout the country aimed at supporting boards of trustees, principals and teachers.

### **Reforms of education**

Since 1989 the education system has undergone some dramatic changes. Mitchell and O'Brien (1994 p. 434) list a number of these changes:

- The institution (e.g., a school) is the basic 'building block' of educational administration, with control over its educational resources being used as it determines, within overall guidelines set by the Minister of Education. No intermediate bodies exist between the Ministry of Education and the individual learning institution; indeed, the reforms abolished the 12 education boards that used to serve at that level.
- The institution is run as a partnership between the professionals and the particular community in which it is located. Boards of Trustees, with governance responsibilities, are the mechanism for this partnership. In primary and intermediate schools these boards comprise elected parent representatives, one elected staff representative and the principal. As well, secondary schools and schools with a secondary component are required to have a student representative. Schools may co-opt up to four persons, in regard to the type of skills needed to function effectively, the ethnic and socio-economic composition of the school's student body and the country's gender balance.
- The institution sets its own objectives, within the overall national guidelines set by the Minister of Education. These objectives should reflect the particular needs of the community in which the school is located and should be clearly set out in the institution's charter which acts as a contract between the institution and its community, and between institution and the Minister.
- The Ministry of Education provides policy advice to the Minister, administers property, and handles financial flows and operational activities.
- Each institution is accountable for the Government funds it spends on education and for meeting the objectives set out in its charter. To ensure that this

accountability obligation is met, the Education Review Office (ERO) reviews learning institutions every three years.

Mitchell, McGee, Moltzen and Oliver (1993) discuss these reforms in relation to their central themes: Choice and devolution; parents as governors; continuity with the past; impact on the quality of education; and the reform process. They also report responses to the reform by trustees, teachers and principals. Of the critical aspects of these reforms some may be mentioned:

- There was little support for the prediction that the reforms would improve the standards of educational outcomes
- Excessive demands on the participants and poor resourcing of new developments
- A wide variety of withdrawal arrangements for students with special needs across the schools studied
- Acceptance of mainstreaming of students with special educational need made dependent upon increased funding, resourcing and staffing

It is assumed that this report may have influenced later policy developments as regards special education. These developments are summarised in a later section of this report.

### **Critical Analysis of the Reforms**

Choice, contestability, decentralisation and accountability were the basic tenets of the political reformers on New Zealand in the last decade of the twentieth century with vast implications for education and special education. In a discussion of paradigm shifts in New Zealand special education Mitchell (1999a) summarises the basic principles of the reforms:

*...a), separating policy/ regulatory and delivery functions; (b)/ reducing public monopolies and maximising contestability; (c), shifting the balance of responsibility for the governance/ management and accountability of learning institutions from the centre to elected boards of trustees (BOTs) responsible for individual institutions; (d), moving from the use of input controls to quantifiable output measures and performance targets; and (e),. moving towards greater parental choice (p. 199)*

Mitchell (1999a) distinguishes two waves of special education reforms. In the first wave (1989 -1995) the same right as others for students with special education

needs to enrol in state schools is mandated and it became prohibited for educational institutions refusing or failing to admit a student with a disability. A Crown agency - the SES (Special Education Service) - was established to provide free advisory services to school and parents. This was hard-wired into guidelines and a new funding scheme. In the second wave (1995-) a national strategic plan - Special Education 2000 - was adopted. Based on several reports criticising resource allocation, programme co-ordination and a centralisation of the special education system out of line with the education system. Mitchell (1999a, p.202) describes the policy by quoting Davis.

*Special Education 2000 introduced a new/ multipronged and interlocking approach to resourcing students with special education needs. According to a senior Ministry official, the policy is intended to provide "a simpler, fairer and more transparent funding system of resourcing allocation to schools"*

These reforms of education and special education have been controversial for several reasons. A collection of articles by Thrupp (1999) gives a comprehensive critical analysis of how these reforms are manifested in education. One of the basic thesis of this collection is that the reforms in New Zealand seek to instate an "enterprise culture" based on neo-liberalism and managerialism similar to developments in Britain under Thatcher (Olssen 1999). In a much similar vein O'Neill (1996/97) analyses the manifestation of this policy in special education. He argues that *on paper, policy transitions appear as natural, clinical, and linear progressions, which are assumed to benefit everyone and disadvantage no one* (p.294). He argues that in New Zealand functional definitions of special educational need have been developed primarily to satisfy ideological and fiscal imperatives and acknowledge *an overall cultural shift in the process of policy development in the last decade* (295). Then he proceeds to analyse special education policy in relation to the neo-liberal reform ideology. Public statements in special education policy, like all official policy discourse intended to convey a reassuring impression of objectivity, clarity, equity, and sufficiency to as many people as possible. In fact, policies have to be made real by decisions in the field of practice.

*In reality, all students are not provided for equally, nor equitably; the definition of special education needs is deliberately exclusive, not inclusive; the full range of educational settings is not readily accessible to all; discretionary funding for students with special needs provided by*

*central government supports only officially sanctioned, extraordinary educational needs; and funding and eligibility criteria are controlled by gatekeepers. In practice, provision for special needs depends primarily on the willingness and capability of the school and individual teachers (Ballard, 1995), on staff expertise and decisions about how money intended to support special education is actually deployed (O'Neill, p.300)*

Conclusions from the report "Implementing Special Education 2000 in Schools" from the Education Review Office (1999) on the SEG (Special Education Grant) - one of the basic components of Special Education 2000 offers some credibility to O'Neill's argument:

*All the funding is accounted for but much of it fails to meet special education objectives. Capital items purchased such as shelving, seats, cameras and tape recorders do not meet the criteria....Student needs are not being met from this grant (p.4)*

On the other hand, Mitchell (1999a) may also be right when he concludes that major shifts have taken place in New Zealand special education system:

*It is moving from being relatively ad hoc, unpredictable, uncoordinated and nationally inconsistent to being relatively coherent/ predictable, integrated/ and consistent across the country. It is moving away from categorising students in terms of their disabilities to making judgements on their needs for educational support; from seeing the reasons for failure at school as residing in some defect or inadequacy within the student to seeing it as reflecting a mismatch between individual abilities and environmental opportunities. It is moving from a binary system in which children with special needs receive a different education to those without such needs to a single/ inclusive system (p.208).*

Evaluations and expert reviews have been launched which may settle some of these issues. Results from them will be discussed in the final sections of this study.

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SYSTEM

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### THE LEGAL FOUNDATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mitchell (Mitchell and O'Brien 1994, Mitchell 1999a; Mitchell 1999b; Mitchell 2001b) presents systematic accounts of policy developments in New Zealand special education. Mitchell (1999a) writes that there are few sectors in New Zealand education that have been as frequently reviewed and subjected to such wide-ranging policy changes as special education. The evolution of special education policy, he says, that has taken place in the past decade reflects the coalescence of several paradigm shifts. Some of these are directly related to special education, like the shift away from categorising students in terms of their disabilities, to making judgements on their needs for educational support and to a concern for ecological factors, and away from segregated educational provisions to more inclusive approaches. Others reflect changes in the broader public sector and education system.

Section 8 of the Education Act 1989 specifies that “people who have special educational needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol and receive education at state schools as people who do not”<sup>4</sup>. Under this section, all students between the ages of 5- 19 years are entitled to a free enrolment and education in any state school. The exceptions envisaged are when the Secretary of education agrees with a student's parents that a student should be enrolled at a particular state school, special school, special class, special clinic or special service.

Section 57 of the Human Rights Act, 1993 prohibits educational establishments from refusing or failing to admit a student with a disability; or admitting such a student on less favourable terms and conditions than would otherwise be made available, except where that person requires special services or facilities that in the circumstances cannot reasonably be made available.

National Education Guidelines among other things, require each board of trustees, through the principal and staff, to:

- analyse barriers to learning and achievement;

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<sup>4</sup> Education Act 1989 080 Commenced: 1 Jan 1990 I: Rights to Primary and Secondary Education  
Equal rights to primary and secondary education

- develop and implement strategies which address identified learning needs in order to overcome barriers to students' learning;
- assess student achievement, maintain individual records and report on student progress

National Administrative Guidelines (Removing barriers, Identification of children with special education needs).

New Zealand Curriculum Framework contains the following statement that is of particular relevance to students with special educational needs:

*The school curriculum will recognise, respect, and respond to the educational needs, experiences, interests and values of all students: both female and male students; students of all ethnic groups; students of different abilities and disabilities; and students of different social; and religious backgrounds. Inequalities will be recognised and addressed. All programs will be gender- discriminatory, to help ensure that learning opportunities are not restricted.*

The national curriculum has a common set of goals for all students.

Special Education Policy Guidelines released by the Minister of Education in 1995 and re-released in a slightly modified form in 1999. These Guidelines are built around seven main principles, each of which implications for practice in schools.

1. Young children and students with special educational needs have the same rights to a high quality education as people of the same age who do not have special educational needs.
2. The primary focus of special education is to meet the individual learning and developmental needs of the learner. This means, for example, that:
3. All young children and students with identified special education needs have access to a fair share of the available special education resources.
4. Partnership between students' families and education providers is essential in overcoming barriers to learning.
5. All special education resources are used in the most effective and efficient way possible, taking into account parent choice and the needs of the young child or student.



6. A young child or student's language and culture comprise a vital context for learning and development and must be taken into consideration in planning programs.
7. Young children and students with special educational needs will have access to a seamless education from the time that their needs are identified through to post-school options.

## DEFINITION AND ENTITLEMENTS

According to the Special Education Policy Guidelines special education means “the provision of extra assistance, adapted programs or learning environments, specialised equipment or materials to support young children and school students with accessing the curriculum in a range of settings”. According to the act ““Special education” means education or help from a special school, special class, special clinic, or special service”<sup>5</sup>. All persons age 6 to 20 are eligible to special education. There is a continuum of services in New Zealand. The entitlement is not specified but is dependent upon negotiations between the school and the parents. The character of these negotiations is critically described in a study by Brown (1999) of parents in New Zealand.

*The parents spoken to for this study reported having to combat the beliefs held by many professionals, that it is the professional who knows what is best for the child. The education discourse, like the medical discourse, has promoted the view that the professionals have the best interests of the child at heart and that they can intervene and change the individual who has the problem. In line with the medical discourse, educationalists individualise disability. It is the individual child who is seen as incapable. This professionalises disability, so that parents confront an array of experts available to offer their opinions and judgements on their, the professionals', terms (p.33).*

The law allows the Secretary of Education to place the child. When disapproved by parents a three-person committee considers the evidence.

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<sup>5</sup> Education Act 1989 080 Commenced: 1 Oct 1989 I: Rights to Primary and Secondary Education  
2 Interpretation

## **INCLUSION**

The law doesn't mandate inclusion. Even if inclusion is expressed as an important social goal the question to include or not is a question of professional discretion. Viewing special education as a part of a continuum of services may actually support exclusion for education purposes.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Quality assurance is a complex process dependent upon criteria of quality and present principles for assuring that those criteria are met in special education. New Zealand has a number of quality mechanisms:

1. At the legal level and policy level: Legal mandates and elaborate policy guidelines and funding systems directed at different categories of disabilities
2. Assessment systems for matching special education needs to education and funding
3. Individual education plans (IEPs) are mandated for all students who get funding from the Ongoing Resourcing scheme (ORS)<sup>6</sup>.
4. A system for procedural safeguards
5. A system (ERO) for control and evaluation in order to secure that schools fulfil their obligations according to mandates, guidelines and school charters.
6. The Board of Trustees which was established as an instrument to increase accountability and transparency for the local community
7. Professional training programs

There are, however, no nationally established procedures for evaluation of the education outcomes for students with special education needs in New Zealand.

## **PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS**

*“A parent who is dissatisfied with the result of the reconsideration may, by notice in writing to the Secretary, require the result to be sent to an arbitrator.”<sup>7</sup>* The process is

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<sup>6</sup> There is no mandatory transition plan in New Zealand

<sup>7</sup> Education Act 1989 080 Commenced: 1 Jan 1990 I: Rights to Primary and Secondary Education  
10 Right of reconsideration

stated in the law. The law also established a “special education service board” of six persons appointed by the Minister of Education. The Board's function is to provide advice, guidance, and support for the benefit of people under 21 with difficulties in learning or development<sup>8</sup>.

Brown and Browning (1998), however, report considerable dissatisfaction by parents as regards their contacts with the schools:

- All areas of the research revealed discriminatory practices used by schools to limit the attendance and participation of children with special needs in their school environment
- There emerged a feeling of disempowerment and an imbalance of power between parents and caregivers in their relationship with professionals.
- Parents and caregivers reported feeling that more constant demands were made on them by education professionals for their child with special needs than for their other children
- Parents and caregivers wrote and spoke of inappropriate curricula being taught to children with special needs and the restricted opportunities for these children for participating in the academic levels they were capable of achieving, which may well be above or below their peer group (p. 64-65)
- In a number of interviews, parents and caregivers spoke of the abuse their children received in the hands of teachers in being isolated for days, ridiculed or shut away - or by students in being bullied or beaten

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<sup>8</sup> Education Act 1989 080 Commenced: 1 Oct 1989 IV: Special Education Service Function of Board

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## SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY

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In 1995-1996, a new policy, Special Education 2000, was introduced (Ministry of Education, 1996). The aim of the new policy, Special Education 2000, is "to achieve, over the next decade, a world class inclusive education system that provides learning opportunities of equal quality to all students"(p.5).

More specifically, the objectives of Special Education 2000 are that students with special educational needs will:

- Achieve better learning outcomes;
- Be welcome at their local school;
- Benefit from schools having more flexibility in the provision of programs;
- Receive equitable levels of resourcing according to level of need, whatever their learning environment; and
- Be able to attend the type of facility of their family's choice, where there are enough enrolments.

Mitchell (1999c) supports the optimism by saying:

*I believe that once all of the elements of SE2000 have been implemented and have been in place for a period of consolidation, New Zealand will have one of the leading systems of inclusive education in the world. This should be the case by around the year 2003. (p.33)*

Special Education 2000 announced a comprehensive package of measures, with eight interlocking components. These included initiatives to do with individually targeted resourcing for children with high needs. They are to be identified in terms not of their disability, but their need for intensive support to assist their learning or to meet their personal assistance needs at school. Thus, those with 'very high needs' require one or more of the following: (a) total adaptation of all curriculum content; (b) special assistance to engage in all face-to-face communications; and (c) specialist one-to-one intervention at least weekly and/or specialist monitoring at least once a month, together with daily special education support provided by others to meet their personal care or mobility/positioning needs.

In addition, special education grants to all schools are based on their roll numbers and socio-economic status. It also included initiatives to improve the practice of special education like the creation of positions of Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour, programs for children with behaviour difficulties and speech/language difficulties, and a comprehensive professional development program aimed at all principals and teachers (Mitchell1999d, p.11)

## **FUNDING OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) is an individually-targeted resourcing scheme that provides for the 1% of students deemed to have high or very high needs for support to manage the national curriculum. ORS funding was made "portable". Whereas in the past the resourcing of students with high and very high needs was tilted heavily in favour of special school or special class placements, under Special Education 2000 the resource went with the students, irrespective of their location, including regular classrooms. Transitional Resourcing Scheme (TRS) is a variant of ORS directed at students from 5-7 years of age. TRS applies to students with special education need aged 5-7 years who may not have ongoing needs, but who have high needs for education support.

Three sources:

- Normal entitlement to teachers
- Entitlement to add teachers (10-20 % of a teacher) per child
- Special grant: 30-50000 a year (Teacher aides, teacher assistants)

OTRS have the following key features (Wylie 2000):

- limited to two categories, high and very high needs students
- national verification panel, with no local discretion
- criteria for verification are focused on the need for specialist input to adapt the content of the curriculum, or to provide specialised teaching, or therapy input so that students can access the curriculum.
- resourcing supplied in the form of a fixed dollar sum per student, and some teacher time.

- High needs students are allocated .1 of a teacher, and are funded on a per capita basis of \$7,500.
- Very high needs students are allocated .2 of a teacher, and are funded on a per capita basis of \$12,900.
- Both categories of student are allocated \$250 per student for materials.
- The resourcing is divided. Teacher time is allocated to the student's school; the dollar sum to the fundholder for the school.
- Fundholding is contestable, and split between the SES, and 77 schools/clusters (with one school taking responsibility). Fundholders have at least 20 OTRS students, either in one school, or spread between a group of schools, with one school taking the overall responsibility for management of funds. The SES holds funds for 58 percent of the OTRS students, and 87 percent of the schools with an OTRS student. Sixty percent of New Zealand schools have at least one OTRS student enrolled.
- Schools usually make applications for OTRS or early intervention teams with parental input. Parents must sign the applications.
- Verified OTRS students are deemed to have section 9 agreements.
- Very high and high need students have guaranteed access to OTRS funding, with yearly reviews (at age 8, 11, and 14).
- Transitional funding is provided for students between the age of 5 and 7 who meet the high needs criteria, but whose needs may not be ongoing.

As a component of the new policy a new grant - SEG (special education grant) - was established. Every school receives this grant, which is targeted at the 4-6% of students with moderate special education needs, the size depending on the total school roll and the schools socio-economic status whereas in the past schools had to apply every six months for a discretionary special education allowance. The earlier grant was directed to particular students and was almost entirely used to employ teacher aides. The SEG is formula-driven and schools are free to use it in a variety of ways to provide additional assistance and resources for students with special educational needs in ways that work for their particular school communities.

Mitchell (1999c) provides a table showing the policy components and the assumed prevalence estimates<sup>9</sup> on which funding is based.

CATEGORY	ESTIMATED %AGE OF SCHOOL POPULATION	RESOURCING
High/very high needs	1%	ORS <sup>10</sup> : \$7,500-12,500 and 0.1 or 0.2 teacher per child
Severe Behaviour Difficulties	1%	BEST <sup>11</sup> intervention
Speech/Language Difficulties	1%	Access to speech and language therapy
Sensory or physical disabilities with moderate needs not eligible for ORS	0.2	National contracts for specialist \ teaching and therapies
High health needs	?"	Access to Hospital Schools
Moderate learning and/or behavioural difficulties	4-6%	Special Education Grants (SEG) <sup>12</sup> , ranging from \$24.50 to \$52.00 per child in each school, depending on the school's SES decile rank Access to RTLB <sup>13</sup>

Education Review Office (1999) reports an evaluation of the implementation of Special Education 2000 in 366 state primary, intermediate and secondary schools (14 % of all schools). ERO most commonly identified the lack of effective systems for management of SEG as an impediment to the effective use of SEG. In some instances this was primarily a planning or management issue, such as poor practice in identifying students with special needs or failure to keep a special needs register. However, for the majority of schools the area of greatest difficulty was monitoring and

<sup>9</sup> OECD (2000 p. 72) cumulates the number of students across disability categories as a percentage of students in primary and secondary education. New Zealand shows the third lowest figure (1.50) of sixteen countries. In comparison the USA percentage was 10.43

<sup>10</sup> Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) is an individually-targeted resourcing scheme that provides for the 1% of students deemed to have high or very high needs for support to manage the national curriculum.

<sup>11</sup> Behaviour Education Support Team (BEST). These multidisciplinary teams are charged with responsibility for assisting schools to manage students with severe behaviour difficulties who cannot be provided for within schools resources.

<sup>12</sup> Special Education Grant (SEG): Grant to schools. Every school receives this grant, which is targeted at the 4-6% of students with moderate special education needs. Varies according to the status of the school:

<sup>13</sup> Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTBL). These teachers are available to give guidance and support to teachers in meeting the challenges of students with special educational needs, especially those with moderate learning and/or behaviour difficulties.

evaluation. The evaluation even showed that much of the SEG funding failed to meet special education objectives. Many schools continue to commit most, if not all, of their SEG funding to the purchase of staffing early in the year, making it difficult for them to meet any special needs arising later in the year. The funding was combined with other types of funding to pay teacher aide salaries, and some schools even used the funding to buy different types of equipment.

## **CATEGORIES EMPLOYED TO IDENTIFY DISABILITIES**

New Zealand has a mixed system of categorical and non-categorical approach to identification. Mitchell (1999d) distinguishes seven categories used:

- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Physical disability/Orthopaedic
- Behaviour Disorder/Emotional Maladjustment
- Communication Disorder/Language Disorder/Speech Disorder
- Chronic illness/Physical fragility

Special Education 2000, identifies children with high levels of special education needs in terms not of their disability, but their need for intensive support to assist their learning or to meet their personal assistance needs at school (Mitchell and Ryba 1994).

Those with 'very high needs' require one or more of the following:

- (a) total adaptation of all curriculum content;
- (b) special assistance to engage in all face-to-face communications; and
- (c) specialist one-to-one intervention at least weekly and/or specialist monitoring at least once a month, together with daily special education support provided by others to meet their personal care or mobility/positioning needs.

There are indications that this needs based approach may actually become categorical in its consequences.

## **IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL**

The schools primarily identify students with special education needs. High need students are preferably identified at the pre-school level and referred to Special Education Services (SES) that confirm/or do not confirm. Documents go to Ministry of



Education (MOE) verifiers who regulate the level of resourcing. These students are funded under the ORS scheme. For students identified to have moderate needs funding is not based on identification of individuals, but on the status of the school (SEG). In this case schools decide the procedures and programme.

### THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE CONTINUUM

The placement options for students with special education needs may be presented in a table (Mitchell 2001a, p.16).

PLACEMENT OPTIONS	DISABILITY CATEGORY <sup>14</sup>				
	Intellectual	Physical	Visual	Deaf	Behavioural/E motional
Special Schools	Dependent upon severity And level of schooling			X (Short term)	
Units attached to regular schools/classes				X (Some)	
Regular Classes		Majority		X (Majority)	X (Behaviour Support Team)
Short time institution			X		
Resource centres			X		X
Regular class/itinerant teacher			X		
Psychiatric					X (Small number)

According to statistic from 1999 reported by Mitchell (Mitchell 1999c) 3737 students or 55.5 % out of a total of 6734 students were placed in regular class. Regular class placement was strongly related to level of needs and level of schooling. Of the very high need students 29.0 % was placed in regular class while 62.2% of the high needs students had the same placement. In primary units 84 % visited regular classes. At the secondary level the figure dropped to 49 % of all students.

<sup>14</sup> There is no groupings of learning disability or ADHD

Brown and Browning (1998 p.42) studied a sample of 253 disabled students and found that 40.7 % of these students were fully mainstreamed. With a few exceptions the rest of them were either in a special unit in mainstreamed school (25.5 %) or in special school (12.5 %). They found a rise in the number of parents and caregivers opting for special schools and special units as a preferred educational placement for their child with special needs. According to their view this trend appears to be due to two factors, the first being the lack of information and support given to schools that mainstream students. The second factor is parents and caregivers running out of the energy required keeping their children with disabilities in a mainstream placement (p. 57-58).

A report from OECD (2000 p69) summarises and compares to other countries placement options for eight categories of students with special education needs and shows that special schools (and special classes) is an option for seven of these categories of students. The following table summarises information about New Zealand from the report (p. 59-69).

<b>PROPORTION OF PUPILS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION BY LOCATION</b>			
<b>DISABILITY</b>	<b>REGULAR CLASS</b>	<b>SPECIAL CLASS</b>	<b>SPECIAL S</b>
Blind and Partially Sighted	88.62	0.00	11.38
Deaf and Partially Hearing	85.17	4.48	10.34
Physical Disabilities	25.17	64.34	10.49
Speech and Language	0.00	100.00	0.00
Hospital	0.00	0.00	100.00
Severe Learning Difficulties	12.84	34.69	52.47
Moderate Learning Difficulties	0.00	0.00	100.00

From this information one may conclude that New Zealand maintains a continuum of services for most categories of students with special education needs and that the regular class option is primarily utilised for students with sense handicaps. There is no clear indication in these statistics that the new system of funding creates incentives for inclusive education.

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## EVALUATION OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION 2000 POLICY

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The policy has been evaluated rather extensively (Ministry of Education 1999, 2000). The summaries briefly outlines results from the following strands:

- Initiatives for students with high to very high needs: Ongoing and Transitional Resourcing Schemes (OTRS); Severe Behaviour Initiative (SBI); Speech Language Initiative (SLI).
- Initiatives for students with moderate needs: Special Education Grant (SEG); Sensory Impairment and/or Physical Disability who are not on ORS.
- Initiatives for early childhood.

There is also a comprehensive expert review of Special Education 2000 by Wylie (2000).

As the policy evaluations and reviews are fragmented into the several policy components it is difficult to summarise results briefly. I will only try to pinpoint some general quality features of special education. This is done mainly on the basis of Wylie's (2000) review, which also incorporates previous evaluations.

The piecemeal character of the policy is hinted to by the title of Wylie's report "Picking up the Pieces". Wylie (2000, p.20) writes about Special Education 2000:

*It is not clear whether it is a consistent or predictable framework. The policy has subdivided into a number of different initiatives. It is confusing for people that some of the high needs initiatives are accessed on the basis of ongoing need, and others are provided on the assumption that high special needs can be transformed with time-limited interventions. The definition of special needs has become unclear to many, particularly with the inclusion of initiatives and support for behaviour.*

### COVERAGE

Special Education 2000 appears to be covering more students than the former provision, though the quality and appropriateness of coverage varies. New Zealand's 5.5 percent of students receiving some individual support after assessment comes in

slightly higher than average<sup>15</sup>. A recent OECD report on inclusive education in eight countries found a wide variation in the proportion of children recognised as having special needs, from 2 to 20 percent, with the median around 12 percent (OECD 1999, p25). These figures appear to be actual proportions but may include estimates.

## **Inclusion**

One aim of the Special Education policy is:

*To ensure the acceptance of children with special needs in all schools, and their inclusion in school activities in ways, which benefit their development of independence.*

It is not clear whether the policy is making more schools more positive about inclusion, or if it is reducing the number of schools which take more than their fair numeric share of students with special needs. Schools also have more autonomy in New Zealand than in other countries. This makes it easier for schools to evade their responsibility to enrol students with special needs, or to meet their needs. Sometimes this is done overtly, sometimes covertly. Some schools have fully accepted the rights of students with special needs to have the same educational opportunity as their peers. Having made the changes to teaching, school organisation, and communication with parents which allow this to happen they are operating at or beyond full stretch.

Special school enrolments increased by 4 percent between 1998 and 1999, with some schools gaining more than ten students in a single year. The schools have been able to offer much more as a result of Special Education 2000. They also report more parents coming to them as units close and mainstream options are inadequate, or become too difficult. The units have actually been losers under Special Education 2000. Many offer satellite units in regular schools, allowing some flexibility as student needs or capabilities change. There is some evidence that the units, like the special schools, have become more attractive to parents. Some have found it difficult to find mainstream schools that will take their child, or have found that what is offered is poor quality. Educators in special schools and units noted that parents become

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<sup>15</sup> This figure doesn't compare well with the previous reported figure of 1.50 (OECD 2000).

more interested in non-mainstream options when their child reaches 8 or 9 years, when a child who has difficulty in reading is more isolated in a class of peers. The transition to secondary school also created problems with mainstreaming for some students.

### **Teaching**

Unlike their peers, many students with special needs receive a lot of their education from teacher-aides rather than teachers. Teacher-aides are often untrained to support children educationally. If constantly present, it can keep a child separate from his or her peers, from developing friendships and social skills. Expertise remains unevenly distributed, and is not evenly accessible. The policy does not sufficiently address the issue of developing and retaining expertise among teachers, teacher-aides, therapists, and specialists. Transitional funding on a year-by-year basis makes for uncertainty and does not provide predictability for many teachers, teacher-aides, and therapists. Nor does it adequately address the need for resource materials which adapt the curriculum for classroom teachers, or the need for the development and sharing of practical ideas for classroom organisation and team-work between teachers and teacher-aides, which would allow principals and teachers to feel more confident about meeting the needs of students with special needs.

### **Funding**

OTRS (Ongoing Transition and Resourcing Scheme) has become the main measure of support for students with special needs. It divides students with special needs into two groups, those who are seen to have some assured support, which will meet their needs, and those who do not. Before Special Education 2000, such a distinction was less easy to make, as there was no distinction between high and moderate needs students in terms of their access to special schools, units or services, and applications could be made for (additional) teacher-aide hours for students with a range of needs. In mid 2000, 7,113 students are individually identified through the OTRS, 0.97 percent of the total school population. The rate is slightly higher in major urban areas, and lower in rural areas (0.64 percent) and minor urban areas (0.78 percent). Forty-six percent of the students with very high needs are in the 35 special schools. These include students in satellite units in regular schools. Eighty percent of

the students in the OTRS scheme have primarily intellectual needs, 12 percent primarily physical, 7 percent primarily hearing, and 1 percent primarily visual needs. The overall success rate of applications since the start of the scheme is 45 percent. This includes cases where applications have been made several times, usually with changes made to provide more specific or clearer information, or additional information, sometimes added after further observations in the classroom, or additional short-term interventions. Not enough students with high needs are verified for OTRS. These children soak up a disproportionate share of SEG. The OTRS funding does not cover school costs, such as teacher-aides, particularly for children with high personal care needs, or whose health or behaviour requires ongoing supervision. This means that SEG is sometimes spent augmenting the support for OTRS students.

According to Wylie (2000) one of the unintended effects of the OTRS scheme is that by providing the most prominent aspect of the new system in the form of a seemingly specific amount attached to individual students and offering a guaranteed resource for up to 3 years at a time, the OTRS scheme implies that other forms of provision cannot be taken for granted.

*The overall impression is that the Special Education 2000 policy has indeed improved opportunities for some: those whose resourcing increased, or who access the right-size funding pools. Some students have lost opportunities, or have them in a patchy fashion. It is not clear yet whether outcomes are improving—very little evidence is being collected on a systematic basis.*

### **Verification**

Verification is handled at the national level. There was criticism that the verification process was not handled by local professional judgements based on observations over time, and face to face contact with student, teacher, and parent, in the class and home settings, particularly where people felt seeing a child in action would clinch the case for verification. Verification is also seen to be inequitable because it depends too much on the written skills of those making the application, the availability of specialist assessments, which must often be paid for (though some access health

services, depending on the availability of these; and the SES receives funding to carry some out, left to its discretion). Applications are often done in anxiety, because so much is seen to ride on it. It is not clear to many people what role specialist assessments and diagnoses should play. Many continue to supply and pay for IQ tests, which are usually unrelated to the criteria. Many believe that despite the aims of the policy to move to provide resourcing according to need, not label, medical labels can make all the difference. The verification process singles out students with special needs. Teachers and principals spend up to 10, sometimes 15 hours assembling material from different sources and writing the application. Parents and teachers also talked about the pain involved, particularly in the need to paint a large and long-term picture that may not provide much optimism about the reality of future progress. The verification process was often contrasted with the positive emphasis taken in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and the usual teacher/teacher aide/parent communication about children.

## **Parents**

Many parents are confused. They often feel that unless their child has Ongoing and Transitional Resourcing Scheme (OTRS) verification, they have no secure support. Around half the students with §9 agreements did not qualify for OTRS. This has created a deep sense of loss and anxiety for parents of these students. When parents with children with special needs approach principals about enrolling their child, they are almost invariably asked about the OTRS status of their child. Without OTRS status, parents find themselves more fearful about approaching a school they would like their child to attend. Many parents have experiences of being turned down by schools, either directly or subtly.

## **Local co-ordination**

New Zealand does not have school districts like other OECD countries where one may have positions within schools coupled with district level support to provide advice, ongoing professional development, and specialist support. Some district or local education units also work in co-ordination with health and social support services, aiming to provide more integrated services for families and schools.

It does have a number of different organisations with overlapping and sometimes unclear responsibilities: SES, RTLB clusters, Child and Family development units within health organisations, and others such as the Department of Child, Youth, and Family Services (CYFS). Wylie (2000) finds it may make sense to provide greater co-ordination, and to bring services together in a form, which makes them more accessible to parents and schools.

*These district centres would act as fundholders, and perform the administrative work associated with that role. They would manage the moderate contracts. District centres would also manage and co-ordinate the behaviour-related services, linking in with health and community networks to get better service integration*

## **Māori**

Further development of policy should include Māori in all phases. The Special Education 2000 policy has been criticised by Māori for taking little account of their particular needs, and their preferred solutions, such as a more holistic approach to the identification and support of special needs. There is a particularly noticeable shortage of Māori therapists and specialists. Pacific Island expertise is also yet to be developed to meet student needs. Access to the OTRS verification for Māori students, students attending Kura Kaupapa Māori<sup>16</sup>, students from transient families, attending decile 1 schools, and in rural areas appears more difficult than for others.

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<sup>16</sup> Immersion primary school



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## **CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

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The objective of this section is to try to distinguish some important controversies and issues, which may be embedded in the New Zealand system of special education. Such issues have also been distinguished by Mitchell and O'Brien (1994) and by Mitchell (1999). For more specific analysis of issues related to specific components of the Special Education 2000 policy it is referred to the three policy evaluations which have been previously described.

### **INCLUSION**

Present statistics and policy implementations do not indicate a clear commitment to inclusion in New Zealand. There has actually been an increase in special schooling and a decrease in the number of special units located in regular school. There may be many reasons for this situation. Parental choice plays an important role. This may serve to maintain a continuum of placement options. Lack of stability and insecurity as regards individual funding may also actually support parental choice of special schooling.

### **IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL**

Low degree of individual funding (app. 50 % of all applications) and national verification procedures put considerable stress on the assessment process. This may definitely serve to turn the need identification approach of the policy into categorisation and labelling of students with special education needs.

### **CENTRALISM**

There seems to be a strong need for a structure for local control and co-ordination of programs and resources for students with special education needs in New Zealand. National verification procedures, portability of individual resources as well as lack of a co-ordinating infrastructure may obstruct programme co-ordination and flexible use of all available resources as well as transition from school to society.

## **PARENTS**

Reviews of the Special Education 2000 policy indicate that only the policy makers have an overview of the fragmented policies. This has created a strong feeling of insecurity in many parents. Such feelings are accentuated by the fact that many do not know if the individual funding application will be prolonged after three years.

## **LEARNING PROGRAMS**

Comprehensive utilisation of teacher-aides for writing IEPs and teaching students with special educational needs as well as rather low degree of competency development in this sector may be taken as a signal that this sector has a rather low priority in New Zealand. There are also indications that the system of individual transitional funding may have created instability as regards employment at the school level and hampered co-operation between school personnel.

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## TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

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Special Education 2000 is a unique experiment to create a coherent architecture that covers most aspects of special education. Present evaluation results do, however, at best show only a moderate degree of satisfaction. The patchy character of the policy into a number of separate components makes it difficult to get an overview of the actual output of the system. This separation of functions is a part of the general policy of contractualism, contestability and restricted devolution in New Zealand in the period.

Present evaluation reviews are not very helpful as they only evaluate particular policy components without relating results to general quality criteria. This makes comparisons with other countries extremely difficult. Looking at the system from a more general perspective some aspects move to the forefront. First, the policy system doesn't clearly support inclusion. Special schools are actually prospering lately and units in regular schools are put down. Secondly, the funding system may have served to increase labelling and created additional insecurity for parents whose children do not have disabilities that aren't sufficiently pronounced to satisfy the verifiers. Thirdly, the individualised funding system (OTRS) is not sufficiently integrated with other funding systems (SEG) which makes it difficult to maintain stable and co-ordinated programs in regular schooling. Fourthly, extensive use of teacher-aides may jeopardise quality of special education. Fifthly, absence of a co-ordinated system locally for advice and support may hamper transition from school to society.

Clearly, these points are pinpointed by present evaluations and continual evaluation even shows considerable improvements on some important points. The question is if it really is possible to serve students with high and moderate needs in inclusive ways in a life-span perspective by an education system without a clear service structure based in the local society.

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## PART TWO. INTERVIEWS IN NEW ZEALAND

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The respondents are listed in the following table.

<b>PERSONS INTERVIEWED</b>	
<b>TYPE OF STAKEHOLDERS</b>	<b>NO.</b>
Parents	4
Teachers	3
Principal	3
Training & Research	4
Executives	2
Total	16

The background of the interviewees is described in Stangvik (2000a). The table is based on formal description of their primary functions and cover, of course, very different experiences. Two of the parents teach in universities and one is a medical doctor. Two of them have actual done research in this area. By means of the experiences of this collective of persons I hope to improve the understanding of special education in New Zealand.

What people told me can of course not be separated from my perceptions. These perceptions are selective and based on my own cognitive organisation of the problems raised in the interviews. Communication is a question of coding and encoding. Therefore, it is necessary to reiterate some of my assumptions about the role of parents and their way of responding to the interview. In the second report of the project (Stangvik 2002b) a number of assumptions were made about the role of stakeholders and their perspectives on special education. The point of departure was that such roles would inflict upon how they judge which qualities should be given priority. In the report different knowledge paradigms met in special education are also discussed. This discussion may be said to stage my approach to the interviews.

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## WHAT RESEARCHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS TOLD

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### JOHN

John has spent five years in New Zealand at the time of the interview. He is a trained special education teacher from Britain with a solid background of teaching students with special needs. Currently John works at a university among philosophers, sociologists, and historians of education who have a broad socially critical perspective on educational issues. John has practised special education in New Zealand. He thought one of the best ways to know the school system would be to do some voluntary work in schools. So he went in as an unpaid classroom aid at a local intermediate school with 11 and 12 years old students in a learning support program which was partly segregated, partly integrated. *I suppose I have experience of different special education systems*, John says. That seems very valid to me. And, of course, the comparative perspective comes very easily to him when we discuss special education in New Zealand.

#### **Practices the same but different ideologies**

To John special education in New Zealand seemed very similar to a lot of what he had seen in Britain.

*They had specialist skills and expertise. They used specialist resources but it was this idea that you need to supplement what goes on in the ordinary classroom, specialised intervention and intensive support.*

The language was familiar and the resources were familiar. It's a post- colonial society here, he said, and it's based very much on a British colonial experience so a day-to-day life is quite similar in many respects. The classroom management strategies, the sorts of activities the students were all engaged in didn't seem that different from the sorts of ordinary classrooms that he was used to. However, he finds more emphasis on caring here in New Zealand in primary classrooms. More emphasis on child centred strategies than he was used to in his particular primary school back in Britain. But then he adds:

*But again the approach to students with special education needs seemed broadly similar. There would be a range of specialists you would see*

*coming in like advisors for the deaf and visually impaired. You would occasionally see specialists come in for children with physical disabilities, and you would quite frequently see teacher aides working in the classroom so although on paper they may be labelled different systems in terms of day to day practice it seems to me that they are quite similar.*

He finds, however, that the level of policy is different in one major respect. The approach to the management of the public sector in general and also in education is driven by a particular set of ideologies in New Zealand, theories of new public management, of contractualism and of the devolution of resources. He thinks all of those have had quite significant effects on the way that special education politics have developed in New Zealand.

### **Special education as a part of a general political ideology**

John recapitulates the chronology of special education review and policy from the 80ies and says that one can chronicle these ideologies quite explicitly in a series of documents. A review of all central government agencies was undertaken in 1990 by the incoming conservative government.

*They were looking to save money and they looked at things like specialist education services and that's why they introduced the idea of contestability and also the special education statement on intent. This idea those centrally organised resources were inefficient. It's better if you can evolve decision-making and funding control as close to the school as possible. And if you introduce a market of source into the provision of support services then there is more of an incentive for special education services - the government agency to perform more efficiently.*

He makes this linkage between ideology and governmentality explicit with reference to the ORS (ongoing Resourcing Scheme) funded students and high and low level needs. It was around about the same time, he argues, that the Treasury and the other control agencies of the state were arguing for a clear distinction between the high need students and students whom they thought ought to be managed within the school. When I made a comment about more rational use of resources, John responds:

*Yes, rationalistic I think. In a sense it's not driven by any conception of what special education should really be about, but about the most efficient use of resources.*

John fills in the background. The public sector was turned upside down from 84 onwards. The incoming labour government inherited the huge national debts from the previous Prime Minister. So, within 3 or 4 years they sold out large amounts of state assets, they introduced contestability and contractualism to the whole of the public sectors. In their second term in office, beginning in 87, there were some Treasury briefing papers to the government on education, a whole volume devoted to education. Within that you had the ideological arguments for the reform of administration, a side-based administration, great reforms of accountability, contestability and devolution funding. In 1988 there were the Tomorrow Schools reforms announced. These reforms set up the local school boards of trustees. The department of education was reduced to a policy and operation division. All resources were to be developed at the school level. There would be a charter between government and schools, which would be policed by the education review office (ERO). But John argues the freedom of the schools soon became limited.

*Now, very quickly the scope of the charter was reduced to a requirement for schools, a biotic relationship between the minister and the schools and greater prescription was introduced in terms of what the charter had to include.*

John draws attention to the fact that before 2000 when the New National Guidelines and the Administration Guidelines were announced there had been no explicit reference to students with special needs. Previously schools had to identify barriers to learning and meet them, but now there's actually something in there explicitly which says you need to have plans and strategies for dealing with students with special needs. The he adds:

*So, if you like, the surveillance mechanisms are tightening all the time and there seems to be a coming together of resourcing mechanism, policy guidelines and school accountabilities now.*

## **Research as a part of policymaking**

When I ask John about the research base of policies in special education he says there has been links between academics who are perceived to have expertise in the field, and policy development through a national advisory committee established by the government. Running alongside there has been a number of research projects but the ministry has usually funded them so they focused quite narrowly on policy, resourcing and devolution issues. These projects are very much linked to policymaking and the political process, John says.

*Here are blurred boundaries, very much so in New Zealand I think, between what would be classed as scholarly research or research from the academy and policy related research, which is commission research and where the focus, the objective and the questions are defined by the funder.*

There is, however, another strand of research looking at discourses of special education, how notions of special education are constructed and the relative inclusion or marginalization of people with special needs. There has also been a limited amount of policy critique. But according to John the most influential part of the discourse is the research which is contracted by the ministry.

Critique may come from other directions. In the 1990ies there has been a community-based resistance to the policy model and the emergence of a number of interest groups, of concerned parents, of ginger groups, who've raised particular issues.

*I know that in the last year or 18 months with the huge changes in terms of resourcing - to use a phrase - all the worms have crawled out of the woodwork and the debate has become much more politicised. But largely I think, not to the level of ideology or theoretical analyses, but purely the level of resourcing my children are affected, they're going to lose out on resources, they're not going to get ORS funding, they're not guaranteed long term funding and that's where the debate is provoked.*

## **Funding and policies**

There was an expectation that Special Education 2000 would sort out the resourcing problems of the last 5 to 10 years, John says. That's transpired, particularly with at



least half the students and their families missing out on long term funding. They'd been on additional discretionary support before, but didn't get on to the ORS scheme or other long term funding schemes. There has been a huge reaction to that on the part of parents and schools. Schools with units in attached classes have also been faced with losing the automatic staffing and financial support for those because the government wants to move towards tagged funding to the student, not to the institution. This situation has created a political debate and a dichotomy between those who want the units and the classes maintained and those who don't.

*Special schools in all this have been reasonably quiet because I think they've been the ones that have done best out of it. But that again raises issues while in a system that exposes normative rhetoric of inclusion...*

### **Equity and parental choice**

Parental choice is paramount in New Zealand, but this has created contradictory discourses. The policy intended to achieve equitable distribution of resources but because of its demography and its large geographical size, historically there has been better access to resources for some parents than for others. In some urban areas there has been better access than in others and certainly in urban areas at the expense of rural.

*Driving the policy evaluations in the early 1990ies, it was how do we make a more equitable use of the resources we've got, John says.*

*Now all of that appears to have gone by the board and been dominated by the resource issues, and to a certain extent equity has been used by some schools to exclude some students with special needs because in a market you don't want students with special needs in them.*

He also draws attention to national testing in primary schools and asks *do you want lots of students with special needs?* His conclusion is that schools seem to have moved markedly away from what are the needs of students who have a range of special needs.

New Zealand was determined not to adopt a categorical approach to funding, but, John says, in fact, what you've got is people trying to get into funding categories and not disability categories.

With funding issues in the forefront the educational discourse hasn't included debates about what good practice looks like. There is a policy to move towards inclusive classrooms. What that means in terms of the curriculum, in terms of the school culture, in terms of classroom culture, management pedagogy, the empowerment of students is still a debate that takes place in a very facile and normative level. Inclusion moves ordinary teaching into focus and the curriculum discourse becomes important. There is a discourse on a national curriculum in New Zealand, and how that should be organised and specified. John tells me that it seems to have been a battle that has been won - to a large extent - by the traditionalists. They want the subject driven curriculum, and they want outcomes driven assessment. The battle over national assessments hasn't been won but it's very much an instrumental approach to curriculum. Issues of inclusion and equity have been dealt with at a very normative level.

*Skills development is dealt with at a very instrumental level, attitudes are dealt with as part of the enterprise economy. There's notion of a society or community as something that's inclusive and committed to social justice has been silenced in the last 8-10 years because of the ideologies of the conservative government...*

### **School and community**

I raise the question of the role of the school in the local community and make a hint about that the present policy model may serve to isolate the school from the surrounding community. John says that is very much so. The lines of accountability are strictly between the school board of trustees, not the whole school community, and the central government and policed by a very intrusive audit and accountability agency. Primary school has been schemes of work developed by central government and paternalistic department throughout most of the history of New Zealand. There hasn't been much local decisions.

*..., following the rhetoric of 88 the charter very soon became an accountability document, not something that school communities, local communities could develop to meet their needs.*

### **Inclusion as a stick to beat at teachers with**

When I ask how schools look at inclusion John says that special needs attract traditional resources. Therefore, if we have kids we identify as special needs, which get additional resources to help. That's almost a sine qua non in lots of educational practice he has seen. When I respond that this would be in conflict with the broader concept of inclusion John says that when large sums of money are pumped into the system for students with special needs *it seems to be in a school's interest that they cannot cope and so they get money*. Commenting a bit further on inclusion John says:

*The difficulty is that again normatively it's used as a big stick to beat teachers with: Oh, you don't accept inclusion, you don't practice inclusion. And rather than treat it as an issue of how do I broaden my repertoire of skills, knowledge and pedagogies it's about you ought to be feeling guilty for the fact that you don't meet the needs of kids with special needs.*

### **The future**

At the end of the interview I ask John about the future of special education. For teachers in school, he says, you've still got this very contradictory discourse, you know *if kids are entitled to have their needs met in an inclusive classroom setting, you know, or a Walt Disney sitting beside, playing suitable music*. John feels that the pursuit of the policies of inclusion is going to be constrained by this tension between seeking additional resources and labelling kids and ignoring differences and working on inclusive curricula.

He draws attention to the fact that the government has been devoting considerable amounts of money to normative forms of professional development. You know, to try and increase boards of trustees' understanding, they're offering dedicated training in the support packages in the early child centre through to post compulsory, etc. But, then he adds:

*My cynical hunch is that it's far too much on that accountability super structure rather than the underlying issues. But that again comes back to governments conception of what teaching is about, and it has been clear for the last decade that teaching isn't a craft or an art or a moral enterprise, it's a technical enterprise where you identify taxonomies of competencies, one sub-set of which they with 'How do you teach kids with special needs, you incorporate that in its service and pre-service education and your problem is solved.*

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

To clarify linkages between ideology, governmentality and the practice of special education is important for John. He sees special education in the light of ideology, economic efficiency, accountability and control. He finds the linkage between ideology, governmentality and special education most clearly expressed by the funding scheme. He draws attention to a particular set of ideologies as regards public management in New Zealand. Contractualism, contestability and devolution of decision-making and funding close to schools are central principles derived from these ideologies. John regards economic efficiency to be the primary motive on which this management model is based. These principles have some explicit consequences for special education. John refers to the funding system with its clear distinction between high and low needs students. The ORS scheme has created new categories of students - those with high needs and those with moderate needs -, that have replaced other categories. Low degree of funding and struggle to get access to resources have increased labelling and moved attention away from the practice of special education. More efficient use of resources in special education seems to be the primary objective of the special education policy. Parental choice is an important part of the present ideology. Lack of equitable distribution of resources across the country has reduced the possibilities for many parents to choose. Hence, funding has become the focus of the debate. Inclusion has been treated in a very normative way without really exploring what inclusion takes as regards teaching and curricula. Strict subject driven curriculum and outcome assessments also serve to restrict inclusion. John also contends that the charter, which was intended to increase the freedom of the local school, quickly was brought under state control by an intrusive accountability agency.

Taking his point of departure in a number of policy documents and the special education resourcing mechanism he observes *a coming together of resourcing mechanisms, policy guidelines and accountability*. In the new system *the lines of accountability are strictly between the Board of Trustees, not the whole community*, John says. He contends that skill development is dealt with at a very instrumental level and that the notion of a community that is *inclusive and committed to social justice has been silenced in the last 8-12 years*. This is a serious argument as

regards special education and the transition of students with special needs because of the need for a collaborating community. John also observes a conflict with the principle of equity as students with special need do not fit in with the new social economic reality characterised by the model economy and national testing.

## KEITH

Keith is professor and dean at a school of education. He is trained in primary teaching and as an educational psychologist. After having worked as an educational psychologist he went into the university again and worked in the field of training for some 10 years. He made his doctorate in the field of behaviour analysis.

### **A change of paradigm**

In the beginning Keith's engagement in special education was at that level the individual child in the classroom. But the more he became involved in thinking about what was meant by mainstreaming the more it seemed to him that all of the efforts of the individual, while they're important, they were not making any progress. They were not making any impact on the overall problem that he defined as a political and social problem. So at that point he got more involved in the social context of education, the social context of special education, and as he says *I guess my work became more politicised in that regard*. And as that happened it sort of coincided or became part of a very change of paradigm in his thinking and he moved from a very strong positivist model of thought about research into an area of qualitative work. In the middle of all that he moved from teaching about special education to teaching about disability. After that he has done a lot of work in the area of theorising disability. In doing that he worked closely with disabled people and disability action groups. At the moment his research work centres on disability and inclusion.

### **A bigger issue than special education**

When I ask Keith to describe the present situation of special education in New Zealand he answers *I think it is quite confused*. It is confused first of all because of the significant changes in the funding arrangements, which he thinks are unsustainable. He thinks something has to happen eventually to get out of this

system which requires the categorization of children with very elaborate and certainly very expensive assessments to attitudes verification strategies and appeal.

He also thinks there are areas in New Zealand where you've got teachers and others, parents particularly, who understand what it is they want to achieve in the area of inclusion. Then he adds:

*I think the most significant group in New Zealand of researchers and writers and educators seem to be wanting to be involved in some notion of inclusion but continuing to do it from a special education position, and I think that is not possible*

He tells me that he was asked to write foreword for a book recently. In the end he had to say he couldn't do it because he couldn't justify writing a foreword for a book which was on special education when he want to write an essay on why the term "special' is so problematic. Later on he makes a comment on this which shows his line of thinking.

*But my sense was they didn't see why I thought that was problematic, and I mean that why I think it's problematic is that what we should be doing is not thinking about anything with a label on it. We should be thinking about education, and the idea of education in a democracy. I think that is a much bigger issue than special education.*

### **The pressures for exclusion**

For Keith inclusion should be regarded from the perspective of equity and justice - both these concepts have according to him clearly been parts of the development of education in New Zealand. But it hasn't been understood obviously, Keith says, because children with disabilities have been discriminated from the beginning. And Māori have not been served well by the education system. Then he adds:

*You cannot have inclusion unless you really mean it is for all people, and when you begin to look at that I think you will end up – at least that's what I do – with a concern for what are the pressures for exclusion.*

And he continues:

*if you are discussing inclusion you must understand the process of exclusion. So when I did that I began to look at the New Zealand context, the deliberate creation of poverty in New Zealand which I see as a profound instance of exclusion, which will have long-term social consequences.*

### **To become "special"**

Keith also underscores that it is also necessary to look at the micro level. Most children go to school and they have books, desks, toilets and teachers. But if you are disabled you have to have a special case for toilets and a special case for teachers.

*As long as the child is special they're not included. They're not included in the way we think about them and therefore they won't be included really, as long as there is a label on the child. Now, having said that it is also the case that every child needs to be understood by a teacher who is knowledgeable enough to recognise their uniqueness. And that's why I don't like all this categorisation.*

Keith feels that each time you create a category you distance yourself from that person. Later on he says that the implication of democracy and citizenship for schooling is that it responds to diversity. The education system must respond to all uniqueness rather than breaking people up in different groups.

### **Conflicting values**

When I ask for comments on special education of the organisation of the school system in New Zealand he says *It's fragmented, I mean, each school is an entity so it's very hard to see how, as a nation, we could establish and maintain policies that nationally we believe in.* The Board of Trustees is no long-term body so there is not any clear lines of development. Schools can basically run their own affairs but there is a very centralised control of the curriculum.

Special education has to be analysed within that politicisation of the public service, Keith says. He draws attention to the market model on which it is based and that people from business and treasury have been moved into top positions in education.

*... you only have to open up a New Zealand newspaper or magazine or TV to see that we've become a commercialised society, I mean, all of the language, even the new language of the knowledge economy, well, what*

*on the knowledge society. Everything in New Zealand is driven by money. We are in the service of economy, and there is now a generation of students and people and parents who have never known anything else. You see their goals are to do the best for themselves and their families.*

Further discussing school development in New Zealand he says:

*After 1984 we literally took our education system apart. We destroyed it; we did away with the department of education with a professional focus. We did away with all the school boards, which were a local, regional focus, and we turned each school into an educational shop.*

He also points out that it is difficult to engage or to get research funding if you are not a part of it. To Keith's experience this situation has created a conflict of values in New Zealand and the room for equity has been seriously limited. He finds practices very much dependent upon ideology. *Our practice is embedded in those macro systems,* he says.

When I discuss teacher education with him he further underscores the importance of ideology. He finds the merging emphasis on teacher training being classroom based problematic.

*Of course it has to be shared with the profession but an apprenticeship model is not good enough. You need a model that is grounded in research and looking forward, not only grounded in present practice.*

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

To Keith special education is a representation of problems at other levels of society, i.e. ideology and culture. Initially Keith approached education at the level of the individual child in the classroom. But his experiences have made him change his paradigm of thinking and to become involved in the context of society and the individual responding to this context. Consequently his focus is on the social construction of disability and not on special education per se. He wants to focus circumstances in society and schooling that serve to exclude children from schooling. He doesn't like to use the term 'special education' because he regards this system to as an important instrument in the disability construction. This term is ultimately associated with labelling and categorising children. Education should be based on equity. Equity in education, however, can only be achieved by a school system based



on democracy and dedicated to catering for diversity. This line of thinking is very present in his views on inclusion. Inclusion cannot be achieved through the special education system, as *a child who is special is not included*. At the bottom line exclusion is the primary concept (not inclusion). Inclusion is related to democracy that Keith argues is a much bigger concept than special education.

Keith is very critical as regards the present situation of education in New Zealand. For him ideology is fundamental. His comments to my questions indicate that the market model on which education has been based has served to fragmentize the school system and turned it into an educational shop. The present model with its Board of Trustees and Education Review Office lack a long-term perspective on education. The model seems mainly to be designed to control the money flow. Central to this model is the individualisation of failure. There is a conflict of values as regards the new policy. It is not based on equity that has formerly been a basic principle in New Zealand education.

#### **DAVID**

David is professor of education and a member of the Ministry of Education's national advisory committee of special education. The committee advises the Ministry of Education, which in turn takes the policies to the Minister, and to Cabinet and Parliament for approval. David is involved in policy development and has been so since 1995. He is also a co-director of professional development project in which they are working in approx. 400 schools aiming to work with teachers and principals of all the schools to help them to understand the principles of inclusive education and also the new policies. Another of his interests is international. At the moment he is doing work with UNESCO, advising 8 countries on inclusive education.

#### **From disability category to needs for support**

I ask David in what way New Zealand departs from a traditional model of special education. Although they have some category-based provisions -particularly for those with hearing impairments, visual impairments and physical disabilities - New Zealand has tended to move away from a categorical approach. The ORS funding scheme looks at children in terms of their need for support to manage the school curriculum in stead of looking at the disability they might have and its degree of severity.

*So I think that is one of the differences compared with the other countries I have visited and read about where there are multiple categories and you have very large preoccupation with psychometric evaluation in order to determine what category the child belongs to.*

David feels there has been a general concern in New Zealand among professionals and academics that the category system was not entirely successful for a variety of reasons, and that categories don't coincide with educational programs. So you can have children with very different categorical labels but they might have very similar programs, he says. He also draws attention to other problematic aspects of the category system like the problem of children being in several categories and the problem that children may have no category like those with learning disabilities in New Zealand. David and a colleague have been instrumental in changing the way children are assessed in New Zealand. They were asked to clarify the various disability categories and did that by what he calls as a non-categorical approach. This was a mixed system, however as they were asked to do it in the labels of categories and they identified 4 different levels of support within each category. This line of thinking became policy by Special Education 2000, which came into being in 1997 and forms the basis of the ORS funding scheme.

### **Landmarks in special education**

When I ask David about important landmarks in the development of special education in New Zealand he mentions a number;

1. There has been a famous policy statement of equity saying that children should have opportunities to develop to the best of their ability. That acted as a touchstone for development of special education provisions. Children needed different unequal provisions of resources in order to give them the opportunity to achieve outcomes that were within their potentials.
2. The Scandinavian model in the sixties, particularly with the principle of normalisation permeated into New Zealand quite strongly in the early seventies.
3. In the mid-seventies they had the impact of American law. Then many professionals and academics were arguing quite strongly for the principles of least restrictive environment, the zero reject model and the IEP. They were very

important, and reflected the civil rights movement in the States and which were picked up in many Western states and incorporated into social policy.

4. David also thinks the Warnock Report in 1978 was quite influential. It underscored a non-categorical approach.
5. Then in 1987 there was quite a major report developed by the then Department of Education, which is now the Ministry, and it argued fairly strongly for an inclusive model.
6. Then the next major impact occurred with the education reforms in 1989. One of the key things that took place was the devolution of power to the local school and its Board of Trustees and a move away from central control. More responsibility was being placed on the schools to flexibly use their resources on a formula basis at discretion. Special education stood outside that for a while. David says it was seen as necessary to retain a lot of central regulation and central provisions centralised in an attempt to protect the small groups. They might otherwise be overlooked in decentralisation.
7. The next major development was the introduction of special education 2000 in 1997

### **All laws are in place**

When I ask David about present responsibilities at different levels of schooling he says that at the high levels you've got all regulations to ensure that equity is achieved. Laws ensure that children with special needs are enabled to enrol in the ordinary school. The national curriculum, which has a strong inclusive philosophy, is meant to be a single national curriculum for all children. You've got the resourcing of special education and that termination of the allocation mechanism that's all held at the national level. At the school level there is a high degree of flexibility as to how the resources that are allocated are used – either to the school or to the individual child. So you're getting quite a considerable variation from school to school in the way to use their resources, how to combine them with other resources to make provisions for children with special needs.

### **Behaviour is a burning concern**

David thinks a burning concern in New Zealand is children who have difficulties in behaviour of some kind, children who are non-co-operative, children who are

aggressive, children who are taking drugs, children who are stealing, children who might assault the teacher. He thinks that this is the key issue that teachers are concerned with at the moment. Many teachers feel they can cope with ranges of learning difficulties, but when it comes to managing behaviour difficulties that's where they have problems. Another group is the ADD or ADHD and associated with that those with the specific learning difficulties. Then he adds:

*There are quite strong lobby-groups seeking to help those children, identify them, deal with them properly, equally there are strong groups within the professions saying we shouldn't get too concerned with identifying these children as we go down the American track. They have an enormous number of these children in their school system.*

Another group is the Māori group whose learning difficulties - when they interact with the cultural background - cause considerable anguish among teachers who have problems dealing with not only their learning difficulties but also the cultural context, working with their whanau, or family, in a way that is profitable. David doesn't think Māori have been a major force in the development of special education. But there is a major concern at the moment that the special needs of Māori children, these special needs haven't been adequately addressed. There is a big concern that for those who – in the Māori community here – are wishing to pursue their own language and culture don't have access to people in special education with both culture and special education skills. This is coming through in research.

### **Indicators of the official policy: autonomy and control**

When we discuss the relation between special and regular education David says:

*I think the relation is one of increasingly seeing it as a unified system rather than a dual system, and I think to New Zealand's credit that it has always been the case to a large but not full extent. But now I think the policies have attempted to bring the regular and special education under one umbrella with a common purpose, a common curriculum and without trying to make it too separate as far as the notion inclusion has been the governing tractor.*

In David's opinion this is the policy of the government. But there is only partially consensus on the policy.

*But in reality there are of course there are still principals and teachers who don't have that view, that they have the deficit model of children with special needs. They have the segregation's history, and they feel that special education is something that is best handled by special trained teachers working primarily in their own kind of system.*

The decentralisation policy is critical for the development of special education. With increased authority given to schools, David explains, there is room to determine their school policies, even to determine – to some small extent – school curriculum, certainly to appoint their own staff, including principals and certainly to manage and govern the way in which they operate. This has brought the question of control to the forefront. But with devolution, David says, a central administrator and policy maker has to be very cautious not to impose requirements and control mechanisms in such a way that it undermines the principle of local authority, local management of school. His stand in this matter is clear. *So a devolutionist in general I'm centralist to a larger extent when it comes to children with special needs.* There is a need to have consistent patterns and a consistency in principles across the country for education of children with special needs. His argument is that they are a very small minority and that their needs need to be protected at a national level. He is not supportive of evolving special education decision making completely to the local school, as there is a risk that you get unfortunate diversities and discrimination and abuse of the rights of children with special needs. He finds, however, that the laws to protect children with special needs are in place. The two most important pieces are the legislation act, which was passed in 1989. It requires all schools to accept into their schools all children irrespective of their abilities. A school cannot turn away children with special needs, with any degree of disability. The second piece of legislation is similar. It is a human rights act, which was passed in 1993 and that forbids any organization from discriminating against people on grounds of gender, race and also disability. *So it is illegal to – directly or indirectly – to discriminate against disabilities in normal education institutions,* he says. He also refers to the National Education Guidelines and the National Administrative Guidelines, which include the need to identify children with special need to make sure the barriers to their learning, are identified and removed. Another example at that level is the curriculum that contains the principle of inclusion. It is intended that it should be accessible and made accessible

to all children irrespective of their abilities. Summing up David says *those would be the indicators, there are some others but these are the indicators of the official policy.*

### **The principle of equity**

He thinks that this policy is based on the principle of equity and has to be seen in a historical perspective. The farmers who came to New Zealand were mainly British. They came from a society, which was highly stratified and unequal, and they were very determined to create a different society with a great deal more of equity and equality before the law. And that's permeated. David adds:

*You may know e.g. that we were the first country to introduce votes for women in the 1890ies. We were one of the first countries to introduce old age pension at the turn of the century. In the 1930ies we were one of the countries to lead the world into the social welfare system. In the 1940ies we had the statement from the then Ministry of Education that every child irrespective of their background (the Frazer statement) have a right to education which meets their needs.*

### **Teacher training and inclusion**

The individual resourcing at the school level with the move towards inclusion means that a high degree of responsibility now comes down to the classroom teacher to devise programs, work with other groups of professionals and agencies. And the general philosophy in New Zealand is that the regular classroom teacher now has to take increased responsibility for children with special needs. That in turn reflects back on to the need to get appropriate pre service education and appropriate in service education. One of the problems of ensuring pre service education is given is that there are no formal requirements on colleges of education to provide students with appropriate background material. New Zealand has an organization called the Teacher Registration Board, which sets the criteria which students must be prepared to meet in order to register as teachers. Nowhere in those criteria there is a mention of being prepared to educate children with special needs, David says. It is therefore, theoretically spoken, possible to go through college without having any teaching in special education. But to his knowledge the majority of colleges would have some courses of education for children with special needs. But it is not required. *Colleges are given a fairly large degree of autonomy*, David says. Then he adds that with the special education 2000 policy that was introduced in 1997 a component of that

included professional development opportunities for all teachers and all principals in New Zealand.

### **Parent participation**

According to David parents have a long history of participation at various levels. With the education reforms that role was increased. The intent of that reform was to give more power to parents and that was reflected in the forming of the Board of Trustees that is mainly elected by the parents and most of the people that are elected are parents. Another level of participation of parents is in the IEP process for the high needs and very high needs children and like most countries that have IEPs they must be consulted and agree to the IEP before it is implemented. He also refers to a national advisory committee. It's a group of 8 and 5 of them are parents. There are other qualifications for being on that committee than professional ones, so parents have an influence on the policy level.

### **Transition: a main deficiency of the system**

I ask him if transition doesn't become problematic in New Zealand. The school has such an independent role in the local community. There isn't anything between the Ministry in the center and the local school and the city council doesn't have any responsibility for education and social services. He responds *if we've got any deficiencies in our system that would probably be the most important one*. He feels that's probably the biggest problem that they have got to work through, the transition from school to post school and an aspect of that is determining who is responsible for students with special needs when they leave the school system, which government agency should have the responsibility. He feels that changes are needed here.

*That may change, and one or two local governments are moving in and taking some responsibility for housing and so on. I think we may see a shift there. So that may be one of the problems bringing about effective transition because you've got a need for some coordination at a local level as well as at a national level and policy level...*

### **Important issues**

At the end of the interview I ask David what he thinks are the most important issues today. The first one he mentions is the inclusion issue. What do we mean by

inclusion? Is it full inclusion or partial inclusion? Is inclusion for every child? Is it feasible? Is it desirable? What are the barriers to making it feasible? I think these are key issues as they are in many countries. A second one he mentions is accountability and that in part relates to the decentralization. How you can make schools accountable for what they do without imposing too high degree of controls so that you undermine the principle of autonomy. The third point he mentions is the impact of decentralization on children with special needs? How to ensure that their rights are protected. Another issue, which he thinks is global, is the evaluation of outcomes. David thinks that we've been very process oriented within special education so as to what is the best place, what is the best procedures as systems for educating these youngsters with insufficient concern for establishing appropriate outcomes and assessing those outcomes. As regards outcomes David makes a distinction between two levels. One is a level, which we should be looking at irrespective of the child, and then the other level is the child, the individual child's outcomes. The latter he thinks is relatively straightforward and should be governed by the IEP- an IEP attainable towards the individual child's needs. One should be assessing the extent to which those objectives have been met. The other one is much more difficult. David enumerates some criteria he thinks are universal. One would be drop out rates. Children with special needs should continue their education right through to the maximum period of their opportunity. They should not drop out till they are eligible to leave school. Another one is about transition and post school placement. Successful transition must be made either to the work force or to some training program. He also asks what we do we mean by students with special needs? What are the criteria for defining needs? This involves looking at the deficit model through to the ecological model and the disability focus to the needs focus. *The concept of special needs moving away from the disability definition*, David says. He also raises an issue, which is specific to New Zealand. What are the special needs of Māori children who have learning difficulties and the interface between culture and special needs?

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

According to David the legal basis for an inclusive special education is in place. The policy of devolution has brought freedom to the school to handle educational problems according to the local setting and identification and referral based on need



for support create a more goal directed special education. In summary David acclaims the new policy and he has also to a certain extent been instrumental in putting it through. But he is somewhat sceptical to the increased local control as regards special needs children. In this case David characterises himself more as a centralist than a devolutionist because he fears that total local control may abuse the rights of children with special needs. He thinks that the balance between requirements and control mechanisms and local authority is an important issue. He relates decentralisation to the issue of accountability by asking how you can make schools accountable for what they are doing without undermining the principle of autonomy. The interview indicates another critical element in New Zealand special education. As local authorities lack responsibility for education and social services there is not a legally based infrastructure at the local level which may secure transition or post education of students with special education needs. David considers this to be the most important deficiency of the system. He also thinks that the education of students with special education needs ought to be more oriented towards outcomes. Education has been too much occupied with what is the best procedure and place for their education. As regards outcomes David makes a distinction between two levels. One is a level, which we should be looking at irrespective of the child, and then the other level is the child, the individual child's outcomes. The latter he thinks is relatively straightforward and should be governed by the IEP- an IEP attainable towards the individual child's needs. One should be assessing the extent to which those objectives have been met. The other one is much more difficult. David enumerates some criteria he thinks are universal. One would be drop out rates. Children with special needs should continue their education right through to the maximum period of their opportunity. They should not drop out till they are eligible to leave school. Another one is about transition and post school placement. Successful transition must be made either to the work force or to some training program. He also asks what we do we mean by students with special needs? What are the criteria for defining needs? This involves looking at the deficit model through to the ecological model and the disability focus to the needs focus. *The concept of special needs moving away from the disability definition*, David says. He also raises an issue, which is specific to New Zealand. What are the special needs of Māori children who have learning difficulties and the interface between culture and special needs?

## JILL

Jill is a senior lecturer at a university who works in the area of special education. Her particular interest is Māori children with special needs. Jill is a Māori herself. Her research has always been centred in that area and her responsibility in a ongoing research project her responsibility in that project is services for Māori children throughout New Zealand.

### **Special needs in Māori is not exactly the same**

Jill questions the definition of what special needs are. In New Zealand special education provides for certain categories of children, the ORS funded children.

*Well, what is perceived as special needs in Māori is not exactly the same as the categories that are provided for. So there are some Māori children with special needs who are not even thought about because it is not considered a special need by the Ministry.*

So the big issue, she says, is the whole definition of special needs as related to culture perceptions and at the moment in New Zealand What is defined as special needs is very much dominated by a pakeha middle class white perception of what special needs are. When I ask Jill what would characterise the Māori perception of need, she answers that it's a lot broader. *It has to do with Māori experiencing themselves as being a minority culture, a minority indigenous culture, she says.* How needs are defined is culturally dependent and the way they are catered for is not necessarily the same between cultures. *What is appropriate for a pakeha child with learning disabilities may not be appropriate for a Māori child, Jill says.* When I ask how a Māori child should be catered for, Jill says it has to be holistic, and the physical family must be included. You are not working with an individual, you are working with a family. By family she means whanau, which is the extended family, so it's not only the child and the father and the mother and brothers and sisters. Aunts and nannies and all sort of persons have to be included. Everything must center on the whole whanau that the child is a member of. Catering for the special needs – must be done on all levels, all domains. It is not just academic and physical it is also spiritual and interpersonal, it is also interpersonal. *Some of the things get missed out*

when we are looking for programs for children with special needs, Jill adds. When I ask Jill if I have understood her correct by saying that the way special education is developed in New Zealand is not comparable to the Māori culture by defining needs and supportive measures too narrow, she responds by saying:

*Yes, exactly. Because they are defining it from what is perceived from a pakeha point of view rather than say OK, so what is special needs for Māori or Samoan or whatever. You know, this is what we are funding for special needs, it is the one size fits all, and that doesn't work. But I should have said this right from the beginning, that I am doing what I always tell people not to do, I'm generalizing!*

Some families identify only as Māori and they want everything as Māori. At the other end of the spectrum we have Māori children by blood whose parents don't want to identify as Māori at all although they may look Māori. The parents don't want anything of Māori services and they feel quite comfortable within the pakeha service. There is a continuum in Māoridom and what she is talking about now is this end of the continuum, the people who identify as Māori and want Māori services.

When I compare Māori to the Sami and say that cultural problems may be transformed into special educational problems Jill tells me that they have exactly the same situation. Māoriness in itself sometimes becomes a special need because of people's attitude to it. She thinks that is an explanation why they have Māori children overrepresented in special education.. There are a number of factors and many of them are, she says, socioeconomic. But there are also cultural factors like certain attitudes.

*It's hard actually to put into words – certain cultural attitudes are considered deficits. And so, children with those deficits get labeled with the majority culture's special needs, and they are not deficits at all in that culture. You know, sometimes they can be strengths but it is the majority culture's perception that they are special needers.*

### **Inclusion but we are all pakeha middle class**

The egalitarian principle is highly celebrated in New Zealand and one would think it would fit nicely with inclusion. *But somewhere along the way this egalitarian principle has been related into: we are all the same, and we are all the same tends to be: we are all pakeha middle class, Jill says. She feels that the ideology of equality may*

become so strong that the diversity and needs associated with this diversity is overlooked. She tells me how she has had to argue for special need in an advisory committee of which she is a member.

*Because many of the other members who are developing have this concept that inclusion means that we're all the same, not that we're celebrating diversity but we're all the same and so actually we don't mention special needs, and we don't mention Māori or whatever because we're all the same.*

If inclusion is celebrating diversity and catering for diversity there would be no problem, Jill thinks.

*But there is this tendency I see to end up with the same sort of assimilative properties that has come through New Zealand education anyway, we are all the same which means we are all pakeha, that's now coming into inclusive services: We're all the same, we're all non-disabled, we don't have special needs.*

### **To empower the people whom the services are for**

I ask Jill what be her most important contribution if she could contribute to a change of special education, to take care of the Māori children with needs. She says there needs to be a greater empowerment of Māori people to determine what those services are, and to deliver them. At the moment a lot of the stuff is tokenism. Māori are represented on committees.

*But when it comes down to the bottom line, you know, we can give advice, but we have no power to actually see that the advice is taken and ultimately it ends up with a few of the pakeha men who make that decision.*

It should be Māori whanau who make that decision.

*My thing would be to empower the people who the services are for, and that is a general principle, not only for Māori but for any culture or for any groups.*

### **The Māori voice hasn't been heard**

I ask Jill if we will have a development here in New Zealand with the Māori schooling separating from pakeha? Some Māori have given up trying to change the mainstream to get their cultural needs, Jill says. Over the years integration and mainstream services have become pakeha services. To get the cultural needs catered for within the mainstream system they have been fighting and fighting and haven't found the best way of actually getting out of the system. *If we had a Māori system of authority then we'd have the power and we could make those decisions*, Jill says. It's a survival way, which again is into the inclusion and integration philosophy.

*It would be wonderful if they didn't have to do that. The Māori voice could be heard and empowered within the main system. But because it hasn't been that is why the separatism is developing, and it's a means to gain an end that would be lovely, but it hasn't been gained.*

She finds great differences in New Zealand. The difference, she finds, is whether Māori people having power or not. Without power the Māori perspective is subdued.

In some areas, even if they had good policies, were hopeless and other areas were brilliant. She has done research into this matter and finds *it depends very much on who's running the show in the local area and if the person happens to be a competent Māori.*

### **If we haven't Inclusion in its pure form**

As Jill sees it inclusion has been on the conditions of the dominant culture. From a pakeha point of view assimilation means inclusion. That's the reason why Māori has opted to go separate ways because inclusion has been assimilation. That is the biggest complaint within Māori history. *Inclusion, integration and education have meant assimilation. It hasn't meant separate development at all*, she says. If real inclusion had been the practical goal there would be no need for separatism.

*If we don't have inclusion in its pure form it ends up being assimilation. And so you end up having people fighting against developing a system because the experience is that if they stay in the main system they become assimilated and they don't want that, you know. So they are really working for the same ends but they've had to move out of the mainstream*

*to get those ends. But the same ends are what pure inclusion is about so it's sad that they've been forced to move to another system to gain an end that really pure inclusion should be working for.*

When I ask her if special education in its present form may actually support the assimilation concept instead of the inclusion concept, she is reluctant to say yes or no because it is so dependent upon the people that are running it. It depends on attitudes but also on skills and knowledge in catering for diversity in education. *So there needs to be a big education of diversity, of values – some people value it but they don't know enough to implement it.*

### **The treaty of Waitangi**

When I ask Jill what she thinks about the future of special education and Māori in New Zealand she says it fluctuates from the one day to the next. From a positive point of view I think there is more attention been given to the Māori children with special needs than it ever has been in the past. Research she has been fighting for for years and which previously has been ignored is supported today. But research is dependent upon money.

*Then ultimately the purse strings are still with the pakeha middle class. So you can encourage all the research under the sun but if the findings ask for stuff that is too expensive we still get the "NO"....*

More research has been done, more services has been provided, more people have been consulted than ever before. That's neat, she says. But it's a shame it ultimately comes down to money when major decisions are made.

But, anyway, the Treaty of Waitangi has created a unique situation in New Zealand. It has established a partnership that gives equal status to New Zealand things and Māori things. So in establishing services you should be looking at both of those things first, and then you look at multicultural. The treaty establishes a base line of bicultural services.

*What we're saying from a Māori point of view is that the Treaty gave everyone the right to be in New Zealand, and yes, you are welcome but it is based on a partnership. So if the partnership is not here then you should not be here because then you are not upholding your side of the*

*bargain. So that is the foundation that we work from. Because Americans didn't have such a treaty it is not the same thing to go by.*

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Special needs are a pakeha definition, which doesn't take the Māori culture sufficiently into account. In the Māori culture needs have to be catered for more broadly. In fact, Māoriness in itself may become a need because of people's attitudes. This may be one of the explanations why Māori are overrepresented in special education. Equality in New Zealand is mainly based on pakeha values. Then the risk is that the cultural diversity is overlooked and inclusion easily becomes the same as assimilation. Empowerment of the Māori is for Jill the general principle to change constructively the present situation. Because the Māori voice isn't sufficiently heard some may actually give up the idea of mainstream schooling. Jill also underscores that there are great differences in New Zealand, and ins spite of her critical points she sounds optimistic about the future of the Māori in New Zealand.. More attention is given to Māori Children than ever before and the Treaty of Waitangi is an important instrument to secure bi-cultural interests.

## **SALLY AND TONY<sup>17</sup>**

Sally is the project manager for special education in the Ministry of Education in Wellington. Her job and that of her team, of which Tony is a member. is to implement the new policy. In 1989 when the Government initiated a whole reform in education they left special education behind because it was too difficult. So bit by bit over the years it had become more and more ad hoc, inconsistent, unpredictable. In 1995 the Government agreed to go ahead with a new policy framework. They started to implement that in 1996. It was called special education 2000 because they expected to have the resourcing framework in place from the beginning of the year 2000.

I ask what they regard as the most important issues connected with implementing the policy?

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<sup>17</sup> This interview was somewhat aborted due to practical circumstances.

### **To take responsibility**

The biggest issue has been to change the mind set. In the past children with special education needs applied to a centrally managed system for which at that time really was teacher aid hours. That was really all that was found. Certainly there were specialist teacher. They had resource teachers for children with hearing impairment, vision impairment, physical therapists and occupational therapists. But you had to go to a special school or attend a special unit for children with physical disabilities to get access to these things. The rest was teacher aid hours. The situation is different now.

*What we have tried to do is to say is: Yes, there are a certain group of children who will always need individually targeted resourcing, but most of the children can have their needs met if the school takes responsibility, and we will give the resourcing to the school, and the school then can take responsibility for special education needs just like it does for all of its children. And that's been the hardest thing really because in the past the school didn't have to make that decision. The Government made it whether you get 10 teacher aid hours or whether you get 7.*

Now the school has to do the decisions, particularly for children with more moderate difficulties. It has been a lot of work for schools in term of moving to that system.

### **Children falling between cracks**

Also one of the biggest issues has been that they have moved at a really fast pace. In a period of 3 years they have overturned the whole provision of special education. They have had 200 million dollars new money. *That's been one of the biggest allocations to any area of education.* The policy has been implemented on an incremental basis. As the parts have been implemented they've discovered that there has been a group of children who have fallen between the cracks. And then they have gone back to those children. That's been difficult.

*Because whilst we would say we've been responsive in listening to what you're saying. You're telling us there is a group of children missing out...and obviously the schools' response to us was: You should have got it right in the first place.*



## **Unequal partnership**

One of the issues confronting them at the moment in particular is that Tomorrow's Schools, which is a sort of ethos of school resourcing, is built on partnership between schools and community. We've worked on that premise, they say, but as the policy has unfolded they've found that in fact parents, being the community, have felt themselves be unequal partners in the partnership. The school takes the decisions. Although we talk about the IEP and shared decision-making parents have felt very much that they have been at the beak and call of the schools.

*Some schools have said no, you go down to the other school down the road, much better to meet your needs there. And the parents have felt unable to sort of persist and demanding that they go to that school even though that school has as much resourcing as the school down the road.*

The issue of parent and school partnership is an issue facing them. Parent empowerment is how they should put in structures and support to get that partnership on a more equal basis.

## **To get access to resources**

I ask them how does the school system respond to the very varied set of resourcing schemes? They think it's been difficult for them because there are a wide range of components and the three for the children with highest, high and very high need are seen of kind of like *the jewel in the crown*.

*And you could go to a school and the school says: Are you on the ongoing resourcing scheme? And they can say: Yes, and however, if they're not they feel they have no bargaining power.*

Sometimes parents may not have been aware that there are other initiatives, other than the ongoing resourcing scheme. So the getting of information has been difficult.. And also schools find it difficult because there are different holders of that resourcing, fundholders have some and specialist education services have some, schools have some. And so it has been a little complicated for them to understand and to use.

## **Government support**

When I ask if they expect the new labour Government<sup>18</sup> to support this strategy or to change they say that she think that the new Government is supportive of the framework. That they have signalled already through the manifesto and their early papers. They want to review that boundary line between the ongoing resourcing scheme for students with moderate needs. They think as with any system of resourcing when you draw a line there are always going to be children who fall below the margins. One has to be assured that these kids have their needs met. They think that that the Government may have received information from their constituency may be that the present line isn't right. They've signalled that they will review the resourcing schemes. Funding is weighed according to the socio-economic background of the schools but the line has changed and research shows that the present system doesn't take sufficiently care of these changes. They expect that the new Government will look at that.

## **Inclusion and parental choice**

I have observed inclusion to be an important matter in New Zealand and ask about its implementation.

They think the system of special education has the opportunity to support that. *But I think it is first of all a question of what is inclusion, and inclusion is respect for difference.*

*And also the Government has been quite clear that the policy is based on parental choice and so some parents will choose to have their children in special schools. And both of the previous ministers have been quite clear that they wanted schools to have the capacity to maintain units in schools because they would say that some parents would choose to have their children in units. And so certainly there is a tension...*

This tension is explained a little later: *Well, I was saying that really what is the definition of inclusion and then the tension between if we believe in total inclusion and parental choice. According to her parental choice is given priority. If the parents want to have a secluded setting they will have it. And to provide for that choice there*

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<sup>18</sup> After sever years of conservative Government Labour regained power in 1999

has to be a range of different settings. When I ask if parents may not be ill informed and that the segregated systems may convince them that their system is the best for the child they admit that this is a risk. But their really intervention in the main is pretty well old children in regular settings. So people working with those families are bound to take them to a range of settings, so they would take them to the facilities that are in the area. Some of the areas do not have special schools, whereas in Auckland for instance there are more special schools and more units.

But inclusion isn't only dependent upon the organisation of a system. They draw attention to the fact that if you use the work inclusion you have got some special schools who actually have classes on the site of regular primary schools and thus make a very strong effort to secure that those children are included. Similarly there are children included in a regular classroom who are excluded because they have the teacher aid with them on a particular program and they're actually quite isolated from what is going on in the rest of the class. And present figures show that there is actually a very small percentage of students located off site in special schools in New Zealand. And those children are likely to be our most needing in terms of health care, multi-disabled. As transition is closely related to transition I ask about the status of this concept in New Zealand. They answer: *In the policy guideline there is a talk of the transition.* That's it! It doesn't seem to me like this concept is well developed at the policy level in New Zealand.

### **Barriers to inclusion**

They feel that there are several barriers to inclusion. People's fear and lack of understanding which they manifest in terms of embarrassment or denial or feeling that they can't take these children. There are early childhood facilities that by having a child with a disability in their centre is likely to turn other families away. And they also have a perception of competition in schools. So if you become a magnet school for children with special education needs there is the perception that you will lose your top-flight children. They will then go to a more academic school because they get better exam results therefore. The policy that parents can choose whatever school they want need some modifications because it may create imbalance between schools. Schools are almost encouraged to take the group of students that are sort of

the average. Outside that board range the others are often pushed off or marginalised within the school.

### **Equity and parental choice**

They also raise the question of how the new government will balance a policy of equity - which has been given priority by previous labour governments with the policy of parental choice.

*I will be interested to see what is happening with the new Government because the previous Labour Government in the 1984 to 1990 period they had a very strong focus on equity, and that was one of their driving principles, and it will be interesting to see if the 5<sup>th</sup> Labour Government actually is going to hit back into that sort of equity issue or whether it's going to follow what has been in this decade of parental choice.*

### **SOMETHING THAT IS ALIVE AND VIBRANT**

At the end of the interview I ask what they hope to get out of the present research project on the special education policy they are running through Massey university.

Tony responds:

*I think what we really hope to find out from is just as we implement the special ed 2000 frame work, just how well it beats down and whether or not in particular we have to do some adjustments to it as we go through. Because I think what Sally and I have always been committed to right from the beginning – and it has got us into heaps of trouble – is altering. And we've been accused of U-turns and not getting things through, I'd much rather have something that is alive and vibrant...*

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Before the introduction of the Special Education 2000 policy schools didn't have to make decisions concerning children with special education needs. All this was channelled through special schools and units. This has created a certain main set in schools. The new policy assumes that a greater proportion of children with special education needs may be catered for in regular schools. It has been difficult for schools to come to terms with this new responsibility for decision-making. In spite of the rather great allocation of resources to special education it has been observed that the new system may not sufficiently target the actual needs. Some students fall

between the cracks. Not being on the Ongoing Resourcing scheme may seriously restrict options. To remediate this is an important policy matter. In spite of the intention of the policy many parents feel an unequal partnership as regards the schooling of their children. To empower parents seems to be an important issue. There is a feeling that there is Government support for eradicating these deficiencies of the system. New Zealand confesses to an inclusion policy but there seems to be a conflict between these policies as parents may very well opt for secluded settings. These may create imbalance between schools as regards the number of students with specific needs. Furthermore, parental choice may also make it difficult to attain equity - a principle that has been adhered strongly to in New Zealand. A tendency for schools and other relevant facilities to reject children with specific needs has also been observed.

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## GENERALISING PERSPECTIVES

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There is the feeling that the strong presence of the market ideology creates a particular mindset as regards education that may be characterised by the metaphor 'educational shopping'. The ideology of individual choice moves into the forefront. This happens at the cost of broader ideologies about the role of schooling in society. This orientation does not favour any critical analysis of the context where schooling is taking place and does not give a sufficient foundation for inclusion. Inclusion is a highly favoured goal, but there is a feeling that a strongly subject oriented curriculum and orientation towards outcome assessment may restrict the possibilities for inclusion. The ORS scheme is an important door opener and not being on this scheme seriously restricts available options. There seems to be a strong mindset for segregated options. The fact that these options may be favoured by the funding system may serve to maintain this mindset. At the level of ideology there is a push to get away from categorical systems, but there evidently is a fear that the way the ORS scheme is practised will actually serve to create new categories.

Decentralisation may be a controversial issue in relation to special education because there is no clear control mechanism to make certain that the needs of individuals with special needs are not abused. A vital problem in the local system is that there is no legal infrastructure that efficiently handles the problems of transition.

There is a feeling that that the way special education is defined in New Zealand has no basis in Māori culture and serves to favour assimilation instead of diversity. This strengthens Maoriness.

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## WHAT PARENTS TOLD

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### WE HAVE A SLIGHTLY BROADER VISION OF THE GOALS

Parents and schools look differently at things. Garth who has a boy who is a high need child according to the ORS funding scheme. He says there are many good things at the school. But there is also the tension between the functioning school system and its overriding goals and the ability of the school to meet the special needs child. Later on he explains this when he says that he thinks the school genuinely has the long range goal of achieving literacy for his child at some measure, and mathematical literacy and social literacy which of course are their long range goals as well.

*The major problem for us as parents I think, well, the hope for our son, you know, is social integration and self support. That's where we express fears, you know, will he be able to look after himself later on in life.*

Elva, who has seen her daughter with Down's syndrome passing through the school system, expresses the same feeling when I ask her what in her opinion should be the main goal for handicapped children.

*Well, I think the main goal should be to make these children part of the school system. You know, I said this to one of the staff at the school here where I have a little job*

Adrian expresses this feeling of having a child who is treated differently than other children by the school system.

*We feel that all the time every year, every time we have a meeting is a battle trying to get appropriate services, appropriate equipment. We feel that we always have to justify our request for William or justify William's needs.*

Colleen who has a son of nineteen who has a Down's syndrome puts it more harshly:

*The schools are still very hierarchical. They are very directive; they are still very authoritarian. And the rules trickle down, and some of the schools say: how dare you come along here and knock on my door with a piece of legislation in your hand and say, "I have a right to be here". Go away or I will make your life very difficult".*

But:

*Travers cannot read or write, so most people would say well; he cannot be in my classroom. I think that is rubbish because he can talk; he can express his feelings. He can draw, he can sit beside you, he can cut out things, he can add things to a discussion. I just fail to see why he cannot adept things, that he can learn alongside.*

Adrian has a son with a brain condition. He feels that the school is trying hard but it is inhibited by the by the funding they get from elsewhere. He describes the situation in this way:

*We feel that all the time every year, every time we have a meeting is a battle trying to get appropriate services, appropriate equipment. We feel that we always have to justify our request for William or justify William's needs. I have 3 - 4 thick files about 10 cm thick of paperwork about William, and he is aged 8. I don't have any for my other children. Why is there so much paperwork and so much battle for William?*

These parents often feel that schools marginalise their children and do not serve them well. This doesn't fit very well with the New Zealand policy of parental choice.

Colleen answers my question about this:

*It's a paper choice. It is not real. On paper they say. You have a choice, but the reality is this. Under the 1991 educational act where they say that schools could create their own zones. We don't have a choice. I don't have a choice of who my fundholder is. I mean, here I am on the SES board and I cannot even choose the SES to be my own fundholder. I think that is absurd. Where is my choice of what school my son goes to?*

Colleen has even a vast experience as an advocate for other parents and she actually sees partnership and parental choice as paper words. When ask I say isn't a Board of Trustee a democratic setting that could create a new situation for parents, Colleen answers that she doesn't think the Board of Trustees is informed. Are they looking at her child because the professionals have said so or is it out of pity and charity, she asks. Are they really looking at the rights model? She thinks they are looking at the other three: the charity and the professional model or the medical



model. She doesn't think they are looking at the rights model. In her opinion that is the weakest point about special education. So much power has been given to people who are not necessarily informed.

## **SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND SELF SUPPORT**

There is a strong mutual feeling among these parents that the school doesn't take the goals they have for their children, or the knowledge they have about them, sufficiently into account. For Garth the goal for his boy is social integration and self-support. For Elva it is to make these children a part of the school system. Adrian grasps the parent situation very well when he says:

*My long-range goals alter from year to year. My initial long-range goal when he was borne was to try for him to limit his handicap as much as possible and to lead a relatively normal life. As his handicap has become more apparent as he got older you alter your long-term goals. My goal at this stage is to try and make William as highly independent as possible, to increase his communication skills and increase his independence as great as possible. Where my long-term goal will be in 5 years time I cannot say because his development is constant on go and he constantly improves and therefore my goals have to alter accordingly.*

Elva's comment when she tells about Karen coming to a special school is indicative of parents' goals for their special needs children: *Well, I suppose it was good to have her accepted and come among those of her own kind.* These feelings of having children who are not accepted is a strong feeling in most parents I have interviewed. But, like in Karen's case there are pockets in the system that is different. It doesn't seem to be dependent upon organization. Locked doors both in regular and special school may meet parents. Colleen says:

*The schools are still very hierarchical. They are very directive; they are still very authoritarian. And the rules trickle down, and some of the schools say: how dare you come along here and knock on my door with a piece of legislation in your hand and say, "I have a right to be here". Go away or I will make your life very difficult".*

Even special schooling may be perverted. Elva remembers a gatekeeper who assessed handicapped children for special school. *They had to be of a certain standard before he would let them into the special classes.*

Colleen may capture the general feeling of parents when she exclaims *I don't think we have a philosophy of inclusion in this country, we have not got around to how we think of people with disability.* Later on she continues:

*But in there it said if we're going to have inclusion – or mainstreaming as they called it there we have to have a change in attitude, and if we do not have the change in attitude, that's number one, we've got to have the hearts and minds of the teachers, and if we don't do that then everything else is lost.*

The last twelve years they've been battling for the hearts and minds of teachers, she says. The situation is not at all bleak. Some teachers are just amazing, she says. Garth, too, judge the school situation positively in general. The difference has to do with the vision of schooling.

*So, yes, I think the school is doing the best it can and of course we have a huge role there I believe in reaching those goals as well. So I don't think there is any conflict between us and the school...except, we have a slightly broader vision of the goals within the area of social integration, you know, so for us it has perhaps even been more important what's going on outside the classroom.*

### **GOD BLESSED THEM WHO HAD AN ORS FUNDING.**

The ORS funding scheme is the door opener. The parents sometimes rely on the school, Garth says. Of course the school has other resources for the special needs children who have none ORS funding, but it is a very difficult situation for parents. We've been really fortunate of having someone with Sunil all the way through from the person in the kindergarten. His son has been assessed as having high needs under the ORS funding system and he believes it's just historical circumstances that dictates.

*Sunil was fortunate I think because he got the 2 episodes and it was demonstrated brain damage. Other children who have not had those*

*episodes... you know, their parents have it tougher to get those things.. There is one at the kindergarten who they say is at a lower stage than Sunil but his parents have trouble getting this funding because he has not had these episodes!*

Garth wonders about decision making. They have friends who have a special needs child and in the same school and their special needs child behaviorally was more difficult than his son.

*..., and their child never had an incident that Sunil had, and so they didn't get ORS funding, but this child was constantly being sent home with sort of things like "I think he is tired"...*

This is also Elva's experience of the funding system when she tells me about a boy she knows.

*But anyway he was okayed to get into school because he was regarded as – it was medical misadventure and the accident compensation people paid quite liberally for him to have support at the school.*

The she adds *So, many may think "My son has just as much problems so why does not he get as much help"*. But she has been told that the school was rather happy to have the child because there was more funding coming to them. There is, however, a double bind here. Frequently schools feel there is not at all enough for a one to one time for a child and yet there is also resentment if they do have too much support because *"that child is not going to get anywhere so why should it have so much support"*

Colleen, too, is critical to the way schools target needs when she talks about her son.

*He cannot read or write. He has got tunnel vision. He can't cross the road safely. He can walk and he can talk, and he is not classified as very high, just high. I find that extraordinary in many ways, so he does not get the highest funding.*

Adrian feels that the school really tries hard. But the school is inhibited by the funding they get from elsewhere. This creates a lot of paper work.

*I have 3 - 4 thick files about 10 cm thick of paperwork about William, and he is aged 8. I don't have any for my other children. Why is there so much paperwork and so much battle for William?*

Discussing the verification process Colleen comments:

*No; they are the verifiers. They verify the papers, it is all done on paper. The parents only have to be for half an hour in the classroom to see what it is like, but it is all done on paper. Parents find this absolutely perplexing.*

Whether you get ORS funding or not, she says, is dependent on a person filling out a bit of paper. *If they're very good at it they may get it, now where is the justice in that?*

Adrian links funding to the inclusion policy. He thinks the problem is getting enough funding for his son to have the teacher aid, to allow him to be in mainstream in a normal classroom with these children who get on with him whom he interacts with and who have become his friends. *And that is where our biggest problem now lies, in retaining the funding to allow him to really be integrated fully into a mainstream system.* The integration policy, he says, requires a high degree of funding. According to him New Zealand does to attempt to do very well within the present economic limitations. But there is a fundamental problem with this need based funding scheme.

*On a general aspect that is outside schooling the support for the other things you need, such as wheelchairs, shoes and things we find that it is very hard to get funding, because everything has to be justified on a needs basis.*

Funding that school gets is very little and it is not going to cover the kid's needs, Colleen says.

*So what happens, you go out on a fund raise or to a pub charities so there are two poker machines and a pub that are now funding a kid in school. I think that is obscene. The schools do this out of desperation. They say they are very happy to use this. This is the worst form of charity, that a child with special needs have people putting money in a slot machine so that they can have a teacher aid.*

## **“I THINK HE IS TIRED”...**

How are schools dealing with the special needs children? Garth says *it is an interesting thing with the schools and how they deal with special needs children*. He tells about his son being suspended from school because he couldn't manage turn taking in a play situation and behaved inappropriately. He also reports having friends who have a special needs child and in the same school. Their special needs child behaviourally was more difficult than his son and was constantly being sent home with sort of things like "I think he is tired".

## **"SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN'S NEEDS ARE PUT SECOND TO THE ORGANISING OF THE SCHOOL."**

To get a long term teacher aid is quite difficult to some degree. Garth tells about a teacher aid the school put in place for his son. She was someone who actually works preparing lunches at the school. This person who was quite a good person but there is an overlap between her lunchroom duties and her duties with his son. In the afternoon she was devoted to him on an educational level, but in the morning he would often be with her helping her with preparing the lunch. Garth says he has a very broad view on what education is, and this was also a temporary arrangement, or meant to be temporary. For a while that was OK for him to have his son working with her. *But it also again reflects the situation that special needs children's needs are put second to the organising of the school*. He feels that one should have discussed the activities and said "Look, we believe it is involved with a lot of social activities, get the orders ask questions." Garth tells about some of his kindergarten experiences and says that they considered that kids should be toilet trained prior to their coming to the kindergarten. So he used to carry a little pager with him to his work and dashed off when they called.

The school often limits its education to class hours. Adrian is frustrated by the school leaving his son in his wheelchair at breaks for instance. That leaves him strapped in his chair. And he asks you wouldn't shut all the other children in the classroom and say they have to stay there for the break, so why does the attitude change because he is in a wheelchair? He is still shut in an environment he cannot escape from for

the convenience of other people because they cannot provide the necessary help. So *this is a frustration we constantly have*. This school behaviour surely doesn't help his son's social integration. These reactions from the school are also reported by Garth. His concern is the social integration. They were aware of the problems in the playground, his lunch not being eaten for instance at times and the unhappiness one felt at times as when they picked him up from school. Therefore they strongly requested that consideration being made to helping his son at the outside the classroom situation, the playground situation. But, there is a tremendous difference between schools and what can be offered. Unless the school is willing to make an effort and then try putting a special needs child in that school is a waste of time, Adrian says. Elva has many years of school experiences with her daughter. She tells that the teachers said that they were not allowed to take handicapped children and that she had to find some other way of educating her. When her daughter was about six the school nurse came and said she had arranged for her daughter to go to the kindergarten. But the day before she was to start she came to the door and she said: "I'm sorry but your daughter cannot go to that kindergarten because the director of the kindergarten does not want to have any of the assistants to work with handicapped children." Things may not have changed too much. Elva has a little job at school. She has a friend who has a girl with Down's syndrome and asked the resource teacher if she knew inclusion was working. She said "no" they are not really included. If the resource teacher comes in a classroom the ordinary teacher will just set them up in the back of the class." This was just a little school. Elva thinks that acceptance by the teacher is most important.

### **"WHERE PEOPLE WOULD TRAVEL LONG MILES"**

Lack of efforts to handle the problems parents feel may be felt at the systems level. Colleen points this out when she describes what she calls "magnet schools". Suddenly we had a situation where parents expected their children to go to schools but there was resistance from schools saying they did not have resources. What unfortunately happens then is that parents quickly find out which are the best schools and the number of children with special needs grows.

*There is no longer a situation where there are 5 children in this community with special needs from age 5 to 12. Suddenly you get 10 kids age 5 going to the same school. Many schools were rather happy because it meant that if all children were going to school A school B didn't have to have any at all. I worked at a school at that time where people would travel long miles to have their children there because they felt that here their child would get the education it was worth.*

The parent's reports even indicate that the situation in regular schools also may make special schools a more viable alternative for parents. *I know that in Auckland special schools are flourishing. It is big business that's what is happening.* Colleen tells me. Schools can be fundholders. So they can hold the fund for other people whether they are regular schools or not. They very often have the high need children so they are getting a huge amount of money.

*So they say to parents: "Come here, we have all these wonderful things that we can offer you. Why would you want to go to that school down the road, the local primary school, because they cannot offer the therapist that we have got. They can offer the specialist, they can offer the wonderful programs." It takes a very strong parent to fight that fight.*

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## GENERALISING PERSPECTIVES

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They are only four but together they have many years of experience with the school system. What do they tell me? First of all they report a gap between what they perceive to be the need of their children and the ability of schools to cater for those needs. They all appreciate much of what the school is doing but they have a broader vision of their children's needs and feel that the school doesn't sufficiently cater for those broader social needs. These needs do not seem to be clearly located on the day-to-day agenda of the school. The result is that they feel their children marginalised in the school setting and their social integration is threatened. They often feel that the parent opinion is not coming through and question the policy of parental choice. One of them even contends that the establishment of the Board of Trustees has not increased the opportunity for their choice. To get access to ORS funding is perceived as a critical door opener to special education of the parents. But they feel resources are scarce and often wrongly targeted. Some are very critical about what they have to go through to get access to the resources. Stressful contacts with the regular school system and the way funds are held may enhance their choice of segregated school settings for their children. This definitely doesn't favour the principle of inclusion.



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## WHAT TEACHERS TOLD

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### RICHARD

#### **"But in the main our philosophy is inclusiveness"**

Richard has been a principal for a school with 400 children. He has been a principal now for 25 years and he has a broad experience from education. Richard has a particular interest in the field of special education and at the school they have a number of children who have special needs. They have appointed a teacher who is also talented and have skills in that particular field. She is a manager of the special education.

*Because we have a number of children with special needs we have appointed a number of teacher aides who work with those children so we're resourcing these with a number of staffing as well. We've tried to develop our school building so that we can cater for withdraw groups as well as one-to-one instruction. But in the main our philosophy is inclusiveness so we try and work with children with special needs within their own peer group within the classroom setting, by special education programs called IEP, specifically targeted to meet their individual needs.*

They involve the parents at the stage of drawing up these plans and they designate who is going to be responsible for the particular outcomes that they are trying to target. *Sometimes the parents are responsible, sometimes the teacher aides and sometimes the teacher in the classroom, he says.*

He has also been involved in the appointment of Resource Teachers of Learning Behaviour and his school happens to be the base school for two of those teachers who also service at other schools. Their particular job is to go out into the field and to work with children who are identified in the school setting as having particular behaviour concerns and where the school is looking for specific intervention<sup>19</sup>. Richard is impressed with the results they've had from these two specialist teachers, and the comments from the other schools have been likewise.

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<sup>19</sup> According to information from Andrew - another interviewee - 750 teachers in New Zealand have been trained to do this

**"...so the Government can see..."**

Richard has to report back to the 6 other schools what they are currently doing and what the desirable outcomes are and whether they've reached those targets or not. And annually he has to report to the Government that they can set benchmarks that they have to work towards achieving and so the Government can see whether the funding for these people is effective nationwide. But, of course, there are other intentions with the assessments. Karyn tells me that special assessment and reporting are enormously complex.

*You don't want to knock the kids all the time by comparing them to the national standards for their age group. But at the same time the parents need to get a realistic picture of exactly where they are in relation to other kids. I think there is a real tension there. It is nice to be positive and say: "Your son can now write a paragraph," but I think you have to be rational and tell them that other kids are writing books. Facts of life, but not knocking them all the time. One must celebrate their achievement and celebrate their progress but it is also necessary to be realistic*

**"...the biggest issue"**

Richard thinks the biggest issue that currently face them is that the type of children who are entering our school sector have problems that seem to be wide and deeper in terms of the severity. They have autistic children, Down's syndrome children, children who have disciplinary problems, globally delayed children, academically globally delayed. They have emotionally disturbed children, and all of these children schools now cannot turn away because there is no other place for them to go. That has a huge impact on the school.

*In order to address that I think it's all about resourcing. It's all about having specialist knowledge, well researched knowledge so that you know you're building your practices on research findings, that you have a very reflective environment whereby people can challenge the current thinking if we can do things differently.*

One of the biggest challenges he has faced is trying to develop a school culture that says we will have an inclusive model and that says that it's OK to challenge hierarchy

and the decisions that have been made. But more than that it's most important that when people see a problem they also try to present a couple of solutions to that problem.

So, he says, we have a very solution orientated environment and I expect that if a staff member has a problem and raises that problem with me I expect them to have at least one solution to the problem because no single person has the only answer to a problem.

**"...wondering why is the child there..."**

To have these special needs children in your school our community can also be very hard on schools these days, wondering why the child is there. The certain problem that exists because children are inside the school system and those problems may well impact in a negative way on your own child, of a so-called normal child in the school so parents are also equally challenging the school. Therefore, Richard thinks it's really important that the message of inclusiveness goes out in the community so parents start to understand what the school is going to do about things. How are they going to tackle these issues and how can parents take a part of responsibility as well? *So to me that is the biggest issue facing education at present* Richard says. He feels that the staff's appointment procedures are very important in the process of getting a wider approach to schooling.

*I've been on appointment's committee to appoint all but two of the staff, so that put me in a prime position to select staff that were appropriate to what we are trying to achieve here. So they have a vested interest in the philosophy of the school.*

**"...resourcing is a bottomless pulp..."**

When I ask if the present resourcing model realises the ambitions to take care of a broad variety of children he answers that he doesn't think they are resourced well in that area at all. In terms of monitory resourcing we are probably resourced at about 80 % of the value. The other side of resourcing is to advise special services that can

intervene from aside the school setting, that can come in and model different ways of doing things.

*However, you can take the view that the parameters are set and you operate with those parameters and if you do that then I think you're setting yourself up to fail. Or you can take the view that you need to look outside the square and say, yes, these are the parameters but we can push those parameters out by showing other initiatives and by doing things differently. So we are all the time searching for innovative practices, looking for different ways of funding programs, looking for corporate sponsorship, all sorts of enterprises that are really important to make things happen.*

**"...the right to have certain expectations..."**

I ask Richard what he thinks is the central mission of his school. In terms of special education their mission is to be fully inclusive, he says. To be fully inclusive to them is a model whereby you have a strong partnership with the family of any child who has special needs. But the school has a right to have certain expectations of the family as the family has the right to have certain expectations of the school.

*And I think that currently the right seems to be more in favor of the families where they believe they've got rights to require the school to meet all sorts of needs. But with their rights they often do not accept their responsibilities. And I would like to think that within the next couple of years we can establish more of a balance here where parents also understand how schools function, what's reasonable and what's not reasonable, and that the school has the right to expect certain things from families with children with special needs. I think only when you can establish that balance you can develop a true partnership.*

He tells me of the nine very special needs cases they would have developed a very good relationship and partnership with probably six of those families. And the children of those families who have developed a true relationship and partnership with others are those who have benefited the most.

**"... but the threshold is too low..."**

Richard feels that the ORS scheme definitely facilitates positive processes, but the threshold is too low. The threshold, he says, was going to be 3% of the special needs population in the country would receive ongoing resources, but the threshold has

been dropped to 1%. They we have children at his school who would be on an ongoing resourcing scheme but who aren't accepted into the scheme. These children have to be resourced by other grants that are too small to give sufficient flexibility.

*So I think every child who is lucky enough to be on an ongoing resourcing scheme as long as the school is effective utilizing that scheme certainly it is to the child's benefit. But so do the other children at the school because that child has been recognized as having that level special need has been well catered for, so therefore they are not problematic within the school setting.*

### **Schools are about staff...**

I asked Richard what he thinks was the most important thing he had done in order to implement what he perceives as the mission of the school. The first thing, he says, has been to actually look at the policy and procedure and have written guidelines about what they were trying to achieve, and to ensure that those statements were well read and well understood by all the teaching and support staff. Secondly, it was to create budgets so that we knew where our money was coming from and how that money would be dispersed to meet their needs. Because a lot of schools haven't gone down that path one can't identify clearly enough how money is being utilized to meet the needs of the individual and collective groups. The next thing he mentions is staffing. *I think the next thing was the staffing issue because I actually believe that schools are about staff and not about children*, he says. They have appointed special needs manager who takes on real responsibility and very good teacher aides whom they have trained to meet the needs of the children. The next level, he says, is to locate what you're actually doing in terms of your programming so that the program that you've designed are specified to meet the needs of the children you are working with. To monitor progress over time and reporting back is a very important aspect of the job. He also underscores the necessity of involving the parents in their child's education in order to form partnerships. *I think that's really important and they feel that they are stakeholders*, he says.

### **"...our school grounds will be a battlefield..."**

The biggest concern Richard holds about the future is the concern over what's happening in general society, the amount of violence among younger and older adults. Things like home invasions like road rage, alcoholism, and drug taking. He

believes values in society are very hard for children to identify with positive values and how can they be modified into these values.

*School used to reflect society – or school was expected to reflect society. Schools now – and I'm talking particularly about New Zealand – are now expected to lead society because we model society, our school grounds will be a battlefield, daily they'll be a battlefield, and that really concerns me as a principal.*

He feels that the biggest challenge for them going into a new millennium is to ensure that the schools stay a safe haven as much as they are able to make them a safe haven. But there are value conflicts.

*Well, we can hopefully present what would be commonly held values by the majority in society. I think it's important that we keep presenting those for children, and not only present them but also expecting that they utilize them within the school setting. But the problem for children is when they go home or go out in society they see different things, and they feel differences, and maybe in their own home they experience a huge difference from what we are trying to present as a culture to what is happening at their home setting. So I think that is going to be our biggest challenge.*

Commenting on the special needs children he adds:

*Now, when you place special needs children inside that as well I think that provides another challenge. Because if a teacher is fronting these other issues and they also have special needs children in their class, even if those children are resourced, I just think the job is challenging enough when things are right. So you get this in addition.*

The number of children who bring baggage to school every day has increased. The numbers who have an inherent anger problem have increased. The lifting of that anger from being in-compliant one minute to being totally non-compliant the next, and the extent and level that it presents itself at, very rapidly that has increased.

He exemplifies.

*If I go back 10 years children would have the odd anger problem, but you could actually talk them through it, you could talk them down. A child who was pushed in the playground would jump up and simply yell at the other child and then get on with the game. Often these days when a child is pushed in the playground would jump up and hit the other child.*

Karyn expresses the same feeling when she says to me:

*...but I think that at times there is a feeling of a lot of energy, a lot of time, a lot of money is going to children who very often have major behavioural problems as well as learning problems and that some of the energy should go into keeping academic standards high and these kinds of things.*

I ask her, too, about future development as regards special needs.

*I think we're going to have a reasonably long period where the same will happen as has happened in the health system which means that people with special needs are mainstreamed which means to dump them to mainstream culture without any support unless schools do what ours has tried to do and that is to find the support within their own resources. I think it is going to be pretty negative and pretty horrible because people who are really trying to do something are not supported in terms of funding. And may be then the pendulum will swing back and we will start saying no to special classes again.*

She can't see any vision or real understanding coming from politics. There are people who say, she says, "well, these people are different behaviourally, throw them out."

Then she adds:

*But there are burgling, criminality, and great costs for society. I think that we, as a society, in New Zealand have lost the last 20 30 years the sense of actually having a social responsibility. It is the market forces, and the individual stuff that has come through in the political system as we see it.*

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Richard thinks that their biggest challenge is to develop an inclusive school. To achieve this goal may become difficult for several reasons. He refers to a significant underfunding of this enterprise. An increasing number of children with deeper functional problems than before makes the funding problem greater than before and threatens the principle of mainstreaming. He also observes some negative developments of the New Zealand society, which make it more difficult to maintain positive school norms. This development he thinks may also have an impact on the education of children with specific educational needs.

The model of intervention implicit in the interview is of interest to me. The interview indicates that his model of intervention has primarily an individual orientation. The main goal is to support students with specific needs with the help of teacher aides and Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour. There was no clear indication from the interview of structural and value barriers to inclusion. Richard's approach is pragmatic. He refers to guidelines, resources and staff as the basic conditions for implementing inclusion.

## KARYN

Karyn is assistant principal at Melville High School. She is responsible for student welfare and for the special programs. She sees her job as the person in the school who tries to find the appropriate place and the appropriate support for the students. *I try to put them in the right curriculum area*, she says. Karyn has a broad educational and practical background for her work. She has studied French and sociology, been a social worker and held leadership positions in schools. When I interviewed her she had been 4 years in her present position. There are just over 1000 students in the school at the moment and 55 – 60 members of staff. Predominant background is pakeha, probably about 20% Maori and about 12% various Asian groups.

Karyn tells me that that her school takes every applicant. They do not have what she calls a Roman scheme that means that a school can choose what students they take in and which they do not. The school has a great turnover. The last figures show a 50% turnover. This means that at any particular moment of the year half of the students that were there half a year before aren't there any longer. This has great



implications for establishing the school climate and for establishing routines. Karyn thinks the student population is very transient. Most of the students that leave mostly go to other family members. But, they also have one student who received one of the three medals in maths competition in Australia. *So it is a huge range, a local spike at the top there and a heavy bottom*, she says. Then I ask her about how they cater for students who do not easily adapt to the common high school pattern? How is it organised here?

### **...diversity within an inclusive ENVIRONMENT...**

She shows me an illustration and says *what we have got here is with a visual representation of how we see our school*. Then she adds *or rather how I see our school, I'm not sure whether everybody will share it but this is my concept*. Her digression indicates that she isn't sure that all in school share her view.

She uses this fan metaphor to describe the programs in the school and to indicated that all these programs are treated equally.

They have some totally integrated programs for their students who have behavioural, security or truancy type of problems, the hearing-impaired unit, partly integrated programs with the students who have learning difficulties and a group with transition to work. One experience unit for the children who had a so-called Section 9 agreement.

*The image of the fan is an important one because rather than having the traditional image of a New York sky scraper image we say that this bit here is the mainstream, every program is equally important and every program is equally valid and there is inclusiveness.*

Then she adds:

*Now, these little bits of tape that you can see going across. These are designed to represent the hold of the blades of the fan together, such things as the curriculum objectors, pastoral care, common philosophies..*

What they're looking at is diversity within an inclusive environment. So they're saying that each student has to find a program that suits them and these programs need to be all held together by the fans that hold schools together. *There has been a lot of*

*debates of what the bits that hold them together are, Karyn says. When I ask if she means philosophy she says yes, and the core values. She is not particularly fond of talking about special needs students and she doesn't like the word "involves".*

*I'd rather say that each student deserves to have a program that meets their needs but it is a help to them in terms of curriculum that is in there, the staff, the resources. That is very much our vision, I certainly wouldn't say that we're there.*

### **...we have become what we call a magnet school...**

Karyn thinks they have about 15 kids of the 1000 kids in the school with ORS funding. But they have a huge number of students who needs special programs.

*What has happened to us is that we have become what we call a magnet school because we have actually set up programs for our students with special needs and not just dumped them in the mainstream.*

Karyn tells that the people of the Ministry of Education are saying to people who have students who do not quite fit the old mainstream pattern that they should go to Melville because they've got good programs. So they are actually attracting special needs students who aren't recognised as special needs in terms of funding but who certainly have extra needs. They don't get extra money for them. *And there is a little bit of bright flights from here anyway because people perceive the schools that choose their students are superior, Karyn says. She thinks that the danger for them is that the better job they do on the special needs and the more of those students that they attract the more of the brighter kids they will lose.*

*What we do is very heavy on staffing. We are running programs with 1 to 9, i.e. 1 teacher to nine kids, and that has to come from our general staffing. So we do that obviously at a cost.*

### **...keeping academic standards high..**

When I ask Karyn what kind of problems she meets when implementing her perspective in this school here she answers *I suppose teachers are not keen to be putting their energy on the bottom... I don't like that term, on the special needs program. A lot of the teachers have been there for quite a long time. They are very*

good teachers, she says, they are trained with a view to teach regular students and so it is not so that they have chosen to come to teach those programs. There are people who have come there because of those programs and they are in those programs and do a really good job. Other people are doing a really good job in other programs.

*But I think that at times there is a feeling of a lot of energy, a lot of time, a lot of money is going to children who very often have major behavioural problems as well as learning problems. And that some of the energy should go into keeping academic standards high and these kinds of things.*

### **The fan as a Venetian blind**

Wanting to know a little bit more about the degree of integration between groups I ask if there are different groups of teachers? In some cases, she tells me, they do the totally integrated programs as the new programme they brought in this year for kids with behavioural problems. They have a 9 a 10 and 11 years of that and teachers are with that class all day. It is like a primary class for English, maths, social studies and it is an integrated program so the students go out for only two of the six lessons every day where they go to art or cooking or something. The teachers also specially choose the partially integrated programme because they integrate the curriculum across maths and science so there is one teacher with both of those. This cuts down the number of changes and strengthens the relationship that the adult has with this group. So there are special teachers at the Campbell centre, which is the most experienced unit within the specialist area. Later on in the interview I learned that this was the location of the ORS funded students. *Some people's programs emphasise one blade of the fan more than the other*, she comments.

When I ask her if the fan couldn't be arranged as a social hierarchy, she responds *I would never put the fan as a Venetian blind*. But, she isn't quite sure about the fan.

*I think I should say first that I am not sure the fan is in other people's mind. That is something that Grace and I have because we're looking to get the image out there. I think it is more historic probably. The people who have been here for a long time and who are trained and interested in skills in academic classes, they are working there so – and the people who have come in to do special programs specifically do that, and they are people who have credibility in the main school environment, they have taught 6<sup>th</sup> form science courses, 3 of them are quite young teachers. Some primary*

*training has been important because they need to know how to work with kids in an integrated way, different skills for group work. So I think that people probably work in the areas they want to work in.*

### **An area of change**

When I ask Karyn about the participation of students with learning disabilities in regular teaching she says that this is an area of considerable change. She finds that question really hard to answer because it is dependent on how you would define learning disability - the students that are resourced as having a disability, the hearing impaired students who are in the mainstream. The ones, who have got physical, emotional and intellectual disabilities are in the regular stream. It varies from not at all for one or two through to most of the time for some of the others. From the second year here they are placed in work experience and they all work for one day a week. The whole area that has had quite a considerable change, she says. They are trying to clarify what the programs are, what resourcing they need, which students they are most suitable for. They are looking for a big revue of that area at the moment and say: what do the programs have in common, and how are they separate. How do we distinguish one from the other.

*When a student comes with learning need how do we decide where to put them? The Campbell is the one at the moment, but it is a rough count of the thumb with the kids that have got the ORS-funding. They generally start off from the Campbell centre and we will see how they go from there.*

### **They are certainly concerned about academic standards**

They have the people from the Youth Horizon Trust, which is the social welfare. They looked at the 9 kids in the totally integrated program and they said that the 9 there were on the par with a school in Auckland where there was a 1 to 3 ratio of staff to students. *And I certainly think there is a feeling among the staff that maybe we should leave these children and put our efforts into work with children you can make a difference to,* Karyn comments. Parents may also share such views. A significant group in the community can go off to other schools. These people will be least interested in the things that we are doing, Karyn says. They are certainly concerned about academic standards. People worry about how much bursary we get and how

much energy is going into that, and I think that is a fair comment, Karyn says. The school has to be strengthened. At the beginning of this year they made an appointment for a person to be the talent co-ordinator.

*What we wanted to do with that was to have that person picking out students with particular talents whether it was making models or singing or what mediation skill, whatever it was, and promoting and publicising and emphasising because we wanted people to see that the emphasis on special needs was at the top end as well as on the bottom end, if you like.*

### **You don't want to knock the kids all the time....**

I ask about the possible pressure – or the strain – coming from the New Zealand curriculum framework and if everything is going to be compared with the framework.

*You don't want to knock the kids all the time by comparing them to the national standards for their age group,* Karyn says. But at the same time the parents need to get a realistic picture of exactly where they are in relation to other kids.

*I think there is a real tension there. It is nice to be positive and say: "Your son can now write a paragraph," but I think you have to be rational and tell them that other kids are writing books. Facts of life, but not knocking them all the time. One must celebrate their achievement and celebrate their progress but it is also necessary to be realistic*

When I ask if they have a program of change at the school Karyn *as a school we are not strong on strategic planning.* When I ask her if she feels there is a common set of values on which changes may be based she says *No, I couldn't make the statement as yet.* When I ask her about this lack of agreement, she says:

*I think – I'm trying to be tactful! I went to an ministry conference recently about innovations for effective schooling, and they talked all the time about leadership from the top and our institutions can only be healthy, can only change if the directions are coming from the top and..*

To my comment about a top-down model she responds:

*Yes, and I do think there is another model which is the one I've been working with for four years. It is kind of like the rotten apple infecting the barrel except that it isn't rotten it is good. You know, you can catch good things.*

Then she adds:

*What I've seen happen is that there are some people in school – probably for historic reasons -who have carved out a little area of their own and they are doing an incredibly good job at it. Looking at the transition work program is one. All sorts of programs, there is a whole lot I could name where people have done a really good job. And I think my vision of the fan is to try to bring all that together and support it. For a while I thought I could do that. It is actually a lot more difficult than I thought. I should tell you that I have just resigned. I'm very, very tired of swimming against the tide.*

In her opinion long-term planning does not seem to exist. People have some ideas in their heads about what sort of school they want but in terms of getting it out from there and into planning is very difficult. People are worn out day by day getting through.

*And you know there is a lot of pressure in the schools from the Ministry and everybody else, now you're going to do this and now you're going to do that. And we've really tried the fan and all of these programs and tried to be positive about it and turn it into something good. And I think that is really going to happen, but you know, it is really tiring. It is hard if you don't have everybody on board. The people's attention is really scattered I guess.*

### **Meeting the kids' needs and trying to move them on.**

Karyn thinks that every student has the right to have a program that means something to him, and which is going to take him or her somewhere. She is very unhappy about the alternative programs that just keeps kids busy.

*They were once described as baking scones in the middle of the fjord, and I've always thought of them like "We'll put you in a classroom way over*

*there and keep you busy but you're not going to end up with a qualification, you will never be ending up in mainstream society, you are forever marginalised.*

She wants the programs to be adapted so that they are working and enjoyable, but not marginalised.

*We must stop looking at people as normal or not normal, and say there is a whole range of what's normal and what's special and let people be where they are in a positive sense.*

In the course of the interview it becomes clear that Karyn is not impressed by the support of educational reforms. You know, she says, the whole special ed. 2000 was put up as a pilot program. It was never evaluated, it was just spread around the country.

*So the political decisions are driving educational change really, really fast because there is no long-term planning and politics either. People do change really quickly without stopping and evaluating along the way. There was a time when if there was a change they piloted it. They researched it, evaluated it and with changes they implemented it.*

### **...to dump them to mainstream culture...**

At the end of the interview I ask Karyn what she thinks about the future for students with special need.

*I think we're going to have a reasonably long period where the same will happen as has happened in the health system which means that people with special needs are mainstreamed which means to dump them to mainstream culture without any support unless schools do what ours has tried to do and that is to find the support within their own resources. I think it is going to be pretty negative and pretty horrible because people who are really trying to do something are not supported in terms of funding. And may be then the pendulum will swing back and we will start saying no to special classes again. I can't see any vision or real understanding coming from politics.*

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Karyn's constructive ambition is to create room at the school for diversity within an inclusive model. This ambition is signified by the metaphor of a fan that indicates that all school programs being equal. The interview clearly indicates that there are barriers to the adoption of such an idea. The values of teachers and parents as well as professional preferences of teachers may often be more congruent with a school organisation that is best characterised as a venetian blind.

Basically, the cascade model seems the best for describing this school. This model organises schooling according to the individual backgrounds of the students. At the practical level the fan also signifies differences between students and teachers. As these differences are related to values and preferences of teachers and parents it becomes very difficult to establish equality between programs. It seems to me that a redefinition of diversity and inclusion is needed in order to create a school organisation in accordance with Karyn's ambitions.

## JILL

Jill is a principal of a special school. She has a very varied professional experience as regards age levels and settings. She has worked both at home and abroad. *I came into teaching an unusual way*, she comments when she describes her background. Some statements from the interview may say something about her general view about education and special education.

### **Difference as an opportunity of challenge...**

*It is my belief that the children with the greatest special learning needs require the best teachers. There has been a misconception about that if you work in special education you haven't quite made the grade, but I believe it is the opposite.*

Her view on special education is well expressed in another statement from, the interview.

*To me the most essential to do was to look very carefully at the child and to respond to whatever their need was. So whatever you did was against*



*the child's needs or strength or uniqueness rather than any particular curriculum.*

Later on:

*I came in and the previous principal was the then principal at the school and it was then that I valued the opportunity of meeting that person and discussing the things that really took my attention about these children like "why do they do things differently, what are their learning styles, what is the best way to teach them, how selective do you have to be in the presentation of information, how do you become a significant person to the special needs learner to make effective learning".*

During this time Jill went into postgraduate special education. This was a great stimulation for her.

*I actually am a person who believes that to be able to speak about what you do you have to be able to deliver it. I felt I needed to come back. I felt that to really feel proud of my academic outcome – because it was a mastery learning program requiring a minimum of 90% to pass I felt I had to come back and walk the talk, and so I came back here to walk the talk.*

The interview conveys a picture of a resourceful, creative and independent person and professional. Therefore it is of great interest to observe how she *walks her talk*.

### **I am to be convinced that the mainstream...**

Jill says she doesn't have a problem with the theory of mainstreaming. Her problem was whether or not this new innovation was going to be adequately resourced, ensured the children to receive what the theory promised. Her personal integrity was challenged, she says, because she wasn't very good at compromising equality for kids.

*So I decided "is this really what I want to do and is this something that is going to really benefit children?" because I mean that I believe it can benefit many children, maybe even most children but I am to be convinced that the mainstream classroom is necessarily the best place for all special needs learners potential to be adequately and properly supported.*

When she applied for her present position as principal she had to clarify her views as the Board asked her to bring to the interview some visions for the next five years for

the school. She spent a lot of time thinking of children with intellectual disability and looked at what was available to them and their families. Then she says:

*I believe that there is a very important place for special schools, notwithstanding that mainstream is a very real option and that inclusive schools have a very important contribution but there are still children in our society that I believe is best fitted with this learning environment. So I thought to develop a range of choice within a special school.*

She continues:

*I believe that our children need top quality therapists to work with teachers for good delivery. And so I have spent a lot of time finding the right people to do that work and certainly we are starting to get response now by increasing number of inquiries for placement in our school because there is quite a level of frustration, not with the theory or the concept of delivery but with a response time for children in a mainstream setting, and parents want hands on intervention. They don't want paper program and those are the things that are starting to come through when parents come and see us.*

In their school they have a base school program, 3 satellite classes, 2 in a primary school and one in an intermediate school. Sometimes their children go and work in regular classes and sometimes regular class groups or whole classes come into their classes. *So there is a lot of choice for groups and variance here*, Jill says. She is working hard to develop her special school.

*I'm networking with a school in Auckland who has developed significant expertise in that area and feeling very pleased at the moment because we've got a change of staff next year making a deputy principal position of our own and a new deputy principal as somebody in management at that very specialised special school from Auckland. So we've now got openings coming in our school. I'm seeking to bring in new fresh ideas, recent training people that are on the cutting edge, people who want to really make a difference for kids with new successful education.*

**...it is that collection of money...**

Asking her about the children in her special school she answers that they have about 45 children on their school roll and that they are seeking to grow that. There are some 22 in the base school, and the others are in satellite settings. All students but one are verified students under the ongoing resourcing scheme. *So it is that collection of money which comes with each child which has empowered us to be able*

to employ therapy staff, Jill says. After giving me some extremely negative examples from regular schooling, she asks:

*Is it any wonder that when a parent comes to a special school that has got trained staff, that has got a music therapist, that has an occupational therapist working, and my occupational therapist doesn't have lunch at the same time as the teacher, she has lunch earlier or later because she believes she is skilled to teach children how to play, so she works in the lunch-breaks at the playground. Now, that to me makes good sense.*

The other problem that is arising, Jill says, is that teacher aid is employed by the regular school to support the high need child in a regular class. But the teacher aid virtually resumes responsibility for the child because she is employed to look after the kid, but the teacher aid is not trained. She is just a person to care and work under the direction of the teacher. But very often that doesn't happen. *If I were a parent with a high need child I think I would choose for the trained specialist to work with my child,* Jill says.

### **To play games with the system**

They also have to deal with the New Zealand curriculum framework, Jill tells me. They have a legal responsibility to deliver the children's education on an individual educational plan. The context for the plan is this framework. Some of the children have got very big learning needs and they don't speak and they don't read and they don't write. Still they have to context their teaching to the curriculum of maths, English, science and social studies - and there has to be a Maori component in the schools by law under the Treaty of Waitangi.

*So that gets to be quite an acrobatic challenge for teachers, because I think that in a sense that is making a little bit, it's putting into compromise the child's needs. Because what a child needs if it has got that level of support, that level of need, they need life skills. So to my ways, you know, you really have to play games with the system to prove to the educational review office you're working within the framework.*

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Inclusive schooling isn't regarded as a real option. Regular education, it is argued, is underdeveloped as regards resources and methods and unable to deliver necessary

special education services to this school population. At the special school there is a concentration of resources and competence. In this process the special school becomes a magnet school attracting new students and new resources. By increasing the number of students the special school may be further developed. This approach may seem pragmatically efficient with the specific present conditions of regular education and special resourcing in New Zealand. The question is if this developmental logic is comparable to the principle of inclusion?

## JENNIE

Jennie is a teacher of children with special needs at a special school. She teaches a satellite class. She has no special training for this work. But, when she applied for this job at the special School she had been working 10 years in special education. She has got 7 children in her class aged 5-11. One boy with Down's syndrome, one boy has been diagnosed as autistic. 5 are high needs and 2 are very high needs. All but one of them come from the nearby town. Normally they would start at the base school which is the special school before they are moved into this setting that is planned to be more integrated.

### **I think I would like to have more integration.**

When I ask where the children spend their time, Jennie tells me that they go to mainstream classes for different activities. It is mostly socialisation. One boy is in the hockey team, other children are going to reading, and one little girl who is only 5 and she is with her peers every afternoon. They go to assemblies and to music. *It depends on the child and its needs*, Jennie says. They are mostly in their classroom, however.

*Probably, vocal training will have two and a half-hours a week in another class. Some have more and some have less, it depends on their needs, and also on the teaching in the other class. Sometimes there may be a big sports event and then they will go to other classes at other times.*

When I ask if the regular classes adapt their work to these children, Jennie answers no. But, then she adds:

*..., but our children are out in the playground, playing with the other children and that is may be the best integration of all. And the other children are really good with them, they involve with them. They are inclusive and they are used to them. It is an excellent environment for them. Occasionally we have problems, but you know kids are kids.*

Later on she says:

*Their academic program and their learning program is here in this classroom, but we do things like sports and arts and music and assemblies together with the whole school. We have two children who go into some reading in a mainstream class, they take them but they don't have a special program for them.*

Jennie says she has got the most fabulous class but she thinks she would like to have more integration. I ask her what problems she would have to solve in order to have more integration?

*Communication problems I think. I've only been here 1 year so I've had to pick up from other people and sometimes I don't know how the school runs because every new school you go to is different. So things happen around the school and I find out after they have happened because people forget to ask us. They don't mean to but they forget to let us know.*

When I respond by saying *so you become a separated unit in the system*, Jennie says:

*Yes, we are. We are not included in the staff here and we don't go to staff meetings. They say we don't need to come because this does not involve you. So you misses out on notices a few times and such.*

She doesn't think there is anything sinister about it, and has decided that next year she will try and have a higher profile here. Improvement she thinks is a two-way process. The standard of the teachers here is fantastic, but they haven't thought of doing it before, she says. But, she also has discovered that different teachers have different attitudes.

As regards the children's participation in regular classes, Jennie doesn't work together or plan together with them. She comments:

*..., a teacher aid always go with the children, the children never go on their own. I have 30 hours teacher aid. 3 persons are sharing that job – 25 hours is a full job. Because that is one of our children's priorities. They couldn't manage without.*

The special school has three such units. They use to have staff meeting at the special school. *We find that things are very much the same, Jennie says.*

But there also differences.

*One of the other schools has one special unit and are very orientated towards kids with special needs. The kids are probably much more included in school activities than they are here because they've got a conductor with education class. And I think they've got a class for children with physical – well I'm not sure – but I know they've got – so the school is more orientated to children with special needs.*

So, the work situation you have here is very much dependent upon the management at the school where you are located, I say.

*That's exactly it. And also I think it is actually up to me to improve the situation. It took me a year to find out what the situation is. I have other classes coming in here as well. Two other classes are coming here two afternoons a week. One with music and one with designing. Before school I have lots of kids coming in and play but that is one a child level. On a staff level – but it's not deliberate – it's just...*

As regards contact with the regular classes:

*They don't often initiate it. One or two teachers come and say, "Would you like to join in." Mostly you have to go and say: "Would you mind that we joined in?" Nobody ever said "no".*

Jennie finds the resource situation good, they have got a special language therapist and a physiotherapist employed at the special school. They are available for them to call in.

**We have to cover the curic...**

When I ask her how she integrates her work into the curriculum framework she answers:

*We have to cover the curic. And we have to show who we are. As far as I'm concerned, when children come to the school at the age of 5 some of them are really fragile, those with major handicaps. Now, our children are beginning to learn to read, write do mathematics not to a huge degree but they are entitled to the right to learn and to do social studies and science and learn about the world around them and things. I think it is important for our children*

She accepts in principle that work should be related to the framework, thinks that once they've reached the age of 11 then you have to re-look at what the future is and what is the most important for the child to learn, work skills and that sort of things.

**Unless they have special programs.**

According to Jennie these children need a special program.

*You know, at the age of 12 the normal 5 years old have gone and our 5 years old are still here. They are progressing, but they are not progressing that fast so they.. The trouble is they fall further and further behind, and I mean how hard you work at it they are not going to catch up. They are getting further and further behind all along..*

The curriculum becomes stricter and stricter.

*Yes, it becomes less and less appropriate for them. I think that at the age of 12 you've got to talk to the parents and say: "Well, what do you see as the future for your child? How would you like to see your child when he is 20.*

And then one has to start working towards that goal, and she thinks one really has to be good at it because it takes long to get there.

**We have wonderful parents**

What Jennie likes with special education is that you have the children for a long time, you have a small group of children and you get to know them really, really well, and you also build up relationships with their family. And every child in this class is treasured by their family. *We have wonderful parents*, she says.

### **I personally believe that this is the best way to educate children...**

Jennie thinks parents should have a choice. If they choose the mainstream it is fair enough, but personally she believes that this is the best way to educate children. *If I didn't believe that then I have no right to be here*, she says.

*Yes, I support the fact that parents should have a choice. What I don't support is that the philosophy of specialist education service is mainstreaming. So quite often – this is my opinion...*

### **They try to push the parents very, very hard...**

According to Jennie all parents haven't been free to choose but have been pushed to choose the mainstream. Since the ORS has come it has been easier for parents to opt for this because they haven't had to go through the specialist education system (SES) that tries to canalise students into the mainstream? Jennie gives me an example she knows.

*Yes, but before ORS where I taught before – for 10 years – we've had parents who came down – one in particular. She came and looked around and we had two classes – a junior class and a senior class - and my junior class was very similar to this, and she spoke to the principal and the principal said – and she said to her: "What class is my daughter going to?" and the principal said "This is it, she will be in this classroom." And she said: "Are you sure?" and we said: "Yes, this is the only classroom" and she said she had been told by the specialist education system that she would not have to bring her daughter there because she would be surrounded by children with weird behaviours, who made funny noises and who could not speak and have terrible bad habits.*

### **Education is about offering choices**

Jennie says whether you're teaching kids with special needs or at a university education is about offering choices.

*The more you know, the more you learn, the more skills you have, and the wider your choice is. Whether we are just teaching our children to spread a piece of butter on their bread so they can so they can make themselves a sandwich – so they can choose to eat when they want to – or whether you're learning whatever you're learning – so that you can choose all these wonderful career options – is about options, and the more we can teach our children, the wider the options in their lives will be. And kids in*



*the mainstream they are going to learn anyway. Sometimes they learn in spite of the teacher, but the children I teach learn because of me.*

The more skills she can give them in order to be as independent as possible, the richer their lives will be and the more choices they will have. They can make more decisions for themselves.

### **I don't see them as isolated at all...**

When I ask if the school situation doesn't tend to isolate the children, Jennie responds:

*They are not in the classrooms but they are a lot on the playground. They are interacting with their peers, but you can't tell me that a 15 years old will choose one of my kids for friendship, but in our class they have friends, and it is real friendship. They are good friends to each other because they relate to each other really well. And no matter how much we try to make kids from the mainstream be friends with my kids.. Our kids can't keep up. They can't play the same games. And the other children are really wonderful. They make allowances for them, they include them, but they are not their mates. And if they were in their classroom they still would not be their mates. In fact, they would be far more isolated in their classrooms than they are here. I really believe that.*

### **i'm not involved in that.**

Curious to know about other kids in this school with special needs I say *there must be several who have educational needs here?* Jennie responds *I'm not really sure. I'm not involved in that.* When I ask about possible resourcing from the RTLB programme she answers *I'm sure there will be but I really have no idea, I just don't know.*

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

One important ambition with locating satellite classes in a regular school environment is to improve the integration of children with disabilities. The interview indicates that in this case this goal hasn't been sufficiently achieved. Relations to other parts of the school are weak. Contacts with other students are mainly made on the playground. There is no clear indication from the interview of a common goal at this school to integrate these students socially and educationally. The class teacher is organisationally mainly related to the special school and doesn't seem well informed

about what is going on in the school in which she is located. The teacher argues skilfully for the uniqueness of the children and the necessity of a special setting for taking care of these needs and doesn't think that mainstreaming is a viable option for catering for their needs in the present school situation.

## **GWYNETH**

Gwyneth is a senior teacher in charge of special needs. Her portfolio covers right across the school. She has a mainstream child in her class, intellectually handicapped or globally delayed as they call them now. She also has behaviour problem children in her classroom, the ADHD- children, real severe behaviour children.. She has had a lot of dealing with the special education services, working with the BEST teamwork,. She has had a lot of discussions with the psychologists and the SES professionals.

### **I've actually tightened my program...**

Gwyneth tells me that with a lot of mainstream children teaching has to be more heavily structured. Talking about the need of ADHD children she says they need very, very clear goals and they need very, very clear instructions, and they need to know exactly where they are. They need a timetable that is pretty regular.

*You need to say: "Now you go away and you do this little task, and when you have finished that - I've got little timers in my class, one minute timers -I have one little fellow who can only work one minute at a time - and I give them a task for a short time - and then they come back o me and have something else to do for another 5 minutes.*

They've got to have the boundary so they know they still achieve.

*Otherwise you could have them, and unfortunately I think this is happening in some classes, the children who are not behaviour problems but who cannot cope with the work, are popped in a corner, and as long as they are quiet and as long they are colouring men or doing worksheets they are no problem of concern more. To me that is not inclusive teaching because*

*they are sitting in a class physically but they are not learning, they are not working with groups.*

### **They take them out...**

She has got a register of children not achieving at their chronological age, and they employ teacher aides who work with groups of children. They take them out and they work with children who have trouble with reading at a certain level, children who have trouble with writing, with math. Gwyneth is very keen on what is happening when children are outside the classroom.

*I always say to the teachers: "Don't think because they are going out of the classroom with the teacher aid that you don't need to think of them for the rest of the day. If they've been removed for reading you still have to read with them in class. "This is an extra for them... yes. You cannot say, OK, I don't have to worry about them because they get education outside the classroom..*

### **...then he goes off and works with the teacher aid**

She also has a teacher aid that is working with one little boy in her. He is ORS-funded, he is a high level so he gets 13000 NZ\$, Gwyneth says. They supplement that so he gets teacher aid + half an hour a day teacher time. He is actually removed from class for that half-hour specialist teacher time. The rest of the time he is in Gwyneth's class. Then she says *he always starts the day with me and we... and we always have songs and always do some exercising, and then he goes off and works with the teacher aid.*

Outside class he has a specialist teacher and they work mainly on reading and writing skills because that's where he needs to have the concentration, that is for half an hour. The other half they work with his oral language.

*why they take him out of class is for the quiet because he's got to look at your mouth, he's got to listen so he needs to be in a quiet environment, both those curriculum areas need quiet time. He can do is maths being part of a group or work in the classroom.*

In the afternoon he is completely integrated in my class, and he does what the rest of us are doing.

**I'm a wee bit ahead. but...**

When I ask Gwyneth if she thinks that the other teachers would actually work in the same inclusive way as she does, she replies *I think I am a wee bit ahead, but I think we're moving the same way, and we have everybody on board.* But she feels that she has the whole staff support - from teacher aides to teachers. They participate in a university inclusive school's project and she has 2 facilitators. *They went right through the whole thing of how to include these children in your class,* she says.

She admits that some teachers find it frustrating. Some teachers aren't prepared to change their programs. She has told *them I have had to change mine, we have to have inclusive schools, we can't do anything about it.* She thinks more and more people believe it may work, and with this little fellow in her class it does work. But she still has her doubts about some children, some severely handicapped, the ones that cannot respond to their peers, the severely physical handicapped. She hasn't had any in her class, but is talking from discussions she has had with other people.

In order to be able to include children on a deeper and deeper level she thinks the physical environment would have to change. The classrooms aren't big enough.

*I just had a meeting with the physiotherapist because we have a little girl in a wheelchair and we've got no special toilet facilities for her. The class numbers will have to change; I have 26 in my class, next year it will be up to 30. I think it should be down to 22 if we're going to have these children in. You know the size of the classroom has to increase if you are to have wheelchairs and beds in the classroom. We have to change the environment. And you need a quiet area where other adults like teacher aides can work with a few of the children...*

Gwyneth thinks the SES has to have resources and be resourceful in ways how to adapt the curriculum, but she doesn't think they have been very supportive with ideas. Computers are important. It's a visual thing and can be used to teach children who otherwise are difficult to teach. She has also noticed that if she does that type of

activity they can be included more with less teacher aid. But the curriculum has to be taken in each section and one has to adapt like one does for the bright children. *You have activities for your bright children and you have activities for your other children so it's just part of your planning.* Gwyneth says.

### **Become a part of the community...**

To my question what she thinks should be the long-range goals for schooling of included children here, she replies that it would be nice if they developed intrinsic strategies that they can use to cope with their behaviour.

*you know, when my little fellow leaves here that he's got the life skills that he needs, social skills that normal kids learn by looking at their parents, they don't pick up, they have to be taught, and it has to be repeated and repeated and repeated... and the time of the day, you know, all those little things, that he can write name, that he knows how to use the computer. I don't actually fear for our children who are globally delayed because my little fellow will get a job, he loves horses, it is not a mean bone in his body, he is kind. He will work in a stable and he will do his job well, he has got a good memory*

It is the children with behaviour problems, the angry ones, that worries Gwyneth. *They are the ones who are likely to grab a gun and shoot,* she says, *you know, that's really a concern and I know that is the concern of the teachers. It's the angry one we cannot come to grips with.* The other children are going to learn all the social skills because they are involved, they become a part of the community, and to her that is important instead of being shuffled away in some room or just shuffled away. They can make a worthwhile contribution to their community. *That's what I would like for these children, and you know, we can do that by this program...*

### **Because there are special programs...**

Gwyneth thinks starting inclusion at the school level - at the schools - is a good way. *Because we are educating the citizens of the future, aren't we,* she asks. *We are developing these attitudes to inclusion as these children go through, and hopefully that will come true in society.* Then she adds

*I think there are times a day when you take the children out - which, because there are special programs that need them to be removed, oral work and things like that, so they need to be removed, so perhaps it would be good to have a classroom they could go to and work on their specific programs. And then be included in the class for the afternoon.*

They have talked about this, having a special room where the teacher aides can work with their special programs...

*. .and people say: "Is that inclusion? If you set up a special little room, you see, but that is because it is easier than setting up every classroom, because these children are in every classroom in the school. But is that going backwards? That would make it easier as to organising..."*

When I say that I agree with her that there are practical problems, but the main problem is how do you keep that system together within a common value base for all these teachers, she replies:

*That's right, and my concern is that that little classroom could be separated, it could be the dummies' class, and by physically moving the children there would make them know they're different, they will know they are not as good as others and inclusion is actually trying to do the opposite. We value you for who you are; we value you just as much as the other persons. But from a practical point of view.*

She sometimes thinks that it may be better for the curricular development because they could have a teacher for a longer time for their work. But for their social development she thinks it would be a backward step. For their globally delayed children - social skills and the essential learning skill and co-operative skills and all those skills are the things that they really need to work on, she says. They're going to get the skills as they move on to the intermediate, they've got a special room at the intermediate, they've got a special unit there that's sort of isolated. *And we've had children who come from our inclusiveness here and popped in there and I just wonder about their self-esteem,* Gwyneth says.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on her own practical experience this teacher clearly believes that most children with high needs may be reasonably well included in regular classrooms environments. Some of the tools for achieving this mentioned in the interview are:

- Highly structured learning environments
- Extensive use of teacher aides
- Special education support - out of class
- Sufficient physical space
- Reduction of class size - at least to 22 children in this case
- Access to computer technology

At the same time the interview indicates that placement of these children in some separate system for shorter and longer time always is a competing alternative to inclusion. In this case the idea of a special class seems to be continually resident in the teacher group. From a pragmatic point of view this solution seems to be most efficient for the interviewee. When she rejects this solution her arguments for inclusion are primarily social and conveyed by concepts as social participation, dumping, discrimination and self-esteem. This shows that her ideas of inclusion are founded on long-range goals of schooling. A university based inclusion project seems to have been important by supporting her both philosophically and practically.

Generally spoken, the interview shows the problems that arise when inclusion is taking place in what I will denote as a *hybrid school organisation*. By that I mean an organisation that may split its resources to serve two conflicting goals - inclusion and segregation. There are several indications of the tensions between them. The interview also indicates that teacher aides may become the saviours of the principle of inclusion in the hybrid organisation. This may be economically efficient, but at same time it may hinder inclusion from becoming a true professional educational concept and even prolong the devaluation of children with delayed development.

## CHRIS

Chris has had most of her experiences in the classroom. She also has a son who is dyslectic. This has given her some extra experiences. There didn't seem to be anywhere for the children in the mild area to be catered for in the New Zealand education system, she says to me.

When the RTLB initiative was developed 1998 she applied for a job and got it.

*I won a job and so I'm really at the cutting edge because I came straight from the classroom so my experience is really 20 years of teaching in all areas, but with a special interest in children with special needs.*

She works as an itinerant teacher in 4 schools with children from 5 up to 16 years old. She is a consultant, she does group work in classrooms, and she is a person who mediates between the school and the home. The whole idea of the resource teacher's job descriptions is to work in classrooms. She works with teachers to help them broaden their curriculum and to do adjustments for certain children who have been identified as having special needs. *I actually love that work, Chris says it is very interesting, looking at ways of making the curriculum more exciting.*

### **That is not the model...**

When I ask if she tutors in the classroom she says that she withdraws them. Adding *however, that is not the model but it can be very useful for a push and sometimes a child is really struggling and it can be useful for them to have advocate.* She works with one at a time then.

*I've just been to a school with a little boy who reads very low and he literally is for me at the door. It is only for 25 minutes but it is reading time and it is something to make his day a little bit more...*

### **I think it is really down to teacher attitude...**

According to Chris the curriculum is not broad enough to cater for these differences in the classroom. Teacher attitudes may be an important barrier for broadening the curriculum.

*Well, I think it is really down to teacher attitude. I think the teachers have been trained in a particular way. And if we look for instance the problems*



*of special education I think that teacher attitude is the biggest barrier to inclusion. Particularly in secondary school. The whole idea is the parting of information and the information has to be in part because it's tied to a system that has to do with assessment and exams at the end of. And in some ways primary schools are still tied into that assessment idea as well.*

Chris thinks that Special ed.2000 policy puts the cart before the horse because they didn't give the New Zealand teachers the professional development.

*They started the RTLB initiative, which was wonderful, put the RTLB in the school, and started to train them, put the training in place but left the teachers behind.*

### **They're actually quite negative...**

Teachers haven't been taught about what inclusion is. *They only had David Mitchell's 'Developing Inclusive Schools' folder for 15 years, and I think it's been very difficult for teachers. Typically they would say but how am I supposed to do that. I've got 35 other children..'' and how am I to do that, I've got 35 exam papers to mark...*

To show teachers that there are options she does lots of modelling.

*To go and say "I'll do it" - that is necessary for me to be successful, and show how to actually teach in the classroom, and that's been the most successful part of my work. Sometimes they turn to me and say "It's wonderful to have someone else in the room. It's nice to have time to observe others teaching."*

I ask Chris what she feels is the biggest problem.

*I think teacher attitude. I think that is being my biggest bridge. Sitting down at the teache's room, working an IEP and trying to get them to 'own' it, and they saying, "this will never work" and that happens all the time. That is my biggest frustration.*

### **I'd like to see the idea of inclusion truly developed...**

Chris would like to see an RTLB based on each school and to see the idea of inclusion truly developed by giving teachers more development, professional development. When I ask her what she puts into the word inclusion, she replies *acceptance of those children with differences, they be physical, learning or behavioural differences, academic, intellectual...* To my follow-up question *do you mean acceptance in the regular system*, she replies, *yes I do believe, having done the initial research, that it is an amazing concept, you know, philosophically I think I do believe in inclusion.*

### **So it was not about building a community...**

I ask her if she thinks New Zealand people in general have a value base that supports this?

*No, I don't. You know, from my personal point of view I believe in that because that's where I come from as my belief system, you know, as I was brought up as a child and...but as I was talking about attitudes before. But I believe there are many other New Zealand belief systems... simply because I've heard parents say that "He shouldn't be in the classroom because he is dangerous"...! Mean like "He takes up too much of the teacher's time and my son is not getting a fair deal". So you get that sort of attitude coming through, the health and safety issues, the issue of "they should be locked up anyway".*

Chris thinks that 'Tomorrow's Schools' is one cause of these reactions. It is supposed to give them more control over the school and their child's education. It's a feeling of 'we can all have what we want'...

Then she adds:

*So we have this 'Tomorrow's Schools' concept where the parents moved to controlling the schools, but I think they did it from their own children's perspective and they could get out for their children. So it was not about building a community. Yes, so it was not about 'how can we make our community a better place and one Where everyone is welcome' it was more 'what can I get out of the system for my child.'*

Chris feels that there is an increasing separatism in New Zealand that works against inclusion. She places her view within an analysis of the economic and cultural development of the New Zealand society. She sees the breakaway of Maori schools as a step in this direction.

*I think it will continue to be separatism. Well, research has shown that Maori children are doing better in the small schools, the whanau units, the language base units than they do when they are integrated. So while they continue to have success.... And unless we get more Maori people educated and into our teams I can't see the system changing.*

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Chris is working at the cutting edge of inclusion – directly in the classroom environments where inclusion has to take place in order to become a reality. The interview conveys a message that neither teachers nor parents are prepared for inclusion. She observes negative attitudes in teachers when she works to broaden their curriculum to give better room for diversity in classrooms and in parents who to a want to have things their own way without seeing the greater picture. Based on her observations Chris doesn't think that there presently is an adequate value base for inclusion in New Zealand. School reforms favouring parent choice haven't favoured inclusion. On the contrary it may actually– in combination with other developments that favour separatism – make it difficult to build an integrated community.

## **CATH**

Cath is currently working as an RTLB, which is a resource teacher for learning behaviour. She has taught overseas and in New Zealand for 16 years. She worked in an intermediate school and in a boys' high school and then she went overseas and taught in Brunei for 3 and a half years at a girls' secondary school. Then she went to London and worked. Returning to New Zealand she continued to work in management. Worked briefly in a high school briefly and then another school as deputy principal. Currently she is completing her Masters.

### **I work I work on modifying curriculum...**

As a RTLB her role is to consult with schools and on help them focus on all their students. She says that her work is slightly different to other RTLBs in that she works at a systemic level.

*In the secondary schools where I work I work on modifying curriculum for a whole year group of students. In this case it would be 9 or 10 students, and I work beside teachers to do that so my focus not on the deficits within the children in a class but how we can improve the learning environment to include those kids.*

The secondary curriculum is very content based and secondary teachers have tended to become object specialists. So you have people with huge amounts of knowledge, but the skill they lack is how to get that knowledge across in an exiting, interesting way. *That's what I help them with*, Cath says. She helps to make their classrooms more student centred and a little less abstract and a bit more interactive for the kids. She has a strong feeling of success in this work.

*The work that I'm doing in the 3 secondary schools in my cluster, that way of working – beside the teachers – has been very successful. I've had a tremendously positive response, so much so that in my Masters dissertation the major limitation to my project is only me, I can't actually keep up with the demand, and next year that is going to be a major problem. It's how I'm going to manage the workload and the demands from secondary teachers to manage this kind of support.*

They are running the co-operative learning support group across the 3 secondary schools in a cluster of schools - a boys' school with 1340 boys, an integrated Anglican girls' school with about 600 girls in it and then a co-ed very, very poor with about 900 – 1000 kids in it. The staff from those 3 schools are meeting together twice a term to have professional development about co-operative learning on the basis of Spencer Kagan and the Johnson brothers' work. Cath and a colleague run this professional development sessions twice a term for this group of teachers, it is about 40 persons She alternates between those 3 schools and support teachers in their classrooms.

*So for instance, at the girls' high school I have a home economic teacher, a scientist a mathematician, a social scientist a language specialist. I work in each of those people's classrooms across the age ranges and offer them suggestions how they can use co-operative learning in a subject specific way.*

They use the co-operative learning structures as the coat hanger – that is where they hang the content on. The content is such things as how to manage the behaviour in your classroom, how to establish a classroom appropriately, what the research is telling them about how boys are achieving, how the girls are achieving. How they get that professional development across is using this co-operative learning in structures so that the teachers have an opportunity to work through them with other adult learners. Then they can take them back to the classroom and try them out with the kids.

**The major limitation is that we have become too successful...**

Cath reports several positive effects. The kids take more responsibility for their learning. They are talking more to each other, tolerate each other more, they get to know each other better. Their self-esteem improves and their academic results go up. *In a class that we studied we moved the results for these kids from 50% scores as their top marks to mastery level of about 80 – 90% in less than 3 months, she says.*

When I ask her if they are able to show that this has actually had effects, she replies:

*The major limitation is that we have become too successful. We started out a little snowball, you know, we looked after it and made it bigger and bigger and bigger and now it turned into an avalanche, and we have to think very carefully about how we deliver next year's professional development, you can't let people down. We've got them on a chain, you know, and they say: "Yes, we want to do that and we want to do this, and if I can't deliver, if I can't get around all this paper then its going to lose its impact and that will be a shame.*

**A different vision of the job...**

When I ask Cath about the type of problems she meets, she replies:

*One of the major problems for me has not been resistance from teachers. I've had no resistance from them, a bit. The fellows that have resisted me the most are my RTLB colleagues who think that I am... I think at times choosing an easy road.*

So they are criticising because you are not going direct into interaction with the students, I say.

*No, because I work with the classroom teachers. My belief in secondary school is that behind every teacher there is anywhere up to 200 students. So if I can help that teacher's practice then I can enhance the learning environment for all the students behind that teacher. If we are going to be true agents of change – which RTLB-teachers are asked to be – that's the way we've got to do it. We've got to be thinking at system's level.*

Cath explains these differences for me by saying that she thinks it's a question of differences in background experiences. RTLB-teachers were either resource teachers of special needs who withdrew children out of the classroom and did reading and stuff like that or they were guidance and learning teachers who were guidance counsellors at secondary school. Those two positions have been joined together. She came in with a total different vision of the job and she definitely feels that many colleagues do not share her approach. She feels that they want to go slower and they want to retain the provisions. *My fellow RTLB colleagues would for me be the biggest frustration*, she proclaims.

### **Basically we're selling ice to the Eskimos...**

Our job is to go out and say to the schools, Cath says: "Here is this new idea, inclusion. This is what is going to happen. I can help you get ready to deal with this clientele, the kinds of student you are going to have. Here is the research that surrounds inclusion; here is the research that surrounds strategic methodologists that are going to help you include those kids. Here is the behaviour research that will help you to manage the behaviour of some of these students. I can work alongside you and help you make it easier for yourself.

*Basically we're selling ice to the Eskimos. It's a selling job. And I suppose it's saying to the Eskimos. Here is the ice that you had last year, it is a little bit different, it could be blind, it could be in a wheelchair, it might throw a chair at you. And there might be parents who are really angry, they may be in a pain, but it's really the same ice as you had last year. And if you just try to work with this ice it's really OK, you'll be able to do it.*

They have to spend time getting alongside teachers and listening to them talking about how the day has been or what the frustrations of their job are, and being able to say *well; we know you're having difficulty with that but have you ever thought of trying this. Here's an idea. I can get you the photocopy. I'll bring it in. I'll show you. I'll do it with your kids, or support you. You encourage them to make changes in their practice.*

### **A school that is diversifying...**

Cath reports significant developments in a high school she is working with.

*So what they're doing is... They've always had a polarised system, either the gifted end or the challenged end and what they are now doing – and it is wonderful for me to see it – is to bring these two services into one so that when you go for learning support you can be anywhere along this continuum and still get support, and that's what they're moving to now.*

So they are trying to use all the support, to individualise, I reply.

*But this is a school that is diversifying. They are just building a technology block where they're going to do food technology and stuff like that so the curriculum is broadening. And they are much more aware of changing assessment systems, modifying curriculum for students who need it. To me that is great because before it was more like one size fits all – and if you're not too bad you'll make it! In the other high school the co-ed school have some really tough nuts. They do a lot more curriculum modification, because they have whole classes of students who need it.*

They have whole classes that are operating at primary school level. They are really operating at level 3 or 4 of primary school, particularly in subjects like maths and science and doing a lot more curriculum modification.

**We are not preparing the people who are going out to fight it...**

*Even though I never intended to work with special ed I always ended up saying: "Hi, hang up a moment, you've got to think about those kids" , Cath says, and she continues:*

*And to me the biggest problem with special ed 2000 – it's a great idea, but what they didn't do is – the person, the major stakeholder is the classroom teacher who has had no extra training, who gets no extra salary, who gets no extra resources and ends up with an autistic child, a behaviourally disturbed child – who could end up with 5 very, very special needy people in their room, and they get no help! The only way we're going to get more inclusive classrooms is to support the teachers to have the heart in, to get the guts to keep moving.*

Spec Ed 2000 has been active since 1995, but the teacher preparation programs do not spend more time on special ed.

*We are not preparing the people who are going out to fight it. At the end of this year a lot of the transition classrooms, a lot of special ed separate facilities were closed and all of those kids were coming in the mainstream. And then we'll lose a lot of our best teachers because they cannot cope. To me it actually isn't going to do the children a favour either because it's obvious that for kids who need most help all these services are just going to rain away. Nobody ends up any better off.*

When I ask if there are no national special education programs for these teachers, Cath tells me that there is a team, which is called the inclusive team is going around schools – out of the university here. *They are marvellous people but they have for each school a 12-hour program and that's it.* Work is mostly done at a consultative level. That takes time.



*But you can't just wander into someone's room and say: "I've been in your room for 10 minutes and you need to teach that kid better, move that furniture... You can't just do that..*

Having experiences from England Cath naturally compares.

*What shocked me was, in our training, our RTLB training we have done American research, only American research. That's the main thrust, the American movement. Now, having been in England 1993 – 1996 they did what we're doing here then. They had a new legislation for special ed, they had a huge system, they had the equivalent of ORS children here and they had the whole thing. What they did was they spent 3 and a half years training the teaching population first. Then, in 1996 they introduced people like me, the RTLB, and that was when people knew what an IEP was. They knew how to modify the curriculum. They knew how to differentiate programs. They knew how the system worked.*

Cath obviously would prefer to canalise into the structure itself, into the educational program of the teachers instead of only linking the resources directly to the children who are disabled.

So New Zealand has copied parts of its programs from Britain I say

*Yes, some of it is very similar in the sense that they have the behaviour team for the children who are out of control. The speech programs and the early intervention program are very similar, and in New Zealand – for the children who need funding forever – we call it ORS, and in England these children are what we call "statemented" They get to Warnock stage 5 and it is kind of like a tag on a suitcase that says: My name is Joe, I need...*

Money and services are tagged to the child in the same way in New Zealand. So for instance, 5 hours of teacher aid time a week, 2 hours of speech language therapy, these kinds of things, yes, very similar, Cath says.

*What we needed was people who could take a turn, people who could share, people who could listen to someone else. Who had interpersonal*

*skills, who had enough academic background to be able to cut it at those circles, but most importantly, people who could be world citizens. That's what Cath thinks is most important.*

*I think the thing that frightens me the most is the escalation of youth who are feeling marginalised, you know the shooting we see in America, the shooting we see in Germany, you know, those kind of things, she says.*

*Somehow we have to be the adult and be the professionals and look after people, look after their self-esteem so that they are in a position that they want to take risks, even if the risk means pressing the button on your wheelchair. It's like the little kid, the little boy who had cerebral palsy and wanted to play soccer. He couldn't play without a walking frame so his parents made him one, and he had to go court to use it because the other kids thought it was unfair that he had a walker.*

### **The biggest flaw of the system...**

Cath thinks that moving every decision to the school level may become a barrier to systemic changes.

*... and what happens is that if you get a group of principals who have very clear ideas about what they want and part of that is not inclusion then that is what you'll get. And I think for me that is the biggest flaw of the system*

I ask Cath what she thinks are the barriers for the disabled to become a part of the system. *Well, I think one of the barriers is that the major stakeholders don't seem to have much of a voice in it.* Then she continues:

*I do not think they have enough. This is my concern about power going to the local schools because that school can still make it difficult for you because you don't fit. I can get rid of you and you don't have to go to this school. It can be made very, very difficult. If I for instance had this visually impaired child who needed special furniture or special classroom – some modification of physical environment, the school could just say they didn't have the staff and that means you can't go there. So the idea of the kid going to the neighbourhood school doesn't necessarily follow. It's a kind of windy path. On the surface it looks like it's OK, but when you get down to reality it doesn't work that way.*

At the end of the interview we talk about the future and what is going to happen with the children in education. She thinks the rhetoric will continue in the sense that people will say: *"We should have this"*. We have an election next Saturday. There are people in the possible new Government – the Labour Party – saying: *"We think this is a very expensive experiment."* Then she adds: *Yes, and quite frankly I think it has been a very expensive experiment for a number of factors: RTLB, they are old, the average for an RTLB would be 45 +...*

*You are spending a lot of money on university educating people who in a few years will be retired. I also think that increasingly the master plan is to decentralise as much responsibility as possible, in welfare, in policing and in education. And the gap between those who have and those who have not will increase. I think that unless we listen carefully to the research about these boys we're actually creating more problems than we are solving for them, for literacy, for numeracy and then for jobs.*

The thing that keeps her hopeful, Cath says, is that she has a number of friends that are Maori who have gone back and learnt their language, who are bringing their children up in those old cultural practices. *That's hopeful, and I think that is something that will be really good in the future.* But for the disabled students she isn't so optimistic.

*As for our disabled students I think the next 5 years are going to be very hard. I don't envy a parent whose child has got a disability. I think these kids are going to be marginalised.*

She doesn't think they are ready and that their educational system is organised enough to actually handle what it has set off. *Now it's just an avalanche,* she says.

I ask her if the values that make it more possible to realise an inclusion project are in place?

*I don't think that, I say that in context with having been outside New Zealand for 7 years, and coming back. We are a country that tends to knock new ideas and knock successful people. We call it a poppy*

*syndrome her and it is very, very true, and to make the kinds of changing that we are making I don't think we accept the innovation. I can see from my own experience. The biggest fight I have is with people who are supposed to be on the same team as me.*

*So there isn't a consensus, I say. Not at all, she replies.*

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The interview with Cath indicates a rather strong lack of consensus as regards the choice of approach to support schools to improve their work with learning and behaviour problems and to make it more inclusive. The interview indicates one approach is to accept the structural realities of the schools and pragmatically work to solve the problems of the children within these realities. This approach would primarily focus individual support. On the other hand there is an approach to support that favours curriculum changes and new methods of work. Cath undoubtedly favours this approach in her work as an RTLB and she evidently experiences success in doing it. She thinks, however, that inclusive work in schools for children with learning disabilities and behaviour problems is dependent upon teachers who are well trained and she is very critical to the fact that special education has a low priority in teacher education programs in New Zealand. The RTLB project doesn't adequately solve this problem. Cath isn't optimistic about the future of the disabled in New Zealand. Lack of parent influence and decentralisation are two factors, which according to her do not work, in an inclusive direction.

## **ANDREW**

Andrew is from South Africa and has been in New Zealand for almost a year and a half at the time of the interview. He has been a resource teacher for most of that time. He was a principal at a school in South Africa. Before that he had a teacher position where a part of his duties was to work the deputy with children with learning disabilities, mainly learning disabilities. He has been a number of years in multicultural education.

### **I team up groups with similar problems...**

Andrew works from a set timetable although it is need based. He is visiting 3 schools at the moment at least 3 times a week, and he uses block periods, up to 1,5 hours to 3 hours at a time with them. A set time table suits his needs because everybody knows where he is and the children with learning disabilities and behavioral problems they like a routine and they like to know when he is coming. What he does varies to a large extent.

*Depending on the need I will take the work with the child individually. On a specific problem – with a learning problem I work individually. I don't really like working individually. I team up groups with similar problems and work in a group with them.*

He works in a class situation with a whole class approach doing things like social skills, modeling good procedures that he thinks will work, such as co-operative learning, setting up whole class programs or programs for peer tutoring, reading, etc. The school recently asked him to look at the children's co-ordination because of their handwriting abilities.

*It really varies from individuals to groups to whole class approaches, and I think a lot of my time is really spent in the classroom, alongside the classroom teacher, working with that individual child in the classroom, taking children with similar problems and teaching them in the classroom, almost as a teacher aid or as an assistant.*

### **Children with learning problems normally sits quiet...**

The large majority of the children he works with have behavioral problems. We have very few learning problems. *Children with learning problems normally sit quiet and are not disrupting the teacher*, Andrew says. Comparing his situation in New Zealand with his experience from South Africa he says:

*In a typical school, I don't really use this, but a typical school according to race, a white school, we really never had severe behavioral problems in the school the nature of the country being very authoritarian. You told the child to sit and the child would sit without questioning it. Here it is a little bit*

*different, they are taught to question, they are taught to challenge. One of the things I thought was very strange was children who threw chairs in the classroom, children would lose their temper. In South Africa we had these good old fashioned desks so throwing chairs was impossible! So, yes, this was something new that I had to deal with. I do find that the children do display their anger a lot more freely...*

Initially we were met with a lot of suspicion by the schools, Andrew tells me. They didn't really know what to expect from each other. They did feel a bit threatened but now they are opening up and we are working well as a team. But a lot of parents are also suspicious about a lot of agencies being involved because nothing has worked out in the past.

He gives an example of problems he has met with teachers.

*The biggest problem that I have faced is when we put a child on a behaviour modification program there tends to be a reward and the teacher would ask: Why should the child get a reward for something they should be doing anyway? And trying to convince them it is not a long-term ...we work for rewards, we work for praise, we work for a salary. It's just getting the child into a routine and slowly withdrawing those rewards. That's probably the most resistance I have met from one particular teacher. That is the biggest problem I have faced from a classroom teacher. Normally they are very good, very supportive.*

### **It's the resource within a school that is a problem...**

Andrew believes the Government has put enough money into the work he does.

*We are all well resourced, we get a petrol allowance, we get enough money to run our administration set-ups, we get money to buy material and resources, we are well resourced from within the cluster.*

The problem is the available resources at individual schools.

*I think we lack a personal space, we just sometimes got to work where we can. Some schools give us a special room to work, sometimes... you do a lot of the work in the classroom, but when you want to withdraw a child there is often not enough space. And it is not consistent, sometimes it is in the library, sometimes it's in the hall. Sometimes I find this a bit frustrating,*

*not having a place where you can put your bag, leave it and go to the classroom, come back, withdraw a child and work with a child. G: You are working within the RTLB project, is that a time frame for that? So and so many years...*

**I also believe that children come in with certain disabilities and deficits...**

Andrew thinks there is a consensus about what they are doing. He thinks they have a broad middle path most of us are following even if they have different backgrounds.

But he also reports differences by saying

*So there were 2 groups, one working at the behaviour and the one work at the special needs, they have now been incorporated in the RTLBs and I think a lot of them have been so set in their ways that they find it difficult to adjust to this new paradigm.*

His own philosophy is that he takes in everything that he can learn. Bu he, too, signals some doubts about the main model adopted by the project.

*We are working very strongly with the ecological model, moving away from the medical and the deficit model. And I believe with my training I do believe that we as individuals do come in with certain... deficits, so period, looking at the ecological model isn't really going to solve the problems. I do recognise the ecological model, I believe it's great, I also believe strongly in the family system... the child being a symptom of a broader problem in the family, that has impact on the school. I also believe that children come in with certain disabilities and deficits that must be acknowledged as well. I'm quite strong on the learning styles...*

He is quite happy to work within that model, within the ecological model, but sometimes one thinks there may be something in this child. *I would rather adapt the environmental model and give the teachers strategies to work with the child in different learning styles, he says. Then he adds I believe in finding a suitable model for the child, not to try and fit the job into a certain model. I think at the end of the day it depends on what is best for the child. What works for the child. And if that contributes to that well I think it is a success.*

### **Special education should provide for those children...**

Andrew says he believes that we are all unique, we all have our strengths and we all have our weaknesses. Nobody is the same, he thinks. The he conveys his view of the function of special education.

*Special education should provide for those children who are out of normal which is a horrible term, the gifted and the highly talented should be provided for and those that need extra help and support should be provided for and I think the way you do it unfortunately is generated by the philosophy of the day and of the policy which I don't know is all that right.*

### **I believe in parental choice...**

As regards Government policy of an inclusive school system is probably the right way to go, yet he believes in personal parental choice and that is a conflict.

*In New Zealand we are into an inclusive system which I think is good. I think it is fine, but I think it should boil down to parental choice. If parents want their children with special needs and special abilities to go to a special school that caters specially for that they should have the right to choose that. Or likewise for parents who want their children to be integrated and to have a good social life and be accepted in the normal mainstream school they should provide for that as well. It should be that balance and it should boil down to parental choice and it's not, it should not be boiled down to what is considered politically correct – that we all should be one and we all should be inclusive. I believe in parental choice in mainstream or separate education.*

I ask Andrew about his approach to reach social inclusion. He is working in a classroom where there is a little girl that is in a wheelchair, the school is handling it pretty well. He believes that she should participate in the activities that the rest of the children have – to her ability.

*And if they go around she must push herself around in the wheelchair. When they do exercises she must try and do exercises as far as possible. She needs to be included, to be integrated and incorporated in the groups with co-operative learning. She is part of the class as far as she can be. The children have learnt to accept her and learnt how to interact.*



But there may be children who do not feel comfortable around children with physical handicaps and they should be respected as well. There may also be the odd teacher who says: I can't work with a child like this. *And if you enforce a policy of total inclusion what will you do with that teacher?* Andrew asks.

He thinks there is a strong move for inclusion.

*Maybe deep down they think this is the right way to go, maybe they accept that because that's what they've been told – or I don't know if they have thought deeply about it.*

The RTLB project definitely supports inclusion, he says. The he adds *I don't have a problem with that but I still think basically parental choice...informed choice.*

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Andrew has an individual focus for his work in schools. His work model might be called a 'teacher support model' which has many similarities with traditional special education even if most of the teaching goes on much closer to regular classrooms than what is typical in special education. There are few references in the interview to systemic work, like curriculum work, methods of teaching, etc.

The rich resources reported for the RTLB project compared to available classrooms resources that a 'teacher support model' may be too restricted to generate true inclusive practices in classes, which is the main goal of the project. When Andrew compares the ecological model of the RTLB project with his own views it becomes clear that he gives greater room for a deficit model. This model is clearly present when he says that the function of special education is to provide for children with deficits (not normal). This shows that he doesn't fully share the ecological model of the project. He also told me that he shares the philosophy of inclusion, but in practice his opinion is that education decisions as regards children should give priority to parental choice whether these choices go in the inclusive direction or not.

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## GENERALISING PERSPECTIVES

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The interview with teachers indicates a strong push to develop inclusive practices. There is, however, no general indication that work to develop such practices are founded on long-range social goals of inclusion. At least none of the interviewees relates inclusive practices in schools to such long-range goals. The approach to inclusion is predominantly pragmatic. Extensive use of teacher aides for work with children with problems may support this conclusion and conveys a feeling that inclusion is not sufficiently based on educational programs, but on the need to keep traditional teaching going untouched. Such approaches may easily devalue programs for children with disabilities and serve to locate the socially at the lower end of the venetian blind – so apply a metaphor from the interview.

With few exceptions critical analysis of the school context where inclusion has to take place is lacking. The result is that comments on intervention seem to be based on 'individual support model' that swiftly turns inclusive practices into an issue of resources and staff. Reasoning about school innovations that may help school to be more able to cater for diversity is surely there but doesn't have any generality. Positively, the interviews indicate some constructive conflicts between a systemic and an individual oriented approach. This conflict also seems to run the project that has been established to support schools in their work for inclusive practices. Lack of a firm theoretical and practical basis for their work may ultimately turn this resource into traditional special education with no real consultative and innovative roles. Lack of special education training of teachers may contribute to this choice of model.

At the organisational level a hybrid organisation seems to be preserved by present values and funding. Liberal access to resources for segregated practices may even turn special schools into magnets and to present them as more attractive alternatives to parents than regular schools. So, there is strong indication that separatism may prosper in a system, which favours the inclusion philosophy. Moves are made to make segregated programs more inclusive by locating satellite classes in regular school. This reorganisation isn't sufficiently based on an inclusion intent that results in inclusive practices in the regular school setting.

Generally spoken, these interviews show that inclusion doesn't exist in pure form, but only as a result of negotiations between interests and values. The interviews clearly show that there is an ongoing practical discourse on inclusion and is an important practical achievement of policy even if the results of these discourses are difficult to predict.

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## **CRITICAL ISSUES**

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No countries have to my knowledge done so much as New Zealand to clarify its special education policy. Special Education 2000 placed special education on the country's political agenda. However, adopting a separate policy of special education may be regarded as a 'therapeutic' approach to students with special needs that may serve to separate the special education domain from other policy domains, which are important for successful programs with long-range goals for students with special needs. The distinction between a 'reductionist' and a 'holistic' approach may seem relevant here. The elements of the policy have mainly an individual focus. The main goal seems to be to establish verifiable and equitable ways of allocating scarce resources. This might imply a 'reductionist' approach to special education that does not offer sufficient room for the social needs associated with disabilities. A feeling that special education needs is something that can be successfully catered for within the school system without any system changes.

### **ESTABLISHING NEW CATEGORIES**

The main idea of the ORS scheme was to create a funding system based on real needs that didn't put those who received funding into devalued categories of disability. Just the opposite may actually happen. Because very restrictive funding practices 'moderate' and 'high' needs have become new attractive categories for schools and parents allocating fresh resources to schools serving these students and at the same time offering parents the feelings of security and stability. Divergent practices of assessment and categorisation of need in combination with difficulties in applying the categories to complex problems easily result in practices that are not equitable.

### **CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES**

There is a tension between ideologies. The market ideology that favours consumers' choice creates a particular mindset. One of the interviewees described this mindset by the metaphor 'educational shopping'. This ideology serves to create an individualised approach to special education that may prevent critical analysis of the contexts in which schooling takes place. This ideology does not correspond very well

with the inclusion ideology favoured by policy because the individual doesn't offer a sufficient foundation of inclusion. Inclusion has to be understood in terms of social interaction, the organisation of systems, and of course also in terms of the macro-social in which it is to take place.

## **CONFLICTING VISIONS OF THE ROLE OF SCHOOLING**

There is a tension between the parents' vision of schooling and what they feel is in fact taking place. Social integration is a primary goal for the parents I met. There is a feeling that schools do not measure up to the inclusion ideology and that their children become marginalised. They simply do not feel that their children's needs are not clearly located at the day-to-day agenda of the school. There are indications that this agenda is set by a subject-oriented curriculum and a strong assessment orientation. In this situation their children easily become marginalised. The consequence may be that they do not consider inclusion a viable option.

## **RHETORIC AND REALITY**

There are economic, political and ideological reasons for the policy changes that have taken place. An important question, however, is if decentralisation of power to the local schools and the establishment of the Board of Trustees have improved the situation for students with disabilities. Views are expressed that in this situation a control mechanism assuring that needs are catered for and that policies are implemented are not in place. Parents that perceive that their opinions are not coming through in the new system also verify this.

## **INCLUSION IN A HYBRID ORGANISATION**

There is an obvious lack of social and philosophical underpinning of the principle of inclusion. Inclusion is seldom discussed in any long-range terms. Inclusion is mainly a principle related to schooling and no local infrastructure in place to secure transition from school to society. In schools inclusion is generally approached pragmatically without really provoking system changes. A hybrid organisation is maintained. This organisation is present at the systems level indicated by the prosperous special school alternative and the lack of efficient communication between this alternative

and regular schooling. And it is present in regular schools indicated by the project oriented approach to disabilities instead of training of regular teachers and the extensive use of teacher aides to cater for students with disabilities.

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