Inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji: Teacher perspectives and attitudes

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine teacher perspectives and attitudes on inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji. Teachers' perspectives and attitudes are crucial in providing insights that could help improve education and services for children with disabilities in regular schools in Fiji.

A qualitative approach using semi structured interviews was selected as the methodology for this research. Nine teachers from nine different schools in Suva, the capital city of Fiji, participated in this research. The nine participants were selected from three different school settings. Three of the participants were from special schools, three were from primary schools and three were from secondary schools.

Data collected showed that teachers support inclusive education, however, they had reservations on the inclusion of students with severe disabilities. Several factors were identified to influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. The most common factors were severity of disability that the students had, inadequate training of teachers on teaching students with disabilities, inadequate government funding, lack of specialised resource personnel and lack of appropriate equipment and resources to support students and teachers in the teaching learning process. Limited commitment from the Ministry of Education and limited participation and consultation of teachers on policy and curriculum design were also identified as contributing factors for non inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools.

Teachers need to change their perspectives and attitudes and schools need to be welcoming and prepared to accept all students with disabilities into the general education system in Fiji.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The title of this research is **"Inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji: teacher perspectives and attitudes."** It examines the perspectives and attitudes of nine teachers with regard to the inclusion of children with disabilities in Fiji schools. Children with disabilities in this research includes children with sensory, intellectual and physical impairments particularly those children with hearing and visual impairments, as well as children who use wheelchairs to assist with their mobility or movement around the school.

1.1 Chapter overview

The purpose of this research, a statement of the research problem, a description of the research setting and participants, the research questions, the significance of this study and an overview of my interest in this research topic are presented in this chapter. The background information on the education of children with disabilities in Fiji is also provided. This chapter concludes with the format of this thesis.

1.2 Purpose of this study

The primary purpose of this study is to examine teachers' perspectives and attitudes on inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji. The majority of students with disabilities in Fiji are still educated in special schools. Very few students are educated in regular school settings.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 1994, call on all governments to adopt an inclusive policy by enrolling all students with disabilities in regular schools. This is because inclusive education has been identified internationally as a solution to the marginalisation and exclusion of students with disabilities.

UNESCO (1994) also views the inclusion and the participation of students with disabilities essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights. This call for inclusion was recently ratified by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2007, where nearly a hundred countries in the world signed up at the convention. With regard to education, all children should learn together wherever possible regardless of difficulties, disabilities or differences.

1.3 Statement of the research problem

As stated earlier, the majority of students with disabilities in Fiji are still segregated and educated in special schools. Children with disabilities leave the comfort of their homes and immediate family members to seek education in the special schools, which are available only in major town centres in Fiji.

Children with disabilities who live on the outer islands have to travel by boat all the way to these major town centres to seek education. Even though there are schools within their neighbourhood, villages and islands, many of these schools do not enrol them. This is because students with disabilities are perceived to be in need of special education and therefore should be educated in special schools.

Inclusive education is vital in Fiji because it will provide the opportunity for all students with disabilities to be educated within their neighbourhood schools. Students will not have the trouble of travelling far away from their homes if all schools in their neighbourhood accept and include them.

Teachers' perspectives and attitudes are crucial because their perspectives and attitudes determine the way they behave towards students with disabilities. Gaining an insight into their perspectives and attitudes can help provide an understanding of why students with disabilities in Fiji are

still being marginalised and excluded from regular schools, schools that they would be attending if they did not have a disability.

The map below (Figure 1) shows the major town areas where special schools are available. Children with disabilities who live on the outer islands and in remote rural areas of Fiji do not have easy access to the special schools.

Key: ● indicates towns which have special schools

Figure 1. Map of the Fiji Islands

Source: www.mapsouthpacific.com

1.4 Research setting and participants

This research was conducted at nine different schools in Suva, the capital city of the Fiji Islands. The nine schools consisted of three primary schools, three secondary schools and three special schools. The three special schools included a school for students with intellectual impairment,

a school for students with visual impairment and a school for physically and hearing impaired students. The nine schools were selected randomly.

Nine teachers participated in this research. The nine teachers who participated in this research included three teachers from three special schools, three teachers from three primary schools and three teachers from three secondary schools. Teachers were selected as participants for this research because they play a vital role in the education of students. Their perspectives and attitudes towards students and the general climate that they establish in the classroom have a major impact on the success of all students particularly those with disabilities. The different educational settings in which the participants worked and their different perspectives provided rich data for this research.

The primary and secondary school teachers who participated in this research were recommended by their respective head teachers and principals based on their experiences and involvement in working with students with disabilities. Participants from the special schools were selected randomly without the involvement of their head teachers. Heads of schools in special schools and primary schools in Fiji are referred to as head teachers while heads of secondary schools are referred to as principals.

1.5 Research questions
This research is addressed by the following research questions:

1. In what ways do teachers' perspectives and attitudes have an effect on the inclusion or exclusion of students with disabilities in their schools or classrooms?

2. What are the underlying issues or factors that influence teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards inclusion?

3. How will this study inform inclusive practices in Fiji?

4. How will this study contribute to philosophical and educational learning in relation to inclusion locally in Fiji and internationally?

1.6 Significance of this study

This research is significant because it can create a greater awareness of inclusive education and its importance for children with disabilities in Fiji. It is hoped that teachers' perspectives and attitudes will help all stakeholders that is, the local government, the Ministry of Education, teachers, parents, and school managements in Fiji education, to improve support and services for students with disabilities in schools.

This research is also intended to inform the Ministry of Education in Fiji of the inclusive practices happening in the schools that have accommodated students with disabilities. It is hoped that the Ministry of Education in Fiji may begin to implement positive changes within the current education system and encourage inclusive practices in all schools for the benefit of all students with disabilities. This research is also significant because it will contribute to the international literature on inclusive education.

1.7 Interest in research topic

My interest in this research topic arose from my experiences during my teaching career in both regular and special schools in Fiji. I taught for 14 years in four different primary schools in Fiji after graduating from Lautoka Teachers college, the only government primary teacher training institution in Fiji, in 1985. Special education was relatively new at that time and was not included as a unit of study during my teacher training years.

During my teaching career I did come across students with disabilities, but their disabilities appeared mild and did not seem to interfere with their progress and achievement at school. However, most of these students were often excluded from participating in sports and outdoor activities. They would either sit on the sides of the sports ground watching as spectators

or remain in the classroom while other students went out for outdoor activities such as gardening.

These observations were based on personal and professional experiences over my 14 years of teaching experiences. As I was a teacher without any training in the education of children with special needs, teaching became very challenging and stressful at times, especially when faced with students who had special needs that I could not deal with. It challenged me to seek further studies.

In 2001, I was awarded a scholarship to complete a Diploma in the Education of Students with Special Teaching Needs at the Auckland College of Education in New Zealand. It was here that I came face to face with many different disabilities. I visited schools around Auckland and saw how students with various disabilities were included in all activities, even swimming. It made me think of students with disabilities back home in Fiji who were often excluded from participating in the activities at school.

I became an early intervention teacher for children with special needs in Suva, Fiji, after completing my studies in Auckland. Influenced by the knowledge, skills and experience gained, my perspectives about children with disabilities changed and I became more positive, more confident and competent in working with children with disabilities.

I became instrumental in advocating for the inclusion of students from the Early Intervention Centre for children with special needs in which I taught directly into regular primary schools. These students proved themselves capable and worthy of education in the regular schools they attended despite their differences and disabilities and progressed like any other student without disabilities.

In 2006, I was appointed Chef de Mission and Team Manager for the Fiji Athletes with Disabilities Team to the Far East South Pacific Games (FE-

SPIC Games) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I was overwhelmed by the abilities of persons with disabilities that participated at those games.

There has been extensive literature on the inclusion of children with disabilities internationally. Influenced by the current literature and practices worldwide, I decided to research inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji with a focus on teacher perspectives and attitudes. I have not been able to locate any research studies on inclusive education in Fiji and this has also led me to conduct this study.

1.8 Education for children with disabilities in Fiji

The majority of children with disabilities who attend school in Fiji are educated in special schools. There are seventeen special schools for children with disabilities in Fiji. These schools are managed by local committees and local organisations and are registered with the Ministry of Education in Fiji. The majority of the teachers in the special schools are primary school trained teachers. These teachers are paid by the government. Extra support staff when needed are recruited and paid for by their respective school management.

Special education schools were established to cater for the educational needs of students with disabilities. Organisations such as the Fiji Society for the Blind for instance, helped established the Fiji School for the Blind to educate students with visual impairments. These organisations appeal for donations and contributions from the general public and businesses to help maintain the running of their special schools. Funding also comes from overseas donor agencies and this funding help maintain the running of the special schools.

These special schools provide specialist services, individualised instructional strategies and resources to help students develop the skills and competencies needed for successful participation in the general curricula and in the regular schools. Once their potential and abilities are recog-

nised by their special education teachers they are then mainstreamed into the regular schools.

Mainstreaming is the placement of children with disabilities in to the regular schools only when they can meet the academic expectations, with minimal assistance.

Table 1

Special schools in Fiji – 2008

School	Location	Disability
Early Intervention Centre	Suva	Multiple Disabilities
Hilton Special School	Suva	Hearing & Physical Impairment
Suva Special School	Suva	Intellectual Impairment
Gospel School for the Deaf	Suva	Hearing Impairment
Fiji School for the Blind	Suva	Visual impairment
Nausori Special School	Nausori	Multiple disabilities
Levuka Special School	Levuka	Multiple disabilities
Lautoka Special School	Lautoka	Multiple disabilities
Sunshine Special School	Lautoka	Multiple disabilities
Nadi Special School	Nadi	Multiple disabilities
Savusavu Special School	Savusavu	Multiple disabilities
Labasa Special School	Labasa	Multiple disabilities
Veilomani Boys Centre	Ba	Multiple disabilities
Ra Special School	Rakiraki	Multiple disabilities
Sigatoka Special School	Sigatoka	Multiple disabilities
Ba Special School	Ba	Multiple disabilities
Fiji Vocational Rehabilitation Centre	Suva	Multiple disabilities

Source: Ministry of Education (Suva, Fiji).

Suva has six special schools and four of these special schools enrol only students with specific disabilities. The other two special schools enrol students with multiple disabilities. The other eleven special schools around the country enrol students with multiple disabilities such as intellectual im-

pairments and physical impairments. Students with visual and hearing impairments are sent to the special schools in Suva.

There is no separate curriculum for students with disabilities in the special schools in Fiji. Special schools in Fiji use the same curriculum used in the regular primary schools. However, teachers in special schools do amend the curriculum and teach at a slower pace to meet the learning abilities of the students.

There are no statistics available on the total number of children with disabilities in Fiji nor are there any statistics on the number of students with disabilities in regular primary and secondary schools. From my professional knowledge as a primary and special education teacher, I can say that the number of students in regular schools is quite small and for the few schools that I am aware of that include students with disabilities the maximum number of students with disabilities that each of these schools have is less than five.

Most of the special schools have students with a diverse range of disabilities. The only schools with specific disabilities are the Fiji School for the Blind, the Gospel School for the Deaf which is a private school, the Suva Special School for the Intellectually Handicapped and Hilton Special School, which specifically enrols students with hearing and physical impairments.

1.9 Thesis format

This thesis is divided in to six chapters. Chapter one presented the purpose of this study, a statement of the research problem, the research questions which guided this research, a brief description of the research setting and participants, the significance of this research and interest in this research topic.

Chapter two presents the literature review on inclusive education where the definition, goals and rationale for inclusive education are explored. Teacher attitudes and factors that influence their attitudes towards inclusive education are also included. Barriers to inclusion and essential elements for successful inclusion are also covered.

 Chapter three presents the methodology used in gathering data for this research. The research paradigm, research approach and research design used are all included. The trustworthiness and authenticity of this research is addressed, as well as the processes involved in obtaining the data.

Chapter four presents the data for this research which were collected from nine teachers at nine different schools in Fiji.

Chapter five then discusses the research findings with reference to the literature reviewed in chapter two of this thesis.

Chapter six presents the conclusion, limitations and implications of this research. Recommendations for successful implementation of inclusive education and recommendations for further research are also included.

This thesis concludes with a list of appendices and references used in this research.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter presented the purpose of this research, a statement of the research problem and its significance. Background information relevant to this research and a description of my interests and experiences that led to this research were also presented. A format of this thesis which described the contents of each chapter had also been provided.

The following chapter provides the literature review on inclusive education which explores the definition, goals, rationale for inclusive education, teacher attitudes, benefits and essential elements for successful inclusion. Barriers to successful inclusion are also included.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The inclusion of children with disabilities in ordinary schools and class-rooms is part of a large world wide human rights movement which calls for the full inclusion of all people with disabilities in all aspects of life (Tilstone, Florian & Rose, 1998). The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) calls on all governments to adopt inclusive policies and enrol all students with disabilities in regular schools (UNESCO, 1994). This is because children with disabilities have often been excluded from mainstream schools, schools that they would be attending if they did not have a disability.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2007) ratified and strengthened calls for inclusion of all people with disabilities in all areas of life. 'Article 1' of the convention set out the general principles of the convention which include non discrimination, equality of opportunity, respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity and full effective participation of persons. These principles are crucial for the inclusion of all persons with disabilities.

2.1 Chapter overview

The chapter covers the definition, goals and rationale for inclusive education. The development of inclusive education as well as its global impact is presented. Perspectives on inclusive education along with the philosophical principles that support inclusive education are also presented. Barriers to inclusive education as well as positive outcomes of inclusive education are also covered. This chapter concludes with a review on the essential elements for successful inclusive education.

2.2 Definition of inclusive education

Inclusive education is defined as the full inclusion of children with diverse abilities in all aspects of schooling in general education classrooms regardless of their ability or disabilities (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2005; Rogers, 1993; Salamanca Statement & Framework of Action, 1994).

The term inclusion is typically used to refer to the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools. According to Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy (2008), students with disabilities exhibit specific conditions that result in their need for additional educational assistance in schools. Spedding (2005) says that these include not only those students with a disability but also those students with learning difficulties and behaviour disorders, those from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds, those with chronic medical conditions and all those who are at risk in the school environment for whatever reasons.

With inclusive education all students are included in all school and class activities. Therefore, inclusive education is seen as a process of addressing the diverse needs of all learners where all students in a school regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area participate and learn together in the same classes and activities (Ainscow, 1999; Pearpoint, 1992; The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), 1997).

Inclusive education involves overcoming practices that are segregatory throughout the education system. Ballard (2004) states that educating children in segregated environments and requiring them to follow different courses of study in terms of content and learning environment to their peers is not inclusion. Loreman et al. (2005) state that with inclusion, efforts are made to ensure that the needs of all students are met within an equitable and accepting education system.

2.3 Goals of inclusive education

One of the major goals of inclusive education is to ensure that students with disabilities have fair and equal access to normal school experiences (Loreman et al., 2005). According to Andrews and Lupart (1993), this involves changes and adaptations in the regular schools and classrooms where differences of students are valued and celebrated.

Andrews and Lupart (1993) further suggest that the goals of inclusive education will not be accomplished quickly and the process itself will take time to evolve and grow. They say that commitment on the part of all those involved in the educational process is a pre requisite for the emergence of a unified system of education that can meet the unique needs of all students. Bateman and Bateman (2002) state that the goals of inclusion are achieved only when students with disabilities belong and participate in all the school and class activities with needed services and support.

2.4 Rationale for inclusive education

There are many reasons for implementing inclusive education. Studies show that inclusive education improves educational opportunities and social development for all students, responds to diversity, fosters understanding and tolerance and helps to eradicate prejudices against students with disabilities (Jenkinson, 1997; Kugelmass, 2004; Peters, 2003; Rix & Simmons, 2005).

2.4.1 Improves educational and employment opportunities

Inclusive education improves educational and employment opportunities for students with disabilities (Peters, 2003). Research shows that children with disabilities in regular school settings achieve more in academic and social learning compared to those children with disabilities in segregated special education settings (Rix & Simmons, 2005). Jenkinson (1997) agrees that educating children with disabilities alongside their non disabled peers facilitates access to the general curriculum and that most chil-

dren with disabilities do make better academic progress when expectations of their performance are raised.

According to studies conducted by the National Research Centre on Learning Disabilities (2005), special education students who are educated in regular schools have higher academic achievement, higher self esteem and a greater probability of attending college. They are also more likely to graduate and find employment when they leave school. Therefore with inclusive education the chance of students with disabilities getting into employment is higher than those students who remain in self contained special education classrooms.

Peters (2003) states that the exclusion of children with disabilities from education results in their exclusion from opportunities for further development and it also diminishes their access to vocational training and employment. He adds that the failure to access education and training prevents the achievement, economic and social independence of people with disabilities, which results in a continuous cycle of poverty and vulnerability in society.

2.4.2 Responds to diversity of students in schools

Inclusive education is increasingly being seen as a strategy for responding to diversity of students in schools at both national and international levels (Kugelmass, 2004; Rix & Simmons, 2005). Booth and Ainscow (1998) say that with the increasing diversity of children in schools throughout the world, old models of separating students by various categories and labels are seen as unfeasible and oppressive.

The Salamanca Framework (1994) states that educational systems that take into account the wide diversity of children's characteristics and needs are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, and creating welcoming communities. Andrews and Lupart (1993) stress that schools should provide the opportunities for children to learn among their friends, and strive to be communities that value diversity. According to the

Salamanca Statement (1994), each child has the right to be a full member of his or her community school.

It is important that quality educational services should be made available to all children and that no child should be excluded from regular schools because of perceived learning differences (O'Hanlon, 2003). Catering for diversity does not mean sending children elsewhere to be educated. It means valuing all children and recognising the rights of children to an education alongside others (Ballard, 2004).

2.4.3 Fosters understanding and tolerance amongst students

Understanding and tolerance are fostered amongst students in inclusive educational settings. According to the National Research Centre on Learning Disabilities (2005), educating both students with disabilities and students without disabilities together fosters understanding and tolerance, and it better prepares students of all abilities to function in the world beyond school.

2.4.4 Eradicates prejudices against students with disabilities

Inclusive education also helps to eradicate prejudices. Wade and Moore (1992) state that as more children with disabling conditions enter the regular schools, more of the prejudices prevailing in society will begin to disappear. They add that as students without disabilities and their parents interact on a day to day basis with children with disabilities, they will begin to realise the strengths and weaknesses of the students rather than their disabilities.

Wade and Moore (1992) also state that the positive attitudes towards disabled students that are developed and demonstrated in many schools will permeate through families and society and encourage attitude change towards everyone with disabilities.

2.4.5 Delivers students with disabilities from segregated settings

Inclusive education is also essential in delivering children with disabilities from the segregated self contained institutions which keep them separated from the rest of their peers. Rae (1996) states that if children with disabilities are going to be kept out of main stream schools, they are going to be kept out of life forever. Rae argues that main stream schools give students with disabilities much more. It gives them the social contact and it gives them the sense of how this world operates. She further says that "if children with disabilities are put away in segregated schools to be let out at the age of 16 or 17, then they are moving into an alien world that they are not part of and cannot be part of, because they have not learned and have not been part of the growing process."

Jenkinson (1997) states that segregated settings are seen as artificial and non normative because transfer of students with disabilities from such settings into a normal community setting will require considerable adjustment that will not be necessary if the individual student was integrated from the start.

2.5 The beginning of inclusive education

Strong advocacy from parents and organisations that support children with disabilities and other special education needs led to the implementation of inclusive education (Friend & Bursuck, 2006; Smith et al., 2008).

In the 1960s, parents of African American children formed a civil rights movement that advocated against discrimination of their children (Friend & Bursuck, 2006). This was because many communities in America had separate schools for African American children and separate schools for white children.

According to Smith et al. (2008), this civil rights movement based on racial differences emerged as a significant social force which culminated in to the dismantling of segregated school systems based on race in America.

Smith et al. (2008) also say that the American state, federal court cases and legislations mandated equal access to all schools by children from all backgrounds including all races. As a result, parents of students with disabilities saw this as an opportunity and realised that they could emulate the successful actions of civil rights groups to gain better services for their children

In the late 1970s many students with disabilities worldwide were gradually integrated into the regular classrooms either full time or for part of each school day and according to Smith et al. (2008), this was the beginning of a new era for children with disabilities and their families who had been denied access to public education solely on the basis of having a disability.

2.6 Global impact of inclusive education

The implementation of inclusive education in America had an impact internationally. According to Kugelmass (2004), the implementation of inclusive education and creation of inclusive schools resulted in the intentional restructuring of school cultures, policies and practices in many countries (Kugelmass, 2004).

In 1994, at the World Conference on Special Needs in Salamanca, Spain, it was proclaimed that all children with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them and that teaching strategies be adapted to meet the needs of the students (Foreman, 2005; Peters, 2003; Tilstone, Florian & Rose, 1998). This was reaffirmed at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. Recently, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) reiterated their efforts in ensuring universal human rights for all persons and creating a fully inclusive society for all.

With inclusive education, students with disabilities eventually had the opportunity to learn and interact with peers without disabilities in typical classroom settings (Mitchell, 2005). Many countries worldwide now adopt

policies that value and protect the rights of children and people with disabilities. According to Mitchell (2005), inclusive education policies enable everyone to be accorded equal status regardless of their abilities or disabilities. He adds that not only have these inclusive policies allowed students with disabilities to be accepted into schools of their choice but have also enabled them to participate and be included in the many activities that they never had access to.

In New Zealand for example, the Education Act of 1989 granted children with special educational needs the same rights as other children to enrol and receive education at their local school (Ministry of Education, 1996). The New Zealand Human Rights Act of 1993 also provided major protection against discrimination on the grounds of disability within educational institutions. It is against the law for schools in New Zealand to refuse the enrolment of a student because of disability (O'Brien & Ryba, 2005).

The New Zealand Special Education 2000 policy further provided funding with the specific aim of ensuring that children with special needs or disabilities will be welcomed at their schools and be able to achieve better learning outcomes through provision of flexible programs (Mitchell, 2005).

2.7 Perspectives on inclusion of children with disabilities

The settings in which students with disabilities should receive educational and related services have continued to be much discussed and remain one of the key issues in the field of education worldwide (Corbett, 2001; Smith et al., 2008). Professionals and parents have different perspectives on the inclusion of children with disabilities.

According to Bryant, Smith and Bryant (2008), some professionals support full inclusion where all children are served in the regular classroom all the time. Studies show that regular schools are the preferred and most appropriate settings for all students (MacArthur et al., 2005). Comparative stud-

ies also found improved results for students in regular settings in comparison to those in special schools (Friend & Bursuck, 2006).

Professionals who support inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools believe that all students have a right to fully inclusive educational practices where they can benefit from being integrated into a school setting with their peers (Bryant et al., 2008).

However, other professionals argue that full inclusion where students with disabilities receive all their education in a general education setting is not sufficient to support students with more severe needs whether these needs are academic, emotional, social or physical (Bryant et al., 2008). There is concern that the needs of these students will not be addressed adequately to provide an appropriate education.

One study shows that some parents of children with disabilities had reservations about putting their children into regular schools. They feel that the general education programmes in the regular schools are not educationally appropriate or welcoming to their children (Palmer, Fuller, Arora & Nelson, 2001). According to the study, parents feel that the general education classrooms will not be an appropriate place for their disabled children as some have medical needs and sensory impairments that need individual attention.

The study also shows that parents feel that children with severe disabling conditions such as cerebral palsy and seizures will only distract other students in the class and may affect their learning as well (Palmer et al., 2001). However, studies conducted by Loreman et al. (2005) show that children with disabilities spent comparable levels of engaged time during classes as their non disabled peers and caused no loss of instructional time. Loreman et al. (2005) state that loss of instructional time was attributed to administrative interferences, transitions between activities and to children without disabilities.

Further studies show that parents fear that their children may be subjected to unfair treatment and criticisms by both teachers and children without disabilities in their general education classrooms (Palmer et al., 2001; Pivik et al., 2002; Rouse, 2006; Mohay & Reid, 2006). According to the studies, parents are concerned that their children may not get the attention they need because of the large class size and also because the teachers may not have the experience and training to meet the needs of their disabled children. More parents believe that their severely disabled children will benefit more in a vocational training and independent living training where they learn living skills that will assist them to live independently.

Ballard (2004), however, states that the separation of students into special schools and regular schools will continue the idea that there are two kinds of children, special and not special and two ways of teaching children, those of special education and those of not special education. Ballard stresses that increasing capability in special education will continue the ideas and practices of special education and will therefore involve limited change in the main stream education to cater for disabled children.

2.8 Principles of inclusion

The principles of inclusion promote the acceptance of all students as members of a learning community regardless of their circumstances. According to Bryant et al. (2008), the philosophy of full inclusion is strongly derived from consideration of civil rights issues and the rights of all children to be educated together. They add that within this framework, students' special needs are assessed and supported as far as possible with a continuum of services available only when absolutely necessary.

Foreman (2005) states that inclusive principles such as 'all children belong' support the rights of students to be educated with their peers in a meaningful way. He adds that it is the foundation for making the classroom or school a more welcoming place where appropriate learning experiences are available for everyone. Foreman (2005) further adds that membership

of and belonging to a community is facilitated by inclusive education and it provides a diverse stimulating environment in which all children grow and learn together.

Spedding (2005) suggests that teachers must become aware of the principles and processes of inclusion and have a positive attitude to the inclusion of students with disabilities in order to accept and adjust to the new responsibilities. She adds that teachers will then develop new competencies and work as team members committed to every student with the opportunity to achieve to their potential.

2.8.1 All children belong

One of the fundamental principles of inclusive education is that all children belong. It implies that all children no matter how severe their disabilities are, or how intensive their needs are can be accommodated in the regular class in their neighbourhood schools (Jenkinson, 1997; Peters, 2003).

Peterson and Hittie (2003) stress the importance of belonging in a school community for children with disabilities. They say that belonging is fostered by the positive and welcoming attitudes of staff, and students without disabilities to the individual differences and additional learning needs of students with disabilities. According to Smith et al. (2008), for students to succeed in the classroom, they need to feel a sense of belonging and this sense of belonging assists in making learning enjoyable and students feel valued as part of the class.

Smith et al. (2008) further state that students with disabilities are only truly included in their classroom communities when they are appreciated by their teachers and socially accepted by their classmates. They add that the acceptance of students with disabilities is demonstrated in the day to day interaction with the students and the organisation of classroom activities and while planning activities, an inclusive teacher will always have

students with disabilities in his or her mind and will always find activities that will include and enable students to participate actively and effectively.

2.8.2 All children can learn

There has been widespread acceptance that all children can learn. Foreman (2005) says that learning that takes place is not the same for all students. He said that for some students learning to indicate when they are hungry or thirsty or to show an activity preference will have a significant positive effect on the quality of their lives. Foreman further adds that it is not typical school learning, but it is still learning that can be nurtured and developed by teachers and other school staff in school settings.

Foreman (2005) also says that for some teachers it may initially be difficult and time consuming to explore and implement change and they may feel themselves to be challenged both professionally and personally. He further adds that however, such challenges present opportunities for teachers and schools to foster learning environments that welcome diversity and enable teachers to feel that they can make significant contributions to the school and community.

2.8.3 All children have the right to live a normal lifestyle

The principle of normalisation embraces the belief that people are entitled to live as normal as possible a lifestyle in their community and that patterns in conditions of their everyday life should be as close as possible to those available to the mainstream of society (Bauer & Shea, 1999; Foreman, 2005; Jenkinson, 1997). Normal in this context is taken to mean what most other people in that culture do or prefer to do.

In education, normalisation means making maximum use of the regular school system with minimum dependence on segregated facilities (Jenkinson, 1997). All students and their parents should be able to choose the neighbourhood school they wish to attend, in the same way that it would be expected that a student without a disability would do (Foreman, 2005).

According to Foreman (2005), the social roles of people with a disability tend to be poorly valued in society. He states that if people with a disability are to be genuinely included in the community, it is important that their social roles are valorised. This means that they need to be given roles and opportunities that are valued by the rest of the community. Their living conditions, their education or work and their everyday activities should not be greatly different from what is valued by the culture.

From a school's perspective, it is important that students with a disability are given roles that are valued by the school community. According to Foreman (2005), students with disabilities need to be able to participate in the school's day to day activities and wherever possible perform roles that are seen as positive and valuable.

2.9 Positive outcomes of inclusive education

Many studies have concluded that inclusive education has many positive outcomes. Research conducted by LaRocque and Darling (2008) demonstrates that inclusion affects everyone, children with and without disabilities, families, educators, service providers and administrators. Loreman et al. (2005) state that children without disabilities can learn to value and respect children with diverse abilities in inclusive classrooms and they also learn to see past the disability and the associated social stigmas when placed in inclusive classes.

2.9.1 Enhances teachers' skills and confidence

A study conducted by MacArthur et al. (2005) shows that with inclusive education teachers develop skills and confidence for teaching diverse students and they engage collaboratively with other professionals as they work together to provide effective and quality teaching to students with disabilities. Kluth (2005) states that the presence of students with disabilities in schools should help teachers to become better teachers. He says that students with diverse learning characteristics often inspire teachers to

use a wider range of teaching strategies, educational materials and lesson formats.

2.9.2 Enhances social acceptance of students with disabilities

Studies on inclusion shows that social acceptance of children with diverse abilities is enhanced by the frequent small group work nature of their instruction in inclusive classrooms (McGregor, & Vogelsberg, 1998). This is believed to be closely associated with greater opportunities for social interactions with non disabled peers, who act as models for children who are still developing age appropriate social and communicative competencies. Children without disabilities also get to see beyond the disability of children with disabilities when working in small groups and begin to realise that they have much in common (MacArthur et al., 2005; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998).

2.9.3 Promotes friendships amongst students

Friendships develop more commonly between children with disabilities and those without disabilities in inclusive settings. Studies show that children in inclusive settings have more durable networks of friends than children in segregated settings (Foreman, 2005; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998). Barton (1998) states that the ordinary everyday experiences shared with friends can bring about positive changes and benefits for both children with disabilities and their peers without disabilities.

Studies also show that children with disabilities demonstrate high levels of interactions with their peers without disabilities in inclusive settings when compared with students with disabilities in segregated settings (McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; Peck & Scarpati, 2006).

2.9.4 Provides natural environment for skills development

An important aspect of inclusive education is that regular education settings provide a natural environment for students with disabilities to develop the skills and social experiences that are relevant to successful employment and community living (Peters, 2003). As stated by MacArthur et al.

(2005), education in regular schools and classrooms enhances students'
learning as key transition into adulthood. It also promotes their involve-
ment and participation in the wider community and enhances their success
after schooling.

One study shows that children with disabilities in inclusive settings often
have a more rigorous educational program resulting in improved skill ac-
quisition and academic gains (McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998). The study
shows that an educational program for children with diverse abilities in in-
clusive settings is generally of a higher standard than in segregated set-
tings and children in these settings spend more time engaged in academic
tasks and demonstrate improved academic outcomes.

2.9.5 All students benefit from additional resources

According to Loreman et al. (2005), children without disabilities benefit
from inclusion as much as children with disabilities in many ways. MacAr-
thur et al. (2005) agrees that students without disabilities benefit from the
additional resources that are provided and they get to learn important life
skills such as respect for diversity, teamwork and communication

 Loreman et al. (2005) also state that children without disabilities do bene-
fit from improved instructional technologies in the classroom. This is be-
cause some students with disabilities require the use of technology to help
them learn, such as specialised computer software or hardware to assist
them in their work. They added that other children do benefit from the
presence of these technologies and can use them when they are not re-
quired by the student with disabilities.

2.10 Barriers to inclusive education

Despite calls for the adoption of inclusive education worldwide, millions of
children with disabilities in the world are still being excluded, isolated and
marginalised (Foreman, 2005; Peters, 2003). Many obstacles still stand in
the way for children with disabilities. According to Loreman et al. (2005),

not only are children with disabilities challenged by attitudes, support services and discrimination, schools and educators are equally challenged by lack of funding, resources and support personnel to help assist in the inclusion process.

According to Arbeiter and Hartley (2002), one of the common arguments against the inclusion of children with disabilities into main stream schools is that the schools are already experiencing difficulties in meeting the needs of non disabled students. They say that this is due to large class sizes, untrained teachers, and lack of resources and facilities. They add that the emphasis on an academic curriculum, on exams and rote learning contributes to the difficulties in the implementation of integrated education. Lack of personnel prepared to provide quality inclusive services to students with disabilities and their families is also one of the primary barriers to serving students (Buell, Hallam, McCormick & Sheer, 1999).

It has also been seen that in most developing countries special schools exist mainly in the cities and are accessed by the elite and other city dwellers, whilst the majority of the population live in rural areas where main stream schools are not adequately resourced to include children with disabilities into their classes (Arbeiter & Hartley, 2002).

2.10.1 Negative teacher attitudes

Negative teacher attitudes are seen as one of the major barriers towards inclusion and the learning of students with disabilities (Andrews & Lupart, 1993; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998; Spedding, 2005). Teachers' attitude is of great significance as it determines the way they teach and behave towards students with disabilities in their classrooms. Neilson (2005) states that teachers have the capacity to make a difference in the lives of the students they teach and their attitudes are often reflected by the way students without disabilities react towards students with disabilities in the class.

Spedding (2005) states that teachers' attitudes appear to vary with their perceptions of the specific disability as well as their beliefs about the demands that students' instructional and management needs will place on them. She adds that students with disabilities are often left out or ignored in class because many teachers feel that it is not their responsibility to teach them. According to Pivik, Mc Commas and La Flamme (2002), students with disabilities are often isolated from the rest of the class because their teachers believe that they need a higher degree of physical care and management above their educational needs.

Sobol (2008) states that excluding students because of their disability lowers their expectations and ultimately results in lower performances from the students themselves. He adds that where the expectation is low or non existent, the child will quickly lose confidence and self esteem. According to Smith et al. (2008), students often achieve at a level that is expected of them and if teachers expect less, they get less.

Salend (1999) states that if teachers are not supportive of the inclusion of students with disabilities, other students will detect this attitude and be less likely to accept students with disabilities as equal class members. He adds that students are very good at sensing behaviours and attitudes that are discriminatory or supportive towards students with disabilities. They have a tendency to model these attitudes and behaviours as they relate to interactions with students and the acceptance of individual differences.

Neilson (2005) states that teachers are agents of educational changes and societal improvement. She says that it is important for teachers to acknowledge and appreciate diversity that exists in the class and that diversity of students with disabilities needs to be recognised and accepted and not punished or marginalised.

2.10.2 Lack of qualified teachers and professional development

A lack of personnel prepared to provide quality inclusive services to students with disabilities is one of the primary barriers to serving students in an inclusive environment (Buell et al., 1999). Many teachers lack information about students considered to be exceptional or special and believe, therefore, that they are under prepared to teach them (Opdal, Wormnaes & Habayeb, 2001).

According to Wylie (2000), there appears to be a great need for both pre service and in service training to support the development of inclusive teaching approaches. The Wylie Review of New Zealand's Special Education policy recommended that all teacher training institutions be required to incorporate inclusive education papers within their core training programme.

The Wiley Report (2000) also recommends that teachers and teacher aides be trained on the particular needs of the students and be given guidance on appropriate teaching methods, learning activities and adapted materials. Having ongoing professional development and training is extremely important.

Tilstone et al. (1998) stresses the importance of teachers having frequent opportunities for collaborative planning with other teachers, especially special educators and have ready access to the disability networks and inclusion specialists who can address specific questions educators might have. They add that lots of new resources and technology have been invented and all teachers should be aware of all the new information and technology in order to assist and support students with disabilities better.

2.10.3 Competitive policies and school standards

Competitive school policies which place great emphasis on the standards of the school are also seen to be one of the barriers towards inclusion of students with disabilities in schools. According to Avramidis (2005), some

school administrators feel that the inclusion of students with disabilities will have a negative impact on the standard of achievement for the school.

2.10.4 Inadequate training of teachers and poor staffing

The inadequate preparation and support for teachers are also seen as barriers towards successful inclusion of students with disabilities in schools. Studies show that teachers lack the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of a wide range of children with disabilities (Prochnow, Kearney, & Carroll-Lind, 2000; Avramidis, 2005; Mohay & Reid, 2006). Studies also reveal that new graduates are not equipped to teach students with diverse abilities. The studies also show that there is lack of specialist training and adequate preparation of staff and that support needs are being over-looked.

2.10.5 Lack of resources

The lack of resources in schools contributes to the exclusion of students with disabilities in many classroom and school activities. According to Mohay and Reid (2006), for teachers to do their work effectively there need to be adequate and appropriate resources available. Rouse (2006) states that many students with disabilities rely on assistive technology to assist them with their movements and learning. Therefore, it is important that schools and classrooms be well equipped to cater for the needs of the students and to assist teachers to do their work effectively. Rouse (2006) also states that many students with disabilities require all types of physical and human resource support in order to operate successfully in their schools and classrooms.

Poor staffing in schools and inappropriate teacher student ratio also contribute to the non inclusion of students with disabilities (Mohay & Reid, 2006). It is seen that many regular classrooms are already filled with students who have learning difficulties and behavioural problems and teachers do not have the skills and experience to accommodate them all (Palmer, 2001; Mohay & Reid, 2006).

2.11 Essential features for successful inclusion

Many features are being identified as critical in the successful inclusion of students with disabilities. These include strong leadership and support from the school principals, positive teacher attitudes, acceptance and a sense of belonging for students, inclusive instructional strategies and parental involvement. All these features are essential for inclusive education to be successful.

2.11.1 Administrative leadership and support

The success of students with disabilities depends a lot on the type of support that is available and provided in the schools that they are enrolled in. According to O'Brien and Forest (1989), school principals as influential people in the school have the greatest authority and power in influencing members of the school staff to support inclusion of children with disabilities. They add that through the principal's leadership, a model of accepting and welcoming students with disabilities can be established, and progress is made by encouraging collaborative teamwork and by involving parents.

Wade and Moore (1992) agree that school principals have an important role in promoting and sustaining changes in schools. They say that without the school principals' efforts, schools cannot change or improve to become places where all students learn essential academic and non academic lessons in preparation for life in the community. Wade and Moore (1992) add that principals play a unique role in helping students, staff and parents to think and act more inclusively.

Friend and Bursuck (2006) state that for a school to be inclusive, the principal must be a strong leader who keeps the vision focussed and fosters amongst staff an understanding of inclusion. According to Wade and Moore (1992), effective inclusive schools are schools that have principals that take leading roles in modelling inclusive attitudes and behaviours and ensuring that all staff members are aware of their roles in ensuring that all

children with disabilities are included and supported in all aspects of school life.

2.11.2 Positive teacher attitudes

Positive teacher attitudes have significant impact on the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools. Loreman, Forlin and Sharma (2007) state that successful inclusion depends largely on the attitudes and willingness of the teachers at school to welcome and involve students with disabilities in their classrooms in a meaningful way. Research shows that teachers with positive attitudes not only employ instructional strategies that benefit all students in the classroom but also have a positive influence on the attitudes of students without disabilities towards students with disabilities (Buell et al., 2007).

Avramidis, Baylis and Burden (2001) state that inclusive education will not be achieved where acceptance and commitment of teachers are not evident. They say that for inclusion to be successful, teachers need to be accepting and committed to its principles and demands.

Neilson (2005) states that a teacher's positive attitude and belief in a child with disability is critical and can have lasting effects. According to Arbeiter and Hartley (2002), the attitudes of teachers have a stronger impact on children with disabilities in the classrooms rather than the availability of resources or the technical knowledge of specialised teaching strategies. Teachers who have positive attitudes have high expectations and fully involve students with disabilities in all classroom activities (Neilson, 2005; Smith et al., 2008).

Neilson (2005) further states that it is important for teachers to continuously reflect on their attitudes and practices and to improve on them. She adds that if more teachers become reflective practitioners and positive, then more children with disabilities will thrive in the main stream settings.

Macfarlane (2004) suggests that teachers need to find time to listen to students and to reflect on their feelings.

2.11.3 Acceptance and sense of belonging

A child's sense of belonging in the school community is a vital element of inclusion (Peterson and Hittie, 2003). They say that when students do not feel a sense of love and belonging, they often react in problematic ways and feelings of unworthiness and low self esteem set in.

One of the biggest challenge students with disabilities face in schools is acceptance. According to Smith et al. (2008), for students to succeed in the classroom they need to feel a sense of belonging. They say that when students belong, they feel safe and this sense of belonging assists in making learning enjoyable and they feel valued as part of the class.

Peters (2003) states that the philosophy of inclusion promotes the acceptance of all students as members of a learning community regardless of their circumstances. He adds that inclusion supports the rights of students to be educated with their peers in a meaningful way. It is the foundation for making the classroom or school a welcoming place where appropriate learning experiences are available for everyone.

 Foreman (2005) agrees that inclusion is about membership and belonging to a community. He says that inclusion provides a diverse stimulating environment in which all children grow and learn together and it affords a sense of belonging. He further adds that inclusion enables development of friendships and provides opportunity for all children with disabilities to be educated with same aged peers.

2.11.4 Inclusive curriculum

An inclusive curriculum is essential for the successful inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools (Smith et al., 2008). According to Mentis, Quinn and Ryba (2005), the curriculum is a way of promoting so-

cial, emotional and development growth of all students. Smith et al. (2008) suggest that curriculum for students with special needs must be responsive to the needs of individual students and it must facilitate maximum integration with non disabled peers and focus on the students' transition to post secondary settings.

The Council for Exceptional Children (2005) stresses that to meet the goals of equal access to the curriculum for everyone and to enable each student to engage with his or her lessons in a meaningful way, teachers must be prepared to provide useful alternatives in terms of both curricular materials and instructional delivery. According to Tilstone et al. (1998), teachers who work to develop a curriculum which meet the needs of all pupils are developing a vehicle for inclusion while those who attempt to fit the pupils to existing structures are more likely to provide a level for exclusion.

Tomlinson (1999) states that depending on the disability itself and other factors affecting their ability to succeed academically, students with disabilities may need modifications in the curriculum taught. He adds that without appropriate modifications the curricular materials can be inadequate for students with disabilities and this could deprive these students from having access to the essential aspects of the curriculum.

2.11.5 Inclusive instructional strategies

For all students to be included, teachers need to use inclusive instructional strategies. Teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, differentiated instruction and the use of computer technology are some of the well researched teaching strategies and are proven to be very effective for students with all disabilities (Mentis, Quinn & Ryba, 2005; Peterson & Hittie, 2003; Smith et al. 2004).

Smutny (2003) states that teachers need to incorporate a variety of teaching techniques or pedagogical strategies that provide students with a variety of opportunities to engage in the learning process (Smutny, 2003).

Cooperative learning is regarded as one of the best teaching strategies for students with disabilities. Jolliffe (2007) states that with cooperative learning, students are required to work together in small groups to support each other to improve their own learning and that of others. He adds that with cooperative learning, friendships between peers can be established and maintained and there is a greater sense of belonging and mutual support. He further adds that morale amongst students also improves and there is greater independence and increased self confidence as students achieve.

Peer tutoring is also described as one of the strategies that optimise students' performance. According to Bauer and Shea (1999), peer tutoring and supports are forms of peer mediated instruction in which peers serve as instruction agents or helpers. They say that one of the main advantages of peer tutoring is that it creates a more favourable pupil teacher ratio especially in a large class of thirty to forty students and it also increases the amount of time students spent on a task.

Bauer and Sheer (1999) further add that with peer tutoring, students with disabilities have more opportunities to interact with peers without disabilities and have more access to teacher student discussions, worksheets and workbooks, written tasks and projects. Peer mediated instruction also allows students to motivate their peers to contribute their best performance to complete tasks and also uses procedures such as frequent error identification, immediate feedback and peer encouragement to ensure success (Allington, 1994; Mentis et al., 2005).

Differentiated instruction is also identified as one of the instructional strategies that best meet the needs of students with disabilities. According to Smutny (2003), differentiated instruction addresses individual needs and adjusts instruction to fit the skills and experience level of each student

in a classroom. He says that students need choices as to how they will engage in classroom activities in order to be successful. Tomlinson (1999) agrees that when students take ownership of their learning, they become more involved, interactive and take control by using their individual learning styles to access information, interpret material and demonstrate what they have learned.

The use of technology is also seen as an effective instructional tool for students with disabilities. According to Peterson and Hittie (2003), computer technology has the ability to help all learners participate equally, accommodate different learning styles and can motivate students to participate actively in learning at their own pace. They also add that computer software programs offer students with disabilities a non judgemental forum for study and practice and whether the student requires one exercise or one hundred exercises, the computer remains neutral.

2.11.6 Parental involvement

Inclusive schools value and recognise the value of parents in their children's education. Parental involvement is very critical in inclusive education because they can offer teachers valuable information and support (Andrews & Lupart, 1993; Orelove & Sobsey, 1991; Smith et al., 2008).

Andrews and Lupart (1993) state that parents involvements in their children's education contribute to positive attitudes to learning. They suggest that parents' wishes, feelings and knowledge be taken in to account during all stages of their children's learning, beginning from their enrolment to the planning of their educational plan, right up to assessment.

According to Orelove and Sobsey (1991), parents have expert in depth knowledge of their child's personality, strengths and needs and can make substantial contributions to the inclusion effort. They add that as primary stakeholders in inclusion, parents should be involved throughout the entire planning and implementation process. Peters (2003) states that inclusive

schools realise that professional help can be ineffective if parental involvement is ignored.

2.12 Conclusion

The literature reviewed provided the background information on inclusive education. It provided the definitions, goals and rationale for inclusive education. The development of inclusive education and the impact it had internationally were explored. Perspectives on inclusion of students with disabilities were also covered with an overview of the principles of inclusion.

Positive outcomes of inclusion were also provided and the barriers to successful inclusion were also included. The literature reviewed also described the essential features for successful inclusion which focussed on administrative leadership and support, positive teacher attitudes and parental involvement. All these were identified as critical elements for successful inclusion.

Informed with the literature, this research endeavours to examine teachers' perspectives and attitudes on inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji. Teacher perspectives and attitudes are important as they can provide insights as to why the majority of students with disabilities in Fiji are being segregated and educated in special education settings.

The following chapter presents the methodology and processes involved in collecting data on teachers' perspectives and attitudes with regards to the inclusion of students with disabilities in Fiji schools.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to collect data for this research. Research questions that guided this research are provided as well as the approach, paradigm and the design used. A description of the processes involved in accessing the participants is also provided.

The primary purpose of this research was to examine teachers' perspectives and attitudes on inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji. Nine teachers from nine different schools were interviewed to examine their perspectives and attitudes with regard to the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools.

3.1 Research questions

This research was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways do teachers' perspectives and attitudes have an effect on the inclusion or exclusion of students with disabilities in their schools or classrooms?

2. What are the underlying issues or factors that influence teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in their schools and classrooms?

3. How will this study inform inclusive practices in Fiji?

4. How will this study contribute to the philosophical and educational learning in relation to inclusion locally in Fiji and internationally?

3.2 Research approach

3.2.1 The qualitative data

A qualitative approach was used to examine teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in their schools and classrooms. The qualitative approach has been identified by Glaser (1992) as a way that can uncover the nature of people's actions, experiences and perspectives.

The natural setting was used as the direct source of data. According to Merriam (1998), the researchers go to the particular setting under study because they feel that action can be best understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs. Data are collected on the premises and supplemented by the understanding that is gained by being on location (O'Connor, 2007).

With qualitative research, the data collected are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. When presented in narrative, the data provide tones and means of helping the reader to connect with the research that pure numerical data are unable to convey (Burton, Brundrell, & Jones, 2008). Researchers try to analyse the data with all of their richness as closely as possible to the form in which they were recorded or transcribed.

Data in the form of the participant's own words are likely to be included to support the findings of the study (Merriam, 1998; O' Conner, 2007). According to Burton et al. (2008), the real strength of this way of researching is in the way that quoting from participants is able to offer insight and humanity into the analysis.

Qualitative data can be used very effectively to identify a pattern or trends in relation to a specific phenomenon. The qualitative method requires a focus on a very small number of sites. Schools or particular groups of children or teachers within schools are researched because they are seen as

typical or because they can offer insights into what may be occurring in other schools (Walford, 2005).

3.3 Research paradigms

Research paradigms are used by researchers to guide their research process (Tobin & Kincheloe, 2006).

3.3.1 The interpretive paradigm

This research operated within the interpretive paradigm. Within the interpretive paradigm, the aim of the researcher is to explore perspectives and shared meanings and to develop a better understanding of phenomena occurring in the social world by means of collecting predominantly qualitative data (Burton, Brundrell & Jones, 2008).

With the interpretive paradigm, the researcher wants to know how people grasp, understand and interpret events and this can be done by, for example, conducting an interview. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979), the researcher attempts to understand and explain the social world primarily from the point of view of the participants directly involved in the social process. Burrell and Morgan (1979) further add that the methods of investigation based on the interpretive paradigm seek to understand human beings, their inner minds and their feelings and the way they are expressed in their outward actions and achievements.

The interpretive paradigm fitted in well with this research as it attempted to examine teacher perspectives and attitudes and to find out factors that influenced their attitudes with regard to the inclusion of students with disabilities in their schools and classrooms. The interpretive paradigm also provided a deeper knowledge and understanding of the teachers' behaviour and relationships. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), the research evidence becomes useful only when the findings are interpreted.

With the interpretive paradigm the construction of knowledge is a democratic process which involves both the researcher and the research participants, and where knowledge is constructed from multiple perspectives (Burton et al., 2008). In this research, data were interpreted from three different school settings and from the perspectives of nine different participants.

3.4 Research design

3.4.1 The interview

 The data for this research were collected using semi structured interviews. A semi structured interview is an interview in which the researcher asks some predetermined questions but also allows the participants time and opportunity to explore other areas they think relevant (Hinchey, 2008). This interview method was chosen because it was believed to be the best way of extracting information regarding the teachers' perceptions and attitudes about inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji.

The interview method is seen as a unique research method because it involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals where the answers are either written or recorded (Cohen, et al, 2007). According to Hinchey (2008), interviewing is probably the most common form of data collection in qualitative studies in education and in many studies it is the only source of data.

Interviews have many purposes. One of the main purposes of an interview is to obtain information that is relevant to research. Interviews give the researcher an idea of what is in or on someone's mind on the topic being investigated. According to Best and Kahn (1993), in areas where human motivation is revealed through actions, feelings and attitudes, the interview can be most effective. There is a higher response rate because the respondents are actually involved and get motivated. This may enable them to say more than what was originally expected (Cohen et al., 2007).

As a data gathering technique, the interview has unique advantages. One of the main advantages of having an interview is that it is easy to conduct and direct. Many people are more willing to talk than to write. In this situation the interviewer has the ability to get an answer to all the questions and the interview could also generate some very interesting points (Bell, 1999).

Another advantage of the interview is its flexibility or adaptability. For example, the interviewer has the opportunity to observe the person and the total situation in which he or she is responding. The interviewer can make use of these responses to alter the interview situation. And if the information given is irrelevant or does not make sense, the interviewer can press for additional information to obtain more data and greater clarity (Bell, 1999). Likewise if the interviewee does not understand the questions or misinterprets the question, the interviewer can either repeat or explain the meaning of the questions.

With personal contact, there is greater opportunity for an individual to participate and provide the desired information (Bell, 1999). Extracting information from the person interviewed is easier once the interviewer gains rapport. Once the interviewer establishes a relaxed relationship with the interviewee, information that may not have been forthcoming or confidential is more easily extracted (Bell, 1999).

The interview is also a great advantage in situations where the person interviewed cannot read and understand a written questionnaire. The only readily available information gathering technique available is the interview (Bell, 1999). Two of the teacher participants in my research did not have the ability to write. One was completely blind and the other had no hands. Having the interview was therefore particularly convenient in this situation.

3.5 Trustworthiness and authenticity

All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner. The notion of trustworthiness is one that fits very well

with the qualitative approach used in this research and the interpretive paradigm that I am working with. Being able to trust research results is especially important to professionals in applied fields such as education, in which practitioners intervene in people's lives (Merriam, 1998).

In qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved and the participants approached (Cohen et al., 2007). Trustworthiness and authenticity in this research were met by following all the ethical aspects of the research. Proper procedures were followed in accessing the participants.

It was initially planned that teachers be approached directly for participation without the involvement of their school principals and head teachers. However, this did not happen in the three primary and secondary schools visited as the respective school principals and head teachers recommended a teacher in their school to participate.

The recommended teachers from the three secondary schools were teachers who were actively involved with students with disabilities in their classes, while the three primary school teachers were recommended based on their previous involvement and teaching in special schools. Participants from the three special schools were approached directly without any intervention from their head teachers.

All the participants were fully informed about the research and their consent given before the interviews. All participants were also given a copy of their interview transcripts to amend and withdraw information that they were unhappy with. No new words were added nor any words deleted from their transcribed data.

According to Kvale (1996), validity could also be achieved by interviewing from a range of sources. For this research, three groups of teachers were interviewed. There were three teachers from special schools, three teachers from primary schools and three teachers from secondary schools. All

were interviewed using a semi structured interview guide (Refer to Appendix 5 for interview questions).

3.6 Research process

3.6.1 Approval from the Research Ethics Committee (See Appendix 1)

Many processes were involved in the carrying out of this research. Application for ethical review and approval was submitted to the University of Waikato School of Education Research Ethics Committee. The ethics committee deliberated on my application. Amendments were made and resubmitted for consideration before final approval was given.

3.6.2 Approval from the Ministry of Education in Fiji (See Appendix 2)

The Ministry of Education in Fiji was informed of my intention to conduct research at nine of the schools in Suva. An introductory letter was sent to the Permanent Secretary for Education in Fiji introducing myself and my research as well as requesting permission and authorisation for me to visit the selected schools and conduct interviews with the interested teachers. Approval from the Ministry of Education was important as some school principals and head teachers ask for evidence of approval.

3.6.3 Consent from principals and head teachers of schools

Once approval was given from the Ministry of Education I then made appointments by phone to see the respective school principals and head teachers of the nine selected schools. Once appointments were made I met with the school principals and the head teachers and informed them of my research and gave them a copy of approval from the Ministry of Education. The principals of the three secondary schools and the head teachers of the three primary schools then recommended teachers in their school who would best meet the needs of my research. The head teachers of the special schools did not recommend anyone and asked me to approach any teacher in the school.

3.6.4 Consent from teachers

Recommended teachers were called to the principal's office and were informed about me and the research I was doing. They were asked if they could assist me. I then had a one to one meeting with the teacher. I gave the teacher a copy of the information sheet detailing my research and a consent form to sign if he or she agreed to participate. We then set an appropriate date and a time for the interview.

At the nominated date and time I met with the teacher, went over the information sheet and gave time for the teacher to ask questions and informed him or her with her rights. Participants were informed of their rights to decline to participate and also of their rights to withdraw completely from the research. They were also informed of their rights to withdraw any information they provided.

Participants were also briefed on the nature of research and the form in which the findings will be published. Participants were assured that they will not be identified in any publication or dissemination of research findings.

The interviews were conducted at the respective school sites. For the secondary school teachers the interviews were conducted in their offices during their free periods. This was very convenient as there was hardly any noise as all students were in their respective classes. Teachers in the primary schools and special schools were interviewed after school hours in their respective classrooms.

3.7 Selection of research participants

Nine teachers from nine different schools in Suva participated in this study. Three were teachers from three special schools, three were teachers from three primary schools and three of the participants were teachers from three secondary schools. Teachers who work with or who have had direct experiences with students with disabilities in their classrooms were

selected as participants for this research. The reason for selecting these teachers was because of their direct involvement with students with disabilities and they were considered the best to provide the most reliable information on the topic that I was investigating.

 The selection of the participants was made in consultation with the school principals and head teachers of the selected schools. I had initially intended to hold meetings with the teachers in the schools and then approach a teacher individually. However that was not possible as permission to see teachers had to be granted from the school principals and head teachers. After meeting with the respective head teachers and principals they each recommended teachers whom they thought would best assist me with my research.

Not all teachers in the schools visited had direct contact with students with disabilities, so the school principals and the head teachers of the schools visited recommended teachers in the school who have worked with or were currently working with disabled students in the school.

At one of the secondary schools, the school had a coordinator for students with disabilities and she was the contact person for any issues related to the students with disabilities. As such, she was recommended by the school principal. After being approached she readily accepted.

The selection of participants from the three special schools was different as the head teachers did not have any involvement in their selection. Although I did seek consent from the head teachers for meeting with teachers and conducting interviews within the school premises, the head teachers told me to approach any teacher in the school. The first teacher that I approached and agreed to participate in my research was the one that I selected from the special schools.

3.8 Ethical considerations

3.8.1 Informed consent

All the nine participating teachers were fully informed of the research before the interviews began. They were informed on what the research was about, its purpose and what it aimed to achieve.

Participants were also informed that information gathered was to inform my thesis and that the Ministry of Education in Fiji will be informed of my findings. They were also informed that information in my research may be used in future seminar presentations or publications and that their approval was needed. All these were clearly documented on the consent forms which I discussed with them and which they were given time to read through before they signed.

Getting the consent of the research participants was necessary because it respected their rights as participants and gave them the opportunity to make decisions on their own rather than being influenced by the recommendation of their school principals and head teachers.

The participants who were recommended by their respective school principals and head teachers were fully informed that they did not have to participate if they did not want to. However, they all said that they were happy to participate and signed the consent forms.

3.8.2 Confidentiality and potential risks for participants

The participants and their respective principals and head teachers were informed that no names will be mentioned nor their schools identified in the reporting of the findings. However, it must be recognised that there was a possibility that the participating teacher would be identified by their respective school principal or head teacher. As a precautionary measure, great caution was taken when reporting the findings of this research to minimise the possibility of the participant being identified.

3.9 Research equipment

An audio tape recorder was used during the interview with prior approval from the participants. Approval for participation and approval for interview to be recorded were signed on the consent forms and were also acknowledged on tape before the interviews began.

The use of the tape recorder during the interview was very convenient. This gave me the opportunity to concentrate on the interview rather than writing the responses. Recording of the interviews on tape was also convenient because the tape could be replayed as often as necessary for analysis at a later time.

3.10 Data collection

Data were collected from the nine teachers by using semi structured interviews. An interview guide (Appendix 5) was used to help me during the interviews. The interview guide consisted of some specific questions which were asked in no particular order. Other questions asked were based on the responses that the participants gave.

Before the interviews the teachers were asked to fill in a demographic information sheet (Appendix 6) using tick boxes. This included a list of variables regarding information on age, years of teaching experience and disabilities of children they have worked with or are working with. While giving out the form I assured the participants that information gathered on the form was confidential and it was in no way to be used to identify them.

Each interview took approximately an hour. The participants were thanked for their participation and support for the study. This acknowledgement was also recorded on tape. A formal acknowledgement was send with their transcripts. They were requested to read through their transcripts, make amendments and changes if they wanted to. A cut off date for changes and withdrawal was given to the participants. After the cut off date I called them individually by phone to confirm if they had received

their transcripts and if there were any changes needed to be made. All the participants confirmed that they have received their transcripts and gave me their assurance that that was what they said and were happy with me to proceed with the analysis of my data. One of the participants contacted me via e-mail which was very convenient.

3.11 Data analysis

With this research all data were recorded on tapes. I transcribed all the taped material that had been gathered the same day I completed each interview. Transcribing the data after every interview helped me to formulate further questions that I thought were important and relevant and carried the questions over for the next teacher to be interviewed. The actual wordings of the responses were retained. No new words were added nor any words deleted. All data were transcribed in detail with nothing left out.

Each interview was coded with a letter and a number. For instance, all special schools teachers' data were coded as SET1, 2, 3. Data from the three primary school teachers were coded as PT1,2,3 while data from the three secondary school teachers were coded as ST1,2,and 3.

I typed and stored the transcribed data into my personal computer as well as saved them in a memory stick as a back up data. I read through the transcribed data over and over again to see if there were any patterns or themes. I then used different colours to code segments of the data which were similar. Since my data were stored in electronic form, I used the text highlighting feature to colour code the data. I then cut all the segments of the data which had the same colour and pasted them together under a category or theme which I felt best suited the data. For instance, all the participants' definition of inclusive education was put under the category "teachers' definition of inclusion."

As I read through the data, key differences and similarities became increasingly clear and the segments began to fit together. New issues which

did not fit into any of the existing categories were placed under a new category which I titled emerging issues and then sorted them into specific categories later on in the data analysis.

3.12 Data management

After transcribing my first interview, I began to make notes of what the participant had said. After transcribing the second interview I began to make comparisons to see if some of the things that they said were similar and began to make tentative categories. I did this for all my transcripts and by the end of my interviews I had analysed most of the information that I had collected although I was not sure of what the exact results were.
It was only when I colour coded and put the information together that I began to get a clearer picture of the issues that answered the purpose of my research.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology used in this research. The research approach, paradigm and design used were presented. A detailed description of the processes involved in the collection of data was also provided. Ethical considerations were also included.

The following chapter presents the findings of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides the findings of this research, which examined teachers' perspectives and attitudes on inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji. The research was conducted in Suva, the capital city of the Fiji Islands. Data for this research were collected from nine teachers at nine different schools in Fiji. Three of the teachers were from secondary schools, three were from primary schools and three were from special schools.

Semi structured interviews were used to collect data from the nine teachers. The main focus was to get teachers' perspectives and attitudes with regard to the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools. The teachers were asked about what they understood about inclusive education and what they thought about the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools. They were also asked to describe reasons as to why students with disabilities should or should not be included in the regular schools (See Appendix 6 for interview questions).

In the reporting of these findings, the special education teachers are referred to as SET1, 2 and 3. The primary school teachers are referred to as PT1, 2 and 3. The secondary school teachers are referred to as ST1, 2 and 3 respectively.

4.1 Demographic data

Collecting the demographic data (Table 4.1) was important because significant relationships could potentially be established with the variables and the interview data. The variables included the participants' gender, age, qualifications, and years of teaching, background experience with disabilities and the disabilities of students that the participants were teaching.

Table 2

Demographic data

Teacher	Gender	Age	Qualifications	Years of teaching	Disability experience	Disability of students in class
SET 1	F	32	Certificate in Teaching (Fiji) Degree in Special Education (Australia)	8	Yes	Multiple Physical & hearing impaired
SET 2	M	28	Certificate in Special Education (Fiji)	2	Yes	Intellectual impairment
SET 3	F	26	Bachelor of Arts (University of the South Pacific) Fiji	4	Yes	Visual impairment
PT 1	F	50	Certificate in Teaching (Fiji)	30	Yes	Learning disabilities
PT 2	F	36	Certificate in Teaching (Fiji)	16	None	Learning disabilities
PT 3	M	43	Certificate in Teaching (Fiji)	20	None	Learning disabilities
ST 1	M	60	Certificate in Teaching (NZ)	40	Yes	Learning disabilities
ST 2	M	45	Post Graduate Diploma Research and policy design (USP-Fiji)	20	Yes	Visually impaired
ST3	F	32	Bachelor of Arts (Geography & Social Science) USP – (Fiji)	6	None	Visually impaired

Of the nine teachers who participated in this research, five were females and four were males. The teachers' ages ranged from the mid twenties to the early sixties. All the teachers were qualified teachers. Their qualifications ranged from a Certificate in Teaching to a Masters Degree. Only two of the teachers had special training in special education.

Years of teaching experience ranged from two years to forty years. Background experiences varied as well. While some teachers have had some background experience with children with disabilities, two of the teachers had no background experience at all and only came into contact with students with disabilities at the school where they currently taught.

The three primary school teachers did not have any students with disabilities in their classrooms at the time of the interviews but they taught for two

years in special schools and therefore had some background experience of teaching children with disabilities. All are qualified and trained primary school teachers. Two of the teachers were trained at Lautoka Teachers' College, which is a government owned teachers' college, and one was trained at the Corpus Christi Teachers' College in Suva, which is run and managed by the Catholic Church in Fiji.

Two of the secondary school participants were graduates from the University of the South Pacific. The third participant holds a teaching certificate from Wellington Teachers College in New Zealand. Two of the secondary school participants have had background experiences with children with disabilities while the third participant had no background experience or training in teaching students with disabilities. All the three secondary teachers had students with disabilities in their classes.

Disabilities of students taught by participants also varied. The data showed that the most common disability in primary schools was learning disability and the most common disability in two of the participating secondary schools was visual impairment. Children with learning disabilities in the primary schools have specific disabilities such as dyslexia, inability to read.

4.2 Teachers' definition of inclusive education
A range of definitions of inclusive education were provided by the participants. These included participation of students with disabilities in both academic and non academic lessons, being part of everything, learning amongst able bodied peers, the right to learn together and having the same rights as everyone else.

Two of the participants mentioned the participation of students with disabilities in their definitions. One of the participants said that "inclusive education is the inclusion of special education children into the mainstream classroom whereby they are given the chance to participate in the other curricular activities such as sports, drama and activities that may not be

available in a special education setting" (ST1). Another participant said that inclusive education is when students with special needs are accepted or integrated into normal schools, to participate and to learn among their able bodied peers, which includes both academic and non academic lessons (ST3).

Two other participants defined inclusive education as the rights of children with disabilities to be educated alongside their able bodied peers and to have successful education in the schools that they were enrolled in. One of the participants said that inclusive education is where children with disabilities were educated in a school and given all their rights, as is anyone else (PT1). The other participant said that "inclusive education was where all children regardless of colour, gender, ability or disability had the right to learn and when given the opportunity can have a successful education in the classrooms and schools that they were enrolled in" (PT2).

One of the participants defined inclusive education as the inclusion of everyone in the main schooling system regardless of their difficulties and their differences (ST2). He said, "Be it a blind or visually impaired student or a handicapped person, they are all part of the schooling system." Another participant said inclusive education is teaching children with special needs in a normal mainstream class and being part of everything that happens in the school (ST3).

4.3 Teachers' perspectives on inclusion of students

All the nine participants supported inclusive education. However, they all said that students with profound or severe disabilities should be educated in special education settings. Students with profound or severe disabilities are those students who needed extra care and management as well as those who needed assistive devices such as wheelchairs to help with their movement around the school. Five of the participants said that only students who were able to cope with the academic work in the classroom should be included.

Several factors have been identified by the participants as to why not all students with disabilities should be included in to the regular schools. Communication barriers, differences in teaching styles, unavailability of support teachers and unavailability of appropriate equipment and resources were some of the factors that the participants stated.

One of the participants said that the idea of inclusion was very good because it broadened the minds of students with disabilities and it also gave the students an idea of what was happening out there in the world (SET3). She also said that "when students with disabilities are isolated in their special education set up, their experiences are limited to their peer groups of disabilities and they do not know how to interact with able bodied people." She further added that "when these students [visually impaired students] come across non disabled people, they do not know what to do or how to react and most of them are not prepared for the attitudes and reception that they get especially when it is negative and this often hurts them."

One of the participants said that not all children with disabilities should be included in the regular schools especially the severe ones because these students needed individual educational programs (SET1). She said "only the students who are able to cope and be involved in academic activities should be included in the regular schools."

Another participant said that "it's a good thing to include everyone into the normal school, but for the severe ones, it's good to stay in a special school" (SET2). He said that for students who were deaf and mute, and were intellectually impaired, communication would be a barrier, and unless the teaching style in mainstream classrooms changed, students with disabilities would not have their needs met very much.

Two of the participants stated the differences in pedagogical styles used in regular schools and special schools as one of the reasons why students with severe disabilities should be educated in special education settings.

One of the participants said that the way students with disabilities were taught in the special education set up and the way they were taught in the regular schools were quite different (SET3). She said that "in the special schools, teaching is mostly one to one interaction whereas in the mainstream it is a whole class teaching approach." She further added that in regular classrooms students worked on their own and did things independently with very little support from the class teacher, and with this approach of teaching, students with disabilities would not be able to cope well in the classroom.

The availability of a support person to assist a child with disability in the class was also stated. One of the participants said that "not all children with disabilities should be included in regular schools but those who have the potential to develop more and cope with the work given" (PT1). She added that unless a support teacher was there to assist the students with severe disabilities in her class, the students will be left on their own most of the time as there were forty other students to teach and attend to.

The availability of equipment and training of teachers and support staff to assist students with disabilities in schools and classrooms were also reported by one of the participants. One of the participants said that inclusive education will be good for all children with disabilities. (PT2). However, she said that there will be some students who will need their own special classrooms and curriculum that suited the disability that they had. She also said that "for some students, the disability would be severe and unless they had the proper personnel and the training was given to the teachers and support staff and the equipment was there, it would be a bit too much for the teachers to try and get the child to cope with the work load given in the class."

One of the participants stated the extra workload and responsibilities that teachers have in schools as a barrier for inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools (PT3). He said, "I teach class 8 [Year 8] students and prepare them for their external examinations [Fiji Eighth Year Exami-

nation]. Apart from that I am also responsible for coaching athletics and rugby in the school." He said that it would be difficult for him to attend to the individual needs of a student with disability in his class with the extra workload and responsibility that he had (PT3).

Another participant said that inclusion was good for all students but only when the students were ready and the school was ready (ST1). He said that the acceptance of students with disabilities in their schools depended on the facilities and staff that they had. Another participant said that for children with disabilities to be included the government should take an active role by providing the facilities and training for all teachers on how to teach and handle all the various disabilities that students with disabilities have (ST3). She also said that not all children could be included in regular schools so special schools should still be there to meet the educational needs of students who have profound disabilities.

4.3.1 Optimal time for inclusion of children with disabilities

The nine teachers interviewed were divided on when the optimal time was for children with disabilities to be included into the regular classrooms. Some of the teachers said that the sooner the children with disabilities were included into the regular schools the better. Other teachers said that children with disabilities should only be included when they were ready and able to cope with the work in the regular classroom.

The participants who favoured early inclusion said that the sooner the children were integrated into the regular schools the better. One of the participants said that inclusion of students with disabilities should start from the very early days (ST2). He said that "children with disabilities should be included from kindergarten or from early childhood education because that is where they learn the basics of the education stuff and it would be easier for them to master the skills as they progressed through each and every stage." Another participant said that students with disabili-

ties should be included right from the beginning because non disabled students in the school will learn to appreciate them (ST3).

One of the participants said that children with disabilities should only be included into the regular schools when the classroom teacher deems it appropriate (SET1). The three primary school teachers said that students with disabilities should only be included when they were ready and when they were able to cope with the work given in the classroom. One of the secondary school participants (ST1) said that "students should only be integrated when they are deemed able to cope with the educational demands of the class that they go into."

4.3.2 Curriculum in schools

The nine teachers' perspectives on the curriculum used in schools varied. The three teachers from the special schools and the three teachers from the primary schools all favoured the use of the same curriculum as used in the regular schools. The three secondary school teachers, on the other hand, said that there should be a separate curriculum for students with disabilities.

Successful integration of students into the regular schools based on the use of the standard curriculum used in regular schools was identified by some of the participants. One of the participants from the special schools said that by using the same curriculum students with disabilities in the special schools were able to fit in well when they integrated into the regular schools (SET1). She said that students at the special school that she teaches in were kept till they reached class 8 level because the teachers saw that they were doing the same curriculum as students in the regular schools were doing and that students also sat for the same external examinations that the students in the regular primary schools sat for and eventually move on to an inclusive setting in the high school. She said that if regular schools were to be inclusive then all students should do the same curriculum but it just had to be modified and changed in such a way

that it takes into account the needs and the capabilities of all students with disabilities.

The three teachers in the primary school said that it would be very difficult for a child from a special school to integrate successfully into a class in primary school if the subjects he or she was taking were different from the subjects he or she would take in the primary school. One of the participants said that it was best to have the same curriculum so that students were familiar with the subjects that they take when they integrated into regular schools (PT2).

The three participants from the three different secondary schools however, did not support the use of a standard or same curriculum for all students. They said that students with disabilities should have a separate curriculum. One of the participants said that there should be a different curriculum for different categories of students. He said that "we have three categories of students the weak, the average and the gifted, but all these students follow the same curriculum" (ST2). He said that by having the same curriculum for all students only the students who were able to keep up with the curriculum advanced and moved on to further studies while those who lagged behind became school dropouts

Another participant said that many of the students with disabilities would not be able to do some of the subjects at school because it did not suit their disability (ST3). She said that "for instance, in the Social Science curriculum in Form 3, students had to do individual tasks, draw maps and diagrams." She said that these tasks were not suitable for students with visual impairments.

4.4 Factors that influence teachers' attitudes on inclusion

Several factors have been identified as influencing teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. These included the severity and type of disability that students have, the extra workload and re-

sponsibility teachers have in schools, inadequate training, and unavailability of specialist teachers. Inadequate government funding, lack of demonstrated commitment from the Ministry of Education as well as non participation of teachers in decision making were also identified as barriers to inclusion of students with disabilities in schools and classrooms in Fiji.

4.4.1 Severity and type of disability

All nine teachers identified severity and type of disability as two of the factors that affected the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools and classrooms.

One of the participants said that the inclusion of a student into the school that he teaches in depends on the type of disability the student has. He said, "This school is known as the School for the Intellectually Handicapped, so the school only accepts students who have intellectual impairment" (SET2). When asked what happened to a child who did not fit that category of disability, he said students with other disabilities were referred to other special schools that suited their disabilities. The Fiji School for the Blind takes in only students with visual impairment. Participant (SET3) said, "The name of this school is Fiji School for the Blind. Therefore only students who are blind are accepted at this school."

The three teachers in the primary schools said that their schools only accepted students with mild disabilities. A student with a mild disability is a student whose disability does not affect his or her functioning in any significant way. For instance, the child does not require any equipment for daily functioning at school. The primary school teachers mentioned that their schools do not have the appropriate facilities such as ramps and special toilets to meet the disability of students on wheelchairs and other severe disabilities.

The secondary school participants accepted students with disabilities based on the facilities and staff that they have available at the school. One of the participants (ST1) said that "we only accept students whom we think

we can assist with the facilities and the staff that we have." Another participant said that their school does not have the appropriate environmental conditions to include other students with disabilities such as hearing impairment and students on wheel chairs (ST2). Another participant said that students have to access their classrooms by walking up the steps and it would be difficult to have students on wheelchairs in the school as there were no special provisions for their disabilities (ST3).

4.4.2 Inadequate training on special education

Inadequate training in special education was also identified as a contributing factor for teachers' negative attitudes to the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools. This research showed that all the nine participants were qualified teachers. However, only two of the teachers were specifically trained in teaching children with special needs.

One of the participants said that the training she had on the special education course at teachers college did not prepare her well for the reality she faced with children with disabilities in her class (PT2). She said, "During my training at teachers' college, special education was being introduced, but the content was mostly on special education in general with no specific mention of the varying disabilities and how to deal with the students with disabilities in the classroom." She also said that even for teaching practicum they were not given the opportunity for placements in special schools.

The teacher who was specifically trained in special education said that he did have training in teaching students with disabilities, but the course was comprehensive and rushed as it was only a one year program (SET2). He said that when he started teaching at the special school he was lost for the first two weeks of school. He said that "it was only after I observed and interacted with the students that I began to understand them and learned how to teach them better."

Teacher graduates from the University of the South Pacific in Suva had no training at all on the teaching of students with disabilities. One of the par-

ticipants who graduated from the university said that "if you look at the University of the South Pacific, to what extent are they preparing teachers to deal with, let's say, visually impaired students?" (ST2).

Another participant who is also a qualified secondary school teacher from the University of the South Pacific said that she had no training in teaching students with disabilities at all so she just taught the students with disabilities the same way she taught the non disabled students in her class (ST3).

4.4.3 Lack of specialist teachers

The lack of specialist teachers was also identified as a contributing factor to the non inclusion of students with disabilities in schools. The nine participants stated that teachers were not specifically trained and the teaching institutions did not offer courses on specific disabilities such as hearing and visual impairment.

One of the participants said that teachers in Fiji were not specifically trained in the teaching of children who were visually impaired or who had hearing impairment (ST3). She said that "there are no courses available locally at the teacher training institutions and at the two local universities on specific disabilities."

Another participant said that the lack of specialist teachers to teach students with disabilities is a major reason for schools and teachers not accepting students with disabilities (ST2). He said that "these training institutions should consider these and offer courses that will help our students with specific disabilities such as hearing and visual impairments."

One of the secondary school participants said that they had a student with hearing impairment at the school but the student did not last the whole school year as there was no one at the school who could communicate effectively with him (ST1). He said, "We could not help students with hear-

ing impairment as there was no specialist teacher in hearing impairment at the school to teach them."

Another participant said that "students in special schools were able to learn and communicate using sign language because they had teachers in their special schools who knew sign language. However, when they reached secondary school level, there were not many sign language teachers or resource people to assist them" (SET1).

4.4.4 Extra workload and responsibility for teachers

Six of the participants mentioned that having students with disabilities in the class meant extra workload and responsibility for teachers. Teachers mentioned that they already had responsibilities in schools apart from their classroom teaching responsibility and that having students with disabilities in the class would be an extra responsibility and would mean extra workload.

One of the teachers in the special schools said that in her class she had to do three separate activities all at once. She said that with the varying disabilities of the students and with no support teacher or teacher aide in the class, she easily got tired and very exhausted at the end of the day (SET1). Another special education teacher said that "it is very hard to teach these students [intellectually impaired students]" (ST2). He said that "you have to teach the same thing over and over again before the students could actually grasp what you were trying to teach."

The primary school teachers said that they had other responsibilities in the school apart from their classroom teaching responsibilities. For example, one of the participants said that he teaches an examination class and coaches athletics and rugby in school (PT3). He said that with these extra responsibilities it would be very hard for him to attend to the needs of students with disabilities.

Two of the secondary school teachers (ST2 and ST3), said that they had to put in extra effort to ensure that the visually impaired students in their classes have access to all the notes that were given in class. For instance, one of the participants teaches Social Science and Geography. She said that with Geography and Social Science, there were a lot of mapping and note taking involved. She said that "instead of giving out notes or writing them down on the board I had to dictate to the whole class to accommodate the students with visual impairment in the class" (ST3). She further added that a topic that normally took a day or two to cover was usually covered in a week or two.

4.4.5 Inadequate government funding

Inadequate government funding was identified by the participants as a contributing factor to the exclusion of students with disabilities in schools. Participants said that students with disabilities needed extra resources and specialist teachers. The schools cannot provide all these because of inadequate funding from the government.

One of the participants said students with disabilities needed extra resources and support, yet the funding from the government was the same for all students (ST2). He mentioned that all schools in Fiji receive a thirty dollars grant per child per year. He said that "with the inadequate funding that we have, we do not have enough funds to employ extra teaching staff and buy appropriate resources or build extra classrooms that would accommodate all students with disabilities."

Another participant said that schools will need extra funding to restructure their school buildings to cater for students who have visual impairments and students on wheelchairs (SET1). She said that "because of financial difficulties and inadequate funding, schools will find it hard to restructure and make their schools conducive to the needs of students with disabilities."

4.4.6 Inadequate school facilities

The inadequate facilities in schools were also identified as contributing factors to the non inclusion of students with disabilities in schools. This includes the general structure of school buildings and school compound.

One of the participants said many schools have been built without any thought for students with disabilities and the school environments are not conducive and welcoming for students with disabilities (SET1). She said that many of the schools have no proper pathways and are ill equipped to provide access for all students particularly those in wheelchairs and those with severe physical disabilities.

Another participant stated that most of the schools have double storey buildings and there were no provisions for students with disabilities such as those with wheelchairs and physical impairments (SET3). She said that "as a result most of these students have no access to higher education in secondary schools."

4.4.7 Lack of appropriate equipment and resources

The lack of appropriate equipment and lack of resources were also identified by participants as barriers towards inclusion of students with disabilities.

One of the participants said that students with disabilities needed extensive resources and equipment to help them with their learning (SET3). She said that for example, in Science, the equipment used in primary and secondary schools was not the kind that students with visual impairments used. She said that "there are beakers with markings on them that students have to feel and read, but this equipment is not available so students [visually impaired students] are not able to do the experiments."

Another participant also said that with the lack of proper equipment, students with disabilities at their school did not participate in sports or Physi-

cal Education as the school does not have the proper sports equipment to include them (ST3). She added that as a result the students were often asked to remain in the classroom and do something else while the rest of the students went out for outdoor activities.

4.4.8 Limited commitment from the Ministry of Education

The participants also identified the limited commitment and support from the Ministry of Education regarding the education of students with disabilities in regular schools. Participants stated that the Ministry of Education officers rarely visited their schools to see if there were any students with disabilities in the school and how the students and schools were coping.

One of the participants said, "So far no one from the Ministry of Education had visited to see if there were any students with disabilities in this school" (ST2). Another participant said that the education officers in the Ministry of Education should at first familiarise themselves with the concept of inclusive education before forcing it on teachers and schools (SET1). She said that "before inclusive education is officially implemented in all schools, the officers in the Ministry of Education should themselves be committed and be aware of what inclusive education is all about." She added that the Ministry of Education should consult teachers and listen to the recommendations before integrating all students with disabilities in to the regular schools.

4.4.9 Limited teacher participation in decision making

The limited participation of teachers in decision making and initiatives put forward by the Ministry of Education was also identified as a factor that influenced teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools.

One of the participants questioned the extent to which teachers were involved in policy and decision making regarding the education of students in schools (ST2). He said that many initiatives regarding the education of

students did not include the major implementers of policies who were the teachers. He said that "it is what I would say as a very bureaucratic nature of policy design where the top people design the policy and it's thrown on the teachers." He further said that "teachers are policy actors, they are the official policy actors and I believe that they should be included in the policy development and design in the very first stage."

4.4.10 Occupational Health and Safety Act in schools

The Fiji Occupational Health and Safety Act (2001) in schools was also identified as another contributing factor to the non inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools. According to this Act, schools and teachers were liable for any injuries sustained by the students in the school. Schools, therefore, had to have a safe environment for all students.

According to one of the participants, schools have to be compliant with the Occupational, Health and Safety Act (SET1). She said that "the school environment has to be OHS compliant especially with wheelchair cases." She said that many of the schools were built a number of years back, and the school managements were not prepared to readjust the whole school buildings and structures just for one or two disabled students. She further said that the expenses and cost that will be involved in the alteration and modification of the school structures and environment will be too much for the school management.

Another participant said that the school management and teachers were worried that accidents could happen when these students moved around the school (SET3). She added that this was one of the reasons teachers do not allow students with disabilities to take part in subjects such as Physical Education, Woodwork and Agriculture and all the other subjects which requires them to go out to do gardening or use tools."

4.5 Benefits of inclusive education

Many benefits of inclusive education were identified in the research. The participants all said that inclusive education had benefits not only for them but for the students as well. Patience, tolerance and compassion were some of the virtues that participants acquired while teaching students with disabilities. The participants also expressed personal satisfaction after seeing students succeed with the disabilities and limitations they had. Students without disabilities were also found to benefit from the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classes.

4.5.1 Benefits to students

Inclusive education benefits both students with and without disabilities in schools. Students with disabilities motivated students without disabilities to work harder.

One of the participants said that the presence of the disabled students in the class was a motivation to the rest of the students without disabilities (ST2). He said that in a class test, the students who were visually impaired attained more marks than some of the students without any disabilities. He said that these students were a source of motivation to the other students without disabilities in the class.

Another participant said that the inclusion of students with disabilities helped students without disabilities in the school to be more caring and more understanding towards students with disabilities. She said that "students without disabilities in the school were very friendly and helpful to students with disabilities." She also said that the non disabled students in the class also learned to appreciate and respect the students with disabilities.

Another participant stated that inclusive education gave students with disabilities self confidence (SET3). She said "it gives them an idea of how to survive in the real world and it helps them to interact and to live normally

with non disabled people." She also said that inclusive education helps students with disabilities secure long lasting friendships. She said "the world out there is a big place, and students with disabilities need to make as many friends as possible and that's a good thing about inclusion, because you get to meet new people, you get to make new friends and most of these friends become lifelong."

4.5.2 Benefits to teachers

Inclusive education also had benefits for teachers. The participants stated that teaching students with disabilities helped build their characters and better understanding of students and their disabilities.

One of the participants said that teaching students with disabilities was fulfilling and a lot of the benefits had to do with character building (SET1). She said that "when you see these students come at the very beginning with their limitations and the limited knowledge they have and to see them leave at the end of the day with the new knowledge and skills they have acquired, it is very fulfilling because you know that you have been part of their achievement." She added that by being involved with these students, she had learned to be more compassionate, more tolerant and more patient.

Another participant said that working with students with disabilities had helped broaden her mind and thinking in terms of strategies and ways of dealing with and teaching students with disabilities (SET3). She said that teaching students with disabilities led her towards a wider thinking and thinking aloud in terms of how she could accommodate students with other types of disabilities.

One of the primary school teachers who taught in a special school for two years said that teaching students with disabilities had done a lot on her character (PT2). She said, "I learned to be patient, to learn to wait and hope that change will eventually come at their own time when they were ready." She also said that to actually see the changes that had happened

and to see the skills they had developed gave her a sense of satisfaction as she knew she had something to do with it.

The three secondary school teachers all shared the same views and mentioned personal satisfaction as a benefit of teaching students with disabilities. One of the participants said that "the satisfaction that I get when the students achieve is great as I know I played a role in their success and achievements and I am happy that I had contributed to their success (ST3)." She also said that teaching those students had helped her to accept their disabilities and understand them better.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided the results of this research, which examined teachers' perspectives and attitudes on the inclusion of students with disabilities. Participants' perspectives on the optimal time for inclusion and the curriculum to be used in schools were also presented.

Several factors that influenced teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards inclusive education were identified in this research. Factors such as the severity and type of students' disability, lack of resources and equipment, lack of support teachers and specialist staff in schools as well as inadequate government funding and limited commitment and support from the Ministry of Education in Fiji were identified by the participants.

The following chapter discusses the findings of this research with reference to the literature reviewed in chapter two of this thesis.

CHAPTER FIVE
RESEARCH DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

This research examined teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji. Understanding the perspectives and attitudes of these teachers was crucial because they could help improve inclusive education in Fiji. Although the participating teachers supported inclusive education, they all said that students with severe disabilities should be educated in special education settings. Several factors were found to influence teachers' perspectives and attitudes. These will be discussed in the chapter.

5.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the discussion of the findings in chapter four with reference to the literature reviewed in chapter two. Discussions on the relationship between the demographic data and the interview data are also included.

The discussion will also focus on four main areas identified in the findings. The first theme focuses on teachers' perspectives on the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools, the optimal time for the inclusion of students and the curriculum used by students in schools.

The second theme includes teachers' attitudes and factors that influenced their attitudes and acceptance of students with disabilities in their schools and classrooms. Several factors such as the severity of disability, the extra responsibility and workload of teachers in schools, the inadequate training of teachers, inadequate government funding and the limited commitment and support from the Ministry of Education in Fiji were identified in this research.

The third theme comprises of emerging issues and concerns raised by the participants regarding inclusion of students with disabilities in schools. These include the pedagogical styles used in schools, the non participation of students in school activities such as sports and other outdoor activities, and the limited participation and consultation of teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools.

This chapter concludes with discussion on the positive effects of inclusive education on students and the participants in their respective schools and classrooms.

5.2 Significance of demographic data

The demographic data provided information about the participants' gender, age, qualification, years of teaching experience, disability background experience and information on the disabilities of students in their classes. This information was then linked to the interview data to see if there were any significant relationships.

Linking the demographic data with the interview data did in some instances reveal significant relationships between the variables examined and attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools. The gender and age of the participants in this study did not appear to have any impact on the acceptance or inclusion of students with disabilities in their schools or classrooms.

However, the qualifications of teachers and their years of teaching experiences had an impact on their perspectives and attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools. Teachers with longer years of teaching knew what to expect from the students with disabilities whereas beginning teachers with no special education training took time to adjust to the disabilities of students when the students first enrolled in their classes

Background experiences with disabilities also had a major impact on teachers' acceptance and inclusion. Participants who had previous personal contact and experience with disabilities easily accepted students with disabilities in their classes. Participants with no previous contact or experience with disability initially expressed reluctance with the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms as it was the first time for them to encounter or have students with disabilities in their classes.

5.3 Teachers' perspectives on inclusion

Teachers' perspectives on the inclusion of children with disabilities were examined during the interviews. The results of this research showed that all nine teachers supported inclusive education and said that inclusive education was good. However, the nine teachers said that students with severe disabilities should be educated in special education settings.

The ability to cope in the regular schools was shown in the study to be an important factor for inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools in Fiji. The majority of the participants said that only the students who were able to cope and be involved in academic activities should be included in the regular schools.

Inclusive education means the full inclusion of children with diverse abilities in all aspects of schooling and that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their abilities or disabilities (Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2005; Rogers, 1993). The literature shows that all children no matter how severe their disabilities are or how intensive their needs are belong in the general education classroom and can be accommodated in the regular class in their neighbourhood schools, the schools they would be attending if they did not have a disability (Jenkinson, 1997; Peters, 2003; Smith, Polloway, Patton & Dowdy, 2008).

There is also sufficient research evidence to suggest that inclusion even of children with the most severe disabilities can work if schools have a culture of shared values and are genuinely committed to improving their practices (Loreman et al., 2005).

5.3.1 The optimal time for inclusion of students with disabilities

Teachers' perspectives on the optimal time for inclusion were also examined. The majority of the participants in this research said that students with disabilities should be included only when they were ready and when they were able to cope in the main stream classroom. Only two of the participants supported early inclusion and said that the sooner the children were integrated into the regular school, the better.

Participants who supported early inclusion said that inclusion of students with disabilities should start from the very early days in kindergarten or from early childhood education because that is where the children learn the basics of the "education stuff" and it would be easier for them to master the skills as they progressed through each and every stage (ST2).

Literature also suggests that inclusion must begin in the very early years. Expecting students with disabilities who have been isolated in segregated settings in the first eighteen to twenty years of their life to assimilate into society is unrealistic (Smith et al., 2008). The literature shows that in the long term these students as adults will need to live, work and play along with their peers in their home, communities, in inclusive settings. Without the opportunity to grow and learn with non disabled peers throughout their lives these individuals with disabilities will be much less able to accomplish these goals as adults.

Wade and Moore (1992) state that children with special needs who start their education in mainstream settings at infant school are more fortunate than those who make the transition from special schools later in their school career. They added that any developmental delay as a result of

disability is usually less noticeable and immediate acceptance by teachers and peers is easier when children are younger.

5.3.2 Curriculum for students with disabilities in schools

Curriculum is commonly used as a general term to describe a course of study that has been planned with expected learning outcomes and which has a structure of learning activities and evaluation procedures (Foreman, 2005). In more general terms it is the total of all that is learnt in schools.

Teachers' perspectives on curriculum for students with disabilities varied. This research found that the primary and special education teachers favoured a standard curriculum for all students where students with disabilities learn the same subjects as those learned by students without disabilities.

The special education and primary school participants argued that by using the same curriculum students with disabilities in the special schools were able to fit in well when they integrated into the regular schools. One of the participants said that it would be very difficult for a child from a special school to integrate successfully into a class in primary school if the subjects he was taking were different from the subjects he would take in the primary school. Therefore it was best to have the same curriculum so that students were familiar with the subjects that they take when they integrated into regular schools (PT2).

It was also stated that if the schools were to be inclusive then all students should do the same curriculum but it needed to be modified and changed in such a way that it takes into account the needs and the capabilities of students with disabilities (SET3).

The secondary school teachers however, argued for a separate curriculum for students with disabilities. One of the participants argued that there were three categories of students, the weak, the average and the gifted,

but all these students followed the same curriculum (ST2). He said that as a result only the students who were able to keep up with the curriculum advanced and moved on to further studies while students who lagged behind became school dropouts.

Another secondary school participant said that the curriculum content and activities in certain subject areas were unsuitable for some students with disabilities particularly for students with visual impairment (ST3). The participant said that in the Social Science curriculum in Form 3, for instance, students had to do individual tasks, draw maps and diagrams. These tasks were found to be difficult for students with visual impairments. The curriculum therefore was found to be unsuitable for students with disabilities particularly students with visual impairments.

The literature shows that having a separate curriculum for students with disabilities in schools does not help with the inclusion of students. It only leads to more isolation and exclusion of students. According to Tilstone, Florian and Rose (1998), it is still common to find teachers and even the whole school staff advocating for a curriculum for pupils with special needs which is separate from that which is regarded as an entitlement to all other students. They said that if this course of action were to be taken, its likely conclusion would be an even greater distancing of pupils in special schools from the model of mainstream provision and a general slowing down of the principle of inclusion which recognises the right of all students to take their place as equals in society.

Spedding (2005) states that students with disabilities share with their non disabled peers common educational goals. Therefore a common shared curriculum is called for, one which recognises the shared goals and characteristics of all students but within which individual needs are recognised and catered for, so that success is fostered for all. The literature also suggests that if students with disabilities are not provided with opportunities to address significant elements of the same curriculum as that provided to their mainstream peers then such action will restrict the likelihood of those

students ever making a successful transition into the mainstream (Tilstone, Florian & Rose, 1998).

5.4 Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion

 Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities were ascertained from their perspectives. This research found that although the nine participating teachers supported inclusive education, their attitudes towards the inclusion of students with severe disabilities were negative.

Negative teacher attitudes have been identified in the literature as a major barrier towards the successful inclusion of students with disabilities (Andrews & Lupart, 1993). This research found that teacher attitudes did contribute to the non inclusion of students with disabilities in their schools.

It was found that in one of the schools, only students who were found to be "educable" were enrolled. The participant revealed that teachers only accepted students whom they think were "educable" and could be assisted with the facilities and staff they had at the school (SET1). For instance, students with hearing impairment were not enrolled at the school because none of the teachers at the school knew sign language for the deaf and therefore students with hearing impairment could not be assisted.

Another participant said that inclusive education was a foreign concept and therefore will not be successful in Fiji (SET2). The participant said that foreign countries that had initiated and endorsed inclusive education had the funds, the resources and trained specialists for successful inclusion whereas Fiji does not have the funds, the resources and the trained specialists to successfully implement and sustain inclusive education for all students with disabilities.

The research also showed that the primary school teachers were only prepared to take in students with disabilities if there was a support person for the student in the class. The participants stated that with the responsi-

bilities and extra work that they had apart from their teaching responsibilities in class, it would be impossible to provide individual assistance to the students with disabilities.

The literature shows that the achievement and success of students with disabilities were often limited by the negative assumptions and attitudes of teachers (Neilson, 2005). The three special schools in this research only took in students with specific disabilities. For instance, the Fiji School for the Blind accepted only students with visual impairment and the Suva School for the Intellectually Handicapped accepted only students with intellectual impairment.

Discrimination and segregation of students with disabilities in Fiji contributes to the continued perception of teachers and other pupils that students with disabilities belong in special schools. As Neilson (2005) states, being discriminated against, ridiculed and labelled does not help in making students with disabilities belong and participate fully within the school community. She adds that these attitudes only lead to frustration, low self esteem and often create more issues. According to Smith et al. (2008), accepting students for who they are and helping them to understand their problem is important as well as educating other students to understand their disabilities.

5.5 Factors that influence teachers' attitudes

This research showed that teacher' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in their schools and classrooms were influenced by several factors. Such factors included the severity or type of disability the students had, inadequate teacher education, lack of specialist staff and support services, the extra workload and responsibilities teachers had, inadequate government funding, and the lack of appropriate facilities equipment, and resources to support students with disabilities in schools and classrooms.

5.5.1 Severity and type of disability

This research found that the severity and type of disability the students had were major contributing factors to their exclusion from schools. The literature also shows that the nature and severity of children's needs and disabilities strongly influenced teachers' disposition towards inclusive practices (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Forlin, 2001; Opdal, Wormnaes & Habayeb, 2001).

This research found that schools accepted students depending on the type of disability they had and the severity of their disabilities. The three special schools in this research enrolled or accepted only students whose disability matched the name of their school. For instance, the Fiji School for the Blind accepted only students with visual impairment and the Suva School for the Intellectually Handicapped accepted only students with intellectual impairment.

Students who were enrolled in the primary schools were enrolled according to the severity of their disability. They were accepted only if their disability was mild and they required minimal assistance in the classrooms.

5.5.2 Inadequate teacher training

This research also found that the training that teachers had at their respective teacher training institutions was inadequate in teaching students with disabilities in schools.

Participants in this research expressed the inadequacy of training they had on teaching students with disabilities during their teacher training. One of the participants said that the training she had at teachers college on special education did not prepare her well for the reality she faced with children with disabilities in her class (PT2). She said that during her training at teachers' college, special education was being introduced, but the content was mostly on special education in general with no specific mention of the varying disabilities and how to deal with the students with disabilities in the

classroom. She also added that even for teaching practicum, they were not given the opportunity for placements in special schools.

It was also found that the secondary graduate teachers from the University of the South Pacific in Suva had no training on the education of students with disabilities. Special education or inclusive education was not part of their course content either. Teachers were therefore, ill prepared to teach students with disabilities in their schools.

The literature shows that it is unrealistic and unfair to expect general education teachers to creatively and productively educate and include students with disabilities in their classrooms in the absence of the adequate training they need in order to meet the special learning and behaviour needs of students (Flem & Keller, 2005). Teacher training institutions should therefore, consider in their programs practical experiences with inclusive education in positive and supportive environments, and opportunities for students to experience success in inclusive education (Loreman, Forlin & Sharma, 2007).

5.5.3 Lack of specialist teachers and support services

This research found that the negative attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities were also due to the lack of specialist teachers and support services in schools. For instance, students with hearing impairments needed sign language teachers and interpreters. The research showed that schools did not have these specialist teachers and there were no support services available for both teachers and students in schools.

It was revealed by one of the participants that a student with hearing impairment enrolled at their secondary school did not complete the school year as there was no specialist teacher in the school to assist him with his hearing needs. The same difficulty is found by other participants who had students with visual impairments at their school. It was found that students

with visual impairments were taught exactly the same way as the other students without disabilities. There were no support services available in the school. Teachers and students with visual impairments sought the assistance and services from the Fiji Society for the Blind.

5.5.4 Extra workload and responsibility of teachers

This research revealed that teachers found it difficult to have students with disabilities in their classes because of the extra responsibilities and extra workload that they have in the school apart from their classroom teaching responsibilities. Participants revealed that apart from their classroom teaching responsibilities, they were responsible for other school activities such as sports, and other extra curricular activities. The participants revealed that having students with disabilities was an added responsibility on top of the extra responsibilities they already had. One of the participants revealed that it would be very difficult for him to offer individual assistance to a student with disability in his class because of all the other responsibilities that he had.

Having an extra support staff in the class would be an advantage but this is not possible as schools are not able to pay for extra support services in the schools for students with disabilities because of inadequate government funding and assistance for students with disabilities.

5.5.5 Inadequate government funding

Inadequate government funding was identified in this research as a contributing factor to the reluctance of schools and teachers in having students with disabilities in their schools and classrooms.

It was revealed that schools receive a fee free grant of thirty dollars per student per year from the Ministry of Education. The participants said that this funding was not enough to meet the needs of the school in terms of resources, extra staffing and modifications of school structures to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

One of the participants said that students with disabilities needed extra resources and support, yet the funding from the Ministry of Education was the same for all students (ST2). Whiting and Young (1996) state that with inadequate financial and professional support, teachers were often left to struggle with implementing policies demanded by systems, governments and communities at large. The results are extremely stressful for many teachers whose self esteem may be undermined by the inability to cope with a situation for which they are unprepared and unassisted (Wood, 2006).

One of the participants mentioned that without the government support and extra funding, the process of inclusive education in Fiji will take longer to achieve than anticipated (ST3). Participants predicted that it would take another ten to fifteen years or even longer for inclusive education to materialise in Fiji and for students with disabilities to be fully included in all schools in Fiji.

5.5.6 Limited commitment from the Ministry of Education

With inadequate funding from the government, the Ministry of Education also had limited funds and human resource to visit schools and monitor the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools. Participants therefore noted the limited commitment from the Ministry of Education as a contributing factor to the non inclusion of students with disabilities in their schools. Since the Ministry of Education in Fiji failed to visit the schools to monitor the education of students with disabilities, schools and teachers did not see it as a priority to include students with disabilities.

This research found that education officials from the Ministry of Education rarely visited the schools to see how schools were progressing with the education of students with disabilities. There was no monitoring or evaluation of how successful inclusion was. No special attention was paid to students with disabilities. Therefore these students were like any other stu-

dents in the school without any special provisions or support on the part of the Ministry of Education.

It was also found that no research or survey had been conducted to see how many students with disabilities were actually educated in regular primary and secondary schools. There are no statistics available to show the actual number of students with disabilities in regular schools in Fiji. This indicates the low priority given to students with disabilities in regular schools in Fiji.

According to Foreman (2005), the tendency for those in authority in the education hierarchy to issue directives and leave it to the teachers to implement with no follow up to determine efficacy of practice, is not uncommon in schools.

5.5.7 Inadequate school facilities

This research also found that schools did not have the appropriate facilities and provisions for the successful inclusion of students with disabilities. Participants revealed that their schools did not have ramps or proper toilet facilities to accommodate students on wheelchairs.

5.5.8 Lack of appropriate equipment and resources

This research also found that students with disabilities were often neglected during certain class activities because of the lack of appropriate equipment and resources. It was revealed by one of the participants that during Science class students with visual impairments did not participate in the experiments because the school did not have the special braille marked beakers or equipment for them to use. The availability of appropriate materials and teaching aids and adapted accommodation has been identified in the literature as key factors that help schools become more inclusive.

The process of inclusion in many countries will take long to improve because of lack of resources (Mohay & Reid, 2006; Rouse, 2006). For

teachers to do their work effectively there need to be adequate and appropriate resources available. Many students who have severe disabilities rely on assistive technology to assist them with their movements and learning. This research shows no indication of use of any technology for students with disabilities in the regular schools such as computers to assist students in their learning.

5.6 Emerging issues and concerns of participants on inclusion

Several concerns regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities were raised by the participants in this research. These included the pedagogical styles used for teaching students with disabilities, the non participation of students with disabilities in certain school and class activities, and the lack of teacher participation and consultation in policy and curriculum designs

5.6.1 Pedagogical styles used in schools

Some of the participants in this research, particularly teachers in special schools were concerned with the pedagogical styles used in the regular schools. It was found that teachers in regular schools used whole class teaching approaches with no modifications or adaptations to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities.

It was found that pedagogical styles used in special schools were different from those used in the regular classrooms. Participants stated that teaching in special schools was more individualised whereas in the regular schools teachers use a whole class teaching approach. With large class sizes and diversity of students in class, teachers used a whole class teaching approach with very little interaction with individual students. As a result students with disabilities often lagged behind and eventually dropped out of school with the impression that they were not able to cope in the regular classroom because of their disabilities.

There are many teaching strategies that a teacher could use. Cooperative learning, peer tutoring, reciprocal teaching and differentiated instruction

have all been identified as helpful strategies to use with students with disabilities and diverse learning needs (Schmidt & Harriman, 1998). With these strategies students work together in small learning groups and are dependent on one another to complete a task.

5.6.2 Non participation of students with disabilities in schools

This research showed that students with disabilities did not participate in many of the school activities such as school excursions, sports, and subject areas such as music, gardening and science experiments.

It was revealed by one of the participants that students with disabilities in her school did not participate in sports because there was no special equipment to assist the students (ST3). It was also revealed that students did not participate in Science experiments as well as outdoor activities such as gardening. This study found that students with disabilities were often left in the classroom without any supervision to complete uncompleted tasks while the rest of the students went out for Physical Education and other outdoor activities. Teachers were reluctant to take students out due to the Health and Safety Act in Fiji (2001), which holds teachers and schools liable if students were injured in the schools.

Students with disabilities are often excluded from participating in physical education and physical activities because their abilities have been undermined by teachers who feel that they do not have the ability to participate as well as others (Pivik, Mc Commas & La Flamme, 2002).

5.6.3 Limited participation and consultation of teachers

This research also found that teachers were rarely consulted nor participated in any government initiatives regarding the education of students with disabilities. One of the participants questioned the extent to which teachers were involved in policy and decision making (ST2). He said that teachers were policy actors and therefore should be included in the policy development and design. Teachers spend considerable time with their

students. Therefore it is essential to include them and their perceptions in discussions regarding the education of students (Foreman, 2005).

It was also found that the teachers limited participation and involvement in educational initiatives resulted in the lack of awareness of educational policies and issues regarding inclusive education. All the participants said they only heard about blueprints and affirmative actions on education for students with disabilities but they had no idea of what they are nor had they seen or read a copy of them.

One of the participants suggested that inclusive education should not be forced into schools unless the schools and teachers were ready. He also suggested that the Ministry of Education should not rush into including all children with disabilities into the regular schools but to implement inclusive education slowly and at the same time train the teachers and provide funds for schools to modify and adapt their school structures to be conducive to the needs of the students that they will take.

5.7 Positive effects of inclusive education

Despite the many challenges described, the participants claimed that inclusive education had its benefits for both teachers and students. Effects on students included positive social relationships and lifelong friendships. Effects on teachers included changes in character, patience, tolerance and better understanding of students and their disabilities.

5.7.1 Effects of inclusive education on students

This research showed that inclusive education benefits both students with and without disabilities. Loreman et al. (2005) say that children without disabilities benefit from inclusion as much as children with disabilities in many ways. One of the participants said that the presence of the disabled students in the class was a motivation to the rest of the students without any disabilities (ST2). He said that in a class test, the students who were visually impaired attained more marks than some of the students without

any disabilities. Students without disabilities saw this as a challenge and a motivation to work harder.

Inclusion of students with disabilities also helped students without disabilities to be more caring and more understanding towards students with disabilities. This research showed that students without disabilities in the school were very friendly and helpful to students with disabilities. Children without disabilities can learn to value and respect children with diverse abilities in inclusive classrooms and also learn to see past the disability and the associated social stigmas (Loreman et al., 2005).

One of the participants (SET3) said that "inclusive education gave students with disabilities self confidence and an idea of how to survive in the real world. It also helps them to interact and to live normally with non disabled people." She further added that "the world out there is a big place, and students with disabilities needed to make as many friends as possible and that was a good thing about inclusion, because students with disabilities get to meet new people and make new friends and most of these friends become lifelong."

Barton (1998) also said that the ordinary everyday experiences shared with friends can bring about positive changes and benefits for both children with disabilities and their non disabled peers. Students also benefit from the additional resources that are provided and they get to learn important life skills such as respect for diversity, team work and communication (MacArthur, Kelly & Higgins, 2005).

5.7.2 Effects of inclusive education on teachers

This research showed that teachers also benefit from inclusive education. One of the participants said that teaching students with disabilities was very fulfilling and a lot of the benefits have to do with character building (SET1). She said that to see the students come at the very beginning with their limitations and the limited knowledge they had and to see them leave

at the end of the day with the new knowledge and skills they had acquired, was very fulfilling. She added that by being involved with these students, she had learned to become more compassionate, more tolerant and more patient. She said that initially, she did not have all these virtues.

The literature also shows that teachers develop skills and confidence for teaching diverse students and they engage collaboratively with other professionals as they work together to provide effective and quality teaching to students with disabilities (MacArthur et al., 2005).

For many of the participants, patience was an important virtue that they learned from teaching students with disabilities. As one of the participants stated, "I learned to be patient, learned to wait and hope that change will eventually come at their own time when they were ready" (PT2). She also said that to actually see the changes that had happened and to see the skills the students had developed gave her a sense of satisfaction as she knew she had something to do with it.

Another participant said that working with students with disabilities has helped broaden her mind and thinking in terms of strategies and ways of dealing with and teaching students with all disabilities (SET3). Participants also expressed that teaching students with disabilities has helped them to accept and understand the students and their disabilities better.

5.8 Conclusion

This research offered insights into teachers' perspectives and attitudes on the inclusion of students with disabilities, which concluded that teachers' attitudes did have an impact on the inclusion or exclusion of students with disabilities in schools. The nine teachers interviewed supported inclusive education but had reservations on the inclusion of students with severe disabilities, students who needed extra support and services. Several factors were identified as the root causes of non acceptance of students in schools and classrooms. Factors such as inadequate government funding,

inadequate teacher training, lack of specialist teachers, equipment and resources contributed to the exclusion of students with disabilities. These factors influenced teachers' attitudes towards the acceptance of students with disabilities in their schools and classrooms.

Other factors were also identified from the demographic data which showed that teachers' years of teaching experience, qualifications and previous experience with disabilities affected their attitudes towards the acceptance and inclusion of students with disabilities in their schools and classrooms.

The findings of this research are also similar to the findings of research identified in the literature review, which states teacher attitudes, lack of resources and facilities, inadequate training of teachers and lack of personnel to provide quality inclusive services to students as barriers towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. Findings in the literature reviewed also showed that in most developing countries, special schools exist mainly in the cities and are accessed by the elite and other city dwellers while the majority of the population live in rural areas where mainstream schools are not adequately resourced to include children with disabilities in to their classes. This is very similar to the situation in Fiji, which is also a developing country, where the special schools are available only in the town centres.

It is important that all the factors identified in this research be acknowledged and addressed by the appropriate education authority in Fiji, which is the Ministry of Education in Fiji and other stakeholders, that is, the school managements, teachers, parents and organisations that support education in Fiji. As Ainscow (1999) says, existing practices should be closely scrutinised so that barriers to learning can be identified and appropriate measures taken to ensure that such practices are discontinued.

The next chapter will look at the implications of this research and provide recommendations for further research to improve inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions and implications of this research as well as recommendations that may help improve inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji. Recommendations for further research are also included.

The purpose of this research was to examine teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji. Teachers are crucial in the education of all students. Their perspectives and attitudes can provide insights that can help improve education and services for children with disabilities in schools.

6.1 Limitations of this research

Only nine teachers were interviewed in this research so this was a limitation in terms of how comprehensive the information was. It was difficult to make any generalisations based on the insights of the nine teachers interviewed. There was also no statistical data available on the number of students with disabilities that were educated in regular schools.

6.2 Research conclusions

This research concluded that although all the nine teachers supported inclusive education most of them had reservations on the inclusion of students with severe disabilities particularly those students who needed extra support and care in the classrooms. The participants suggested that special schools should always be available to accommodate students with severe disabilities.

This research also concluded that the nine teachers' perspectives and attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities in schools were influenced by several factors. These included the severity and category of disability that students had, inadequate government funding, inadequate training on teaching of students with disabilities, lack of specialist teachers, lack of appropriate equipment and resources and the lack of appropriate facilities in schools to successfully include all students with disabilities. Limited commitment and support from the Ministry of Education in Fiji and limited involvement of teachers in policy design and decision making also contributed to the negative attitudes expressed by the teachers.

This research also concluded that teachers' perspectives and attitudes did have an impact on the inclusion or exclusion of students with disabilities in schools. Schools and teachers who recognised the abilities of students with disabilities continued to accept students with disabilities despite the limitations they had in terms of resources and funding. Other teachers appeared reluctant to accept students with disabilities and identified certain factors that needed to be addressed in order to accept and accommodate students with disabilities in their schools and classes.

The literature reviewed also showed similar findings which states attitudes, discrimination, and lack of funding, resources and support personnel as barriers to the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools.

6.3 Implications of this research

This research has several implications. The findings of this research suggest that there is a need for teachers who are reluctant to accept students with disabilities in their schools in Fiji, to change their perspectives and attitudes towards students with disabilities. They should become aware of the international trends and practices with regards to inclusive education and the inclusion of all children with disabilities in schools.

The local government needs to provide the necessary funding for implementation, adaptations and modifications to existing school structures, appropriate equipment and resources and specialist teachers to ensure that all children with disabilities have access to education in schools within their neighbourhood and communities.

Teachers had reservations on inclusion of students with disabilities because schools were not appropriately structured and resourced to accommodate the educational needs and disabilities of the students. Inclusive education should be implemented in all schools because students have the right to be educated in the school of their choice or in the school within their community and do not have to travel far from their homes to attend special schools which are available only in the town centres.

There is also need for a review of curriculum content at teacher training institutions in Fiji so that teachers are well prepared to teach students with disabilities in their schools and classrooms. All teachers should now be prepared to teach all students and teacher training institutions need to review their curriculum content and make inclusive education a compulsory unit of study.

6.3.1 The need for change

To stop the marginalisation and exclusion of students with disabilities and to enhance learning and social opportunities for students with disabilities, there have been calls in the literature for significant changes in education based on a commitment to inclusion at all levels, from policy through to classroom practice (Ballard, 2004; Booth & Ainscow, 1997).

Many countries worldwide have adopted inclusive education in schools. Children with disabilities are now successfully included in regular schools. In countries like the United States of America and New Zealand, it is against the law to refuse enrolment of students in schools because of their disabilities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2007) continues to appeal to all countries in the world to support the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of life. Countries that have signed the convention recognise the value of people with disabilities and have made positive changes with regards to the education of children with disabilities.

6.3.2 The need for extra government funding

The current government funding for students in schools is thirty dollars per student per year. There is no separate allocation of funds for students with disabilities in schools. The teachers in this research indicated that current government funding is not enough to meet the needs of students with disabilities in schools. The government therefore needs to provide extra funding for students with disabilities as they have special needs that require extra staffing, resources and equipment. Schools and teachers may change their attitudes if extra funding is allocated for students with disabilities in schools.

6.3.3 Personnel in the Ministry of Education for students with disabilities in primary and secondary schools

There is a need for education personnel in the Ministry of Education in Fiji to specifically look after the needs and welfare of students with disabilities in primary and secondary schools once they are there. Currently there is only one special education officer in the Ministry of Education that looks after only the seventeen special schools in Fiji.

Many students with disabilities leave school after primary education because there are no provisions for them in the secondary schools. For those students who manage to get a secondary education, there is no support available to help monitor their progress and entry into the workforce. It is important that the Ministry of Education have a section and personnel within the Ministry that identify and monitor students' progress in primary and secondary schools and ensure that they have fair and equal

access to tertiary education and employment after completion of their studies.

There are no records or statistical data available on the number of students with disabilities in schools nor are there any data on how many schools are fully inclusive. Having personnel in each section, primary and secondary and personnel in each of the major districts of Fiji can help generate more facts and data on students with disabilities in Fiji.

Little is known on the inclusion of students with disabilities in schools. There is lack of evidence to show the number of students with disabilities that have gone through general education in Fiji. It is therefore significant to have officers in the Ministry of Education to look specifically after students with disabilities in primary and secondary schools.

6.3.4 Review of the curriculum in schools

The current curriculum in Fiji needs to be reviewed as certain curriculum areas were found to be unsuitable for certain groups of students particularly students with visual impairments. More practical subjects need to be provided and students be given options to choose what is appropriate to their needs. As Smith et al. (2008) state, curriculum for students with special needs must be responsive to the needs of individual students and must facilitate maximum integration.

The curriculum development unit in Fiji needs to have a wider consultation with teachers particularly teachers who have taught students with disabilities. Special education teachers need to be included in curriculum development as they are aware of the needs and abilities of students with disabilities.

6.3.5 Review of current teacher education curriculum

There is a need for a review of the current teacher education curriculum to ensure that inclusive education is a compulsory unit of study. This research found that the teachers were not prepared for the reality of teach-

ing students with disabilities in their classes. The existing pre service and in service teacher programmes also need to be reviewed to develop specific programmes for training regular classroom teachers so that they can effectively respond to the needs of all students.

There is need for more training of specialist teachers particularly teachers for hearing impairment and visual impairment. There is also a great need for speech therapists, psychologists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. These specialists are important in providing support for students with disabilities. These specialist positions are lacking in Fiji. The government should provide scholarships for training in these areas so that the Ministry of Education has its own set of specialists that could assist teachers and students in their respective schools.

6.3.6 Improvement of school structures and facilities

Buildings and schools in Fiji have been built without any thoughts for people or students with disabilities. Schools will need to adapt and modify their current school structures to suit the needs of all students with disabilities. All schools will need to have lifts and ramps to cater for students in wheel chairs and students with other physical disabilities. The government has a significant role to play in providing the necessary funding for modifications.

6.3.7 The need for appropriate equipment and resources

The lack of appropriate equipment and resources was identified as an obstacle to the inclusion and participation of students with disabilities in schools. Schools will have to find ways and means of accessing these equipment and resources to ensure full inclusion and participation of students with disabilities in their schools.

6.4 Recommendations for further research

There is a need for future research to generate quantitative data as little is known about the number of children with disabilities in regular schools in Fiji.

Research should also be conducted on the impact of inclusive education for students with disabilities in Fiji. A number of individuals with disabilities who were educated in regular schools in Fiji now hold prominent positions in the country. Their experiences and life stories may be an inspiration not only for children with disabilities and their families but to teachers and all those who perceive students with disabilities as "non educable" and should only be educated in special schools.

6.5 Conclusion

Significant changes are required in Fiji schools if all children with disabilities are to be included alongside their non disabled peers. Teacher attitudes have to change.

Worldwide literature supports inclusive education and many countries in the world have adopted inclusive education and practices in schools. This is yet to be seen in Fiji as most students with disabilities are still segregated and educated in special schools. Students with disabilities have the right to be educated in their neighbourhood schools or in the school of their choice.

Several factors have been identified in the research as influential in the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion. These factors need to be seriously considered and appropriate measures be taken to ensure that these factors are addressed so that students with disabilities are not adversely affected.

The process of inclusive education requires considerable preparation and commitment. Not only does the process need to be decided upon and acted upon, but it also needs to be continually monitored and evaluated. This is still lacking in Fiji and unless appropriate measures are taken by the Ministry of Education and school managements, the inclusion of all students with disabilities will take longer to achieve. It is therefore important that teachers' concerns and the factors identified in this research be seriously considered for improvement of inclusive education in Fiji.

The Ministry of Education in Fiji has a significant role to play in ensuring that schools and teachers are prepared and ready to accommodate students with disabilities and their learning needs. With the current economic and political climate in Fiji, it may not be possible to make or achieve these changes immediately, but it must be acknowledged that students with disabilities have the right to an education alongside their non disabled peers and therefore necessary measures need to be taken to see that this is achieved.

With international pressure in terms of international trends and international decisions and practices, all stakeholders in Fiji education, that is, the government, the Ministry of Education, school managements, teachers and parents need to work together to achieve international standards and productivity for the benefit of all students with disabilities in Fiji.

It is hoped that appropriate actions will be taken and teachers and schools in Fiji be supported in whatever needs they have in terms of including all children with disabilities in their schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Approval letter from the Research Ethics

Committee

Appendix 2 – Approval letter from the Ministry of

Education in Fiji

Appendix 3 – Information sheet for participants

Appendix 4 – Consent forms

Appendix 5 – Interview guide

Appendix 6 – Demographic information sheet

Appendix 7 – Return of transcripts

Appendix 1

Approval letter from the Research Ethics Committee

_____

Dean's Office
School of Education
Te Kura Toi Tangata
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand

Phone +64 7 838 4466
Ext 8283
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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

MEMORANDUM

To: Mereoni Laveti Daveta
Cc: Dr Rosemary De Luca; Wendy Neilson; Assoc. Professor Angus Macfarlane

From: **Dr Rosemary De Luca**
School of Education Research Ethics Committee

Date: 22 April 2008

Subject: Research Ethics Application

Thank you for submitting the revisions to your research proposal:

Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Fiji: Teacher Perspectives and Attitudes

I am pleased to advise that your application has received ethical approval.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

Dr Rosemary De Luca
Chairperson
For School of Education Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 2

Approval letter from the Ministry of Education in Fiji

_____

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

EDUCATING THE CHILD HOLISTICALLY FOR A PEACEFUL AND PROSPEROUS FIJI

Marela House, 19 Thurston Street, Suva, Fiji Islands   Ph: (679) 3314477   Fax: (679) 3303511
Private Mail Bag, Government Buildings, Suva

Our Reference: E 24/2/3   Your Reference: Date: 23.06.08

Mrs.Mereoni Daveta,
Department of Arts and Language Education,
The University of Waikato,
Hamilton 3840,
New Zealand.

Dear Madam,

Re: Approval to Conduct Research in Fiji

I am pleased to inform you that your application to do research work on the topic **"Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Fiji – Teachers Perspectives and Attitudes"** has been approved. The approval is for the period from June to July 2008.

Please liaise directly with the heads of the selected schools and teachers that are going to be involved and that classes are not to be disturbed during your consultations.

As a condition for all research approvals you must forward to us a copy of your final report as soon as it is ready. You are not to release any details, findings or results whatsoever unless the Ministry of Education has authorized you to do so. This Ministry reserves the sole right to publish your final report or an edited summary of it.

We wish you well in your research work.

Joji Qaranivalu
Joji Qaranivalu [Mr.]
for **Permanent Secretary for Education, National Heritage,Culture&Arts**

cc   A/DAMU
       File

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR EDUCATION

Appendix: 3

Information sheet for participants

_____

Researcher details

Mereoni Daveta: (student - University of Waikato) 2008.

Qualifications: Post Graduate Diploma in Special Education – NZ (2007)

Bachelor of Education in Teaching (Primary) – NZ (2002)

Diploma in Education of Children with Special Teaching Needs – NZ (2003)

Certificate in Teaching (Primary) – Fiji (1985)

Research details

Title of research project

Inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji: Teacher perspectives and attitudes

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to examine teachers' perspectives on inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji. Teacher's perspectives are crucial as they can provide insights that can help improve educational services for children with disabilities in Fiji.

Importance and benefits of the research

It is hoped that this research will create awareness on inclusive education and help the improvement of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Fiji.

Time /Duration of participation

Duration of interview will be approximately 60 minutes.

Benefits to the participants

As participants in this research, teachers will have the opportunity to develop a better understanding of what inclusive education is about. Teachers will also have the opportunity to reflect on their daily practices and attitudes towards children with disabilities.

Potential harm to the participants

No potential harm is anticipated in this research. However there is a possibility of participants being identified by their head teachers, school principals and colleagues in the research. As a precaution, interview questions will focus on issues and topic researched. Naming of individuals will be discouraged.

Confidentiality

 Identity of participants will not be disclosed in the report. Maximum effort will be taken to ensure that the source of information gathered is not identified.

To minimise the risk of participants being identified, names of schools will not be disclosed or mentioned in the research findings.

Termination of participation

You may choose to withdraw from this research project however, the cut off point for withdrawal will be two weeks after you have checked your transcribed data.

 You can contact me by phone on 3303 896 or by e- mail
on mlr15@waikato.ac.nz.

Withdrawal /Amendment to information given

Participants will be given time to read their transcripts. Information given can be amended or withdrawn during this time.

Informed consent

Willing participants will sign the consent form only after they have been briefed clearly on the nature of this research and they have fully understood the requirements and procedures involved in this research.

Complaints or concerns

For questions, withdrawal or more information concerning this research you may contact me by mail, phone or e-mail.

Address in New Zealand:	**Address in Fiji (May - July 2008)**
32 Hogan Street, Hillcrest, Hamilton 3216 Phone: (0064) 21 072 3967	23 Gardiner Road, Nasese, Suva. Phone: (00679) 3303 896

Email: mlr15@Waikato.ac.nz

For complaints or any concerns: you may contact my research supervisors:

Dr Rosemary De Luca (deluca@waikato.ac.nz) or **Wendy Neilson** (wgneils@waikato.ac.nz) at the University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand.

Yours sincerely,

....

Mereoni Daveta.

Appendix 4:

Consent Form

_____

I have read all the information regarding this research and have been fully informed by the researcher.

I understand that:

(i)   I do not have to answer any questions that I am uncomfortable with.

(ii)   the research will involve taped interviews that will be transcribed and returned to me for amendments and comments.

(iii)   the researcher will maintain confidentiality by using pseudonyms to protect my identity.

(iv)   information gathered will be used for the initial purpose of this research which is to inform the researchers' masters' thesis.

(v)   information gathered will be shared with the Ministry of Education in Fiji.

(vi)   information gathered may also be used for further publications and seminar presentations.

I hereby give my full consent to participate in this research.

Signed………………………….   School…………………………

Name:………………………….   Address………………………..

Date:...   Phone…………………………

Appendix: 5

Interview Guide

These were the focus questions which guided my semi structured interviews. Other questions which are not written here were asked based on the answers provided by the participants and were also carried forward to other participants.

_____

1. Tell me what you understand about inclusive education. What is inclusive education?

2. Describe how you feel about the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms?

3. Where should children with disabilities be educated? Why?

4. When do you think is the best time for children with disabilities to be included into regular schools?

5. Teacher attitudes had been identified as one of the major obstacles towards the inclusion of children with disabilities into general education classrooms. What is your opinion on this statement?

6. What are some of the underlying factors that contribute to these attitudes?

7. Tell me why some schools and teachers appear reluctant to enrol or accept students with disabilities in their schools and classrooms.

8. What are some of the challenges and barriers that impact on the successful inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms?

9. Tell me, who should be responsible for the education of students with disabilities in schools?

10. Tell me what needs to be done if students with disabilities are to be included in schools.

11. What are some of your recommendations for implementing and maintaining inclusive education in Fiji?

12. Are there any other issues or concerns that you wish to share that may be relevant to this research project?

Appendix 6

Demographic information sheet

_____

Name:.................................... **Pseudonym**..

Gender: Female   ☐   Male   ☐

Age:

   ☐ 19 – 30 years   ☐   31 – 40 years

   ☐ 41 – 50 years   ☐   51 – 60 years

Years of teaching experience:

   ☐ 0 – 5 years   ☐   6 – 10 years

   ☐ 11 – 15 years   ☐   16 – 20 years

   ☐ 21 – 25 years   ☐   Over 25 years

Disabilities of children in your class (2008).

   ☐ Learning disabilities   ☐   Behavioural difficulties

   ☐ Emotional disabilities   ☐   Attention deficit

   ☐ Hyperactive disorder   ☐   Visual impairment

   ☐ Hearing impairment   ☐   Speech impairment

   ☐ Intellectual impairment   ☐   Traumatic brain injury

   ☐ Other

Previous experience with children with disabilities?

If Yes- Explain---

Appendix 7

Return of transcripts

_____

32 Hogan Street,

Hillcrest,

Hamilton,

New Zealand.

Return of transcript

Dear... (participant's name),

Please find attached is the transcribed data of our interview which was conducted at your school on the ... (date)... of ... (month)....at..... (time).

No new words have been added nor any words deleted. The data is transcribed directly from our interview tape.

You are most welcome to amend or withdraw any of the information you have provided.

If you wish to make changes, please let me know as soon as possible.

The cut off date for amendments and withdrawal of information will be 30th August, 2008. If I do not hear from you by that date, I will presume that you are happy with it.

Thank you very much for your participation and support.

Yours sincerely,

Mereoni Daveta.

Phone: (0064) 21 0723967

Email: mlr15@waikato.ac.nz