

**BARRIERS TO SCHOOL INCLUSION:  
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EXCLUSION OF  
DISABLED STUDENTS FROM AND WITHIN  
NEW ZEALAND SCHOOLS**

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# ABSTRACT

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Research evidence suggests that disabled students are experiencing forms of exclusion from and within schools, however little is known of the nature of this phenomenon. This study investigated the nature of school exclusion in relation to disabled students. It sought to uncover the factors that exclude disabled students from and within schools, and make recommendations to reduce and eliminate these factors.

Using a grounded theory methodology, this research investigated the nature of school exclusion. It explored parents of disabled student's views about their children's experiences of school exclusion both from school, and within school. The themes identified by parents were then further investigated with school principals, teachers, teacher aides and school students.

This study revealed that disabled students are being excluded from and within school in New Zealand in a number of ways. These include being denied enrolment and/or full-time attendance at school; being denied access to, and participation within the curriculum; being bullied; inappropriate teacher and/or principal beliefs and practices in relation to funding; a lack of caring, valuing and responsibility by school staff; limited teacher knowledge and understanding; poor relationships between parents and school staff; and exclusionary beliefs and practices in relation to teacher aides.

Based on the findings of the study, four propositions were put forward to explain why disabled students are being excluded from and within school. These are that disabled students are considered to be less entitled to human rights than non-disabled students; that there is a lack of school accountability in relation to legal and human rights obligations to disabled students; that inclusive education is predicated on issues of funding and resourcing; and that there is prejudice towards disabled students.

Based on the findings of *how* and *why* disabled students are excluded from and within school, prompts for classroom teachers and school principals/senior management staff were developed in seven areas shown to be important to this phenomenon. These areas are access, accountability, attitudes, knowledge, responsibility, and funding and

resourcing. The prompts are intended to help guide attention and discussion to the issues that are important if exclusion is to be reduced and eliminated. As well as this, recommendations are made for government and government agencies outlining ways that they can contribute to the reduction and elimination of school exclusion for disabled students.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

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*Inclusive education is an unabashed announcement, a public and political declaration and celebration of difference...[However,] it would appear that the development of education systems has been predicated by the denial of the existence and value of difference... Turning this around is not a project for osmosis. It requires continual proactive responsiveness to foster an inclusive educational culture. Further, it means that we become cultural vigilantes. Exclusion must be exposed in all its forms; the language we use, the teaching methods we adopt, the curriculum we transmit, the relations we establish within our schools (Corbett & Slee, 2000, p. 134).*

### 1.1 Introduction

This is a study of exclusion. It is an investigation of the factors that exclude disabled students from, and within schools. It is a study of exclusion as it works against inclusive education. Inclusive education is a phenomenon that is gaining world-wide focus and attention and has been described as a social movement against exclusion in education (Slee & Allan, 2005). It has as its focus, the restructuring of mainstream schools so they are better able to respond to the diversity of all students (UNESCO, 2005). In this regard, inclusive education is not concerned with remediating perceived deficits within students. Nor is it concerned with the integration or assimilation of diverse students into regular schools (Ballard, 1999a; Barton, 1999; Slee, 2001a). Rather, inclusive education is concerned with overcoming the barriers to participation and learning that may be experienced by students, particularly students who have historically been excluded or marginalised from school (Mittler, 2000). A basic premise of inclusive education is that all children belong at school and all children are able to meaningfully participate and learn at school. While inclusive education is concerned with making schools more responsive to *all* students, disabled students are reported to be the largest group of students excluded and marginalised from quality education in the world today (UNESCO, 2005). It appears therefore that disabled students are experiencing many barriers to their presence, participation and learning at school and little is known of the specific nature of these barriers.

## **1.2 Research Aims and Objectives**

This study explores the barriers that prevent children and young people who are disabled<sup>1</sup>, or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour<sup>2</sup>, from actively participating and learning in school. When children and young people encounter barriers to their participation and learning at school, they experience exclusion. Therefore this study is an examination of the nature of school exclusion of disabled students. The research aims to uncover the factors that act to exclude disabled students from and within school and provide some answers to the question of why this may be occurring. It also aims to make recommendations that may reduce the exclusion of disabled students from and within school.

## **1.3 Rationale for the Study**

In New Zealand, disabled students are experiencing barriers to their inclusion in schools (Ballard, 2004b; MacArthur, Kelly, Higgins, Phillips, & McDonald, 2005; Purdue, 2004). This is despite legislation designed to protect their rights to access mainstream education and participate and learn without discrimination. It is despite human rights and social justice arguments, despite research showing the benefits of mainstream education, and it is despite strong pressure from disabled students' parents to include their children. Lack of inclusion in the face of such compelling legislation and research indicates that strong forces are present, working against the inclusion of disabled students.

However, while there is a growing body of literature focused on inclusion and the enablers to inclusive education, only recently have researchers begun to focus on exclusion as an important concept to be investigated in relation to inclusive education. A major rationale for this has been the realisation that inclusion and exclusion are directly and intricately linked. To contribute to the movement towards creating more inclusive schools, more information is needed regarding exclusion; that is an

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis, the term 'disabled' is used in line with the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* which defines disability as "the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have" (Minister of Health, 2001, p. 10). The exception to this will be when quoting or discussing the work of other authors.

<sup>2</sup> The term disabled will also be used to include students who are disadvantaged because of impairments or disadvantaged because they experience difficulties with learning and behaviour.



uncovering and unpacking of the forces that are working against the presence, participation and learning of disabled students in mainstream schools.

## **1.4 Context of the Study**

The last 150 years have seen marked changes in the education of disabled students in New Zealand. As underlying beliefs and assumptions regarding disabled people and the role of schools in relation to them have changed, so too have practices. This has seen an evolution from little or no education provisions for disabled children and young people, to segregated systems, to systems of integration in regular schools, and more recently, towards systems of inclusive education.

In order to understand the nature of these changes, an explanation of the systems of special education and inclusive education is required with reference to the New Zealand situation. This is important, for as Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton (2000) point out, “an historical perspective in relation to the inclusion and exclusion of disabled students will be a timely reminder that current practices are neither natural, inevitable or unchangeable” (p. 3).

### **1.4.1 Special Education**

Special education developed in New Zealand, and world wide, as a system to meet the educational needs of disabled children, or children deemed to have special needs. It began from a basis of charity (Mitchell 1987), but was later accepted as a responsibility of government. By the 1970s, New Zealand had a firmly established special education system made up of special schools and classes, along with specialist positions and organisations. However, in the 1970s, the appropriateness of separate systems of education for disabled students began to be challenged, at first from the perspectives of human rights and effectiveness (UNESCO, 2005), then latterly, from a challenge to the knowledge base of special education as well as the social, cultural and political reasons for its existence.

With regard to the effectiveness of special education, the seminal report of Dunn (1968) showed that students with mild and moderate impairments made just as much progress,

or more, in regular class settings as they did in special classes. Dunn found that the labelling of students that occurred in segregated settings had a detrimental impact on their self-concept and their teachers' expectations for their achievement. In addition, a disproportionate number of ethnic minority students were in special education and Dunn believed that special education was a system of segregation for ethnic minorities. Numerous studies followed pointing to the negative effects of segregated settings and the positive outcomes of well-supported inclusive settings for students who were disabled (e.g., Brinker & Thorpe, 1984; Madden & Slavin, 1983).

The formation of advocacy groups made up of parents, professionals and disabled people themselves was another impetus for change (Salend, 1998). Parents of disabled children began calling for equal access to regular education for their children (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996) demanding the same rights as non-disabled peers. Similarly, disability advocacy groups were formed to lobby for the rights of people who were disabled, including school age children. In New Zealand, *The Intellectually Handicapped Society (IHC)* was one of the first groups to lobby for the rights of children who were disabled. In 1960, The IHC made a submission to the Minister of Education asking that the same educational facilities available to non-disabled students also be made available to disabled students (Sleek & Howie, 1987). Advocacy of this nature by IHC has continued, and the organisation still advocates for the rights of disabled children and young people to attend their local neighbourhood school.

Challenges to special education were also influenced by political rationales. While it was widely accepted at the time that separate facilities and services were designed in the best interests of students who were disabled, this rationale was later scrutinised and questioned. For example Skrtic (1991, p. 24) defined special education as “the profession that emerged in 20<sup>th</sup> century America to contain the failure of public education to educate its youth for full political, economic, and cultural participation in democracy”. Ballard (2003b) reported a similarly sceptical view of the rationale for special education in New Zealand stating that: “special education exists to cater for children who are deemed sufficiently different that they do not belong within ordinary school settings alongside others from their community” (p. 6). Moore et al. (1999), took a comparable view describing the development of special education in New Zealand as an “implicit contract” (p. 7) between regular and special education where regular

education would support special education and, in return, special education would protect regular education from troublesome students.

Criticism of special education was also levelled around its role in protecting the interests of non-disabled people. For example, Barton (2000) describes special education as:

a means of control, a means of legitimating the dominant forms of discourse and interests of a given society, in particular a world of marketisation, competitiveness and selection. It makes sure the system continues as smoothly as possible by removing those difficult, objectionable and unwanted people to other spheres. It is however, often justified on the basis of being in their interests, of meeting their needs (p. 53).

Special education was also challenged in relation to its ideology (e.g., Ballard, 2004b; Ware, 2004). Critics pointed out that special education was constructed upon a belief system of individual pathology, ideas about what is normal and abnormal, theories of deficit, and the belief that only expert teachers can know about, and meet the needs of, students who are disabled (Ballard, 1990). This medical model ideology was linked to the phenomenon of exclusion of disabled students. For example, Booth and Ainscow (1998a) argued that this ideology led to exclusion and segregation because it assumed that children who were disabled were deficient and therefore required 'special and 'different' forms of education. Corbett and Slee (2000) concurred stating that: "A great deal of theory and practice which forms the special educational tradition is essentially disablist, compounding the patterns of educational and social exclusion we witness in schools and communities" (p. 143).

Based on these criticisms and challenges, calls were, and still are, being made for an education system based on an inclusive ideology.

#### **1.4.2 Inclusive Education**

Early definitions of inclusion focused on the valuing and acceptance of difference and the rights of all students to not only attend their local neighbourhood school, but also to belong as valued members. This aspect of inclusive education still remains a core

feature of many explanations. However, as the idea of inclusive education evolved, explanations also included a focus on contextual issues, at first the school context. For example Skrtic (1991) pointed out that inclusive education does not focus on the student per se, but rather the emphasis is on the regular education programme and organisation. More recently, the focus has been on the social, cultural and political aspects of education and the effect of these on the inclusion and exclusion of children and young people. For example:

I view inclusion as a social justice project that begins with understanding how exclusionary we are in schools and in society, how we are sanctioned to maintain exclusion, and how we are rewarded to remain exclusionary—all of which suggests that deconstruction would be the most useful tool for analysis (Ware, 1999, p. 43).

While many writing in the field of inclusive education would agree upon some descriptors of inclusion and inclusive education, it remains a complex and contradictory concept. One of the reasons for this is the competing discourses used to explain and describe the concept of inclusive education. One such discourse has its roots in special education and has been described by some as simply a transfer of special education knowledge, language and practice into regular education, under the guise or name of inclusive education (Slee, 2001a, 2007). Generally, this perspective still adheres to many of the principles and practices associated with special education. Corbett and Slee (2000) describe this perspective in the following way:

Inclusive schooling according to traditional special educational perspectives is seen as a technical problem to be solved through diagnosis and remedial interventions. Typically, this generates policies whereby the expert professions are called in to identify the nature and measure the extent of disability. This is followed by highly bureaucratic ascertainment processes where calculations of resources, human and material, are made to support the locating of the disabled child in the regular school or classroom (p. 143).

An alternative discourse is one that focuses on the restructuring of mainstream schools so that they are better able to respond to the diversity of all students (UNESCO, 2005). From this perspective, inclusive education does not focus on the remediation of perceived student deficits, or on preparing students to be able to meet the demands of

the regular education system. At a school and classroom level, inclusive education implies that all students are able to attend their local neighbourhood school and that all children are the responsibility of the classroom teacher who works in collaboration with parents, caregivers and a range of professionals. It also implies that schools rethink their values, and organisational curriculum and assessment arrangements to overcome barriers to learning and participation for all students (Mittler, 2000).

Most writers in the area of inclusive education would agree that inclusive education is not an end point, it is a process. In this study, the use of the term inclusion and inclusive education will be based on the work of Booth (1996) who describes inclusion as “a process of increasing participation of students within and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures curricula and communities of neighbourhood centres of learning” (pp. 34–35).

### **1.4.3 Legislation, Policy and Inclusive Education**

Few would argue against the importance of policy and legislation in creating inclusive education systems. However, the success of inclusion requires much more than policy, rhetoric and legislation. Attitudes and philosophies are key prerequisites of successful inclusive schools (Berres, 1996). However, policy and legislative changes in relation to the rights of students who are disabled have been lobbied and fought for in New Zealand and this has contributed to the change necessary for the growth of inclusive philosophy and practice. Also, it has been noted that policy and legislation *can* bring about the alterations in attitude that may be necessary for successful innovation and change (Sleek & Howie, 1987).

Prior to 1989, there was no law in New Zealand protecting the right of disabled students to attend their neighbourhood school. *The 1989 Education Act* was the first legislation to guarantee that right. Section 8 of the Act states that people who have special educational needs have the same right to enrol and receive education at a state school as people who are not disabled. Similarly, *The 1993 Human Rights Act* is legislation that protects the rights of students who are disabled in law. Section 57 of this act makes it illegal for schools to deny enrolment to a student on the basis of a disability or to treat students who are disabled less favourably than students who are not disabled.

In 1996, the New Zealand Government introduced a document called *Special Education 2000* (Ministry of Education, 1996). While originally described by the Ministry of Education as a ‘policy’, this was later changed and called a ‘funding framework’, due to recognition that the document did not present principles and directions to guide practice as would be expected in a policy. In the main, the document set out resourcing provisions, including a package of professional development. The funding allocation was based around the level of need of the student as opposed to a category or label. Students verified as having high or very high needs receive individual funding and individual teacher time. Students who have moderate needs access a school-based funding pool. The document outlined the aim of “achieving a world class inclusive education system over the next decade” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 2).

However, it is not just policies and official government documents targeted at inclusive education that are able to bring about, or act as barriers to inclusive education systems; other education and social policy can shape inclusion (Booth, 2000a). One such example of policy that is designed to facilitate a more inclusive society in New Zealand is *The New Zealand Disability Strategy* (Ministry of Health, 2001), which was introduced in 2001. It was described by the Minister for Disability Issues as “a long term plan for changing New Zealand from a disabling to an inclusive society” (ibid, p. 7). It was developed in consultation with disabled people as well as the disability sector in general, and outlines 15 objectives for advancing New Zealand towards a fully inclusive society. While all the objectives are indirectly related to the inclusion of disabled students in mainstream schools, one is particularly relevant. This objective is “to provide the best education for disabled people” (Ministry of Health, 2001, p. 18) There are eight actions associated with this objective that are to inform the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* implementation work plans to be developed by government departments.

More recently, the New Zealand Ministry of Education released its *Statement of Intent 2007–2012* (Ministry of Education, 2007a). In it, the Ministry states its commitment to implementing the New Zealand Disability Strategy pointing out that:

the incorporation of the NZ Disability Strategy throughout the education system is necessary to achieve the vision of the strategy which is to ensure that people

with impairments can say they live in a society that highly values our lives and continually enhances our full participation (p. 38).

To do this the Ministry of Education states that significant changes across the education system will need to occur.

#### **1.4.4 Human Rights and Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education has been described as an issue of human rights (Daniels & Garner, 1999), and also an issue that lends itself easily to international human rights declarations (Artiles & Dyson, 2005). At the core of inclusive education is the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*, which states that:

Everyone has the right to education...and that education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (Article, 26 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*).

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there have been other important human rights declarations with specific relevance to inclusive education. The 1989 *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC)* states that all children have a right to receive education without discrimination on any grounds. While every article in the *UNCROC* pertains to disabled children, specifically, article 23 states that: “disabled children should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community” (Article 23).

The 1994 *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (under the aegis of UNESCO) outlined the rights of all children to access education in the regular school environment and the responsibilities of school systems to accommodate all students. Recently, The United Nations have developed The *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)*, which New Zealand

signed in March 2007. It reaffirms that all persons irrespective of any impairment must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

#### **1.4.5 Social Justice and Inclusive Education**

As well as strong links to human rights, inclusive education is also an issue of social justice. Broadly speaking, social justice refers to giving all individuals and groups a just share of the advantages and benefits of a society. Specifically, social justice is the process that seeks to ensure the maintenance of a fair, equitable and egalitarian society. Discrimination, persecution, intolerance, prejudice and inequity are the antithesis of the goals of social justice (University of Southern Queensland, 2007). Social justice works against marginalisation and exclusion.

Inclusive education is essentially social justice in education. It seeks a fair, equitable and egalitarian education for all students. It seeks to break down discrimination and prejudice based on difference or minority status. However, as Slee (2001a) has stated, those arguing for social justice in education have been relatively silent in regards to disabled students.

#### **1.4.6 The Disability Movement and Inclusive Education**

The way that societies have thought of, and conceptualised disability, has long been influenced by a medical model of disability. This model described and defined disability as an individual deficit, a problem or illness residing within an individual that required remediating or curing. However, over the last fifty years, the disability movement has challenged this understanding of disability, with the argument that disability is socially constructed. The challenge has come, in particular, from the work of Mike Oliver who encouraged people to think about disability from social and cultural perspectives (e.g., Oliver, 1987). Oliver challenged individual perspectives of disability which located the 'problem' of disability within the individual and which assumed that limitations or losses arose from disability. Oliver purported that it is not individual limitations that are the problem, but society's failure to provide appropriate services and



to ensure that the needs of disabled people are taken into account in social organisations (Oliver, 1996).

The concept of inclusive education is a reflection of the social model of disability (Mittler, 2000). As the social model of disability concerns itself with the identification and reduction of obstacles to the participation of disabled people in regular societies, inclusive education concerns itself with the identification and reduction of obstacles to the participation of disabled students in regular schools. The disability movement, which traditionally focused on the rights of adults, is now concerning itself with children and is working alongside organisations that are campaigning for inclusive education (Mittler, 2000).

#### **1.4.7 Exclusion**

The term ‘exclusion’ is used in many disciplines, for example education, geography, and social work. It is also a term that has found favour in political discourse, particularly in the United Kingdom and particularly in relation to social exclusion. The term exclusion is complex, contradictory and confusing because it is used in a variety of different ways to mean different things, both within, and across disciplines.

For example, in social sciences the term ‘social exclusion’ is one that is gaining widespread acceptance. In this discipline, social exclusion is described as a process that deprives individuals or groups of people from the resources that they need to participate in the social, economic and political activity of society (Pierson, 2002). Social exclusion is usually a consequence of poverty, but other factors such as discrimination and low educational attainment have also been shown to bring about social exclusion (ibid).

This explanation is closely linked to the concept of marginalisation. Marginalisation has been described as a socio-political process and is the peripheralisation of individuals and groups from a dominant, central majority (Hall, 1999). It is the pushing away of groups of people or individuals from the centre. As with exclusion, marginalisation has been described as both “a process and an experience” (McIntosh, 2006, p. 48), which results in social inequality and disadvantage. It results in social inequality and

disadvantage because the power and voice in any social group comes from the centre. The further away a person is from this centre, the less power and voice that person has. The education field has forged its own specific discourse around exclusion, but again, even within this discourse there are differing explanations and uses. For example, in the literature around school discipline, the term exclusion has come to mean the forced removal of students from school due to serious misconduct. Inclusive education has taken up the term exclusion and used it in another specific way. In the inclusive education literature, exclusion is used to mean the opposite of inclusion (e.g., Ballard, 2004b; Booth, 1996). Based on this understanding, inclusion and exclusion are directly related. To be included is to be not excluded. To be excluded is to be not included. Exclusion and inclusion are two faces of the same coin. To understand one aspect requires an understanding of the other. If a student is not being included (or is not present, participating and learning) at school, they are experiencing exclusion. As Booth (1996) points out, exclusion occurs whenever the participation of pupils in the cultures and curricula of mainstream schools is decreased.

Adding to the confusion of multiple meanings and multiple uses, is that few writers go to any lengths to be explicit regarding the meaning they place on the term exclusion, using it freely and perhaps assuming that the meaning ascribed to it is universal and understood by all.

While there is much confusion surrounding the term and its use, in this study the use of the term exclusion will follow explanations from the inclusive education literature, and be based specifically on the definition of Booth (1996), who states that exclusion is “the process of decreasing the participation of pupils in the cultures and curricula of mainstream schools” (pp. 34–35). However, it should be noted that when discussing the literature, other terms will be used, for example marginalisation, as these are terms that are used in the literature to describe the phenomenon of exclusion. These concepts will be explored further in Chapter Two.

## **1.5 Terminology and Inclusive Education**

Language has the power to include and to exclude, for ideologies are carried through language (Ballard, 2004b). The ideology of exclusive education has a well-established

language (Mittler, 2000). If there is a desire to overcome exclusionary forces within a society (including the societies of schools), “individuals need to resist and reject the language that carries the ideology of exclusion” (Ballard 2004b, p. 103). In particular, the use of the term ‘special needs’ has been associated with the devaluing and excluding of disabled students (Ainscow, 2000; Mittler, 2000). The use of the term ‘special’ can create a mindset that perpetuates segregation (Mittler, 2000) and those who carry this label are often viewed as different from others in ways that are not valued by the mainstream (Ainscow, 2000). As Mittler highlights “even if the concept of special educational needs was now abolished, the damage done by the use of such language will take a long time to heal” (p. 80).

The language of medical model thinking has also been associated with the exclusion of disabled students (Ainscow, 2000). Terms such as ‘diagnosis’, ‘therapy’, ‘disorders’ all conjure up ideas of deficits and illness. These terms, which have been commonly used in relation to special education, have been shown to target those associated with them for “derisive humour and patronising solicitude” (Biklen, 1989, p. 13). These terms will be avoided in this thesis, except where it is historically necessary or where it is used in quotations or citations of other people’s work. The term ‘disabled’ will be used in line with the New Zealand Disability Strategy (Ministry of Health, 2001), which defines disability as “the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have” (Minister of Health, 2001, p. 10). The exception to this will be when quoting or discussing the work of other authors, who may use the term in different ways.

## **1.6 The Place of the Researcher**

As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) point out, “no matter how much you [researcher] try, you cannot divorce your research and writing from your past experiences, who you are, what you believe, and what you value. Being a clean slate is neither possible nor desirable” (p. 38).

Therefore, it is important to ‘lay open’ my background and experiences that influence this thesis. Prior to this research, I was a classroom teacher in a range of primary and

intermediate schools in New Zealand. I spent five years working in the special education system as a *Guidance and Learning Teacher* and a *Resource Teacher of Special Needs*. I am presently working in an education facility at a university. In this position I teach and research in the area of inclusive education. I have a brother who has an intellectual and visual impairment and who spent 40 years of his life in an institution for intellectually disabled people. I have two sons who have been through the New Zealand education system.

This study was approached with a consciousness of the negative implications that can, and have been associated with research in this area. For example, research in the area of disability has been implicated in framing disabled people as ‘other’ (Morton, 2006). The ‘othering’ of disabled students is well recognised as a strong force of exclusion and marginalisation. Therefore, I was at pains to avoid ‘othering’ those whom I was seeking to empower (disabled students and their family/whānau<sup>3</sup>). The aim was to deconstruct disability, rather than construct it, and to focus on research *for* disabled students rather than research *on* disabled students.

## **1.7 Summary**

Chapter One has provided background information in which to place and interpret this research. It has discussed the development of educational provisions for disabled students in New Zealand, and the issues that have led to a call for a new educational approach to meet the need, which are to uncover the factors that act to exclude disabled students from and within school; provide some answers to the question of why this may be occurring; and make recommendations that may reduce the exclusion of disabled students from and within school. The rationale for the study was described. This is based on evidence suggesting that disabled students are experiencing barriers to their inclusion in schools. However, there is a lack of research investigating the nature of school exclusion in relation to disabled students. If progress is to be made towards achieving more inclusive schools, more needs to be known about exclusion, or the factors that are working against inclusive education. Finally, key terms were defined and their use in this research clarified.

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<sup>3</sup> Maori word for family

## **1.8 Organisation of the Thesis**

The thesis is organised into seven chapters. This first chapter states the aims and rationale for the study, and provides background information in which to place and interpret the research. Chapter Two reviews the literature that informs and supports the aims of this study. Chapter Three explores the methodological theory underpinning the study, including the epistemology, theoretical perspective, and methodologies that the study is based upon. Chapter Four presents the methods and procedures used, including the selection and recruitment of research participants, the ethical principles that were considered, and the data gathering tools that were used. Chapter Five presents the findings of the study. Chapter Six discusses the results of the research, and critiques these in the context of the existing literature as well as in the context of future research required. The final chapter summarises and draws conclusions about the study. It also provides indicators and recommendations that may reduce and eliminate school exclusion.



# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

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### **2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study is to explore the nature of school exclusion of disabled students. This chapter presents evidence from the literature to inform this study. It examines some of the ways that exclusion is conceptualised and explores various theories and propositions around school exclusion of disabled students.

The literature review begins by outlining the research aims and questions. Descriptions of the search strategies used for the literature review are then provided. The construct of exclusion and the various ways that it is conceptualised is examined. Literature around the rights discourse of inclusive education is reviewed followed by an examination of factors influencing school exclusion of disabled students.

### **2.2 Research Questions**

This study aims to explore the barriers that prevent children and young people who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour, from actively participating and learning in school. The research addresses three key questions:

1. How do some disabled students experience exclusion from and within school?
2. Why do some disabled students experience exclusion from and within school?
3. How can disabled students' exclusion from and within school be reduced and eliminated?

### **2.3 Literature Review Methods**

Keywords were developed to assist the electronic search of the literature throughout the research process. These are outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

*Key words for literature review*

<b>Inclusive education and; inclusion and:</b>	<b>School exclusion and:</b>	<b>Marginalisation and:</b>
attitudes	marginalisation	school
barriers	attitudes	attitudes
curriculum	disability	disability
disability	disability discourse	disability discourse
disability discourse	effects	effects
enablers	parents	students
parents	rights	rights
rights	curriculum	curriculum
principal	social justice	social justice
social justice	teachers	teachers
teachers	values	values
values	principal	exclusion
exclusion		
marginalisation		

Books, journal articles, theses, conference papers, government policies and documents and commissioned reports were sourced for the literature review. The criteria for selection of material into the literature review were:

- Material containing the primary keywords.
- Material linking the primary keywords with secondary keywords (e.g. inclusion with teachers).
- Publications not older than 15 years (except for seminal works).
- Articles by key researchers within the keyword areas.

Electronic searches were carried out using ERIC, and EBSCO HOST. The search engine Google Scholar was also used. Additionally, key journals in the field were systematically searched. These included:

- Australian Education Review
- British Journal of Special Education
- Cambridge Journal of Education
- Critical Studies in Education
- Disability Culture and Education
- Education, Citizenship and Social Justice
- International Studies of Sociology in Education
- International Journal of Disability, Development and Education



- International Journal of Inclusive Education
- Issues in Education
- Issues and Research in Special Education
- Journal of Education for Teaching
- New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies
- Remedial and Special Education
- Waikato Journal of Education

For the purposes of this study, a thematic approach was used to synthesise the literature. These themes emerged through the literature review.

## **2.4 What is Exclusion?**

As explained in Chapter One, the concept of exclusion is complex, contradictory and confusing. Not only is it used in a range of different disciplines, but across disciplines, and even within each discipline, it can be used in different ways to mean different things. To add to the complexity, few writers using the term define their use of it. It is important therefore, to briefly explore some of these multiple meanings and discourses.

Outside of education, for example in social policy, the term ‘exclusion’ is commonly used. In particular, the term ‘social exclusion’ is increasingly used in the area of government social policy in Europe and the United Kingdom. Social exclusion originated in France and was first used to replace terms associated with poverty and underclass (Milbourne, 2002). Combat Poverty Action Group (2008) describe social exclusion as:

The process whereby certain groups are pushed to the margins of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, low education or inadequate life skills. This distances them from job, income and education opportunities as well as social and community networks. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and little chance of influencing decisions or policies that affect them, and little chance of bettering their standard of living (page not given).

The concept of social exclusion is closely related to the concept of marginalisation. Marginalisation originated from the political struggles of people of colour, women, the poor, immigrants, the mentally ill, and children (Hall, 1999). It is tied to the notion of normality, where those who are not perceived to fall within the bounds of normality come to be seen as outsiders by those who do (Messiou, 2006). Marginalisation is often described as a socio-political process (Hall, 1999) that results in inequality and disadvantage.

The notion of marginalisation can be conceptualised in relation to a circle, with members of a group or society being more or less marginalised depending on their proximity to the core of the circle (McIntosh, 2006; Messiou, 2006). The core of the circle represents the heart of a society or group's normality (the idea of normality being socially constructed). Those members of the group or society who are most like these notions of normality find their place easily within this core. The more different from the norm a person is perceived to be, the further from the inner core of the circle they find themselves. The further from the inner core a person or group of people find themselves, the more marginalised they are from access to social justice, power, participation, voice and value (Tucker, 1990).

When describing the concept of marginalisation, pinning down this centre point (the place of normality) is often difficult (Ferguson, 1992). This is because it can be a very hidden place and to know that place often requires membership. Also ideas of normality are social constructs, not direct referents. However, despite the elusiveness of the centre, Ferguson stresses that it exerts a real and undeniable power in social contexts.

The power of the centre depends on it being unchallenged (Ferguson, 1992). However, if this authority is challenged and breaks down, then there remains no centre point to which others can be marginalised from. As Ferguson states:

In our society, dominant discourse tries never to speak its own name. Its authority is based on absence. The absence is not just that of the various groups classified as 'other' although members of these groups are routinely denied power. It is also the lack of any overt acknowledgement of the specificity of the dominant culture which is simply assumed to be the all-encompassing norm. This is the basis of its power (p. 11).

Ferguson's explanation of the unchallenged nature of the 'centre' has direct relevance to the exclusion of disabled students. The dominant discourse of education has been shown to exclude disabled students, however, it never speaks its name as such, rather giving the impression that what occurs at schools is a natural normal occurrence, not socially constructed by those who hold the power.

In education, exclusion is typically a term that has been used to describe what occurs when students are formally removed from school for reasons of inappropriate behaviour and discipline. In New Zealand the term exclusion is used to mean "the formal removal of a student aged under 16 from the school and the requirement that the student enrol elsewhere" (Ministry of Education, 2008c, p. not given). Students can only be excluded if their behaviour is deemed by the school principal to be harmful or a dangerous example to other students at the school, or if the student has displayed continual disobedience and this is a harmful or dangerous example to other students at the school (Ministry of Education, 2003).

As well as explanations of exclusion related to school discipline, recently inclusive education research has taken up the term exclusion and used it in direct relation to the notion of inclusion. While exclusion as it relates to school discipline is an overt practice, with a focus on physical non-presence, the use of the term exclusion in the field of inclusive education differs. For example, the term exclusion is used in the literature in relation to forces of exclusion: those factors that act to make it difficult for a student to have full and fair access to all the things that happen at school. For example, special education language has been reported as a force of exclusion (Ballard, 2004b). In the inclusive education literature, exclusion is also used to describe the *process* that occurs when a student is denied access to all the things that happen at school, such as access to the curriculum, access to friendship groups, access to teacher time and so forth (Booth, 1996).

Critical to this thesis is the idea that the term exclusion is not just associated with physical presence at school. A student may be in school, but still experiencing exclusion if they are not able to access curriculum, friendships and other experiences considered as ordinary (Kearney, 2008). Finally, exclusion can be both obvious and hidden. For example, a student may be experiencing exclusion at school, but those factors that are

acting to exclude that student may be so ingrained in the structure and culture of a school that they go unnoticed and unquestioned (Slee & Allan, 2005). In the inclusive education literature, the term exclusion is used as an antonym to inclusion.

#### **2.4.1 Exclusion of Disabled Māori Students**

It is important to specifically consider the exclusion of disabled Māori students in New Zealand. Māori students in general (both disabled and non-disabled) experience greater levels of exclusion from and within schools than non-Māori students (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2006). Studies have shown that the most critical characterisation that has reinforced the exclusion of Māori within education is the perceived inferiority with regard to Māori language, intellect, social formation and cultural practices (Bishop, Berryman, Richardson, & Tiakiwai, 2003). Add disability to this already discriminated group, and it can be argued that exclusion is even more greatly experienced.

Bevan-Brown (2000, 2006, 2007), argues that one of the major factors that act to exclude and marginalise disabled Māori students is negative individual and societal beliefs and attitudes. One of the most detrimental of these is a belief that a child's culture is not relevant to their education. This can be seen when teachers deny cultural difference and employ monocultural and discriminatory pedagogical practices, particularly around assessment (Bevan-Brown, 2006). Other exclusionary principles and practices identified by Bevan-Brown (2006) include: low teacher expectations leading to self fulfilling prophecies; "economic rationalisation" (p. 224) where schools are driven by monetary imperatives and Māori relevant services are not provided because they are not economically viable; "meritocratic, individualistic and competitive ideologies" (p. 224) that create school systems and school practices that conflict with holistic, Māori views values and beliefs; and majority culture ethnocentrism which results in differences in Māori students being perceived as deficits (ibid).

Other studies report similar findings. For example, researchers from Massey University (Bourke et al., 2001), when talking with teachers, principals and teacher aides around meeting the needs of disabled Māori students, found deficit model thinking, low teacher expectations and an ignorance of the importance of a child's culture. Similarly, other research projects in New Zealand have identified deficit beliefs and low expectations as

factors that exclude and marginalise Māori students (Bishop et al., 2003; Phillips, 2005; Wilkie, 1999).

International research in relation to ethnicity and disability has long reported the over-representation of ethnic minority students with special education labels; labels that act to marginalise and exclude these students from access to the advantages of mainstream education (Ishii-Jordon, 1997). Current research would suggest that this is still evident in educational systems around the world (Artiles, Klingner, & Tate, 2006; Reid & Knight, 2006). Similarly, in New Zealand, Phillips (2005) reports this phenomenon and asks the question whether Māori are ‘diagnosed’ with ‘special needs’ because they have a genuine impairment or because they come from different social, cultural and linguistic traditions.

#### **2.4.2 What are the Effects of Exclusion?**

While not a direct aim of this study, it is difficult to overlook the theme of school exclusion effects. Because exclusion is about devaluing people (Booth, 1996), one of the major psychological effects of exclusion is students’ negative feelings of value and belonging (Falvey & Givner, 2005). In a major synthesis of research regarding student’s need for belonging in a school community, Osterman (2000) draws a number of relevant conclusions. She maintains that a sense of belonging is an extremely important concept and as a psychological phenomenon has a far reaching impact on human behaviour and motivation. She found that many students fail to experience a sense of belongingness at school. The results of not having this are “a range of emotional problems such as violence towards other students and teachers, drugs, depression, drop outs, eating problems, and teen pregnancy” (pp. 358–359). Baumeister and Leary (1995), in a review of over 300 citations, found that being excluded or ignored often leads to negative feelings of depression, jealousy, anxiety, grief and loneliness. They also found that when people lack belongingness, they are prone to a range of behavioural problems including criminality and suicide.

Whenever students are denied access to the culture and curricula of mainstream schools, they are devalued (Booth, 1996). Devaluing people leads to feelings of alienation and isolation (ibid) and has been suggested as a reason for crime, and many other

difficulties experienced by societies (Forest & Pearpoint, 1992). Exclusion from education has also been shown to limit employment opportunities and restrict freedoms of citizenship including access to adequate income and housing (UNESCO, 2005).

Similarly, a common theme to emerge from the inclusion literature is the link between exclusion and segregation in schools spilling over to create exclusive and segregative societies (Stainback & Stainback, 1996). While schools continue to legitimise exclusion, communities that exclude particular people will continue to exist. It could also be argued that while communities continue to legitimise exclusion, exclusion in schools will continue to exist.

## **2.5 Human Rights**

In recent years, inclusive education and exclusion have been viewed and interpreted as a 'rights' issue (Ballard, 2007; Daniels & Garner, 1999; UNESCO, 2005). A major impetus for this approach has been the advocacy of disabled people themselves (Mittler, 2000). A rights discourse of inclusive education is supported in and by many international rights declarations. For example *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948); *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC)* (1989); *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (1994) (under the aegis of UNESCO); and *The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006)*<sup>4</sup>.

There is certain appeal for a human rights approach to inclusive education (Mittler, 2000). One of the advantages of this approach is that it lessens the importance, or makes irrelevant, research validation about the benefits of inclusive education (Mittler, 2000). Also, it is well documented that disabled children are less able to fully realise their human rights than other social groups (Campbell, 2001; New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2004). It has long been accepted that education is a basic human right for all children and that free and open education systems are necessary for creating inclusive societies. As stated in the New Zealand Human Rights Commission (2004):

Education is critical to the development of human potential, to the enjoyment of the full range of human rights and to respect for the rights of others. Education

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter One for a further explanation of these declarations.

also acts as a protector of children's rights. The right to education straddles civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights (p. 68).

Therefore, inclusive education is not just a way to ensure that all children and young people have their right to education fulfilled, but it is also a vehicle for ensuring that children and young people learn to respect and respond to diversity in their communities and their societies (ibid). Education provides one of the most powerful tools in breaking down stereotypes and negative attitudes towards disabled people (Campbell, 2001).

The human rights perspective is also very useful for examining and understanding the reasons why disabled students are being excluded from and within school. Many of the ways that disabled children are denied inclusion are based on a denial of their rights. Logically then, if disabled students were to experience their full rights they would not be excluded or marginalised. The notion that disabled students experience fewer rights to access regular education than non disabled students is well reported in the literature. (e.g., Lansdown, 2001; MacArthur, Sharp, Kelly, & Gaffney, 2007; New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2004).

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child identified a number of factors that impede the access of disabled children to inclusive education. These were:

- Deep seated prejudice and fear of disability, when disability is viewed as a curse, stigma or punishment. The isolation of disabled children serves to perpetuate such myths.
- A lack of understanding about the potential of all children to develop if provided with a responsive environment.
- The prevalence of discriminatory laws that fail to provide equal rights of access to disabled children.
- Persistence of the medical model of disability in which the disabled person is defined as the problem. This contrasts with the social model, where a child is perceived as having an impairment, but is disabled by attitudes and the environment.
- The failure to recognise the potential economic and social benefits of inclusive education for society as a whole (Lansdown, 2001, p. 45).

It is probable that these factors are also evident in the New Zealand education system. For example, the New Zealand Human Rights Commission report that many of the disability-related complaints to the Human Rights Commission are related to disabled students being denied their rights to education (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2004). Complaints were based on the difficulties parents and students experienced with the attitudes and behaviour of staff and students who it was reported, lacked understanding of the needs of disabled students and were patronising or openly discriminatory. Also reported was a lack of specialist services and equipment and a lack of funding for them. Parents indicated a need for teachers to be trained to work with disabled students (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2004).

Four broad standards for assessing the achievement of the right to education have been adapted for use in a New Zealand context in the form of *A Right to Education Framework* (Human Rights Commission, 2004). These were taken from the standards proposed by the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Katerina Tomasevski. These standards are:

- Availability: to ensure education is available for all in accordance with human rights standards;
- Accessibility: to ensure access to available education for all in accordance with human rights standards/ Accessibility also includes affordability;
- Acceptability: to ensure that all education provision conforms to the minimum human rights standards;
- Adaptability: to ensure education is responsive to the best interests and benefit of the learner, in their current and future contexts (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2004, pp. 68–69).

Each of these four standards has been used by The New Zealand Human Rights Commission to judge New Zealand's progress towards education for all. In relation to availability, it has been found that New Zealand is performing well. In terms of accessibility, participation rates for disabled people are disproportionately low. In relation to acceptability, The Human Rights Commission report that there are disparate standards of education for disabled children and they experience discrimination, bullying and harassment over issues of disability. Finally in relation to adaptability, it is



reported that disabled people are experiencing disproportionately low achievement rates (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2004).

Lack of attention to the rights of disabled students to education in New Zealand is an area of concern. An example of this lack of attention can be seen in the 2008 *Report of the Education and Science Committee Inquiry* into making the schooling system work for every child (New Zealand House of Representatives Education and Science Committee, 2008). Throughout this report, there was no discussion on how effective the education system is for disabled students. The only part of the report to mention disabled students pointed out that the committee did not gather any evidence around students on the autistic spectrum.

However, taking a human rights perspective to inclusive education is not without its critics. For example Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton (2000) believe that limiting discussions of inclusive education to human rights is constraining as it offers no strategies to bring about change. They also believe that it does not challenge, or adequately problematise issues of power and control, issues that have been shown to be a major force in the exclusion of disabled people.

## **2.6 Exclusion: Influencing Factors**

A ‘rights’ explanation is useful in providing an overarching basis for an examination of the phenomenon of exclusion of disabled students. However, the reasons why disabled students experience exclusion and the methods by which they are excluded are far more complex. This is for two main reasons. First, often the reasons for excluding disabled students are hidden and deeply embedded in attitudes and practices that are accepted and taken for granted. As Slee and Allan (2005) point out, “Exclusion proceeds through deep structural and broad cultural mechanisms to invigilate a shifting spectrum of diversity” (p. 15).

Second, it is difficult to identify the precise factors of school exclusion (i.e., the how and why of exclusion) because of the interrelated nature of them. That said, this section will review the literature examining why disabled students experience exclusion from and within school, and how it occurs.

### 2.6.1 Market Model Systems

One of the most compelling reasons cited in the literature for the exclusion of disabled students is market model education systems. That is, where schools compete against each other to attract students. Barton and Slee (1999) note that market model education systems, encourage competition between schools with the aim of increasing and improving standards of academic achievement and behaviour. However, as research has shown, while market model systems may promote individual choice and freedom, the schools that successfully operate within this model do not promote social justice or equity, particularly for minority and marginalised groups (Barton & Slee, 1999; Clark, Dyson, Millward, & Robson, 1999b; Thomas, Walker, & Webb, 1998). Education systems based on market model systems are particularly problematic for inclusive education. If schools have to compete for students, they want students who “add value to their school rather than invite risk” (Slee, 2001a, p. 392). Slee also reports that the competition brought about from market model systems in education has increased pressure on schools to assure parents that high standards will be maintained in schools, and that problem students will not interfere with the learning of their children (Slee, 2001a). This is proving to be a major force in the exclusion of disabled students (Ballard, 2003a; Carrington, 1999; Halpin, 1999; Slee, 2001a). As Barton and Slee (1999) note:

there is an assumed benign quality to the selective precision of the market as it randomly picks and chooses according to ‘natural talent’. Market equilibrium defines social good. Competition as the instrument of selection will include and it will exclude (p. 5).

Corbett (1999a) concurs, noting that competition has been used as a tool of marginalisation and exclusion and that by its very nature competition is the antithesis of inclusion.

New Zealand has not been immune to issues associated with market model education systems. The concept of ‘self managing schools’<sup>5</sup> was introduced in 1989. This had the effect of making schools more aware of the need to attract students, often in competition with other schools (Gordon, 1994). Similar to researchers commenting on similar systems around the world, Ballard (1999b) believes that this concept makes it

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<sup>5</sup> Where funding, management and governance is devolved to the individual school operating under a Board of Trustees.

extremely difficult to sustain a model of inclusion. Other New Zealand research supports this assertion. For example in a study into the effects of the Special Education 2000 policy, Bourke et al. (2000) found that some school principals did not want their school to be known as one that attracted students with special needs in case some parents were detracted from sending their bright children to the school. Similar findings have also been reported in Australia (Slee, 2001a).

Examination systems, particularly in secondary schools, are reported as a vehicle of exclusion. Searle (2001) has suggested examination systems in Britain ensure thousands of young British students fail and are rejected. He points out that that the entire British school examination system has been built upon practices of exclusion as it was not designed for the majority of school age children, but rather a small minority of children (Searle, 2001). While New Zealand has a different system of examinations, similar parallels can be drawn. For example in 2003, more than 40% of year 11 students failed to meet the requirements for National Certificate in Educational Achievement<sup>6</sup> (NCEA) level one (Larson, 2004).

In many countries the publication of league tables<sup>7</sup> has exacerbated exclusion. For example, Searle (2001) reported that in Great Britain, during August of 1996, it was revealed that, in order to boost their ranking in performance tables, some schools were refusing thousands of sixteen-year-olds their right to sit the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. Those students who were considered likely to fail were not allowed to attempt the examination, as their results would bring down the school's overall pass rate. By excluding these students, schools were then able to raise the percentage of students who achieved five GCSE passes between grades A and C. Approximately 50,000 students nationally, mainly from working class homes, were denied access to the GCSE examination (ibid). Milbourne (2002) found that teachers and schools were likely to devote their energy and resources to pupils who were just at the borderline of achieving nation examination passes, which left them less time to devote to pupils who experienced much greater difficulties with learning.

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<sup>6</sup> NCEA is a national assessment programme in secondary schools grounded within a competency framework which allows students to demonstrate achievement across a range of competencies within each subject to levels of either credit, merit or excellence.

<sup>7</sup> Where ranked lists of schools, based on student achievement scores and examinations pass rates, are published in newspapers and other media with the purpose of enabling parents and students to make informed choices regarding attending different schools.

In New Zealand, the practice of publishing tables showing comparisons of individual school results in the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) pass rates could possibly create similar practices. In an investigation into a New Zealand secondary school (Larson, 2004), it was reported that under-performing students were deflected from enrolling in core subjects, so that the school could report 100% pass rates in NCEA.

These are just some compelling arguments showing that competition is a vehicle of exclusion. As Searle (2001) warns:

The hidden hand of the market will not deliver a morally justifiable school system. In fact the market always pushes the system towards injustice. It is inevitable that competition between schools will reinforce a division between failing and successful schools. Thus it is crucial that schools do well in school league tables: otherwise they will be set on a downward spiral of falling rolls and diminishing resources (p. 136).

### **2.6.2 Protection of Majorities**

As well as the more obvious reasons for the exclusion of students from schools, some researchers have suggested more complex reasons that reach deep into the heart of societies and their cultures. Staub (1990) reports that groups in power or a majority position can look to enhance this power and majority by partially or wholly excluding some groups from certain aspects of a society. Staub notes that by excluding some groups, those in power maintain their privileged status.

Education has been used as a vehicle to protect the self-interest and power of majority groups, often by way of denying some groups access to academic credentials. Tomlinson (1999) noted that restricting access to academic and professional qualifications is a major form of social exclusion. Some have argued that governments are at the heart of this exclusion. Governments are prone to support exclusionary forces in schools, as well as creating the catalyst for them by way of adopting policies that protect the interests of some groups of students and legitimate the exclusion of others. Examples of this include funding frameworks based on labels, promoting segregated

special education facilities, and the publication of league tables (Reay, 2004; Tomlinson, 1999).

It has been suggested that practices that lead to the exclusion of disabled students (e.g., segregation, streaming, labelling), occur because professionals with particular status carry them out (Tomlinson, 1996). It is the status of the professionals involved that legitimises the practices. Similarly, students can be subjected to exclusionary forces because it justifies the work and beliefs of those professionals involved in these practices. For example it has been reported that professionals and academics who earn their living working from exclusionary paradigms and within settings that segregate disabled people, do not want their positions and livelihoods taken away from them (Booth & Ainscow, 1998b). Therefore they would be likely to resist any moves towards more inclusionary philosophies and practices (ibid). Similar findings were reported by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2003). In their thirty-country study of inclusive education, they found that in some European countries, special educators felt threatened by the process of inclusive education, because they thought that it would endanger their jobs.

### **2.6.3 Disability Discourses**

A discourse is a way of speaking about a reality and a way of constructing knowledge. It is through discourse that meaning and knowledge about a phenomenon are formed and produced (Purdue, 2004). Discourses provide the words and symbols that allow people to construct and communicate a reality (Johnson, 2005). Discourses also determine what is important and what is not important.

A discourse can develop when there is an acceptance of certain issues and assumptions around a phenomenon or issue (Neilson, 2005). Over recent decades there has been increasing recognition that our awareness and understanding of issues and phenomenon are influenced by the language and concepts we use (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999). Therefore, discourses are very powerful in terms of shaping ideas, norms, values and beliefs about a topic or phenomenon.

This has been the case in relation to the concept of disability, where a range of meanings has been assigned based on different discourses. Historically, three main discourses have dominated thinking about disability: (1) medical discourses, (2) charity discourses, and (3) lay discourses (Fulcher, 1989). Traditionally understandings of disability have been dominated by the medical discourse, which interprets disability as an individual problem where a person is perceived by others as having a deficit, an illness or problem that needs fixing or curing. Disability is not seen as 'normal' and social, political and cultural contexts play no part in the interpretation of disability. Medical discourses of disability often portray disabled people as 'others' and, by implication, legitimise discrimination against them (Purdue, 2004).

Charity and lay discourses are closely linked to medical perspectives. In regards to charity discourses, Neilson (2005) points out that disabled people are described as needy, pitiful and requiring compensation. As opposed to disabled people, able-bodied people hold the dominant knowledge discourse and they set the rules based on what they regard as normal. Also disabled people's judgements and preferences are regarded as inferior to those of professionals who are working to 'help' them (ibid). Similarly, lay discourses regard disability as something terrible (Fulcher, 1989).

Over the last few decades, medical, charity and lay discourses have been challenged as disablist, discriminatory and oppressive. The notion of disability being a problem that resides within an individual was criticised and challenged and an alternative perspective was given which located the problems disabled people experienced as arising from society's failure to provide appropriate services and take into account the needs of disabled people in relation to the way societies are organised (Oliver, 1996). This discourse has gathered momentum and can be seen as a major 'way of thinking' evident in, for example, disability studies courses in universities around the world. Similarly, this socio-cultural perspective can be seen at government policy level. For example the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* (Ministry of Health, 2001) which defines disability as "not something individuals have ... disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have" (p. 10). However, this discourse is not without its critics. For example Corker and French (1999) believe that socio-cultural

model theories of disability still have value judgements because they dichotomise disability and impairment. Disability tends to be valued (that is, it is acceptable to be labelled disabled) and impairment tends to be silenced and marginalised (it is not talked about or valued because it is not acceptable).

#### **2.6.4 The Notion of Difference**

The theme of disability as ‘difference’ is often associated with exclusion. It has been argued that the phenomenon of ‘difference’ is a social and political phenomenon. Minnow (1990) sees difference as a function of comparison and not, as has traditionally been the case, some individual pathology of the ‘different’ person. To understand difference requires an understanding of the majority ‘other’. As Minnow (1990) states, “if we look closely at the context that defines some people as different, that difference will no longer seem empirically discoverable” (p. 22), but rather ideas about difference will be clues to problems associated with the responsibilities of people within a society and the policies of those societies (ibid). The effects of seeing ‘difference’ as a function of comparison can lead to dividing the world into have and have nots, worthy and unworthy, valued and unvalued (Minnow, 1990).

This is of direct relevance to the exclusion of disabled students. Some studies have shown that the notion of difference is seen as a justification for excluding and marginalising disabled students from regular education. Purdue, Ballard, and MacArthur (2001), found that the teachers in their study identified disabled students as different from those students who were not disabled and therefore not the responsibility of the classroom teacher. They found that when this did happen, those students would be considered the responsibility of an untrained teacher aide. Ainscow (1999) has reported similar findings where teachers have believed that because of the needs of some disabled students, they could not be expected to teach them. Similarly, the degree of difference can equate to the level of rights disabled children are given to be present, participate and learn in regular classrooms. MacArthur, Dight, and Purdue (2000) found that some teachers suggested to them that some disabled children are too different and too disabled to be taught in a regular classroom.

The idea of difference has been associated with medical model thinking about disabled students. In a study by Davis and Watson (2001a), teachers told researchers how different disabled children were to 'us'. Often these ideas about difference were based on value judgements and medical model perspectives that had as their focus, children's impairments and deficits. Davis and Watson (2001a) also found that because 'difference' was not something that was valued or aspired to, disabled students were often forced to act 'normal'. This was associated with a view that it was the role of the teacher to correct disabled students 'abnormalities or deficits', and this process of such correction was based on developing a dependency on non-disabled people (Davis & Watson, 2001a).

Ballard (1995) argued that schools that practice exclusion do not see differentness as part of the ordinary and not being ordinary is used as a justification to exclude or marginalise these students from mainstream schools. He points out that this is often under the misguided belief that they need special treatment that can only be given in special schools (*ibid*). This is a reflection of the values of our society. In New Zealand society, as in many other western societies, normalness is valued. As it is difficult to segregate school culture from the culture of the wider society in which the school is placed, these values are also evident in schools (Sarason, 1982).

However, as many writers have noted, difference is culturally, socially and politically constructed (Ballard, 2003a; Corbett & Slee, 2000; Slee, 2001a). Culture defines who has ability and who has not, who is valuable to a group and who is not so valuable (Carrier, 1990). Recognition and understanding of the part played by culture in including and excluding students is vital in promoting successful inclusion (Carrington, 1999; Slee, 2001a) and therefore, in overcoming school exclusion. As Carrington (1999) points out: "By recognising and understanding social responses to difference and establishing 'cultures of difference' within schools, equity and the inclusion of all students could be promoted" (p. 259). Slee (2001a) concurs, noting: "the point of embarkation for the journey towards more inclusive forms of schooling is at the point of recognising the nature and legitimacy of difference and the relations of domination between different cultural groups" (p. 389).



Closely related to the concept of difference is the concept of 'others'. Slee (1995) highlighted the exclusive nature of this term when recounting his involvement in a forum for teachers and parents. Here he was questioned about the other 29 students in the class who it was believed would be disadvantaged by having a disabled student amongst them. The term 'other' was used to imply that the disabled student had the status of the outsider (Slee, 1995). The concept of 'other' is a complex one, particularly as it relates to the exclusion of minority student groups. Ballard (1999c) sees this concept as creating the discrimination of 'them' and 'us', and this forms the basis for exclusion. Teachers must consider all students as 'us' not 'them' (Alton-Lee, 2003).

### **2.6.5 Language**

Directly associated with the concept of difference and disability discourse are the words or language that define and categorise those as different. Language is often reported as an instrument of exclusion (e.g., Ainscow, 2000; Booth, 2000a; Ballard, 2003b; Slee, 2001b) and most forms of exclusion involve a language that differentiates between those that are in and those that are out. In relation to disabled students, this language is well established (Ainscow, 2000; Ballard, 2003b; Booth, 2000a; Slee, 2001b). In particular, the term 'special needs' has been reported as an example of language that devalues and excludes those who are assigned the label. The term 'special needs' presupposes that there is a clearly defined group of students who have extraordinary needs and these needs are around deficit and 'not valued' difference. Ainscow (2000) reports that if we categorise and name children as special, this identifies them as different from others and different in ways that are not valued in schools and in societies. Corbett (2001) concurs, stating that "the concept of special educational needs; particularly as it is seen in this country [England] becomes another barrier. I don't think it has a productive contribution to make to the inclusive education agenda. If anything, it is one of the major barriers to moving forward" (p. 41).

It is also relevant to note that studies showing the link between language and exclusion often find the use of language associated with deficits and illness when referring to disabled students (e.g., Davis & Watson, 2001b; MacArthur et al., 2000).

The language of exclusion can also be hidden. Slee (2001b) warns that those working from traditional special education paradigms may use the language of inclusion, but still continue to hold assumptions about disabled people based on ideas of pathological defect and abnormality. This is not to say that those working from a special education, deficit model, while speaking the language of inclusion, do so in a conscious effort to exclude and marginalise the students that they work with, this is probably far from the truth (Slee, 2001b). However, this is the worst scenario and draws similarities with the writing of bell hooks (1994) discussing the issues of freedom and justice:

In retrospect, I see that in the last twenty years I have encountered many folks who say they are committed to freedom and justice for all even though the way they live, the values and habits of being they institutionalise daily, in public and private rituals, help maintain the culture of domination, help create an unfree world (p. 27).

Therefore it may be possible to use the words of inclusion to talk about the principles and practices of exclusion. Further demonstrations of this can be seen in other areas. For example, in an advertisement for a teacher to work with students experiencing difficulties with learning and behaviour, the following description of the work cluster appeared: “Our cluster is focused on inclusive special education practices” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 41). Similarly, there are book titles such as *Inclusion Practices with Special Needs Students* (Pfeiffer, & Reddy, 1999).

### **2.6.6 The Curriculum**

Curriculum can be described in broad terms as the subject matter, pedagogy (including assessment) and resources that are involved in the organisation, delivery and articulation of education programmes (National Board of Employment Education & Training, 1992). The role of the curriculum in creating more or less inclusive schools is well documented. For example, UNESCO (2005) reports that “accessible and flexible curricula can serve as the key to creating inclusive schools” (p. 25). However, studies both in New Zealand (e.g., McArthur et al., 2005) and internationally (e.g., Davis & Watson, 2001b; Lloyd, 2008; UNESCO, 2005) report that often disabled students have limited access to the general curriculum and that the curriculum may not be designed to successfully meet the needs of all students.

Curriculum adaptation has been reported as a key practice that can reduce the exclusion often experienced by disabled students. Udvari-Solner (1996) reported that if teachers did not adopt a model of curriculum adaptation, students were more likely to be excluded from regular classroom activities. Similarly, Shevlin, Kenny, and McNeela (2002) found students being more marginalised when teachers did not make adaptations so that students could access the experiences of their non-disabled peers. Also reported is the need for teachers to focus on modifying and adapting the curriculum, rather than disabled students needing to ‘modify and adapt’ in order to access the curriculum (Davis & Watson, 2001b).

Lloyd (2008) has argued that the curriculum is inherently biased, focused on the needs of the academically able to the detriment of those not so able. UNESCO (2005) suggests the following strategies need to be taken into consideration if the curriculum is not to be a force of exclusion:

- Providing a flexible time-frame for pupils studying particular subjects
- Giving greater freedom to teachers in choosing their working methods
- Allowing teachers the opportunity of giving special support in practical subjects (for example orientation and mobility) over and above the periods allotted for more traditional school subjects
- Allotting time for additional assistance for classroom based work
- Emphasising aspects of pre-vocational training (p. 25).

UNESCO (2005) also suggests asking the following questions:

- What human values promoting inclusion are being fostered through the curriculum?
- Are teaching methods child-centred and interactive?
- How is feedback gathered/integrated for curriculum revision?
- How is the curriculum related to national assessment systems?
- To what extent are the education authorities responsible for monitoring the school in tune with the curriculum revisions and transactions? (pp. 25–26).

Carroll-Lind, Bevan-Brown, and Kearney (2007) suggest that in order to encourage teachers to think more about curriculum issues in relation to the inclusion and exclusion of disabled students, curriculum documents need to be very clear about the need for

curriculum adaptation and also very clear that it is the teachers' role to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all students. They also suggest that human rights should be an integral part of the curriculum as this promotes inclusive schools and communities.

Assessment is considered an integral part of the learning process. However, some forms of testing and assessment, especially norm-referenced assessments, have been shown to exclude and marginalise disabled students (Mittler, 2000; Thomas & Loxley, 2001).

### **2.6.7 Low Teacher Expectations**

Low teacher expectations are a factor reported as excluding disabled students from an inclusive education (Keary, 1998). In an Irish study of students who were physically disabled, participants reported that their teachers expected less of them than their non-disabled peers. Teachers accepted work of a lower standard, and gave inadequate feedback (Shevlin, Kenny, & McNeela, 2002). Similarly, a study by Priestley and Rabiee (2002) reported low expectations based on perceived severity of impairment. In a Norwegian study, Nes (1999) reported that teachers of a highly capable disabled student did not expect her to attain very much.

The concept of 'self fulfilling prophecies' is well reported in the literature (e.g., Tauber, 1997). However, Alton-Lee (2003) warns of taking a simplistic approach when it comes to the issue of teacher expectations. She maintains that while inappropriate teacher expectations can undermine student achievement, a focus on teacher expectations alone will not bring about improved outcomes for students. Teacher expectations need to be integrated into quality teacher practices. However, Alton-Lee also points out that New Zealand educators need to break the pattern of inappropriately low expectations for some groups of students, particularly disabled students (ibid).

### **2.6.8 Teacher Attitudes and Beliefs**

Teacher attitudes and beliefs have been shown to be important factors in the inclusion or exclusion of disabled students at school. Arguably, one of the most important teacher attitudes is a belief in the concept of inclusive education. In this regard, if teachers are not accepting of the principles of inclusive education, barriers to the participation of

disabled students will be erected (King-Sears, 1997; MacArthur et al., 2005; Mentis, Quinn, & Ryba, 2005; Spedding, 2008; UNESCO, 2005). However, Cook, Tankersley, Cook, and Landrum (2000) would maintain that it is teachers' attitudes towards disabled students themselves, as opposed to their attitudes towards inclusive education in general that is the critical factor. Ainscow (1999) also identifies the teacher rejection of certain students based on their characteristics as an excluding factor.

Dyson, Howes, and Roberts (2004) reviewed the literature on how mainstream schools respond to student diversity, and facilitate participation by all students. They found that a strong theme running through all studies was the importance of the values and attitudes held by school staff. Important attitudes included an acceptance and celebration of difference and a commitment to providing for the social and educational needs of all students. This commitment to all students is reiterated in other studies. For example, Carrington and Elkins (2005) found that disabled students may not have their needs met in regular classrooms if the classroom teacher does not believe that they are responsible for these children. Similarly, *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study* (Education Queensland, 2001) found that teachers who were engaged in productive pedagogy (that is a pedagogy that successfully meets the needs of all students) held the belief that they were responsible for all students in their class. In contrast, teachers who were not engaged in productive pedagogy were less likely to hold this belief. Ainscow (1999) reported similar findings and argued that barriers to inclusion are erected when teachers believe that there are some children who they cannot be expected to teach. Research has also shown that teachers who do not believe they are responsible for disabled students are likely to hand over responsibility to teacher aides (Ainscow, 1999; MacArthur et al., 2005).

A belief in the importance of teacher self-reflection with the intention of improving practice is reported as important in facilitating inclusive education. Corbett (2001) reports that school staff who are open to learning new skills and to self-reflecting, respond effectively to students needs, and this contributes to an inclusive school environment. Similarly, *The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study* (Education Queensland, 2001) found that teachers who were engaged in productive pedagogy were more willing to talk about and reflect upon their failings and consider changes that had to be made to their teaching, than teachers who did not engage in productive pedagogy.

Closely related to teacher reflection, is a recognition by teachers of the power that they hold to either include or exclude students. This recognition is reported as an enabler to inclusive education (Allan, 1999; Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000; Spedding, 2008). If teachers are aware of the part they play in this regard, they are more likely to modify their behaviour in areas such as use of language, expectations, and stereotyping. A belief by teachers that all children can learn and succeed is also well reported as a belief that facilitates inclusive education (Falvey & Givner, 2005).

Teacher misconceptions can also act as barriers to inclusive education. These include the beliefs that inclusion (1) is a theoretical construct, (2) is not a practical one, (3) is costly, (4) requires capacities and special skills in teachers and these are difficult to develop, and (5) will only come about when society changes to be more inclusive (UNESCO, 2005).

Factors that affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education are: their previous experience with students who are considered 'challenging'; their training and professional development; the support that is available to them; the size of their class; and their overall workload (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burton, 2000; MacArthur et al., 2005; UNESCO, 2005).

### **2.6.9 Teacher Education and Professional Development**

The professional development and training of teachers is an important consideration in the exclusion or inclusion of disabled students. This is for two main reasons. First, teachers often report a lack of knowledge and skills as a factor impeding their ability to successfully include disabled students in their classes (Marshall, Ralph, & Palmer, 2002). Second, research consistently shows the importance of appropriate teacher attitudes and values for successful inclusive education and that teacher training and professional development can play an important part in developing these necessary beliefs and attitudes. For example Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden (2000) and McDonald and MacArthur (2005) report that professional development in the area of inclusive education can have a positive effect on developing teacher attitudes conducive to the facilitation of inclusive education. Similarly, Praisner (2003) found a correlation between school principals' involvement in professional development about inclusive

education, and their positive attitude to disabled students. Those with positive attitudes were more likely to provide a more inclusive education whereas those with negative attitudes were more likely to provide restricted education. Praisner also found that the more content around appropriate topics, the more positive principals were in their attitude toward inclusion. However, Praisner did not specify just what these appropriate topics were.

It should be noted that this is not necessarily the widely held belief that the professional development needed is in the form of special training around special interventions for disabled students (Mittler, 2000). Thomas, Walker, and Webb (1998) report that there is no evidence to suggest that there is a separate set of practices or teaching strategies that are required to meet the needs of disabled students. Some research shows that it may be more effective if professional development provides participants with opportunities to reflect on their beliefs, values and attitudes and the relationship between these and their day-to-day practice (MacArthur et al., 2005; Mittler, 2000).

Similarly, it is reported that professional development for inclusive education, based on special education principles, may not support teacher learning. As reported by CCS Disability Action (2007), most in-service professional development in New Zealand relating to disabled students originates from the Ministry of Education's Special Education division, *Group Special Education*. CCS Disability Action (2007) report that "this is generally not about inclusion, but about managing problems" (p. 5). However, given that in 2007, the New Zealand Ministry of Education did not have an inclusion policy, logically, there would be no professional development specific to inclusive education.

Marshall, Ralph, and Palmer (2002), in a study examining teachers' attitudes towards students experiencing speech and language difficulties, recommended that professional development for teachers focus on a commitment to inclusive education and that attention be given to appropriate knowledge and skills. They found that teachers' perceived lack of knowledge was a barrier to their ability and reduced their confidence to work effectively with students who experienced difficulties with speech and language.

The role of initial teacher education (ITE) in creating inclusive or exclusive schools is also reported in the literature. While some writers take a technical view, highlighting the necessity for the inclusion of teaching strategies and skills into ITE programmes (for example writing IEPs, preparing picture exchange communication systems and so forth), others call for a move away from the technical approach (Slee, 2001a). Ewing (2001) believes that many teacher education programmes have too little attention focused on the ethical, political, social and cultural dimensions of teaching whereas, it is these aspects of schooling that sustain the exclusion of some students. In particular Ewing (2001) believes that teacher educators need to reflect upon the extent to which their courses convey, often tacitly, social and political realities that encourage students to accept, uncritically, power and hierarchy arrangements in schools. These are the power and hierarchy arrangements that include and exclude some groups of students. In their extensive review of the literature, McDonald and MacArthur (2005) make similar recommendations highlighting the need for initial teacher education (ITE) programmes to change from traditional knowledge based models, to those based on principles of social justice and citizenship.

Kane (2005) investigated the nature and extent of ITE programmes in New Zealand around inclusive education. She found that the majority of ITE providers did not have clearly articulated policy around inclusion within their qualifications, and that there was limited evidence of the degree to which ITE programmes responded to the literature on inclusive education. She also found that the titles of many papers reflected a focus on special needs rather than inclusion.

McDonald and MacArthur (2005) report that most teachers in New Zealand have attended ITE programmes that have optional papers about teaching disabled children and children who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour, and thus believe that teaching these children in their classroom is also optional.

It is not just teachers that need to be involved in training and development around inclusive education. Governors, politicians and decisions makers at local and national levels need to be involved as well (Mittler, 2000).



### **2.6.10 The School Principal**

There is a growing body of research examining the role of the school principal in creating inclusive or exclusive school environments. Many studies support the notion that principals have a vital role in the success or otherwise of inclusive schools (Avisar, 2000; CCS Disability Action, 2007; Kugelmass, 2003; Praisner, 2003; Riehl, 2000). As creating inclusive schools often involves significant change for school communities, principals are in a unique position to affect this change. Riehl (2000) points out that a principal can “influence what things mean” (p. 60), promoting appropriate situations and their meanings. For example at meetings, public relationship events and school ceremonies, principals are in a position to assign inclusive meanings to actions and beliefs, for example promoting inclusive meanings around disability and difference (ibid). Principals are also in a unique position to model inclusive attitudes, beliefs and practices, and the modelling of such behaviour has been shown to advance the acceptance and inclusion of diverse student populations (Praisner, 2003). Also, principals are in a powerful position to create a shared vision towards an inclusive school (Ainscow, 1999; Hanson et al., 2001). Similarly, principals are in a strong position to encourage the training and professional development paths of teachers (MacArthur et al., 2005). As stated previously, effective professional development has been strongly linked to inclusive schools (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000).

The attitude of school principals towards disabled students appears to be a very important factor in the inclusion and exclusion of disabled students. Praisner (2003) found that principals with positive attitudes towards inclusive education are more likely to place disabled students in inclusive settings, whereas principals with negative attitudes towards inclusive education are more likely to include disabled students in more restricted environments. Praisner also found that a school principal’s attitude was affected by past positive or negative experiences with disabled students.

The leadership style of school principals has also been shown to help or hinder inclusive education. For example, Dyal (1996) found that the school principal’s ability to share leadership with others was a vital factor in creating school climates conducive to inclusion. Similarly, Education Queensland (2001) and Dyson et al., (2004) found that leadership that was strongly focused on management did not lead to improved student

outcomes. Likewise, CCS Disability Action (2007) report that an inclusive school is less likely when leadership is weak, particularly in relation to encouraging a learning organisation within a school.

Principals are in a unique position to act as gatekeepers to the enrolment of students at their school. This is particularly relevant for disabled students. A New Zealand study reported that 10% of school principals surveyed indicated that they had denied enrolment to a child with a disability (Bourke et al., 2000). These principals justified this on the grounds of lack of trained personnel to work with disabled students, a lack of what was considered appropriate facilities, and health and safety concerns for other students and staff. Another group of principals indicated that while they had not actually denied enrolment, they had discouraged it. Some principals in this study also said that they had used delaying tactics in relation to a disabled students' enrolment, hoping that the parents might enrol their child at another school. The same study reported similar findings from surveys with parents who reported that some school principals made it obvious that they did not want the child by suggesting to parents that another school would have better facilities and opportunities for their children. Parents also reported that some principals gave them the impression that the resourcing entitlements must come before the child could enrol (Bourke et al., 2000).

School culture has been described as one of the most important concepts in education but also one of the most overlooked (Stoll, 1999). The school principal is in a unique position to shape school culture in line with inclusive principles and practices (CCS Disability Action, 2007). The nature of school culture and the part it can play in including or excluding disabled students is discussed in the following section.

### **2.6.11 School Culture**

While many aspects that could be considered part of a school culture (such as teacher attitudes beliefs and management styles) have already been discussed in this literature review, the topic of school culture is such an important one that it is worthy of individual consideration. The notion of school culture has been linked to effective inclusive schools (Ainscow, 1995; Alton-Lee, 2003; Carrington, 1999; Dyson et al., 2004). It has been defined as:

the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p. 28).

School culture is a complex phenomenon, and this complexity is in part due to the fact that there are multiple meanings assigned to the term. Often it is used interchangeably with terms such as school climate, ethos, atmosphere or character and these terms are assumed to be a common phenomenon (Prosser, 1999).

Culture within a school context, exists at different levels, some of which can be observed (for example language, rituals, symbols and customs) and some of which are not visible and deeply embedded within organisations (e.g., values, norms and beliefs and taken for granted assumptions). In an extensive study into the school culture of inclusive and non-inclusive schools, Carrington and Elkins (2005) found that whereas non-inclusive schools held notions of difference that perpetuated medical model thinking and value judgements and maintained rigid teaching methods and school structures, inclusive schools blurred the lines between disabled and non disabled, and special and mainstream provisions. There was also greater sharing and collaboration between teachers and teachers were encouraged to experiment and adapt their ways of working.

Similarly a study by Henderson (1997) found that schools with high exclusion rates were characterised by a management style with a narrow definition of both the teacher's role, a narrow understanding of the purposes of the school, and the schools employed rigid, hierarchical discipline systems. Henderson recommended that the ethos of schools be reviewed as this had a major influence on exclusion rates.

In an extensive review of the literature around how mainstream schools act in ways that enable them to respond to student diversity to facilitate participation by all students, Dyson et al. (2003) found school culture to be the critical factor. They found that the norms, values and accepted ways of doing things in schools that were focused on inclusion and inclusive principles, produced an overall enhancement in participation of all students.

Corbett (1999b) reported that successful inclusion occurs only if the level of deep culture is examined and attended to. In this study, school principals reported that although all the planning, curriculum modification and other practices often associated with inclusive education had occurred, this was not enough to counteract exclusion, particularly from peer groups. Corbett believes that any definition of inclusive education must be located within a school's culture if it is to have meaning. She believes that locating inclusive education within the culture of the school reduces the abstraction of the concept, thus giving it meaning to those within the school and the school community.

Alton-Lee (2003) reports that schools that have collective perspectives regarding curriculum, policy and pedagogy, and are safe environments for all students, show positive outcomes for diverse students. In particular, those schools that provided safe environments for students through active strategies to reduce bullying and violence report positive outcomes for diverse students. The relevance of bullying to inclusion and exclusion will be discussed in the following section.

#### **2.6.12 Bullying**

While much has been published in the area of school bullying generally, little attention has been given to the area of school bullying and disabled students (Flynt & Morton, 2004). However, the UK Office of the Children's Commissioner has found that disabled children can be twice as likely as their peers to be the victims of bullying and Mencap (a leading United Kingdom charity working with learning disabled people) reports that nearly nine out of 10 people who experience difficulty with learning, also experience some form of bullying, with over two-thirds experiencing it on a regular basis (National Children's Bureau, 2007). Similarly in New Zealand, MacArthur et al. (2007), found that bullying was a common feature of school life for disabled children, and the New Zealand Human Rights Commission report evidence that disabled students experience issues of bullying in regards to their impairment (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2004). As bullying has been shown to lead to exclusion (MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001), this is an important factor associated with the exclusion of disabled students.

### **2.6.13 Lack of Resources**

It has been claimed that exclusion comes about from a scarcity of resources. For example in a New Zealand study into the effects the Special Education 2000 policy, Bourke et al., (2000) found that principals actively redirected students to other schools when it was thought that the students would put pressure on their funding. Similar beliefs were reported in another New Zealand study where teachers believed it was a lack of funding that contributed to a discrepancy between what was received and what was required to successfully include students with special needs (Prochnow, Kearney, & Carroll-Lind, 2000). It would appear that in some cases, resources are seen as a critical factor for successful inclusion, and when principals believe 'adequate' resources are not available, they feel justified in legitimising the exclusion of students with disabilities. Ballard (1999c) surmises that using a lack of resources as an excuse for excluding students on the basis of their disability is more a statement about the values held by the excluder than a justification or explanation. From these perspectives, it is not so much the lack of resources that is the 'excluder' but the feeling that it is justified to use the perceived lack of resources as an acceptable reason for exclusion that is most telling.

Peters, Johnstone, and Ferguson (2005) report that the belief that disabled students are excluded because of a lack of resources is a myth, with the main forces of exclusion being attitudes, beliefs and systems that are not designed to meet the needs of diverse students.

### **2.6.14 Teacher Aides**

The use of teacher aides (also called paraprofessionals) is a growing phenomenon in relation to the education of disabled students, however, as Giangreco, Edleman, and Broer (2001) suggest, it is one of the least studied. Giangreco et al. (2001), report that there is little evidence attesting to the efficacy of paraprofessionals for improving outcomes for disabled students, yet the practice of assigning paraprofessionals to work with disabled students continues and grows. They wonder how this practice has survived and even grown over the years without strong efficacy data (ibid).

One of the themes in the literature in relation to the use of teacher aides is the practice of class teachers handing over responsibility for disabled learners to teacher aides (e.g., Broer, Doyle, & Giangreco, 2005; Giangreco et al., 2001). This is done both willingly and reluctantly. Similarly, Ainscow, Farrell, and Tweddle (2005) found what they called surprising levels of importance placed on the work of unqualified paraprofessionals. This does raise questions of assigning the least powerful and qualified staff (paraprofessionals) to the least powerful students, and perpetuates the devalued status of disabled students, both in the eyes of the disabled student themselves and in the eyes of others (Giangreco et al., 2001). Similar results are reported by Thomas, Walker, and Webb (1998). They have found that when a student is seen as the responsibility of a teacher aide, their status is reduced in the eyes of their peers.

Literature also reports the potential of teacher aides to segregate students from their peers. This is most apparent when teacher aides work with disabled students in isolated areas, away from the mainstream class (Ainscow et al., 2005). This has been linked with a lack of opportunity for disabled students to form social skills and social interactions with their peers (Lorenz, 1998). Broer, Doyle, and Giangreco (2005) report that paraprofessionals can act as protectors of disabled students in the playground, particularly in relation to bullying which Broer et al. believe denies these students the opportunities for decision making and reduces the visibility of issues of bullying. Thomas, Walker, and Webb (1998) also report that when a student is viewed by their peers as the responsibility of a teacher aide, they are likely to be isolated by that peer group.

## **2.7 The Voice of Parents<sup>8</sup>**

The literature reveals a number of general beliefs and assumptions regarding the place of parents in relation to their children's schooling. Some of the more commonly reported are that parents know their children best; that parent involvement in their children's education is important; and that collaboration between parents and teachers is an important practice that brings positive outcomes for their children (e.g., Howland, Anderson, Smiley, & Abbott, 2006; Kelly, 2005; Lam, 2006). It is also reported that

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<sup>8</sup> While the term '*the voice of parents*' is used, it should be noted that there is no one voice for all parents. Parents are individuals with multiple perspectives.

these beliefs and assumptions are even more pronounced and important in relation to disabled students (Fraser, 2005). However, the literature reports mixed findings regarding how these 'givens' play out in reality, both in terms of parents' voice in their child's school, and parents' voice in research affecting their children.

Some studies report relatively high levels of communication between parents and schools. For example, in a survey with parents of children labelled as autistic, Spann, Kohler, and Soenksen (2003) found that 100% of respondents to the survey indicated that they communicated with someone at the school who was important to their child's education. Also, 51% indicated that they interacted with school personnel on a daily basis and 31% reported interacting with school personnel one to three times a week. Similarly, in a 2001 New Zealand study surveying 245 parents of disabled students, most respondents commented positively on their relationship with their child's school and the frequency of their contact. When asked to suggest how this could be improved, 115 said that they had no suggestions, as they were satisfied (Bourke et al., 2001).

However, other studies report poor communication between parents of disabled students and the school. In one New Zealand study, Brown (1999) quotes the following from one advocate who draws attention to the difficulties parents of disabled students have in ensuring their voice is heard:

What upsets me is confident articulate parents, well able to work the system, are reduced to quivering wrecks. It riles me that we can do this to people. What about people who cannot speak English and where it is culturally inappropriate to buck authority? (p. 28).

Arguably one of the areas where the voice of parents would be expected to be the most predominant is in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process. However, in a New Zealand study examining 159 IEP plans for the 1994 school year, Thomson and Rowan (1995) found that only 55% of parents participated in individual education planning meetings.

Reasons why the voice of parents can be relatively silent are varied. Ashman (2009) reports that parents can avoid contact with the school if they see themselves as visitors who are unwelcome, if they are not offered opportunities to learn about the school and

if they have negative perceptions of the school based on their own experiences as students. Benson, Karlof and Siperstein (2008) suggest other reasons why parents of disabled students may not be involved. A major reason they cite is based on the severity of the difficulties their child experiences and the high levels of stress that this brings. They suggest that because of these difficulties and stress, parents can have ‘nothing left to give’ in relation to communication and partnership with their child’s school. Fraser (2005) also reports that communication becomes difficult when schools pay lip service to policies around parent and teacher communication; do not understand or value parents; and treat parents as if they were impaired.

In New Zealand, the voice of Māori parents has been particularly marginalised. This is disconcerting for a number of reasons. Central to this is that schools have important responsibilities under New Zealand’s founding document, *The Treaty of Waitangi*<sup>9</sup>, to ensure that Māori parents are an integral part of the school (Ministry of Education, 2000). In a study into Māori parents’ perceptions of Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Bevan-Brown (2004) reported a pressing need for professionals to listen to Māori parents, and be guided by them. Another finding by Bevan-Brown in relation to the voice of Māori parents is a need for their culture to be considered in interactions with them and their children (2000, 2006). The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2000) suggest that developing more effective communication between Māori parents and schools is not something that can be achieved with simple solutions. However they suggest that some straightforward things have been shown to increase the voice of Māori parents. These include ensuring that Māori place names and personal names are pronounced correctly, that the status of Māori language is raised in the school, and the school is a warm and welcoming place for Māori parents and whānau.

Listening to the voice of parents is vitally important in inclusive education research. Their knowledge gives a unique perspective to inclusive education as a humanising context (Ware, 1999), as opposed to inclusion in the way that Slee (2001b, p. 174) critically calls “technical problems to be solved.” Ware also warns that research in this area should focus on working *with* parents rather than working *on* parents. Ware

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<sup>9</sup> “Signed in 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi is an agreement between the British Crown and Maori. It established British law in New Zealand, while at the same time guaranteeing Maori authority over their land and culture. The Treaty is considered New Zealand’s founding document.” (New Zealand.com, 2008, page not given)



believes that research *on* parents has been the basis of special education knowledge for the past two decades and has contributed to the exclusion of disabled students from and within school. Brown (1999) reports that in New Zealand, the voice of parents with a family member who is disabled is rarely heard in the literature around disability issues.

## **2.8 Summary**

This review has examined the literature around the construct of exclusion. The review revealed tensions in relation to the use of the term exclusion, and highlighted that it is a complex phenomenon often explained in contradictory ways. To add to the complexity, few writers using the term define their use of it. However, in the inclusive education literature, the term exclusion is often used to mean the opposite to inclusion.

The review of the literature also revealed that the reasons for exclusion are complex and interrelated. This complexity is due not only to the hidden nature of many of the forces working against the inclusion of disabled students, but also to the unquestioned way they are carried out and accepted.

Current research in this area places an emphasis on the contextual issues that act as exclusionary forces. These include the marketisation of education, disability discourses, medical model paradigms, notions of difference and the language associated with disabled people. Within schools, the curriculum has been shown to be a powerful force in including or excluding students, as have teacher and principal attitudes, values, beliefs and knowledge; issues associated with funding and resourcing; student bullying; and the inappropriate use of teacher aides. As reported in this literature review, many of these factors are seemingly accepted unquestioningly, and form the tradition and culture of the way things are done. The literature review also identified the importance of human rights and social justice arguments in the area of inclusive education and exclusion, as well the voice of parents.

The following chapter will discuss the research methodology of the study.



# CHAPTER THREE

## METHODOLOGY

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### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the methodological theory underpinning this study. A brief exploration of some of the criticisms of traditional research in this field is provided, as well as a discussion of the new research agendas needed to move towards more inclusive education systems. The nature of qualitative research is examined, followed by an explanation of the epistemological foundations, the theoretical perspective and the methodology of the research. Finally, research ethics are considered. Practical issues associated with the methods are discussed in Chapter Four.

### 3.2 Research in the Area of Inclusive Education

Research in the area of inclusive education, and specifically, disabled students has its roots in special education research methodology. However, over the last 10 to 20 years, this methodology has been questioned and critiqued. For example, Skritic (1991) warned of the dire effects of traditional ‘special education’ research methodologies. He criticised their framework based on positivist paradigms, where differences between people were considered from medical and psychological perspectives. As Skritic (1991) pointed out:

Real progress in special education, of course, will require a different frame of reference, a different set of assumptions, theories and metatheories. At a minimum, it will require the special education community to take seriously the critics of its theoretical and applied knowledge. It will require a self-reflective examination of the limits and validity of special education knowledge and its grounding assumptions (p. 116).

Others have added their voices in criticising traditional special education and disability research paradigms. Notable is the work of Oliver (1992, 1996) who has argued that traditional research agendas have reinforced negative stereotypes of disabled people and have done nothing to improve the quality of their lives:

As disabled people have increasingly analysed their segregation, inequality and poverty in terms of discrimination and oppression, research has been seen as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. Disabled people have come to see research as a violation of their experience, as irrelevant to their needs and as failing to improve their material circumstances and quality of life (Oliver, 1992, p. 105).

This is because, historically, much research in the area of special education and disability has been focused on the identification and remediation of deficits, and a view that the problems faced by disabled people are a result of their impairment (Oliver, 1992). Also, this research agenda has seen a proliferation of numbers of children and young people being labelled as having ‘special educational needs’ (Corbett, 2001), resulting in pressures on school systems for funding and resourcing.

New research agendas are required. As described in Chapter One, inclusive education is a social, cultural and political issue; it is not an issue of individual student pathology. Therefore, research in the area of inclusive education needs to focus on the social, cultural and political issues that allow or disallow the development and sustenance of an education system for all students (Slee, 2001a). As Slee, (2001b) advises, this will require shifting the emphasis from viewing inclusive education as a set of specific “technical problems to be solved” (p. 174) to an agenda of research that considers the “pathologies of schools” (p. 174).

One of the suggestions for this new research agenda is participatory and emancipatory research. Participatory research in this field involves disabled people in the research planning and processes. Emancipatory research is controlled by them as part of a broader process of empowerment (Zarb, 1997). While these were recognised as appropriate research approaches for this study, neither approach was used as it was not possible within the constraints of this project. However, Zarb (1997) believes that just because this is not possible, it does not mean that researchers cannot exercise some meaningful choices about how they work with disabled people. If researchers are able to exercise control over the social relations of the research production, their research can still achieve meaningful outcomes for disabled people. He believes that disability

research can only be considered transformative to the extent that disabled people are able to use the research to facilitate changes in the status quo.

This research project aimed to empower disabled students and their parents/whānau. The focus was on identifying some of the social, political and cultural issues that act to exclude and marginalise disabled students from education. However, empowerment of disabled students will require more than single research projects such as this one. Empowering disabled students and their parents/whānau is a process. As Zarb (1997) states, “emancipation is not something with a fixed beginning and end, rather it is an ongoing dialectical process of growth and development” (p. 53). This research is intended as a small part of that process.

### **3.3 Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research grew from dissatisfaction with earlier forms of quantitative research, forms of research that (in their simplest sense) examined questions that were answered by collecting and statistically analysing numerical data, usually in ‘unnatural’ settings such as laboratories. This dissatisfaction emerged from within the quantitative paradigm and from outside of it (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). It is not possible to describe these factors in any depth, however as Guba and Lincoln (1998) explain, the problems or dissatisfaction that surfaced surrounding quantitative research were associated with a questioning of so-called objectivity in relation to facts and values. Also, dissatisfaction with quantitative research was based on a belief that it did not place any relevance on the context; it could not explain human behaviour because it did not attend to the meanings and purposes people gave to the things they did; it did not include any discovery dimension in inquiries; and was often not applicable to individual cases.

Qualitative research emerged in the social science arena in the 1960s (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As with many of the terms that will be described in this section, qualitative research can mean different things to different people and can mean different things depending on the historical time period in which it is referred (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). However, a general description of qualitative research is that it is a situated activity where researchers attempt to make sense of and interpret phenomena in relation to the meanings that people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Bogdan and Biklen (2003, pp. 4–7) have identified five key characteristics of qualitative research (although they point out that all studies that they would describe as qualitative, do not necessarily have all five traits to an equal degree; some may be lacking in one or more). The first characteristic of qualitative research is that it is naturalistic: that is, it occurs in authentic settings, which are the source of data, and the researcher is the key instrument in collecting this data. Secondly, qualitative research involves descriptive data: the data collected are not numbers (although, there can be some quantification of data) but rather words or pictures. The third characteristic of qualitative research is that it has a concern with process, not just with outcomes or with products. Fourthly, qualitative research is inductive: data are analysed inductively as opposed to being used to prove or disprove a hypothesis. Finally, qualitative research places emphasis on meaning: researchers who work in qualitative ways are interested in other people's perspectives and meanings.

Qualitative research can include many different epistemological positions, theoretical frameworks and methodologies and it is interdisciplinary in its nature (Guba & Lincoln, 2004). Methods common to qualitative research include observation, document review and analysis, cultural analysis, interviews, focus group discussions and first person accounts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Qualitative research methods are those that allow for 'thick' descriptions of social life and social processes (Guba & Lincoln, 2004), as opposed to surface or 'thin' descriptions. Qualitative research seeks to make sense of social phenomena as they occur in natural settings (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006). A quantitative approach on the other hand, is one that looks to find relationships between variables, particularly, cause and effect relationships (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington, & Okely, 2006). While this study involved some use of numbers and statistics, the analysis was not based on a quantitative approach. This study did not set out to uncover any statistical relationships.

This study sought to make sense of the social phenomena of school exclusion in relation to disabled students. Therefore, a qualitative approach was selected to examine this phenomenon. The use of a qualitative approach to research inclusive education is well supported in the literature. For example, Danforth and Morris (2006) explain that qualitative research encourages contextual dialogue between researchers and practitioners about the education of students who are often subject to marginalisation.

They also point out that qualitative research can get to the heart of the “possibilities and shortcomings of daily practice in schools that seek inclusion” (p. 145).

### 3.4 Theoretical Framework

Epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodologies and methods are the four basic elements of any research process and each informs the other (Crotty, 1998). From a researcher’s epistemology comes a theoretical perspective, which informs the methodology, which in turn informs the methods used. Figure 3.1 shows this relationship.

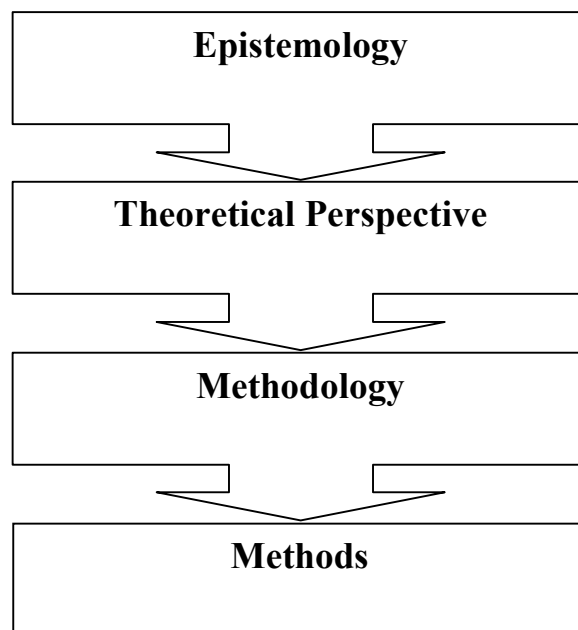


Figure 3.1 *The basic elements of the research process (Crotty, 1998, p. 4)*

#### 3.4.1 Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge. Epistemology concerns itself with questions such as what is knowledge and what does it mean to know something? As Crotty (1998) points out, there is a range of epistemological perspectives. An example is objectivism, which purports that meaning and reality exist apart from any consciousness or any context. From an objectivist perspective, when we see a cat and call it a cat, we are not assigning our own meaning to it, but merely discovering a meaning that has been there all along (Kuhn & Dean, 2004). A research project based on an objectivist epistemology would be based on the belief of an absolute truth waiting to be discovered, a truth that

was not affected by subjective meanings or contexts. At the other end of the epistemological spectrum is subjectivism. From a subjectivist epistemology, meaning is arrived at by the subject imposing meaning on the object (Kuhn & Dean, 2004).

This research project was based on an epistemological stance that is somewhere in the middle of objectivism and subjectivism, that of constructionism. Constructionism is based on the understanding that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality, is contingent upon human practices, and that the knowledge and reality is constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world (Crotty, 1998). Further, this knowledge and reality is developed and transmitted within a social context (ibid). The difference between constructionism and subjectivism is that researchers do not start with nothing (as subjectivism would have it), they start with the people and objects in the world (Crotty, 1998). The difference between constructionism and objectivism is that researchers do not start with the belief that there is an absolute knowledge or truth waiting to be discovered and that this truth is independent of the context or subject (as objectivism would have it). Researchers are part of constructing that knowledge, and the subject and object are inextricably related, both having an effect upon the other. From a constructionist perspective, objects or phenomena cannot be described in isolation from the conscious being experiencing it (Crotty, 1998). Similarly, experiences cannot be adequately described in isolation from its object or phenomena (ibid).

This epistemological perspective was particularly relevant for this study which took the perspective that the meanings around ideas such as disability, inclusion and exclusion are socially and culturally constructed, in and out of the interaction between people and their world. Constructionism was also relevant to this study because for any meaning to be ascribed to 'exclusion,' there must be a relationship between the concept of exclusion and subjects, for example, 'exclusion from what?' 'exclusion of whom?' 'exclusion by whom?'

### **3.4.2 Theoretical Perspective**

The theoretical perspective describes the philosophical stance that informs a chosen methodology. The theoretical perspective that informed all aspects of this study was critical inquiry or critical theory. Critical theory was developed by a group of writers at



the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. Originally, critical theory was based on the purpose of Marxism which was to oppose the bourgeois society and (in comparison to traditional theory) as a theory that seeks to change a situation rather than a theory that merely reflects the current situation (Peters, Lankshear, & Olssen, 2003). Critical theory was designed to hasten developments that reduce injustice in societies (Peters, Lankshear, & Olssen, 2003).

The origins of critical theory can be traced back to the thoughts and writing of Karl Marx (1818–1883) although the theoretical base of critical theory was broadened by Horkheimer and his colleagues at the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. They moved away from a focus on the economy, which was prevalent in the writing of Marx, to a more humanistic and philosophical reference (Peters et al., 2003). They considered that it was not only economic oppression and exploitation by the bourgeois that needed to be critiqued (as suggested by Marx) but also other repressive forces associated with modernisation and representations of modernity (Peters, et al., 2003).

Although the literature provides differing explanations of critical theory, Kincheloe and McLaren (2003) have provided a useful interpretation and reconceptualisation of critical theory for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They outline the following premises of critical theory:

Critical theory:

- Analyses competing power interests between groups and individuals within a society identifying who gains and who loses in specific situations.
- Attempts to expose the forces that prevent individuals and groups from shaping the decisions that crucially affect their lives to achieve greater degrees of autonomy and human agency.
- Recognises that there are multiple forms of power including racial, gender, sexual forms of domination. Economic factors are also important in shaping everyday life.
- Recognises the concept of hegemony as central to critical theory and an understanding of the various and complex ways that power operates to dominate and shape consciousness. Power can be productive or oppressive.
- Recognises that language is not a mirror of society; it is an unstable social practice whose meaning shifts, depending upon the context in which it is

used. Language is not a neutral and objective conduit of description of the 'real world.' Rather from a critical perspective, linguistic descriptions are not simply about the world but serve to construct it. Critical theorists study the way language in the form of discourses serves as a form of regulation and domination (pp. 437–443).

Critical theory as a theoretical perspective is particularly appropriate for this research. Critical theory is directly related to issues of power and justice, as was this research, which hypothesised that exclusion is a phenomenon associated with power and injustice. Critical theory is concerned with uncovering competing power interests and exposing forces that prevent subjugated individuals from making decisions, as was this research, which sought to uncover and expose the forces that support the exclusion of marginalised groups. Critical theory is concerned with the unconscious processes that bring about resistance to any change, as was this research, which sought to examine resistance to inclusive education. Critical theory is concerned with the power of language, as was this research, which hypothesised that language is a powerful tool of exclusion.

Finally, the words of Emeritus Professor John Codd of Massey University are particularly relevant. He urges educational researchers to involve themselves in the practice of rigorous robust criticism of educational practice. This, he believes, is a precondition for the growth of knowledge and improvement of practice in the area. He recommends the use of critical theory as a solid base for such work (Codd, 2007).

### **3.4.3 Methodology**

Methodology describes the research strategy and plan of action. All phases of this study were based on grounded theory methodology. However, while the research was strongly influenced by grounded theory, particularly in regards to allowing the theory to develop from the data no research can be completely true to a theory or concept and this was the case with this research.

Grounded theory is a qualitative research method. It uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived theory about a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Grounded theory focuses on how individuals interact in relation to the phenomenon under study (Dey, 1999). The basic tenet of grounded theory is that a theory must emerge from the data not the other way around where a theory is taken and data are gathered to prove or disprove this theory.

Research questions based in grounded theory are open and general and, as Charmaz (2005) points out, the emerging theory should account for a phenomenon that is problematic and relevant for those involved. This was the case in this study, where the phenomenon of school exclusion of disabled students was problematic and relevant for disabled students and their families. Grounded theory involves choosing forms of data collection that yield information useful in generating a theory. The sampling is intentional and focused on the generation of a theory (Creswell, 2005). This study therefore sought to examine the nature of school exclusion in relation to disabled students, questionnaires and interviews with disabled students<sup>10</sup> and their parents were planned as the first source of data because these people directly experience this phenomenon and can speak from first hand experience.

Initial sources of data are very important to grounded theory as each stage of data gathering informs and focuses the next. In this study the data were collected in three phases, each one informing the other. No decisions regarding the nature of the second phase were made until data from the first stage was gathered and examined. Similarly data from phase two informed phase three, and decisions regarding the nature of phase three were not made until phase two data had been collected and examined. Grounded theorists begin their analyses early and this helps them to focus their further data collection (Charmaz, 2005). Where this study deviated from ‘true’ or ‘original’<sup>11</sup> grounded theory is that the literature was used to influence the initial data gathering. Themes from the literature regarding exclusionary forces for disabled students at school were used in the initial parent questionnaire. However, there were also open questions to allow respondents to provide their own account of the exclusion their child had experienced at school.

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<sup>10</sup> Initially, it was planned to interview disabled students, however, this did not eventuate. See section 4.2.1 for an explanation.

<sup>11</sup> Glaser and Strauss, 1967.

Analysis of data using a grounded theory methodology involves three processes. First is open coding where researchers form initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied. The second process involves axial coding where the researcher refines, develops and relates the open codes into categories. Here the researcher may position each open code at the centre of the process being explored (the core phenomenon) and then relate other categories to it. The final processes involve elective coding, where the researcher writes a theory from the interrelationship of the categories in the axial coding model<sup>12</sup>. The resulting theory can be reported as a set of propositions, or in the form of a narrative (Dey, 1999).

Grounded theory was the methodology chosen for this study for three reasons. First, little is known of the nature of school exclusion in relation to disabled students. Grounded theory provided a vehicle for developing some understanding around this phenomenon. Secondly, grounded theory allows for the incremental development of the research with each phase informing the next. Planning this entire research project from the outset would have been impossible as very little was known of the phenomenon and the researcher was unsure of what parents and disabled students would report in the early phases. Finally, grounded theory is well suited to research around issues of social justice. As Charmaz (2005) points out, social justice inquiry is one area where researchers can fruitfully apply grounded theory methods. She states that researchers working in a grounded theory methodology involve themselves in:

developing increasingly abstract ideas about research participants' meanings actions and worlds and seeking specific data to fill out, refine, and check the emerging conceptual categories. Their work results in an analytic interpretation of participants' worlds and of the processes constituting how these worlds are constructed. Thus, they can use the process emphasis in grounded theory to analyse relationships between human agency and social structure that pose theoretical and practical concerns in social justice studies (p. 508).

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<sup>12</sup> More detailed information about the specific nature of the data analysis used in this research is provided in Chapter 4.6.

### 3.4.4 Methods

Questionnaires and interviews (semi-structured individual, and focus group) were the two methods of data collection used in this study. Phase one involved the use of a web questionnaire (see Appendix C1) with parents of children who had experienced barriers to inclusion, followed up by a semi-structured interview with a random stratified sample of parents who had completed the web questionnaire (see Appendix D1). Phase two involved a postal questionnaire to school principals in three geographical areas of New Zealand (see Appendix C2) followed up by semi-structured interviews with a random stratified sample of school principals who agreed to participate in the interview process (see Appendix D2). Phase three involved interviews with teachers, in one school (see Appendix D3). It also involved a focus group interview with a group of teacher aides (see Appendix D4) and a group of year-6 students in the school (see Appendix D5). It was also intended to include observations and document analysis as forms of data analysis in phase three, but due to difficulties experienced, this was not possible. This will be discussed further in Chapter Four. The specific nature of, and procedures for, conducting the questionnaires and interviews, as well as information on sampling and the make-up of the research population and interviews will also be discussed in Chapter Four.

The rationale for the use of a web questionnaire with parents was four-fold. First, web questionnaires are a quick and expedient way of procuring information from a geographically wide spread population. There is little or no cost involved (for either party) and the data from the questionnaires are returned automatically to the researcher via email or the web, with no need for separate data entry. The second rationale for the use of a web questionnaire is that New Zealand has one of the highest rates of internet access in the world (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). Figures from the 2006 New Zealand Census show that 60.5% of households in New Zealand could access the internet (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). This meant that many parents would have access to the questionnaire via the internet. Thirdly, web questionnaires were a reasonably unthreatening way for parents to share their, and their child's, experiences with the researcher. Finally, web questionnaires allowed the researcher to *enter into* a conversation with respondents, and they were used to provide a starting point for the

identification of interesting and relevant themes that may be followed up in the subsequent interviews that are so important for grounded theory.

Postal questionnaires were the tool of choice for gathering data from school principals in phase two of the research. Again, convenience and expediency were major factors in the choice of this method. Additionally, because of their anonymous nature, questionnaires are more likely to elicit truthful responses: respondents are free to answer in their own time and at their own pace and any influence from the presence of the researcher is reduced (Burns, 2000). As with the rationale for the use of questionnaire with parents, questionnaires allowed data to be gathered in a 'safe' environment for respondents and they provided a starting point for the identification of interesting and relevant themes that may be followed up in subsequent interviews.

Questionnaires also have limitations. These include difficulty securing an adequate response; not being able to follow up on unreturned anonymous questionnaires; skewed or biased samples; questions appearing vague or ambiguous to respondents; and the researcher not being present to explain the intended meaning. Questionnaires also do not provide an opportunity to follow up on interesting data and they have limited use when exploring complex social phenomena (Burns, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The latter is particularly relevant to this study. Exclusion is an extremely complex phenomenon, therefore questionnaires are not likely to elicit in-depth answers to complex questions. However, in this study they were used to first enter into a conversation with potential respondents, and secondly to provide a starting point for interesting and relevant themes that may be followed up in subsequent data gathering.

Interviews were used to collect data in all phases of the research. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggest that interviews are used to gather descriptive data in the participant's own words. This way the researcher can develop insights into how subjects interpret the phenomenon under study. The term 'interviewing' implies a wide diversity of forms and a variety of uses (Fontana & Frey, 2003). The main types of interviews are structured, semi-structured and unstructured.

In structured interviews, the researcher asks all respondents the same series of predetermined questions and there can often be a predetermined coding system for

responses (Fontana & Frey, 2003). Advantages of structured interviews include that they can take less time than unstructured interviews; they provide uniform information; data analysis can be simple and quick; and they allow for accurate comparison if pre and post data is collected (Bell, 2005; Kumar, 1999). Disadvantages include that there is little flexibility in the way that questions can be asked, the interviewer does not have the flexibility to follow up on important responses; and the respondent cannot tell their 'story' in their own words (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Fontana & Frey, 2003; Kumar, 1999). Bogdan and Biklen, (2003) also suggest that if the interviewer controls the content of the interview too tightly, the interview can fall out of the qualitative range.

In contrast, unstructured interviews are used to explore general themes. The questions are posed spontaneously during the interview, based on the responses of the interviewee. Kumar (1999) suggests that this type of interview is very useful when little is known about a phenomenon or area under investigation. Also, unstructured interviews can produce extremely rich data. However, disadvantages include that if more than one person is being interviewed, questions asked of those respondents early in the process may be very different from those asked of respondents at the end of the process. Also, it is difficult to make any comparisons between respondents, and the freedom afforded by unstructured interviews can introduce interviewer bias (Fontana & Frey, 2003; Kumar, 1999).

Semi-structured interviews are used to collect qualitative data. The focus of the interview is decided by the researcher, with predetermined broad questions based on that focus. Usually, these questions are open-ended and there is no ordering of questions (Burns, 2000). Semi-structured interviews are useful for eliciting respondents' own ideas and opinions on a topic. This is in contrast to structured interviews, where predetermined questions lead respondents towards preconceived choices (Zorn, 2008). The rationale for semi-structured interviews is that the only people who understand the phenomenon in question (the focus of the interview) is the person themselves. An interviewer cannot hope to devise a rigid interview structure that encapsulates this (Burns, 2000). However, a researcher may have some key themes that they wish to investigate. In contrast to unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews allow for this approach. Another advantage to semi-structured interviews is that there is flexibility for both interviewee and interviewer. The interviewer can follow up on points of

interest, and the interviewee is able to provide information based on their perspective. (Burns, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The other form of interview relevant to this study is the focus group interview. These interviews consist of a group discussion that focuses on topics provided by the researcher. Questions are asked of the whole group. Focus group interviews are almost always qualitative and the typical size is between 8 and 12 participants (Gomm, 2004). Some advantages of focus group interviews are that: group interaction is possible, and one person's comments can trigger a variety of useful responses; it is an expedient way to gather data from more than one person; and it allows the researcher to see how group members respond to other people's positions and opinions (Bell, 2005; Bouma, 2000; Cozby, 2004). Some of the disadvantages of focus group interviews are that: one member of the group can influence others, it is difficult to attribute particular comments to individuals; transcripts cannot be returned for correction by the participants; and anonymity between participants is not possible (Bell, 2005; Cozby, 2004; Gomm, 2004).

The type of interview that a researcher chooses depends on the research goals (Bogden & Biklen, 2003). This project used semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D for all interview schedules) because they gave insight into a very complex and often emotional phenomenon (exclusion) from the perspective of those people who have close experience of it. They also allowed participants to explore the phenomenon of exclusion and to 'look back' on their experiences. Semi-structured interviews also enabled greater flexibility for both interviewee and interviewer, with the interviewer being able to follow up on points of interest at the time of the interview, and the interviewee being able to provide their perspective based on what they considered relevant and important (Burns, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

### **3.5 Research Ethics**

As social science research involves gathering data from people, questions of research ethics are important considerations. The main considerations are that human beings should be treated with respect, they should not be harmed in any way, and they should be fully informed about what is happening to them or with them as part of the research



process (Oliver, 2003). To ensure that research participants are treated with respect, fully informed, and not harmed by the research process, it is important to consider some key ethical principles<sup>13</sup>.

### **3.5.1 Informed and Voluntary Consent**

Informed consent is one of the most important principles of research ethics. It is based on the need for participants to enter into research voluntarily, while understanding the nature of the research and any disadvantages or obligations that may be involved (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The *Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct Involving Human Participants* (MUCEC) (Massey University, 2004), states that there are four elements that make up the principle of informed consent, these are:

- Information on which to make the decision;
- Comprehension of the information;
- Competence to make a decision and give formal consent;
- Absence of pressure or coercion

It is important to ensure that potential participants have full and open information about what their participation will involve and what will be expected of them (Clark, 1997). This information must be in a manner that is comprehensible to potential participants. The MUCEC (Massey University, 2004) states that this information should be in written form, however, this may not always be ideal, and if so, information should be in a style that is appropriate to the potential participants. Information can be given orally, for example if potential research participants are unable to read, or when it is culturally appropriate to provide information in this way. If written information is being provided, it should also be provided in potential participants' first language.

There may be some research participants without the degree of understanding necessary to give their informed consent to participate in research. Young children and people who experience difficulties with cognitive functioning are examples and are considered vulnerable research populations. Oliver (2003) suggests that, while researchers need to be careful not to be condescending towards these people, or make unwarranted

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<sup>13</sup> The practical application of these principles is discussed in section 4.7.

assumptions about their competence, they either need to help them to understand the nature and extent of the research, or take advice as to whether it is ethical to continue. Snook (1999) suggests a third alternative; to seek vicarious consent. However, Snook argues that this is only acceptable if there are significant benefits from the research and there is no risk at all to the participants. In the case of children, this consent may be obtained through their parents or caregivers. However, children also have the right to be heard, and participate in decisions affecting them as outlined in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Therefore, researchers should always provide appropriate information to children, and seek the informed consent of children themselves whenever possible (Munford & Saunders, 2001).

The principle of informed consent implies that participation in research is voluntary and there is an absence of pressure or coercion (Clark, 1997). Tolich and Davidson (1999) believe that this is easy to accept in principle but more difficult to ensure in practice. For example in some instances, even though potential participants are assured participation is voluntary, these participants may feel some coercion to participate, for example, a teacher asking their class to be part of their research, or a doctor asking their patient. In both these cases potential participants may feel an obligation to participate. Researchers need to ensure that there is no covert pressure felt by potential participants. To do this, Tolich and Davidson (1999) suggest the careful wording of information sheets so as to empower the potential participant. This ensures that potential participants are given clear messages that they have a right to refuse to participate without any negative consequences.

The principle of informed consent includes the avoidance of unnecessary deception. Note the term 'unnecessary' for as Snook (1999) believes, there are some kinds of social research that cannot be carried out without some degree of deceit. In these cases, the researcher needs to justify whether the potential information that could be gained is worthwhile enough, if there is no harm to the participants, and the deceit is not motivated by a desire to invade a person's privacy. Snook believes that it is questionable if deceit in research can ever be justified.

It can be argued that informed consent is seldom possible because this would mean that participants would need to know as much as the researcher, and this is rarely possible

(Snook, 1999). However, if researchers ensure that potential participants have information that is comprehensible; that there is an absence of pressure or coercion to participate in the study; and that appropriate steps are taken when potential participants may not have the competence to give informed consent; their research is more likely to adhere to this important principle.

### **3.5.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Anonymity and confidentiality are cornerstones of research ethics. However, an examination of the literature around these two important ethical terms, uncovers much variation and contradiction in relation to their meanings. For example Oliver (2003), describes anonymity in research as “respondents being given the opportunity to have their identity hidden in a research report” (p. 77). However, Bell (2005, p. 48), defines it as “a promise that even the researcher will not be able to tell which responses came from which respondent.” In a more pragmatic way, Salkind (2009) states that “anonymity in research means that records cannot be linked with names” (p. 82).

Similar discrepancies are evident in the literature associated with the term confidentiality. Wiles, Crow, Heath, and Charles (2006) define confidentiality in research as “assuring someone that what has been discussed will not be repeated” (p. 1). Salkind (2009) describes confidentiality as when “anything that is learned about the participant is held in the strictest of confidence” (p. 82). Wiersma and Jurs (2009) define confidentiality as “the researcher not disclosing the identify of the participants or indicating from whom the data were obtained” (p. 438).

As there was an expectation that this research study would adhere to the MUCEC (Massey University, 2004), clarification was sought from this code. Unfortunately, neither of these terms was defined in this code; rather they were used in such a way as to assume a shared understanding of their meaning. Because of the contradictions and lack of shared understandings around these terms, it is very important that a researcher is clear of the meanings that they assign to these terms and share these with the research participants<sup>14</sup>. When researchers fail to be clear about the meanings they ascribe to

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<sup>14</sup> Clarification of the meanings ascribed to the terms *anonymity* and *confidentiality* in this study are provided in section 4.7.2.

confidentiality and anonymity, serious misunderstandings between participants and researchers can result (Bell, 2005).

Despite this confusion, the importance of protecting participants' privacy is vital. Revealing private unauthorised information to third parties without research participants consent breaches any interpretation of the principles of anonymity and confidentiality (Clark, 1997).

There are a number of advantages of respondents having their identity unknown (including to the researcher). One such advantage is that respondents may feel freer to give their opinions knowing that they can never be attributed to them. This is particularly relevant if the respondent is being asked something that may cause them embarrassment or harm if their responses were attributed to them. Oliver (2003) also believes that when respondents' identity is protected, it is easier for the researcher to explore sensitive issues. However, there are also disadvantages of protecting the identity of respondents. These include that the respondent may wish to be identified; they may wish to have further contact with the researcher (for example an opportunity to review their responses and make changes); and if participants wish to withdraw from the study, the researcher would need to know which data to withdraw (Oliver, 2003).

If researchers themselves know the identity of participants, but make an undertaking to participants to take all reasonable measures to keep their identity known only to them, they should take this undertaking very seriously and do everything in their power to uphold it (Oliver, 2003).

It is unfeasible to promise participants that their data will not be shared with anyone (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2006). However, researchers must be explicit and truthful to participants about who will have access to the data, the researcher's plans for using and retaining the data, and how the data will be stored (Oliver, 2003).

### **3.5.3 Beneficence**

The principle of beneficence refers to the need for research to maximise the benefits and minimise any possible harmful effects (Cozby, 2007). Potential harm to participants

from participating in research can include psychological, emotional or physical harm, and loss of confidentiality (Cozby, 2007; Dunn, 1999). Dunn (1999) reports that mental or psychological risk is likely if people are asked to disclose very private aspects of their lives. It is also likely if at the end of the research, the participants discover that they have been deceived regarding the true purpose of the research. The risks of emotional harm are greatest however, where subjects are vulnerable (Gomm, 2004). As described earlier, vulnerable groups include those who may not be able to give informed consent to participating in the research.

The researcher also needs to consider the potential harm of *not* conducting the research (Cozby, 2007). This may involve issues of such seriousness that research is urgently required to alleviate suffering or harm. Medical research is one area where this is likely to occur.

Most researchers would like to believe that their research is designed to bring about some good to those participating in the research. Potential benefits to participants as a result of participating in research can include acquisition of a new skill or knowledge, treatment or intervention for a difficulty or problem, and less tangible benefits such as satisfaction (Cozby, 2007; Dunn, 1999).

However, Wilkinson (2001) asks the question ‘who is to judge whether the benefits of research outweigh the harm as people differ in how they value the effects of research?’ He supports the notion of research ethics committees as the appropriate forum in which to do this. Bell (2005) concurs, stating that while their gate-keeping role is not always welcome, they have important roles to play, particularly around issues of beneficence.

### 3.6 Research Overview

Table 3.1

*Overview of the research project*

<b>OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH</b>			
	<b>Phase One</b>	<b>Phase Two</b>	<b>Phase Three</b>
<b>Epistemological Perspective</b>	Constructionism	Constructionism	Constructionism
<b>Theoretical Perspective</b>	Critical Inquiry/ Theory	Critical Inquiry/ Theory	Critical Inquiry/ Theory
<b>Methodology</b>	Grounded Theory	Grounded Theory	Grounded Theory
<b>Methods</b>	Questionnaires (web based) Semi-structured interviews	Questionnaires (via mail) Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews Focus group interviews
<b>Participants</b>	Parents	School Principals	Students Teachers Teacher aides
<b>Setting</b>	World wide web (questionnaire) Home of parents/ whānau (interviews)	Various school environments	One school environment
<b>Period of time</b>	February 2005 to April 2005	September 2005 to March 2006	July–October 2007

### 3.7 Summary

The chapter has provided an exploration of some of the criticisms of traditional research in this field as well as a discussion on the new research agendas needed to move towards more inclusive education systems. The nature of qualitative research was examined and an explanation of the epistemological foundations, the theoretical perspective and the methodology of this research study was provided. This study was based on a constructionist epistemology and used the theory of critical inquiry as the basis for the research. Grounded theory was the methodology employed in all phases.

The data gathering techniques used in phase one and two were questionnaires and interviews. The data gathering techniques used in phase three were interviews, including focus group interviews.

The following chapter provides an explanation of the practical aspects of the methodology.





# CHAPTER FOUR

## METHODS

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### **4.1 Introduction**

The methods of a research project are those actual techniques or procedures that researchers use to gather the data needed to answer their research questions (Crotty, 1998). This chapter describes how the research methods outlined in the previous chapter were used in this study. It also provides details of the research populations in each phase, and how they were selected. Data analysis methods are explained. Finally, the ethical principles considered for this study are described.

### **4.2 Phase One**

Phase one of this study involved surveying parents of disabled school age children who had been excluded from or within school. Two data gathering methods were used: a web questionnaire and follow-up interviews.

#### **4.2.1 Research Population and Sample**

Short advertisements were placed in New Zealand parent disability magazines and newsletters. The advertisements invited parents and/or whānau of students who had experienced exclusionary pressures or barriers to their inclusion in school to log onto a web address and complete a short questionnaire (see Appendix A1 for an example of the advertisement). Sixty-three people completed and submitted the questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to indicate their interest in participating in a follow up interview. Over 80% of respondents (51) indicated that they would like to participate in a follow-up interview. A random stratified sampling procedure was used to identify 12 participants. The population of 51 respondents who had indicated a willingness to be interviewed was stratified according to the identified main barrier their child experienced to being included at school (main pressure of exclusion). Then, from each stratification, every fifth willing participant was randomly chosen. Every fifth respondent was chosen as it was calculated that this ratio would procure a sample of approximately 12 (63 divided by 5) and this would be a manageable number. Random stratified sampling was chosen to obtain maximum

differences of perceptions about the topic of exclusion or barriers to inclusion. McMillian and Schumacher (1997) describe this type of sample as the most useful form of qualitative research sampling as it allows representation of “subunits of the research problem” (p. 398).

All 12 selected interview participants were sent information sheets (see Appendix B1) and, if in agreement to proceed with the interview, consent forms to sign (see Appendix E1). Three people either changed their mind about participating in a follow up interview, or did not respond to the second invitation. In these cases, the next participant on the stratified list was chosen. While all parents were asked if their child could also be interviewed, every parent except one, declined to allow their child to be interviewed. Data from the interview with this one child have not been included in this thesis as very little information was gained.

All parent interview participants were given the option of a ‘face to face’ interview or a telephone interview. All chose ‘face to face’. Table 4.2 shows the geographical location of the interview participants.

Table 4.1

*Geographical location of parent research participants*

PARTICIPANTS	GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION
Participant one	South Canterbury
Participant two	Nelson
Participant three	Wellington
Participant four	Nelson
Participant five	Western Bay of Plenty
Participant six	Dunedin
Participant seven	Auckland
Participant eight	Wellington
Participant nine	Auckland
Participant ten	Wellington
Participant eleven	Bay of Plenty
Participant twelve	Wellington

The interviews were audio taped with the permission of participants.

### **4.2.2 Data Gathering Tools**

The web questionnaire consisted of 14 questions, including questions related to gender, date of birth and area of need or disability. There were also questions seeking to probe the nature of the exclusion experienced, where this happened and how it was experienced (see Appendix D1). As this was the first phase of the research project, the themes for the questionnaire were derived from the literature review, although there were also open-ended questions where respondents were able to give their own interpretation. The questionnaire was piloted with a parent of a disabled child to determine its suitability for parents and to test the effectiveness of the questionnaire procedures (this parent did not form part of the final research population). Small changes were made to the wording based on the feedback from this parent.

The interview consisted of three main themes. The first was exploring participants' understandings and opinions of inclusive education, what it meant to them and the importance (or otherwise) they placed on it. The second theme explored in depth, the major barrier to their child's inclusion that they had identified in the web questionnaire. The final theme was an open question asking participants to make comment or discuss issues or difficulties their child had experienced at school.

## **4.3 Phase Two**

Phase two of the study involved surveying school principals in three geographical regions in New Zealand first by way of a questionnaire, then with follow-up interviews.

### **4.3.1 Research Population and Sample**

In total, 143 questionnaires were posted to school principals in three geographical areas of New Zealand. These areas were chosen due to their accessible proximity to the researcher. Knowing that the interview population and later (in phase three) a single school would be derived from this sample, increased the requirement that proximity was an important consideration. The number of questionnaires returned completed was 47. This was a relatively low response rate, and in relation to secondary schools, only three secondary school principals returned a completed questionnaire. Possible reasons for the low response rate include school principals being too busy to complete the

questionnaire or with little interest in issues related to inclusive education. Table 4.2 provides background information regarding the sample.

Table 4.2

*Principal questionnaire: Background information of research participants*

Gender	Male	21
	Female	23
	Not stated	3
Age	20–30	1
	31–40	5
	41–50	17
	51–60	20
	60+	3
	Not stated	1
Number of years teaching	4–10	7
	11–20	10
	20+	30
Teaching Sector	Primary	34
	Intermediate	1
	Secondary	3
	Full primary	6
	Primary/Intermediate/Secondary	2
	Not stated	1

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate their willingness to participate in a follow up interview. Of the 47 respondents who returned the questionnaire, 18 indicated that they would be prepared to be interviewed. Sixteen of these respondents were principals of a primary school and one was an area school principal<sup>15</sup>.

As with the phase one interview sample, a random stratified sampling procedure was used to identify the school principal interview participants. Two differing samples were required based on principals' attitudes towards inclusive education. One sample needed to include principals who believed in the principles of inclusive education. The other sample needed to include principals who did not believe in the principles of inclusive education. Important factors associated with exclusion would be more obvious and juxtaposed where two groups differed in their basic premise around inclusive education.

<sup>15</sup> An area school is a school which has classes from Year-0 to Year-13.

In order to obtain these two samples, the population of 18 respondents who had indicated a willingness to be interviewed was stratified into two main groups, those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement in question 27 of the principal questionnaire that *Regular schools should meet the needs of all who are disabled* (8 participants) and those that did not agree or strongly agree with this statement (10 participants, 4 of which disagreed or strongly disagreed and 6 who were unsure). The group of 8 was listed alphabetically based on their surname, and the first five chosen. This group was called the x group – those who agreed that regular schools should meet the needs of disabled students. To determine the composition of the second group, all four who disagreed or strongly disagreed with question 27 were automatically chosen, and a fifth person was chosen from those who were unsure of their response to this question. This was done alphabetically based on their surname. This group was called the y group – those who did not agree, or in the case of one person, who were unsure if regular schools should meet the needs of disabled students. A sample size of 10 interviewees was decided as being manageable as well as sufficient to follow up in more depth, the barriers or exclusionary forces identified in phase one of this study.

All 10 selected interview participants were sent information sheets (see Appendix B4) and, if in agreement to proceed with the interview, consent forms to sign (see Appendix E1) and a copy of the interview themes/schedule (see Appendix D2). All interview participants were given the option of a ‘face to face’ interview or a telephone interview. All interviews were face-to-face, nine taking place at the school and one at the home of the principal. Table 4.4 shows the demographic data of the school principal interview participants.

Table 4.3

*Principal interviews: Demographic data of research participants*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>School Sector</b>	<b>Special Education Facilities</b>
One	Male	41–50	Primary	
Two	Female	41–50	Primary	
Three	Male	51–60	Primary	
Four	Male	60+	Primary	
Five	Male	51–60	Primary	
Six	Male	41–60	Primary	Special needs unit
Seven	Male	51–60	Primary	
Eight	Female	41–50	Primary	
Nine	Female	Not stated	Primary	Special needs unit
Ten	Female	41–50	Pri/Int/Sec	Special needs unit

The interviews were audio taped with the permission of participants.

#### **4.3.2 Data Gathering Tools**

The school principal questionnaire consisted of 76 questions (see Appendix C2). These were derived from both the literature review and the themes that had emerged from the parent questionnaire and interviews. These included:

- 68 likert scale questions exploring issues associated with teacher knowledge, attitudes and practices;
- six questions designed to elicit demographic information;
- one question asking respondents to rate significant barriers to inclusion; and
- one open question seeking any further comments.

The questionnaire was piloted with a teacher who gave feedback on its suitability for use with school principals and to test the effectiveness of the questionnaire procedures (this teacher did not form part of the final research population).

The interview was organised around four main themes (see Appendix D2). The questions in each area were derived from the literature review, the parent questionnaire and interviews, as well as the data gathered from the principal questionnaires. These themes were: participants' attitudes and values associated with inclusive education; participants' perceptions of barriers to school inclusion; participants' perceptions of

enablers to inclusive education; and participants' perceptions of specific contextual issues identified by parents as acting to exclude their children from or within school.

#### **4.4 Phase Three**

Phase three of this study involved interviews with teachers, teacher aides and students in one of the schools whose principal had taken part in the principal interview in phase two. Originally, it was intended that observations and document analysis would also be used to gather more in-depth information about the phenomenon of exclusion, however, due to a lack of teachers volunteering to be part of these data gathering procedures, this could not be carried out.

##### **4.4.1 Research Population and Sample**

The school was selected from the group of 10 principals who had participated in the principal interviews in phase two. As these principals were listed alphabetically for the purposes of the interviews, it was decided to choose the school by simply inviting the first principal on the list. However, the researcher knew this principal and many of the staff at the school (outside of the professional setting). Therefore the second school principal on the list was invited to participate. Initially, a phone call was made to gauge his interest. This was followed up with a formal letter, outlining the research and requesting a meeting (see Appendix F7). Because of the sensitive nature of this research, it was made clear to the principal that if those at the school did agree to participate in the research, this could involve the identification of exclusionary attitudes, beliefs and practices. The researcher also requested a meeting with all staff at the school to outline the research and gain their informed approval and consent. Information sheets about the research were handed out to all staff members at a regular staff meeting (see Appendix B5) and time was given to answer any questions staff may have had. The research commenced when informal consent was gained from the school principal and all staff. Further information regarding the ethical considerations of this aspect of the research is discussed in section 4.7.

All teachers in the school (excluding the school principal who had already been interviewed in phase two) were given an information sheet about the research and invited to participate in an interview (7 teachers) (see Appendix B5). Four teachers

accepted this invitation. All interviews were audio taped with the permission of the participants.

Information sheets outlining the research and invitations to participate in a focus group interview were sent to all five teacher aides in the school (see Appendix B8). All teacher aides accepted this invitation. The focus group interview took place between 8.30 am and 9.30 am at the school. The focus group interview was audio taped with the permission of all the participants.

Information sheets and consent forms were given to the class teacher of the year 5 & 6 class to send home to all 13 year-6 students' parents/whānau/caregivers (see appendices B6, F11 & E4). Six consent forms were returned. These six students were then invited to participate in the focus group interview. Information sheets were given to them and read aloud (see appendix B7). Students were asked to sign a consent form if they agreed and wanted to participate (see appendix E5). All students agreed to participate. The focus group interview took place between 9.00 am and 10.30 am at the school. The focus group interview was audio taped with the permission of all the participants.

The school was a coeducational contributing primary school with approximately 150 students. There were eight teachers on the staff including the principal, deputy principal and assistant principal. The school had a special education unit on the site for which there was one teacher, and five teacher aides.

#### **4.4.2 Data Gathering Tools**

Two data gathering tools were used in this phase of the research: semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers (see appendix D3) and focus group interviews with teacher aides (see appendix D4) and year-6 students (see appendix D5).

The teacher interview was organised into four main areas (see Appendix D3). The themes in each area were derived from the literature review, the parent questionnaire and interviews, and information from the school principal questionnaires and interviews. These themes were: attitudes and values associated with inclusive education; barriers and enablers to school inclusion; their knowledge and confidence



and the role that this plays in successful inclusive education; and participants' perceptions of specific contextual issues identified by parents as acting to exclude their children from or within school.

The teacher-aide focus group interview was organised into five main areas (see Appendix D4). The themes in each area were derived from the literature review, the parent questionnaire and interviews, and information from the school principal questionnaires and interviews. These themes were: the role of the teacher aide within the school; attitudes and values associated with inclusive education; barriers and enablers to school inclusion; the role of teacher knowledge and confidence in facilitating inclusive education; and specific contextual issues identified by parents as acting to exclude their children from or within school.

The student focus group interview explored students' perceptions of their school, their teachers, what school was like for them, and what happened to kids who were disabled or different (see Appendix D5).

#### **4.5 Summary of Data Gathering Methods Across all Phases and Rationale for their Use**

Table 4.4 summarises the data gathering methods used across the three phases of the research and provides the rationale for their use.

Table 4.4

*Summary of data gathering methods and rationales*

Method	Details of procedure	Rationale
Questionnaire	<b><u>Phase one</u></b> Web questionnaires completed by 63 parents of disabled children who had experienced exclusion at school.	To identify the barriers to school inclusion experienced by disabled children and their parents.
	<b><u>Phase two</u></b> Postal questionnaires completed by 47 school principals in three regions in NZ.	To follow up and explore the barriers identified by parents. To gain an understanding of barriers to school inclusion from the perspective of school principals.
Semi-structured Interviews	<b><u>Phase one</u></b> Semi-structured interviews with 12 parents selected from the 63 parents who submitted a web questionnaire.	To gain an understanding of parents' perspectives of exclusion. To identify the barriers their children had experienced.
	<b><u>Phase two</u></b> Semi structured interviews with 10 school principals selected from the 47 school principals who completed a postal questionnaire.	To follow up and explore the barriers identified by parents in phase one. To explore the perspective of the school principal in relation to barriers to school inclusion for disabled students. To explore the role of the school principal in the exclusion of students who are disabled.
	<b><u>Phase three</u></b> Semi structured interviews with 4 class teachers.	To explore teachers' perspectives of barriers to school inclusion for disabled students. To follow up teacher's perspectives of the barriers identified by parents in phase one. To explore the role of the teacher in the exclusion of students who are disabled.
Focus Group Interviews	<b><u>Phase three</u></b> A focus group discussion with 6 students from one school.	To explore the perspectives of a group of students/ teacher aides in relation to barriers to school inclusion for disabled students. To follow up the barriers identified by parents from the perspectives of a group of students/ teacher aides. To explore the role of students/teacher aides in the exclusion of students who are disabled.
	A focus group discussion with 5 teacher aides from one school.	

## 4.6 Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the two questionnaires (Parent [phase one] and school principal [phase two]) were analysed using the computer software statistical package

SPSS. Although a statistical package was used to analyse data from the questionnaires, only basic frequency tables were produced; no statistical measures apart from frequency were used. Similarly, only descriptive statistics were focused on, not inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarise patterns in the responses of people in a sample. Inferential statistics provide an idea about whether the patterns from any sample are likely to apply in the population from which the sample was drawn (de Vaus, 2002).

Qualitative data from all the interviews were transcribed and then entered into the software programme, *NVivo(7)*. An adaptation of an analysis model by Boyatzis (1998) and Bailey (2007) was used. This model is based on an inductive or data-driven approach to thematic analysis (in keeping with grounded theory data analysis methods) where the researcher immerses themselves in the data, allowing the themes to emerge. Transcriptions were first read to provide an initial familiarisation with the data. No coding was done at this stage, although some memoing (Bailey, 2007; Boyatzis, 1998) was carried out. Memoing involves the researcher writing memos or notes to themselves regarding any insights they derive from the data.

At the second reading, data were given an initial code. The term ‘code’ often implies a number or a symbol to represent something. This was not the case at this early stage of the data analysis. Similarly, coding (as it is applied to qualitative data analysis) can often imply looking for, and giving a theme to the data. Again, this was not the case at this stage of the data analysis. Patterns and themes were not sought, but rather the data were coded based on ‘descriptions’ to organise a large amount of information into smaller parts for later retrieval and focused coding (Bailey, 2007). Some comments from participants had more than one code. For example participant 11 (phase one) said the following:

*Yeah, that if there is a problem, they look at the problem and again the only solution they see is to put a teacher aide onto it. So that the very fundamental simple level of going out to any house sports or ah school activities out on the field, they know [name of child] will need support so they put a teacher aide on. And of course that separates her from everything. They know that they don't want me to go to school events in the evening with her to support her cos they know that I will actually block relationships with other people, with peers. But*

*they can't switch their thinking to see that they're doing just the same every time that they put a teacher aide on the case.*

This passage was given three codes: (1) the use of teacher aide separating child from relationships with peers; (2) the school belief that for participation to be possible, a teacher aide is needed; and (3) if there is a problem, the school's first idea for a solution will involve the use of a teacher aide. After all data from the parent interviews were coded, over 100 (codes) descriptions were formulated.

The next stage of the qualitative data analysis involved what Bailey (2007) calls focused coding. Here, identifying and combining the initial coded data into larger or broader categories that subsumed multiple codes, further reduced data. Bailey (2007) explains:

This focused coding involves kicking the raw materials in the field notes and transcriptions up to a level that facilitates your ability to make analytical insights into the setting. This level might involve connections to previous research on the topic, concerns of the researcher's discipline, or theoretical concepts (p. 130).

The results of focused coding should allow the researcher to attach to conceptual codes to concrete experiences and words (Bailey, 2007), such as, in the area of inclusive education, marginalisation, alienation, social control and so forth.

In order to take the analysis process one step further, a taxonomy of the data was produced. Table 4.5 provides an example of one section of the taxonomy from the qualitative data of the parent questionnaire.

Table 4.5

*Example of data analysis taxonomy*

Theme		No of respondents	Example of transcript
<b>Abuse/ bullying</b>	Teacher bullying	General non specified teacher bullying	6
		Child humiliated by teachers	6
		Teachers shouting at child	2
		Teachers encouraging other children to abuse/bully child	2
		Teacher physically abusing child	1
		Teachers not allowing other children in the class to help child	1
		Teacher harassing siblings of child	1
	Student bullying	General physical and emotional student bullying	10
	Other	Child left in soiled pants	1
	Principal threatening parents	Principals trying to 'section 9' child	2

*...but then also people were reporting to us that she [child] was being intimidated and abused and embarrassed by this same teacher... (P1)*

#### 4.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are a vitally important part of any research process and a consideration of ethics serves to reduce the likelihood of harm being experienced by anyone involved in the research process. This study adhered to the *Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants (MUCEC)* (Massey University, 2004). The ethics of each stage of the research (phase one, two and three) were considered separately. A full application was made to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee in relation to the first phase of the research. Phase two of the research involved a low risk notification to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. In discussion with colleagues and supervisors, this phase of the research was judged 'low risk' by meeting the guidelines as set out in the Massey

University Human Ethics Screening Questionnaire. A full application was made to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee for the third phase of the research.

The principles that were considered in relation to this study were: informed and voluntary consent (including the avoidance of unnecessary deception); respect for anonymity and confidentiality; minimisation of harm to participants, researchers, institutions and groups; and social and cultural sensitivity (Massey University, 2004).

#### **4.7.1 Informed and Voluntary Consent**

Full information was given to all participants in the form of written information sheets. These adhered to the guidelines as set out by the MUCEC (Massey University, 2004). In the case of the interviews and focus group discussions, this information was also given verbally. As well as this, clear contact details were provided to participants of both the research and her supervisors in case participants wished to clarify anything about the research (see Appendix B for copies of the information sheets).

In relation to the interviews, participants were given the opportunity to discuss the details of the research and ask any questions before the start of the interview. In relation to the student focus group interview, the information was given in 'child friendly' language. The information was given in both written form and orally. At no stage were participants coerced into taking part in the research. Apart from the researcher making an initial approach to the principal of a potential school for phase three, information was given to all potential participants in written form, before the researcher made any contact with them.

The principle of informed consent includes the avoidance of unnecessary deception. Deception played no part in this study. All participants were given truthful and full information regarding the purposes and procedures of this research project.

#### **4.7.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality**

As described in section 3.4.2, there is variation and contradiction in the literature around the terms anonymity and confidentiality. For the purpose of this research, the term anonymity was used to mean that any data gathered during the process of the research

would not be linked with names, or with any other factors that would identify the research participants (Salkind 2009). In order to protect the anonymity of the participants in the study, a number of safeguards were used. Information that was gathered was stored in a locked office and identification codes were used. No real names were used on any printed material, or audio material. When reporting the data, all participants were assigned a number. When describing the background information of participants, care was taken not to divulge any information that could identify them, or in the case of parents; their children, and in the case of teachers, teacher aides and students; their school.

Issues of anonymity are problematic in relation to focus group interviews. All participants are likely to know the identity of fellow participants, and are privy to the data shared by them. Therefore, while no data from the focus group were reported in such a way that could identify participants, participants were made aware that anonymity within the group could not be assured.

For the purpose of this research, the term confidentiality was used to mean that what was discussed was not repeated or publicised in any way, and kept in confidence (Wiles et al., 2006). Therefore, confidentiality was not offered to research participants in this study, as it would be impossible to keep. As Wiles et al. (2006) states, “in the research context, confidentiality as it is commonly understood makes little sense” (p. 1). This is because unless researchers are going to keep all data to themselves, and not publish it in theses or articles, they cannot offer confidentiality.

As a person other than the researcher transcribed the interviews, that person was required to sign a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix G). This meant that the transcriber agreed to keep in confidence all data that were transcribed. It should be noted that the transcriber did not have access to names of people, places or schools.

#### **4.7.3 Minimisation of Harm**

Researchers have an ethical obligation to ensure that they identify any potential for risk or harm to participants. The MUCEC outlines four types of harm: physical, psychological, social and economic and provides the following examples: pain, cultural

dissonance and exploitation, distress, fatigue, stress, and embarrassment. There was the potential for harm to participants in this study. In phase one, parents may have suffered psychological harm in recalling experiences of their child's exclusion and rejection. This was minimised by ensuring that participants knew their rights in regarding not having to answer any questions that they felt uncomfortable with, or withdrawing from the study at any time up to three months after participation. Also, information outlining the names and contact details of support and advocacy groups was passed on to participants in an information sheet (see Appendix H).

In all phases of the study, potential harm was identified in relation to anonymity. In particular, potential for harm was identified for professional participants in phase two and three of the study if participant's anonymity was compromised. Similarly, potential harm was identified for parent respondents in phase one of the study if their anonymity was compromised. Therefore, all efforts were taken to protect the anonymity of participants, and these are discussed in section 4.7.2.

The third phase of the study had other specific issues associated with potential harm. As this phase of the study was specifically examining exclusion, this meant that exclusionary factors related to individuals and the school would likely be identified and reported. The effect of this was minimised first by bringing this likelihood to the attention of potential participants prior to seeking their consent to participate, and second, by taking all measures to protect their anonymity as discussed in section 4.7.2. The third factor that was employed in an effort to mitigate or minimise any potential harm was to outline to potential participants an intention to develop resources for schools that identify the barriers to school inclusion and provide suggestions to overcome these.

No harm to participants in relation to physical, or economic issues was identified. Similarly, no harm to the researcher was identified.

#### **4.7.4 Social and Cultural Sensitivity**

Any research carried out in New Zealand must pay particular attention to the specific ethical issues associated with research involving the indigenous people of New Zealand,



the Maori. As Jahnke and Taiapa (1999) point out, historically past research has proven to be of little worth to Māori people, and also detrimental to them. The Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct (Massey University, 2004) states that to be culturally sensitive in research assumes that there is an appreciation of the attitudes and values of specific cultures, and also a sensitivity to those things that constitute the cultural property and traditions of specific ethnic groups. If researchers are to work with people from cultures other than their own, they must have an appreciation of these factors.

In relation to this study, there was no intent to deliberately conduct the research with persons from ethnic groups other than that of the researcher. However, there was a chance that this could happen, particularly with the participation of Māori. The researcher therefore made preparations to consult with Māori researchers in the University if this eventuated. The likelihood of being culturally insensitive to the specific ethical issues associated with research with Māori was also lessened because one of the research supervisors was Māori. She was able to review all data gathering procedures and tools with particular reference to any aspects that may be insensitive, cause offence or prove disadvantageous to individual Māori, or Māori people in general.

## **4.8 Summary**

This chapter has described the research methods that were employed in this study. This included the procedures for procuring the research population; the ethical issues involved in this research; the data gathering and data analysis tools used in each phase; and the data analysis methods.

Phase one involved a web questionnaire and follow up interviews with parents of disabled children who had experienced exclusion from or within school. Phase two involved a postal questionnaire and follow-up interviews with school principals. Phase three was focused in one school and employed two data gathering tools: semi-structured interviews with teachers, and two focus group discussions, one with a group of year-6 students and one with all teacher aides employed in the school.

The computer statistical programme SPSS was used to assist with the analysis of the questionnaire data. Basic frequency tables were produced. The computer software programme *NVivo(7)* was used to assist with the analysis of the interview data. The interview analysis procedures used were based on an adaptation of an analysis model by Boyatzis (1998) and Bailey (2007).

The study addressed the ethical principles as outlined in the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants (Massey University, 2004). The following chapter presents the findings of the study.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## RESULTS

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### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results of all three phases of the research. Phase one employed a web-based questionnaire and follow-up interviews with parents of disabled children who had experienced exclusion at school. Phase two used a questionnaire and follow up interviews with school principals. Phase three was carried out in one primary school and involved questionnaires and follow-up interviews with class teachers, a focus group interview with a group of teacher aides and a focus group interview with a group of year-6 students.

Key to grounded theory methodology is the generation of theory from data and the continual data analysis through the data collection phase. This allows for the identification of key elements of a phenomenon (in this case the phenomenon of exclusion) and for the systematic increase in density of the data around a phenomenon. This was the intention of this research. Each phase would inform and focus the next, identifying themes and elements for further exploration. The data from phase one of the study formed the early foundation for the subsequent themes that were to be explored in phases two and three.

### **5.2 Phase One: Parent Questionnaire Results**

In total, 63 parents completed a web questionnaire. As this study was situated in a qualitative paradigm, and because there was no intent to determine the relationships between variables, particularly causal relationships as is often the case with quantitative research, only basic statistical techniques were used to analyse this data. The results of the qualitative data are presented as tables and text with accompanying participant quotes as examples.

Respondents were asked to identify the main area of their child's need. Table 5.1 outlines this data. While not provided as choices in the questionnaire, Asperger

Syndrome and Autism were specified by a significant number of respondents. Therefore, these categories have been included in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

*Parent questionnaire: Main area of need*

Main Area of Impairment	Frequency	Percent
Intellectual	19	30
Asperger	9	14
Behaviour	8	13
Autism	6	9
Speech and/or communication	5	8
Multiple/complex needs	5	8
Physical	3	5
Emotional	3	5
Hearing	2	3
Social	2	3
Visual	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents were asked to identify their child's present level of schooling. Table 5.2 summarises this information. Over half the respondents indicated their child attended a primary school, and nearly one quarter of the respondents indicated their child attended a secondary school. Only 6% of respondents indicated that their child was at a special school or facility.

Table 5.2

*Parent questionnaire: Present level of schooling*

Present Level of Schooling	Frequency	Percent
Primary	34	54
Intermediate	10	16
Secondary	14	22
Special School	1	6
Not at school anymore	4	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

A list of 27 barriers was presented to respondents. As this was the first phase of the research, the barriers were identified from the literature. Respondents were asked to choose the 10 most common barriers to being included at school their child had experienced.

Table 5.3

*Parent questionnaire: Common barriers experienced*

<b>Common Barriers</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Teachers not being knowledgeable about the special needs of my child	43	69
Lack of funding	37	60
Lack of teacher aide time	35	56
Poor attitude of class teacher	33	53
Poor attitude of the school principal	30	48
Lack of adaptation of my child's school work	25	40
My child being bullied or harassed	24	39
Lack of school policies around meeting the needs of students with special needs	24	39
Discrimination on the basis of their special need	22	36
Inadequate school policy on inclusion	20	32
Child not having friends	19	31
Poor attitudes of the other students at the school	18	29
Not including me as a parent	18	29
The teacher not giving my child enough of their time	16	26
The actual disability of my child	15	24
Being segregated from the regular class	14	23
My child not being wanted by the school	14	23
My child being treated unfairly by those in control at the school	13	21
My child not being valued by the school	13	21
The physical environment of the classroom	12	19
Lack of caring by staff	12	19
Focusing only on the things my child couldn't do	12	19
Too many children in my child's class	11	18
Inadequate physical resources	10	16
The physical environment of the school	10	16
Poor attitudes of the other parents at the school	9	15
Not enough pastoral support in the school	3	5

The most common barriers identified by parents were: lack of teacher knowledge; lack of funding and teacher aide time; and the poor attitude of teachers and principals, all being identified by nearly 50% or more of respondents. Lack of adaptation and bullying were also identified as barriers by nearly 40% of respondents. Those factors that acted to exclude students least were: too little pastoral support at the school; the poor attitude of parents; an inappropriate physical environment of the school; and inadequate physical resources.

Respondents were asked to nominate ONE barrier that they considered the most powerful in acting to exclude their child at school. Table 5.4 presents the most frequently identified barriers and their frequency rates.

Table 5.4

*Parent questionnaire: Most powerful barrier experienced*

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Lack of teacher/principal knowledge and/or understanding	26	41
Lack of funding and/or resourcing	12	19
Poor attitude of the teacher/principal	8	13
Lack of teacher aide time	7	11
Bullying	7	11
Not having friends	2	3
Lack of adaptation to curriculum	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents were then asked to explain the barrier, how their child experienced it and give a specific example of what happened. All responses to this question were analysed using the qualitative data analysis software programme *Nvivo(7)*.<sup>16</sup> Asking respondents to provide an in-depth explanation of the exclusion that their child had experienced at school revealed a more complex account of the phenomenon than the single choices from the quantitative section of the questionnaire had allowed, and therefore the analysis presented in the following section deviate from the basic seven categories outlined in Table 5.4. Analysis revealed eight major themes, which are initially presented in Tables 5.5 to 5.12, then subsequently described in more depth with accompanying quotes from participants as examples. These themes are:

1. Abuse and/or bullying
2. Teacher knowledge and understanding
3. Enrolment and attendance
4. Curriculum access and participation
5. Physical segregation
6. Communication
7. Funding
8. The value placed on child

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter Four, section 4.6 for an in-depth explanation of the data analysis methods employed.

As respondents identified more than one barrier in their explanations, the total from Tables 5.5 to 5.13 are greater than 63.

### Abuse and/or bullying

The most common theme to emerge from parents' explanations of their child's exclusion was associated with abuse and/or bullying. Analysis of the parent questionnaire identified 32 responses related to this theme. Table 5.5 presents these findings.

Table 5.5

*Parent questionnaire: Issues associated with abuse and/or bullying*

Theme	No of responses	
<b>Abuse/ bullying</b>	General physical and emotional bullying by peers	10
	General non specified teacher bullying	6
	Child humiliated by teachers	6
	Teachers shouting at child	2
	Teachers encouraging other children to abuse/bully child	2
	Principals trying to 'section 9' child	2
	Teachers not allowing other children in the class to help child	1
	Teacher physically abusing child	1
	Teacher harassing siblings of child	1
	Child left in soiled pants	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>

Ten parents reported bullying and abuse by peers. This included physical and emotional bullying:

*Physical – leg being hung up on a peg in the cloakroom, ridiculed, shunned, having his lunch squashed, having his personal items stolen or wrecked, clothes ripped. Emotional – being shunned by peers, laughed at. (Parent 29)*

*Lack of understanding, prevention and acknowledgement of the high levels of peer bullying in schools, particularly high school level. (Parent 42)*

In regards to teacher bullying and abuse, humiliation was a major factor, however shouting, encouraging other children to bully the child and principals threatening to 'section 9'<sup>17</sup> children were also reported. For one parent, the acceptance of teacher bullying by other staff at the school was difficult to understand.

<sup>17</sup> Section 9, 1(a) of the 1989 New Zealand Education Act states that parents may be directed to enrol their child in a special education facility or receive a special education service.

*One teacher in particular at primary school added to the bullying [child was being bullied by peers] herself, ridiculing him and segregating him in front of the whole class on more than one occasion, calling him stupid. (P 30)*

*Students at school with staff instruction placed [name of child] in the centre of a large circle of students. The students in the circle were told by staff to each tell [name of child] what it was that they didn't like about him. (Parent 58)*

*The bullying and harassing was done by the classroom teacher. Tolerance among the teaching staff and principal of inappropriate behaviour towards my daughter e.g. throwing a pen that hit my daughter, kicking her chair while seated on it, pushing her out a door, yelling at her for no reason, making her turn off her hearing aids at certain times, ...lack of deep investigation by ERO and Ministry of Education when complaints reported to them and subsequent lack of action even though an independent report clearly identified wrong doing on the part of the teacher, principal and BOT. Continual cover-up by the BOT even though they knew of another same unacceptable incident by the same teacher. (Parent 17)*

### Teacher knowledge and understanding

The second most common theme to emerge from parents' explanation of their child's exclusion was associated with a lack of teacher knowledge and understanding. Table 5.6 presents the major issues associated with this theme.

Table 5.6

*Parent questionnaire: Issues associated with teacher knowledge and/or understanding*

Theme	No of responses	
<b>Teacher knowledge and understanding</b>	Teachers did not recognise needs and meet those needs	7
	Teachers who saw problem only residing within the child	4
	General unspecified lack of understanding by teachers	3
	Lack of teacher knowledge of autism	3
	Teachers not accepting child had impairment	2
	Low teacher expectations of child	2
	General lack of teacher knowledge	2
	Teachers not learning about child's needs	2
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25</b>

The major issues associated with this barrier were predominantly an unwillingness or reluctance on the part of teachers to recognise the specific needs of children and meet those needs:

*It was in the way she was dealt with by staff, how they attended to problems that surfaced, their reluctance to do anything to help, their unwillingness to step outside their comfort zone. Their inability/unwillingness to understand her difficulties. (Parent 32)*



Parents also reported medical model thinking (which locates difficulties children experience at school as residing solely within the child) as a major barrier to their child’s learning and participation at school:

*Any issues were always identified as our son’s, not as stemming from the class teacher. (Parent 41)*

*The previous school were of the belief that our son’s behaviour was due to his disability and to the impact of adolescence. We were unable to convince the school that we did not believe that the problems he was experiencing were totally attributable to this. (Parent 11)*

### Enrolment and attendance

Issues around enrolment and attendance were problematic for some of the parent respondents and this was the third most identified barrier in this section of the questionnaire. Table 5.7 reports on the issues associated with this theme.

Table 5.7

*Parent questionnaire: Issues associated with enrolment and attendance*

Theme	No of responses
<b>Enrolment and attendance</b>	
Parents told they have to keep their child at home if there is no teacher aide ‘cover’	8
Child only permitted to attend school for part of day	2
Parents phoned to come and take child home during school hours	2
School enrolment only permitted with conditions	1
Parents felt pressured to take child out of school	1
Child suspended or expelled from school	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>

Parents identified a number of issues in relation to enrolment and attendance. This included principals permitting conditional enrolment (for example only at times that the child could be ‘independent’); principals permitting children to attend school for only part of a day or week; parents feeling pressure to take their child out of school when there were any problems or issues; and, in one case, a principal suspending a child from school.

*We have been told that he has to go home when the teacher aide does because he takes too much to keep an eye on. (Parent 41)*

*He was turned down on application at one school. Another principal wanted to give him only two weeks to settle down. He showed no understanding of his illness or needs. (Parent 52)*

*We were told that we would have to find times when he could be independent or we would have to keep him at home from school for half of each day. (Parent 64)*

### Curriculum access and participation

Issues associated with curriculum access and participation were also identified by parents as barriers to their child’s presence and participation at school. This included access and participation to all aspects of school curriculum, including assessment. Table 5.8 presents the issues associated with this theme.

Table 5.8

*Parent questionnaire: Issues associated with curriculum access and participation*

Theme		No of responses
<b>Access to learning</b>	Lack of accommodations	7
	Child denied access to learning materials	1
	Regular assessments not carried out with child	2
	Teacher did not plan learning programme for child	1
	Teacher did not take responsibility for teaching child	1
	Children left to do nothing if teacher aide not present	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>15</b>

The issues associated with this theme included children being denied access to learning opportunities, and in particular, lack of accommodation and adaptations being made so that children could access the curriculum. Two parents reported that the learning of their children was not assessed as it was for non-disabled children. One parent reported that the teaching of her son was largely undertaken by his peers.

*There was a lack of recognition by the classroom teacher on the need to modify curriculum to include our child in similar activities to those the other children were doing. (Parent 51)*

*No initial school entry assessment was ever undertaken by the class teacher, in fact no records were maintained by the class teacher at all, the teacher aide wrote the end of year report. (Parent 43)*

*His peer group took over his teaching in the afternoon by sharing work and reading stories. The classroom teacher was not held accountable for not taking responsibility for our son’s learning. (Parent 41)*

### Physical segregation

Issues related to physical segregation were identified as a barrier, with 11 responses emerging from parents' explanations of their child's exclusion. Table 5.9 presents the issues associated with this theme.

Table 5.9

*Parent questionnaire: Issues associated with physical segregation*

Theme	No of responses	
<b>Physical segregation</b>	Being grouped or timetabled with other disabled children	2
	Not being included in the normal classroom/school programme	3
	Being physically segregated within the class	3
	Doing work different from the mainstream	2
	Excluded at break times	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>11</b>

Issues associated with the theme of physical segregation included being physically segregated within and outside the class, not being included in the normal class or school programme, having to do work that was different from the mainstream, and being excluded at break times.

*She was not allowed to be included in core subjects with her year-9 form class. (Parent 23)*

*Being removed from the classroom for individual instruction in a large storage cupboard. (Parent 43)*

*His skill base lies in sport, swimming, art and music. These were scheduled after he was to have left the class. This showed a lack of consideration of where he could fit in easily in the class. (Parent 41)*

### Communication

An analysis of parents' explanations of their child's exclusion revealed 10 responses associated with communication issues. Table 5.10 presents the issues associated with this theme.

Table 5.10

*Parent questionnaire: Issues associated with communication*

Theme	No of responses
<b>Communication</b>	
Parents' advice not listened to	8
Lack of communication to parents	1
Lack of information sharing	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>

The issues associated with this theme included parents feeling that they were not being listened to, and that they did not have their knowledge and experience as parents respected. Two parents reported schools refusing to access support from agencies such as *Ministry of Education: Special Education (GSE)*<sup>18</sup>. One parent reported that a class teacher would not read any of the material she provided. A barrier for one parent was a lack of information sharing between professionals and between the teacher of one year and the next.

*The staff consistently refused to access support from GSE. The offer of advice, support from us as parents and our son's previous teacher aide who had worked with our son for seven years was ignored. (Parent 11)*

*Some teachers and the principal showed absolutely no interest in learning about his condition and how to adjust their teaching style to suit him or to ensure his safety in the playground. I was told that he could not be treated differently to anyone else and that the injuries in the playground were his own fault. (Parent 6)*

*Our child was excluded but so were we as the parents and as the years go by, principals, schools and teachers are just becoming better at it. For example, the IEP process was supposed to be the vehicle where we expected our views to be respected and implemented but we were continually disregarded and ignored. It was the school's way or no way and their way was just to receive the funding with no interest in the well being of our child or accountability for outcomes. (Parent 61)*

Funding

A further theme to emerge from parents' explanations of their child's exclusion was associated with funding. Table 5.11 presents the issues associated with this theme.

<sup>18</sup> The section of the Ministry of Education where staff focus on, "strengthening and improving the educational opportunities and outcomes for children with special educational needs" Ministry of Education, 2008).

Table 5.11

*Parent questionnaire: Issues associated with funding*

Theme	No of responses
<b>Funding</b>	
Parents asked to fund teacher aide hours	2
Funding application difficult	2
School diverted child's teacher aide hours	2
General lack of funding	1
Not receiving all allocated teacher aide hours	1
Being denied ORRS <sup>19</sup> funding	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>

Parents reported being asked by the school to fund teacher aide hours; schools diverting the teacher aide hours allocated to their child to other uses; and difficulty in completing the funding application forms. While twelve parents indicated lack of funding as one of the barriers in the quantitative section of the questionnaire, only two parents indicated this as *the* major barrier, and no parents mentioned this in the qualitative section of the questionnaire.

*The principal kept trying to divert funds allocated to the school for my child into other areas of the school which didn't affect her. I had several meetings with support staff from the various agencies and the principal, and he eventually redistributed the funds to help my daughter. (Parent 1)*

*The responsibility was put back to us as parents to provide extra resources, pay extra teacher aide hours. (Parent 41)*

The value placed on the child

The final theme to emerge from parents' explanations of their child's exclusion was associated with the lack of value parents believe schools placed on their child. Table 5.12 presents the issues associated with this theme.

Table 5.12

*Parent questionnaire: Issues associated with value placed on child*

Theme	No of responses
<b>Value placed on child</b>	
Child not wanted by the school	3
School thinking child was a nuisance	2
Teachers angry at having to have child in their class	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>

<sup>19</sup> Ongoing Reviewable Resourcing Scheme is a funding mechanism for individual students who are verified as having high or very high needs. Funding is allocated to schools for teacher and teacher aide time as well as for professional support and intervention.

It could be argued that the theme of lack of value placed on the child, played a part in all the themes reported by parents as barriers to their child's inclusion at school. Three parents described how their child was not wanted by a school, two believed that the school thought their child was a nuisance and one parent explained that the class teacher was angry at having to have her child in their class.

*The negative attitude towards our child created the school culture that allowed discrimination and bullying (a learnt behaviour). It was not part of the school culture for our child to be valued or wanted. This situation can only evolve because there is an attitude to allow it to happen or to deny it is happening. (Parent 61)*

*We have to continually fight to get teaching staff that are willing to have him in their class without seeing him as a nuisance. (Parent 34)*

While not reported as a separate theme, issues associated with teacher aides were prevalent in a number of themes. This included schools denying school enrolment, or restricting school attendance unless they considered there were sufficient teacher aide hours; disabled children being isolated from the peer group with a teacher aide; and a lack of teacher aide funding. These issues are reported separately under the themes of 'enrolment and attendance', 'access to learning', and 'funding'.

### **5.2.1 Phase One Parent Questionnaire Summary**

When asked to nominate the one barrier that was most powerful in excluding their child, a lack of teacher knowledge and/or understanding was the barrier most commonly identified. This was followed by a lack of funding and/or resourcing; poor attitudes of teachers and principals; a lack of teacher aide time; bullying; and a lack of adaptation. When asked to describe in more detail their child's experience of exclusion, analysis of the data revealed a number of issues. These included issues of abuse and bullying which was a predominant theme to emerge. Parents also described a lack of teacher knowledge and understanding, that their knowledge and opinions were not listened to, that teachers felt no desire or need to up-skill themselves in meeting the specific needs of some children, low expectations, and medical model deficit thinking associated with disabled students. Also reported were instances of disabled children being denied access to learning and the curriculum.

Results from this initial stage of the research indicated a number of issues associated with teacher aides. Parents reported a belief on the part of some teachers and principals that disabled children could only be present and participate at school if they had teacher aide hours allocated to them. This was reported in regards to initial enrolment in a school; the time that a child was ‘allowed’ to be at school; and whether a child could have their learning and social needs met in a classroom (all three only allowed if a teacher aide was present). Also associated with teacher aides was the issue of funding. While a ‘lack of teacher aide funding’ is often reported in the literature as a major barrier to school inclusion, only 12 out of 63 parents reported this as the main barrier their child had experienced. For the parents who identified funding as a major barrier, this was associated with them being asked to fund their child’s teacher aide, the school diverting their child’s teacher aide allocation, and the difficulty of the funding application. Exploring the understanding, role and function of teacher aides was highlighted as important theme for follow-up in the subsequent phases of the research.

### **5.3 Phase One: Parent Interview Results**

Of the 63 parents who completed a questionnaire in phase one of the study, 51 indicated an interest in participating in a follow up interview. Twelve of these parents were chosen to be interviewed.<sup>20</sup> For all 12 parents who were interviewed, multiple factors were reported as contributing to their child’s exclusion at school.

Results from analysis of the parent interviews are presented as tables and text with accompanying participant quotes as examples. Seven main themes emerged and are analysed within this section. These are:

1. Knowledge and understanding of professionals
2. Curriculum access and participation
3. Teacher and principal behaviour towards parents
4. Enrolment, attendance and segregation
5. Abuse and/or bullying
6. Caring and valuing of child
7. Funding

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<sup>20</sup> For an explanation of the sampling procedures employed in this phase of the research, see section 4.2.1. For a summary of the background information of the sample, see table 4.2.

### Knowledge and understanding of professionals

Issues associated with a lack of understanding and/or knowledge on the part of teachers and school principals was a major theme to emerge from the analysis of the parent interviews. Eleven of the 12 parents interviewed identified some aspect of this theme. Table 5.13 presents these findings.

Table 5.13

*Parent interview: Issues associated with knowledge and/or understanding*

Descriptors	Parents											
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Lack of principal knowledge about inclusion	√					√					√	
Class teacher did not want to learn about needs of child					√	√	√					
Teachers did not understand needs	√	√								√		
Lack of teacher training	√	√										
School did not understand impact on family	√											
School saw problem only residing within child and family							√					
No belief on part of teachers that child could learn											√	
Teachers held low expectations of child	√		√	√							√	
Lack of knowledge on part of GSE		√									√	
Lack of understanding that a teacher aide can exclude child from mainstream				√				√	√		√	

Issues associated with knowledge and understanding were reported by parents in relation to: teachers, school principals, Board of Trustees, the Education Review Office (ERO) and the Ministry of Education (MoE). By far the biggest issue was associated with lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of the teacher and school principal. For example:

*His brain doesn't quite work like everybody else's does, he gets tired...just remember that sometimes he might need a bit of support instead of pushing him too hard...I know when he's been pushed, I know if he's had a bad day, he comes in and hides for two hours before he will even talk. What they do, they don't realise how much it impacts us as a family...they just need to be more supportive. (Parent 1)*



One parent believed that improved understanding of her child would benefit all disabled students, particularly in relation to valuing these students:

*We need to increase our understanding and we need to actually listen and challenge each other and understand each other and make some ideas and help people move in their understanding about the value of the child in the school. Do that for [name of child] you'll have a better understanding for how many other kids in the school. (Parent 11)*

For some parents the lack of teacher knowledge and understanding was associated with the specific needs of their child. For three parents, this lack of knowledge on the part of teachers was even more frustrating when teachers appeared not to want to learn. Some parents spoke of the need for both pre-service and in-service teacher training.

Two parents reported issues associated with the knowledge and understanding of those from Group Special Education (GSE) (now referred to as Ministry of Education: Special Education). One parent believed that the idea of professionals working with parents in a collaborative model was not well understood by some professionals who, in their experience, find it difficult to accept the expertise of parents. This may also be one of the reasons why (as reported earlier) some teachers would not accept the advice and information that parents had to provide to them.

*I think teachers, GSE and the Ministry, are blocked by a perception that you actually can't mix professional and non-professional, and that the partnership team business is all tokenism. They see it as being nice to the parent or letting them come to a meeting or telling them what you're going to do but they have real difficulty in actually accepting the expertise of parents. (Parent 11)*

Teacher training was an issue for two parents who believed that there should be a greater focus on training teachers to meet the needs of disabled students, both at pre-service level and in-service. It was also pointed out that teachers should constantly be seeking out new understandings and ideas that would improve their teaching.

There appeared to be a link between lack of teacher knowledge and understanding and the inappropriate use of teacher aides.

*If there is a problem, they look at the problem and again, the only solution they see is to put a teacher aide onto it...going out to any house sports or school activities on the field, they know [name of child] will need support so they put a teacher aide on. And of course that separates her from everything. (Parent 11)*

A specific area of teacher knowledge that was highlighted in this study was teacher expectations. Four parents reported low expectations as a barrier to their child’s successful inclusion at school. For one parent, it involved a teacher who did not believe that the child could learn. Low expectations were also associated with behaviour:

*She went through a stage of stealing pencils and things, taking the pencils from people that she, you know, liked their pencils. She was allowed to do it, because one particular teacher didn’t pull her up on it. When I found out she was doing it, one of the other kids had told me, I told the teacher in no uncertain terms, I said “why do you accept that kind of behaviour from her? You wouldn’t accept it from anyone else. (Parent 3)*

The importance of knowledgeable and understanding teachers was highlighted by one parent when she pointed out that when teachers are not coping, children are often excluded:

*Parents have been called to pick up their child from school when the child is not coping, it is not the child not coping, it is the teacher not coping. (Parent 1)*

#### Curriculum access and participation

Issues associated with curriculum, and in particular access to the curriculum, was another theme to emerge from the analysis of the parent interviews. As with teacher knowledge and/or understanding, this was identified as a barrier by 11 of the 12 interviewed parents. Table 5.14 presents these findings.

Table 5.14

*Parent interview: Issues associated with curriculum*

Descriptors	Parents											
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Excluded from aspects of curriculum				√	√	√	√	√		√	√	
Teacher would not make adaptations to the curriculum	√	√		√	√							√
No regular assessment or reporting on child’s progress				√		√					√	
Lack of TA time used as justification to deny child access to learning experiences						√			√		√	

There was a range of issues associated with the curriculum (used in its broadest sense) identified by parents as exclusionary pressures. This included students being denied access to certain curriculum areas, a lack of curriculum adaptation that would have facilitated student learning, and a lack of assessment of learning.

*But [name of teacher] would do things like she'd have a worksheet photocopied and everyone would get one except [name of child]. (Parent 4)*

*The teacher said that if he doesn't have a teacher aide there, he can't go swimming and I said "this was not right" so I got some money from a Trust to fund that one. (Parent 6)*

*I said to them, "if he is on a computer he needs to be looking at it level, not from above or below". They didn't want to know, I couldn't tell them anything. They gave me the impression they weren't going to do anything for him at all to do with his eyesight. (Parent 5)*

### Teacher and principal behaviour towards parents

Ten of the 12 parents interviewed identified inappropriate behaviour by teachers and/or school principals towards them as a factor acting to exclude their child. Table 5.15 presents these findings.

Table 5.15

*Parent interview: Issues associated with behaviour towards parents*

Descriptors	Parents											
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Parents criticized by principal and teachers					√		√		√	√	√	
Parents not included in 'normal' parent events	√	√			√				√			
Parents threatened by principal with 'section 9'				√								
School blamed parents for child's difficulties					√							
Parents not listened to by school personnel				√	√	√	√		√	√	√	
Highlighting only deficits of child to parents	√			√		√	√					
Parents had difficulties obtaining information from school							√	√		√	√	
Parents not contacted when child sick/hurt				√								
GSE won't listen to parents and children	√							√	√		√	

Some parents in this phase of the study reported that they were threatened and criticised by teachers and school principals. One parent was threatened by the school principal that her child would be given a 'section 9' if she continued to insist that her child be allowed at school for the full day. One school principal told another parent that if they continued to insist their child come to school for a full day, he would exclude the child

for disobedience. Three parents reported being criticised by the school principal and labelled as ‘a bad parent’, an ‘anxious parent’ and a ‘depressing parent’. After repeated bullying incidents involving her child, one parent reported the following:

*So finally, the day after the big incident, I wrote to the principal, a formal letter outlining these four major incidences and the dates that they had occurred and pointing out and summarising what he had said had happened for each thing and what didn't happen. And I said "my son has a right to be safe at this school, what are you going to do about it?" He wrote back to me to the effect of I worry too much. I should let him stand on his own two feet and by the way he is not doing his homework ... and please stop bothering the teacher so much. (Parent 5)*

Another parent described her treatment by a school principal:

*And finally I got a letter from the principal saying that at the last IEP I had been depressing and that I had been insulting and dealing with me was a depressing and demoralizing experience. And I was just like shaking, I couldn't believe it. (Parent 10)*

Four parents spoke of their experiences being excluded from normal parent interactions with the school:

So you don't feel welcome to go to the school? [interviewer]  
*No I don't, I don't go often. The special needs teacher, she had nothing to do with me until I got the funding and then she was all over me and organized everything...but she has been unavailable to talk to for the last three years, as soon as I've got funding she pops up... I'm excluded from anything that happens at school. That suits me fine, I've had no contact, I've got a few select parents that I have contact with, they've all got kids with special needs and we all stick together. (Parent 1)*

Seven parents reported that they were not listened to and that their knowledge and opinions were not respected. This acted as a barrier to their child's presence, participation and learning at school.

*We've had a lot of sleepless nights, waking up in the early hours of the morning definitely. It was like we were banging our head on a brick wall for nothing, I mean, I would actually take them photocopies out of books from the Autism Society which perfectly explained it, you know how these children act and why. But no, they were already the experts they already knew him better than me and they already knew everything about everything. What could I tell them, they are the experts on children not me. (Parent 5)*

Parents reported difficulties obtaining information from the school. This ranged from teachers simply not adhering to previous agreements regarding communication procedures between school and home, to parents perceiving that teachers were

consciously making it difficult for them to obtain any information. One parent reported that a teacher of her child felt like they were being monitored when the parent asked for information.

Four parents reported that the major focus of any communication from the school was of a negative nature.

*One of the teachers is doing a paper on autism at the moment which I find highly amusing as she's probably one of the worst with the attitude that she has. She says things like "oh he's been naughty today", "oh, he's had a really crappy day today" and at the gate after school she says things like "look, here he comes, look at him, he's had a crappy day, he's upset everybody today". (Parent 1)*

This was often in opposition to parents understanding of their children and the focus that they had:

*We were so proud of what she could do, we were so proud that she was five and had a bag and was going to school but we knew they really didn't want to know. I guess that was just the start of it, that hurt. We were so proud of what she had achieved and it was given absolutely no recognition whatsoever. I tend to think that generally they looked at her as a kid with Down Syndrome. They didn't ever look at her as [name of child]. She has some neat little quirks, yes, she has got high needs but she's a neat kid and they never saw that or never wanted to see that. (Parent 4)*

#### Enrolment, attendance and segregation

Issues associated with enrolment and attendance were identified by parents as exclusionary barriers. Ten of the 12 parents identified some aspects of this theme. Table 5.16 presents these findings.

Table 5.16

*Parent interview: Issues associated with enrolment and attendance*

Descriptors	Parents											
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Parents phoned during day to take child home						√			√	√		
The use of TA segregating from participation and/or learning with peers	√	√		√							√	
Because of pressure, forced to remove child from school. Began to see special schools as better alternatives			√	√			√				√	
Principal tried to talk parents out of sending child to school									√			
Child was denied enrolment		√										
Child only allowed at school part-time		√		√					√			√

While only one of the twelve parents in this phase of the study reported their child being denied outright, enrolment at their local school, four parents spoke of being told by school principals that their child could only come to school for part of the day. For example:

*We were told that we had to take him out of school six hours a week, two afternoons. So I went down to the Ministry and I was furious actually and I said “just why can’t my son go to school?” and that’s when a person from the Ministry became involved. I said “I want to know the law” and finally she said to me “Section 8 of the Act, it is very clear, the children have the same right as any other.” I said “how does four days a week equal five?” (Parent 12)*

One parent reported a school principal taking steps to discourage parents of disabled children from enrolling them at their school:

*But we have had major concerns about [name of school]. A very, very aggressive attitude from the principal who has actually been going around a lot of kindergartens and saying “tell those parents with special needs children not to send them here, we don’t get the funding”. (Parent 9)*

Other parents described being phoned by the school to come and pick up their child, for reasons that they believed were not justified nor expected of parents of non-disabled children.

*Oh just every little thing, they would phone me to come and pick him up. One time he had a rash due to some sun screen put on him and it wasn’t effecting his learning or anything but just tiny things like that. I mean I was quite amazed when he started at his present school, it is like a whole year and I don’t think*

*they have even phoned me once. But his previous school, they would ring me virtually every week to come and pick him up and then if they couldn't get hold of me, if I was out they would go into my daughter's class and start saying "where is your mother?" and all this and it was really not good to interrupt her education. Then one time I forgot that the school was closing an hour early when I got to the school I found him sitting on the curb outside and he had been lying there for an hour outside and they had done nothing. They didn't try to ring me then. (Parent 9)*

Other parents reported their child being removed from their regular class and taught in excluded settings such as resource rooms.

*Segregated from the regular class. All the tricks. I mean I have to actually stay on my toes about the number of attempts that are made to pull her out of the classroom, often for work that is of no value to her at all. (Parent 11)*

### Abuse and/or bullying

Nine of the 12 parents identified issues associated with abuse and/or bullying as acting to exclude their children. Table 5.17 presents these findings.

Table 5.17

*Parent interview: Issues associated with abuse and/or bullying*

Descriptors	Parents											
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Bullying of child by teacher/s	√								√	√	√	
Bullying of child by peers	√	√					√	√				
Teacher physically inappropriate to child										√		
Teacher would not let other children help child				√					√			
Teacher openly criticized child				√								
Teachers put pressure on siblings						√			√			

As shown in Table 5.17, nine parents in this phase of the study reported issues associated with bullying. This means that for these children, they did not experience a safe physical and emotional environment. Four parents spoke of incidences of student bullying. For two of these parents, the bullying incidents they described were witnessed by teachers, or known about by teachers, yet nothing was done. In some cases, parents were told that their child deserved it.

*I had my Mum teacher aiding for him last year. We had a bit of the funding left over ... she would come in because of his safety and the fact that he was so badly bullied, he was beaten by three kids with the teacher standing and watching.*

So nothing was done about that? [interviewer]

*Nothing, it was a relieving teacher, and her comment was that he deserved it. He had been annoying all day. (Parent 1)*

Other incidents of children being injured at school were also reported. While parents knew that ‘rough and tumble’ was a natural part of childhood, and that children would get hurt, some parents were upset when injuries to their children were not taken seriously.

*And he had the ball and this other kid wanted the ball and went up and pushed him over and he fell backwards and he has quite poor coordination and loses his balance easily and he just hit the deck and that crashed his head. The teachers weren’t concerned at all that he was quite out of it. (Parent 1)*

Four parents identified teacher bullying as a barrier to their child’s inclusion at school.

*But then also people were reporting to us that she [child] was being intimidated and abused and embarrassed by this same teacher...the staff would not accept our word that this was a serious concern. [Name of child] was off school for all of the first term while we tried to work it out. (Parent 1)*

*And the worst time, the time I decided to take him out of school was when we walked into class together and we were a bit late. The others were sitting down and he started chewing his finger nails, which he didn’t normally do. She [class teacher] instantly said “ooh [name of child] take your fingers” and all of this, and then the others started to say the same thing, “ooh [Name of child]” ..then when he sat down they all pulled away from him. That was it, I just had to get him out then, it was just too horrible to leave him there. (P 9)*

As well as specifically describing incidents that had happened to their children as ‘teacher bullying’, some parents reported other incidents where teachers behaved in inappropriate and, in their view, cruel ways, both to the parents themselves, and to the children. In one instance, a teacher demonstrated a lack of understanding of the need for children to help each other and the positive learning that can occur when children do this.

*Well one time, I was there and he was taking off his bag and a sweet little girl came to help him. And it was like shouting right across the room “leave him alone!”. You knew it was going to be her way, her way was he has to do everything himself. He has to be completely independent. Well, I don’t think there is anything wrong with helping, it is quite nice for people to help others really. But she was determined that he was not going to be helped. Then we had*



*an IEP meeting and she said he was engaging in anti-social behaviour! (Parent 9)*

In other instances, parents reported that the siblings were victimised or felt upset at the way their brother or sister was being treated.

*My daughter used to go into [name of child's] class and the teacher would make sarcastic comments, if my daughter hung around for like a minute just to say hello to her brother or something, or even a few seconds, the teacher would make sarcastic remarks like "oh you're joining the juniors now are you?" My daughter in particular was upset. She felt that her brother was being treated unfairly. He wasn't being treated nicely. (Parent 9)*

*A couple of girls being quite open, like looking up a book on Autism that was in the library, and laughing at the pictures and my daughter took that quite harshly. Also, lack of funding led to so many issues that it was unbelievable, and it led to so much stress on our family life and his sister included. She knew what he needed at school and could see that he wasn't getting it. (Parent 6)*

#### Caring and valuing of child

While it could be argued that many of the issues identified by the parents in this phase of the study reflect a lack of caring and valuing of their children, six of the 12 interviewed parents specified issues associated with a lack of caring and valuing of their child. Table 5.18 presents these findings.

Table 5.18

*Parent interview: Issues associated with lack of caring and valuing of child*

Descriptors	Parents											
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Child was not seen as a valued part of the school	√	√		√			√				√	
Teacher ignored child									√			
Teacher did not care about child	√								√			
Principal gave teachers choice whether to have child in class or not			√	√					√			
Child was not wanted in class by teacher	√	√		√			√		√			
Class teacher did not see child as their responsibility	√			√			√		√			

As Table 5.18 shows, a number of parents in this study spoke of their perceptions that their child was less valuable, or held less status at the school than other children. They

developed this perception about their child's status and value in many ways. One parent described how successful her daughter had been in the Special Olympics, but was not mentioned once in the yearly school magazine. Three parents described how their child's teacher had been given a choice about having their child in the class, a choice that they knew these teachers did not get in relation to non-disabled students. Five parents talked of their child not being wanted or welcomed by the school.

*I was really disappointed because as I said we were really active parents in that school environment and I felt like we had just, we just weren't wanted, my daughter wasn't wanted and that really hurt...I didn't expect anything back, just to be included, we were included, but my daughter wasn't. There was no reason why she shouldn't have been as accepted as my other two children. (Parent 4)*

*[Name of teacher] basically told me its been alright while your son has been in the junior school, but from here on it is just going to be too hard ... this was so heavy, I mean I spent the whole night crying I was so hurt that they didn't want him, that is what it felt like to me.*

So it was very upsetting? [interviewer]

*Yeah, I was very upset, I felt that they didn't care about him as a person and the fact that he had made all those friendships and he knew everybody there you know. (Parent 9)*

Four parents reported that they did not believe that their child was seen as the classroom teacher's responsibility. This was demonstrated in a number of ways. For example, one class teacher did not gather assessment data, or report on the progress of a disabled child. Another teacher believed that students with disabilities were the responsibility of special needs teachers in special schools. Another teacher left the responsibility for a disabled student to the teacher aide, and in one case, a teacher simply ignored a disabled child. Many of the parents who reported these incidents believed that the class teacher thought that their major responsibility was with non-disabled students.

*There was absolutely no assessment...so when it came to the end of the year I made it known that I was expecting a school report, like every other child and it was, "oh" I knew jolly well because the teacher aide had told me that she [teacher] had not done any of the assessments that they do. I don't know the name of them, you do to find out where the kids are. Basically [name of child] was the teacher aides' responsibility and that was it. (Parent 4)*

## Funding

The final theme to emerge from the parent interviews was funding. Seven parents identified three issues associated with this theme. Table 5.19 reports these findings.

Table 5.19

*Parent interview: Issues associated with funding*

Descriptors	Teachers											
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Parents paying for teacher aide support	√					√				√	√	√
Lack of funding					√	√						
Funding being inappropriately used			√									

For just over half the parents in this phase of the study, issues around funding were identified as a barrier to their child’s inclusion at school. This included funding being inappropriately used, a lack of funding, and parents feeling obligated to provide funding, or being asked to provide funding to support their child at school. The practice of parents providing funding (over and above normal school fees paid by non-disabled students) was reported by five parents. One parent provided the following account of her experience:

*I have been asked in the past, specially the end of last year and for most of this year to provide our carer support hours.*

The school has asked you to provide funding for your child’s support at school?  
[interviewer]

*Yes, my carer support money.*

And that is the money you are given or entitled to, to provide respite care for you?  
[interviewer]

*Yes,... my answer was they were told to shove it in a big way.*

*Because we refused, they have pushed and pushed all year until I have just had enough and I applied for a grant, and I have got enough for 14 hours a week*

Can you tell me, this pushing that the school did, can you talk to me about that, what sort of pressure did they put on you?  
[interviewer]

*The pressure, what they would do is they would ring up nearly every day and say he’s not coping come and get him, this is sort of how it started. Then we got, “oh we are doing this today, so it may be best if he didn’t come because we haven’t got enough staff to look after him or...” (Parent 1)*

While closely associated with the theme of enrolment and participation, using a perceived lack of teacher aide allocation as an excuse to deny children full time enrolment and presence at school was reported by three parents.

### **5.3.1 Phase One Parent Interview Summary**

Analysis of parent interview data revealed seven major themes associated with the exclusion of disabled students at school. These were issues related to: the knowledge and/or understanding of professionals; behaviour of teachers and principals towards parents; curriculum access and participation; enrolment attendance and segregation; abuse and or bullying by teachers and peers; the lack of caring and valuing of disabled children; and funding issues. Throughout all these themes, issues associated with teacher aides were raised.

These were important themes that were carried forward into the next phase of the study.

## **5.4 Phase Two: School Principal Questionnaire Results**

Phase two of the research involved a postal questionnaire and follow-up interview with school principals. Questionnaires were sent to 143 school principals in three geographical regions in New Zealand. Forty-seven questionnaires were returned completed<sup>21</sup>. Data from the questionnaires were entered into a statistical software package, *SPSS*<sup>22</sup>.

Data from the school principal questionnaires were analysed in light of the following themes identified from phase one. These were issues associated with:

1. Knowledge and understanding of professionals
2. Curriculum access and participation
3. Behaviour towards parents
4. Enrolment, attendance and segregation
5. Abuse and/or bullying
6. Caring and valuing of child
7. Funding
8. Teacher aides

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<sup>21</sup> For a summary of the background information of the sample, see section 4.3.1.

<sup>22</sup> For an explanation of the data analysis methods employed in this phase of the research see section 4.6.

### Knowledge and understanding of professionals

Data from phase one of the study indicated that a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of professionals is a factor that can exclude disabled students. Therefore, a number of questions in the principal questionnaire specifically focused on respondents' knowledge and understanding. Principal respondents were asked to indicate their familiarity with relevant legislation, funding and support frameworks, and principles and practices associated with inclusive education. They were also asked to give their opinion regarding the importance of successful inclusive education, of teacher knowledge and skills, teacher professional learning, and increasing the capacity and capability of teachers in the school. Table 5.20 presents these findings.

Table 5.20

#### *Principal questionnaire: Knowledge and/or understanding*

	<b>Never heard of it %</b>	<b>A little familiar %</b>	<b>Familiar %</b>	<b>Very familiar %</b>
The concept of inclusion	0.0	10.6	46.8	42.6
Supports avail to help teachers of disabled students	0.0	27.7	34.0	38.3
Current principles & practices related to meeting needs of students who experience difficulties with learning	0.0	14.9	63.8	21.3
Curriculum adaptation	2.2	19.6	50.0	28.3
Current principles & practices related to meeting needs of students who experience difficulties with behaviour	0.0	21.3	57.4	21.3
Legislation that guarantees the rights of disabled students to attend their local school	2.1	36.2	46.8	14.9
Funding Framework (SE 2000)	2.2	42.2	33.3	22.2
Supports available to help parents of disabled children	4.3	36.2	48.9	10.6
NZ Disability Strategy	31.9	51.1	12.8	4.3
	<b>Not Important %</b>	<b>Important %</b>	<b>Very Important %</b>	<b>Vital %</b>
For successful inclusive education, the knowledge and skills of teachers is:	0.0	2.2	32.6	65.2
	<b>Strongly disagree %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>	<b>Unsure %</b>	<b>Agree %</b>
Professional development for teachers is important	0.0	0.0	0.0	48.9
To facilitate inclusion we focus on increasing capacity & capability of teachers	2.1	19.1	25.5	40.4

Responses to these questions showed a reasonably strong familiarity with the concept of inclusion (89% were familiar or very familiar with it). Similarly, respondents believed they were familiar or very familiar with principles and practices known to meet the needs of students who experience difficulties with learning (85%) and behaviour (79%). In relation to the practice of curriculum adaptation, 78% of respondents reported being familiar (50%) or very familiar (28%) with it.

Policy, legislation and funding frameworks were less well known to respondents. Thirty six percent (36%) were only slightly familiar with the legislation that guaranteed disabled children the right to attend their local neighbourhood school (The 1989 Education Act). Similarly, the funding framework was only slightly familiar to 42% of respondents. In particular, the New Zealand Disability Strategy was not well known, with only 17% of respondents indicating they were familiar with this strategy.

All respondents either agreed (49%) or strongly agreed (51%) that the professional development of teachers was important for successful inclusive education. However, only 13% strongly agreed with the statement that as a school they focus on increasing the capacity and capability of teachers in order to create inclusive learning environments. Later in the questionnaire, when asked to rank factors considered important for inclusive education, teacher knowledge and skills was not ranked as the most important factor by any of the respondents (see Table 5.28).

#### Curriculum access and participation

In the phase one interviews, 10 out of 12 parents identified the curriculum as a barrier to their child's presence and participation at school. Predominantly the issue was not being able to access the curriculum. Principals were asked about the value they placed on curriculum adaptations for facilitating inclusive education and whether teachers in their schools make curriculum adaptations if required to allow students to access the curriculum. Table 5.22 presents these data.

Table 5.21

*Principal questionnaire: Curriculum*

	<b>Never %</b>	<b>Seldom %</b>	<b>Sometimes %</b>	<b>Often %</b>
Teachers make curriculum adaptations	0.0	0.0	21.3	78.7
Teachers use a varied range of teaching strategies	0.0	2.1	23.4	74.5
	<b>Not Important %</b>	<b>Important %</b>	<b>Very Important %</b>	<b>Vital %</b>
For successful inclusive education, making curriculum adaptations is:	0.0	6.5	37.0	56.5

All respondents reported that teachers in their school adapted the curriculum. Similarly, all believed (to a greater or lesser extent) that curriculum adaptations were important for successful inclusive education.

Behaviour towards parents

Parents in phase one of the study reported a number of behaviours towards them that they considered inappropriate. These were associated with being denied rights and levels of respect. Therefore, four questions in the school principal questionnaire sought to uncover respondents' attitudes and behaviours towards the parents of disabled children. Table 5.22 presents these findings.

Table 5.22

*Principal questionnaire: Behaviour towards parents*

	<b>Strongly disagree %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>	<b>Unsure %</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>Strongly agree %</b>
Parents of disabled and non-disabled students are given the same rights and respect in this school	0	0	2.2	43.5	54.3
	<b>Never %</b>	<b>Seldom %</b>	<b>Sometimes %</b>	<b>Often %</b>	
I enjoy having all parents come into our school	0.0	0.0	4.3	95.7	
I would have contact with all parents of children in our school at least once a year	6.7	4.4	17.8	71.1	
I have advised some parents that their children would be better educated at schools other than this one	53.2	34.0	12.8	0.0	

Principals were asked if parents of disabled students in their school were shown the same rights and respect as that shown to parents of non-disabled students. Only one

respondent was unsure, while 44% agreed that they were and 54% strongly agreed. However, when asked if they had ever advised some parents that their children would be better educated at schools other than their school, nearly 13% reported they had sometimes done this, and 34% reported that they had seldom done this. The majority of principals (71%) reported having contact with all parents of the school often. Similarly, most principals enjoyed having parents come into the school.

### Enrolment, attendance and segregation

At the most basic level of inclusive education is presence. To participate and learn at school, students have to be present. Parents reported a number of different ways that their children had been excluded from being present at school. For example instances where their child had been denied enrolment, only permitted to attend school part time, only permitted to attend school if a teacher aide was present, or parents being phoned to come and pick up their child from school during school time. School principals were asked their opinions and practices about student presence and participation.

Table 5.23

#### *Principal questionnaire: Enrolment, participation and segregation*

	Strongly disagree %	Disagree %	Unsure %	Agree %	Strongly agree %
Students who experience difficulties with <u>learning</u> are welcomed at this school	0.0	0.0	6.4	44.7	48.9
All students are welcome to attend this school (except for enrolment policies)	0.0	6.4	4.3	34.0	55.3
Our school has made an effort to identify and address barriers to learning/participation of disabled students	0.0	4.4	4.4	62.2	28.9
Students who experience difficulties with <u>behaviour</u> are welcomed at this school	0.0	6.5	17.4	54.3	21.7
Regular schools <u>can</u> meet the needs of all students	8.5	29.8	23.4	27.7	10.6
Regular schools <u>should</u> meet the needs of all students	8.5	21.3	31.9	25.5	12.8
There are some students who need special treatment and this cannot be provided in this school	25.5	38.3	10.6	10.6	14.9
Teachers have an obligation to non-disabled students first and foremost	27.7	59.6	6.4	4.3	2.1
I feel justified in denying enrolment to disabled students without a teacher aide	33.3	26.7	20.0	15.6	4.4

When principals were asked to respond to the statement ‘all students are welcome at this school’, just over 10% of respondents were either unsure or disagreed. Similarly,



when asked if they would feel justified denying enrolment to a disabled student if they did not have teacher aide time, 20% of respondents indicated that they would feel justified in doing this. When considering differences between students who experience difficulties with learning and students who experience difficulties with behaviour, 93% of respondents reported they welcome students who experience difficulties with learning, and 76% reported they welcome students who experience difficulties with behaviour.

Nearly 13% of respondents were either uncertain or thought that classroom teachers had an obligation to non-disabled students first and foremost. There was a strong feeling of doubt regarding whether regular schools could meet the needs of all students with 37% thinking that this was not possible. In regards to whether regular schools should meet the needs of all students, only 38% of respondents believed they should. Just over 25% of respondents agreed that there are some students who require special treatment that cannot be provided in their schools.

#### Abuse and/or bullying

Bullying and abuse was another barrier identified by parents in this study. Principals were asked to report the bullying that occurred in their schools. Table 5.24 presents these findings.

Table 5.24

#### *Principal questionnaire: Abuse and bullying*

	<b>Never %</b>	<b>Seldom %</b>	<b>Sometimes %</b>	<b>Often %</b>
Student to student bullying occurs in this school	0.0	46.8	51.1	2.1
Teacher to student bullying occurs in this school	48.9	36.2	14.9	0.0
Teacher to teacher bullying occurs in this school	50.0	32.6	17.4	0.0

Of particular interest in this research was the issue of teacher to student bullying as little has been written or reported of its nature. Approximately 51% of respondents reported that teacher to student bullying did occur in their school. Similarly, 50% reported

teacher to teacher bullying and all respondents reported student to student bullying at some level in their school.

### Caring and valuing of child

Many parents in phase one of this study reported that a lack of caring and valuing of their child was a major barrier to their child’s presence and participation at school. This was expressed in many different ways, from children being abused or bullied, to teachers being given a choice of whether or not to have a disabled child in their class. Responses from school principals to questions eliciting opinions about the value they placed on disabled students provided mixed results. Table 5.25 presents these findings.

Table 5.25

#### *Principal questionnaire: Caring and valuing of child*

	<b>Strongly disagree %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>	<b>Unsure %</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>Strongly agree %</b>
All students can learn	0.0	0.0	2.1	27.7	70.2
It is the classroom teacher’ job to report to the parents of all students in their class	0.0	0	21.1	31.9	66.0
The role of the classroom teacher is to meet the needs of all students	2.1	6.4	4.3	44.7	42.6
Our school has made an effort to identify and address barriers to learning and participation of disabled students	0.0	4.4	4.4	62.2	28.9
Students who experience difficulties at school often do so because of their own shortcomings	19.6	60.9	10.9	8.7	0.0
There are clearly defined groups of students those with, and those without special needs	31.9	53.2	2.1	8.5	4.3
Teachers have an obligation to non-disabled students first and foremost <sup>23</sup>	27.7	59.6	6.4	4.3	2.1
Some students hold more status in this school than others	53.3	26.7	4.4	13.3	2.2
	<b>Not Important %</b>	<b>Important %</b>	<b>Very Important %</b>	<b>Vital %</b>	
For successful inclusive education, a school climate that is accepting of difference is...	0.0	2.2	15.2	82.6	

Overall, principals did not report values and opinions that would indicate a lack of caring and valuing of disabled students. Only one principal had doubts that all children could learn with 98% of respondents indicating that they believed all children can learn. Similarly, few believed that there were clearly defined groups of students, those with

<sup>23</sup> Also reported in table 5.23.

and those without special needs, (13%). Nor did they report that some students held more status in their school than others (16%). Most respondents believed that the role of the classroom teacher was to meet the needs of *all* students (87%).

Another of the barriers to inclusive education identified by parents in phase one of this study was a belief by teachers that children who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour do so predominantly because of their own shortcomings or deficits. However, the majority of principals did not hold this view, with 20% strongly disagreeing and 61% disagreeing with this statement. A focus on setting up a climate conducive to learning for disabled students is an important enabler of inclusive education. Just over 90% of respondents reported that they had made an effort to identify and address barriers to learning and participation for disabled students in their school. Being accepting of difference was seen as important by all respondents.

The one area that may indicate that disabled students were valued less than non-disabled students is in relation to teacher responsibility. In response to the statement ‘teachers have an obligation to non-disabled students first and foremost’, 13% were either unsure, agreed or strongly agreed.

### Funding

Parents identified some issues associated with funding as acting to exclude their children from and within school. School principals were asked their opinion regarding the importance of funding for inclusive education. Table 5.26 presents these findings.

Table 5.26

#### *Principal questionnaire: Funding*

	<b>Not Important %</b>	<b>Important %</b>	<b>Very Important %</b>	<b>Vital %</b>
For successful inclusive education, funding is:	0.0	2.2	21.7	76.1

The majority of respondents (76%) believed that funding was vital for successful inclusion. No respondents believed that it was not important.

### Teacher aides

Parents reported issues associated with the use of teacher aides that acted to exclude their children from and within school. This included their child being denied enrolment if a teacher aide was not present, teacher aides excluding children from the having social interaction with their peers, and class teachers abdicating responsibility for disabled students to teacher aides. School principals were asked their opinions regarding the relationship of teacher aide provision to inclusive education. Table 5.27 presents these findings.

Table 5.27

*Principal questionnaire: Teacher aide*

	<b>Not Important %</b>	<b>Important %</b>	<b>Very Important %</b>	<b>Vital %</b>	
For successful inclusive education, the provision of teacher aides is:	0.0	13.3	33.3	53.3	
	<b>Strongly disagree %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>	<b>Unsure %</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>Strongly Agree %</b>
I feel justified in denying enrolment to disabled students without a teacher aide	33.3	26.7	20.0	15.6	4.4

In relation to the importance of teacher aide provision for successful inclusive education, principals indicated that they were important (13%), very important (33%) or vital (53%). Twenty percent of respondents felt justified in denying enrolment to disabled students without a teacher aide. Related to this phenomenon, the practice of teachers delegating responsibility for disabled students to a teacher aide was reported in phase one. Similarly, related to this, the belief that classroom teachers are not responsible for all students as reported in Tables 5.23 and 5.25. Here nearly 13% of principals did not agree that class teachers should be responsible for all students.

Principals were asked to indicate their opinions regarding how important seven factors identified from the literature were to successful inclusive education. Table 5.28 shows these findings.

Table 5.28

*Principal questionnaire: What is important for inclusive education*

	<b>Not Important %</b>	<b>Important %</b>	<b>Very Important %</b>	<b>Vital %</b>
The attitude of the class teacher	0.0	2.2	13.0	84.8
A school climate that is accepting of difference	0.0	2.2	15.2	82.6
Funding	0.0	2.2	21.7	76.1
The attitude of the school principal	0.0	6.5	21.7	71.7
The knowledge and skills of the class teacher	0.0	2.2	32.6	65.2
Making adaptations to the curriculum	0.0	6.5	37.0	56.5
Provision of teacher-aides	0.0	13.3	33.3	53.3

All factors were considered by principals to be important for inclusive education with little difference between factors. Principals were then asked to rank the factors based on what they considered the most important to least important. Table 5.29 shows these findings.

Table 5.29

*Principal questionnaire: What is the most important factor for inclusive education?*

<b>The most important factor for inclusive education</b>	<b>%</b>
A school climate that is accepting of difference	38.6
Funding	31.0
The attitude of the school principal	18.6
The attitude of the class teacher	18.2
Making adaptations to the curriculum	9.5
Provision of teacher-aides	2.4
The knowledge and skills of the class teacher	0.0

A school climate that is accepting of difference and funding were the two most important factors identified by principals. The provision of teacher aides and the knowledge and skills of the class teacher were considered the least important (in fact, no respondents identified the knowledge and skills of the class teacher as the most

important factor). In relation to funding results from this question were not in keeping with data from an earlier question where 76% of principals indicated that funding was vital for successful inclusion.

#### **5.4.1 Phase Two School Principal Questionnaire Summary**

Results from the school principal questionnaire indicate that few of the principals in this sample reported holding views or practising the factors identified by parents as acting to exclude disabled students. Principals reported having a reasonably sound knowledge of policies and legislation associated with or facilitating inclusion (the one exception to this was the *New Zealand Disability Strategy*, 2001). In terms of knowledge about practices however, there was a reasonably significant group of respondents who indicated that they were only a little familiar with practices associated with meeting the needs of students who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour (approximately 20%). Similarly, nearly 15% indicated they were only a little familiar with curriculum adaptation practices.

The lack of value given to disabled students is an important excluding factor. Some principals reported that particular students hold more status at their school than others. Teacher responsibility to disabled students is one indicator of the value schools place on these students. Approximately 87% of respondents believed that teachers were responsible equally to all students, however 13% of the sample did not hold this view. Deficit model thinking (where people see problems or challenges residing with the individuals) was not significantly apparent in the data, with approximately 91% of respondents indicating that if students experience difficulties at school, it is not only because of shortcomings on the part of the student themselves.

The child's presence at school is a critical factor for inclusive education. However, some principals reported that not all students were welcomed at their school and one third of respondents did not believe that regular schools should be the place for all students. Nearly one fifth of principals felt justified in denying enrolment to disabled students if they did not have a teacher aide.

Emotional and physical safety at school is a right enshrined in policy and legislation in New Zealand, yet, just over half of the principals in this sample reported that teacher-to-student bullying did occur in their schools. A similar degree of student-to-student bullying was reported.

Data associated with principals' behaviour towards parents of disabled students indicate that while principals reported valuing and respecting parents, other actions and beliefs refuted this. For example parents reported that principals suggested that their child would be better educated at another school.

Funding and teachers aides were considered by principals to be important factors associated with successful inclusive education, however principals identified a school climate that is accepting of difference to be more important. The factor considered the least important to inclusive education was the knowledge and skills of the class teacher.

## **5.5 Phase Two: School Principal Interview Results**

Ten school principals participated in this phase of the study. Five principals indicated in the questionnaire their agreement with the statement that regular schools should be the place for all children (Participants 1–5, identified in the shaded area of the following tables). Five principals in this sample indicated that they were either unsure, or disagreed with the statement that regular schools should be the place for all children (Participants 6–10, identified in the non-shaded area of the following tables). These two groups formed the comparative samples. For the purposes of discussing results from these two groups, those principals agreeing with the statement that regular schools should be the place for all children will be referred to as the x group. Those principals unsure, or disagreeing with the statement that regular schools should be the place for all children, will be referred to as the y group.

In order to explore the issues identified in phase one, four main areas were explored with school principals. These were participants': attitudes and values associated with inclusive education; perceptions of barriers to school inclusion; perceptions of enablers to inclusive education; and perceptions of specific contextual issues identified by parents as acting to exclude their children from or within school. Interview transcripts

were analysed in relation to the themes parents had identified in phase one as barriers to their child's presence and participation at school. These were:

1. Knowledge and understanding of professionals
2. Curriculum access and participation
3. Teacher and principal behaviour towards parents
4. Enrolment, attendance and segregation
5. Abuse and/or bullying
6. Caring and valuing of child
7. Funding
8. Teacher aides

Principals were asked to talk about their understanding of inclusive education and what it meant to them. Table 5.30 outlines the main themes from their responses.

Table 5.30

*Principal interview: What inclusive education means*

	Principals who agree that all students belong in regular schools (Group x)					Principals who disagree or are unsure that all students belong in regular schools (Group y)				
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
All children have a right to attend school		√	√		√		√			√
Every student is included at school where possible				√		√				
All children should be with their peers	√				√		√			
Every child is welcomed	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
There are some instances when inclusive education is not possible		√	√			√	√	√	√	√

All principals believed that inclusive education was about all children being welcomed and included at their school. However, two principals qualified this view. These two principals believed inclusion may not be possible if the children are too disabled (principal four from the x sample and principal six from the y sample). Principals two, three, five, seven and ten all believed that inclusive education was about rights.

*Inclusion to me means that everybody has a right to be part of the whole school community. So they are a complete part of a school life the same as everybody*



*else. There is nothing in the way that stops them being with their peers and involved in everything. (Principal 2)*

However, while most principals spoke of inclusive education meaning that all children were accepted and valued at school, some principals believed this could mean being accepted and valued in a special unit at their school. Two principals (six and ten) saw special education units at mainstream schools as inclusive education.

*I think that the situation that we run now where we have a unit with a dedicated teacher who specializes...and we are able to do that but the inclusion is to have it not in specialist schools to me is to have it in a normal school like ours and to have those children so they are part of the school community.... (Principal 6)*

Two principals specifically indicated that they believed inclusive education was always possible (principals one and four). As one of these principals stated:

*It is not possible for it to be not possible. Because we have a code of practice, a code of inclusion that we worked on that together...what it basically says is that every child has a right to that education, the right to be educated along with their mates. (Principal 1)*

Principals two, three, six, seven, eight, nine and ten all thought that there were instances where inclusive education was not possible. For principals two, three, nine and ten, this was when they believed that children were too disabled. For principals six and seven this was when the disabled student interfered with the learning of 'other' children in the class. Principal eight believed that inclusion would not always be possible if there were not enough resources.

*Sometimes their behaviour can be so bad I don't think that they should be included. Also I'm thinking of a kid, it sounds terrible but a bit like a vegetable, do you know what I mean, I hate saying the word, but like with a mentality of under a year. (Principal 10)*

*Yes I think that it gets extremely difficult if the needs for attention are so high that it is disruptive to the normal operation of the classroom. (Principal 7)*

These data highlight the varying explanations and understandings of inclusive education. The range of views spanned from a belief that inclusion involved children being welcomed into their local school in a regular class with their peers (two principals), to the belief that inclusion could mean children in special units in the grounds of regular schools (two principals). All principals thought that inclusive education involved welcoming disabled students into regular schools, but their beliefs

regarding the involvement of disabled students varied. Only two principals believed that there were no qualifiers to the involvement of all students in regular classes and schools.

Principals were asked what they believed were the enablers and barriers to inclusive education, Table 5.31 outlines these data. For ease of interpretation, data have been organised around the themes of teacher, student and context.

Table 5.31

*Principal interview: The barriers/enablers to inclusive education*

	Principals who agree that all students belong in regular schools (Group x)					Principals who disagree or are unsure that all students belong in regular schools (Group y)				
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
<b>Factors associated with teachers</b>										
Fearful teachers/confident teachers		√			√		√			√
Teacher knowledge and professional development	√		√	√	√		√			√
Unwilling/willing teachers	√			√					√	
Accepting/not accepting student's individual needs			√		√					
Friction/good relationships between teachers and parents	√									√
Teachers not taking/taking responsibility for all students	√									
Inappropriate/appropriate teaching strategies	√									
Overloaded teachers/supported teachers						√				
<b>Factors associated with students</b>										
Disabled students who don't get on well/get on well with peers								√		
Low intelligence/not low intelligence						√				
Inappropriate/appropriate behaviour								√		
<b>Factors associated with context</b>										
Inadequate/adequate funding and resources	√	√			√		√		√	√
Support staff				√						√
Inappropriate/appropriate physical environment									√	√
Ignorance/acceptance of community			√					√		
Poor support/good support from GSE							√			

The most common barriers and enablers to inclusive education expressed by principals in both the x and y groups were associated with teachers. Four principals (two from each group) believed that teachers fearful of inclusion were the greatest barrier to the inclusion of disabled students.

*Yes for example when I first was told that we were getting two children with very high needs, I didn't want them I was scared stiff and so I found out a whole lot about them before I could accept them. (Principal 10)*

Lack of teacher knowledge was also seen as a barrier to successful inclusive education. Principal five believed it was critical to have knowledgeable support staff. Principal ten believed that gaining knowledge about the needs of disabled students could overcome barriers to their inclusion. Principal seven and principal one thought that if inclusive education was to be a reality, there needed to be an emphasis on the professional development of teachers. Principals from both groups identified this as a barrier or enabler to inclusive education.

The right attitude on the part of teachers was an enabler identified by three principals (one, four and nine). This was expressed as a willingness on the part of teachers to include disabled students.

*If there is a willingness to include people you can do it. I mean sometimes it is difficult but get on and do it. (Principal 4)*

Principal one was more specific regarding the nature of this willingness, which he expressed as teachers being willing to take on responsibility for disabled students. This principal was the only one to identify teacher responsibility as an important enabler or barrier to inclusive education.

Other factors associated with teachers identified by principals as barriers and/or enablers to inclusive education included teachers accepting that students have individual needs, relationships between parents and school, teachers taking responsibility for all students, and the support of teachers.

No principal mentioned the role of the school principal in including or excluding disabled students.

Three principals in the y group believed that it was factors associated with the disabled student themselves that either acted as a barrier to their inclusion or enabled it. No principals in the x group identified issues associated with the student. Principal eight believed that if inappropriate behaviour interfered with the learning of non-disabled students, then the community would not support inclusion. She also believed that if a disabled child was not very 'likeable' by their peers, this could also act as a barrier to school inclusion. Principal six stated that often the child's intellectual ability acted as a barrier to school inclusion; if it was too low, the teacher could not be expected to do much. Barriers and enablers associated with the student themselves were areas where there was a discernable difference between the views of the x group and the views of the y group.

Principals in both groups identified a number of contextual issues as barriers/enablers to inclusive education. Funding was identified as a barrier/enabler by six principals (one, two five, seven, nine and ten). For one principal from the x group, this was the most important issue:

*Well you can't get away from money. It's sad isn't it but that is the be all and end all of things. (Principal 2)*

For another principal from the y group, funding was also a strong issue:

*Well from the school's viewpoint I think it still comes back to first of all resources and funding. (Principal 7)*

Principal five believed that because of the sheer scale of resources (funding) needed to equip a school to meet the needs of disabled students, not all schools should be expected to cater for all children:

*Funding is always an issue, the funding to provide paraprofessional support, the resources, sometimes the ramps and whatever else. Also it takes time to have resources to be put in place. That is why I believe it is better to have some schools well resourced rather than an expectation that every school can cater for every child. (Principal 5)*

Other contextual issues included having good support staff (principals four and ten), an accepting community (principals three and eight), using appropriate teaching strategies (principal one), having access to adequate resources (principal one), and good support from GSE (principal seven). In relation to contextual factors, the main discernable

differences between the beliefs of the x group and the beliefs of the y group were in relation to the physical environment where no principals from the x group believed this to be a barrier or enabler to inclusive education.

Principal interviews were also analysed to identify respondents' views and practices associated with the barriers that the parents had identified in phase one. Tables 5.32 to 5.38 present the findings of this analysis. The themes explored were:

1. Knowledge and understanding of professionals
2. Curriculum access and participation
3. Teacher and principal behaviour towards parents
4. Enrolment, attendance and segregation
5. Abuse and/or bullying
6. Caring and valuing of child
7. Funding
8. Teacher aides

The results are presented in tables and in subsequent commentaries and participant quotes. Not all results are presented in the tables, only those representing factors that were often identified by respondents. Other factors thought to be important are discussed by way of a commentary and presentation of participant quotes.

#### Knowledge and understanding of professionals

Parents identified a lack of teacher knowledge and/or understanding as a barrier to their child's presence and participation at school. Table 5.32 outlines the major findings from the analysis of the principal interviews in relation to this theme. Subsequent commentary and participant quotes present further findings from the analysis.

Table 5.32

*Principal interview: Teacher knowledge and understanding*

	Principals who agree that all students belong in regular schools (Group x)					Principals who disagree or are unsure that all students belong in regular schools (Group y)				
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Inclusion requires the right attitude from teachers (willingness)	√		√	√	√				√	
Teacher knowledge and professional development is important	√		√	√	√		√			√
Teacher fear and ignorance gets in the way of inclusion		√			√		√		√	√

Four of the five principals from the x group spoke of the importance of a willingness by the class teacher to include all students. The same four principals also believed in the importance of teacher knowledge and professional development for teachers. These two themes were less well supported by principals in the y group, with only principal nine mentioning a willingness on the part of teachers, and principals seven and ten mentioning the importance of teacher professional development.

With regards to the right attitude, specifically a willingness to include all children, there were a number of different themes. Principal one spoke of the need for teachers to be willing to work with somebody that is different and not expecting other people to do their work for them. This touches on an important issue identified by parents, that of teachers not feeling responsible for disabled children. This theme is also discussed later in this section.

*Attitude. Teachers willing to work with somebody that is different and that has been a barrier for some people prior to setting in place inclusive education. There were people that did expect other people to do it for them. (Principal 1)*

Principal nine believed that while the ‘right’ attitude was important, you could not blame people if they did not have this.

*So another barrier, definitely people’s attitudes and I don’t think it is something that they can particularly help. I don’t think they set out to be malicious or unkind or unloving. (Principal 9)*

Five principals (two from the x group and three from the y group) identified teacher fear as something that was a barrier to inclusive education. For one principal this stemmed

from an experience visiting a ‘mental institution’ when she was a child. For another, it was based on not having experience with disabled people. For the remainder of respondents, this was an unspecified fear.

### Curriculum access and participation

In relation to the curriculum, few principals mentioned the curriculum at any stage of the interview. However, principals one and two both emphasized the importance of making the curriculum accessible if students were truly going to be included. In particular, principal two spoke at great length of the curriculum initiatives in her school. Making adaptations to the curriculum was an important aspect for principal one. Principal six outlined how they used the early childhood (Te Whāriki) curriculum for the students in the special needs unit. Principal ten believed the curriculum was so ‘normed’ that it got in the way of inclusive education.

### Teacher and principal behaviour towards parents

Parents identified what they perceived to be inappropriate behaviour towards them by teachers and school principals as a barrier to their child’s presence and participation at school. Data from the principal interviews were analysed to uncover principals’ attitudes and practices in relation to this theme. Table 5.33 and subsequent commentary present these findings.

Table 5.33

#### *Principal interview: Behaviour towards parents*

	Principals who agree that all students belong in regular schools (Group x)					Principals who disagree or are unsure that all students belong in regular schools (Group y)				
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Working with parents is essential for inclusive education	√	√		√	√		√	√		
Reporting to parents of disabled students involves more than for non-disabled students	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

In relation to inappropriate behaviour towards parents, principals were unlikely to describe outright the behaviour that was described by parents in the first phase of this research. All principals reported good communication and relationships with the parents

in their school, and none identified this theme as an issue for them or for developing an inclusive educational environment. Four principals from the x group and two from the y group described working with parents as essential, and principal seven emphasised that principals and teachers must listen to parents.

In addition, principal one pointed out that teachers and school principals need to be aware of the difficulties that parents of disabled students often have to face and the struggles they may have to go through in order to get what their child is entitled to.

*We have some [parents] who have quite rightly been the only advocate their child has ever had and for a long time since they were born they have fought and fought and fought and so that is the main barrier, and so when they come into a school and they are getting that it doesn't take them long to know when there is another fight on their hands and they quickly get their defences up. (Principal 1)*

All principals identified that reporting practices for disabled students was over and above what occurred for non-disabled students, mainly due to the Individual Education Process (IEP). As mentioned earlier, three principals described deficit model thinking in relation to disabled students. Whether this was communicated to parents or not could not be determined. There were no discernable differences between the opinions and practices of the two groups.

Principal two believed that parents being labelled (for example as troublesome, or disabled themselves) is a barrier to inclusive education. Principal two also pointed out that often parents of disabled students are denied the usual parent friendships that parents of non-disabled students have with each other. Principal ten thought that at times, parents themselves can be barriers to successful inclusive education:

*Sometimes the parents can be a barrier, the friction between the parents and the school. (Principal 10)*

While there were similar viewpoints expressed regarding the importance of good parent teacher partnerships by principals in both the x and y groups, there was more empathy expressed by principals in the x group for the needs of difficulties often faced by parents of disabled children.



### Enrolment, attendance and segregation

In phase one of this study, parents identified issues around enrolment and attendance as barriers to their child’s presence and participation at school. Data from the principal interviews were analysed to uncover principals’ attitudes and practices in relation to this theme. Table 5.34 and subsequent commentary present these findings.

Table 5.34

#### *Principal interview: Enrolment attendance and segregation*

	Principals who agree that all students belong in regular schools (Group x)					Principals who disagree or are unsure that all students belong in regular schools (Group y)				
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Disabled students are not permitted access to some mainstream activities						√			√	√
Disabled students are sent home during school time						√	√		√	
Disabled students are only allowed part-time participation at school						√		√		
Would deny enrolment if too disabled		√								√
Not excluded from enrolment or participation	√		√	√	√				√	
Having disabled students improves the school				√	√					
Disabled students have rights to attend their local neighbourhood school	√	√	√		√					√

No principals from the x group described restricting disabled students access to mainstream activities. In comparison, three principals from the y group spoke of this practice. For example, principal nine explained:

*They come to assembly every morning, they are in the playground everyday. Our own children go down and wheel them up. (Principal 9)*

Similarly, no principals from the x group described denying disabled students full time participation at school. However, part time participation was described by three principals in the y group, either as something that was set up from the initial enrolment at school or in the case of students who were described as ‘not coping’ with school.

*So he’s a likeable wee kid thank goodness...but the difficulty of settling means he only comes to school for three days a week for half days because he is so difficult to absorb into a classroom so he needs the money to put into support. (Principal 8)*

Two principals (one from each group) said that they would turn a child away from their school if it was considered that they were too disabled. Principal two said that this would only be for children with very high health and medical needs if it was thought that they could not guarantee the student's safety.

Only one principal (P9) from the y group said that they would never turn a child away from enrolment or participation (although this was a school with a special needs unit), however, four principals from the x group explained that they would never turn a child away from their school or deny their participation. One principal (P4) spoke of the benefits that having disabled children at the school brings.

*We had a deaf student last year who left. She is a big loss to our school community because we were all learning from her...she brought in some people like she had a guy [name] who would come to the school and he was just fantastic so that is another benefit actually. (Principal 4)*

Four principals from the x group and one from the y group spoke of disabled children's rights to attend their local school.

*These children are people and have rights and opportunities to be included, not segregated and put apart. (Principal 5)*

There were some clear differences between the views of principals in the x group and those in the y group. As opposed to those in the y group, principals in the x group described not turning children away, not excluding disabled children from participation, not engaging in restricting the attendance of disabled students, and a belief in the rights of disabled students.

### Abuse and/or bullying

Abuse and bullying was another issue identified by parents as acting to exclude their children from school. Data from the principal interviews were analysed to uncover principals' attitudes and practices in relation to this theme. Table 5.35 and subsequent commentary present these findings.

Table 5.35

*Principal interview: Abuse and bullying*

	Principals who agree that all students belong in regular schools (Group x)					Principals who disagree or are unsure that all students belong in regular schools (Group y)				
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Bullying is an issue for inclusive education				√		√	√	√		
No we don't have bullying at this school		√								√
Yes we do have bullying at this school					√	√			√	
No teachers do not bully students at this school			√					√		
Some teachers do bully students at this school		√							√	
We have plans and procedures to reduce bullying at this school	√			√					√	

Three principals from the y group and one from the x group believed that bullying was an issue for inclusive education. One principal believed that it occurred if children did not have the ability to cope with difference because children who appeared and behaved differently can be isolated and picked on by their peers if the culture of the school allows it (P7). One principal believed it was an issue because often disabled students did not have the ability to 'get out of tricky' situations (P8). Most principals thought that bullying occurred at most schools, although only three stated that it happened in their school (Principals 5, 6 and 9). When asked if they had ever seen the bullying of students by teachers, two principals said that they had seen examples in their school. Both described their abhorrence of the practice and outlined how they would tactfully address the issue. In both cases, this was not by confronting the teacher outright with their behaviour and stating clearly that this was not acceptable. For example, one principal said:

*I said to them "what was that noise in there" ..I kept talking about it and the person came back to me and said "I apologise and I shouldn't have done that and I'm sorry I did it". (Principal 9)*

When queried about teacher and student bullying three principals described the plans and procedures their schools used for reducing the incidence of bullying. These included specific bullying programmes, encouraging children to inform teachers if they see bullying, and one school who surveyed their children twice a year regarding their beliefs on school bullying and physical and emotional safety.

There were no discernable differences between the beliefs and practices of principals in the x and y groups in relation to bullying and abuse.

### Caring and valuing of child

The data from phase one of the study highlighted that a lack of caring and valuing of disabled children acted to exclude disabled students from and within school. Data from the principal interviews were analysed to uncover principals' attitudes and practices in relation to this theme. Table 5.36 and subsequent commentary present these findings.

Table 5.36

#### *Principal interview: Caring and valuing of disabled children*

	Principals who agree that all students belong in regular schools (Group x)					Principals who disagree or are unsure that all students belong in regular schools (Group y)				
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Perceive disabled children as 'different' and 'separate' from non-disabled children						√	√	√	√	√
Perceive non-disabled students to have more rights to and in education than disabled students						√		√		√
Meeting the needs of disabled students is viewed from a 'charity' perspective									√	√
Disabled students are viewed from a deficit perspective		√				√			√	
All students are treated as individuals	√		√	√				√		
All students have equal rights to education	√	√	√		√					√
Classroom teachers are responsible for all students	√		√							
Classroom teachers are not responsible for disabled students						√	√		√	

All principals in the y group described a range of principles and practices indicating that they perceived disabled students to be inherently different from non-disabled students (with these differences came different rights on the part of these students and obligations on the part of their teachers which will be discussed later in this section). Disabled students interfering with the best interests of the 'other' students was a theme that was quoted by principals in this group.

*If you have a child with special needs you have to have the resources to meet their needs and not muck up the learning of the other kids, I think that is essential. (Principal 8)*

*Yes, I think that it gets extremely difficult if the needs for attention are so high that it is disruptive to the normal operation of the classroom. (Principal 7)*

*I think other children miss out as a result. (Principal 6)*

For one principal who had a special needs unit in the school, the students enrolled there were not seen as ‘her’ children.

*They come to assembly every morning, they are on the playground every day. Our own children go down and wheel them up. (Principal 9)*

Closely associated with the theme of believing disabled students were inherently different from non-disabled students was the idea of the rights of disabled students. Each of the comments above can be linked to a belief that disabled students have less rights to education than non-disabled students. Principals from the y group indicated this belief in a number of comments:

*We get complaints from parents of the other children who want to know why their child’s classroom is being disrupted or why the attention time is being soaked up by a child its not fair. (Principal 7)*

*Oh yes, absolutely, they [parents of non-disabled students] don’t want them and I don’t blame them you know why do you want those badly behaved or intellectually impaired students taking teacher time that your kids can get. (Principal 6)*

*We have a room where they can go to in the morning...you can’t have them rolling around the floor for a start we don’t have enough room. (Principal 10)*

Two principals from the y group displayed a ‘charity’ perspective in relation to disabled students. One principal, when describing the strengths of the teacher aides in the school said:

*We are very blessed with people that have been here for years that aren’t just doing it for the money. A lot of them are mothers and the mothering thing is just that natural caring. (Principal 10)*

Deficit model thinking was apparent in the responses of three principals (two from the y group and one from the x group) with a focus on the things that children could not do as a reason to exclude them from the mainstream setting.

Four principals (three from the x group and one from the y group) spoke of the importance of treating children as individuals and seeing them as children first and foremost. One principal stressed that disabled students are more like non-disabled students than unlike them.

*Preconceived ideas of what children might be, looking at their previous history, not taking into account that possibility some of the problems might have occurred due to personality problems. And some communities not accepting other people, not accepting how other people are, individuality things like that and I think that is what a lot of the barriers are. (Principal 3)*

Four principals from the x group talked of the rights of disabled students to an education. For principal ten, this was in relation to all children having a right to enrol in their special unit. Principal one showed a strong commitment to 'rights', mentioning this more than ten times during the interview. This included the right to an education, the right to be themselves and the right to be with their mates.

*They have a right to be here, this is their school. (Principal 1)*

The responsibility of the teacher to meet the needs of all students in the class was an issue for parents in this study, particularly in relation to the value placed on their child. Two principals from the x group indicated clearly that inclusive education involved teachers taking responsibility for all the students. For example, principal one said:

*We get supported through a very good teacher, specialist teacher but as I pointed out to them [class teachers] if these people weren't here they would be totally responsible for these kids. (Principal 1)*

In contrast, principals six, seven and ten made comments indicating their belief that the classroom teacher was not responsible for meeting the needs of disabled students. For example:

*I realised that I was making no progress and at a cost to the other students in my class so then I stopped and I allowed teacher aides to work with the student when possible. As long as the student was at the back of the room and didn't disrupt the rest of the children, I got on with my job. (Principal 6)*

The issue of valuing and caring of disabled students showed marked differences between the two groups. Principals in the y group generally held beliefs that disabled students were less valuable and less deserving than non-disabled students. There was also a general belief by three of the five principals in this group that disabled students

were not the responsibility of the class teacher. Charity and deficit beliefs were also apparent in this group.

### Funding

In phase one of this study, parents identified funding issues as barriers to their child's presence and participation at school. Data from the principal interviews were analysed to uncover principals' attitudes and practices in relation to this theme. Table 5.37 and subsequent commentary present these findings.

Table 5.37

#### *Principal interview: Funding*

	Principals who agree that all students belong in regular schools (Group x)					Principals who disagree or are unsure that all students belong in regular schools (Group y)				
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Funding is necessary for successful inclusive education	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Lack of funding is a barrier to inclusive education		√			√	√	√		√	√
We need to look at ways to get over funding shortfalls			√	√						
Difficulties with ORRS funding					√	√	√		√	

While not all principals identified a lack of funding when asked to identify what they believed were the barriers to inclusive education (see Table 5.32), in subsequent discussions, all 10 principals talked of the necessity of funding for inclusive education. However, the importance placed on this varied between principals. For example two principals believed that while funding was necessary, and in short supply, schools needed to be creative in finding ways to get over funding shortfalls.

*We have got money through the [name of programme] and we are into our second year of the [name of programme] and we have had success with that, so where possible we get contestable funding. We use the Resource Teachers of Literacy or any of those support services where possible to get additional funding as well. (Principal 4)*

*Funding does come into it, but that should not be looked at as a barrier. Look at ways of getting around it. (Principal 3)*

However, principals two, six, seven, nine and ten believed lack of funding was a definite barrier to inclusive education.

Principal one found difficulties paying for teacher aides from the *Ongoing Reviewable Resourcing Scheme (ORRS)*<sup>24</sup> funding because it did not cover any sick leave. This principal found himself questioning whether he would have to deny enrolment to out of zone ORRS funded students if funding did not increase. This was also a dilemma for principal five, who was considering denying out of zone enrolments to any ORRS funded students once they reached 20 of these students in their school.

*The Ministry is saying that our special needs programme is not big enough to support direct funding, you are supposed to have 20 or more ORRS funded pupils to be directly resourced and we range between 16 and 20. With the increases of salaries for support staff which has been very good and proper over the last few years of about 12 percent, the funding that has come in to support our programme has not come anywhere near that amount. (Principal 5)*

Principals four and five stated that they would rather have the funding allocated directly to them, than it going through GSE.

*And really, from where I sit, I would rather have the funding and be able to access you know contract people to come in and provide the support you need. But having said that we have in this area very good support from GSE. (Principal 4)*

Four principals (three from the y group and one from the x group) spoke of difficulties with the ORRS application and funding process. All four principals believed that children who should be ORRS funded were missing out. One principal bemoaned the arbitrary nature of the allocation process.

*Another problem we have is the sheer difficulty of actually having a child verified as ORRS...it seems to me they draw an arbitrary line in the sand and if you fit under there you do and if you don't you don't. (Principal 7)*

There were no discernable differences between the beliefs and practices of principals in the x and y group in relation to funding.

### Teacher aides

The data from phase one of the study highlighted issues associated with teacher aides that acted to exclude disabled students from and within school. Data from the principal interviews were analysed to uncover principals' attitudes and practices in relation to this theme. Table 5.38 and subsequent commentary present these findings.

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<sup>24</sup> Ongoing Reviewable Resourcing Scheme is a funding mechanism for individual students who are verified as having high or very high needs. Funding is allocated to schools for teacher and teacher aide time as well as for professional support and intervention.



Table 5.38

*Principal interview: Teacher-aide*

	Principals who agree that all students belong in regular schools (Group x)					Principals who disagree or are unsure that all students belong in regular schools (Group y)				
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Teacher aides are necessary for inclusive education					√	√	√	√	√	√
Teacher aides work specifically with disabled students						√	√		√	√
TAs can get too close to child and exclude socially and create dependencies	√	√	√					√		
TA also supports the class teacher/works with all students				√				√		

All principals in the y group and one from the x group specifically stated that teacher aides are necessary for successful inclusive education.

*The equal access to everything shouldn't be an issue as long as there are support personnel to support the child in whatever they need. (Principal 8)*

*Teacher aides are absolutely vital. (Principal 9)*

*We can probably cope with most children in the classroom if there is adult support. (Principal 7)*

In one case the principal pointed out that this was necessary for the safety of the child themselves and for the safety of the students and teachers at the school.

*We had a teacher aide attached to him 24/7 ..she just shadows him now because he has lashed out at the teachers. Because the other children in the unit are all fragile physically small children, we can't risk him being more than a couple of metres away from a teacher aide. (Principal 9)*

Four principals from the y group indicated that teacher aides worked specifically with individual disabled students, although for one of these principals, this varied according to the needs of the child.

*Well it varies depending on the need, but if we get to the more severe situations, usually one on one sitting with the child along side the child. (Principal 7)*

Four principals (three from the x group and one from the y group) believed that having a teacher aide 'attached' to a disabled student could isolate them socially and make them overly dependent on the teacher aide.

*Teacher aides can get in the way of inclusion, just by physically being there just by doing too much for the person they are supposed to be working with. By treating them as a special case not just a kid with special needs. (Principal 8)*

Principal three believed that teacher aides were not always the best support believing that the classroom teacher should teach disabled children.

*In some ways I don't see that teacher aides always are the best resource for some of these children. I think really they should be taught by the teacher so sometimes it's a matter of attitude...because the teacher is the expert, not the teacher aide. (Principal 3)*

Issues around teacher aides showed some marked differences between the two groups. Principals in the y group generally held beliefs that teacher aides were necessary for inclusive education and that they need to work specifically with disabled students. Three out of five principals in the x group mentioned that teacher aides can get too close to disabled students and interfere with their social functioning.

### **5.5.1 Phase Two School Principal Interview Summary**

All principals in the sample believed that inclusive education was about welcoming disabled students into their neighbourhood school. However, for some principals, this meant welcoming them into their special needs unit, which was in the grounds of the school. For others it meant welcoming students as long as they were not 'too disabled'. Only two principals believed that inclusive education was about welcoming disabled students into regular classes with regular teachers with no conditions attached.

In relation to the barriers and enablers to inclusion, the perceptions of principals from both the x group and the y group were similar in many instances. This included the confidence, knowledge and willingness of the class teacher as well as adequate funding and support staff. There were differences between the x and y group in relation to the role of the disabled students themselves in their exclusion. Whereas no principals from the x group identified the student themselves as a barrier or enabler, three principals from the y group did. Another factor identified by two principals from the x group and not identified by any of the principals in the y group was accepting student's individual needs.

Data from the principal interviews were analysed based on the factors identified by parents as barriers to their child's presence and participation at school. No discernable differences were found in the views of principals in the x and y group in relation to bullying and abuse, funding, and teacher knowledge and understanding. Small differences were discernable between the views of principals in the x and y group in relation to behaviour towards parents.

In relation to enrolment and participation issues, there were clear differences between the views of principals in the x group and those in the y group. Principals in the x group described not turning children away, not excluding disabled children from participation and not engaging in the practice of restricting the attendance of disabled students. They also described a belief in the rights of disabled children to presence and participation at school. These were factors not described by principals in the y group.

Similarly in relation to issues associated with the valuing and caring about disabled students, clear differences were apparent. All principals in the y group described a range of principles and practices indicating that they perceived disabled students to be inherently different from non-disabled students and less worthy than non-disabled students. There was also a general belief indicated by three of the five principals in this group that disabled students were not the responsibility of the class teacher. No principals in the x group held these views. Conversely, four of the five principals from the x group spoke of their belief in the rights of disabled students.

There were also differences between the two groups of principals in respect to issues associated with teacher aides. All principals from the y group mentioned the necessity of teacher aides for successful inclusive education, and four mentioned that their role is to work specifically with disabled students. Only one principal from the x group mentioned the necessity of teacher aides, and no principals from this group talked about teacher aides working specifically with disabled students. On the contrary, three principals in the x group believed that teacher aides can get too close to disabled students and interfere with normal social functioning.

There were small differences in relation to issues associated with inappropriate behaviour towards parents. While all expressed similar viewpoints regarding the

importance of good parent teacher partnerships, more empathy towards parents of disabled students was expressed by principals in group x.

More principals in the x group spoke of the importance of curriculum and curriculum adaptation than those in the y group.

## 5.6 Phase Three: Teacher Interview Results

Phase three of this study involved interviews with four teachers in one school. All interview transcripts were analysed to identify respondents' views and practices associated with the themes parents had identified in phase one as barriers to their child's presence and participation at school (see section 5.3). Table 5.39 provides background information on these teachers.

Table 5.39

*Teacher interview: Background information*

Teacher one	Teacher in charge of the special education unit
Teacher two	Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO)
Teacher three	Classroom teacher (junior school)
Teacher four	Classroom teacher (senior school)

Initially, teachers were asked to talk about the concept of inclusive education, what it meant to them, and what their views were about it. Table 5.40 presents the main themes from the analysis of this data.

Table 5.40

*Teacher interview: What inclusive education means*

	Teachers			
	1	2	3	4
Being in the mainstream if they are able	√	√		
Being with their peers if the gap is not too wide	√		√	
Meeting the educational needs of all students		√		
Giving all students the same opportunities within an educational setting		√		
Being part of the mainstream classroom programme for certain activities			√	
Including students with special needs in mainstream classes when the class programme is appropriate				√
Including students with special needs in mainstream classes if they are not too disruptive		√		
Including students with special needs if it suits the child	√			

For all teachers, inclusive education was focused on the student being physically present in a mainstream class if their needs were not too high, or too different from the non-disabled students, or if they were not too disruptive. None of the four teachers spoke about inclusive education in relation to identifying and reducing barriers to their presence and participation in mainstream settings. Teacher two did speak of inclusive education as giving all students the same opportunities within an education setting, however caveats were placed on this view such as if the students were not too disruptive, or if they were not too different from their peers.

Teachers were asked to identify what they believed were the barriers and/or enablers to inclusive education. Table 5.41 outlines these findings. For ease of interpretation, data have been organised around the themes of teacher, student and context.

Table 5.41

*Teacher interview: The barriers/enablers to inclusive education*

	Teachers			
	1	2	3	4
<b>Teachers</b>				
Lack of teacher knowledge/ knowledgeable teachers	√	√	√	√
Teachers not accepting/accepting disabled students in their class	√	√		√
Fearful teachers/confident teachers	√		√	
Poor/effective teacher communication & consultation	√	√	√	√
Lack/adequate teacher time			√	
Teacher not adapting/adapting the curriculum		√		
Previous/no previous experience of teacher	√			
<b>Students and/or parents</b>				
Parents not thinking/thinking child can be mainstreamed				√
The behaviour or ability of the student		√	√	
Lack of/good communication skills in the student		√		
Not preparing/preparing the student for the mainstream	√			
<b>Context</b>				
Inadequate/adequate teacher aide support	√	√	√	√
Inadequate/adequate funding/resources	√	√	√	√
Inappropriate/appropriate physical environment	√		√	√
Fear/non fear of other students			√	√
Professionals not working/working together		√		√
Class size too large/not too large			√	

All four teachers indicated that the degree of knowledge on the part of the teacher was an important enabler or barrier to inclusive education. Two spoke of the importance of professional development in this area for teachers and teacher aides.

*You've got to have that knowledge base. Be up-skilled in how to best support these kiddies and from a teaching point of view and also our support staff.*  
(Teacher 2)

Three teachers identified teacher acceptance of disabled children as an enabler to inclusive education. For one of these teachers, this acceptance had to come from the entire school community if inclusive education was to be a reality.

*You have to have everyone coming on board with you, you can't leave anyone, it is a bit like a lifeboat, you can't leave anybody out.* (Teacher 1)

One teacher pointed out that she thought the students in the school noticed that some teachers were accepting of disabled students from the special education unit, and some were not.

*I think the kids pick up on this. Why do they go to that class and not that class?*  
(Teacher 4)

All four teachers, but particularly teacher two, stressed the degree of communication and consultation as important barriers or enablers. She pointed out that all parties working and communicating together acted as a strong enabler to inclusive education ensuring that good decisions were made for the disabled student.

*The consultation process needs to be an important factor. You've got to consult with all the parties to be able to make sure that you as the professional are making the right choice for the student. (Teacher 2)*

Other issues identified were the importance of adapting the curriculum, a lack of teacher time and a lack of teacher experience.

Three teachers identified a factor or factors associated with the disabled student themselves as working for or against inclusive education. This included the student's behaviour, a lack of communication skills on the part of the disabled student, and the disabled student not being adequately prepared for the mainstream.

*I guess the ability of some of the kiddies to be successful in the mainstream. Ideally we want all students to be included within the mainstream, but the reality is it is not always possible, with some of our severely disabled kiddies. And you know they can be disruptive. (Teacher 2)*

One teacher said that when parents don't think their child can be educated in the mainstream, this was a barrier to inclusive education.

All four teachers identified contextual issues as factors that can facilitate inclusion, or act as a barrier. The provision of teacher aide support was an issue common to all four teachers, who thought that it was necessary for successful inclusion. All teachers also mentioned the importance of funding and resources. Two teachers were not specific regarding what the funding was necessary for, and two teachers once more mentioned the necessity for teacher aides when explaining the importance of funding.

*The link with inclusion and funding often goes hand in glove with teacher aide support. (Teacher 1)*

One teacher thought resources such as classroom furniture and the right equipment were enablers for successful inclusive education.

Closely related to the issue of adequate resources was the issue of physical access to buildings. Three teachers identified ramps and other environmental adaptations for access as important for inclusive education.

*Just the facilities, the environment. We are very lucky here we have got, you can take a wheelchair anywhere, or take the children anywhere. (Teacher 4)*

Fear of disabled students by their peers was identified as a barrier by two of the four teachers.

*Some of the children in my class wouldn't go into the unit...they didn't like it I think because they hadn't met those children before. Some children go through their life and they never come across children like that. (Teacher 4)*

One teacher identified large class numbers as a barrier to successful inclusive education.

Teacher interviews were also analysed to identify respondent's views and practices associated with the barriers parents had identified in phase one. These were:

- Knowledge and/or understanding of professionals
- Behaviour towards parents
- Curriculum access and participation
- Enrolment, attendance and segregation
- Abuse and/or bullying
- Caring and valuing of child
- Funding
- Teacher aide

The teacher in charge of the special needs unit was very aware of the role of teacher knowledge and understanding in including and excluding disabled students from mainstream settings. This included teachers having preconceived ideas about the disabled child, teachers not knowing the student and a lack of professional development for classroom teachers.

*I think it does help for the teachers to have some prior knowledge of the student. Not from the point of view to be able to make a blanket decision before they get there, but just to know that if there are certain things that occur, don't react because that might be part of the student's makeup. (Teacher 1)*

In relation to teacher knowledge and understanding, two other teachers made reference to the need for knowledgeable and skilled teachers. Both teachers believed that not



enough was covered during the period of initial teacher education training, with one teacher saying that the training in inclusive education was ‘politically correct’ with not enough focus on practical skills and strategies. The other teacher also mentioned the importance of in-service professional development for successful inclusive education.

*I think perhaps at Teachers College, when I was there, things were very “PC” and things we were expected to say the right things and to have special needs children in our class. We were not shown what we were going to need to do to incorporate them, to include them. (Teacher 3)*

None of the teachers spoke of the need for appropriate attitudes or acceptance on the part of teachers in relation to inclusive education; nor spoke of the rights of disabled students to attend their local neighbourhood school. One teacher spoke of the need for teachers to seek knowledge and support for inclusive education to be a reality.

The teachers did not indicate negative attitudes towards parents, which were identified in phase one of this study as a barrier to inclusive education (this included criticising, threatening and blaming parents and not listening to parents). However, one teacher spoke of the importance of listening to parents and consulting with them.

*They [parent] know their child better than anybody else. (Teacher 1)*

All teachers expressed the view that communication and consultation were important enablers of inclusive education. All spoke of the importance of consulting with other professionals to meet the needs of disabled students. Teachers two and four spoke of the need to consult with other staff.

*Successful inclusion communication, communication between all parties. That’s GSE, the parents, myself, my colleagues, my support staff, the principal. (Teacher 1)*

Only two teachers mentioned the curriculum in relation to inclusive education. Teacher three spoke of the need to make curriculum adaptations to include all students, but pointed out that she already did this for the other students in her class. Teacher two also indicated her belief that the curriculum needs to fit all students and can be adapted to do this:

*In terms of the curriculum, the curriculum needs to fit all students but in reality it does not and this could be because some of our students have very high disabilities. But in saying this, the curriculum can still be modified or adapted to*

*include those. Certainly there needs to be a lot of modifications and adaptations to programmes. (Teacher 2)*

In relation to enrolment and participation, no teachers spoke of denying disabled students enrolment in the school, however, this may have been because it was assumed they would attend the special education unit. All teachers did indicate that disabled students would not automatically have the right to participate in all mainstream classes and activities. In all cases, this was because teachers believed that disabled students' needs could not always be met in mainstream classes. While two teachers had talked about the necessity of making adaptations to the curriculum so that disabled students could participate, no teachers mentioned this when indicating their belief that the participation of disabled students in mainstream classes was not always possible. For one teacher, participation was not possible if a student's needs were too different from the mainstream. Here the emphasis was on the student not coping with the mainstream, not the teacher not coping with the student.

*In saying that though I think there are children that benefit from being in the special needs unit. Because some of those children, their needs are so much different to the needs of the children in the class that they couldn't be met well in a mainstream class. (Teacher 3)*

No teachers spoke of bullying in relation to any of the questions they were asked.

In relation to the value and worth placed on disabled students, three classroom teachers spoke in ways that demonstrated disabled students were not as entitled to mainstream education as non-disabled students. For example, teachers three and four both spoke of having to consider the 'other' students in the class, not seeing disabled students as part of this group. Teacher two also explained that it was difficult enough to cope with her own class without having extra [disabled] students. Two teachers indicated a belief that disabled students needed to be able to adapt to the demands of the mainstream rather than the mainstream adapt to the needs of the student and if the student could not cope, then the mainstream was not suitable for them. One teacher spoke of a belief that there are some students who cannot succeed in education.

*School doesn't suit them, they need a children's programme, they need to be out in the fields or chopping wood or even life skills. They are not bright kids, they are not going to succeed in education so we need to give them something they can use. (Teacher 4)*

The notion of disabled students being different from non-disabled students was reinforced by teacher two when she stated that:

*You have to be a special sort of person to work with a large group of kiddies of really high significant special needs. (Teacher 2)*

In their comments, teachers demonstrated their belief that they were not responsible for disabled students, and that they had a choice whether or not they allowed disabled students in 'their' class. These attitudes were confirmed by the teacher in charge of the special needs unit when he pointed out that he had to try to 'sell' his children to teachers and other students.

Both teachers two and three believed that every disabled student had a right to education but not necessarily a mainstream education with their non-disabled peers. Teacher two also stressed that students could be different in different schools and if a child had been excluded from another school, she would be happy to give them a fresh start in her school.

Funding was seen as important by the teacher in charge of the special education unit, and two other teachers. For the teacher in the unit, funding was seen as going hand in glove with teacher aide support. Teacher three believed that the better resourced a school was, the better teachers could include disabled students in mainstream settings. In respect to funding, none of the teachers spoke of factors identified by parents in phase one as barriers to their child's inclusion. This included parents being asked to fund teacher aide hours, schools diverting the child's teacher aide hours, or denying enrolment if funding was not present.

Issues associated with teacher aides were identified in the previous two phases of the research. All four teachers believed that the provision of teacher aides was essential for successful inclusive education. One teacher pointed out that teacher aides needed to work carefully so as not to make the student reliant on them.

*Yeah. We've got a teacher aide that has been assigned to one of my students in the class. And my understanding is that she is there to support that student and funding is provided for that student being in the class. But in saying that I think I'd be doing the student and the teacher aide a disservice if I had her purely working with that student. The student comes to rely on the one to one support. (Teacher 3)*

The same teacher pointed out that it was not the role of the teacher aide to provide the programme, this was the role of the teacher. She also tried to use the teacher aide in a way that included the student in a group.

*So the teacher aide's role is to work with that child but she can include other children in that. I guess it is a way of making resourcing go a little bit further so that other children that may not be getting something are benefiting from that extra input and the child that is getting it reaping the benefit of that group work as well. (Teacher 3)*

The teacher in charge of the special education unit reported that it was made clear to the teacher aides that they were not there to do the work for the students, but to support the teacher.

### **5.6.1 Phase Three: Teacher Interview Summary**

Data from the teacher interviews reinforce some of the themes that emerged from the previous two phases of the research. There was a belief from the teachers in this group that disabled students were not as entitled to mainstream education as non-disabled students. For example, the rights of 'other' students had to be considered before the needs of disabled students who were not described as part of this 'other' group. Also, while teachers were able to verbalise the need for curriculum adaptation, they indicated that the reason disabled students could not be in the mainstream was because it was not suitable for them. In this regard, there was no consideration of the possibility of changing the mainstream to suit students.

While all teachers believed that all children had a right to an education, this was not necessarily in mainstream schools. If students were considered 'too disabled' it was thought that segregated education would better suit their needs. Similarly, three teachers believed that they were not responsible for disabled students; they believed they had a choice whether or not to teach a disabled student in their class.

However, no teachers spoke of the misuse of funding, or the practice of asking parents to fund teacher aides for their child at school as identified by parents in phase one of the study. All teachers believed that funding was a necessity for successful inclusive education.

The issues associated with communication that were identified by parents in phase one, were not mentioned by the four teachers. None of the teachers in the sample criticized or blamed parents, however, only one identified respecting and listening to parents as an enabler to inclusive education.

Teacher education (both pre-service and in-service) were identified by all teachers as important enabler of inclusive education. Teacher knowledge was also identified as an important enabler.

All teachers had an understanding of inclusive education that focused on the deficits or differences of the student. None of the four teachers considered inclusive education to be about identifying and breaking down barriers to the presence and participation of disabled students at school.

### **5.7 Phase Three: Teacher Aide Focus Group Results**

The teacher aide focus group consisted of five teacher aides who all worked with individual children in the special needs unit of the school. They also accompanied disabled students into the mainstream for some curriculum areas. The focus group interview explored teacher aides' perceptions of: inclusive education; the barriers and enablers to inclusive education; the role of teacher knowledge and confidence in facilitating inclusive education; and specific contextual issues identified by parents as acting to exclude their children from or within school. It also explored the role of the teacher aides within the school.

Participants were asked to talk about their beliefs regarding inclusive education. All five teacher aides who responded to this question were doubtful that inclusive education could work. Reasons given were that disabled children needed a lot of resources and services that they believed could not be provided for in mainstream classes; the students would not be able to cope, both with the work and the environment; that mainstream teachers would not be able to cope with disabled children; and that parents of non-disabled students would complain. One teacher aide pointed out that disabled children would not get the quality of education in the mainstream that they received in the special unit.

*They wouldn't be able to do the work and the changing facilities. And a lot of our students need changing and their walking frames and their standing frames, things like that. (Teacher aide focus group)*

All agreed that every child had a right to attend school, but there was general agreement that this was not necessarily in a mainstream class. It was thought that including disabled children in mainstream classes would depend on the ability of the child. If they had the intellectual capacity, it would be appropriate. A view was expressed that if inclusive education was going to be a reality, there would need to be changes to the classroom.

*I think it depends on the child, what the child is actually like. If the child is a bright child then it would probably be okay to be in a mainstream class. But if a child is fairly disabled that would make it very, very hard. (Teacher aide focus group)*

Participants in the focus group talked about their role. All five teacher aides worked with a number of different students from the special needs unit, not just one. This was done deliberately so that the student and the teacher aide did not get too attached to each other. Teacher aides worked with students in the unit on their individual programmes (devised by the special needs teacher), or accompanied them into the mainstream and worked with the student. Again, their programmes were devised by the special needs teacher who is in charge of the special education unit. One teacher talked of trying to ensure that the child she accompanied into the mainstream does what all the other students are doing:

*If the other students are doing something like sitting on the mat and doing a morning discussion or anything like that, we also do that. We do what all the other students are doing except when they go to do their language work, we go to do ours but still sitting at the same table. So we try and do everything that the others do except the work. (Teacher aide focus group)*

There was agreement amongst the group that teacher aides needed to be valued more by classroom teachers and school principals.

*We are only teacher aides...I don't think we are valued. I don't think we get the proper recognition and the support from mainstream teachers that we should get for the work that we do. (Teacher aide focus group)*

In phase one of the research, parents raised three issues associated with teacher aides. These were that a lack of teacher aide time was used as a justification to deny disabled students access to learning experiences; that the teacher aide was used in such a way

that they excluded disabled students from the mainstream; and that classroom teachers saw disabled students as the responsibility of the teacher aide. The teacher aides in the focus group explained that students who were not funded on the Ongoing Reviewable Resourcing Scheme (ORRS) were not permitted to enrol in the unit. They also reported that if a disabled child did not get ORRS funding, they could only come to the mainstream school with teacher aide funding.

*Because the schools won't take them on if they are not ORRS funded. [Name of school principal] won't have children that aren't ORRS funded.*

So what happens if a child came to this school, perhaps had special needs, or was disabled in some way but didn't get ORRS funding, could they still come to this school? [interviewer]

*Only if they had teacher aide. If they were in the mainstream class but not in the Unit.*

So you have to have ORRS funding to go into the Unit?

*Yes we do don't we? [name of school principal] won't let any children in there without ORRS funding.*

None of the teacher aides expressed a view that they might act in such a way, or they might be required to work in such a way that excluded disabled students from the mainstream and their non-disabled peers.

That classroom teachers may see disabled students as the responsibility of the teacher aide, was only mentioned by one teacher aide. She pointed out that when teachers viewed the responsibility for disabled students to rest with the teacher aide, this was a barrier to inclusion. However, very closely related to this is classroom teachers not believing that they were responsible for disabled students. Many of the teacher aides made comments about teacher responsibility. For example, if a mainstream teacher said 'hello' to a student from the unit, or interacted with them in other ways, this was noticed and considered exceptional by the teacher aides, not something that was an accepted part of their role.

*The teacher that we've got is really good, she is very good, she interacts with the child and speaks to him when we go into class and says hello. (Teacher aide focus group)*

Some teacher aides believed that classroom teachers would be shocked if they were asked to have disabled students in their class full time, and others spoke of teachers not coping with disabled students as one of the reasons that inclusive education was not possible. One teacher aide reported that teachers did not enjoy having disabled students, indicating that this was another valid reason why inclusive education could not be possible. When choosing mainstream classes for disabled students to work in, only those that had teachers who were interested were considered.

*And there are only certain teachers in this school that he [teacher in the special needs unit] probably approaches for mainstreaming because the others aren't interested. (Teacher aide focus group)*

*I don't think it's that they are not interested, it's just that they can't be bothered. (Teacher aide focus group)*

Many of the teacher aides in the focus group talked of other issues associated with classroom teachers. The lack of teacher training and teacher understanding was seen as a barrier to successful inclusive education.

*I think all teachers nowadays should be trained when they go to university, and it should be part of their training, learning how to cope with special needs children. Because there is a lot more of special needs children out there now than what there ever used to be...a lot of parents are choosing that their child doesn't go into a special needs class, they want their child to be normal and the teachers aren't trained for that. (Teacher aide focus group)*

Teachers not coping, teachers being scared of disabled students, and teachers not being interested in meeting the needs of disabled students were also identified as barriers to inclusion.

### **5.7.1 Phase Three: Teacher Aide Focus Group Summary**

Data from the teacher aide focus group reinforce some of the themes that emerged from the previous two phases of the research. The teacher aides believed that students' entitlement to an inclusive education was based on the severity of the needs of the students. If students' needs were too severe, the services and equipment they needed could not be provided in the mainstream. If services and equipment could not be provided in the mainstream, students could not expect an inclusive education. All agreed that disabled students did have an entitlement to education in general, but not necessarily to mainstream education.



All teacher aides seemed aware of the important role that teacher knowledge and attitude played in relation to successful inclusive education. They believed that some teachers were not trained to meet the needs of disabled students, that they did not have adequate knowledge, and they were fearful of disabled students. There was a general agreement that most teachers would not be able to cope with disabled students in their classrooms fulltime.

Closely associated with teacher knowledge and attitude were issues associated with teacher responsibility. Teacher aides indicated that it was not generally considered the responsibility of the mainstream classroom teacher to meet the needs of disabled students. Only those teachers who were positive about mainstreaming were approached to include disabled students in their class. When teachers treated disabled students well, this was considered a bonus. When disabled students from the unit were involved in the mainstream class, they had programmes designed by the teacher in charge of the special needs unit.

Teacher aides spoke of the practice of excluding disabled students from enrolment if they did not have funding allocated to support the employment of teacher aides. Students who were not ORRS funded were denied enrolment in the special needs unit, and if they did not have teacher aide allocation, the teacher aides in the focus group reported a belief that they would also be denied enrolment in the mainstream school.

When discussing their role, all teacher aides spoke of working with students on individual curriculum programmes. No-one spoke of aspects associated with the social and emotional development of the student, or working to have the student part of the school community. The teacher aides did not report that they excluded disabled students from presence and participation in the mainstream, as raised by some parents in phase one of the study.

## **5.8 Phase Three: Student Focus Group Results**

Six year-6 students participated in the focus group interview. This interview explored students' perceptions of their school, their teachers, what school was like for them, what

happened to kids who were disabled or different, and their views and attitudes towards disability and inclusive education.

Initially, students were asked to talk about what it was like at their school. Generally students all agreed that playtime and lunchtime was the best thing about the school because they could be with their friends. One student thought the ‘fun stuff’ they got to do, for example art and knitting, was the best thing about the school. One student thought getting rewarded was the best thing and another said the people and the teachers.

*The best thing about this school is at playtime and lunchtime. It's like up to us if we want to be good or not and we can hang out with our friends and we don't get forced.*

*You get to play with people and you get to get PE gear out. (Student focus group)*

One student summed up what it was like for her at the school.

*With our school it's like a really nice environment because people just get along. If somebody is new here and they are like ashamed or scared or something, other people will just go up and say "are you bored or something, do you want to come and play with me?" and that is how they make new friends. (Student focus group)*

When asked about the worst thing about the school, two students thought that it was when people are naughty and the teacher growls or shouts at them. One added that the worst thing was when everyone in the class had to pay the consequences for those students who get into trouble. One student thought the work was the worst thing, and another student thought the bullies were the worst thing about the school. One student said other kids annoying her and breaking up her games.

*Like when some people get growled at and we have some people be naughty and the good people have to pay the consequences. (Student focus group)*

*The thing that I hate about this school is that there are bullies and all that and they get us into trouble when they are lying. (Student focus group)*

In relation to the best and worst things about the school, no students raised any issues associated with disabled students or the special education unit.

When asked to talk about bullying, all the students spoke of some aspect of bullying that concerned them. These were all were associated with peer bullying. No students

spoke of teacher bullying. They reported that students got bullied if they were very good, if they were the teachers' pet, if they did something wrong in a game in the playground, or if they showed off. While most thought that teachers did not know about all of the bullying, there was general agreement that their school was safe for them. Most of the students in the focus group talked about the peer mediators<sup>25</sup> in their school:

*It's kind of safe because when you've got friends, because there are two mediators walking around most of the time but if you are getting bullied you can or if you are hurt like you fall off the playground equipment they can help you.*  
(Student focus group)

One student thought that if they had more male teachers, there would be less fights:

*I think they need more boy teachers to stop most of the fights. Because we had the same amount of boy teachers and the girl teachers at my old school.*  
(Student focus group)

The students were asked to talk about students with special needs.<sup>26</sup> When asked if they had any students with special needs in their classes, none said that they did. One student replied:

*No, there is the special needs class over there. Sometimes they come into different classrooms.* (Student focus group)

When asked if the students from the special needs unit ever come into their classes, the students explained that they came into mainstream classes for certain times of the day.

*Yeah. There is this boy and he goes into that class for a couple of hours and just works with them. One of the teachers in the special needs class goes with him.*  
(Student focus group)

When asked if they knew the names of the students in the unit, many of the students in the focus group could name them. When asked if the students in the special needs unit were part of the school, they agreed that these students were part of the school. An example was given by one student that they came to assembly, walked around at lunch time and their teacher aide took them around the school when everyone is doing work. When asked if the students from the special needs unit were treated well, all thought that they were, although one student said that while other students were nice to their

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<sup>25</sup> Peers who are trained to help students resolve disputes between each other.

<sup>26</sup> The term 'special needs' was used in the focus group as this was the term that the students were familiar with.

face, they were mean to them behind their backs. No students mentioned disabled students being treated badly by teachers.

When asked how things could be better for the students in the special needs unit, two students thought there should be more communication and liaison between the mainstream school and the special needs unit.

*Sometimes the teachers could set up, with [name of special needs unit teacher] a day with them or a couple of hours. And then two kids or someone could go over there for two hours and spend some time with them. (Student focus group)*

One student suggested that the school needed to be one whole school and a community. They thought that this could happen by getting to know the students from the unit better and going over to the unit more often. One student thought that the students in the special needs unit should go to mainstream classes to really get to know each other. This way they would not be left out of the school.

*If they go to other classes to get really known to each other. So they know that they are not left out of the school. (Student focus group)*

Another student suggested that things could be better for the students from the special needs unit if they had their own playground.

Students were asked if they thought it was best to have students in a special needs unit or in mainstream classes. Four of the six students thought that they should be in a special needs unit because they get more care; it is more fun for them; they feel comfortable there because they know the teachers; because people in the mainstream won't know what to do with them; and because there were more people to look after them in the unit. Two students thought they should be in both the unit and the mainstream classroom. One gave the reason that they could learn to do 'normal stuff' in the mainstream classroom, then take that back to the unit.

*I reckon it's good if they be in their room and it's good if they come into the normal classroom sometimes to learn about what the normal kids are doing and then when they go back they can start doing that in their room. (Student focus group)*

The students had mixed ideas about the concept of special needs. There was general agreement that this concept was only associated with significant impairment, particularly in relation to brain function. Students agreed if a person had difficulty

learning or reading, or had difficulty with hearing or vision, this was not ‘special needs’ as it was still ‘normal’. As a follow up to a student who talked about students with special needs as not being normal, the interviewer asked:

So would you call someone who had trouble learning, or had trouble reading, would you call them normal?[interviewer]

*Yeah but they just couldn't learn properly. They are still normal.* (Student focus group)

One student pointed out that the principal had bad eyesight, but he was still normal.

There was agreement amongst the group that special needs equated to abnormal, and abnormal was associated with impairments in brain function.

*It depends. If it with your eyesight or you ears you can still do all the other stuff but not...*

*But with your brain it's a bit different?* [interviewer]

*Yeah because you brain controls your whole body. And if you get brain damage like your brain blanks out and you don't know what to do because its like, that controls the whole body.* (Student focus group)

In terms of how people come to have special needs, one student thought it depended on how parents treated the child.

*The parents. Depending on how you grow up and what happens to you because depending on the parents if they are going to treat you well.* (Student focus group)

One student thought that people were born that way, and one student explained that it happened if your brain becomes damaged for example, in a car accident.

### **5.8.1 Phase Three: Student Focus Group Summary**

Students who participated in the focus group generally spoke positively about their school. The best things about the school for them were associated with socialising times, such as playtime and lunchtime. Also, they liked being involved in fun activities such as art. The worst thing for the students was growling teachers, bullying and the work they were required to do.

In terms of bullying, all students had reported that bullying did occur at their school but that they generally felt safe there. The students did not believe that disabled students

were bullied, although one student did point out that sometimes people were unkind about them behind their backs. No students mentioned teacher bullying.

Students gave the general impression that the students in the special education unit, while part of the school theoretically, were in fact separate from the mainstream. They indicated this by comments associated with what improvements they thought needed to happen for these students. For example, better mixing of students from the unit with the mainstream students; that it was better for the disabled students themselves to have their own unit and teachers; and that mainstream teachers would not know what to do.

Students in the focus group had definite ideas of what special needs meant. Special needs equated to 'not normal' and it was students with intellectual impairments who were thought to have special needs. Those students with sensory impairments and learning difficulties were thought to be 'normal' and not have special needs.

## **5.9 Additional Information**

At the conclusion of the three phases of data gathering, it became apparent that further data was required to gather information for emerging themes that were unable to be explored through way of the data that had already been gathered. Results of the study appeared to suggest an apparent disregard by some teachers and school Boards of Trustees of their legal and human rights obligations in relation to disabled students. The questions raised therefore were *how was this able to happen*, and *why were the accountability procedures that all schools are subject to, not picking this up?*

Particularly relevant to this study is school Boards of Trustees' (BOT) obligations to adhere to the legislation that pertains to disabled students rights, including rights to a safe environment, to access the school and the curriculum (without extra financial cost), to have access to the class teacher, and in general, to be treated on no less favourable terms than non-disabled students. Also relevant is the responsibility of the Education Review Office (ERO) to ensure that schools are indeed fulfilling their obligations in this area. Results from this study suggest that there may not be the level of investigation by ERO into school compliance for disabled students.

In New Zealand the Education Review Office (ERO) was established to ensure that schools and school Boards of Trustees fulfil their obligations. The ERO is a government department that is charged with evaluating and publicly reporting on the quality of education and care of students in schools and early childhood centres. When evaluating schools and early childhood centres, The ERO focuses on three things: school specific priorities; government priorities; and compliance issues.

To gather further information to explore the theme of compliance and accountability, 20 ERO school evaluation reports in one geographical city in New Zealand, in the years 2006 and 2007 were selected and examined (all ERO evaluation reports are available online through the ERO website). Four criteria were set for this examination:

1. Was attention given to the factors that act to exclude disabled students?
2. Was attention given to compliance with legal and human rights obligations as they affect disabled students?
3. Was attention given to the use of teacher aides in schools?
4. What attention was given to the notion of inclusive schools?

There were a number of indications that ERO are not attending to issues associated with disabled students. For example in one school's report, ERO reported on the provision for students who are underachieving. However, in the opening paragraph, it was pointed out that their review of this area did not include students who were in the special needs unit. Similarly, in another school where there was a special needs unit, ERO did not comment on any issues (either as good performance or needing attention) pertaining to the students in this unit.

Another noteworthy finding from this examination of ERO school review reports was that none of the reports made mention of student's or childrens' rights. Similarly, in only six of the 20 reports was any mention made of the use of teacher aides. In all cases, these were general comments regarding their use. Of particular significance, one report on a school where seven teacher aides were employed, made no reference to them at all.

Another relevant issue is that no reference was made in any of the reports to the New Zealand Disability Strategy. The Ministry of Education report that they are committed to implementing the objectives of the New Zealand Disability Strategy (New Zealand

Ministry of Education, 2007a), of which one objective (with eight associated actions) is to “provide the best education for disabled people” (Ministry of Health, 2001, p. 18). Therefore, it would be expected that some mention be made of schools’ performance in this respect.

The terms inclusion and inclusive were often used in many of the ERO reports. However, they were used in general terms without any specificity and explanation regarding the meaning that was attached to their use. For example, “Inclusive relationships are encouraged through meaningful interventions” and “Students work in an inclusive environment highly conducive to their learning” (ERO, 2007, page not given).

It should be noted that these results need to be interpreted with caution. The data are based on a brief examination of a small number of ERO reports in only one geographical area of New Zealand and provide an indicative issue for further exploration.

## **5.10 Summary**

This chapter has presented the results of all three phases of the study. Tables 5.42–5.45 present a summary of the main findings of each phase.



Table 5.42

*Summary of phase one findings*

Phase	Data Gathering Tool	Main Findings
One	Parent questionnaire	<b>Main forms of exclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abuse and bullying</li> <li>• Lack of teacher knowledge and understanding</li> <li>• Parents opinions and knowledge not listened to</li> <li>• Low expectations of disabled children</li> <li>• Medical model, deficit model thinking by teachers</li> <li>• Lack of curriculum adaptations/accommodations</li> <li>• Lack of teacher responsibility</li> <li>• Child not valued or wanted by school</li> <li>• Teacher aide issues</li> </ul>
	Parent interview	<b>Main forms of exclusion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of teacher knowledge and understanding</li> <li>• Inappropriate behaviour by principals and/or teachers towards parents</li> <li>• Difficulties accessing and participating in the curriculum</li> <li>• Difficulties with enrolment, attendance and segregation</li> <li>• Abuse and bullying</li> <li>• Lack of caring and valuing of child</li> <li>• Funding issues</li> <li>• Teacher aide issues</li> </ul>

Table 5.43

*Summary of phase two findings*

Phase	Data Gathering Tool	Main Findings
Two	Principal questionnaire	<b>Most principals reported:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doubt over whether schools <i>can</i> and <i>should</i> meet the needs of all children</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge of legislation and funding frameworks</li> <li>• An awareness of the practice of teacher to student bullying and student to student bullying</li> <li>• A general belief that teachers are responsible for all children</li> <li>• Funding as an important enabler for inclusive education</li> <li>• Teacher aides as an important enabler for inclusive education</li> </ul> <b>Most principals did not report:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of caring and valuing of disabled children</li> <li>• Deficit/medical model thinking</li> </ul> <b>Other findings:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were differences between what principals say they believe in and what they do (e.g., agreeing with inclusion, but excluding some children; reporting they treat all parents with respect, but advising parents of disabled students to attend other schools)</li> </ul>

Table 5.43 (cont.)

*Summary of phase two findings*

Phase	Data Gathering Tool	Main Findings
	Principal interview	<p><b>Most principals reported:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That most barriers and enablers to inclusive education centre around teachers</li> <li>• Funding is very important for inclusive education</li> </ul> <p><b>Most principals did not report:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A recognition of the role played by school principals in the inclusion/exclusion of disabled students</li> </ul> <p><b>Differences between the x and y groups:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deficit model thinking apparent in principals in the y group</li> <li>• Only principals in the y group reported denying disabled students enrolment and full participation at school</li> <li>• Most principals in the x group identified ‘rights’ as an important factor associated with inclusive education</li> <li>• Only principals in the y group reported perceiving disabled students as different from non-disabled students</li> <li>• Only principals in the y group reported beliefs that non-disabled students have more rights than disabled students</li> <li>• Only principals in the y group reported beliefs that teachers were not responsible for disabled students</li> <li>• Principals in the y group reported that teacher aides were necessary for inclusive education and worked exclusively with disabled students</li> </ul> <p><b>Other findings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were differences between what principals say they believe in and what they do (agreeing with inclusion, but excluding some children)</li> <li>• Confusion around the term ‘inclusive education’</li> </ul>

Table 5.44

*Summary of phase three findings*

Phase	Data Gathering Tool	Main Findings
Three	Teacher interview	<p><b>Most teachers reported:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A belief that disabled students can only be in the mainstream if their needs are not too great</li> <li>• A belief that teacher knowledge; teacher aide support; and funding and resourcing are enablers or barriers to inclusive education</li> <li>• A belief that class teachers are not responsible for disabled students</li> <li>• An understanding of inclusive education based on deficits and differences of disabled students</li> <li>• A belief that disabled students held less value and had fewer rights than non-disabled students</li> </ul>
	Teacher aide focus group interview	<p><b>Most teacher aides reported:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doubt that inclusive education could work</li> <li>• Every child had a right to attend school, but not necessarily in the mainstream</li> <li>• Being undervalued</li> <li>• Teachers rights were more important than disabled students rights</li> <li>• Teacher training was a barrier or enabler to inclusive education</li> <li>• Teacher attitudes were barriers or enablers to inclusive education</li> </ul>
	Student focus group interview	<p><b>Most students reported:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positivity about their school</li> <li>• Feeling safe at school</li> <li>• That the disabled students in the unit were separate from the ‘rest of the school’</li> <li>• Special needs means ‘not normal’</li> </ul> <p>No prejudice was evident in the comments of the students</p>

Table 5.45

*Summary of additional findings*

Phase	Data Gathering Tool	Main Findings
Additional	Analysis of 20 ERO school evaluation reports in one geographical area in NZ	<p>ERO may not be giving enough attention to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The specific needs of disabled students in schools</li> <li>• School compliance requirements in relation to Human Rights Declarations, Human Rights Legislation, Sections 3 and 8 of The 1989 Education Act, and the New Zealand Disability Strategy</li> <li>• The use of teacher aides in schools</li> <li>• Their use of the terms ‘inclusion’, ‘inclusive’ and ‘inclusive education’</li> </ul>

The following chapter will present a discussion of the results.



# CHAPTER SIX

## DISCUSSION

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### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the nature of school exclusion of disabled students. Data were gathered from parents of disabled children on the barriers their child had experienced to being included at school. These findings were then explored with school principals, teachers, teacher aides and, to a lesser extent, school students.

This chapter considers the results of the three phases of the study. The findings will be discussed within the context of the existing literature as well as with regard to issues that could be addressed through further research. The discussion is guided by two of the research questions:

1. How do some disabled students experience exclusion from and within school?
2. Why do some disabled students experience exclusion from and within school?

The third research question will be addressed in chapter seven.

The school exclusion of disabled students is a complex phenomenon, particularly with regard to the key questions that formed the focus of this study: First, *how* are some disabled students being excluded from and within school? Second, *why* are some disabled students being excluded from and within school? These two questions are interrelated and therefore, it is difficult to discuss one without discussing some implications of the other. The complexity inherent in exclusion is in fact, played out through this chapter. Despite this, the initial discussion will be organised separately around the two key questions, although there will be instances where the discussion will, from necessity, focus on both aspects of exclusion.

### 6.2 How are Disabled Students Being Excluded?

The parents of disabled students reported a range of factors that acted to exclude their children from being present, participating and learning at school. Major findings are that disabled students were being excluded by:

- Being denied enrolment and/or full-time attendance at school
- Being denied access to, and participation within the curriculum
- Being bullied
- Inappropriate beliefs and practices in relation to funding
- A lack of caring, valuing and responsibility by school staff
- A lack of teacher knowledge and understanding
- Poor relationships between parents and school staff
- Inappropriate beliefs and practices in relation to teacher aides

Each of these factors will be discussed separately in relation to the existing literature, and in relation to issues that could be addressed through future research.

### **6.2.1 Enrolment and Full-time Attendance at School**

While inclusion should not be narrowed to an enrolment and resources focus (Slee, 2001a), presence at school is obviously a critical prerequisite for inclusive education. This is also one of the most basic of educational rights afforded students in New Zealand – their right to attend their local neighbourhood school without prejudice. This is enshrined in the 1989 Education Act which states that people who have special educational needs have the same right to enrol and receive education at a state school as people who are not disabled. This is also supported by the 1993 Human Rights Act. Section 57 states it is illegal for schools to deny enrolment to a student on the basis of a disability or to treat students who are disabled less favourably than students who are not disabled.

The experiences of the parents of disabled students in this study indicates that some schools are breaking the law in regard to children's legal rights to enrol and attend school. For example, while only one of the 12 parents interviewed in the first phase of this study reported their child being denied outright, enrolment at their local school, four parents reported only partial enrolment was allowed. Likewise in the parent questionnaire, 15 parents reported that their child had experienced issues involving less favourable enrolment and attendance at school. This included being phoned to come and take their child home from school during school hours, children only being permitted to attend school for part of the day, and parents being told to keep their child

at home if there was no teacher aide 'cover' at school. In many instances, parents reported that it was the school principal who was giving these messages and setting these limitations.

Bourke et al. (2000) reported that school principals are in a unique position to act as gatekeepers for the enrolment of students at their school, and findings from this study support this notion. For example, as well as parents reporting the role of the school principal in denying and restricting their child's enrolment and attendance at school, some principals reported these practices themselves. Principal respondents reported feeling justified in: denying enrolment to disabled students; restricting the attendance hours of disabled students; sending disabled students home during school hours; and advising parents their child would be better educated at other schools. It appears therefore, that principals hold an important key to the enrolment and attendance of disabled students at school.

One of the key factors influencing this is likely to be principal's attitudes towards inclusive education. This is not only evidenced in the results of this study, but also by previous research. For example in this study, obvious differences were evident between the reported practices of principals in the x and y groups. No principals in the x group described not permitting disabled students to access mainstream activities, only allowing part time participation at school, or sending disabled students home during school hours. However all principals from the y group mentioned at least one of these practices. Similarly, four principals from the x group spoke of their beliefs in the rights of disabled students to attend their local neighbourhood school whereas only one principal from the y group indicated this belief. Praisner (2003) found that principals with positive attitudes towards inclusive education are more likely to place disabled students in inclusive settings. Whereas principals with negative attitudes towards inclusive education are more likely to include disabled students in more restricted environments. Praisner also found that a school principal's attitude was affected by past positive or negative experiences with disabled students.

Results from this study also suggest that some school principals do not believe that regular schools *should* be places that meet the educational and social needs of all students. Over one quarter of principal questionnaire respondents believed that there

were some students whose needs could not be met in their school. Similarly, nearly 30% of respondents to the principal questionnaire disagreed with the statement that schools should meet the needs of all students. It appears likely that if school principals do not have positive attitudes towards inclusive education and a belief in the rights of disabled students to enrol and attend regular schools without restriction, inclusive education is not likely to be advanced (Ainscow, 1999; Hanson et al., 2001). This is not only because, as Bourke et al. (2001) report, they are in a unique position as gatekeepers, but also because they are in a unique position to create a shared vision for the school community towards an inclusive school (Ainscow, 1999).

A human rights perspective is also important to any discussion around access and participation to education (and a lack or denial of it). The New Zealand Human Rights Commission (2004) have developed a set of four broad standards which can be used to measure New Zealand's achievement in relation to students' rights to education. Two standards particularly relevant to this discussion are:

- “Availability– to ensure education is available for all in accordance with human rights standards;
- Accessibility– to ensure access to available education for all in accordance with human rights standards” (Human Rights Commission, 2004, pp. 68–69).

The New Zealand Human Rights Commission (2004) report that while in New Zealand, there is a range of education opportunities available to children, there are systemic disparities, including participation rates for disabled people. Results from this study support these findings. For the children in this study, education was not always readily available or accessible. Some parents reported less than full participation for their children and systems that were not readily available or accessible to them.

### **6.2.2 Curriculum Access and Participation**

The importance of a flexible, curriculum that is accessible to all is often reported in the literature as an important enabler of inclusive education. UNESCO (2005, p. 25) stress that “accessible and flexible curricula can serve as the key to creating inclusive schools.” Similarly the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994) emphasised the importance of curriculum adaptation stating that curricula should



be adapted to children's needs, not the other way round; and that children should receive any extra support in the context of the regular curriculum, not a different curriculum. Here the term curricula refers not just to 'what' is taught in schools, but also how students are taught and assessed. The curriculum is at the core of schooling (Pugach & Warger, 1996).

While the practice of curriculum adaptation is accepted as a vital tool in creating inclusive education environments, parents in this study reported that their children were being excluded by being denied access to learning opportunities. This happened through a lack of accommodation and adaptation to the curriculum, and a lack of student assessment.

In order to encourage teachers to think more about curriculum issues in relation to the inclusion and exclusion of disabled students, Carroll-Lind, Bevan-Brown, and Kearney (2007) suggest that Ministry of Education curriculum documents need to be very clear about the need for curriculum adaptation and also very clear that it is the teacher's role to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all students. In this present study, all principal questionnaire respondents reported that the teachers at their school made curriculum adaptations to a greater or lesser extent. Two of the four interviewed teachers mentioned the importance of adapting the curriculum. This indicates that the practice of curriculum adaptation is something that principals and teachers understand the importance of. However, lack of adaptation was identified by 40% of parent questionnaire respondents as a barrier to their child's presence, participation and learning at school. This discrepancy suggests that curriculum adaptation may at best be under utilised or misunderstood, and at worst, paid lip service to.

The literature reports similar findings where exclusion comes about through inappropriate curriculum, or lack of access to the curriculum. In interviews with disabled students, Pivik, McComas, and LaFlamme (2002) found that these students reported being given inappropriate alternative work when the teacher was too busy to adapt the work that the rest of the class was doing. The students also reported being excluded from certain classes without good reasons, and that they were only able to observe in some curriculum areas rather than participate. Similarly, in a study of physically disabled students in Ireland, Shevlin, Kenny, and McNeela (2002), found

that the majority of students interviewed had often experienced exclusion from full curricular access. This included teachers who excluded students in class question times; who had lower expectations of their work and achievement than for non-disabled students; who provided inadequate feedback on their work; and who placed them in inappropriate level groups within the classroom.

Parents in this present study also reported forms of physical segregation as a factor excluding their child from and within school. Clark, Dyson, Millward, and Robson (1999a) report similar practices. In their study disabled students were placed in their own physical classroom, or in a separate building from other students. They reported that this often happened when students were ability grouped and that this “segregated them from their peers almost as effectively as if they were placed in a separate institution” (p. 164). While parents in this study did not specifically mention ability grouping, some reported that their children were physically segregated to do their own work possibly because of a belief by some teachers that if they are not able to do the work the ‘other’ students are doing, they could not be part of the mainstream class. For example parents in the first phase of this research reported teachers focussing only on the things their children could not do, and not wanting to find out about their children and what they could do. As Shevlin et al. (2002) conclude, disabled students’ access to the curriculum is heavily reliant on the appropriate expectations of their teachers. Other reasons for this may be associated with the use of the teacher aide to support disabled students, and a belief by some teachers in this study that some disabled students interfered with the learning of non-disabled students.

Withdrawing students to focus on different work, in situations away from their peers not only excludes students from access to the social learning that occurs in the classroom, but from the peer group where friendships are often formed. In a study by Thomas, Walker, and Webb (1998) disabled students reported not wanting to be withdrawn from the classroom for a number of reasons. This included the added pressure of one-on-one teaching, the embarrassment of having their differences emphasised, and wanting to stay in the classroom to be in company of their peers. However, it should be noted that some studies report opposite findings. For example Norwich and Kelly (2004) in a study of 101 disabled students in both mainstream and special settings found that mainstream students preferred learning support in withdrawal settings.

While this present study did not gather data from the students themselves, it may be surmised that the students, whose experiences were reported on by their parents, may have felt similar reactions to those involved in the Thomas et al. (1998) study.

Some parents in this study spoke of their children being denied access to extra curricular activities such as trips and swimming, particularly if there was no teacher aide available to ensure safety. Shevlin et al. (2001) reported similar experiences of disabled students where some were left to watch physical education rather than participate, and were not permitted to go on school trips. The students in Shevlin's study reported that when they were segregated in this way, they felt excluded and even more aware of their differences. Pivik, McComas, and LaFlamme (2002) reported disabled students being assigned as the teacher's helper in physical education rather than participating with their peers.

### **6.2.3 Bullying**

Much has been written on the general theme of student-to-student bullying at school (e.g., Besag, 1989; Olweus, 1993; Sullivan, 2000) and principals and teachers seem to be aware of the nature and extent of this. Less has been written about the bullying of disabled students. However, some studies do show that disabled children can be twice as likely as their peers to be the victims of bullying (MacArthur et al., 2007; National Children's Bureau, 2007; New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2004). Norwich and Kelly (2004) found what they described as high levels of bullying experienced by disabled students in their study. Approximately half of the 101 students in their study reported that the bullying they experienced was related to their learning difficulties. These students were from both special schools and mainstream schools. Special school students reported more bullying than mainstream pupils but this was from people outside of their special school. There is also some evidence in the literature that bullying leads to physical exclusion from school (MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001).

Results from this study identified student-to-student bullying and teacher-to-student bullying as factors that excluded disabled children from school. Nearly 40% of parents in the questionnaire identified bullying as one of the 10 most excluding influences, and nine of the 12 parents interviewed spoke of bullying issues acting to exclude their child.

As well as student-to-student bullying, nearly 30% of parent questionnaire respondents, and 33% of interviewed parents identified some form of teacher bullying or harassment as a force of exclusion for their children. Teacher bullying included humiliation, intimidation, shouting, teachers encouraging other students to bully the child and in one case, a teacher physically hurting a child.

School principals also reported bullying. All principals in both the questionnaire and interview reported that student-to-student bullying occurred in their school. Approximately 50% of school principals who completed the questionnaire stated that teacher-to-student bullying occurred in their school.

While there are few studies looking at the phenomenon of bullying in relation to disabled students, there are even fewer studies investigating the nature and extent of teacher-to-student bullying. It is a phenomenon that has long been realised, but very rarely reported (Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, & Brethour, 2006). McEvoy (2005) describes teacher bullying as having similar characteristics to student bullying. It is an abuse of power that tends to be on-going, and displayed in a public manner. It is a deliberate act and a form of humiliation likely to distress the victim. Acts resembling this description were reported by parents in this study. Both disabled students, and the siblings of disabled students were humiliated and intimidated by teachers, and parents reported that teachers encouraged other students to bully the victim.

Although the effects of student-to-student bullying on the victim are well known and reported (e.g. Olweus, 2001), little has been written in relation to the specific effects on victims of teacher bullying. It could be surmised that they are similar. For example, the literature reports that when a student bullies another person, observers can reinforce and model the bullying behaviour (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). This may also be the case in relation to teacher-to-student bullying and it could be argued that student bullies may be provided with even more licence to reinforce and model the bullying behaviour because teachers are important role models for students. Students may feel that if it is acceptable for a teacher to bully a student, it is acceptable for them to do so as well. Similarly, victims of student-to-student bullying are often reported as taking on board messages about their lack of worth (Olweus, 2001). Again, it may also be surmised that when a student is a victim of teacher bullying, these messages are even stronger. It may

be one thing for a student to believe that one or more of their peers do not like or value them, but when a teacher who is charged with caring for all students victimises a student, students may feel extremely devalued. Lack of research evidence in this area means that these hypotheses need to be tested. Therefore, further research is needed in this very important area. However, in the examples quoted in this study, clear messages would have been given to students that the victims of teacher bullying are not as valued or accepted by that teacher as students who are not victimised. Not only would this exclude the disabled student from the class group, but also encourage in non-disabled peers, a belief that disabled people are less worthy and less valuable than non-disabled.

Feelings of powerlessness may also come into play, for both parents and students. Because teachers hold positions of power and responsibility, victims and their parents may feel that there is nothing they can do to improve or stop the bullying behaviour. This was the case for the students in McEvoy's (2005) study. McEvoy found that when students were asked if they thought teachers who bullied students could do so without getting into trouble, 77% said 'yes'. When they were asked if there was ever anything done to officially reprimand these teachers, 80% said 'no'.

Powerlessness may also be an issue for teachers. For one parent in this study, the acceptance of teacher bullying by other staff at the school was difficult to understand. Twemlow et al. (2006), found that non-bully teachers who observe bullying by their colleagues do not report or step in, due to fear of retaliation from unions, colleagues or because of conflicting loyalties. This would be an area worthy of future research in New Zealand.

It is unknown whether the teacher bullying reported in this study was something that was only experienced by disabled students; it may be something that was experienced by non-disabled students as well. The phenomenon of teacher-to-student bullying in general is one that requires further research in New Zealand.

#### **6.2.4 Beliefs and Practices in Relation to Funding**

The theme of 'funding' is something that is often associated with inclusive education. It is a complex issue, involving rights and responsibilities as well as fiscal and social

politics. For many of the parents in this study, issues around funding were identified as an exclusionary pressure. Sixty percent of parents in the questionnaire identified lack of funding as one of the 10 barriers that contributed to the exclusion of their child. However, while seven out of the 12 interviewed parents identified funding as an issue for their child, only one of these parents identified lack of funding as the issue. The difficulties that were experienced were around issues such as funding being denied (i.e., a belief by parents that the government did have the money, it was just being denied to the students), funding being inappropriately used by the school, and parents feeling obligated or being asked to provide funding to support their child at school.

An important finding is that five of the twelve parents interviewed reported providing funding to the school for teacher aide hours.<sup>27</sup> This is contrary to New Zealand legislation, which states that education is to be free from the age of five until the age of 19. This finding is important because it points to the inequity of an education system where some parents are asked to, or feel a need to, provide funding in order for their children to have their needs met at school.

There is little published empirical evidence reporting instances where parents have been asked to financially support their child's education in publicly funded schools. Therefore this is an area of research that is urgently needed. There is however, some recently published literature reporting anecdotal evidence of this practice. A New Zealand organisation called Quality Public Education Coalition (QPEC) reported a case where a disabled child's parents were asked to 'top up' the child's teacher aide funding allocation. QPEC report that this is now a common occurrence and that many parents are now paying \$100 to \$200 per week or more to do so (QPEC, 2007).

In the present study, some parents reported that their child's school was diverting their teacher aide funding to other purposes, or using this funding inappropriately. In one instance it was being used to employ a teacher aide for another section of the school, and in another not all allocated funding was being used by the school. This may point to a lack of accountability systems. This is another area in need of further research as little has been published on accountability issues specific to funding and inclusive education.

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<sup>27</sup> Issues associated with teacher aides will be discussed in section 6.2.8.

This study also uncovered principals' lack of familiarity with the funding framework. Just over 42% of principals who completed the questionnaire indicated that they were only a little familiar with the funding framework. Principal knowledge of available funding and funding entitlements would appear to be critical to ensuring that disabled students are accessing the funding that is available and that they are entitled to. This requires further research in order to see if a lack of principal knowledge regarding funding entitlements is reducing the likelihood that disabled students receive the financial support that is available to them and that the funding is used in appropriate ways. Also, research investigating why school principals are not familiar with the funding framework would also be useful.

In this study, the term 'lack of funding' was often cited by parents, teachers and principals. How parents, teachers and principals come to this understanding is unknown. For parents, these messages may come first hand from their observations in schools, or they may come by way of the information given to them by their child's school. Again, research is needed to elucidate this.

Data from school principals, teachers and teacher aides also show a belief that funding is an important enabler of inclusive education and further discussed in section 6.3.3.

### **6.2.5 Valuing, Caring and Being Responsible for Disabled Students**

It could be argued that many of the factors identified in this study as acting to exclude disabled students are indicative of a lack of caring, valuing and responsibility on the part of school staff. However, parents identified some specific issues in this respect that warrant separate reporting. For example, when parents were asked in the questionnaire to identify ten barriers to inclusion that their child had experienced, 23% of respondents identified that their child was not wanted by the school, 21% that they were treated unfairly, 21% that their child was not valued by the school and 19% identified a lack of caring by school staff. Similarly, seven out of the 12 parents interviewed identified factors associated with this theme. For example five parents said that the classroom teacher did not want their child. The critical role of the teacher in setting up and maintaining a 'caring' environment is well documented (e.g., Alton-Lee, 2003;

Education Queensland, 2001), however, for some parents and their children, this was not something they experienced.

Parents reported receiving the message that their child was not as worthy or valued as other children in many ways. One parent was told it was acceptable for her child to be at their school while he was in the junior classes, but he would not be wanted in the senior school. Lorenz (1998) reported similar findings and also found that as disabled children progress through the school system, the less likely it is that teachers take responsibility for them, instead handing over that responsibility to teacher aides. This is consistent with other findings of this study where teachers and principals report that inclusive education is only workable, when the disabled student is not too different from the 'other' students. If teachers do not perceive disabled students to be worthy and if they do not value them, it is unlikely that these students will be included.

Another way parents received the message that their child was not valued was when school principals gave class teachers a choice whether or not to include their child in the class. As some parents pointed out, this would not happen for non-disabled children. This is also closely tied to the way that teachers saw their roles and responsibilities. Some parents in this study identified that teachers did not see disabled children as their responsibility. When school principals give class teachers a choice whether to have a disabled student in their class, they give teachers the message that disabled students are not part of their teaching duties. The belief that mainstream class teachers are not as responsible for disabled students as non-disabled students was also reflected in comments made by the teachers in phase three of this study. In their comments, teachers demonstrated their belief that they were not responsible for disabled students, and that they had a choice whether or not they 'allowed' a disabled students in their class. Also, teacher aides in this school reported that when choosing mainstream classes for disabled children to work in, only those that had teachers who were interested were considered. The practice of allowing teachers to choose whether particular students are in their class or not is a significant factor in the exclusion of disabled students. Not only does it give teachers the message that disabled students are not part of their duties, it also devalues disabled students as people.



Inclusive education requires teachers to take responsibility for all students. This notion is well reported in the literature. The Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (Education Queensland, 2001) found that teachers who were not engaged in productive pedagogy (that is a pedagogy that successfully meets the needs of all students) were less likely to hold the belief that they were responsible for all students in their class than those teachers who were involved in productive pedagogy. Similarly, Carrington and Elkins (2005) found that disabled students may not have their needs met in regular classrooms if the classroom teacher does not believe that they are responsible for these children. Ainscow (1999) reported similar findings and argued that barriers to inclusion are erected when teachers believe that there are some children who they cannot be expected to teach. It should also be noted that some research has shown that teachers who do not believe they are responsible for disabled students are likely to hand over responsibility for them to teacher aides (Ainscow, 1999; MacArthur et al., 2005).

Some principals also indicated a belief that teachers have an obligation to their non-disabled students first and foremost. Only 28% of principal questionnaire respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that teachers have an obligation to their non-disabled students first and foremost. Also, only approximately 38% of respondents thought that regular schools should meet the needs of all students. Three of the five principals in the y group believed that classroom teachers are not responsible for disabled students. Likewise, all of the principals in the y group believed there were two distinct groups of students, those who were disabled and those who were not. Those who were not disabled appeared to have more rights to education than those who were disabled. For example some principals spoke of disabled students interfering with the learning of other students. Disabled students were never referred to as belonging to this group of 'other students' whose learning may be interfered with. Similarly, one principal saw the needs of the classroom operation as more important than the needs of the disabled students, and one principal described disabled students as coming to assembly to be with 'our' students. Corbett and Slee (2000) found that when teachers started from the premise that disabled students are 'their' students, an inclusive education was more likely to ensue. In contrast, when teachers do not see disabled students as 'their' students, an exclusive education is more likely to ensue.

This notion of 'other' was also evident in the discussions in phase three of this study. Teacher three and four both spoke of having to consider the 'other' students in the class, giving a clear message that the disabled student was not seen as part of this group. Teacher two also demonstrated this attitude when explaining that it was difficult enough to cope with her own class without having extra [disabled] students. As Slee (2001a) points out, the term other is often used to imply who is in and who is out, who is an insider (and therefore belongs) and who is an outsider (and therefore does not belong). Ballard (1999) sees this concept as creating the discrimination of 'them' and 'us', which forms the basis for exclusion.

When school principals were asked if they agreed with the statement that some students hold more status in the school than others, just over 80% of principals either strongly disagreed or disagreed with this statement, whereas just over 15% agreed or strongly agreed. These results need to be interpreted with caution for while 15% of principals indicated that some students did hold more status in their school than others, this does not mean that they agree with this state of affairs.

It would appear therefore, that if school principals and teachers do not believe they are responsible for all students (including disabled students), and believe that some students have more rights over others, these students are likely to be excluded, and inclusive education is unlikely to be realised.

### **6.2.6 Teacher Knowledge and Understanding**

A lack of teacher knowledge and understanding was a major factor identified by parents excluding their children from and within school. For example, when parents were asked in the questionnaire to identify ten barriers to inclusion that their child had experienced, the most frequently identified barrier was the teacher not being knowledgeable about their child. Similarly, 41% of parent respondents identified this as the most powerful barrier experienced. When parents were asked in the questionnaire to expand on this theme, they identified issues such as teachers not recognising the needs of their child, and teachers who only saw difficulties as residing within the child.

All principals who completed the questionnaire believed that successful inclusive education required knowledgeable and skilful teachers, with 65% believing this to be a vital prerequisite. However, when asked to provide a level of agreement with the statement ‘to facilitate inclusion, we focus on increasing the capacity and capability of teachers’, over 21% disagreed and 25% were unsure. This discrepancy indicates some confusion or ambivalence regarding the important role played by competent teachers with regards to inclusive education. It may also indicate that while principals were aware that knowledgeable and skilful teachers are important to the success of inclusive education, they were not sufficiently committed to inclusive education to follow this up in a meaningful way.

Lack of teacher knowledge as a barrier to inclusive education is well reported in the literature. In a study that involved interviewing 22 parents of disabled children, Law (1997) found that parents reported a lack of knowledge on the part of teachers as a major barrier to their children’s participation at school. Many studies highlighting lack of knowledge as a barrier are not specific in their identification of what knowledge is lacking. For those that do specify, there are two general types of knowledge that are considered. First is the technical knowledge associated with strategies and procedures thought necessary for meeting the needs of disabled students (e.g., Marshall, Ralph, & Palmer, 2002). The second is a lack of knowledge and understanding around more general aspects of inclusive education, such as knowledge regarding the barriers and enablers of inclusive education (e.g., Booth, 2000b).

The majority of parents in this study who reported lack of teacher knowledge and understanding as a barrier to their child’s presence and participation at school did not identify lack of technical knowledge around teaching skills and strategies. Rather the lack of knowledge and understanding was associated with factors specific to the child, such as the specific needs and capabilities of the child. Similarly, parents believed that a lack of knowledge about inclusion, and the role of the teacher aide was also acting to exclude their children.

One of the issues associated with teacher knowledge and understanding identified by parents in this study was low teacher expectations of their students. This phenomenon is well reported in the literature, particularly in relation to disabled students. In a study by

Pivik, McComas, and LaFlamme (2002), both disabled students themselves and their parents identified low teacher expectations as a limitation to their success at school. Likewise, Shevlin, Kenny, and McNeela (2002) found that teachers of physically disabled students expected less of them. In Shevlin et al.'s study, students described struggling to be placed in classrooms appropriate to their ability level. Participants in this study also reported that their teachers accepted work of a lower standard, and gave inadequate feedback. Similarly a study by Priestley and Rabiee (2002) reported low teacher expectations based on perceived severity of impairment, and a Norwegian study reported that teachers of a highly capable disabled student did not expect her to attain very much (Nes, 1999). When teachers hold low expectations for students, self-fulfilling prophecies usually occur (Bevan-Brown, 2006; Tauber, 1997). Having low expectations of disabled students, as reported this study, and in the literature, excludes students from participating in appropriate learning experiences.

Another area where parents identified a lack of knowledge and understanding relates to the concept of inclusive education. Through the questionnaire, most school principals reported familiarity with the concept of inclusive education as well as the principles and practices known to meet the needs of students who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. Most interviewed principals also believed that inclusive education was about all children being welcomed and included at their school, however some placed caveats on this (for example if the students were not too disabled). For other principals, inclusive education meant students being accepted and valued at special schools. All but two principals thought that there were some instances when it was not possible to have disabled students at school, and that this was acceptable. Therefore, while all principals were able to speak the language of inclusive education by describing it, for some, their interpretation of what that meant was based on a belief that it only applied to some students.

Similar findings were found amongst the teachers and teacher aides in this study. All four teachers interviewed thought the idea of inclusive education was not for all children, but only for children that were able to be in the mainstream, or who were not too disabled or only if the activities were appropriate. They also displayed an understanding of inclusive education that focused on the deficits or differences of the student. None of the four teachers mentioned inclusive education as being about

identifying and breaking down contextual barriers to the presence and participation of disabled students at school. The five teacher aides interpreted inclusive education around issues of resources and services.

If school principals and teachers do not have a good knowledge and understanding of inclusive education and the complexities associated with it, achieving inclusive schools would seem improbable. UNESCO (2005) has reported that teacher misconceptions about inclusive education can also act as barriers to inclusive education. Some of these beliefs are that inclusion (1) is a theoretical construct, (2) is not a practical idea (3) is costly (4) requires capacities and special skills in teachers which are difficult to develop and (5) will only come about when society changes to be more inclusive. Many of these beliefs were evident in the participants in this study.

In addition to an understanding of inclusive education, knowledge of policy, legislation and funding frameworks is also important. Policy, legislation and funding frameworks were not well known to the principals in this study. As knowledge has been shown to be an important enabler to inclusive education, raising the awareness of school principals to important policies and legislation that support inclusive education, may reduce the exclusion experienced by disabled students.

### **6.2.7 Relationships Between Parents and the School**

Effective relationships between schools and parents are often reported as a key facilitator of inclusive education (e.g., Hilton, 2006). In this study, parents reported poor home-school relationships as an excluding force. This included parents' advice not being listened to, a lack of information sharing, parents not being included in normal parents' events, and teachers and principals only highlighting to parents the deficits of their child. In particular, poor communication was a barrier identified by most of the interviewed parents. By far the most common issue was a perception by parents that they were not listened to and that their opinions and knowledge were not respected.

Similar findings are reported in the literature, particularly around communication. For example, in Law's (1997) study, 22 parents of disabled children reported lack of information and feelings of helplessness as major barriers to their children's

participation at school. This included a lack of parental consultation and programme information. Similar results were reported by Hanson et al. (2001). They also found that families' abilities to be heard was affected by their access to information and their own comfort and ability to advocate. They reported that parents unfamiliar with the culture of schools, and the laws of the country governing education were likely to be left out of the decision making process. Similar findings were reported by Lorenz (1998).

The findings of this present study, and those reported in the literature suggest that improving communication between parents and schools would help to reduce the exclusion of disabled students from and within schools. Improvements could include raising the level of information sharing between parents and schools; introducing systems of consultation based on equality and mutual respect; and schools recognising the specific and important knowledge that parents have about their children.

As well as issues associated with communication, parents reported other behaviours towards them that were inappropriate. For example being criticised by principals and/or teachers, being excluded from parent events and being threatened that section 9 (1) of the 1989 Education Act<sup>28</sup> would be used against their children. In relation to inappropriate behaviour towards parents, no principals, teachers, or teacher aides described the behaviour that was reported by parents. Principals were also asked if parents of disabled students in their school were given the same rights and respect as that given to parents of non-disabled students. Only one respondent was unsure, while 44% agreed that they were given the same rights, and 54% strongly agreed that they were given the same rights. These findings highlight the tensions between parents perceptions of acceptable behaviour and school principals understanding of this issue. It may also be the case that school principals do not recognise the issues for parents of disabled students in relation to effective communication and other relationship issues. This is an area that is not well reported in the literature and is one that requires further research.

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<sup>28</sup> Where parents may be directed by the state to enrol their child in a special facility.

### **6.2.8 Beliefs and Practices in Relation to Teacher Aides**

In this study, parents reported issues associated with the use of teacher aides as factors that excluded their children from being present and participating at school. Some of these have been identified in previous sections of this chapter, however, because of the pervasive nature of this theme, it is also discussed separately in this section.

The use of paraprofessionals to support disabled students is a growing phenomenon (Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2001). However as Giangreco et al. (2001) report, it is one of the least studied but potentially most significant aspects of special education over the past 10 years. When comparing their extensive review of the literature about paraprofessionals' work with disabled students with the earlier research of Jones and Bender (1993), Giangreco et al. (2001) report that little has changed in regards to evidence of paraprofessionals improving outcomes for disabled students.

Parents in this study identified a lack of teacher aide time as a barrier to their child's presence and participation at school. Just over half of all parents who responded to the phase one questionnaire identified this as one of the ten most common barriers to their child's presence and participation at school and 11% identified it as the most common barrier.

It is unclear what information parents used to make the judgement that there were insufficient teacher aide hours; however, it is likely that one way parents received this message was from schools. For example, parents reported being told that their child could only be at school when there was teacher aide support; that children could enrol in the school if they had access to a teacher aide; and that they could only be at school for the time that they had access to a teacher aide.

Principals, teachers and teacher aides all thought the provision of teacher aides was important and necessary for inclusive education. An important finding of this study is that school principals, teachers and some parents held unquestioned beliefs that a lack of teacher aide time equated with lack of children's rights to be present and participate at school.

Another important finding is the practice of handing over responsibility for disabled students to teacher aides. Some parents reported that their child was left to do nothing if the teacher aide was not present and that the teacher aide, not the teacher, was expected to teach their child. Nearly 13% of principals were unsure, or did not agree that class teachers should be responsible for all students. Teacher aides comments also showed a belief that class teachers were not responsible for disabled students.

Abdicating responsibility for disabled students to teacher aides is a practice reported in the literature. For example Giangreco, Edelman, and Broer (2001) and Broer, Doyle, and Giangreco (2005) both report the practice of handing over primary responsibility for disabled students to paraprofessionals. Ainscow, Farrell, and Tweddle, (2005) report that unqualified paraprofessionals are often asked to do work with students with complex needs. However, they also report that working with students with high and complex needs requires skilled and qualified teachers and other professionals. Giangreco et al. (2001), believe that when disabled students are assigned to the least powerful and qualified staff, this devalues their status in the eyes of the disabled student themselves, in the eyes of their peers, and in the eyes of teachers.

Parents in this present study reported that if teacher aides were used inappropriately, it could hinder disabled students forming friendships with their peers. Three of the five principals interviewed from the x group were aware that teacher aides can get too close to students and interfere with their socialisation however, only one principal in the y group mentioned this. This difference between the beliefs and practices of principals in the x and y groups may indicate that this point of difference is an important factor in the inclusion and exclusion of disabled students. This is supported in the literature (e.g., Ainscow et al., 2005; Thomas, Walker, & Webb, 1998). Ainscow et al. (2005), claim assigning teacher aides to work with disabled students is a new form of segregation. Literature often reports the importance of all students forming social skills and social links through interactions with their peers. In order to develop relationships with other members of their peer group, disabled students need to have regular opportunities to play and interact with them without close adult supervision (Lorenz, 1998). However, when individual adult support extends beyond the classroom, it can interfere with the formation of friendships as well as preventing the child from becoming an independent member of the school community (Lorenz, 1998).



However, even though literature reports the detrimental effects of inappropriate use of adult supports, it would be too simple to suggest that adult supports are not needed. No parents in this present study suggested that this was the case, or that this was something that they wanted. It is well accepted that inclusive education requires a range of adults (professionals and paraprofessionals) to work collaboratively to increase the presence and participation of disabled students. However, it appears that adult supports need to be used in such a way that over-reliance is not developed; peer contact and friendships are not discouraged; the status of disabled students is not devalued; and learned helplessness is not developed. This will require further research particularly if the use of teacher aides to support inclusive education is a practice that continues to grow.

### **6.3 Why are Disabled Students Being Excluded?**

Section 6.2 of this chapter has addressed the question: how are disabled students being excluded from and within school? This study also sought to answer the question, why are disabled students being excluded from and within school? This section elaborates on the ‘why’ question.

The literature reports that the reasons why disabled students experience exclusion from and within school are extremely complex (Slee & Allan, 2005). This complexity is due to a number of factors. First, many forces that are working against the inclusion of disabled students are hidden. They are unspoken and based on values and attitudes that are difficult to uncover. Second, even when these forces are not hidden, they may be beliefs and practices that are so much part of the culture of a person or school, that they are unquestioned and accepted as natural and normal practices. Added to this complexity is that the reasons disabled students are being excluded, can at times only be implied or inferred from certain actions. For all these reasons, to uncover from this study, the reasons why disabled students are experiencing exclusion from and within schools will require the presentation of propositions with supporting links to the data from this study and from the published literature. This is in keeping with grounded theory methodology where the theory resulting from the accumulated data around a phenomenon can be reported as a set of propositions (Dey, 1999). Finally, it should be noted that there are complex relationships between all four propositions presented here, with none acting in isolation from the other.

### **6.3.1 Proposition One: Disabled Students are Experiencing Exclusion Because they are Seen as Less Entitled to Human Rights than Non-Disabled Students.**

Data from this study showed that some teachers, principals, and other school staff believe disabled students have fewer rights (both human and legislative rights) and entitlements to mainstream education than non-disabled students. In relation to legislative rights, the 1989 Education Act guarantees students the right to enrol in their local neighbourhood school without prejudice. Section 8 of this Act states that people who have special educational needs have the same right to enrol and receive education at a state school as people who are not disabled. Similarly, the 1993 Human Rights Act protects the rights of students who are disabled. Section 57 of this act makes it illegal for schools to deny enrolment to a student on the basis of a disability or to treat students who are disabled less favourably than students who are not disabled.

International human rights declarations are also relevant to the results of this study. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that everyone has the right to education, and that education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (Article 26). New Zealand is also signatory to The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) (1989) which states that all children have a right to receive education without discrimination on any grounds. While every article in the UNCROC pertains to disabled children, Article 23 specifically states that: “disabled children should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community” (UNCROC, Article 23).

In 2007, New Zealand signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This Convention has 50 articles many of which have relevance to inclusion and exclusion in education in a general way. However, Article 24 is specifically related to education. This article sets out disabled persons’ rights to an “inclusive education” (Article 24, 1) without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity. It states that governments shall ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of their disability and that they can access an inclusive quality and free education on equal basis with others. The Convention also

highlights the need for reasonable accommodation, support and environments that maximise disabled persons' academic and social development, "consistent with the goal of full inclusion" (Article 24, 2e)

Data from this study show that disabled students were being denied these legislative and human rights. This included their rights to enrol in their local neighbourhood and to receive the same education entitlements as those students who are not disabled. Parents reported incidents where their children were treated less favourably than students who were not disabled, for example, parents being asked to pay for their child's education, and being told their child could only be at school for part of the school day or that their education entitlement was reliant on teacher aide support. Other factors include being denied access to the curriculum and the life of the school, and being subjected to bullying, sometimes by the teachers.

The belief that disabled students have less rights to access regular education than non disabled students is well reported in the literature (e.g., New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2004; Lansdown, 2001; MacArthur, Sharp, Kelly, & Gaffney, 2007). The New Zealand Human Rights Commission report that many of the disability-related complaints to the Human Rights Commission are related to disabled students being denied their rights to education. Complaints were based on the difficulties that parents and students experienced with the attitudes and behaviour of staff and students who reportedly lacked understanding of the needs of disabled students and were patronising or openly discriminatory. Also reported was a lack of specialist services and equipment and lack of funding for them. Parents indicated a need for teachers to be trained to work with people with a range of disabilities (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2004).

Campbell (2001) also believes that education is a field where the rights of the disabled are obviously denied and compromised. She believes that this is because there is a greater emphasis placed on parents' rights. This study did not gather any evidence to support or refute this claim, however, results do show that the rights of non-disabled students are given precedence over the rights of disabled children. This was particularly evident in comments from some principals, and teachers who indicated that disabled

students had a right to an inclusive education only if it did not interfere with the rights of non-disabled students.

One of the advantages of a human rights approach to inclusive education is that few, if any people would argue against it. However, while a human rights approach may seem useful in this regard, it is not a complete panacea for exclusion. Armstrong, Armstrong, and Barton (2000) believe that this is for a number of reasons. First because human rights are a rather abstract principle, they are limited in the impact they can have. Second, while human rights may be useful in uncovering forces of exclusion, they offer no practical strategies to bring about change. Third, a human rights approach to inclusive education may reflect disabled students' rights as a 'given' rather than a "continuous struggle between contending social forces" (p. 9). Finally, human rights arguments do not problematise the issues of social power which exclusion is often based on. For example, human rights arguments often do not uncover and examine issues around 'why' some groups are denied human rights and the forces that sustain this denial.

Added to these drawbacks of a human rights approach to overcoming exclusion is that human rights, and indeed legislative rights approaches to inclusion and exclusion are only effective if they are accepted, maintained and enforced. For the parents in this study, this was not something that was occurring for them and their children. This is closely related to Saleh's (2001) proposition, who points out that "we need to transform this powerful idea [children' rights] into a programme of action on behalf of children ... the rights of children in education are willingly acknowledged, but the obligations that these rights impose ... often tend to be ignored or minimised" (p. 119).

### **6.3.2 Proposition Two: Disabled Students are Experiencing Exclusion because of a Lack of Accountability.**

Results from this study show that some schools are breaking certain laws and contravening some human rights conventions. Results also suggest that government and government agencies may not be fulfilling their legal and human rights obligations to disabled students.

For example, The New Zealand National Administration Guidelines (NAGS) (Ministry of Education, 2008b) set out statements of desirable principles of conduct and administration for schools. NAG 5 (i) states that every school Board of Trustees is to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students. For some of the parents in this study, this safe environment was not something that was experienced by their children specifically in relation to the bullying reported by parents and confirmed by school principals. Similarly NAG 1 (a) states that schools are to provide all students in years 1–10 with opportunities to achieve success in all areas of the New Zealand Curriculum. However, as reported in this study, disabled students were being denied access to aspects of the New Zealand Curriculum.

Similarly, Section 8 of The 1989 Education Act states that people who have special educational needs have the same right to enrol and receive education at a state school as people who are not disabled. The 1993 Human Rights Act is legislation that protects the rights of students who are disabled. Section 57 of this act makes it illegal for schools to deny enrolment to a student on the basis of a disability or to treat students who are disabled less favourably than students who are not disabled. However, some principals in this study reported feeling justified in denying enrolment to disabled students if they believed there was insufficient funding, and nearly half of principal respondents to the questionnaire reported that they had, to a greater or lesser extent, advised parents that their children would be better served at another school. Parents also reported their children were offered less favourable enrolment and participation terms.

The question is raised therefore, how is this permitted to happen and why is it continuing to happen?

In 1989, with the passing of the 1989 Education Act, the responsibility for the management and administration of schools passed from government control to individual elected school Boards of Trustees (BOT). Boards of Trustees are made up of parents and school staff at each school, including the school principal. While there has been much argument regarding the reality of this devolution of power, authority and responsibility (e.g., Codd, Gordon, & Harker, 1990), school Boards of Trustees are responsible for the governance and control of the management of the school. They are the employer of all staff in the school and are responsible for ensuring that the school

provides a safe environment and quality education for all its students, and for overseeing the management of curriculum, property, finance and administration (Ministry of Education, 2007b).

Particularly relevant to this study is the school BOT obligations to adhere to the legislation pertaining to disabled students' rights including rights to a safe environment, to access the school and the curriculum (without extra financial cost), to have access to the class teacher, and in general, to be treated on no less favourable terms than non-disabled students. Also relevant is the responsibility of ERO to ensure that schools are indeed fulfilling their obligations in this area.

To ensure that school Boards of Trustees are fulfilling their obligations, the Education Review Office (ERO) was developed. The ERO is a government department that is charged with evaluating and publicly reporting on the quality of education and care of students in schools and early childhood centres. The official purpose of ERO is “to provide external evaluation that contributes to high quality education for all young New Zealanders” (Education Review Office, 2007b, no page given). Furthermore, ERO, through its evaluations, aims to inform and influence schools and early childhood services “so that they know what they are doing well and what they could do next to improve their current practice” (ERO, 2007b, no page given). ERO is made up of teams of experienced teachers who visit schools, visit classrooms, examine documents and talk with teachers, students, and Board of Trustee members. Specifically, when carrying out a review in a school or early childhood centre, ERO focuses on three things: school specific priorities; government priorities; and compliance issues. In regards to compliance issues, ERO has published a handbook for schools, which outlines the Acts, regulations and other official documents that schools must comply with – *The ERO Handbook of Contractual Obligations and Undertakings: Schools* (Education Review Office, 2004).

While compliance with legal requirements is a major part of any ERO review, since 2002, ERO have been placing a greater reliance on school Boards of Trustees who are now asked to complete a Board Assurance Statement and self-audit checklists before ERO arrives in a school. This means that rather than gathering the data themselves, ERO teams rely on the information reported by the school in their Assurance Statement.

There are a number of questions for Boards of Trustees in the self audit checklist that are of particular relevance to the results of this study. These include:

Has the Board, through principal and staff ensured that:

7(a). Teachers of students with disabilities, and other contact staff, have a sound understanding of the learning needs of students with disabilities? (Education Review Office, 2004, p. 6)

7(b). Support systems are in place that centre on each individual with disabilities? (Education Review Office, 2004, p. 6)

25. There are anti-bullying programmes for students and do those anti-bullying programmes include a focus on racist bullying; bullying of students with special needs; homophobic bullying; and sexual harassment? (Education Review Office, 2004, p. 9)

27. Policies and procedures that relate to students who have special education needs are implemented without discrimination, i.e. they are:

- Objective, value diversity and are integrated within the school curriculum;
- Regularly re-evaluated and developed to enhance effectiveness;
- Well communicated to all staff and families, whānau of student and consistently applied;
- In compliance with the Education Act 1989 (section 8) and the NZ Bill of Rights Act (section 9), the Human Rights Act 1993 (section 21), the National Education Guidelines, National Administration Guidelines, National Education Goals, Curriculum Statements, Foundation Curriculum Policy Statements and Special Education Guidelines (Education Review Office, 2004, p. 10).

As part of the self-audit process, schools are required to answer 'yes', 'no', or 'not applicable' to the above questions.

While the ERO self-audit document covers many of the important compliance issues in relation to the exclusion of disabled students from and within schools, results from this study suggest that some schools are not fulfilling their obligations in these areas. One possible reason for the discrepancy is that ERO is not gathering the data themselves, but relying on the information provided by the school. Schools may be indicating in their

self-audit statement that they are fulfilling their obligations when they are not. This may not be a deliberate attempt to mislead, but may come about through lack of knowledge and understanding. Whatever the reason, the practice of asking schools to self-report their compliance to important legal requirements could be described as less than ideal and may be linked to the exclusion of disabled students from and within school.

Other factors worth noting is that in the examination of 20 ERO school evaluation reports, there was some evidence to suggest that disabled students may not be seen as part of the general school population by ERO. For example 'special units' in regular schools may not be included in the school reviews by ERO, and ERO may not be giving due attention to the importance of teacher aides in the inclusion and exclusion of disabled students. Also, while ERO make reference in school review reports to inclusion and inclusive environments there is no specificity regarding the meaning that is attached to its use. Using these terms in such a loose way, without ensuring a shared understanding of the meaning, may contribute to the masking of exclusion in schools.

The findings associated with ERO need to be interpreted with caution. This discussion is based on a relatively brief examination of a small number of ERO reports in only one geographical area of New Zealand. However, indications are that ERO processes may not be effective in relation to evaluating school compliance around issues of disabled students. This is an area that would be worthy of further research.

Some have argued that the devolution of power for the governance of schools from government to school based, elected Boards of Trustees brought with it a devolution of responsibility and accountability from government to Boards of Trustees as well (Niven-Simpson, 2004). While this may have been the case, the government cannot be said to be devoid of accountability and responsibility. However, there is mixed evidence that the needs and rights of disabled students are held in high regard in this quarter. In the 2008 Report of the Education and Science Committee Inquiry into making the schooling system work for every child (New Zealand House of Representatives, 2008), the only mention of disabled students in the 43 page report was one, five-line paragraph regarding students on the autism spectrum pointing out that the committee did not gather any evidence on this group of students.



Similarly, each year, the government, through the Ministry of Education sets out its vision for education for the next five years (Statement of Intent). In the Statement of Intent, 2007–2012 (Ministry of Education, 2007a) the New Zealand Government outlined a commitment to implementing the New Zealand Disability Strategy (NZDS), noting that significant changes will need to occur across the education system if progress is to be made in this area. It was stated that the government would need to take the lead across the sector to ensure that no child is denied access to their local school because of their impairment, that teachers and other educators understand the learning needs of disabled people and that disabled students, their families, teachers and other educators have equitable access to the resources available to meet their needs. They also reported that they would need to “work to improve schools’ responsiveness to and accountability for, the needs of disabled students” (p. 38). However, only one year later, in May 2008, the government released the Statement of Intent 2008–2013 with most of the above references absent. Only scant reference to the NZDS remained (Ministry of Education, 2008a).

The role of the government in implementing inclusive education is vital. As Tomasevski, the late United Nation’s Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education points out, “human rights are defined as government obligations because they do not materialise spontaneously through the interplay of market forces or charity” (Tomasevski, 2004, p. 57). This will require political will on the part of present and future governments.

### **6.3.3 Proposition Three: Disabled Students are Experiencing Exclusion because Inclusive Education is Predicated on Issues of Funding and Resourcing.**

Data from school principals, teachers and teacher aides demonstrated a belief on their part that funding is an important enabler of inclusive education, and few would argue against this. However, for some principals, disabled students’ rights to attend school were directly related to funding and these principals felt justified in excluding disabled students from full participation at school if they believed that there was insufficient funding to support them. Similarly, some parents reported that their child’s inclusion at school was directly linked to issues of funding. For some parents, the excuse of lack of funding was accepted as being a legitimate reason why their children could not be

included. It appears therefore that some disabled students are experiencing exclusion because inclusive education is predicated on issues of funding and resourcing. As long as some schools continue to say that they do not have the resources and funding to meet the needs of disabled students, disabled students will continue to be excluded from and within schools.

Similarly, Bourke et al., (2000) reported that some school principals felt justified in denying disabled students enrolment or full access to school if they believed that there was not adequate funding and support. In another New Zealand study teachers believed it was a lack of funding that contributed to a discrepancy between what was required and what was received to successfully include students with special needs (Prochnow, Kearney, & Carroll-Lind, 2000).

Findings from the literature and this study raise important questions in relation to funding. For example, will increased funding bring about the increased inclusion of disabled students at school? Results from this study suggest that this may not be the case. For many principals, the allocation of funding was directly related to the employment of teacher aides. If schools continue to use funding to employ teacher aides, more funding may in fact make inclusive education less of a reality, for as some parents in this study explained, teacher aides are sometimes used in ways that exclude disabled students. This is supported in the literature. Ainscow et al. (2005) and Lorenz (1998) both point out the potential of teacher aides to segregate disabled students from the life of the mainstream class and school.

Another critical issue to consider is that it may not be the *actual* levels of funding that are the barrier to disabled students presence and participation at school, but rather the *belief* that a perceived lack of funding is a *legitimate* reason to exclude disabled students. For example, while all interviewed principals believed funding was important for inclusive education, principals in the x group, who believed that all students belong in regular schools, placed less importance on funding and emphasised the rights of students to be at school even though there were difficulties with funding. Providing further funding to support schools may not guarantee increased presence, participation and learning of students if the attitudes and beliefs shown to bring about inclusive education are absent. There is support for this notion in the literature. For example

Keary (1998) believes that predicating inclusive education on issues of funding can disguise or take the focus off other important solutions, such as attitudes and values. Peters, Johnstone, and Ferguson (2005) concur, going so far as saying that the belief disabled students are excluded because of lack of funding is a myth. Rather they maintain that the main causes of exclusion are poor attitudes and beliefs regarding the rights and abilities of disabled students, and the role of regular schools to meet their needs. Similarly, Ballard (1999) argues that using a lack of resources as an excuse for excluding students on the basis of their disability is more a statement about the values held by the excluder than a justification or explanation. He believes that looking at the issue from this perspectives shows that it is not so much the lack of resources that exclude, but rather the belief that it is justified to use the lack of resources as an acceptable reason for exclusion (ibid).

#### **6.3.4 Proposition Four: Disabled Students are Experiencing Exclusion because of Prejudice**

The final proposition is one that perhaps encompasses all preceding propositions. That is that disabled students are experiencing exclusion because of prejudice towards them. Prejudice has strong links to exclusion. Yee (2002) reports that when societies hold negative attitudes about people with impairments, these negative judgments appear to justify the exclusion of those people. Similarly, Lansdown (2001) reports that deep-seated prejudice is a serious impediment to disabled students' access to mainstream education.

In the seminal work of Allport (1954), prejudice is defined as “an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he or she is a member of that group” (p. 9). Allport points out that “the net effect of prejudice, thus defined, is to place the object of prejudice at some disadvantage not merited by their own misconduct” (p. 9). In this description, prejudice is described as an attitude. Some writers believe prejudice involves additional aspects as well. For example Jones (2001) describes attitudes as the affective aspects of prejudice, stereotypes as the cognitive aspect of prejudice, and discrimination as the behavioral component of prejudice.

In this study, parents reported a range of situations where their children experienced barriers to school inclusion. In many instances, these involved clear indications of stereotypes (for example, low expectations on the part of teachers, and a focus on the deficits of students) and discrimination (for example less favourable enrolment terms, and less access to teacher time). Making links between the data in this study and affective aspects of prejudice (attitudes) is more tenuous and needs to be done with care. This is because often attitudes can only be inferred. However, valid links can be made between some of the data and the phenomenon of affective or attitudinal prejudice.

Some teachers and principals in this study held perceptions about disabled students that appeared to justify in their minds, the exclusion of those students. For example the attitude by some principals that if a student's behaviour or cognitive functioning was particularly 'below the norm' this was reason to expect that they should not be part of the mainstream classroom. Also, there was an attitude by some teachers and principals that disabled students required 'charity' or 'pity', believing that if mainstream education was too difficult, or too much of a struggle for disabled students, they needed to be segregated for their own good. Similarly, there was an attitude by some teachers and principals that it was natural to assume that disabled students could only be permitted at school if they had teacher aide allocation and also that disabled students were less worthy of teacher time than non-disabled students.

In a brief to the United States Supreme Court on behalf of Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Siegal, Dane, and Hill (2000) reported that there has been a long history of prejudice and mistreatment of disabled people. They believe that while outrage has accompanied prejudice against racial, ethnic and other minority groups, this outrage is rarely exhibited in relation to prejudice against disabled people. They attribute this to the idea held by some that disabled people, unlike other minority groups, deserve to be treated unequally. This belated attention to the plight of disabled people has also been the case in New Zealand, where segregated residential hospital institutions for intellectually disabled people were not closed down until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The abuse and neglect that occurred in these institutions has only recently been widely reported (e.g. McCurdy, 2001) even though it is probable that many people knew of its existence in the past.

Teachers are in a unique position to reduce the likelihood that children will develop prejudice. Some studies have shown that even within mainstream schools, the more school staff in positions of authority sanction contact between disabled and non-disabled, the better the attitudes of non-disabled students towards those who are disabled (MacArthur et al., 2005). This is particularly relevant to this study. It can be surmised that when teachers and other school leaders displayed prejudiced attitudes and behaviours towards disabled students, it is likely that they were encouraging in other students, forms of prejudice towards disabled students. As teachers are in such powerful positions to make positive or negative differences in relation to prejudice, Ponterotto, Utsey, and Pedersen (2006) suggest that they must address their own prejudice. This would seem a most important first step. They propose a model (based on Haberman, 1994) where teachers analyse their own prejudices, look for the sources of their beliefs, consider the effects of prejudice and plan to eliminate the prejudices. Teachers can also be effective in reducing and eliminating prejudice in their students if they set up learning environments based of climates of respect and trust, where open mindedness and critical thinking are encouraged (Ponterotto et al., 2006).

Also in relation to reducing teacher prejudice, McDonald and MacArthur (2005) found that teachers are more likely to have a positive attitude towards disabled students if:

they have had previous experience; the school actively supports inclusion; frequent relevant professional development opportunities are available; teachers feel confident in their own ability to meet student needs; there are well trained support staff available for teacher support; and there is potential for environmental change in the school if needed (pp. 445–446).

Key questions are raised. What causes prejudice towards disabled students, what conditions foster it and how can it be eradicated? The causes of prejudice have been debated over many years. Allport (1954) identified six major causes of prejudice, (although he cautioned against seeking single causation factors for such a complex phenomenon as prejudice). There are:

- Historical emphasis where prejudice has its roots in historical events.
- Sociocultural emphasis where the social cultural context is examined to identify those factors that cause competition and conformity within societies.

- Situational emphasis where, for example a child grows up in an atmosphere of prejudice and conforms to what he or she sees around them.
- Phenomenological emphasis, which is based on a person's view of the world and the labels she or he uses regarding groups of people. It is these factors that will determine whether or not a person reacts in a prejudiced way.
- Psychodynamic emphasis where prejudice is caused by stable personality characteristics that people bring to social situations. It is these characteristics that predispose people to act in certain ways (prejudice).

Links between Allport's theories of prejudice causation, and data from this study can be made. For example Allport's *historical emphasis* where prejudice has its roots in historical events has direct relevance to prejudice associated with disability. Historically, it was an accepted practice that disabled people were separated from mainstream society, and placed in institutions. Some participants in this study demonstrated prejudice that could be linked to this. For example a principal who did not question his belief that disabled students should be segregated in a school: *we have a unit with a dedicated teacher...they are still part of our assembly so there is inclusion in that social context. I think that it is important but I honestly don't think you can include them in the normal class.* (P. 6). Similarly, nearly 62% of principal respondents to the questionnaire either did not think that regular schools *should* be the place for disabled students, or they were unsure. Other research highlights the link between the historical beliefs and practices and prejudice. Fishbein (2002) believes that much of the prejudice towards disabled *students* has occurred because of the history of segregated education systems. This is consistent with research showing that inclusive education is a powerful tool to break down prejudice in all its forms (UNESCO, 2005).

The other cause of prejudice identified by Allport with direct relevance to this study is *sociocultural emphasis*. In particular, Allport emphasises examining contexts to identify those factors that cause competition and conformity within societies. As competition within a society increases, prejudice against others who interfere with 'getting ahead' comes into play. Both the review of the literature and the results of this study identified sociocultural factors that exclude disabled students from and within school. One identified factor is the marketisation of education and the associated competition that this brings. For example principal six who stated: *Oh yes, absolutely, they [parents of*

*non-disabled students] don't want them [at this school] and I don't blame them.* Similarly, 47% of principal respondents to the questionnaire had, to a greater or lesser extent, advised parents that their child would be better education at another school.

Also relevant to this study is Allport's third theory of prejudice causation, that of *situational emphasis*. An example of this is where a child grows up in an atmosphere of prejudice and conforms to what he or she sees around them. It has relevance to this study only in so far as it was *not* seen in the children who participated in the phase three focus group interview. No forms of prejudice were displayed by any of these children. Over the last 50 years, some research has examined the phenomenon of non-disabled students' prejudice towards their disabled peers. In a review of much of this literature, Fishbein (2002) reports that between kindergarten and 6<sup>th</sup> grade, older students are less prejudiced than younger ones and that girls show less prejudice than boys. They also found that children based their attitudes mostly on the behaviour of the disabled person. It is unknown whether the prejudice shown by adults in this study could be linked to this theory of prejudice causation.

The final theory of causation that may help to explain the prejudice against disabled students identified in this study is *phenomenological emphasis*. This is based on a person's view of the world and the labels she or he uses regarding groups of people. It is the labels that people use that determine if they act in a prejudiced way or not. The use of labels and deficit language was identified in this study as acting to exclude disabled students from and within school. Based on this theory of prejudice causation, it could be surmised that the prejudice towards disabled students highlighted in this study had links to the language people were using in relation to disabled students.

It is beyond the scope of this research to make any definitive conclusions regarding the causation of prejudice against the disabled students whose experiences form the basis of this study. Also, knowing the cause of prejudice may not be enough to eliminate and eradicate it. However, the results uncovered in this study provide a strong signal for the need to explore this important factor in future research.

## 6.4 Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study within the context of the existing literature and with regard to issues that could be addressed through further research. The discussion was guided by two of the research questions:

- How do some disabled students experience exclusion from and within school?
- Why do some disabled students experience exclusion from and within school?

In relation to how disabled students are experiencing exclusion from and within school, the discussion was focused on eight key findings. This included disabled students being denied enrolment, full-time attendance at school, or both; being denied access to, and participation within the curriculum; and being bullied. It also included inappropriate beliefs and practices in relation to funding; a lack of caring, valuing and responsibility by some school staff; a lack of teacher knowledge and understanding; poor relationships between parents and school staff; and inappropriate beliefs and practices in relation to teacher aides.

Based on the findings of this study, four propositions were put forward to address the question of why disabled students are being excluded from and within school. These are that disabled students are experiencing exclusion because: they are seen as less entitled (than non-disabled students) to mainstream education and to human and legal rights; schools are not held accountable for the education of disabled students; inclusive education is predicated on issues of funding and resourcing; and of deep seated prejudice based on ability.

This study was based on a social constructivist perspective. Therefore, it is important that results are interpreted in relation to the principles of this perspective. Constructs such as disability, difference, and exclusion are not a natural order, rather they are phenomena that are constructed socially and culturally through human interaction. Therefore, the difficulties experienced by students as reported in this study are not individual inherent traits, but are created through the contexts that they find themselves in. Similarly, teacher and principal attitudes and values that play such an important part in the inclusion and exclusion of disabled students are formed and shaped by complex interrelationships and often competing ideologies within social settings (e.g. market



model systems of education as discussed in chapter two). Those working within education do not have natural inherent ideals and values that exclude. These values and ideals are shaped by the context that these people find themselves. Therefore, it is important to the argument that exclusion is not inevitable; it can be deconstructed in the same way that it has been constructed.

Even though this thesis cannot provide final definitive answers to the question of why disabled students are excluded from and within school, this research can claim to contribute to ongoing discussions and offer the beginnings of some answers to these questions. The following chapter will present suggestions for reducing the exclusion of disabled students from school and specifically address the third research question on how school exclusion can be reduced and eliminated.



# CHAPTER SEVEN

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter addresses the third research question: How can disabled students' exclusion from and within school be reduced and eliminated? It draws conclusions from the findings of the study and, based on these conclusions, provides prompts for teachers, school principals and senior school managers. The prompts are designed to help guide attention and discussion to the issues that are important if exclusion is to be reduced and eliminated. This chapter also outlines recommendations for government and government agencies that may reduce the exclusion experienced by some disabled students at school. Finally in this chapter, the contributions and limitations of the study are outlined, and suggestions made for future research.

### **7.2 Conclusions from the Study**

The parents of disabled students reported a range of factors that acted to exclude their children from being present, participating and learning at school. Major findings are that disabled students were being excluded by:

- Being denied enrolment and/or full-time attendance at school
- Being denied access to, and participation within the curriculum
- Being bullied
- Inappropriate beliefs and practices in relation to funding
- A lack of caring, valuing and responsibility by school staff
- A lack of teacher knowledge and understanding
- Poor relationships between parents and school staff
- Inappropriate beliefs and practices in relation to teacher aides

Based on the results of the study, four propositions were posited to explain why disabled students are being excluded from school. These were that disabled students are experiencing exclusion because of:

- A perception that disabled students are less entitled to human rights than non-disabled students
- Lack of accountability
- A belief that inclusive education should be predicated on issues of funding and resourcing
- Prejudice.

These findings point to six key areas for consideration. These are: access; attitudes; knowledge; responsibility; funding and resourcing; and accountability. Results indicate that disabled students experience access difficulties associated with enrolment at school and participation in curriculum and extra-curriculum activities. They also experience reduced access to their peer group. In relation to attitudes, disabled students can experience a lack of caring and valuing at school, and a belief by those employed in schools that they are less entitled to human rights than non-disabled students. They also experience prejudice as a result of their impairments. Disabled students experience exclusion through a lack of teacher and principal knowledge and understanding (both of their needs, and of the concept of inclusive education) and responsibility towards them. Funding and resourcing issues are often used as legitimate excuses to exclude disabled students. Finally, results of this study suggest that there is little accountability in regards to New Zealand legislation and human rights conventions that are designed to protect the rights of disabled students in education. Table 7.1 shows how the results of the study can be organised into these key areas.

Inherent in these findings, it is clear that values underpin inclusionary and exclusionary policies and practices (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006; Ballard, 2004a; Booth, Nes & Stromstadt, 2003). They significantly influence school systems and policies as well as what teachers and principals think and do. At a broader level, values also underpin government priorities and practices. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) have identified an evolving list of values as being important for the development of inclusive schools. These include equity, participation, community, compassion, respect for diversity, sustainability and entitlement, although Ainscow, et al., (2006) caution that these will play out differently in different contexts.

However, while it is widely reported that inclusive values are a necessary prerequisite for inclusive education, there needs to be a clear understanding how these values play out in inclusive practice. This research has made explicit the important link between values and practice particularly as they relate to the exclusion of disabled students. For example in this study, disabled students experienced less entitlement to enrolment and full time attendance at school; less access or entitlement to human and legal rights; and were excluded by the belief that inclusive education is predicated on issues of funding. These actions have a direct link to values associated with student entitlement. Similarly, this study found that disabled students had less than favourable access to the curriculum, to their peer group and to their class teacher. Issues associated with valuing participation can be linked to these actions. In addition, a lack of valuing and caring of disabled students was highlighted through the data. Given that respect for diversity is an important value for inclusion, these results raise questions for both policy makers and practitioners. Similarly, the values of equity and fairness were highlighted as important in the inclusion and exclusion of disabled students. Overall results from this study show a lack of equity and fairness in relation to disabled students. This was shown not only in the day-to-day experiences reported by parents, but also at systems level, particularly in relation to accountability systems such as the Education Review Office.

Table 7.1

*Key areas for consideration*

<b>Key Areas</b>	<b>How and why are disabled students being excluded from school?</b>
<b>Access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denial of enrolment and/or full-time attendance at school</li> <li>• Denial of access to, and participation within the curriculum</li> <li>• Reduced access to peer group</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation and human rights conventions in relation to disabled students are not being enforced</li> </ul>
<b>Attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of caring, valuing of disabled students by school staff</li> <li>• Disabled students are seen as less entitled to human rights than non-disabled students</li> <li>• There is prejudice towards disabled students</li> <li>• Inclusive education is predicated on issues of funding and resourcing</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of teacher and principal knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Responsibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying</li> <li>• Lack of teacher responsibility</li> <li>• Poor relationships between parents and school staff</li> <li>• Inappropriate beliefs and practices in relation to teacher aides</li> </ul>

### **7.3 Reducing and Eliminating School Exclusion**

A seemingly simple, but important question that must be asked of any research project is: *So what?* What are the implications of the findings, and how can they be used to make advances and improvements. In this regard, it is very important that the lessons gained from this study are transferred into suggestions for positive change. How can the findings of how and why disabled students are excluded from and within school be used to reduce and eliminate the exclusion experienced by disabled students.

In order to do this, prompts for teachers and school principals/senior managers have been developed in each of the key areas. Also, based on the findings of this study, recommendations are made for government and government agencies outlining ways that they can contribute to the reduction and elimination of school exclusion for disabled students. Rather than provide prompts by which government and government agencies can reflect, this section purposely provides strong recommendations. This is

based on the premise that governments must take the lead in ensuring a fair, just and appropriate mainstream education is provided for disabled students in New Zealand.

### 7.3.1 Prompts

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following prompts are provided for teachers, school principals and senior school managers. These prompts are designed to help guide attention and discussion to issues that are important if exclusion is to be reduced and eliminated. School principals and senior managers should consider both the prompts for teachers and the prompts for school principals and senior managers. The prompts are organised under the five key focus areas.

Table 7.2

#### *Access prompts*

<b>Key area</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Prompts:</b>
<b>Access</b>	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled students have equality of access to my time.</li> <li>• Disabled students have equality of access to the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (If needed, adaptations and accommodations are made so disabled students can access the New Zealand Curriculum Framework).</li> <li>• Disabled students have equality of access to extra-curricula activities (If needed, adaptations and accommodations are made so disabled students can access extra curricula activities).</li> <li>• Disabled students are only removed from the classroom for learning experiences that are not possible in the regular class and only if this is in the best interests of the student.</li> <li>• Disabled students have equality of access to their peer group.</li> </ul>
	School principals Senior managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled students have equality of access to this school</li> <li>• Disabled students are able to enrol at this school without funding preconditions.</li> <li>• Disabled students are able to enrol at this school without attendance pre-conditions (such as only being permitted at school for part of the day).</li> <li>• Parents are not expected to take their disabled child home if there are difficulties.</li> </ul>

Table 7.3

*Attitude prompts*

<b>Key area</b>	<b>Prompts for:</b>	<b>Prompts:</b>
<b>Attitudes</b>	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I hold appropriate expectations of disabled students.</li> <li>• I avoid taking a deficit approach to problem solving issues related to disabled students.</li> <li>• I avoid stereotyping disabled students based on their label.</li> <li>• I believe disabled students should have equal human rights to non-disabled students and I work to ensure they receive them.</li> <li>• I value and care for the disabled students in my class just as much as for non-disabled students.</li> <li>• I view disabled students as being as entitled to mainstream education as non-disabled students.</li> <li>• I value and respect the parents of disabled students as I do non-disabled students' parents.</li> </ul>
	School principals Senior managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I hold appropriate expectations of disabled students.</li> <li>• I avoid taking a deficit approach to problem solving issues around disabled students.</li> <li>• I avoid stereotyping disabled students based on their label.</li> <li>• I believe disabled students should have equal human rights to non-disabled students and I work to ensure they receive them.</li> <li>• I value and care for the disabled students in the school as I do for non-disabled students.</li> <li>• I view disabled students as being as entitled to mainstream education as non-disabled students.</li> <li>• I value and respect the parents of disabled students as I do non-disabled students' parents.</li> </ul>



Table 7.4

*Knowledge prompts*

<b>Key area</b>	<b>Prompts for:</b>	<b>Prompts:</b>
<b>Knowledge</b>	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am aware of my responsibility to engage in continuous professional learning related to disabled students.</li> <li>• I am aware of funding frameworks that support the inclusion of disabled learners.</li> <li>• I am aware of policy, legislation, and human rights conventions that support the rights of disabled learners to attend their local mainstream school on equal terms as their non-disabled peers.</li> <li>• I am aware of education regulations (such as National Education and Administration Guidelines) related to the education of disabled students.</li> <li>• I have an understanding of the concept of inclusive education and the barriers and enablers to such a system.</li> </ul>
	School principals Senior managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our school provides opportunities for teachers to engage in continuous professional learning specific to meeting the needs of disabled students.</li> <li>• Our school encourages teachers to engage in continuous professional learning specific to meeting the needs of disabled students.</li> <li>• I am aware of funding frameworks that support the inclusion of disabled learners</li> <li>• I am aware of policy, legislation, and human rights conventions that support the rights of disabled learners to attend their local mainstream school on equal terms as their non-disabled peers.</li> <li>• I have an understanding of the concept of inclusive education and the barriers and enablers to such a system.</li> </ul>

Table 7.5

*Accountability prompts*

<b>Key area</b>	<b>Prompts for:</b>	<b>Prompts:</b>
<b>Accountability</b>	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I hold myself accountable for meeting the needs of disabled students in my class (in collaboration with parents/whānau and other professionals).</li> </ul>
	School principals Senior managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our school systems and policies indicate to teachers that they are accountable for meeting the needs of disabled students in their class (in collaboration with parents, whānau and other professionals).</li> <li>• I hold myself accountable for meeting the needs of disabled students in the school (in collaboration with parents/whānau and other professionals).</li> <li>• There are mechanisms in place that hold teachers accountable for meeting the needs of disabled students.</li> </ul>

Table 7.6

*Responsibility prompts*

<b>Key area</b>	<b>Prompts for:</b>	<b>Prompts:</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I believe that I have prime responsibility for disabled students in my class (as opposed to other educational professionals and teacher aides).</li> <li>• I take responsibility for the direction of any teacher aides who may be working with disabled students in my class.</li> <li>• I am aware of the exclusionary affect that may occur when teacher aides work inappropriately with disabled students.</li> <li>• I am vigilant regarding the bullying of disabled students and take appropriate action when necessary.</li> <li>• I take responsibility for the emotional, social and cultural well being of disabled students.</li> <li>• I do not engage in teacher to student bullying.</li> <li>• I understand and pursue my responsibility to establish a collaborative partnership with parents /whānau of disabled students.</li> </ul>
	School principals Senior managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our school is responsible for all disabled students who choose to come here.<sup>29</sup></li> <li>• Policies and practices within the school promote the understanding that disabled students are the responsibility of their class teacher (in collaboration with parents/whānau and other educational professionals).</li> <li>• Our school systems and policies encourage the forming of collaborative partnerships between teachers and parents/whānau of disabled students.</li> <li>• I am vigilant regarding teacher to student bullying and take appropriate action when necessary.</li> </ul>

Table 7.7

*Funding and resourcing prompts*

<b>Key area</b>	<b>Prompts for:</b>	<b>Prompts:</b>
<b>Funding/ resourcing</b>	Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive education should not be predicated on the issue of funding.</li> <li>• Inclusive education should not be predicated on the issue of teacher aide allocation.</li> </ul>
	School principals Senior managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive education is not predicated on the issue of funding.</li> <li>• In this school, inclusive education is not be predicated on the issue of teacher aide allocation.</li> <li>• In this school, funding is allocated to disabled students and used in ways that it was intended.</li> </ul>

<sup>29</sup> If the student lives within the zone of the school.

### **7.3.2 Recommendations to Government and Government Agencies**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to government and relevant government agencies:

- Support and promote the concept of inclusive education.
- Implement an information campaign to schools (that reaches all teachers) outlining:
  - The nature of inclusive education and the rationale for its implementation.
  - Misconceptions about inclusive education.
  - Common barriers to the inclusion of disabled students so that teachers, principals and others working in schools can recognise these.
  - The New Zealand Disability Strategy and its place in New Zealand schools.
  - The funding available to support disabled students in schools.
  - The legislation that guarantees the rights of disabled children to attend their local neighbourhood school and not be discriminated against.
  - The human rights conventions that New Zealand is signatory to, that protect the rights of disabled students.
  - The responsibilities of teachers and schools to uphold human rights conventions and New Zealand legislation in relation to disabled students.
- All relevant government policies and publications should promote the rights of disabled students to access their local neighbourhood school.
- All relevant government policies and publications should promote the rights of disabled students to access the curriculum.
- Introduce policy guidelines on the use of teacher aides in New Zealand schools that promote the inclusion of disabled students.
- Ensure that ERO focus on school compliance issues in relation to disabled students.
- Make the issue of human rights in schools a ‘government focus area’ for ERO, for how ever many years it takes to improve the human rights of disabled students in New Zealand Schools (this would likely improve the human rights of other marginalised groups also).
- Encourage the teaching of human rights in all schools.
- Ensure that all initial teacher education providers (in their training programmes) are promoting the rights of disabled students to an inclusive education and the responsibilities of teachers and schools to provide this in a fair, just and equitable way.

- Ensure that there is a fair and equitable funding system to support inclusive education.
- Ensure that this funding is used in the way that promotes the inclusion of disabled students.

## **7.4 Further Research**

Research is not just about systematic inquiry into issues to seek answers and develop understanding; it is also about identifying important questions. As a result of this research, a number of questions have emerged that require further exploration. These provide the basis for the following recommendations for future research.

Research in the area of teacher aide use is urgently needed. There is a growing trend to employ teacher aides to work with disabled students in New Zealand schools. This study has identified issues associated with their use that may act to exclude disabled students. How are teacher aides being used in schools? What is the rationale for their use? What are the effects of their use in this way? How can teacher aides be used to increase the inclusion and reduce the exclusion of disabled students? These are important questions that require further investigation.

This study ‘caught glimpses’ of the effects of school exclusion on the disabled students themselves, their siblings and their families (particularly parents). Little is known of these effects, in particular, the long-term effects. Further research is needed to address this area, in particular, what are the short and long term effects of exclusion on disabled students and their families, and how has this affected the decisions that they make regarding the type of education chosen?

Teacher-to-student bullying is an issue that was identified as excluding disabled students from and within school. Little is reported on the nature and extent of teacher to student bullying although its occurrence is probably well known. Further research is needed to learn more about the nature of teacher to student bullying. How does it occur? Why does it occur? Why is it ignored? What can be done to reduce and eliminate teacher to student bullying? Also required are prevalence figures. What is the prevalence of teacher to student bullying in New Zealand schools?

The link between lack of teacher knowledge and exclusion is reasonably well documented. However, further research would be useful to uncover specific issues. For example, does increased knowledge of the specific needs of disabled students lead to greater inclusion? Does a sound knowledge of funding policies lead to greater inclusion? Does a sound knowledge of disabled students' rights lead to greater inclusion?

While there is much research examining the role of prejudice in the exclusion of minority groups, there is little research investigating the phenomenon of teacher prejudice in relation to disabled students. Again, research investigating the nature and extent of teacher prejudice in this area would be useful in reducing and eliminating teacher prejudice towards disabled students.

Finally, the issue of funding. This is an issue that is often associated with inclusive education and there is a wealth of research investigating this. However, further research is still required to examine a number of long-held, and often deep-seated beliefs in relation to funding. For example in this study a number of teachers and principals believed that if there was a lack of perceived 'adequate funding,' this was a legitimate reason to exclude disabled students. This phenomenon requires investigation. What is adequate funding? Why are the rights of disabled children to attend school disregarded if 'adequate funding' is not provided? Similarly, parents in this study reported paying to support their children in school. Research into the nature and extent of this practice is also urgently needed.

## **7.5 Contributions to Knowledge**

This study has investigated the nature of school exclusion experienced by disabled students in New Zealand schools. It has contributed to knowledge in six main ways. First, it has provided New Zealand-based evidence that disabled students are experiencing exclusion from and within school and it has identified some of the ways that this is happening. Second, the study has contributed possible answers to the complex question of why disabled students are experiencing exclusion from and within school. Because of the complexity of this question, multiple answers and perspectives will be required in order to understand this phenomenon. This study purports to add one

piece to this puzzle. Third, this study has raised awareness of the nature of school exclusion and the challenges faced by disabled students who experience exclusion, and their families. Fourth, at a practical level, this study has developed suggestions for teachers and school principals that may reduce and eliminate the exclusion experienced by disabled students. Fifth, gaps in the research have been identified and suggestions made for future research. Finally, a contribution has been made to overall understandings of the phenomenon of school exclusion at both a national and international level.

## **7.6 Limitations of the Study**

It is important to acknowledge and identify the limitations of any research project. The limitations associated with the methodologies of this research are discussed in chapter three. However, there are other limitations that need to be mentioned.

First, the basis of this study was the perceptions of parents. However, it should be noted that there are multiple realities to any phenomenon, and if the study had taken the perceptions of teachers as its basis, completely different results would likely have been found.

Another limitation of this study is that the parents who participated were self-selected. Therefore, it cannot be said that the factors identified as acting to exclude disabled students from and within school are representative of all disabled students, or even representative of all disabled students who have experienced exclusion from and within school.

A further limitation of the study is the lack of data gathering based on observations of exclusion and a lack of disabled student voice. While this was an original intention of phase one and three of the study, difficulties acquiring participant permission to carry out this form of data gathering made this impossible.

Finally, a limitation of the study is the relatively small sample size of all phases of the research. Again, this limits the generalisability of the findings.

## 7.7 Final Words

The path towards inclusive education systems will require the identification and removal of all forms of exclusion and this will not be an easy task. However, it is hoped that the factors acting to exclude disabled students that have been uncovered in this study, and the propositions suggested as to why disabled students are experiencing exclusion in New Zealand schools, will contribute to this process.

Presently, as this study has shown, disabled students and their parents are blazing the trail towards more inclusive schools. However, they are paying a very high price, physically, emotionally and financially and for some, the toll is very high. These parents and students must be supported. As Fergusson (1992) reminds us, making a future where inclusive education is a reality must involve all of us. Particularly important is the role that government plays in bringing about change.

It seems fitting to end with a quote from one of the parent participants who describes her hope for more inclusionary communities and schools:

*Through my life experience I've come to think that our communities and all the people are going to be much happier if we just have a place for everybody where they all get dignity, and where they all feel worthwhile. So I think it's just how I would live my life and how I would like our communities to be. And I would like our school communities to be like that too. And that is what we intend for our daughter even though there are lots of times where we find that in her life it's way short of that.*

For this parent, her daughter, and all whom experience exclusion from and within school, we must work together to reduce and eliminate all forms of school exclusion. In this way, schools can be places that are safe and welcoming for all children and young people, places where they can participate, learn and belong.





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## Appendix A Advertisement

**Appendix A1: Phase one advertisement for parent newsletters/magazines**



### **ARE YOU THE PARENT OR CAREGIVER OF A CHILD WHO HAS EXPERIENCED BARRIERS TO THEIR INCLUSION IN A REGULAR SCHOOL?**

My name is Alison Kearney and I am a senior lecturer at Massey University where I teach in the area of inclusive education. As part of my PhD, I am looking at identifying barriers to the inclusion of learners who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. If you are a parent of a child who has experienced barriers or difficulties being included in a regular school, I am interested in hearing your story.

In order to do this, I have set up a short questionnaire on a web page. If you would be interested in finding out more about this research with the possibility of completing the questionnaire, please visit the web site on:

**[http://education.massey.ac.nz/A\\_Kearney\\_Questionnaire.htm](http://education.massey.ac.nz/A_Kearney_Questionnaire.htm)**

Or alternatively, contact me at the address below and I will send you an information sheet and a questionnaire. My contact details are:

Alison Kearney  
Senior Lecturer  
Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11 222  
Palmerston North  
06 3569099 ext 8704  
[a.c.Kearney@massey.ac.nz](mailto:a.c.Kearney@massey.ac.nz)

## **Appendix B Information Sheets**

### **Appendix B1: Phase one parent interview information sheet**



#### **Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices**

##### **Information Sheet**

##### **Phase One: Parent/Caregiver Interview**

###### **Introduction**

My name is Alison Kearney and I am employed as a senior lecturer at Massey University College of Education. This research forms the first phase of my PhD study into barriers to the school inclusion of children and young people who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. You kindly completed a questionnaire that was examining barriers to your child's presence, participation and learning at school. As part of that questionnaire, you indicated your interest in participating in a follow up interview. The purpose of this sheet is to give you information about this interview, and invite you to participate.

Over sixty people responded to the web questionnaire, and all had interesting stories to tell of the barriers they had experienced in trying to get their child included in mainstream schools. Unfortunately, I cannot interview all of those who volunteered, so I have chosen a sample of 12, based on the main barrier experienced. You form part of this sample of 12.

###### **Project Procedures**

You are invited to participate in a follow up interview. This should take approximately one hour (more or less, depending on what you wish to say) and can happen at a place of your choice. It can also be over the telephone if you would prefer, I can ring you at a time to suit. With your permission, I would like to audio tape the interview, although again, you can choose for the interview not to be taped. Once all interviews are completed, the tapes will be transcribed by another person (who will have signed a confidentiality agreement) and analysed by me for themes and threads. No identifying data will be used, so reducing the likelihood of identifying participants. All participants will have their identity protected. I will send a copy of the transcribed interviews back to you so that you can ensure that you are happy with what has been recorded. Copies of the tapes can also be sent back to you to keep, or I will store them in my locked office, together with a copy of the transcripts for a period of five years, after which they will be destroyed.

I would also like the opportunity to invite your child to participate in an interview. To do this, I would first seek your informed consent, then, the informed consent of your child.

However, even if you do not consent to your child being interviewed, I would still be interested in talking with you.

If you wish, you will be sent a summary of my findings from this phase of the research.

### **Participants Rights**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study (up to three months after the interview date);
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- ask for the audio/video tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

If as a result of participating in this interview you experience any emotional distress, I have information about support services you can contact for help.

Could I also suggest that you should informally discuss the research with your child and only participate if your child is happy for you to talk to me about them.

#### Name and contact details of researcher:

Alison Kearney  
Department of Learning and Teaching  
Massey University College of Education  
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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, Wellington Application 05/45. If you have any concerns about the ethics of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: WGTN telephone 06 350 5249 x 8635, email [humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz)



**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices  
Information Sheet  
Phase One: Child/Young Person Participants**

**To be read aloud**

Hello, my name is Alison Kearney and I am work at Massey University as a teacher. I am also studying at that university for a qualification called a PhD. As part of this study, I am doing a project looking at the difficulties or troubles some kids who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour have at school.

Have you ever been on the internet? If you have ever been on the internet, you will know that there are heaps of sites you can visit there. A few months ago, I put some questions on the internet and asked parents of kids who had difficulties at school to go to this site and answer these questions. Your Mum/Dad/caregiver went to this site and answered my questions. Your Mum/Dad/caregiver has said that it is OK if I asked you if you would like to answer some of my questions to help me with my study.

So that is what I am doing now, asking you if it would be OK, if I asked you some questions about troubles or difficulties that you may have had at school. You do not have to say yes, no one will mind! Or, even if you do say yes, and I ask you a question you do not want to answer, you do not have to answer that or any other questions. Later on, if you change your mind about being part of this study, you can let me or your Mum/Dad/caregiver know (my phone number and address are at the bottom of this sheet) and if it is no later than three months after the interview, I can throw away all of your answers or just send them back to you and not use them at all.

There are about five questions and it will probably take about one hour to talk about them. If you have any questions, you can ask me at anytime, and, if you want to, I can send you a copy of the summary of what I find out from my study. One of the other things about taking part in this study is that I will not use your name. That means no one will know that the answers you give to my questions came from you (this means you are anonymous!)

Because I cannot write very fast, I would like to tape your answers. But if you don't want me to do this, that's OK, I can just take some notes. Also, you might say at the beginning that it is OK to tape what you are saying, but later on, want the tape recorder turned off. This is OK too, you can just ask me to turn it off and I will. If you want, I will send the tape back to you to keep, or I can just keep it in my office at work in a locked cupboard. You can let me know what you would like.

I am going to talk to another 11 Mums/Dads/caregivers and kids just like you, and ask them the same questions. When I have finished doing all that, I am going to listen to the tapes, put all the information together and write down what I have found out from



talking to you all. This will be for my study I told you about earlier. When I type up all the things that you said to me, I will send this back to you, or your mum/dad/caregiver to look at. If you want me to change anything or take it out, I can do that up to three months after the interview date.

I don't think it will happen, but perhaps talking to me about some of the hard stuff that has happened to you at school may make you sad. If this does happen, I can tell you, or your Mum/Dad/caregiver where to go if you would like someone to help you feel better.

You do not have to take part in answering these questions, but if you decide you want to you are allowed to:

- Not answer any questions you don't want to
- Start answering the questions than say that you don't want to do it any more;
- Answer all the questions, then say that you want all your answers taken out of my study (up to three months after the interview);
- ask any questions about the study at any time you like;
- know that no one will know your name or know any of the answers belong to you;
- be given a summary of what I have found out by interviewing all the people in my study;
- Ask to have the tape recorder turned off, or not used at all.

Name of researcher and how to contact her:

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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, Wellington Application 05/45. If you have any concerns about the ethics of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: WGTN telephone 06 350 5249 x 8635, email [humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz)



**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices  
Information Sheet  
Phase Two: School Principal Questionnaire**

**Research/Researcher Introduction**

My name is Alison Kearney and I am employed as a senior lecturer at Massey University College of Education. This research forms the second phase of my PhD study into barriers to the school inclusion of children and young people who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour, and the factors that act to exclude them. I have already conducted the first phase of this research where I invited parents of disabled children to complete a web questionnaire. This questionnaire identified specific barriers that children had experienced to being included at school. I then went on and interviewed twelve parents all around New Zealand, exploring in more depth, some of the issues that they had raised.

I am now looking at the issue from within the school. I am particularly interested in answers to the following questions:

- What are the barriers to mainstream school inclusion for disabled students?
- Why do some schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- How do schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- What behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, norms and values are found in schools that exclude and marginalize disabled students?
- How can barriers to school inclusion be broken down?

**Project Procedures**

There are two stages to this phase of the research.

The attached questionnaire

A semi structured interview with school principals who volunteer

This questionnaire forms the first part of this phase of the research. All principals in the [name of three geographical regions in New Zealand] have been sent a questionnaire with an invitation to complete it. The questionnaire should take approximately 30-40 minutes to complete. There is a section at the end of the questionnaire inviting principals to participate in a follow up interview. This should take approximately one hour. Completing the questionnaire does not imply a willingness to participate in any follow up interview so even if you do not want to participate in a follow up interview, I would still appreciate you taking the time to complete the questionnaire. The final stage of the research has not yet been finalized but will take place in one school.

Once all questionnaires have been collected, data will be collated, aggregated and used to present findings to the research questions. Along with data gathered from other phases of this project, this data will form the basis of my PhD research report. Once data from all phases of the project have been analysed, I intend to develop 'user

friendly' teacher resources that identify the barriers to school inclusion for learners who are disabled and ways that these can be overcome

All raw data will be stored for a period of five years in a lockable filing cabinet in my office at Massey University.

### **Participants Rights**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation to complete this questionnaire. If you choose to do this, you have the following rights as set out in the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct.

The right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study up to two months after completing the questionnaire;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation (the researchers contact details are provided on this information sheet);
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded (you have the opportunity to indicate at the end of the questionnaire if you would like to be sent a summary of the questionnaire data).

Completion and return of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to decline to answer any particular question.

### **Project Contacts**

If you have any questions about this research you can contact me, or my supervisors. Contact details are:

#### **Researcher:**

Alison Kearney  
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Ph 06 3569099 ext 8704

#### **Supervisors:**

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Centre for Educational Research  
Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North  
Ph 06 3569099 ext 8304

This part of the project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the research, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-chancellor (Ethics & Equity), telephone 06 350 5349, email [humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz)



**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices  
Information Sheet  
Phase Two: School Principal Interviews**

**Research/Researcher Introduction**

My name is Alison Kearney and I am employed as a senior lecturer at Massey University College of Education. This research is part of my PhD study into barriers to the school inclusion of children and young people who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour, and the factors that act to exclude and marginalize these students. I have already conducted earlier stages of this research where I invited parents of disabled children to complete a web questionnaire. This questionnaire identified specific barriers that children had experienced to being included at school. I then went on and interviewed twelve parents all around New Zealand, exploring in more depth some of the issues that they had raised.

The second phase of the research involves looking at the issue from within the school. Late in 2006, I sent questionnaires to all school principals in the [name of three geographical areas] districts. From this population, 47 completed questionnaires were returned to me. You were one of the school principals who completed a questionnaire and you also indicated your willingness to participate in a follow up interview. As I pointed out in the information sheet you received with the questionnaire, in this part of the research, I am particularly interested in the following questions:

- What are the barriers to mainstream school inclusion for disabled students?
- Do some schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- How do schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- What behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, norms and values are found in schools that exclude and marginalize disabled students?
- How can barriers to school inclusion be broken down?

**Project Procedures**

There are two parts to this phase of the research.

- The questionnaire (which you have already completed)
- A semi-structured interview with school principals who volunteer

The interview that I am inviting you to participate in forms the second part of this phase of the research. ***Participating in the follow-up interview does not imply a willingness to participate in any other part of this research.***

Once all the interviews have been conducted, interview tapes will be transcribed, analysed and used to present findings to the research questions. Along with data gathered from the other phases of this project, this data will form the basis of my PhD research report. Once data from all phases of the project have been analysed, I intend to

develop 'user friendly' teacher resources that identify the barriers to school inclusion for learners who are disabled and ways that these can be overcome.

All raw data will be stored for a period of five years in a lockable filing cabinet in my office at Massey University.

### **Participants Rights**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation to participate in this interview. If you choose to do this, you have the following rights as set out in the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct.

The right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study up to two months after completing the interview;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation (the researchers contact details are provided on this information sheet);
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

### **Project Contacts**

If you have any questions about this research you can contact me, or my supervisors. Contact details are:

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This part of the project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the research, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-chancellor (Ethics & Equity), telephone 06 350 5349, email [humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz)



**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices  
Information Sheet  
Phase Three: Teacher Interviews**

**Research/Researcher Introduction**

My name is Alison Kearney and I am employed as a senior lecturer at Massey University College of Education. I am presently involved in a PhD study looking at barriers to the school inclusion of children and young people who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. This research forms the third phase of my PhD study. I am now looking at the issue from *within the school*. I am particularly interested in answers to the following questions:

- What are the barriers to mainstream school inclusion for disabled students?
- Why do some schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- How do schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- What behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, norms and values are found in schools that exclude and marginalize disabled students?
- How can barriers to school inclusion be broken down?

**Project Procedures**

Data is being gathered to answer these questions in three phases:

Phase one: Web questionnaire and interviews with parents

Phase two: Questionnaire and interviews with school principals

Phase three: Interviews with teachers, teacher aides and a group of school students.

**Project Procedures**

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview. The interview should take approximately 60 minutes (more or less, depending on what you wish to say). With your permission, I would like to tape the interview, although again, you can request the interview not to be taped. Once the interview is completed, the tape will be transcribed by another person (who will have signed a confidentiality agreement) and analysed by me for themes. No identifying data will be used, so reducing the likelihood of identifying participants. All participants will have their identity protected. Copies of the tapes will be stored in my locked office, together with a copy of the transcripts for a period of five years, after which they will be destroyed.

If you wish, you will be sent a summary of my findings from this phase of the research.

**Participants Rights**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;

- withdraw from the study (up to three months after the interview date);
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

### **Project Contacts**

If you have any questions about this research you can contact me, or my supervisors. Contact details are:

#### **Researcher:**

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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 07/17. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz)



**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices  
Information Sheet  
Phase Three: Parents of Potential Students for Focus Group Interview**

**Research/Researcher Introduction**

My name is Alison Kearney and I am employed as a senior lecturer at Massey University College of Education. Prior to taking up my position at Massey University, I was a primary school teacher for 15 years. I am presently involved in a PhD study looking at barriers to the school inclusion of children and young people who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. This research forms the third phase of my PhD study looking at the issue from *within the school*. I am particularly interested in answers to the following questions:

- What are the barriers to mainstream school inclusion for disabled students?
- Why do some schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- How do schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- What behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, norms and values are found in schools that exclude and marginalize disabled students?
- How can barriers to school inclusion be broken down?

**Project Procedures**

Data is being gathered to answer these questions in three phases:

Phase one: Web questionnaire and interviews with parents

Phase two: Questionnaire and interviews with school principals

Phase three: Interviews with teachers, teacher aides and a group of school students.

**As part of the third phase of the research, I wish to talk to a randomly selected group of students regarding their thoughts about the inclusion of disabled students. Your child has indicated an interest in being part of this focus group of students. I would like to seek your informed consent for your child to participate.**

**Focus Group Procedures**

The focus group discussion should take approximately 60 minutes. There are about ten main questions (I have attached these for your information). The discussion will happen at school, probably in the school library or staffroom. There will be approximately 10 students participating in the focus group discussion. The students have been selected by asking the school to randomly select a pre-determined number of students from the school roll.

With the permission of all the students participating in the focus group discussion, I would like to audio tape it. The tape will be transcribed by another person (who will have signed a confidentiality agreement) and analysed by me for themes. No identifying



data will be used, so reducing the likelihood of identifying participants. All participants will have their identity protected. Every student in the focus group will have the opportunity to be sent a summary of the findings from this phase of the research.

Copies of the tapes will be stored in my locked office, together with a copy of the transcripts for a period of five years, after which they will be destroyed.

Students will be asked not to talk about individual children. However, if this does happen accidentally, students will be asked to keep what is said at the focus group confidential.

### **Participants Rights**

The students are under no obligation to accept the invitation to participate in the focus group discussion. As a parent/caregiver, you are under no obligation to give your permission for your child to participate in the focus group discussion. If students do accept the invitation to participate and you give your permission, they have the following rights:

- to decline to answer any particular question;
- to ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- to provide information on the understanding that their name will not be used;
- to be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

### **Project Contacts**

If you have any questions about this research you can contact me, or my supervisors. Contact details are:

#### **Researcher:**

Alison Kearney  
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Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North  
Ph 06 3569099 ext 8704

#### **Supervisors:**

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Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North  
Ph 06 3569099 ext 8304

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 07/17. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz)

**Please complete the form below and ask your child to return it in the supplied envelope to the school office. Alternatively, you can pop it in any NZ Post box, the postage has been paid.**



**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices  
Information Sheet  
Phase Three: Student Focus Group**

**Research/Researcher Introduction**

Hello, my name is Alison Kearney and I work at Massey University as a teacher. I am also studying at that university for a qualification called a PhD. As part of this study, I am doing a project looking at the difficulties or troubles some kids with learning and/or behaviour difficulties and kids who are disabled, have at school.

Last year, I put some questions on the internet and asked parents who had kids with disabilities or special difficulties to go to this site and answer these questions. About 63 parents did this. Then I asked some parents if I could interview them about the things that had happened to their kids. This was the first part of my project. In the second part of my project I talked to school principals.

In the last part of my project I want to go into a school and talk to teachers and students about what they think about including kids who have behaviour and learning difficulties or disabilities. So that is what I am doing now, I'm asking you if you would like to be part of this study. I would like to invite you to be part of a group of about ten students to answer some questions I have. We would all sit in the same room at school, I would ask your opinions about some things to do with my study, and if you wanted to answer any of the questions, you could.

The questions would be about things that get in the way of kids who have difficulties with learning and behaviour or kids who are disabled being a normal part of the school. I am looking to see if there are some things that happen at school that makes it hard for these kids to feel part of a school and be included in all the stuff that other kids do, other kids without these difficulties. **I don't want us to talk about any ONE student, so I don't want us to name anyone**, I just want to talk about your ideas in general.

You do not have to say yes to being part of this study, no one will mind! Or, even if you do say yes, and I ask you a question you do not want to answer, you do not have to answer that or any other questions. Later on, if you change your mind about being part of this study, you can let me or your Mum/Dad/caregiver know (my phone number and address are at the bottom of this sheet) and if it is no later than three months after the interview, I can throw away all of your answers or just send them back to you and not use them at all.

There are about ten questions and it will probably take about one hour to talk about them. If you have any questions, you can ask me at anytime, and, if you want to, I can send you a copy of the summary of what I find out from my study. One of the other things about taking part in this study is that I will not use your name. That means no one

will know that the answers you give to my questions came from you (this means you are anonymous).

Because I cannot write very fast, I would like to tape your answers. However, all the kids in the group would have to agree that that is OK. If one person says no, I will just take notes.

When I have finished doing all that, I am going to listen to the tapes, put all the information together and write down what I have found out from talking to you all. This will be for my study I told you about earlier.

Copies of the tapes will be stored in my locked office, together with a copy of the transcripts for a period of five years, after which they will be destroyed.

If you want to be part of this group of students that takes part in this study, here is a summary of your rights. You are allowed to:

- Not answer any questions you don't want to;
- Start answering the questions than say that you don't want to do it any more;
- Answer all the questions, then say that you want all your answers taken out of my study (up to three months after the interview);
- Ask any questions about the study at any time you like;
- Know that no one will know your name or know any of the answers belong to you;
- Be given a summary of what I have found out by interviewing all the people in my study.

Name of researcher and how to contact her:

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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 07/17. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz)



**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices  
Information Sheet  
Phase Three: Teacher-Aide Focus Group Interview**

**Research/Researcher Introduction**

My name is Alison Kearney and I am employed as a senior lecturer at Massey University College of Education. I am presently involved in a PhD study looking at barriers to the school inclusion of children and young people who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. This research forms the third phase of my PhD study. I am now looking at the issue from *within the school*. I am particularly interested in answers to the following questions:

- What are the barriers to mainstream school inclusion for disabled students?
- Why do some schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- How do schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- What behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, norms and values are found in schools that exclude and marginalize disabled students?
- How can barriers to school inclusion be broken down?

**Project Procedures**

Data is being gathered to answer these questions in three phases:

Phase one: Web questionnaire and interviews with parents

Phase two: Questionnaire and interviews with school principals

Phase three: Interviews with teachers, teacher aides and a group of school students

**Project Procedures**

The focus group discussion should take approximately 60 minutes. There are about ten main questions (I have attached these for your information). The discussion will happen at school, probably in the school library or staffroom.

With the permission of all the teacher-aides participating in the focus group discussion, I would like to audio-tape the focus group interview. The tape will be transcribed by another person (who will have signed a confidentiality agreement) and analysed by me for themes. No identifying data will be used, so reducing the likelihood of identifying participants. All participants will have their identity protected. Every person in the focus group will have the opportunity to be sent a summary of the findings from this phase of the research.

Copies of the tapes will be stored in my locked office, together with a copy of the transcripts for a period of five years, after which they will be destroyed.

If you wish, you will be sent a summary of my findings from this phase of the research.

### **Participants Rights**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study (up to three months after the interview date);
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

### **Project Contacts**

If you have any questions about this research you can contact me, or my supervisors. Contact details are:

#### **Researcher:**

Alison Kearney  
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Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
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Ph 06 3569099 ext 8704

#### **Supervisors:**

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This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 07/17. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz)

## Appendix C: Questionnaires

### Appendix C1: Phase one parent web questionnaire

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#### Barriers to the Inclusion in Regular Schools of Children and Young People who are Disabled or Experience Difficulties with Learning and Behaviour

## A Questionnaire

*Thank you for logging on to this web questionnaire. My name is Alison Kearney and this research forms the basis of my PhD thesis looking at identifying barriers to the inclusion of children and young people who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. I am a Senior Lecturer at Massey University College of Education where I teach and research in the area of special and inclusive education.*

*Prior to taking up my position at Massey University I was a class teacher and a resource teacher for 17 years. If you would like to contact me, my contact details are printed at the end of this page. You will also find the contact details of my research supervisors.*

---

### **Information about the Research**

This questionnaire is part of a larger study that is looking at barriers to the school inclusion of children and young people who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. The trend in New Zealand is to educate children and young people who are disabled, in regular school settings. However, even when children are in their local school, there are indications to suggest that some of these children and young people are experiencing a number of exclusionary forces, or barriers to their inclusion while being physically included in a school. This is a questionnaire for parents who have a child who has experienced barriers or obstacles to their inclusion at school.

The wider study (of which this questionnaire is the first part) will include interviews with parents and children/young people who have experienced barriers to being included at school. The wider study may also include interviews with school principals, teachers, teacher aides and children. If you choose to complete this questionnaire, this in no way binds you to participate in any other aspect of the study (please see below for more information about the remainder of the study). In particular, there is information for those of you who may be interested in participating in a follow up interview)

It is hoped that this study can help to uncover the stories behind the barriers to school inclusion for children and young people who are disabled, and make recommendations

about how these barriers can be eliminated thus improving the school experiences for these people.

### **Project Procedures**

The questionnaire should take approximately 10 - 20 minutes to complete. Once you have completed this questionnaire, please click on the 'submit' button at the end of the questionnaire. This will send your responses to me via e mail. The data will be used to formulate the interview questions (in the next phase of the study). Analysis of the data will also be included in my final PhD thesis publication. This is an anonymous questionnaire and no participants will be identified. Participants can also be assured that the data obtained from this questionnaire will be stored (in print version) in a lockable office. Data will be destroyed in five years from the collection date. The web page will be taken off the world wide web on the **30 March 2005**. If as a participant, you would like a summarised copy of the findings from this section of the study, you can indicate this at the bottom of the questionnaire. It should be noted that this will require providing your name and contact details to me as the researcher.

### **Participant's Rights**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation to complete this questionnaire. If you choose to do this, you have the following rights as set out in the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct.

The right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study (that is, ask for your responses to be withdrawn up to one month from submitting the questionnaire);
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation (the researchers contact details are provided on this web page);
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded (you have the opportunity to indicate at the end of the questionnaire if you would like to be sent a summary of the questionnaire data)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, Wellington Application 05/45. If you have any concerns about the ethics of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: WGTN telephone 06 350 5249 x 8635, email [humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz)

Completing this questionnaire implies consent.

#### **Researcher**

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## Questionnaire

This is a questionnaire about the barriers children who are disabled or experience difficulties with learning and behaviour may have experienced in regards to being included at school in New Zealand.

**A barrier to school inclusion is anything that has acted as an obstacle, or has got in the way of a child or young person participating as a valued and accepted school member with equal access to all the things that happen at school (such as learning experiences, resources, friendships, school and class rewards, teacher time and so forth).**

Statistical information about your child

Gender

Date of Birth

Area of need or disability (please tick **one only** thus indicating the main area of need)

Physical

Intellectual

Emotional

Hearing

Visual

Speech or communication

Behaviour

Multiple complex needs

Other (Please specify)

**Does your child have other area of disability or need (not identified above as the main area) (you may tick more than one)**

Physical

Intellectual

Emotional

Hearing



- Visual
- Speech or communication
- Behaviour
- Other (please specify)

**What level of schooling is your child involved in NOW?**

- Early childhood (for example kindergarten, playcentre, childcare centre )
- Primary School
- Kura Kaupapa Maori
- Intermediate School
- Secondary School
- Not at school any more

**Where were barriers to school inclusion experienced (you may tick more than one)**

- Early childhood (kindergarten, playcentre, childcare centre)
- Primary School
- Kura Kaupapa Māori
- Intermediate School
- Secondary School

**Please indicate the period in which your child experienced barriers to their school inclusion.**

Prior to 1960      1960s      1970s      1980s      1990s      currently

**Below are some of the common barriers to school inclusion. Please choose the TEN you consider to be the major barriers your child has experienced to being included at school**

- Lack of funding
- Poor attitude of class teacher
- Inadequate physical resources (such as a computer, or a standing frame)
- Poor attitudes of the other students at the school
- Poor attitudes of the other parents at the school
- The teacher not giving my child enough of his or her time
- Lack of teacher aide time

Poor attitude of the school Principal  
Inadequate school policy regarding the inclusion of children and young people with special needs  
The physical environment of the school  
The physical environment of the classroom  
Child not having friends  
Lack of adaptation of my child's school work  
Discrimination on the basis of their special need  
My child not being valued by the school  
My child not being wanted by the school  
Being segregated from the regular class  
Lack of caring by staff  
Not enough pastoral support in the school  
The actual disability of my child  
Not including me as a parent (keeping me informed, welcoming me in the school etc)  
Too many children in my child's class  
My child being treated unfairly by those in control at the school  
My child being bullied or harassed  
The teachers not being knowledgeable about the special needs of my child  
Lack of school policies around meeting the needs of students with special needs  
Focusing only on the things my child couldn't do  
Other.....(please specify)

**Please comment briefly on the one barrier that you consider to be the most powerful in acting as an obstacle to your child's inclusion at school.**

**What was this barrier?**

**How did your child experience it?**

**Can you give a specific example of what happened?**

**Is there anything else you would like to add about the barriers or obstacles your child has experienced in terms being included in their school?**

**Would you like to be sent a summary of the findings of this questionnaire?**

Yes (please provide an email or postal address)

No

### **Follow-up Interview**

Would you be interested in participating in a follow-up interview?

This would take place at a time and place convenient to you (and may even be over the phone if you would prefer). The interview would take from one to two hours and would explore in more depth some of the points covered in this questionnaire. If you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview, please complete your contact details in the space below. I will contact you within the next month.

I would like to take part in a follow-up interview

Name:

Address:

Phone number:

#### **Researcher**

Alison Kearney  
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## Appendix C2: Phase two school principal questionnaire

### Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices

#### Principal Questionnaire

This is a questionnaire about the barriers to school inclusion for students who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. It investigates the beliefs, principles and practices of the school principal and the role of these in relation to the inclusion or exclusion of these students. It is not about specific special needs of students, but rather factors that may act to disadvantage or exclude these students. This is an anonymous questionnaire, and respondents will not be identified. Completion and return of the questionnaire implies consent.

The following terms are used in this questionnaire.

**Disability:** A restriction or disadvantage experienced by an individual with an impairment.

**Inclusion:** Increasing the participation of students (especially those who have historically been excluded or marginalized) in the cultures, curricula and communities of their local school.

#### SECTION ONE (please circle answers)

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Age: 20–30 31–40 41–50 51–60 60+
3. Years teaching (including role of principal): 0–3 4–10 11–20 20+
4. In which sector do you teach? Primary Intermediate Secondary
5. Did you train as a:  
early childhood  
  
primary  
  
secondary teacher (circle one)
6. What is your highest tertiary qualification?  
No tertiary qualification  
Certificate  
Diploma  
Bachelors degree  
Masters degree  
Postgraduate certificate or diploma

PhD

**SECTION TWO** (please circle answers)

**Please rate your level of familiarity with the following:**

7. The legislation that supports the rights of students who are disabled to attend their local school  
**Very familiar                      familiar                      a little familiar                      never heard  
of it**
8. The Government funding framework that sets out the resourcing support for schools to meet the needs of students who are disabled  
**Very familiar                      familiar                      a little familiar                      never heard  
of it**
9. The New Zealand Disability Strategy  
**Very familiar                      familiar                      a little familiar                      never heard  
of it**
10. The National Education Guidelines relevant to students who are disabled  
**Very familiar                      familiar                      a little familiar                      never heard  
of it**
11. The National Administration Guidelines relevant to students who are disabled  
**Very familiar                      familiar                      a little familiar                      never heard  
of it**
12. The role of the Resource Teacher, Learning and Behaviour  
**Very familiar                      familiar                      a little familiar                      never heard  
of it**
13. The role of the Resource Teacher, Literacy  
**Very familiar                      familiar                      a little familiar                      never heard  
of it**
14. The supports available to help teachers meet the needs of students who are disabled  
**Very familiar                      familiar                      a little familiar                      never heard  
of it**
15. Your school policy regarding meeting the needs of students who are disabled  
**Very familiar                      familiar                      a little familiar                      never heard  
of it**
16. An understanding of the theories behind how students learn  
**Very familiar                      familiar                      a little familiar                      never heard  
of it**

17. Supports available to help parents, caregivers and whānau who have children who are disabled  
**Very familiar**                      **familiar**                      **a little familiar**                      **never heard of it**
18. Current *principles* and *practices* related to meeting the needs of students who experience difficulties with their behaviour  
**Very familiar**                      **familiar**                      **a little familiar**                      **never heard of it**
19. Current *principles* and *practices* related to meeting the needs of students who experience difficulties with their learning  
**Very familiar**                      **familiar**                      **a little familiar**                      **never heard of it**
20. Practices to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of students who are disabled  
**Very familiar**                      **familiar**                      **a little familiar**                      **never heard of it**
21. The concept/philosophy of inclusion  
**Very familiar**                      **familiar**                      **a little familiar**                      **never heard of it**

**SECTION THREE** (please circle answers)

**Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:**

22. All students can learn  
**Strongly agree**      **agree**      **uncertain**      **disagree**      **strongly disagree**
23. There are some students who need special treatment and this cannot be provided in this school  
**Strongly agree**      **agree**      **uncertain**      **disagree**      **strongly disagree**
24. I feel that I have the knowledge and skills to lead a school that can meet the needs of *all* learners.  
**Strongly agree**      **agree**      **uncertain**      **disagree**      **strongly disagree**
25. It is the classroom teacher's job to report to parents of *all* children in their class  
**Strongly agree**      **agree**      **uncertain**      **disagree**      **strongly disagree**
26. Regular schools *can* meet the needs of *all* students who are disabled  
**Strongly agree**      **agree**      **uncertain**      **disagree**      **strongly disagree**
27. Regular schools *should* meet the needs of *all* students who are disabled  
**Strongly agree**      **agree**      **uncertain**      **disagree**      **strongly disagree**
28. Teachers have an obligation to non-disabled students first and foremost

- |                                                                                                                      | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 29. Parents of disabled and non-disabled children are given the same rights and respect in this school               | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 30. Students who experience difficulty at school often do so because of their own shortcomings                       | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 31. It is the role of the classroom teacher to meet the needs of all learners                                        | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 32. Teaching is a solitary activity                                                                                  | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 33. The main role of a classroom teacher is to 'impart knowledge'                                                    | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 34. Teachers must be prepared to meet the needs of all learners on their own without the help of other professionals | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 35. There are clearly defined groups of students, those with special needs and those without special needs           | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 36. At this school, some students are more valuable to us than others                                                | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 37. I feel justified in denying school attendance to those students who need, but do not have, teacher aide support  | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 38. At this school, some students hold more status than others                                                       | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 39. Except for enrolment and zoning policies, all students are welcome to attend this school                         | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 40. Some parents at this school do not want students who are disabled in their child's class                         | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |
| 41. The professional development of teachers is given a strong emphasis at this school                               | <b>Strongly agree</b> | <b>agree</b> | <b>uncertain</b> | <b>disagree</b> | <b>strongly disagree</b> |

42. At this school, the main style of teaching is expository (learn by doing) rather than narrative (learn by telling and listening)  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**
43. Students who are disabled are welcome at this school  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**
44. Students who experience difficulties with learning are welcome at this school  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**
45. Students who experience difficulties with behaviour are welcome at this school  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**
46. When it comes to meeting the needs of students who are disabled, the main focus is on increasing the capacity/capability of the teachers and the school  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**
47. Our school has made a conscious effort to identify and address the barriers to the learning and participation of minority ethnic groups  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**
48. Our school has made a conscious effort to identify and address the barriers to the learning and participation of disabled students  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**
49. Our school has made a conscious effort to identify and address the barriers to the learning and participation of gifted students  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**
50. At this school the main role of a teacher aide working with a learner is to encourage independence and self-regulated learning  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**
51. This school has active policies and practices to reduce bullying  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**
52. Compared to other schools in our local communities, we have more students who are disabled or who have difficulties with learning and behaviour  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**
53. This school is a magnet school for students who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour  
**Strongly agree      agree      uncertain      disagree      strongly disagree**

**SECTION FOUR (please circle answers)**

**Please indicate the level of frequency of the following:**



54. I would have contact with all parents of children in our school at least once a year  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
55. I enjoy having parents come into our school  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
56. I encourage resource teachers to come into our school (e.g. RTLB)  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
57. Teachers at this school make adaptations to the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of the students in their class  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
58. I enjoy working with other professionals (for example psychologists, special needs advisors)  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
59. I ask colleagues for their opinions and advice  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
60. I take all opportunities offered to me to improve my practice  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
61. Teacher to teacher bullying occurs in our school  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
62. Teacher to student bullying occurs in our school  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
63. Student to student bullying occurs in our school  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
64. Teachers at this school use a range of teaching strategies (for example, cooperative learning, action learning, problem based learning, chalk and talk, discovery based learning)  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
65. I have advised some parents that their children would be better served at schools other than this one  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
66. At this school we make a deliberate attempt to increase the participation of students from backgrounds different to the majority  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**
67. At this school we make links between the child's learning within the classroom to their world outside the school.  
**Often**      **sometimes**      **seldom**      **never**

**SECTION FIVE** (please circle answers)

**In relation to students who are disabled, how important are the following for the success of inclusion?**

- |     |                                                    |              |                       |                  |                      |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 68. | Funding                                            | <b>Vital</b> | <b>Very important</b> | <b>Important</b> | <b>Not important</b> |
| 69. | The attitude of the School Principal               | <b>Vital</b> | <b>Very important</b> | <b>Important</b> | <b>Not important</b> |
| 70. | The attitude of the class teacher                  | <b>Vital</b> | <b>Very important</b> | <b>Important</b> | <b>Not important</b> |
| 71. | The knowledge and skills of the classroom teacher  | <b>Vital</b> | <b>Very important</b> | <b>Important</b> | <b>Not important</b> |
| 72. | The provision of Teacher Aides                     | <b>Vital</b> | <b>Very important</b> | <b>Important</b> | <b>Not important</b> |
| 73. | Making adaptations to the curriculum               | <b>Vital</b> | <b>Very important</b> | <b>Important</b> | <b>Not important</b> |
| 74. | A school climate that is accepting of 'difference' | <b>Vital</b> | <b>Very important</b> | <b>Important</b> | <b>Not important</b> |

75. Please rate the following factors in order of importance. 1 being the most important factor for inclusion, 7 being the least important.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Funding
- \_\_\_\_\_ The attitude of the School Principal
- \_\_\_\_\_ The attitude of the class teacher
- \_\_\_\_\_ The knowledge and skills of the classroom teacher
- \_\_\_\_\_ The provision of Teacher Aides
- \_\_\_\_\_ Making adaptations to the curriculum
- \_\_\_\_\_ A school climate that is accepting of difference

76. Any other comments?

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**Follow-up Interview:**

Would you be prepared to participate in a follow-up interview?

This would take place at a time and place convenient to you and may even be over the phone if you would prefer. The interview would take one hour and would explore in more depth some of the points covered in this questionnaire.

If you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview, please complete your contact details in the space below. I will contact you within the next month.

**I would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview:      yes**

Name:

Name of School:

Address of School:

Phone Number of School:

Email Address:

## Appendix D: Interview Schedules

### Appendix D1: Phase one parent interview schedule

#### Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices Phase One: Parent interview questions

This study is about inclusion and exclusion, and in particular, the barriers children who are disabled or experience difficulties with learning and behaviour may experience in their local mainstream school. These barriers I describe as **forces of exclusion**, as they reduce the ability of children to participate in some, or many aspects school life. This was described in the original web questionnaire as:

*A barrier to school inclusion is anything that has acted as an obstacle, or has got in the way of a child or young person participating as a valued and accepted school member with equal access to all the things that happen at school such as learning experiences, resources, friendships, school and class rewards, teacher time and so forth.*

#### Question one

A confirmation of the statistical information about your child gathered from the web questionnaire.

Gender

Age

Main area of disability or need

Geographical area

#### Question two

I would like to explore your understandings and opinions regarding the concept of inclusion.

What does this mean to you?

Is inclusion something that is important to you in regards to your child at school?

Why/why not?

#### Question three

In the questionnaire, you identified the following barriers that your child experienced to being included at school. First, I would like to take the barrier that you identified as the main barrier and have you elaborate on how you and your child experienced this. Then I will read out the other barriers you identified and ask you to elaborate on some of your choosing.

The main barrier identified in the questionnaire was:

.....

- How was this experienced?
- Did the school justify this barrier? If so, how?
- What were the repercussions of this barrier?
- What could have made the situation better?

The other barriers you identified in the questionnaire were:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

(show parent)

These were some of the other barriers you indicated in the questionnaire that your child had experienced. Can you choose one and talk about:

- How was this experienced?
- Did the school justify this barrier? If so, how?
- What were the repercussions of this barrier?
- What could have made the situation better?

**Question four**

Do you have any other comments you wish to make about the barriers you and your child experienced to their inclusion at school.

## **Appendix D2: Phase two school principal interview schedule**

### **Inclusion (General)**

What does inclusion mean to you?

Many countries around the world are pursuing a model of inclusive education. Why do you think this is?

What are your views about the inclusion of students who are disabled or who experience difficulty with learning and/or behaviour?

Are there any instances when inclusion is just not possible?

What do you think are the important things that need to happen in order for inclusion to be a reality for students who are disabled or who experience difficulty with learning and behaviour?

Is this a reality at this school?

### **Barriers to Inclusion**

In this study, I am using the following definition of a barrier to inclusion

**A barrier to school inclusion is anything that has acted as an obstacle, or has got in the way of a child or young person participating as a valued and accepted school member with equal access to all the things that happen at school (such as learning experiences, resources, friendships, school and class rewards, teacher time and so forth).**

What do you think are the main barriers that get in the way of students who are disabled or who experience difficulty with learning and behaviour being included in regular schools?

Do any of these things occur at your school?

Are there any pressures upon schools **not** to be inclusive? (what where do these pressures come from, why?)

### **Enablers to Inclusion**

As the opposite to barriers, what do you think are the ‘enablers’ to inclusion?

Do any of these things occur at your school?

In the questionnaire, you identified some other factors as being important for inclusion (choose factors that have not been discussed). Can you clarify and expand your points here?

Are there any pressures upon schools **to** be inclusive? (what where do these pressures come from, why?)

### **Contextual**

Obviously, schools have limited resources and funding. What happens when there are limited resources and funding? How are decisions made about who or what will be funded? How do you as a school principal make these decisions? Are some things more worthy of funding and resourcing?

What is the role of parents in your school? Is there a link between inclusion and relationships with parents?

What is the role of teacher aides in your school? Is there a link between inclusion and the use of teacher aides?

The National Administration Guidelines (1) state that:

...on the basis of good quality assessment information, schools need to identify students and groups of students who are not achieving, who are at risk of not achieving or who have special needs. How does your school do this?

Does your school have a policy regarding meeting the needs of students who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour? Is this a policy that most teachers would be familiar with?

Bullying – do you think this is this an issue for inclusive education?

Do you have any other comments you wish to make?

### **Appendix D3: Phase three teacher interview schedule**

#### **Inclusion (General)**

What does inclusion mean to you?

Many countries around the world are pursuing a model of inclusive education. Why do you think this is?

What are your views about the inclusion of students who are disabled or who experience difficulty with learning and/or behaviour?

Are there any instances when inclusion is just not possible?

What do you think are the important things that need to happen in order for inclusion to be a reality for students who are disabled or who experience difficulty with learning and behaviour?

Is this a reality at this school?

#### **Barriers and Enablers to Inclusion**

In this study, I am using the following definition of a barrier to inclusion

**A barrier to school inclusion is anything that has acted as an obstacle, or has got in the way of a child or young person participating as a valued and accepted school member with equal access to all the things that happen at school (such as learning experiences, resources, friendships, school and class rewards, teacher time and so forth).**

What do you think are the main barriers that get in the way of students who are disabled or who experience difficulty with learning and behaviour being included in regular schools?

Do these things occur in this school, or are these things present in this school?

Are there any pressures upon schools **not** to be inclusive? (what where do these pressures come from, why?)

What are some of the enablers of inclusive education?

Do these things occur in this school, or are these things present in this school?

#### **Teacher Knowledge and Confidence**

What is your understanding of the concept of inclusive education?

How knowledgeable do you think you are in relation to successfully including students who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour?

How confident do you think you are in relation to successfully including students who are disabled or experience difficulties with learning and behaviour?



**Contextual**

Is there any relationship between inclusion and resourcing/funding?

What is the role of parents in this school? Is there a link between inclusion and relationships with parents?

What is the role of teacher aides in this school? Is there a link between inclusion and the use of teacher aides?

Bullying –is this an issue for inclusive education?

Are there any other comments you wish to make?

## **Appendix D4: Phase three teacher aide focus group interview schedule**

### **The role of the teacher aide**

Can you talk to me about the work that you do in the school?

### **Inclusion (General)**

What does inclusion mean to you?

What are your views about the inclusion of students who are disabled or who experience difficulty with learning and/or behaviour?

Are there any instances when inclusion is just not possible?

### **Barriers and Enablers to Inclusion**

In this study, I am using the following definition of a barrier to inclusion:

**A barrier to school inclusion is anything that has acted as an obstacle, or has got in the way of a child or young person participating as a valued and accepted school member with equal access to all the things that happen at school (such as learning experiences, resources, friendships, school and class rewards, teacher time and so forth).**

What do you think are the main barriers that get in the way of students who are disabled or who experience difficulty with learning and behaviour being included in regular schools?

Do these things occur in this school, or are these things present in this school?

What are some of the enablers of inclusive education?

Do these things occur in this school, or are these things present in this school?

### **Teacher Knowledge and Confidence**

Do you think that regular teachers are adequately trained to meet the needs of disabled students or students who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour?

### **Contextual**

Is there any relationship between inclusion and resourcing/funding?

Bullying –is this an issue for inclusive education?

Are there any other comments you wish to make?

**Appendix D5: Phase three student focus group interview schedule**

First of all I would like to hear what you have to say about your school. What is your school like?

What are the teachers like?

What is the work like?

What about the kids at this school. What are they like?

Are there certain types of kids who are treated differently at this school?

Lets talk about this thing called inclusion. Is this something that any of you know about?

What do you think about the idea of including kids who experience difficulties with their learning and behaviour, or kids who are disabled in regular schools? (sometimes these kids are called kids with special needs)

What are some of the good things?

What are some of the not so good things?

Do you like having these kids at your school?

How are these kids treated in this school?

What do you think are the important things that need to happen at school for these kids?  
How could things be better for these kids?

Does this happen at this school?

What does it mean to have special needs?

**Appendix E: Consent Forms**

**Appendix E1: All phases parent/principal/teacher interview consent form**



**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

This consent form will be held for a period of five years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I wish/do not wish to have my tapes returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Full Name – printed.....



## **Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices**

### **CHILD/YOUNG PERSON CONSENT FORM**

This consent form will be held for a period of five years

I have read or listened to the information about this study

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I wish/do not wish to have my tapes returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Full Name – printed.....



## **Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices**

### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM TEACHER AIDE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW**

This consent form will be held for a period of five years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Full Name – printed.....

**Appendix E4: Phase three parent consent form for child's participation in the student focus group**



**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices**

**PARENT CONSENT FORM  
STUDENT FOCUS GROUP**

This consent form will be held for a period of five years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree for my child to take in this study under the conditions that were explained to me in the Information Sheet.

Name of child:.....

Name of parent/guardian:.....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

**PLEASE RETURN IN ENVELOPE PROVIDED TO EITHER THE SCHOOL OFFICE, OR VIA A NZ POST BOX. THE POSTAGE HAS BEEN PAID, SO YOU DO NOT NEED A STAMP.**

**Appendix E5: Phase three student focus group consent form**



**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices**

**PARENT CONSENT FORM  
STUDENT FOCUS GROUP**

This consent form will be held for a period of five years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me.

My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Full Name – printed.....



## Appendix F: Letters

### Appendix F1: Phase one letter to parents requesting follow-up interview



20 February, 2006.

Dear

Last year, you completed an on-line questionnaire looking into barriers to school inclusion for learners who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and/or behaviour. Many thanks for taking the time to do this. I have received over 60 responses from parents, all with interesting stories to tell of the barriers they have experienced in trying to get their child included in mainstream schools. I hope to have all this collated soon, and a summary of the findings will be sent out to you if you indicated your interest in this.

At the end of the questionnaire, you indicated your willingness to participate in a follow up interview. Thank you for offering to do this. I would very much like to complete a follow up interview with you. I have enclosed an information sheet about the research, and a copy of the questions that I would like to ask you in the interview.

With your permission, I would also like to interview your child. To do this, I would first seek your informed consent, then, the informed consent of your child. However, even if you do not consent to your child being interviewed, I would still be interested in talking with you.

If you are still prepared to be interviewed (at a time and place to suit you) I have enclosed a sheet that I would ask you to complete and return to me. This sheet ascertains if you are still willing to accept the invitation to participate in an interview. Please return this sheet to me in the enclosed envelope as soon as possible. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Alison Kearney

**Appendix F2: Phase one letter to parents with copy of interview transcript**



School of Curriculum and Pedagogy  
Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North

14 February 2007

Dear [name of parent],

During 2005, you agreed to take part in my PhD study looking at barriers to the school inclusion of learners who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and/or behaviour, and you kindly participated in an interview with me. First of all, my sincere apologies for not being in contact with you for so long. You may have begun to wonder if I was still working on this project, but the answer is yes! I have transcribed all the interviews, and enclosed a copy of your interview transcript. I have sent you a copy of your interview transcript for you to look at (if you wish) and/or just to have as a record of what was said. After reading through the transcript, you may feel that there are some things that you would prefer to delete. If this is so, I have enclosed a stamped self-addressed envelope for you to post the transcript back to me with your changes on it. I will then make the changes, and send it back to you.

Just to clarify how I am going to use this information. I will be looking through all the interview transcripts to identify important points related to the barriers children have experienced. I will place a code next to each point or theme. These points and themes will provide the basis of my discussion in my PhD report. For example, one of the themes that appear to be common in many of the interviews is a lack of teacher and school principal knowledge. This will certainly be a major theme in my report. When I discuss each theme, I will use one or two quotes from the interviews to support my discussion. No quotes will be used that can identify people in any way. No names of parents, children, teachers, principals or schools will be used.

Also, for your interest, I have continued to work on another avenue for my PhD. I have used a questionnaire to gain information from school principals regarding their views on inclusion and exclusion and I will be interviewing ten school principals this term. I hope to have the PhD completed in draft form by the end of next year. Please keep in touch if you would like to see some/all of this. I think about you all a lot, and listening to your experiences has really improved my teaching in regards to preparing student teachers for the real world of inclusion, so many thanks for that, you have made a difference!

I have another request please. I would like to develop a teaching CD that records some of the comments and phrases that came out of the interviews I conducted with you and the other parents. These will be recorded onto the CD and used for teaching purposes with teacher trainees, trainee psychologists, and other people training to take up professional positions in education. I would not use your voice from the tape, but ask friends and colleagues to read passages onto tape for me (of course the passages they read from would not identify you in any way). As with my PhD report, no names of parents, children, teachers, principals or schools will be used. The development of this CD is part of a wider project (called FIET) with three other colleagues from the College of Education. One of these colleagues, Mandia Mentis has a funding source to develop digital teaching resources for use at the College of Education. I am hoping that my contribution to this project could be a teaching CD promoting the voice of parents and children who are disabled or experience difficulties with learning and behaviour.

If you are in agreement for some of the comments you made in our interview to be used in this way, could you please sign the consent form attached to this letter and return it to me in the stamped self addressed envelope provided. Again, I feel that the things you shared with me could be used in a positive way to improve the educational experiences for children who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. If I do not hear back from you, you can rest assured that I will not be using your comments in any way attached with this CD project. If you would like further information about this project, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Alison Kearney

**Appendix F3: Phase one letter to parents providing results of phase one**



**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices**

Results from Phase One Questionnaire

Early in 2005, you were one of 63 people who completed a web questionnaire related to barriers to school inclusion of children and young people who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. The questionnaire was part of a larger study examining barriers to school inclusion. You indicated that you would be interested in a summary of the findings, and these can be found attached to this letter.

Many thanks for your valuable input to this study. The study is still on-going, and, following the web questionnaire, 12 parents were interviewed (from all parts of New Zealand). The final phase of the research is taking place in schools, where observations and interviews with teachers will be conducted. It is hoped that the final data will be used to inform practice, with the hope of reducing and eliminating forces of exclusion that can be experienced at school by children and young people who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour.

Do not hesitate to keep in touch with me if you would like further, or on-going information about this study. My contact details are:

Alison Kearney  
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy  
Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North  
[a.c.kearney@massey.ac.nz](mailto:a.c.kearney@massey.ac.nz)

Kind regards

Alison Kearney

During February and March of 2005, 63 parents and/or caregivers of children who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour, completed a web questionnaire looking at barriers to school inclusion.

### **Demographic Data**

The following four tables set out the demographic data:

**Table 1. Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	48	76
Female	15	24

**Table 2. Main area of need or disability**

Main Area of Need/Disability	Frequency	Percent
Intellectual	19	30
Asperger	9	14
Behaviour	8	13
Autism	6	9
Speech and/or communication	5	8
Multiple/complex needs	5	8
Physical	3	5
Emotional	3	5
Hearing	2	3
Social	2	3
Visual	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

(Note: Asperger Syndrome and Autism, while not provided as choices in the questionnaire, were specified by a significant number of respondents, therefore have been entered in Table 2).

**Table 3. Present level of schooling**

Present Level of Schooling	Frequency	Percent
Primary	34	54
Intermediate	10	16
Secondary	14	22
Special School	1	6
Not at school anymore	4	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4. Geographical area where barriers were experienced**

Geographical Area	Frequency	Percent
Wellington	17	27
Auckland	9	14
Bay of Plenty	8	13
Manawatu/Wanganui	7	11
Hawkes Bay	5	8
Otago	5	8
Nelson	3	5
Canterbury	3	5

Southland	2	3
Wairarapa	1	1.5
Northland	1	1.5
Waikato	1	1.5
Not stated	1	1.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Common Barriers Experienced**

Respondents were asked to choose, from a list of 27 common barriers, up to ten barriers their child had experienced to being included at school. Table 5 summarizes this data.

**Table 5: Most common barriers experienced**

<b>Common Barriers</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Teachers not being knowledgeable about the special needs of my child	43	69
Lack of funding	37	60
Lack of teacher aide time	35	57
Poor attitude of class teacher	33	53
Poor attitude of the school principal	30	48
Lack of adaptation of my child's school work	25	40
My child being bullied or harassed	24	39
Lack of school policies around meeting the needs of students with special needs	24	39
Discrimination on the basis of their special need	22	36
Inadequate school policy on inclusion	20	32
Child not having friends	19	31
Poor attitudes of the other students at the school	18	29
Not including me as a parent	18	29
The teacher not giving my child enough of their time	16	26
The actual disability of my child	15	24
Being segregated from the regular class	14	23
My child not being wanted by the school	14	23
My child being treated unfairly by those in control at the school	13	21
My child not being valued by the school	13	21
The physical environment of the classroom	12	19
Lack of caring by staff	12	19
Focusing only on the things by child couldn't do	12	19
Too many children in my child's class	11	18
Inadequate physical resources	10	16
The physical environment of the school	10	16
Poor attitudes of the other parents at the school	9	15
Not enough pastoral support in the school	3	5

When data from Table 5 was analysed, there were three main foci to the barriers, these were:

- Factors associated with funding and/or resources (such as Teacher Aide time)
- Factors associated with teachers/principals (such as poor attitudes and lack of knowledge)
- Factors associated with the context of the school (such as school policy, the physical environment and bullying).

Figure 1 displays this data.

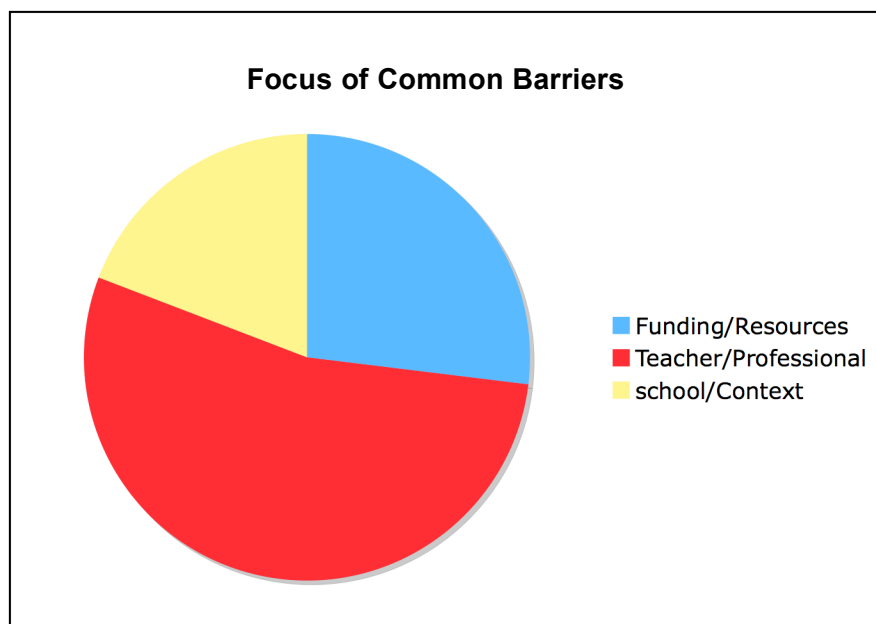


Figure 1: Focus of common barriers

### Main Barriers to Inclusion

Respondents were asked to nominate the ONE barrier that had been experienced the most by their child. Table 6 outlines this data:

Table 6. Main barrier

Main barrier	Frequency	Percent
Lack of teacher/principal knowledge and/or understanding	26	41
Poor attitude of the teacher/principal	8	13
Lack of funding and/or resourcing	12	19
Lack of teacher aide time	7	11
Bullying	6	10
Other	4	6
TOTAL	63	100

As with the previous question, when respondents were asked to identify ten barriers most commonly experienced, the most common barrier experienced was associated with the teacher and/or principal. (86%). This was followed by funding and resourcing barriers (48%) and contextual issues such as bullying and lack of adaptation (16%).

The following are some indicative comments from respondents, organised under each of these categories:

**Lack of teacher and/or principal knowledge and/or understanding**

*Lack of teacher knowledge about how to handle children with ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome. [name of child] was excluded from other children and stuck in a corner with the teacher aide. Was not taught in a method which he could understand.*

*Had major problems at [name of class] due to the teacher's style of teaching, yelling, time pressure, refusing to repeat instructions – I am sure that other children would have difficulty with this teacher's style too.*

*Lack of understanding of my son's disability. Reluctance of the staff of the school to access support and specialist knowledge.*

*The teachers not being knowledgeable about the special needs of my child. This was experienced by a bullying, patronizing attitude from the principal, not really getting to the bottom of the issues.*

*Treated unfairly by those in control. Lack of caring by staff, not enough friends, etc...the principal wrote to us and said that inclusion was not an option at [name of school].*

*IGNORANCE,IGNORANCE, IGNORANCE what can I say, everything stems from ignorance. This barrier was experienced in the way she was dealt with by staff, how they attended to problems that surfaced, their reluctance to do anything to help, their unwillingness to step outside their comfort zone, their inability/unwillingness to understand her difficulties.*

*Classroom teacher's attitude. No school work was set by the classroom teacher. ....The teacher would not read any material on his disability even though ample was supplied nor address the issue of her responsibility to teach our son or adapt any curriculum material. Any issues were also attributed to our son, not stemming from the class teacher ..his peer group took over his teaching in the afternoon by sharing work and reading stories...he resorted to running away when he was not included. The things that he loved and was good at were scheduled to happen in the class when he was not there. This showed a lack of consideration of where he could fit in easily in the class...The class teacher didn't believe that he could academically achieve although this was already well established...Other comments from the teacher were... "He will have to go home when the teacher aide does because he takes too much to keep an eye on I've got the other children to consider... he can't really do maths with the other children because he can't do fractions yet..." There was no progress reports or end of year portfolio collated for our son.*

*Lack of recognition by the classroom teacher on the need to modify curriculum to include our child in similar activities to those the other children were doing.*



*Child going off on his own to do 'other' activities. Being grouped and timetabled with other children with special needs.*

*Teacher's intolerance of my child's special needs and constantly criticizing him. Also abusing any child who tried to help him. The teacher criticizing my child for minor things like putting his fingers in his mouth and teaching other kids to pick on him as well by modeling her attitude. For example once my son walked into class with me and was apprehensive so put his fingers in his mouth the teacher said loudly "ooooohhh [son's name] other kids echoed her - "ooooohhh (in revulsion) yuk etc and all physically moved away from him when he sat down.*

*It is the whole combination of attitude, exclusion and discrimination that leads a child from having one disability to having multiple disabilities as in a lack of emotional development, self-esteem, confidence, ability to communicate, ability to learn and ability to participate – which collectively leads to problems carried through to adult life. The negative attitude towards our child created the school culture that allowed discrimination and bullying (a learnt behaviour). It was not part of the school culture for our child to be valued or wanted. This situation can only evolve because there is an attitude to allow it to happen or to deny it is happening.*

### **Funding and Resourcing Barriers**

*The principal kept trying to divert funds allocated to the school for my child into other areas of the school.*

*Lack of teacher aide funding and lack of commitment by the school to assist with this. Child was only able to be at school 12 hours per week, was unable to attend school without a teacher aide.*

*Lack of financial resource to give our child the support he needs, government policies which encourage mainstreaming and deliver main dreaming. Everything is hard work and is difficult for the child, the family, the principal and teachers. It is very difficult for anyone to do the job they want to when there is not the financial resource to do so. We are currently considering a satellite class through a special needs school as the school has indicated its concern with ongoing resourcing and ability to meet our son's needs.*

*Government policy – without ORRS there was no access to specialist teacher time and very limited teacher aide support. Child unable to participate in classroom activities – left to do nothing – resulting in severe anxiety, depression and loss of self esteem.*

*The disproportion of funding allocated to children with moderate to high needs in contrast to children with very high needs. My child's initial teacher aide time was redirected to existing children with very high needs as deemed appropriate by the principal.*

*Insufficient teacher aide funding so that [name of child] was unable to attend full time until we started topping it up ourselves. On different school days, he missed out on afternoon activities.*

### **Contextual Issues**

*Being bullied at school. Being excluded from an area in the school grounds.*

*Bullying by other students. He was very frightened, humiliated, lost even more self-esteem, became distracted and unable to work even in the classroom. He was very unhappy. In the space of 6 weeks, he had his head pounded in the ground, lip split, nose punched, pushed off a moving bus as well as the usual name calling, stone throwing and being spat at. ..I was told that he could not be treated any differently to anyone else and that the injuries in the playground were his own fault, due to his behaviour.*

*The bullying and harassing was done by the classroom teacher. Tolerance among the teaching staff and principal of inappropriate behaviour towards my daughter e.g. throwing a pen that hit my daughter, kicking her chair while seated on it, pushing her out a door, yelling at her for no reason....*

*Bullying. Physical - Being hung up on a peg in the cloakroom, ridiculed, shunned, having his lunch squashed, having his personal items stolen or wrecked, clothes ripped. Emotional – being shunned by peers, laughed at etc.*

*Not having friends. Spent playtimes and lunch times on her own. She became very unhappy to the point of my removing her from the school. One of her IEP objectives - and to me an extremely important one- was that a buddy system be set in place. This never happened.*

**Appendix F4: Phase two letter to principals requesting completion of questionnaire**



2 October, 2006.

Dear Principal

Are you interested in *breaking down barriers* to the inclusion of learners who are disabled or experience difficulties with learning and behaviour?

If so, you may be willing to complete the attached questionnaire. My name is **Alison Kearney** and I am a senior lecturer at Massey University College of Education where I am involved in teaching in the pre-service teacher education programme. Prior to taking up this position at Massey University I was a classroom teacher for 15 years, a Resource Teacher of Special Needs and a Guidance and Learning Teacher. This research is part of my PhD study looking into barriers to the inclusion of learners who are disabled and factors that act to exclude and marginalize these students. I have already conducted the first two phases of this research where I invited parents of disabled children to complete a web questionnaire. This questionnaire identified specific barriers that children had experienced to being included at school. I then went on and interviewed approximately twelve parents all around New Zealand, exploring in more depth some of the issues that they had raised.

I would now like to look at the issues raised from *within the school*. The first stage of this involves a questionnaire for school principals. Would you be able to assist me in this research by completing the attached questionnaire? This should take between 30 - 40 minutes. I have attached an information sheet that outlines the nature of the research project. The second stage of the process involves an interview with consenting school principals, however, completing this questionnaire *does not imply* a willingness to participate in the follow-up interview. Therefore, even if you do not want to participate in an interview, I would still appreciate you taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

At the end of the questionnaire, there is a section to complete if you would be prepared to participate in a follow-up interview.

Kind regards

Alison Kearney  
Senior Lecturer  
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy  
Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North  
06 3569099 ext 8704  
[a.c.kearney@massey.ac.nz](mailto:a.c.kearney@massey.ac.nz)

**Appendix F5: Phase two letter to school principals requesting follow-up interview**



23 February 2007.

The Principal  
[Address of school]

Dear [name of school principal],

Last year, you very kindly completed a questionnaire looking at barriers to the school inclusion of students who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. This questionnaire was part of my PhD study. Many thanks for the time you took to complete this questionnaire. I am aware of the time pressures upon school principals and also the number of research projects that come over their desks each week! The information that I have gathered from school principals has been a very valuable part of my study and has strengthened it enormously.

At the end of the questionnaire, you indicated that you would be prepared to participate in a follow up interview. I am hoping that you are still able to do this. I am able to fit into any time that suits you best. The interview can be at a place of your choosing (for example at your school), or over the phone if you prefer. I envisage the interview taking up to an hour. I have attached an information sheet about my research for your information.

Would you be so kind as to send the reply sheet back to me in the reply paid envelope indicating times and dates that you are available. I really look forward to talking to you soon.

Kind regards

Alison Kearney

**Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices**

**School Principal Interviews**

Name:

School:

Phone Number:

e mail:

The following interview times would suit me:

First preference	Day	Date	Time
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Second preference	Day	Date	Time
-------------------	-----	------	------

Third preference	Day	Date	Time
------------------	-----	------	------

I would prefer:

Face to face interview .....

Telephone interview .....

I have no preference .....

**Appendix F6: Phase two letter to school principals with interview transcript**



September, 2008.

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy  
Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North

Dear [name of school principal],

During 2007, you agreed to take part in my PhD study looking at barriers to school inclusion for learners who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour, and you kindly participated in an interview with me.

I am in the last stages of this study now, and one of the things that I have been doing is collating all the correspondence from the last three years together, to add to the appendices section of the thesis. I have been unable to find the letter I *thought* I wrote to all the school principals I interviewed, accompanying the return of their interview transcript. This raises a doubt in my mind as to whether I returned your transcript to you or not.

Therefore, I am returning your interview transcript to you now. If you have already received a copy of this transcript, and had the opportunity to read it/change/delete anything, please ignore this letter. If you have not, please accept my apologies, and an invitation for you to read through your transcript and make any alterations, additions or deletions that you wish. I have enclosed a stamped self-addressed envelope for you to send the amended transcript back to me if you want to make any changes. I will then make the changes on the master copy, and the necessary changes to my results, and send the transcript back to you.

For your information, I have developed what I hope will be useful prompts or indicators for teachers and school principals that may break down the barriers experienced by disabled students at school. I will be forwarding a copy of these to all participants early next year.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Alison Kearney

**Appendix F7: Phase three letter to school principal requesting school participation**



June 2007

The Principal  
[address of school]

Dear [name of school principal],

Thanks for talking to me on the phone today. A brief reminder...

My name is Alison Kearney and I am employed as a senior lecturer at Massey University College of Education. Prior to taking up this position, I was a classroom teacher, a Resource Teacher of Special Needs and a Guidance and Learning Teacher.

Recently, you kindly participated in an interview with me about barriers to the school inclusion of learners who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. Many thanks for this. I am presently transcribing the interviews and will send you a copy of the transcript in the next week or two.

I am writing to you with another request. For the final part of my study, I would like interview teachers, teacher aides and a group of students. This would be to follow up on their perspective of the themes that have been identified as barriers to school inclusion. I am writing to ask if you may consider allowing me to do that in your school.

It is hoped that the research would be carried out over two weeks, beginning as soon as possible.

I am particularly interested in identifying overt and covert exclusionary policies, attitudes and practices.

**What is in it for your school, the teachers and students?**

If schools participate in this research they must be prepared to have overt and covert exclusionary policies, attitudes and practices identified and discussed. This would provide information the school could use to guide and focus future improvements for disabled students and students who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour.

The overriding aim being to improve the school experiences of students who encounter difficulties with learning and behaviour. Similarly, one of my driving principles in relation to educational research is that there must be an advantage for those who give their time, their opinions and their space. This includes principals, teachers and in particular, the students themselves. Therefore, I intend to develop 'user friendly' teacher resources that identify the barriers to school inclusion for learners who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour and provide suggestions for

how these barriers may be overcome. I will be available to provide staff professional development in this area if participating schools request it. I hope to publish the findings of this research in 'teacher friendly' New Zealand journals.

I am also available to come into your school and talk through my proposal with you and your staff. I will phone you in the next few of days.

Kind regards

Alison Kearney  
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy  
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Palmerston North  
06 3569099 ext 8704  
[a.c.kearney@massey.ac.nz](mailto:a.c.kearney@massey.ac.nz)

.....  
.....

**BARRIERS TO SCHOOL INCLUSION:  
CULTURES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

Name of School:.....

School Address:.....

School Phone No:.....

I would like to discuss this proposal with you further

I would like you to come into the school and talk to my staff about this proposal.

This school is not able to participate in this research

Signed: .....



**Appendix F8: Phase three letter to school Board of Trustees**



June 2007.

The Chairperson  
[name of school] School Board of Trustees

Dear [name of chairperson]

I have recently been in conversation with the principal of your school in relation to research that I am hoping to carry out there. This research is entitled: **Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices**. It seeks to uncover the school factors that act to exclude and marginalize students who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and/or behaviour, and if they are working within your school. Your principal has agreed in principle for me to conduct my research in your school pending approval from the Board of Trustees.

My name is Alison Kearney and I am a senior lecturer at Massey University College of Education where I am involved in teaching in the pre-service teacher education programme. Prior to taking up this position at Massey University I was a classroom teacher for 15 years, a Resource Teacher of Special Needs and a Guidance and Learning Teacher. This research is part of my PhD study looking into barriers to the inclusion of learners who are disabled or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour. I have already conducted the first two phases of this research where I invited parents of disabled children/children who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour to complete a web questionnaire. This questionnaire identified specific barriers that children had experienced to being included at school. I then interviewed approximately twelve parents all around New Zealand, exploring in more depth some of the issues that they had raised.

I would now like to look at the issue from the perspectives of those within a school. I am particularly interested in answers to the following questions:

- What are the barriers to mainstream school inclusion for disabled students?
- Why do some schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- How do schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- What behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, norms and values are found in schools that exclude and marginalize disabled students?
- How can barriers to school inclusion be broken down?

Data would be gathered to answer these questions in three ways:

- Semi structured interviews with some teachers
- Focus group interviews with teacher aides

- A focus group interview with a group of participating students over the age of seven years.

I am particularly interested in identifying overt and covert exclusionary policies, attitudes and practices.

**What is in it for your school, the teachers and students?**

If schools participate in this research they must be prepared to have overt and covert exclusionary policies, attitudes and practices identified and discussed. This would provide information the school could use to guide and focus future improvements for disabled students.

The overriding aim being to improve the school experiences of students who encounter difficulties with learning and behaviour. Similarly, one of my driving principles in relation to educational research is that there must be an advantage for those who give their time, their opinions and their space. This includes principals, teachers and in particular, the students themselves. Therefore, I intend to develop 'user friendly' teacher resources that identify the barriers to school inclusion for learners who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and/or behaviour, and provide suggestions for how these barriers may be overcome. I will be available to provide staff professional development in this area if participating schools request it. I hope to publish the findings of this research in 'teacher friendly' New Zealand journals.

I am available to discuss this proposal with you if you require. My contact details are printed below. Whatever your decision regarding this, would you please complete the form below and return to me in the attached reply paid envelope. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Kind regards

Alison Kearney  
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy  
Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North  
06 3569099 ext 8704  
[a.c.kearney@massey.ac.nz](mailto:a.c.kearney@massey.ac.nz)

**Supervisors:**

Dr Jill Bevan-Brown  
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Dr Roseanna Bourke  
Centre for Educational Research  
Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North  
Ph 06 3569099 ext 8304

Name of School:.....

School Address:.....

School Phone No:.....

Permission to carry out the above-mentioned research is granted

Signed: ..... (Chairperson, Board of Trustees)

**Appendix F9: Phase three letter to potential teacher participants**



August 2007.

Dear teacher at [name of school]

As you know, from talking to you at a recent staff meeting, I have been in conversation with the principal of your school in relation to research that I am hoping to carry out there. This research is entitled: Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices. It seeks to uncover the school factors that act to exclude and marginalize students who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and/or behaviour.

This research is part of my PhD study. I have already conducted the first two phases of this research where I invited parents of disabled children/children who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour to complete a web questionnaire. This questionnaire identified specific barriers that children had experienced to being included at school. I then interviewed approximately twelve parents all around New Zealand, exploring in more depth some of the issues that they had raised.

As I explained at the staff meeting, I would now like to look at the issue from *within the school*. I am particularly interested in answers to the following questions:

- What are the barriers to mainstream school inclusion for disabled students?
- Why do some schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- How do schools erect barriers to the inclusion of disabled students?
- What behaviours, beliefs, attitudes, norms and values are found in schools that exclude and marginalize disabled students?
- How can barriers to school inclusion be broken down?

During this phase of the research, data would be gathered to answer these questions in three ways:

- Semi structured interviews with some teachers
- A focus group interview with some teacher aides
- A focus group interview with a group of participating students over the age of seven years.

I am particularly interested in identifying overt and covert exclusionary policies, attitudes and practices.

**I would like to invite you to participate in an interview with me. This would take place at a time and place convenient to you. It could even occur over the phone if you would prefer. The interview would take approximately 60 minutes**

If you would be willing to participate, could you please complete the attached form and leave it at the school office for me to pick up.

Kind regards

Alison Kearney  
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Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North  
Ph 06 3569099 ext 8304

.....  
.....

Name:.....

I would be willing to participate in an interview for the above mentioned study.

**Appendix F10: Phase three letter to potential teacher aide participants**



August 2007

Teacher Aide  
[address of school]

Dear Teacher Aide,

My name is Alison Kearney and I am a senior lecturer at Massey University College of Education where I am involved in teaching in the pre-service teacher education programme. I am presently working in your school gathering information for my PhD. This is looking at barriers to the inclusion of disabled learners.

I have already conducted the first two phases of this research where I invited parents of disabled children to complete a web questionnaire. This questionnaire identified specific barriers that children had experienced to being included at school. I then interviewed approximately twelve parents all around New Zealand, exploring in more depth some of the issues that they had raised.

**I would like to ask if you (along with other teacher aides in the school) would be prepared to take part in a group interview with me. This would be at a time that suits you all and at the school. It would involve sitting in a circle, answering questions and giving your opinions about meeting the needs of disabled students at school, and some of the difficulties that these students face.**

I have attached an information sheet about the research so that you can see if you would like to participate in this research.

If you want to ask me any questions about this research, you can contact me. My details are printed below.

Whatever your decision regarding this, would you please complete the form below and return to me in the attached reply paid envelope. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Kind regards

Alison Kearney  
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy  
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Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North  
Ph 06 3569099 ext 8304

.....  
.....

Name:.....

Yes, I am happy to take part in a group interview with other teacher aides

No, I do not want to take part in a group interview with other teacher aides

**Appendix F 11: Phase three letter to parents of potential focus group students**



3 September 2007.

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am writing to you to ask your permission for your son/daughter to participate in a focus group interview as part of some research I am doing at Massey University. This research is looking into barriers that disabled children experience to being included at school.

I have attached an information sheet to explain the research, and to also explain what would be involved if you agree to your child participating in this focus group interview. If in agreement, could you please complete the consent form and return to me in the reply paid envelope attached. This can be dropped off at the school office, or posted via a NZ post box. The postage has been paid.

If you have any further questions at all, please don't hesitate to contact me. My contact details are provided at the bottom of the information sheet.

Kind regards

Alison Kearney  
Senior Lecturer  
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy  
Massey University



**Appendix F 12: Phase three letter to interviewed teachers returning transcript**



March 2008.

School of Curriculum and Pedagogy  
Massey University College of Education  
Private Bag 11222  
Palmerston North

Dear [name of teacher],

During 2007, you agreed to take part in my PhD study looking at barriers to the school inclusion of learners who are disabled, or who experience difficulties with learning and behaviour, and you kindly participated in an interview with me. First of all, my sincere apologies for not being in contact with you for so long. You may have begun to wonder if I was still working on this project, but the answer is yes! I have transcribed all the interviews, and enclosed a copy of your interview transcript. I have sent you a copy of your interview transcript for you to look at (if you wish) and/or just to have as a record of what was said. After reading through the transcript, you may feel that there are some things that you would prefer to delete. If this is so, I have enclosed a stamped self-addressed envelope for you to post the transcript back to me with your changes on it. I will then make the changes, and send it back to you.

Just to clarify how I am going to use this information. I will be looking through all the interview transcripts to identify important points. I will place a code next to each point or theme. These points and themes will provide the basis of my discussion in my PhD report. No quotes will be used that can identify people in any way. No names of parents, children, teachers, principals or schools will be used.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Alison Kearney



## **Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices**

### **TRANSCRIBER'S CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

I, .....(full name – printed)  
agree to transcribe the tapes provided to me.

I agree to keep confidential all the information provided to me.

I will not make copies of the transcripts or keep any record of them, other than those required for the project

Signature:.....

Date:.....



## **Barriers to School Inclusion: Cultures, Policies and Practices**

### Information and Support Available for Parents and Children/Young People

Perhaps as a result of talking about some of the experiences you or your child have had at school, you feel you need to seek professional help in resolving some of these matters. The following are a list of people and/or organizations that may be able to help you. There may or may not be some cost involved in accessing these supports.

1. The Office of the Commissioner for Children employs duty advocates. If you wish to contact the duty advocate in the Commissioners Office to discuss your concerns about the interests rights or welfare of a child you can contact the Office by phoning 0800 224453 (0800 A CHILD) or you can write to the Commissioner at PO Box 5610 Wellington.
2. Parent legal information line for school issues (PLINFO) 0800499 488  
PO Box 24005, Wellington
3. Parent Help Line      Web: [www.dhildforum.com/parent\\_help\\_guide.html](http://www.dhildforum.com/parent_help_guide.html)
4. Most District Health Boards have a Child and Family Mental Health Service. For example the contact for Mid Central Health is:  
Community Health Village  
Private Bag 11036  
PALMERSTON NORTH  
Phone: (06) 350-8373  
Fax: (06) 350-8374

**For other areas, refer to the blue pages at the front of your phone book.**

**Appendix I: Digital Narrative Phase one**