Inclusive and Special Education: A way forward in the Solomon Islands

Umesh Sharma, Ph.D.

July ,2012

Table of Contents

ACRONYMS

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CWD	Children with Disabilities
EFA	Education for All
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development
MHMS	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
NLSRC	National Learning Support Resource Center
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PD	Professional Development
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SICHE	Solomon Islands College of Higher Education
RTC	Rural Training Centre
SDC	Special Development Centre
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
TA	Technical Assistant
TWG	Technical Working Group

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNESCO (2010) estimates there are 650 million children with disabilities in the world. Over 400 million children with disabilities live in the Asian Pacific countries. A large number of children with disabilities in these countries are out of school. The Solomon Islands is one such country. According to the latest estimates, only 2 percent of all children with disabilities have access to any form of education in the country (MEHRD, 2012). AusAID in a recent report indicated that the Solomon Islands is amongst the poorest performing Pacific countries in terms of providing equal access of education to children with disabilities. The government of the Solomon Islands is aware of its poor performance in this sector. The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development has identified an urgent need to develop a policy to promote inclusive and special education and draft a long term action plan that will be implemented from 2013 onwards.

This report is based on the assessment of the legal and policy contexts, the delivery of education at school level, teacher (in-service and pre-service) training, community awareness, suitability of school infrastructure/facilities, and cross sector collaboration for special and inclusive education. Data from a number of key stakeholders were collected to determine what services children with disabilities currently receive in the country and what further improvements need to be made. A key focus of the assessment was to understand how well prepared schools are to implement inclusive education practices now and what additional support they would need when an inclusive education policy is implemented.

In line with international policies, inclusive education, rather than segregated education, was considered a viable option to educate students with disabilities in the Solomon Islands. One of the most significant policy initiatives at the international level that has guided educational policies for such children across the world, including the Pacific countries, is the Salamanca Statement. The statement (UNESCO, 1994) proclaimed that: "regular schools with [an] inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system"(p. ix). Indeed, much research in the 1990s and 2000s has provided evidence of the effectiveness of this approach to education (e.g., Baker, Wang & Wallberg, 1994; Farrelle, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2007; Peetsma, Verger,

Roeleveld & Karsten, 2001).

According to UNESCO (2009, p.9) there are several justifications for inclusive education. First, there is an educational justification: the requirement for inclusive schools to educate all children together means that teachers have to develop ways of teaching that respond to individual differences and that therefore benefit not just the students with disabilities but all children. Second, there is a social justification: inclusive schools are able to change attitudes toward diversity by educating all children together where children start seeing how they are similar to rather than how they are different from each other, and this helps form the basis for a just and non-discriminatory society. Thirdly, there is an economic justification: it is less costly to establish and maintain schools that educate all children together than to set up a complex system of different types of schools specialising in education for different groups of children.

The assessment carried out for this report revealed several barriers that the Solomon Islands is likely to face when implementing the inclusive education policy. The barriers include, among others, lack of commitment of school educators to teach students with disabilities in their schools, inadequate preparation of pre-service and in-service teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms, lack of awareness amongst community members about the need to educate students with disabilities, lack of infrastructure and lack of funding. The key stakeholders identified a number of strategies that can address some of the barriers they identified. Three of the most common suggested strategies featured better training for in-service and pre-service teachers, availability of support in the form of educational materials for students with disabilities, and the active involvement of parents.

A number of recommendations have been identified that can move the country forward in its efforts to become more inclusive of learners with disabilities in regular school systems. Some of the most important recommendations include: establishing a National Learning Support Resource Center in the capital city; opening of demonstration schools across each of the 10 provinces; revision of pre-service teacher education programs; appointment of school level Inclusion Co-ordinators; ongoing in-service training for teachers, and offering a three-tier leadership training program for representatives from MEHRD and all members of school leadership teams. Also, special schools will need to change their roles from providers of segregated education to resource centers. It is important that when implementing the inclusive education policy, schools look at inclusive education as the foundation for providing better education to all children rather than

seeing it as an add-on program to schooling. The report concludes with important lessons learnt from other countries that the Solomon Islands need to be aware of when implementing the new policy.

PART 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, UNESCO revealed that over 650 million people around the world live with disabilities and are often excluded from participation in society (MEHRD, 2012). They have little hope of going to school, getting a job, having their own home, creating a family and raising their children, enjoying a social life or voting. Also access to shops, public facilities and transport is difficult or mostly impossible. Bengt Lindqvist (1999), the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Disability, stated in his report

> A dominant problem in the disability field is the lack of access to education for both children and adults with disabilities. As education is a fundamental right for all, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and protected through various international conventions, this is a very serious problem. In a majority of countries, there is a dramatic difference in the educational opportunities provided for disabled children and those provided for non-disabled children. It will simply not be possible to realize the goal of Education for All if we do not achieve a complete change in the situation.

The Solomon Islands is one such country. A recent report by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) in the Solomon Islands revealed that less than 2% of total enrolled children in primary education are children with special needs (Performance Assessment Framework 2008-2010, cited in MEHRD, 2012). Several barriers that have contributed to limited success in providing education to children with disabilities were identified in the Barrier of Education study (Tavola, 2011). These barriers included lack of knowledge and skills in the teaching community, lack of adequate teaching materials and equipment, and lack of awareness and commitment from parents to enrol their child with a disability in a regular or special school. The MEHRD is committed to changing the situation and has identified equitable access to good quality education as one of the main goals in the National Education Action Plan 2010-2012. The MEHRD is also aware that lack of a sound policy on special and inclusive education is one of the main barriers to achieving the goal of access to education for all by 2015 (MEHRD, 2012).

In many ways the Solomon Islands resembles a number of developing countries that have faced similar challenges in providing better access to educational services to children with disabilities. Researchers and policy makers have debated whether it is better to educate students with disabilities in a special school or to include them into regular schools. Until the 1990s it was difficult to answer this

question as there was not enough research on this topic and nor were there any policy directions from international bodies like UNESCO and UNICEF. However things changed in 1994. Members of 92 governments and 25 international organisations affirmed their commitment to achieving education for all by adopting the Salamanca Statement at the World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994) and promoting inclusive education. It was the first time that UNESCO had particularly focused on the education of children with disabilities and reminded governments that they must include children with disabilities in their Education for All reforms. Despite several positive gains a few years after Salamanca, UNESCO (1999) was concerned about the lack of progress in member nations. It reported that

> The current Education for All strategies and programs are largely insufficient and inappropriate with regard to the needs of children and youth with special needs. Where programs targeting various marginalized/excluded groups do exist, they have functioned outside the mainstream – special programs, specialized institutions, specialist educators. Notwithstanding the best intentions, it is conceded that too often the results have been exclusion – differentiation becoming a form of discrimination, leaving children with special needs outside the mainstream of school life and later as adults, outside the community, social and cultural life in general (UNESCO, 1999, p. 10).

This observation has significant implications for countries, such as the Solomon Islands, that are just beginning the policy development targeting students with disabilities. What roles the existing specialist schools will play within the new policy framework need to be carefully examined. Although it is important to note that the statement did recognize that a minority of students with severe to profound needs may best be served in specialist settings, specialist schools are not the answer for the majority of children with special needs..

1.1. Defining inclusive and special education

At this point it is important to define inclusive education and how it is different from segregated education or special schooling. According to UNESCO (1994), the fundamental principle of inclusive education is that all children should learn together regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to individual differences by accommodating different styles of learning and ensuring quality education to all (UNESCO, 1994).

Inclusion is "an ongoing process aimed at offering high quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and

communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination" (UNESCO, 2008, p.3). Inclusion benefits all learners. "Increasing the use of personalized approaches, including individualized learning plans and harnessing assessment to support the learning process, providing teachers with skills to manage and benefit from diversity, promoting the use of co-operative teaching and learning, and widening access and participation, are ways of increasing quality for all" (Council of the European Union, 2010, p. 5). Inclusion requires schools to change their practices to accommodate the diverse learning needs of all students, rather than asking students to change to fit into the school system. In contrast, special schools or segregated schools provide education to children with disabilities in separate settings. They are based on the assumptions that students with disabilities are significantly different from those students who do not have special needs and that the educational and social needs of these students can only be met in special schools.

1.2. Defining disability and special needs

It is important to differentiate how disability is different from special educational needs as it could have implications for both policy makers and educators. A child can be disabled not because of what impairment he or she has, but in the ways society responds to a person's impairment (Save the Children , 2002). The society can create discrimination and barriers to participation of an individual. This definition has its origins in the social model of disability. It differs significantly from the medical model of disability, placing responsibility on the society to change its practices to meet the needs of a person with a disability (social model) rather than asking the individual to change to fit in the society (medical model) (Save the Children, 2002).

A child with a disability may have special needs to learn effectively or he/she may not have any special needs. Sometimes a child with a disability requires only minor adaptation (ramps to access various school environments) to the environment and could fully participate in school activities. Other children may require significant adaptation of teaching practices (e.g. changing curriculum and developing specialized teaching material) to meet the special needs of the student.

1.3 Rationale for inclusive education

A number of researchers have looked at the question to determine which of the two options is better for

students with disabilities. The available research on this topic suggests that students educated in inclusive schools generally do better academically and socially compared to students educated in segregated settings (Baker, Wang & Wallberg, 1994; Farrelle, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2007). In a classic longitudinal study looking at the impact of being educated in regular versus special schools, Ferguson and Asch (1989) found that students with disabilities educated in regular schools are more likely to live independently, earn a higher salary, be married and engaged compared to those who were educated in segregated settings. A number of researchers in more recent years have found similar results. In a comparative longitudinal study of students with mild educational problems, Peetsma, Verger, Roeleveld and Karsten (2001) found that students with disabilities who were educated in regular schools did well in languages, mathematics, motivation and self-confidence compared to their counterparts in special schools. They concluded that as a whole this demonstrates that students in special education perform less well on cognitive tasks and function less well psychosocially. Students educated in inclusive settings also generally have access to a wider curriculum compared to students who are educated in special schools (Farrelle et al., 2007). However, it is not only the broader curriculum that facilitates better outcomes for students.

Not only do students with disabilities have better outcomes when they have their education in inclusive schools, but students without disabilities also have positive outcomes in areas like academic achievement (Farelle et al., 2007). Teachers in inclusive settings teach in a manner that allow *all* students, including those with diverse learning needs and potentials, to be challenged. This results in improvement of learning for all students. Moreover students without disabilities develop positive attitudes and have meaningful friendships with their peers with disabilities. Peters (2003), in a World Bank report on inclusive education, stated that "inclusive education is not only cost efficient but also cost effective" (p. 5). Quoting the work conducted by Skrtic and the OECD, she argued that inclusive education promotes equity, and equity is the way to excellence in education.

1.4. Lessons learnt in implementing inclusive education

Clearly this suggests that inclusive education is a desirable way to educate students with disabilities in developing countries where it is estimated that the majority of the world's population of people with disabilities live (UNESCO, 1999). Even though many developing countries have passed legislation or have in place policies to support inclusive education, inclusive education is not satisfactorily implemented

in these countries (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002). Including students with disabilities remains both a goal and a challenge for most developing countries. Peters (2003) in her above-cited report identified nine important approaches and key lessons in relation to the implementation of inclusive education:

    I.   Educational goals are often elusive and difficult to measure.

    II.   Development takes time.

    III.   Process is often as important as product.

    IV.   Decentralization and autonomy are important tools but not panaceas for solutions.

    V.   Partnerships and networks are needed at all levels of the system.

    VI.   Integrated and multi-sectoral approaches to learning are essential.

    VII.   Good practices must be carefully analyzed and promoted, and models of good practice must be creatively used.

    VIII.   Diversity, not standard solutions to complex problems, must be the norm.

    IX.   Mobilization and advocacy at all levels are essential.

Ainscow (1999) also recommended that the process of developing inclusive schools requires the whole school system to make several improvements. He identified five key principles in the process of making schools more inclusive. These principles are:

    I.   utilizing existing practices and knowledge as starting points for development;

    II.   acknowledging differences in students as opportunities to learn rather than problems to be fixed;

    III.   examining and addressing barriers to student participation;

    IV.   making effective use of existing resources to support the learning of all, and

    V.   creating conditions that encourage the school community to take risks.

This report is based on the premise, in line with the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), that people with a disability have a right to education like others do (Article, 24, United Nations, 2006). Moreover, the inclusion of students with disabilities into regular schools is the best way to reach and provide quality education to the children who have been excluded for a long time – a key principle ratified by the Ministries of Education in the countries of the

Pacific (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2009) and UNESCO's Education for All by 2015 goals (UNESCO, 2001a).

The current assessment included an analysis of the national legal and policy context, the education delivery models at school level, teacher (in-service and pre-service) training, and community awareness, and the suitability of school infrastructure/facilities for special and inclusive education. The report guides the development of a new policy on inclusive and special education in the Solomons. The report also identifies possible short-term and long-term recommendations that would need to be implemented to enhance access of education for all, but more specifically for children with special needs, in the country.

The next section reports the methodology and the conceptual framework used to undertake the assessment. The section is followed by findings emerging from the analysis. The last section reports recommendations aimed to help achieve the goal of providing Education for All by 2015.

PART 2

METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents the methodology undertaken to conduct the assessment . The methodology was guided by a conceptual framework as shown in Figure 1. The framework is informed by the work of educational change theorists such as Fullan (2007) and inclusion theorists (Ainscow, 1999; Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004).

Stakeholder commitment

=

who wants to drive the vehicle!

Capability

=

Ability to drive

Resources

=

Petrol

Supportive policies

=

Traffic rules
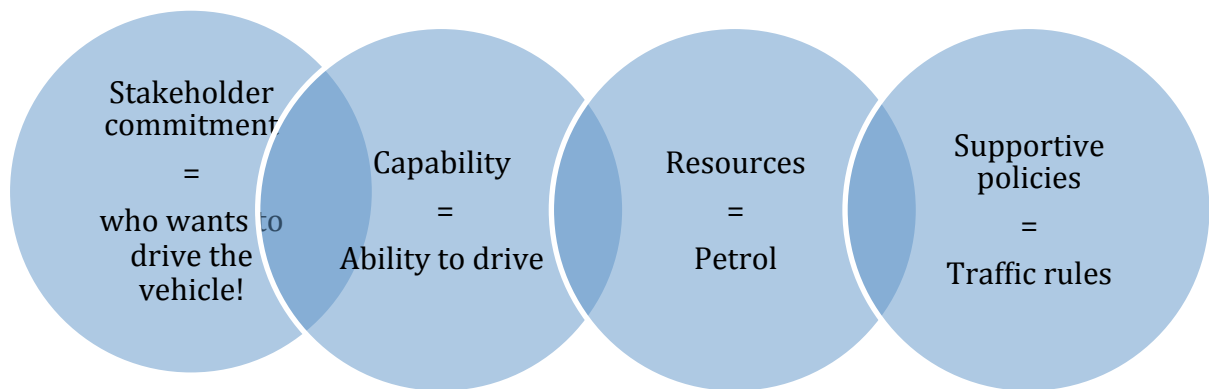
FIGURE1: Conceptual framework for the assessment

A key aim of the new policy is to ensure Education for All by 2015. This will require a significant shift in the way persons with disabilities are currently perceived by the society. Most importantly, it will necessitate the key stakeholders (mainly school personnel) to undertake new roles and responsibilities in ensuring the success of the policy, which is likely to depend on four factors:

1. Stakeholder commitment

2. Capability

3. Availability of resources

4. Supportive policies.

2.1. Stakeholder commitment and capability

Some of the key stakeholders who will play a significant role in the successful implementation of the policy are regular classroom teachers, special education teachers, pre-service teachers, university educators and parents. It was considered important to determine their willingness and preparedness to participate in the policy reform. In a nutshell, it was important for us to find out what their views are about educating students with disabilities 'now' and how best they can support the implementation of the new special and inclusive education policy in the 'future'. In order to understand why their commitment is important, let us look at the following analogy. In the Solomon Islands a new car is being introduced for people to commute from point A (no education for children with disabilities) to point B (access to quality education for all, especially for children with disabilities). If we want people to drive the car (implement the new policy initiative), we must ensure that they are willing to drive it. In other words, they must feel that driving this car is good for them and for the country. If they do not believe in driving the car (lack of commitment), the policy initiative could be a failure. We also know from research in other countries that we can legislate for Equal Access to Education for All, but we cannot legislate for people to believe in the policy and take appropriate actions to implement policy initiatives (Forlin, 2010). It is, therefore, not only necessary to understand the beliefs of key stakeholders about the new policy initiative (most importantly educating students with disabilities in regular schools), but also to make attempts to understand what apprehensions they may have towards implementing the policy. Understanding and addressing the key stakeholders' apprehensions is likely to improve their commitment to implement the policy. Understanding the capability of key stakeholders to implement the policy initiatives is also necessary. The capability can be equated to skills in driving the car. If a driver lacks the skills to drive the car, it is unlikely that the key policy initiatives will be implemented.

2.1.1. Data collection to understand stakeholder commitment and capability

A mixed method approach was used to collect data about stakeholders' commitment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders: regular school teachers (n=6), principals or vice-principals (n=7), special school principals/co-ordinators (n=4), special school teachers/staff (n=6), students with a disability (either vision impairment or hearing impairment) (n=20), parents of children with

a disability (n=2), the head of Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE), and a disability advocate. In total 47 participants were interviewed. The interview questions aimed to determine respondents' views about the new policy reforms and also what barriers they anticipated might hamper the progress of new initiatives. The participants were also asked to suggest possible strategies to address the barriers they had identified. In most cases interviews were recorded, except when interviewing a group of students with a hearing impairment as the group was large and an interpreter was used for communication with the group. The interview with the head of the SICHE could not be audio-recorded because of the significant level of background noise. After each interview the Technical Assistant (TA) made notes of the key themes arising from the interviews. The themes were later confirmed by analyzing the audio recordings.

Data in the form of surveys were also collected from regular and special education teachers, pre-service teachers and parents. The survey for teachers consisted of a four part instrument (see Appendix 1). The survey was administered to understand their commitment (attitudes) (Bailey, 2004), their concerns about teaching students with disabilities (Sharma, & Desai, 2002), and, their teaching efficacy beliefs or capability to teach students with disabilities (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012). An understanding of their concerns about teaching students with disabilities was important to determine what resources could possibly reduce their apprehensions and ultimately improve their commitment to implementing the policy. Understanding their efficacy beliefs was also necessary to understand their capability beliefs to implement the key policy agenda of educating students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

To understand the capability of existing in-service and pre-service teachers, a survey measuring their efficacy beliefs to teach in inclusive classrooms was administered. In addition to completing the Likert-type questions, both groups were also asked to respond to two open-ended questions:

- Can you list three factors that will facilitate inclusion of students with disabilities in your class (in other words what support will make it easier for you to include students with disabilities in your class)?

- Can you list three factors that hinder or will hinder inclusion of students with disabilities in your class?

A total of 63 in-service teachers from 7 schools completed the survey questionnaire. School principals from the seven schools also provided their views about how well prepared their teachers were in their schools to educate students with disabilities. In addition, they identified a few areas where the principals themselves lacked skills to include students with disabilities in their schools.

Data from parents were also collected to determine their attitudes to include their child in a regular school. They completed a Likert-type scale (see Appendix C) which provided information about their attitudes to inclusion (Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy, Widaman, 1998). Participants were asked to identify factors that they thought have created barriers or could create barriers to their son or daughter's education in a regular school. They were also asked to identify factors that could facilitate better education for their son or daughter in a regular school. A total of 40 parents completed the survey. All participating parents were recruited from the three special schools in Honiara City. It is possible that the views of parents whose children did not get admission in the school, and those parents who reside in other provinces, are not represented in this dataset. As the majority of the surveys were completed by parents whose children are currently attending a special school, it is also possible that the views of parents of children attending a regular school are not well represented in this data set. However, it is important to note that hardly any students with disabilities attend regular schools, so it was not possible to recruit such parents in this project, just as it was not possible to find out how parents and children without disabilities in inclusive schools understand and perceive the inclusion of children with disabilities.

2.2. Resources

Resources in the analogy above could be considered as petrol to drive the car. If there is no petrol, it is not possible to drive the car. Teaching students with disabilities in either special or regular settings requires human and material resources. Without adequate resources, implementing any policy is impossible.

2.2.1. Data collection to understand availability of resources

To understand what resources are available and what extra resources would be required to implement the policy, three approaches were followed. First, a number of stakeholders (students with disabilities, their parents, educators in special schools, the head of the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education) were interviewed to find out what resources were currently available in the Solomon Islands to support the education of children with disabilities. Second, the existing facilities (e.g., the Braille production facility at

the Special Development Centre, Red Cross) were visited to determine what support and services students with disabilities currently receive. Third, data from survey participants (both parents and teachers) in their responses to the open-ended questions were examined to identify any resources they thought necessary for schools to teach students with disabilities effectively.

2.3. Supportive policies

The last important ingredient for the success of a reform is to have supportive policies. This does not mean the national policy alone, but also the policies at school level and any other policy within the system that could facilitate the implementation of the reform. In some cases, it could be policies at international levels that have a direct impact on what happens in a classroom. Research on local issues relevant to the reform agenda can also provide useful information about how supportive or not the policies are in moving the inclusion agenda forward. Supportive policies could be equated to traffic rules in the analogy. We may have drivers who are willing to drive, are confident drivers, and whose cars are full of petrol; however, if they were to drive on roads where hardly anyone follows the traffic rules, there could be quite a few accidents, which would ultimately result in many drivers deciding to stop driving the car.

2.3.1. Data collected to understand the policies framework

MEHRD was contacted to provide any relevant policy documents or research reports related to the education of children with disabilities. Research or reports from other Pacific countries were also reviewed to understand the policy and contextual framework in the Solomon Islands. All schools that were visited by the Technical Assistant (TA) were asked to report any school policy in relation to supporting students with disabilities. The following documents were analysed for this report:

- Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability 2010-2015 by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (2009)
- Solomon Islands National Policy on Disability by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) (2004).
- Solomon Islands College of Higher Education Curriculum by SICHE (2012).
- Pacific Children with Disabilities by UNICEF (2010)
- Barriers to Education study by Tavola (2011),
- Teacher Educators' and Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes, Knowledge and Understanding on Special Education and Inclusive Education in the Solomon Islands by Simi (2008)

2.4. Summary

This section has provided an overview of the conceptual framework that was used to undertake the assessment. A key foundation of the assessment is derived from the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994) which asserts that:

> **Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all (Article 2, Salamanca Statement)**

Inclusive education is not only cost-efficient, it is cost-effective and it benefits both students with and without disabilities. In a country like the Solomon Islands, where children with disabilities are widely spread across different provinces, speaking different languages and belonging to different ethnic backgrounds, it is inclusive education that can bring a change in the status of such children in the society without uprooting them from their home communities. It is also a cost-efficient and cost-effective way to provide education to children with disabilities who live in remote communities.

An assessment of current practices with regard to the education of students with disabilities was undertaken to determine the commitment of key stakeholders to implement the policy on inclusive education proposed in this report, the capability to teach students with disabilities and the availability of resources to implement the policy initiatives. The assessment included a review of policy documents, interviews with key stakeholders (principal, teachers, parents, disability advocates and students) and a survey of parents and pre-service and in-service educators. The next section reports the findings of the assessment.

PART 3

INCLUSIVE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS:

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

This section reports results using the framework presented in the last section. The results are reported in four sub- sections:

Existing policies and the context

Stakeholders' commitment

Educators' capability to teach students with disabilities in regular schools

Availability of resources

3.1. Existing Policies and the Context

The Solomon Islands is located east of Papua New Guinea, and northeast of Australia in the South Pacific. There are ten provinces in the country: Guadalcanal, Malaita, Isabel, Makira-Ulawa, Choiseul, Western Temotu, Rennel-Bellona, Central and Honiara. The population of the country is 515870. The three most populous provinces are: Malaita, Guadacanal and Western. The people of the islands largely represent Melanesian, Polynesian and Micronesian cultures. According to a 2006 estimate (Ministry of Health and Medical Services), 3.52 per cent of the population of school-aged children has some form of disability which equates to 14,403 individuals (MHMS, cited in Baker, 2010). The three most common categories of disability were vision impairment, hearing impairment and physical impairment.

A recent UNDP (2009) revealed that there is a significant difference in access of education to women with disability in the Pacific countries. The report (p.19) states that "In the Solomon Islands, the total population of girls attended school at twice the rate of girls with disabilities (37 percent compared with 18 percent). More specifically, 39 percent (6,505) of women with disabilities obtained primary education, but did not make it past year 6."

No data could be found on the number of children with disabilities who reside in different provinces and of these how many are out of school. Neither could any report be found to have looked at the reasons these children are out of school or drop out of school. Such information may be extremely useful in future planning and implementation of the new inclusive education policy. .

In her Disability Information Sheet, Baker (2010) reported that the Solomon Islands has committed to a number of international initiatives related to disability. These include the signing of the Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009 and ratifying the Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2002. Earlier (1994), the Solomon Islands government signed the Proclamation on the full participation and equality of people with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region for the Asia Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002 and 2003 to 2012. This shows the commitment of the government to promoting disability-inclusive development in the country.   More recently (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2009), the Islands were officially represented by Ministerial delegates at the Pacific Islands Forum to develop future implementation of the Pacific Regional Disability Strategy.

3.1.1. Inclusion – a way forward

Analysis of international documents, including Pacific Regional Development Strategy, 2010-2015 (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2009), identified disability not as a charity issue but a human rights issue. The forum recognises that "disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (p.4). The forum also recognizes that the ability of persons with disabilities to function as full and active citizens in a modern society is limited not only by their disability but by society's failure to recognise them and accommodate their needs. The forum developed a strategy which would effectively advance the rights of Pacific persons with disability and ensure their participation as full members of the society. The forum developed a regional framework (Pacific Education Development Framework), one of the cornerstones of which is inclusive education. The Solomon Islands National Policy on Disability (2005-2010) (MHMS, 2004) identified its key goal as:

> A society that will accept and embrace the equal rights of all people with disability, assist and involve them physically, socially, spiritually and culturally and ensure the achievement of their goals and vision.

The policy identified a need to provide better education to students with disabilities as a strategy and specified the key action of "strengthening and supporting special and inclusive (mainstreaming) education". However, it is largely silent on how inclusive education is to be implemented in schools and how schools would be supported in implementing inclusive practices. Also the use of words such as "as *resources permits"* (MEHRD will supply basic educational resources and equipment such as Braille and sign language dictionaries to schools which have children with disabilities) could be seen as evidence of limited commitment from the government. The policy would need to be revised and a firm commitment needs to be evident in the document to make it consistent with MEHRD's commitment to achieve EFA by 2015.

3.1.2. Barriers faced by persons with disabilities

An analysis of the documents suggested that there is significant emphasis on educating children with disabilities in regular schools across the Pacific countries including in the Solomon Islands. However, until recently, the policy initiatives have been taking place mainly as a result of the signing of international policy declarations rather than as a result of a perceived need to improve educational opportunities for *All* in the countries of the Pacific. In other words, the imperative has been driven by outside agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, Aus-Aid) rather than inside agencies. However, there has been a significant shift in the policy framework in the Pacific countries in more recent years. Several ministerial level leaders of the Pacific countries met in the Cook Islands (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2009) and unanimously agreed on a Pacific regional strategy on disability.

As mentioned above, one of the key cornerstones of the strategy is that the leaders agreed that disability should not be seen as a charity issue; rather, it should be seen as a human rights issue. The forum members identified a number of barriers that are hampering the progress of policy initiatives on disability in the Pacific. These include prejudice against people with disabilities and their families, which results in discrimination and rejection of the people with disabilities across a range of sectors (e.g., schooling) (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2009). The forum (p.5) reported that the:

> traditional view in the Pacific is that persons with disabilities are to be looked after or cared for, and cannot be expected to take a full and active part in village community life, thus marginalizing them from mainstream life. This view of persons with disabilities as dependent typifies a 'charity' or 'welfare' approach... A medical approach is also widespread, where disabilities are seen as health impairments that can be cured.

It is not surprising to see that people with disabilities are amongst the poorest and most marginalised group. The forum quoted a UNDP study, reporting "that throughout the Pacific region, in rural and urban areas women and girls with disabilities face multiple and compounding forms of discrimination" (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2009, p.6). Also, they are less educated, experience higher rates of unemployment, are more likely to be abused, more isolated, experience worse health outcomes and in most cases have lower social status.

Some of the barriers identified by the forum members were also evident in other reports (e.g., Simi, 2008; Tavola, 2011; and UNICEF, 2010). A brief overview of each of these reports is presented before a detailed analysis is provided. Simi (2008) used a qualitative research approach and interviewed three teacher educators and eight pre-service teachers from a teacher training college in the Solomon Islands. It is important to note that there is only one teacher training college in the country. A primary purpose of the study was to understand the attitudes, knowledge and understandings about special and inclusive education of teacher educators and to find out if the current training is adequately preparing pre-service teachers to teach students with disabilities. Tavola (2011) undertook a study to identify the barriers to education with an aim to suggest ways to address the barriers. The focus of the study was not just children with disabilities but all children. The main purpose of the UNICEF (2010) report was to consult with a range of stakeholders in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in determining how UNICEF should engage with the countries to improve services for children with disabilities in future considering that several other organizations are also tackling the same issue.

Based on a synthesis of these reports, it appeared that some of the most common barriers that children with disabilities face in the Solomon Islands are:

- Parents do not send their children to schools as they do not see any value in education and they want to protect their child from possible bullying and teasing at schools (UNICEF, 2010).

- Regular schools often refuse to enrol children who have special needs as teachers lack skills and confidence in meeting the needs of such children (UNICEF, 2010).

- Only a small percentage of children with disabilities have access to special schooling in Kiribati and Solomon Islands. Although special schools have some advantages, "many such schools are

more in the nature of care centers and do not provide an education of the same quality as other schools" (UNICEF, 2010, p.16).

- Funds to support the education of children with disabilities are lacking (Simi, 2008. Tavola, 2011)

- Teachers are untrained to teach students with disabilities (Simi, 2008; Tavola, 2011; UNICEF, 2010) and they lack confidence to teach students with disabilities (Simi, 2008).

- Pre-service teachers are not given preparation to teach students with disabilities (Simi, 2008)

- Discriminatory attitudes toward persons with disability prevail in society and among teachers (Simi, 2008; Tavola, 2011; UNICEF, 2010).

Society's discriminatory attitudes toward people with disabilities were captured well during an interview with a teacher educator by Simi (2008). The comment is quoted here not only because this comment resonated during the interviews with the TA during the current assessment, but also because it shows the challenge the policy makers are likely to face when implementing the policy in the Solomons (p. 41).

> Culturally, those with obvious physical disabilities are seen as a form of curse upon the person and family. Maybe they have made the traditional gods and ancestors unhappy that resulted back that way on them as a form of punishment. This negative cultural misunderstanding goes on with the child. In the end nobody will want to have anything to do with that child for fear that the curse will befall upon them as well.

Lack of funds is an ongoing barrier to implementing inclusive education almost everywhere. In this regard, Meijer (1999) stated that unless funds were allocated explicitly to inclusion policy implementation, inclusion is unlikely to happen. However, policy makers and implementers need to be careful in determining how funds are allocated and spent in achieving EFA (Education for All) outcomes.

Lack of learning material and resources is also identified as a major barrier to the education of children with disabilities (UNICEF, 2010). Students who are blind or are partially sighted are reliant on accessing information in the form of Braille or enlarged print. Provision of such resources is instrumental in providing equal educational opportunities to students with vision impairments. Similarly, students who are totally deaf need to learn sign language to communicate with each other and their educators. Facilities for children with vision impairments and hearing impairments are currently provided by two

special schools in the capital city of Honiara. Children with vision and hearing impairments in the other nine provinces do not have access to any form of support and most are out of school. The parents interviewed in this study indicated that the current facilities available to children with a hearing impairment or vision impairment are highly inadequate and continue to create significant barriers for such children to achieve to their potential.

During the interviews with a range of stakeholders for this report, it became evident that there are hardly any policies at school level relating to the education of children with disabilities. In an interview, the principal of a secondary school stated that, "Non-existence of any policy to enrol or educate children with disabilities is one of the major reasons schools are not interested in enrolling such students. We don't know what are we supposed to do with such students. We also don't know if we will get any support when we enrol such students in our schools".

3.2. Stakeholder commitment

Data in the form of surveys and interviews were collected from in-service and pre-service teachers, school principals and parents to understand their commitment to educate students with disabilities in regular and special schools. A key focus of this exercise was to understand their commitment to support children with disabilities in regular schools rather than in special schools. Results from educators are reported first followed by parental data.

3.2.1. School leaders' views

3.2.1.1 IS INCLUSION GOOD FOR ALL?

Seven principals or vice principals of regular schools were interviewed. In general most principals supported the idea of educating students with disabilities in their schools. One principal of a Catholic school stated that "the philosophy of educating students with disabilities ties well with our school's overall philosophy as our religion makes us to be more tolerant towards each other". Most participants, however, had more practical questions. For example, a Vice-principal queried "how can this [inclusive education] be achieved in regular schools?" Another principal stated that "it is easier to teach students who have very mild disability or physical disability, but it is not possible to teach students who have intellectual disability or behaviour problems".

3.2.1.2. LACK OF RESOURCES AND POLICY DIRECTIONS

Yet, another principal specified "lack of resources, both human and material, as a significant concern" when such students enrol in regular schools. He also stated that "parents of children with disabilities will not send their children to school as disability is considered a curse on their family and they don't want society to know about it". Lack of policy directions from the Ministry was a concern identified by most principals as a significant barrier in providing better education to students with disabilities. When asked about how students with disabilities could best be educated in their schools, principals either had "no" views or views that supported segregation in regular schools (e.g., special class) or selective inclusion (only students with mild disabilities).

3.2.1.3. LACK OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The majority of the principals were of the view that they can only invest a limited amount of effort to educate students with special needs as these students have severe limitations in what they can learn. This showed that the respondents predominantly believed in a medical paradigm where something is considered wrong or deficient within a student and the onus for change lies with the student rather than with the school changing its practices to accommodate students. Also, most participants saw including children with disabilities as an additional responsibility and extra work on top of what they are doing already. One principal stated that teachers who include students with disabilities should get extra pay. Four participants agreed that opening a special class in a regular school and educating students with disabilities fulltime in such classrooms was the best way to educate these students. Lack of training of their school staff was a common concern identified by all participants. Most expressed the need to provide professional development to their school staff if such a policy on inclusive education was to be implemented in the Solomon Islands. Surprisingly, none of the participants identified a need for their own professional development. Use of "handicapping" language by the participants (e.g., *deaf and dumb, they are different from normal children, handicapped, isn't a special school better place for them*"), indicated that not only school staff but school leaders will benefit by undertaking professional development for their schools to become more inclusive.

3.3. In-service and pre-service teacher commitment and efficacy

Sixty three in-service teachers from six schools from three islands (Honiara, Malaiata and Central Province) completed the survey that measured their attitudes, concerns and efficacy to teach in inclusive classrooms. They were also asked to write responses to open-ended questions to find out what they perceived to be facilitators and barriers to inclusion. The three scales used to measure participants'

attitudes, concerns and efficacy were reviewed by the Technical Working Group (TWG) and a number of small changes were made in each of the scales to suit the local context.

All pre-service teachers (n=100) enrolled in their final years of study at SICHE responded to open ended questions but none of them completed the attitude, concern and efficacy questionnaires so their data has limited usefulness.

3.3.1. Attitudes, efficacy and concerns of in-service teachers

In order to gauge their attitudes, participants completed a 24 item scale using a Likert-type rating of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for each item. The mean value on the attitude scale can range from 1 to 5 with a higher score indicating that the person has a more favourable attitude to inclusion than another respondent who receives a lower score.   Approximately half of the items on the scale are positively worded (e.g., Students with mild disabilities should be included in regular classrooms) and the other half are negatively worded (e.g., Special needs students belong in special schools where all their needs can be met). All negatively worded items were reverse scored before calculating the population mean. In-service teachers' mean attitude score was 2.62. As the value of 2.62 lies between 3 (neither agree nor disagree) and 2 (disagree), it appears that participants were slightly apprehensive about the idea of including students with disabilities in their classrooms. This finding has significant implications for the success of the new policy on education of children with disabilities in the Solomon Islands. Apprehensive attitudes suggest that if a policy were to be mandated, it would be likely to face some resistance from in-service teachers in regular schools.

Participants also completed a 20-item Teacher Efficacy to Implement Inclusive Practices (TEIP) scale. Participants completed the survey by responding to each item (e.g., I am confident in my ability to prevent disruptive behaviour in the classroom before it occurs) using a 6 point Likert type rating of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). All items on this scale were positively worded. A higher mean score (which can range from 1 to 6) is indicative of the participant having a higher level of efficacy to teach in inclusive classrooms. The mean score for the study participants was 4.49. As this value lies between 4 and 5, it suggests that participants were reasonably confident in their ability to teach in inclusive classrooms. This is a somewhat surprising finding. It was not expected for participants to receive such high efficacy scores. It is possible that the majority of the participants were responding to a hypothetical situation (inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms) that they have not yet

witnessed in real life. Their views thus may not be a true reflection of their actual competence when students with disabilities are placed in their classrooms in the future.

Several international agencies (e.g., UNESCO, 1994) have identified lack of commitment in the education community as a significant barrier to providing better services to students with disabilities. These agencies have also identified a strong need to enhance commitment within the education community. However, it is unknown how the commitment of education community could be increased. A possible way to improve commitment of key stakeholders is by understanding what concerns them about the new initiative and then systematically addressing their concerns. The purpose of measuring educators' concerns was to understand not only what concerned the teaching community but also to identify possible strategies that could be used to address these concerns.

A 21 item Concerns about Inclusive Education scale was used to measure educators' concerns. The scale uses a 4 point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (Not at all concerned), 2 (A little concerned), 3 (Very concerned) and 4 (Extremely concerned). A mean value on the scale close to 4 is indicative of a higher degree of concern to teach in inclusive classroom. Participants' mean score on the scale was 2.81 (a value close to 3). This suggests that the participant were "very concerned" about teaching students with disabilities in their classrooms. In order to understand what concerned them the most, their mean scores on individual concern items were also analysed. Figure 2 provides a detailed analysis of participants' individual concerns.
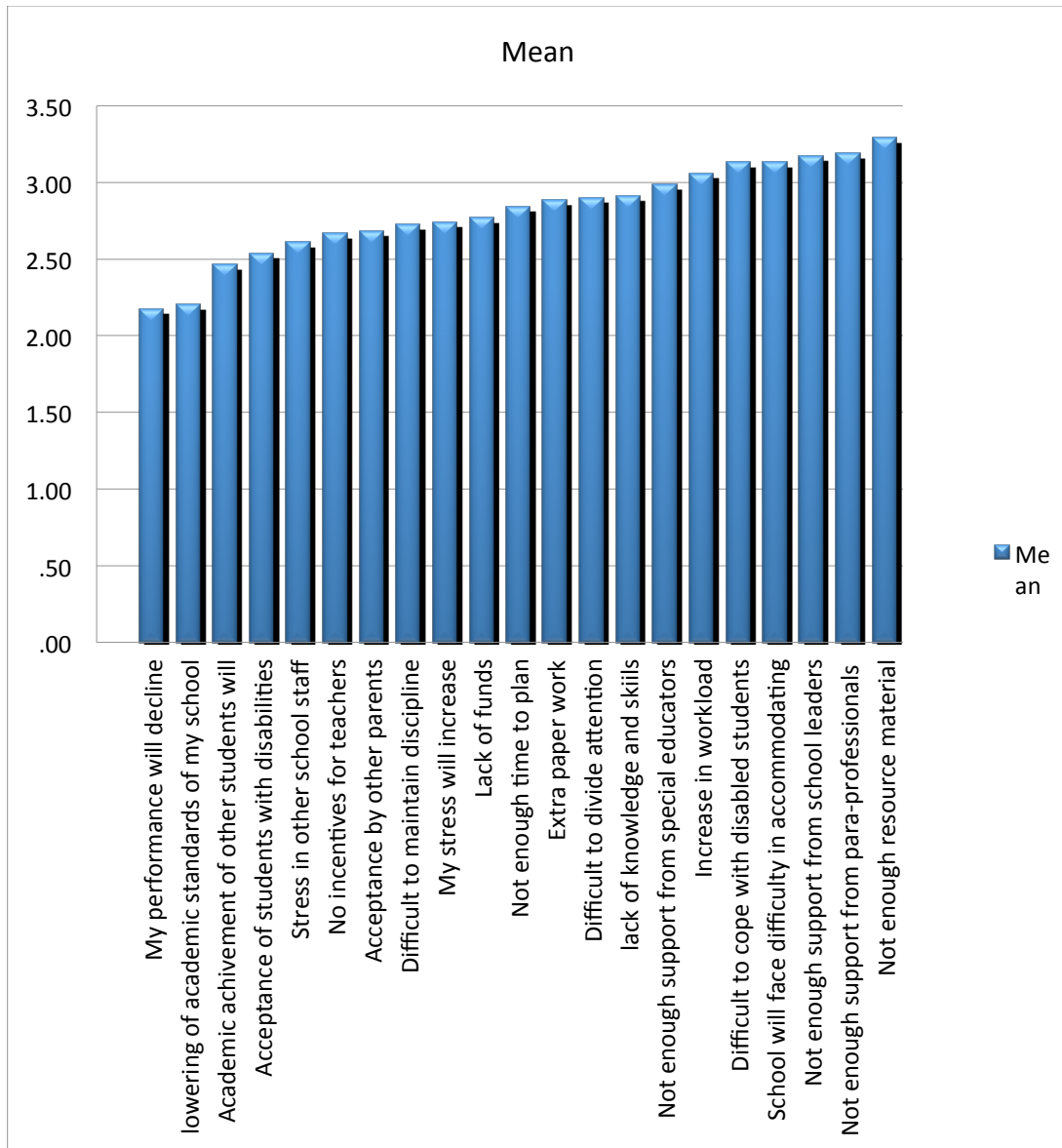
Figure 2: Mean scores for individual concern items

All concern items with a mean score of 3 or above suggest that the policy implementation would require that adequate attention be given to address these concerns immediately. These concerns were about lack of support from paraprofessionals (*M*=3.19), increase in workload of educators (*M*=3.06),

schools lacking infrastructure (*M*=3.13), lack of resource material and equipment (*M* = 3.29), lack of support from special educators (*M*=2.99), their own ability to cope with students who lack self-help skills (*M*= 3.13) and, lack of support from administrators (*M*=3.17). Other major concerns that the participants had were about their lack of knowledge and skills to teach students with disabilities (*M*=2.91), increase in paper work (*M*= 2.88) and their inability to divide attention in an inclusive classroom (*M*= 2.90).

Participants were least concerned about the declining performance of their school *(M*= 2.2) and their own performance (*M*=2.17) when more students with special needs would enrol in their schools. Another concern on which they obtained a significantly lower score was about the lack of acceptance of students with special needs by others (*M* =2.54). This is an important finding. It either means that participants are not concerned if students with special needs are accepted by their peers or it can also mean that they do not consider this an important issue. Both of these explanations suggest that professional development training needs to address this issue carefully and ensure that teachers do understand that acceptance of students with special needs is an important step towards their successful implementation of inclusion reform in the school community.

Some of these concerns were also identified by the participants in their responses to open ended questions which asked them to identify common barriers and facilitators to implement inclusive practices in the classroom. The common barriers identified by the participants in order of importance were (the rankings were calculated based on the number of participants who identified it as one of the top three barriers):

Rank 1: Lack of resources and inadequate training

Rank 2: Attitudes of others (peers, parents and the society)/ discrimination

Rank 3: Lack of parental support

Rank 4: Behaviour problems and classroom management

Rank 5: Infrastructure

Rank 6: Extra work

In-service and pre-service educators were most worried about their own training to educate students with disabilities ("*I am not confident to teach them*"; "*teachers don't know how to teach them*" or

"I don't have specialized training in special education") and lack of resources (*"lack of appropriate material to teach them"*). Some teachers were specific in identifying the material that they would need (e.g., Braille) when they start teaching students with disabilities, others provided generic statements. Apprehensive attitudes of parents, society and peers were the next major concerns identified by both group of educators. This concern is directly related to the next concern of lack of support from parents. The responses from participants were not specific about whether they were worried about support from parents of children with disabilities or parents of children without disabilities - it seems they worried that teaching students with disabilities would be too much "*extra*" work (also a major concern – Rank 6) and that they may not get enough support from both group of parents.   Some teachers were worried that the inclusion of children with disabilities would result in an increase in behavioural problems and classroom management issues. They were also concerned about the lack of proper infrastructure of school buildings to accommodate students with physical disabilities in particular (e.g., wheel chair access). Almost all participants were worried about the inflexible school curriculum and were not sure what they would do to teach a student who could not learn the prescribed curriculum.

3.3.2. Facilitators as identified by in-service and pre-service teachers

The facilitators identified by the participants were classified into five categories.

Rank 1: Training

Rank 2: Separate facilities

Rank 3: Parental support

Rank 4: Resources

Rank 5: Curriculum

An overwhelming majority of participants identified better teacher training as a way to provide improved educational services to children with disabilities. The next category of the facilitator identified by the participants is somewhat unique and requires close attention. Participants indicated that to better educate students with disabilities, these students need to be placed in a separate class in a regular school. This shows a lack of understanding of the inclusion agenda and also a lack of commitment from the participants about their important role in the successful implementation of the policy. The participants did not see their role as important in ensuring that students with disabilities are better educated in

schools. They continued to believe that it should be the responsibility of a special education teacher who would teach such students separately in their school.

The next two categories of facilitators were also the barriers identified by participants who indicated that they need support from parents and they need to have access to better resources to educate students with disabilities. One resource that they identified as crucial for inclusion was the availability of a "*helper*" in the classroom to assist them when they have a student with disabilities included in their class. Some teachers indicated that parents could work in the class to assist the teacher. The last category of facilitators identified by the participants was an adapted curriculum that all teachers could be provided so that they would not have to design lessons for students with disabilities.

3.4. Parental commitment

Parents were asked to complete a survey to determine their attitudes to the inclusion of their child into a regular school. They were also asked to indicate whether they had changed school for their child from regular to special or special to regular, the reasons for changing the school and what extra support they perceived would be necessary to provide better education to their child. Out of the 40 parents who completed the surveys, 13 reported having moved their child from a regular school to special schools. There were no data on parents who might have moved their child from special to regular schools as data were collected only from parents whose child was enrolled at one of the three special schools at the time of the assessment. When asked to indicate the reasons for changing the school, parents identified several reasons. It is important to note that each parent identified more than one reason so the total number of reasons (indicated in the parentheses below) is much higher than the total number of students who moved to a special school from regular schools. The most common reasons identified by the parents were: teasing or discrimination against their child (n=10), "*regular school is not a good place for my child*" (n=8), "*school will not be able to cope with my child*" (n= 6), untrained teachers in regular schools to "*teach my child*" (n= 5). Some of the less common reasons were the ignorance of regular school community (including children and teachers, n=2), lack of resources (n=3), and uncaring teachers (n=2).

3.4.1. Why is special school not a good place for my child?

Parents were also asked to identify any reasons why they thought a special school was not a good place for their child, the four most common reasons being that special schools are expensive (n=4),

teachers lack training to teach students with disabilities (n=4), it affects the child's self-concept (n=3), and classrooms in special schools are overcrowded (n=3). Lack of adequate facilities and resources and the location of the school were identified by two parents as a cause of concern. One parent was concerned that special school did not allow his child to learn how to interact with "*ordinary*" children.

3.4.2. What is needed to educate my child well?

Parents in this project were asked what extra resources they believed were necessary to support their child's education. The question did not specifically ask if the support was to teach the child in regular or special schools. Two categories that emerged as the most prominent resources desired by parents were: well trained teachers to meet the needs of their child (n=16) and better resources and facilities (n=15). Parents identified a greater need for some teachers to learn to teach Braille and sign language to their children. Parents also identified support for them to be able to teach their child better at home and support from other parents (n=4) and better support for their child to learn to read and write (n=3) at school. One parent indicated a need for better salaries for teachers who teach students with disabilities.

Lack of such resources was identified as a major barrier to education by the students and parents interviewed during the current assessments.

3.5. Availability of resources

In order to understand what resources are available to schools to educate students with disabilities, various schools (regular and special) were visited and parents and students with disabilities were interviewed. Data reported in the sections above also provide some evidence about what resources educators need to educate students with disabilities well. Access to resources in the form of *helpers* in class, material in Braille, and, sign language teachers were some of the key resources identified by both in-service and pre-service teachers. Visits to most regular schools revealed there were hardly any material resources available to schools to educate students with disabilities (such as vision impairment, hearing impairments). Moreover, none of the schools visited reported receiving any services from para-professionals (e.g., speech therapists, occupational therapists or audiologists). In visits to two of the three special schools, it was found that one school provided some facilities in the production of Braille materials for students. However, the facilities for Braille production were dated and required significant improvement in order to meet the needs of enrolled students. The two schools also enroll students with total deafness and provide instruction in sign language. The other special school visited specializes in

teaching only students who have a hearing impairment and who are above the age of 15 years. The school has a qualified teacher who teaches sign language to students. Both these schools need to be further supported to improve their services for students with vision and hearing impairment. As both of the schools are located in Honiara City, they are limited in their ability to provide services to students in other provinces.

The adult students with a hearing impairment enrolled at one of the two schools were asked to identify the difficulties they faced when they went to regular schools. Only a handful of all students who were attending the school (San Isidro Care Centre) had attended a regular school in past. One of these students indicated that the most significant problem she faced was "*inability to communicate with anyone in the school. The school thought that I was mentally retarded and asked my parents to take me out of the school and enrol me in a special school*". She also said "*that the best resource to support students like me would be to ensure that regular school teachers learn sign language or employ someone in the school who can interpret for us so that we can communicate with them*".

The parents of children with disabilities also echoed this view during the interviews. "*None of the regular schools in Honiara City have teachers who can communicate with deaf and dumb students – how can we send our children in those schools and expect that they will learn anything in those schools. I also don't think that my child would fit in a normal school – teachers wouldn't know how to teach my child*". Parents were thankful that they were in Honiara City and they could access the services provided by special schools which allowed their children to learn sign language. They had great sympathy for parents and children with disabilities in other provinces as there are no services for people with disabilities beyond Honiara City. This view was also echoed by the disability advocate interviewed. He said that "*people with disabilities outside Honiara city are completely ignored by the government and they hardly receive any services of any kind*"

3.6. Limitations

In concluding the section, it is important to highlight three limitations of the assessment. First, there is an over-representation of participants from Honiara City. Second, the voices and concerns of students with disabilities (or their parents) whose children are attending regular schools could not be captured in this assessment as hardly any such students are in regular schools in the country. Third, there was a significantly low response to the surveys sent to schools. The MEHRD sent over 200 survey

questionnaires to different schools in three provinces, yet only 63 completed survey questionnaires were received. Despite this, the rich data that were obtained through interviews with a range of stakeholders and school visits provided a complex picture of what is happening in the Solomon Islands with regard to the education of students with disabilities.

3.7. Summary

This section has provided an assessment with regard to the education of students with disabilities in the Solomon Islands. The assessment was based on an analysis of policy documents from the Solomon Islands and the countries of the Pacific; interviews with key stakeholders; and surveys of in-service and pre-service teachers. The assessment provided stakeholders' views about the education of children with disabilities now and what support may be necessary to schools and SICHE to implement the new policy framework on inclusive education. The next section provides recommendations for implementing the policy on inclusive and special education.

PART 4

INCLUSIVE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS:

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS.

In its effort to provide better education to students with disabilities, the Solomon Islands National Policy on Disability (2005-2010) (MHMS, 2004) specified the key action of "strengthening and supporting special and inclusive (mainstreaming) education". This report advocates a policy of Inclusive Education for all provinces, based on the research and evidence presented in the Sections One and Two above. This section presets a series of recommendations to implement the new policy in the Solomon Islands. It is important to emphasise that the recommendations identified are not only based on the assessment undertaken, but also based on strategies that have been found to be useful for countrywide implementation of inclusion policies (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009; UNESCO, 2001a, 2001b, 2003), lessons learnt from other countries where inclusive policies are implemented (Johnstone & Chapman, 2009; Peters, 2003), research on inclusive and special education (Ainscow, 1999; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Stubbs, 1993) as well as policy recommendations from the Pacific countries (e.g., Pacific Education Development Framework – Vision Impairment, 2011-2015, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2009). It is important to note that not all suggestions provided by key stakeholders have been incorporated in the recommendations. The reason is that not all suggestions are in line with the overall philosophy of inclusive education. One example of such a suggestion was opening special classes in regular schools and placing students with special needs full time in these classrooms. In this regard, McLaughlin (1993) states "strong professional communities by themselves are not always a good thing. Shared beliefs can support shared delusions about the merit or function of instructional orthodoxies or entrenched routines" (p.95). Placing students with disabilities in a separate classroom full time in a regular school contradicts the overall philosophy of inclusive education. In this regard UNESCO (2003, p.2) states that:

> Segregated educational provision separates children from their peers and families and may not be cost-effective. Establishing or extending separate provision does nothing to identify and remove the barriers preventing those children from learning in mainstream schools. Inclusive education is about helping mainstream schools to overcome the barriers so that they can meet the learning needs of all children. Inclusive education encourages policy-makers and managers to look at the barriers within the education system, how they arise and how they can be removed.

4.1. Recommendation 1

Establish a National Learning Support Resource Center (NLSRC)

Lack of resources was identified as a significant barrier in the current assessment. One way to systematically address this barrier at national level is to set up a National Learning Support Resource Centre (NLSRC). The Centre should ideally be located in close proximity to SICHE (School of Education). Two major roles of the Centre would be to provide support to schools with regard to any resources that they may require in supporting children with disabilities and to train teachers/ interpreters. Resources may include books in Braille or talking books or equipment used by children with physical disabilities. The center can produce audio-visual material for use by regular school teachers to teach students with disabilities.

The Centre should also be responsible for the sign language training of interpreters and teachers. Currently no uniform sign language has been adopted by the MEHRD as an official sign language for the country. Adoption of AUSLAN (Australian Sign Language) may be appropriate considering the close proximity to Australia as well as the opportunity for further training of the existing users/trainers of sign language in the Solomon Islands by Australian trainers. The MEHRD should prioritise training in sign language amongst educators from each of the 10 provinces. It is possible that not many existing teachers would like to learn sign language. The MEHRD should consider providing scholarships to learn sign language to existing teachers and new graduates.

The Centre should also offer training in Braille, and Orientation and Mobility, prioritising teachers who will be teaching in schools where students with vision impairment be educated. Currently American Braille codes are used and taught by the trainer at the SDC, Red Cross. MEHRD needs to adopt Unified English Braille Codes in line with the Pacific Education Development Framework- Vision Impairment (2011-2015) recommendation. Jolley (n.d) in a concept paper for Pacific island nations indicated that "the change to UEB is not a major change for literary braille. Story books in American and British braille will not become unusable overnight when UEB is introduced". One significant advantage of using UEB is that training material developed in neighbouring countries such as Australia and New Zealand can be used in the Solomon Islands. Moreover, both Australia and New Zealand have a pool of instructors who can provide training to sighted and blind people in the Solomon Islands to use UEB. Another significant

advantage is that UEB can be easily reproduced using computer software such as the Duxbury Braille Translator.

The Centre should also play an important role in providing material resources needed but also human resources. In this regard, a long term strategy could be the training of visiting teachers (visiting schools in the various provinces) who are experts in teaching students with vision impairments, and hearing impairments. Once again, the visiting teachers would need to be selected from each of the 10 provinces to ensure that schools in each province have access to specialized services from a visiting teacher when needed. The Centre should take the responsibility of co-coordinating visiting teacher services in future. A long term goal for the center should be to offer training to various allied health professionals such as educational psychologists, speech therapists, audiologists and occupational therapists.

The Centre would thus provide training short term in sign language, Braille and Orientation and Mobility. It would also provide long term advanced training to visiting teachers to work with students with vision impairments or hearing impairments. It is important that the Centre work in partnership with SICHE. The Centre could be an autonomous body under the aegis of MEHRD or an affiliated institute of SICHE. In either case all training provided by the Centre would need to be accredited. Pre-service teachers enrolled at the SICHE should ideally complete at least a short teaching practicum at the Centre to understand the services provided. The Centre should also have a collection of books on inclusive and special education that schools can borrow when needed.

4.2. Recommendation 2

Setting up demonstration schools across each of the 10 provinces with Inclusion Co-ordinators.

MEHRD should identify at least one demonstration school in each of the 10 provinces. The school would need to be fully supported by MEHRD to become inclusive. The school leadership team would need to undertake professional development to understand what is required for a school to become inclusive. All in-service teachers would also need to undertake professional development on various aspects of inclusive education. In each such school, it would be ideal to have at least one teacher who is trained to teach Braille and Orientation and Mobility, and another teacher who can teach Auslan.

Each of the schools must also appoint an Inclusion Co-ordinator. This person will be a great resource for all teachers, and should be able to not only answer questions raised by school staff about various aspects of inclusion but also provide in-class support when necessary. The Inclusion Co-ordinator needs to be well trained to undertake educational assessment of students with various special needs and to identify teaching strategies that can be implemented by classroom teachers. This person needs to have well developed skills in collaboration to work with teachers and parents. Such a person can significantly improve a school's overall enthusiasm to teach and successfully include all students. During the first year of his or her appointment, this person would not only support all school teachers but also collect data on what is working and what is not working in the school. This information would be extremely useful for wider implementation of the policy across the Solomon Islands. The Inclusion Coordinator should also constantly liaise with the National Multipurpose Resource Centre to ensure that the school has access to all the necessary support needed to include students with special needs enrolled in the school. It would be ideal to have one Inclusion Co-ordinator in each school but if the resources are limited or the school sizes are small, such a person could work with a cluster of schools located in close (or at least reasonable) proximity. The Inclusion Co-ordinators would need to hold an advanced degree in education and would have completed at least a Diploma in Special Education or Disabilities. Considering the significant role an Inclusion Co-ordinator would play in the successful implementation of the policy, it is important that his or her job title and salary reflect that.

4.3. Recommendation 3

Special schools as resource centres

Currently three schools are providing services to students with disabilities in the Solomon Islands. No doubt the services provided by these centres are highly valued by parents and students alike. However, the resources available in these schools can be used in much better (and more equitable) ways. Students with disabilities who enrol in these centres rarely gain admission to regular schools. This is an ongoing concern of parents. Special schools will need to change their overall philosophy of educating students with disabilities; rather than educating students with disabilities entirely in their centres (and acting as day care centres), they must plan how the students will be included in regular schools or into the community. This recommendation is in line with the UNESCO (1999) observation that notwithstanding the best intentions, it is conceded that many special schools end up promoting exclusion.

These schools may need to take up new roles. They should act as resource centres to regular schools in their proximity by providing support to teachers in the form of training or in-class support. It may be necessary that each special school employ a staff member whose main role will be to ensure that students enrolled in special schools have an individualized inclusion plan. The success of the special schools should be measured by the number of students with disabilities successfully included in regular schools or the community. This will require each special school to form ongoing relationships with neighbourhood regular schools and community organizations. Special schools should also closely monitor the quality of education provided to students enrolled. Each child enrolled in the school must have an individualized educational plan. Moreover, the plans should be evaluated on a regular basis to determine how each school is meeting the educational and social needs of students. Many parents have raised concerns about the fees they incur to educate their children in these schools. MEHRD can subsidise the fees for all students enrolled in the centres provided the centres meet their obligatory requirement of providing quality education to all children.

Implementation of this recommendation will require that specialist schools work in partnership with regular schools and identify what support each student will need for successful transition. While a key goal for all students is that they are eventually fully included into regular school community, it may be possible that some students who have severe disability and profound special educational needs may continue to be supported in specialist schools. It is important that the decision to transfer or not transfer a student to regular school be made in close consultation with parents and disability advocates.

4.4. Recommendation 4

Reform teacher education programs
The existing teacher education program is not adequately preparing new teachers to teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. There is a need to revise the existing teacher education programs. The teacher education program needs to ensure that pre-service teachers acquire the necessary skills and knowledge required for them to teach all students, including those with disabilities, adequately. A large body of research has identified the skills these teachers must acquire before completion of their teacher education program (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2010). This body of research along with UNESCO's (2001a) nine golden rules to deal with student diversity would be a good starting point to change the existing teacher education program. The nine rules comprise: including

everyone, effective communication; classroom management; having individual education plans; the use of assistive aids; the preparation of lessons; individual help for pupils; managing pupil's behaviour and fostering the child's social inclusion in the life of the school. Pre-service teachers need to learn strategies that ensure the full participation of learners with a range of special educational needs in the learning process. It is important to note that the majority of teacher education programs focus on knowledge and skills that pre-service teachers must acquire to teach students with diverse learning needs. This is not sufficient. The revised teacher education program at SICHE needs to make sure that new graduates firmly believe in the inclusion philosophy as we know that knowledge and skills on their own are unlikely to prepare teachers to actively include students with disabilities into regular classrooms.

It may be necessary for SICHE to engage a consultant to assist them with the revision of the program. A systematic understanding of what concerns pre-service teachers about the inclusion of students with disabilities would be useful to improve their commitment to inclusive practices. The most important aspect of ensuring that pre-service teachers learn how to teach in inclusive classrooms is the provision of opportunities to practise what they learn in university classrooms. Lack of inclusive schools to apply what these graduates learn in university classrooms is a significant barrier that SICHE is currently facing to reduce the gap between theory and practice. The SICHE should work closely with the MEHRD and ensure that pre-service teachers are placed for at least one practicum in one of the 10 demonstration schools. Pre-service teachers should be encouraged to undertake their teaching practicum at the International School in Honiara City. The majority of the teachers in this school are well trained and use effective inclusive teaching strategies. The school is keen to work in partnership with SICHE and MEHRD to support the training of inclusive teachers.

SICHE should also be supported in undertaking research on various aspects of special and inclusive education. The Solomon Islands are facing a number of issues which are highly context specific. Research by local researchers in understanding and addressing these issues will enhance the institute's capacity to find solutions which are likely to have long lasting implications not only for the Solomon Islands but other nations of the Pacific.

4.5. Recommendation 5

Professional development for school leaders and MEHRD officials

It is recommended that a 3–tier leadership training program be designed and offered to officials directly involved with the implementation of the policy. One of the many reasons inclusion policies have failed to get implemented in many countries is the lack of understanding amongst the leadership team of what inclusion is and what is required for schools to become inclusive (UNESCO, 2001c). This recommendation is aimed to address this issue. The MEHRD officials should undertake a three to five days training program (Module 1) on understanding the nature and value of inclusion, what is required for schools to become inclusive and how to determine if a school is inclusive or not. UNESCO (2001c) has produced an open file on inclusive education for managers and administrators. The document identifies 9 important questions that school leaders must ask when implementing inclusive education. The document also provides actions that schools can take to address the questions. It is recommended that in Tier-One training the document be used for leaders to ask relevant questions and identify appropriate actions.

The second tier program, which is more intensive, is aimed at the school leaders. In addition to doing Module 1, school leaders (e.g., headmasters, principals or vice-principals) should also learn about what support is necessary for teachers to become more inclusive, how to resolve conflicts and how to involve parents and community members in making their schools inclusive (Module 2).

Each of the 10 demonstration schools must employ a new staff member whose main role would be to co-ordinate inclusion programs in the school (see also Recommendation 2 above). This person would need to have completed both Modules 1 and 2 but also know about the technical skills of working with students with various disabilities as well as how to assist teachers in classrooms when they face a problem which they cannot resolve on their own. This person requires more intensive training in acquiring technical skills (see Recommendation 4 on what skills are needed) to be an effective teacher of students with disabilities but also a team leader. It is recommended that this strategy be implemented in phases. In the first phase (immediately), the training should be offered to school staff in 10 demonstration schools. In the second phase (within the next three years), the leadership team in all schools in each of the 10 provinces should have received the training. In future, the Inclusion Co-ordinator could be responsible to work with a cluster of schools rather than be based at one school. This would allow collaboration amongst schools in close proximity but also the sharing of both human and material resources.

4.6. Recommendation 6

Professional development for in-service teachers

A large majority of educators during the current assessment identified lack of adequate training for teachers as a major barrier and improved training as a facilitator to make schools more inclusive. MHERD should make it mandatory for all in-service teachers to undertake professional development programs on inclusive education. Again there is a large body of research on what these teachers would need to learn during such training (see UNESCO, 2001b). International evidence suggests that teachers know much more than what they use when teaching (UNESCO, 2003). They must learn to use existing resources and learn to make better use of existing expertise and be creative within their educational context. They should also learn to examine existing practices that create barriers to learning. Some of the other key topics that they need to learn include: understanding the learner, assessment for learning, adapting curriculum, classroom management, involving peers and parents, team teaching and collaboration. This list is by no means exhaustive.

SICHE should take the primary responsibility for the professional development of in-service teachers. It is anticipated that after SICHE has revised its pre-service teacher education program, it would have identified the key skills that in-service teachers would need to learn to educate students with diverse learning needs in the Solomon Islands. It may be helpful for SICHE to collaborate with teacher education institutes in Australia and the Pacific to undertake this task.

It is recommended that professional development programs be offered in multiple sessions spread over a long period rather than in one or two sessions for a single cohort of in-service teachers. All members working in a school should undertake PD at the same time so as to allow whole school implementation of inclusion reforms. As offering PD programs for all teachers throughout the Solomon Islands is a huge task, the PD programs need to be delivered in phases. In the first phase (by the end of 2012), all teachers in the 10 demonstration schools should have completed the PD programs. In the next phase (which can last for two years), 50% of all schools in each province should be asked to undertake PD programs. The remaining schools should be provided PD in the final phase (to be completed no more than five years from the time the policy is implemented).

It is absolutely important that the impact of PD programs be evaluated (initially, and in an ongoing process) to determine if participation in the program has improved participants' ability to teach students with disabilities as evidenced in their lowering of concerns, improved commitment and enhanced confidence as well as improved teaching practices. Classroom observations will provide further evidence

of the impact of training. The data on the effects of training should be used to revise the professional development programs.

4.7. Recommendation 7

Enrolling students with disabilities – translating national policy for implementation in schools.

All schools should be asked to devise a school policy on inclusive education and should be made aware of their obligation to enrol any child (whether or not he/she has a disability). The school policy should covers topics like enrolment, facilities and educational guidelines for school staff.

The school principals and vice-principals need to make sure that each school staff member is aware of his/her obligation to educate students with disabilities adequately. Schools should also know of the resources available to them when a child with a disability enrols in their school. The school may ask parents to provide information about their child's educational and social needs but they cannot refuse to admit a child if parents do not have this information. A traditional practice in many countries has been to ask parents to get a detailed assessment of their child before schools can enrol a child with a disability. Schools should not ask parents for such assessments. Schools should make their own arrangements to undertake assessments for an individual student (only if such assessments are necessary for educational planning). It is anticipated that the Inclusion Co-ordinator will have the skills to undertake the necessary educational assessment, and MEHRD should provide them with training if they do not. The NLSRC centre can also assist schools in undertaking the assessments.

4.8. Recommendation 8

Supporting students with severe disabilities.

When the national policy on education of students with disabilities is implemented, regular schools will be required to enrol students who have severe disabilities and students who are often dependent on others for their self-help needs. Research from a number of developing countries indicates it is the education of such children that create highest degree of apprehension amongst school educators (Johnstone & Chapman, 2009). Policies have often failed when school are asked to include such students but are not provided enough support.

A long term recommendation is that MEHRD first set up resource rooms to support students with severe disabilities in all of the 10 demonstration schools. It is absolutely important that if such resource rooms are established, placement of students with disabilities in these classrooms is temporary. The educational plan of each student should indicate how the students would be included in regular schools. Such resource rooms can also be used to provide educational services to all students (rather than just students with disabilities) thus reducing the chances of a small group of students being stigmatized. Similar resource rooms may be necessary to teach students sign language or Braille. All demonstration schools should be provided funds to set up resource rooms.

Schools in the Solomon Islands would also need to provide support in the form of helpers (or integration aides) from MEHRD to adequately teach such students in regular classrooms. There is a danger that the school will start seeing an integration aide as primarily responsible to work with the student. Schools must understand that integration aides are to work in partnership with classroom teachers to support all students rather than to be assigned full time to work with a particular student. The Inclusion Co-ordinator in each school must be able to provide the necessary training to integration aides to work effectively with the student/s and the teacher in the short term. In the long term, MEHRD should organize short term training and ongoing professional development for integration aides.

4.9. Recommendation 9

Monitoring inclusive education efforts

It is necessary for self-assessment to be undertaken at the national level by MEHRD and at the school level by the school leadership team to determine how much progress has been made in achieving inclusive education for all. This should form part of whole school development and improvement planning. In its self-assessment, MEHRD should determine whether schools are provided the necessary support and guidance in implementing the inclusive education policy.

Each school must undertake a self-assessment to determine how inclusive it is and whether the school's practices need to change. It is recommended that this exercise first be undertaken by all 10 demonstration schools. Schools can use UNESCO's (2003) toolkit for creating inclusive, learning friendly environments. The toolkit provides specific directions in three major areas that relate to "Where are we

now?" Steps to becoming an Inclusive learning friendly school, and "What have we learned?" The toolkit is not only useful in assessment but also provides strategies that schools can use to become more inclusive. "The Toolkit builds on experience gained over many years and on the strategies and tools developed by many organizations and individuals working on inclusive education and in the area of establishing Child-Friendly Schools" (p.4). Another useful tool that schools can use is the Index of Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). The toolkit has been used and validated across a number of countries (both developed and developing. The Index can be used to guide schools through a process of inclusive school development by building supportive communities and fostering high achievement for all staff and students.

It is possible that schools will need extensive support in undertaking the assessment using the one of the two toolkits. The schools should be provided this necessary support and training. It is anticipated that in the 10 demonstration schools this task will be performed by the Inclusion Co-ordinator with the support of the School Principal and Vice Principal. SICHE should be involved in the in-service training of the school leader and teachers to learn about how to use the toolkit(s) when the policy is implemented more widely across the country.

4.10. Recommendation 10

Funding

A range of stakeholders identified lack of funding as a major concern. Adequate funding to implement inclusive education across the Solomon Islands is necessary. Without adequate funding the policy is likely to face significant resistance from the school community and ultimately result in failure. The MEHRD should be careful in deciding how the funds should be allocated. In this regard it is important to quote Meijer (1999), who found that

> Countries where there is a direct input funding model for special schools (more learners in special schools- more funds) report that this funding model, may lead to less inclusion, more labeling and rising costs. Leaner bound budgeting also seems to have some clear disadvantages. At times, regular schools are eager to have pupils with special needs (and their budgets), but they prefer learners (and their budgets) who are considered to be 'easy to fit in'. The study concludes that the countries having the most attractive funding

> option in support of inclusive education are countries with a strongly decentralized system where budgets for supporting learners with special needs are delegated to local institutions (municipalities, districts, school clusters) and funds are based on total enrolment and other such indicators.

MEHRD should ideally consider providing funds to schools or clusters of schools to implement inclusive teaching practices rather than funding an individual student based on the labels. When funds are provided to schools based on a child's disability type and severity, education departments waste valuable resources in assessing a child's eligibility for additional funds and gate-keeping. Schools should be provided funds based on the resources that they will require (e.g., professional development for teachers, learning materials for students, integration aides) to adequately support all students rather than one particular student. Peters (2003) recommends that:

> countries with developing economies and who have low primary enrolment rates, may conduct low-cost childfind surveys to identify those out of school, the reasons why (e.g., disability and/or impairment) – and then construct policies based on these findings without using traditional labels. The need to collect data and to undertake child-find activities should be balanced by sensitivity to these labeling issues (p. 66).

This may be a useful exercise for MEHRD to identify out-of-school children with disabilities.

4.11. Recommendation 11

Measuring student progress and assessment requirements

One significant barrier that the MEHRD will face when implementing the policy relates to how the progress of students who cannot participate in regular school assessment can be measured. Some students with disabilities, for example those with vision impairments or hearing impairments, can do the same assessment as required of other students, but for the assessment to be accurate they would need assistance in the form of extra time or interpreters. Such support should be available to students with vision impairments and hearing impairments. It would be useful to consult schools, and their students, to identify barriers other students face in accessing exams and ensure that all such barriers are minimised. Other students may require adaptive assessment. The two commonly used assessment methods used both in developed and developing countries to measure student progress are: outcomes-based curriculum and assessment and portfolio assessments. In an outcomes-based assessment, students' progress is measured against the broad results expected at the end of each learning process. This may include the acquisition of generic skills, abilities and values (UNESCO, 2003). It may involve an ongoing

assessment to understand a student's learning and the teacher's success in selecting appropriate methods to teach the student. This allows teachers to change the teaching method if a student is not learning.

It is essential to identify necessary educational and social goals for a student who cannot undertake a regular class assessment in consultation with parents and carers. The student's progress should be measured by determining whether the student is able to achieve the agreed goals within a specified time period.

Portfolio assessment is another way to measure a student's progress. A portfolio includes a student's best work, various works in progress, various class projects undertaken, daily work samples, certificates earned, self-evaluation of the progress of learning and teachers' observations (UNESCO, 2003b). Parents can also be asked to include any work completed at home to be included in the portfolio. It is important for schools to learn about the various ways they can adapt assessment to measure an individual student's progress.

4.12. Recommendation 12

Involving parents and communities

Lack of involvement of parents of children with disabilities in their child's education is a significant barrier in the Solomon Islands. There is enough research to show that without parental involvement inclusive education efforts are likely to meet with failure.

There are many reasons for the poor involvement of parents in the Solomon Islands; society's negative attitude towards people with disabilities is one of the most significant challenges. MEHRD needs to use various strategies to increase awareness in society about the rights of children with disabilities as well as to mobilise parents to work in close partnership with schools. MEHRD can use local community leaders, churches, parents, and disability advocates; advertisements in radio and TV also serve well as awareness-raising campaigns. There needs to be two campaigns – one to raise awareness of the rights of all children including those with disabilities to attend schools and change societal attitudes, and the other to encourage parents to send their children to school and make sure they continue to attend.

Currently there are no parent advocates in the country. International Funding Agencies working in partnership with MEHRD should help parents to form advocacy groups with representations from all 10 provinces. Such groups have a vested interest in improving services for their children with disabilities and could thus be a great resource for MEHRD in sustaining inclusive education efforts beyond Honiara City.

Schools need to be proactive in ensuring parental involvement. Parents need to understand that their involvement is likely to result in better educational outcomes for their child. They should also be supported in identifying appropriate educational goals for their child and provided resources that they can use to further educate their child at home. It is necessary that school staff undertake professional development to develop their understanding of the importance of parental involvement and the ways parents can be actively engaged to work with educators. UNESCO (2003, p.9) states

> Successful partnership with families can be developed if both the professionals and families understand and respect each other's roles in those partnerships. Although it can take time to develop, trust between the partners is vital. Encouraging marginalized groups to become involved can be particularly difficult. The importance of family involvement in education can be reinforced by embedding it in the way schools are run and by appropriate legislation.

4.13. Recommendation 13

Multi-sector collaboration of government and non-government agencies.

Services to children with disabilities are provided by a number of agencies and government agencies in the Solomon Islands. Two ministries that are directly involved in providing a range of services to children with disabilities (CWD) are the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD) and the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS). A number of voluntary organizations and special schools are also providing services to CWD. In order to avoid duplication of efforts and to make best use of existing resources, a multi-sector participation strategy needs to be established. It is also important that educating students with disabilities should be seen as the primary responsibility of MEHRD. This does not mean that other ministries do not participate in any aspect of implementing inclusive education in the country; it only means that any activities related to the educational services be primarily co-ordinated by MEHRD.

Establishing and developing multi-sector participation could result in several challenges. However, the costs of the lack of coordination in terms of lost resources and lost benefits/services provide

compelling reasons to aggressively pursue community/agency participation and co-ordination of the activities of various ministries (Peters, 2003). One example of the services provided by MHMS that can and should be co-ordinated by both MEHRD and MHMS is the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program. MHMS has a recurring budget of close to a million dollars to train and employ CBR workers. This program has 18 field workers and most provinces except Renbel and Central provinces have more than 2 CBR workers. During the current assessment it was found that a number of CBR workers were teaching (even though not trained as teachers) in various special schools in Honiara City. The CBR workers are an excellent resource available in the country and could support the implementation of inclusive education in regular schools both in rural and urban areas across all 10 provinces. The support from CBR volunteers could include identifying children with disabilities who are out of school, mobilising families to visit neighborhood schools to enrol their child, organising community events to raise awareness about disability issues, creating educational materials, and providing support to teachers in classrooms.

4.14. Recommendation 14

Transition from home to school and the vocational sector

MEHRD should make sure that students with disability transit smoothly from different phases of education. The most significant transition for children with disabilities is when they first enrol in a school. Both students and families require lot of support to ensure that this transition is smooth. Schools need to plan for the transition of students with disabilities from early child care centers to primary, primary to secondary schools or Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). In the Solomon Islands context maximum efforts would be required to support families for transition from home to schools and from specialist schools to regular schools as there are not many students with disabilities in primary schools currently. MEHRD should also work with early child hood education sector to ensure children with special educational needs are identified early and well supported by school personnel. Investments in this sector can significant reduce the chances of such children dropping out of school or not being admitted in primary schools. It might be useful to identify specific barriers that students and families may face at different stages of transition and then implement strategies to address the barriers. Some of the common barriers the families face are availability of transportation, facility to travel from home to schools, poor infrastructure (e.g., ramps, toilet facilities) and availability of academic material and equipment (e.g.,

braille or talking books).

MEHRD must also ensure that children with special needs, especially those at the risk of being excluded from participation in schooling, e.g. female child, children from different ethnicity and children living in remote areas, are identified as early as possible and provided access to quality education.

4.15. Recommendation 15

Reforming school curriculum

Accessible and flexible curricula, textbooks and learning materials sit at the heart of inclusive education and can serve as the key to creating schools for all. However, this is not easy. Many teachers continue to struggle with visualizing how students with disabilities can learn the same curriculum. Schools in the Solomon Islands, as elsewhere, often expect and require all students to learn the same things, at the same time and by the same means and methods. But students are different in the way they learn and their capacities to learn. It is important, therefore, that the school curriculum in the Solomon Islands be made flexible to provide possibilities for adjustment to individual needs and to stimulate teachers to seek solutions that can be matched with the needs, abilities and learning styles of each and every student. MEHRD needs to appoint Curriculum Officers at the Ministerial level who will work in partnership with SICHE and NLSRC to determine what modifications may and should be made to the curriculum to accommodate students with different abilities in regular schools.

4.16. Recommendation 16

Access to school buildings

In the Solomon Islands access to school buildings is a huge issue. Some of the schools visited during the current assessment were highly inaccessible. It is impossible for a student to move from one class to another class or to use various schools facilities (e.g., toilets). This is an important area that MEHRD has to target as soon as possible. All demonstration schools must be provided necessary funding to improve accessibility of students who have physical impairments or who are blind. This may include building ramps to classrooms and easy access to toilet facilities. MEHRD should also develop uniform guidelines for all new school buildings to comply with disability friendly infrastructure guidelines. It is possible that changing existing school infrastructure may take some time. During this time, schools can work in

partnership with CBR workers to identify cost-effective ways to ensure all students have access to school facilities. MEHRD may seek funds from private agencies and international funding bodies to modify the infrastructure of existing school buildings.

4.17. Recommendation 17

National survey on children with special educational needs

There is not sufficient data available about the number of children with special educational needs in the Solomon Islands. In addition to collecting detailed demographic information (e.g .age, gender, socio economic status, ethnicity), the survey should determine how many children with special educational needs are in the country, where they live, what services they have access to, whether they have attended schools- what their experiences of schooling are, and the reasons for dropping out (if any). This information will assist in addressing any areas that are not yet targeted in this report but most importantly this information will be useful to target communities or regional areas where services for children with disabilities are non-existent.

4.18. Recommendation 18

Implementation of the policy

The last recommendation of the report relates to what needs to be done so that the policy is implemented. Thus this recommendation is very significant. The MEHRD should set up a task force consisting of members from both MEHRD and MHMS, persons with disability (at least one person with a hearing impairment and one person with vision impairment), a parent advocate, a disability advocate, the head of the teacher education program from SICHE, members representing regular school educators and special education teachers and other members as considered important by the task force (e.g., members representing different ethnicity, members of the church). Each member of the task force should play a key role in decision making. The task force should be responsible for identifying actions needed to be taken to implement each recommendation and meet on a regular basis to determine the progress in regard to meeting the set targets.

Implementation of the policy should occur in phases in regular schools. In the first phase the

priority should be to establish 10 demonstration schools across 10 provinces. In the second phase, 50% of schools in each of the 10 provinces would be asked to implement the policy. In the last phase, all schools would be asked to implement the policy.

It is important to acknowledge that each school will require support in the form of in-service training for school leaders and teachers and support from a person like the Inclusion Co-ordinator. MEHRD should plan how implementation will align with the support available to schools.

The schools must be made aware of the consequence of not following the Policy. It is important for MEHRD to identify consequences that will result in significant disadvantage for the school so that discriminatory practices are not repeated. It could mean no promotion for the following 5 years for the person who fails to implement the policy. In countries where rights of students with disabilities are protected by legal mandates (e.g., Disability Discrimination Act in Australia), discrimination against children with disabilities by educational authorities is minimal and reducing. Such legislation allows parents and carers to be proactive in ensuring their child receives appropriate education. School leaders should undergo professional development as part of the leadership training (see Recommendation 4) to understand their obligation to implement the policy. They will also need to be made aware of the various resources available to them within their community and through the MEHRD as well as the NLSRC (see Recommendation 1) to successfully implement the policy.

Summary

This section has presented a series of recommendations to ensure successful implementation of inclusive education in the Solomon Islands. The recommendations have been drafted after a careful examination of the results of the current assessment as well as several UNESCO documents. It is important to understand that implementing inclusive education is a process and the schooling system will not change overnight. Policy implementation should begin in phases by first starting demonstration schools across 10 provinces. Lessons learnt in implementing the policy in these 10 schools will provide useful guidance about what future actions need to be taken for a smooth countrywide implementation. The MEHRD would need to ensure that adequate support in terms of funding and necessary training to key stakeholders is provided to implement the policy.

PART 5

EDUCATION FOR ALL IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS – CONCLUSION.

The Solomon Islands is at a critical stage with regard to the education of students with disabilities. Until recently children with disabilities were out of the education system and the result has been that thousands of children have been denied education in any form. The proposed new policy on inclusive education represented by this report has the potential to change the situation. There is also a danger that the policy is not implemented as it is intended and the result could be continuous exclusion of the most disadvantaged children. Commenting on the lack of progress to implement policy reforms in a number of countries, Peters (2003, p.64) reported that

> just because more than 80% of countries in the North and 50% in the South (Asia and Pacific region) have written policies on Inclusive Education, it does not automatically follow that these policies will be enacted in a particular form or guidelines *talked about, believed in, or even enacted* at all. Written policy gets translated into practice in different forms at different levels, so the notion that policy at the national level determines other levels of policy and practice is reductionist. National policy may have widespread effects, but does not a priori determine what education officials and teachers produce as policy.

The implementation of any new policy is an inherently complex endeavour that involves multiple players and multiple systems (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2011). Whereas most education policies are adopted by a discrete body of decision makers, such as MEHRD and MHMS, they are implemented by a much wider group of actors (e.g., school teachers and principals). Policies fail because the key stakeholders engaged in the work are different – the personnel who enact the policy are often not the people charged with determining its day-to-day implementation (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2011). In the current assessment an attempt has been made to incorporate the viewpoints of policy implementers thus enhancing the ownership of ideas recommended in the report. Despite this, it is possible that the current policy may face resistance and could be difficult to implement.

We have learnt important lessons from various countries about what needs to be done to ensure the successful implementation of educational policy. In this concluding section it is important to revisit some of the key lessons learnt so that the Solomon Islands does not repeat the mistakes that other nations have made.

1. Implementation of educational reforms often takes time, is likely to meet with some resistance and controversy, and faces systematic barriers. It is important that MEHRD is aware of this and considers implementation of inclusion countrywide as a process that will take some time. Policy makers and policy implementers need to be aware that without adequate resources the educational reform is likely to result in failures. Educators directly involved in implementing the policy need to be consulted on a regular basis and be involved in the decision making process (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). Policymakers and educators need to look for creative ways of finding and expanding human and material resources.

2. MEHRD needs to develop a vision of inclusive education. The vision needs to be shared and articulated to teachers, parents and school districts. It is important that everyone in the education system understands that inclusion is not an additional program but a foundation of providing good education for all. This foundation should guide any other programs related to the education of students with disabilities (UNESCO, 2003). It is important that inclusive education be viewed as a way to change the entire education system so that each student is included in better educational quality.

3. All educational policies and legislation of the country need to be coherent with the overall philosophy of inclusive education policy. Any policy or practice which is incompatible with the overall philosophy of inclusive education is likely to create tension amongst policy implementers. Policies incompatible with inclusive philosophy need to be identified and revised to reduce the chances of any tension amongst policy implementers. The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2009) state that integrated legislation across sectors leading to a consistency between inclusive education and other policy initiatives is a key principle of quality inclusive education.

4. MEHRD must invest heavily in the capacity building of key stakeholders (teachers and school principals). Rather than targeting individual teachers, capacity building activities should be aimed at whole school communities. Research suggests that the "traditional model of professional development reflects a limited conception of the dimensions of teacher capacity necessary to support and sustain instructional reform and ignores the role of the school and other communities of practice in teacher learning and educational improvement" (Goertz, Floden & O'day, 1995, p.xii). Teacher capacity is developed through individual activities as well as through interaction with communities of practice and with other colleagues in their schools.   A whole school approach to capacity building is likely to result in the whole school addressing the barriers to inclusion and

providing improved educational services to all children.

5. Lastly, a system must be established for the evaluation and monitoring of inclusive education efforts. It should provide incentives for improvement while addressing problems and barriers. Inclusive education programs should result in improvements at all levels including individual, family, community, organization, and government (Stubbs, 1993). An implementation plan is presented below. It identifies the importance of each recommendation using a star system (the more stars, the more important). The plan presents the time frame within which each recommendation needs to be implemented and it also identifies short term and long term success indicators that MEHRD can use to evaluate the policy implementation.

Implementation of Inclusive and Special Education policy in the Solomon Islands: Priority and time frame

	Time Frame	Priority	Success Indicators (short term)	Success indicators (long term)
Recommedation1: Establishing NLSRC	1-3 years	*****	Setting up the centre in a new or leased building in Honiara City. Appointment of educators who can train Braille and Auslan Equipment to translate text into braille or braille into text Resources in the form of books and specialized training material Audio-visual facilities	A new disability friendly building located close to SICHE Training programs for teachers in Braiile, Orientation and Mobilty and Auslan. Number of graduates completing the specialist training programs. Number of schools/students supported by the centre.
Recommendation 2: Demonstration schools	1-3 year	*****	Identification of schools Location of schools in 10 provinces. Appointment of Inclusion Co-ordinators In-service training for Inclusion Co-ordinators	In-service training of all members of school leadership team In-service training of all teachers and other school staff Resource center for children with severe disabilities Appointment of specialist teachers who can teach Braille and orientation and Mobility and/or auslan Parental satisfaction

Recommendation 3: Special school as resource centers	1-3 years	****	Revision of the existing school policies Appointment of a new person (or change in the role) responsible to enhance collaboration with neighbourhood schools and community. Identification of regular schools that each special school will work with. Development of individualized inclusion plans A memorandum of understanding (MOU)with MEHRD for ongoing monitoring of the school's performance	Number of children successfully included in regular schools Number of schools supported by the specialist centers. Parent satisfaction data
Recommendation 4: Reform teacher education	1-2 years	*****	Revision of the existing subject in special education Infusion of inclusion related material in all subjects taught in pre-service education program. Evaluating practicum placement to ensure inclusion practices could be applied in real settings. Data on pre-service teachers' preparedness to teach in inclusive classrooms (e.g., better attitudes, better confidence and better classroom	Number of pre-service teachers of the total cohort who are placed in demonstration schools and the National Centre. Data reporting improved outcomes (attitudes, confidence and practices) Independent evaluation of the teacher education program showing improvement in the curriculum and teaching practices.

			practices)	
Recommendation 5: Professional Development for school leaders and MEHRD officials	1-5 years	*****	Development of a course by SICHE or another organization responsible. Positive evaluation of the course material by an independent evaluator. Positive Evaluation of the course as evidenced by participants' commitment and knowledge. Course completion by the selected MEHRD officials, school leadership team of all demonstration schools and Inclusion Co-ordinators.	Course completion by all school leaders, regional MEHRD officials. Positive evaluation of the course as evidenced by participants' commitment and knowledge.
Recommendation 6: Professional Development for in-service teachers	1-5 years	*****	Development of an in-service course using the key principles /resources described. Completion of in-service professional development programs by all in-service teachers and school staff in demonstration schools. Positive outcomes as evidenced by increased commitment, confidence and classroom practices	Completion of the course by all in-service teachers across all provinces (within five years) Positive outcomes as evidenced by increased commitment, confidence and classroom practices
Recommendation 7: Revision of school policies	1-5 years	***	Revision of school policy in 10 demonstration schools. Awareness of the school staff about the school policy.	Revision of school policies of all regular schools within 3-5 years.

			Involvement of parents in making of the school policy and implementation.	
Recommendation 8: Supporting students with severe disabilities	1-5 years	****	Appointment of integration aides/helpers in all demonstration schools. Establishment of resource rooms in demonstration schools within three years. Short term training for integration aides. Involvement of parents in program development	Number of students with severe disabilities enrolled in regular or specialist schools. Appointment of integration aides/helpers in any school that has students with severe disabilities. Intensive training for all integration aides/helpers. Parent satisfaction data
Recommendation 9: Monitoring inclusive education efforts	Ongoing	*****	Identification of a suitable tool to monitor school performance to implement inclusion programs in all demonstration schools. Self assessment by MEHRD in consultation with independent evaluator. Completion of a professional development training by school leaders to undertake self-assessment of their schools in 10 demonstration schools. Data collection to undertake whole school assessment. Development of a whole school inclusion/ improvement program	Completion of a professional development training by school leaders to undertake self-assessment in all schools within five years of the policy implementation. Number of schools that collect data to to undertake whole school assessment. Number of schools that develop a whole school inclusion/ improvement program based on the evaluation in all schools. Number of schools that report outcomes to MEHRD.

			based on the evaluation. Reporting school outcomes to the MEHRD	
Recommendation 10: Funding	Ongoing (yearly budget)	*****	Availability of funds to implementing body. Availability of needed funds to implement the recommendations with five star ratings. Funds based on services required not tied to students. Development of school plans to find funds from community sources.	Availability of funds to implement all recommendations.
Recommendation 11: Measuring student progress and assessment requirements	1-3 years	****	Development of a draft school policy related to assessment of students with special needs. Implementation of the school policy in 10 demonstration schools. Revision of the policy based on the feedback from student population and teachers.	Implementation of the school policy throughout the school sector in the Solomon Islands.
Recommendation 12: Involving parents and communities	Ongoing	*****	Launching of a campaign by MEHRD to increase parent awareness. Launching of another campaign aimed at general community to raise their awareness about people with disabilities. Number of campaign	Number of campaign documents produced and distributed into the community throughout the Solomon Islands. Number of TV ads and newspaper articles in national and local media. Number of awareness

			documents produced and distributed into the community in proximity to demonstration schools. Number of awareness building activities in the community in proximity to demonstration schools.	building activities in the community throughout the nation.
Recommendation 13: Multi-sector collaboration of government and non-government agencies	Ongoing	****	Development of a strategy document to enhance multi-sector collaboration. Joint appointments across different sectors or ministries. Involvement of stakeholders from different organisations at key decision making meetings.	Same as short term indicators.
Recommendation 14: Transition planning	1-5 years	*****	Identification of families that require support with transition in proximity to demonstration schools. Development of individual family transition plan identifying support and resources needed for successful inclusion of a child living in close proximity to demonstration schools.	Number of families with young children who are identified as needing special educational services throughput the Solomon islands. Number of families supported with transition planning. Parent satisfaction data
Recommendation 15: Reforming school curriculum	1-3 years	****	Appointment of a curriculum officer to work in partnership with the demonstration schools in adapting the school curriculum. Availability of revised	Availability of the draft document to all schools in the Solomon Islands that they can use to adapt curriculum for an individual student. Professional Development

			school curriculum to students with special needs in the demonstration schools. Development of a draft document that can assist schools to adapt curriculum for student with special educational needs.	(see Recommendation 6 above) for all in-service teachers on how to use the draft document. Number of schools that report making significant adaptation to curriculum to include students with disabilities.
Recommendation 16: Access to school buildings	1-5 years	***	Modification of school buildings to accommodate students with various disabilities in all demonstration schools. Development of an MEHRD guideline to ensure all new school buildings are disability friendly.	Number of schools that change existing structures which create barriers for full participation of persons with disabilities. Parent satisfaction data.
Recommendation 17: National survey on CWD	3-5years	***		Data as identified in the recommendation.
Recommendation 18: Implementing the policy	Ongoing	*****	Appointment of a task force representing different stakeholders. Implementation of the policy in 10 demonstration schools. Ongoing monitoring.	Implementation of the policy nationwide. Number of students successfully included into mainstream schools and the society. Number of students successfully taught at special schools or resource centres. Legislation to implement inclusive education.

Implementing the new policy on inclusive education in the Solomon Islands will provide both challenges and opportunities. It is naïve to assume that the policy will be implemented without any resistance. MEHRD should be prepared to deal with any resistance and ensure that policy implementers (teachers and principals) as well as consumers (parents and students) are well supported. Unless government officials show their commitment to improve the status of children with disabilities in the Solomon Islands, policy implementers at the school level will continue to question and resist educating students with disabilities in their classrooms. The MEHRD has taken a step in the right direction by formulating a policy on inclusive education.

Implementing inclusive education in the Solomon Islands may seem like an insurmountable task. It should not be denied that it is a big task, yet it is the right time to make a start; after all, "Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending".

REFERENCES

Ainscow. M. (1999). *Understanding the development of inclusive schools*. London: Falmer Press.

Booth, T. & Ainscow, M. (2002). *Index for inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools*. UK: Center for Studies on Inclusive Education

Baker, S. (2010). *Disability information sheet: Solomon Islands*. Melbourne: Nossal Institute.

Baker, E.T., Wang, M.C., & Walberg, H.J. (1994-1995). The effects of inclusion on learning. *Educational Leadership,* 33-35.

Bailey, J. (2004). The validation of scale to measure school principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools. *Australian Psychologist*, *39*(1), 76-87.

Canadian Council on Learning (2009). *Changing our schools: Implementing successful educational reforms.* Ontario: CCL.

Eleweke, C. J. & Rodda, M. (2002). The challenge of enhancing inclusive education in developing countries. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *6*(2): 113 – 126

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2009). *Key principles for promoting quality in inclusive education: Recommendations for policy makers.* Odense, Denmark: European Agency. http://www.european-agency.org/publications/ereports/key-principles-for-promoting-quality-in-inclusive-education/key-principles-for-promoting-quality-in-inclusive-education

Farrelle, P. (2000). The impact of research on developments in inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 4*(2), 153-162.

Farrelle, P., Dyson, A., Polat, F., Hutcheson, G., & Gallannaugh, F. (2007). Inclusion and achievement in mainstream schools. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, *22*(2), 131-145.

Ferguson, P., & Ash, A. (1989). Lessons from life: Personal and parental perspectives on school, childhood and disability. In D. Biklen, A. Ford, & P. Ferguson, (Eds.) *Disability and society* (pp108-140). Chicago, National Society for the Study of Education

Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change. (*4th ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Goertz, M.E., Floden, R.E. O'Day, J. (1995). *Studies of education reform: Systemic reform* (Vol. I) *Findings and conclusions*. U.S. Department of Education: New York.

Harvard Graduate School of Education (2011). *Implementing education policy: Getting from what now? To what works.* Boston: Grantmakers for Education.

Jenner D, Community Based Rehabilitation, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Solomon Islands Government, **Solomon Islands Nationwide Disability Survey 2006, Draft for Consultation**, Honiara, February 2006

http://www.undppc.org.fj/_resources/article/files/Final%20PSWD%20BOOKLET.pdf, accessed 27 October 2010.

Jenner D, Community Based Rehabilitation, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Solomon Islands Government,

Jolley, (n.d). *Unified English Braille: A concept paper for Pacific Island Nations*. Sydney: ICEB.

Johnstone, C.J. & Chapman, D.W. (2009) Contributions and constrains to the implementation of inclusive education in Lesotho. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 56(2), 131-148.

Kugelmass, J. & Ainscow, M. (2004). Leading inclusive schools: A comparison of practices in three countries. *Journal of Research in Special Needs Education, 4*(3), 133-141.

Kunc, N. (2002) Rediscovering the right to belong. In R. Villa & J. S. Thousand (Eds.), *Restructuring for caring and effective education* (pp. 77-92). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Lindqvist, B. (1999). Education as a fundamental right. *Education Update*, 2(4), 7

McLaughlin, M.W. (1993) What matters most in teachers' workplace contexts? In J.W. Little & M. W. McLaughlin (Eds.) *Teachers' work: Individuals, colleagues and contexts* (pp. 79-103). New York: Teachers College Press.

MEHRD (2012). *Inclusive and special education: A way forward in the Solomon Islands –Terms of Reference*. Honiara: MEHRD.

MHMS (2004). Solomon Islands National Policy on Disability. Honiara: MHMS

Meijer, C. (1999). *Financing of Special Needs Education: A seventeen country study of the relation between financing of special needs education and integration*. Middlefart, Denmark: European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education.

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (2009). Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability: 2010-2015. Cook Islands: PEFS.

Pacific Education for All- VI Forum (2011). Pacific Education Development Framework – Vision Impairment: 2011-2015. NSW, Australia: PIFS.

Palmer, D. S., Borthwick-Duffy, S. A., & Widaman, K. (1998). Parent perceptions of inclusive practices for their children with significant cognitive disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, *64*, 271-282.

Peetsma, T., Verger, M., Roeleveld, J., & Karsten, S.(2001). Inclusion in education: comparing pupils' development in special and regular education. *Educational Review*, *53*(2), 125-135.

Peters, S. J. (2003). I*nclusive education: Achieving education for all by including those with disabilities and special education needs*. Paris: World Bank.

Save the Children (2002) *Schools for all: Including disabled children in education*. London: Save the Children.

Simi, J. (2008). *Teacher educators' and pre-service teachers' attitudes, knowledge and understanding on special education and inclusive education in the Solomon Islands*. Unpublished Dissertation.

Staub, D. & Peck, C.A. (1994). What are the outcomes for non-disabled students? *Educational Leadership*, *52*(4), 36-40.

SICHE (2012). *Solomon Islands College of Higher Education Curriculum*. Honiara: SICHE.

Sharma, U., Loreman, T. & Forlin, C. (2012). Measuring teacher efficacy to implement inclusive practices. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, *12*: 12–21. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-3802.2011.01200.x

Sharma, U., & Desai, I. (2002). Measuring concerns about integrated education in India. *Asia and Pacific Journal on Disability, 5*(1), 12-14.

Stubbs, S. (1993). Integrating Disability into Development Programmes . EENET. Source: www.eenet.org.uk/theory_practice/integrat.shtml.

Tavola (2011). Barriers to Education Study. Honiara: MEHRD.

UNDP (2009). Pacific sisters with disabilities: At the intersection of discrimination. Suva, Fiji: UNDP Pacific Centre.

UNESCO (1994). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (1999). Salamanca five years on: A review of UNESCO activities in the light of Salamanca Declaration and Framework for Action. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (1999b). *Working schools: Students with disabilities in regular schools*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2001a). Dakar Framework for Action. Education for All: Meeting our collective commitments. World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28th April, 2000.

UNESCO (2001b). Understanding and responding to children's needs in the inclusive classroom: A guide for teachers. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2001c). Open file on inclusive education: Support materials for managers and administrators. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2003) Embracing diversity: Toolkit for creating inclusive, learning friendly environments. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (2008) Inclusive education: the way of the future. Conclusions and recommendations of the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE), Geneva, 25-28 November 2008. www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/brazil_NR08.pdf

UNESCO, (2009) Policy guidelines on inclusion in education. Paris: UNESCO.

UNICEF (2010). Pacific children with disabilities. Geneva: UNICEF.

United Nations (2006). *Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.* Paris: UN.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

In-service and Pre-service Attitudes towards and Concerns about Inclusion Questionnaire

A SURVEY OF PRESERVICE and INSERVICE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD

AND CONCERNS ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Part 1: Background Information

Please respond to the following items by <u>writing the number on the line</u> or by <u>ticking the box</u> as indicated.

A. Which course(s) are you currently enrolled in/have completed?
    1. Please specifiy _____

B. I am a: 1: Male   2: Female   _____

C. My age is……

D. What is your highest level of education completed?   _____
    1. Year 12 or equivalent   3. Undergraduate degree
    2. Diploma   4. Postgraduate degree

E. I have a family member(s) and/or a close friend with a disability?
    1. Family member   Yes _____ No _____
    2. Close friend   Yes _____ No _____
    3. Other (specify _____)   Yes _____ No _____.

F. I have undertaken training focusing on the education of students with disabilities.
    1. Yes ____   please specify _____   _____
    2. No ____

G. My level of confidence in teaching students with disabilities is:
    1. Very High   _____
    2. High   _____
    3. Average   _____
    4. Low   _____
    5. Very Low   _____

H. If you indicated that your level of confidence in teaching students with disabilities is low or very low, what kind of training (or what content) could improve it.

    1. _____

    2. _____

    3. _____

I.   Have you ever taught a student with a disability?   _____
                         1. Yes   2. No

J.   I am teaching in
     1.   Early childhood education
     2.   Primary school
     3.   Secondary school
     4.   Vocational training centres
     5.   Special school

K.   I teach in year
     1.   ECE
     2.   Year 1-3
     3.   Year 4-6
     4.   Year 7-9
     5.   Year 10-12
     6.   Not applicable

L.   Can you list three factors that will facilitate inclusion of students with disabilities in your class(in other words what support will make it easier for you to include students with disabilities in your class)
     1.   _____

     2.   _____

     3.   _____

M.   Can you list three factors that hinder or will hinder inclusion of students with disabilities in your class
     1.   _____

     2.   _____

     3.   _____

Part 2: Teachers' Attitudes toward Inclusion Scale

Instructions: After reading each statement, please <u>circle</u> the most appropriate response at the right of each statement that reflects your personal opinion.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

For example:

If you agree with the statement below, circle 4

Students with physical disabilities create too many problems to permit inclusion 1 2 3   5

4

1	Students with physical disabilities create too many problems to permit inclusion	1	2	3	4	5
2	Including students with special needs create few additional problems for teachers' class management	1	2	3	4	5
3	Students who cannot read normal print size should not be included in regular classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
4	Because special schools are better resourced to cater for special needs students, these students should stay in special schools	1	2	3	4	5
5	Students who are continuously aggressive towards their fellow students should not be included in regular classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
6	Regular teachers are not trained adequately to cope with the students with disabilities	1	2	3	4	5
7	Students with mild disabilities should be included in regular classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
8	Students with special needs will take up too much of teacher aides' time	1	2	3	4	5
9	Regardless of whether the parents of regular students object to inclusion, the practice should be supported	1	2	3	4	5

10	Special needs students belong in special schools where all their needs can be met	1	2	3	4	5
11	Helpers are trained adequately to cope with students with special needs	1	2	3	4	5
12	Students with disabilities benefit academically from inclusion	1	2	3	4	5
13	Regular students will be disadvantaged by having special needs children in their classroom	1	2	3	4	5
14	Students who are continually aggressive towards school staff should not be included in regular classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
15	Special needs students whose achievement levels in basic skills are significantly lower than their classmates should not be included in regular classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
16	Students who have to communicate in a special way (e.g., communication boards/ signing) should not be included in regular classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
17	Regular school principals are trained adequately to cope with the students with disabilities	1	2	3	4	5
18	Including students with special needs is unfair to regular teachers who already have a heavy work load	1	2	3	4	5
19	Students with severe disabilities should be included in regular classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
20	Students with moderate disabilities should be included in regular classrooms	1	2	3	4	5
21	Students with disabilities benefit socially from inclusion	1	2	3	4	5
22	Regular students benefit socially from inclusion	1	2	3	4	5
23	Students with special needs will take up too much of the teachers' time	1	2	3	4	5
24	Students with severe speech difficulties should not be included in regular classrooms	1	2	3	4	5

PART 3:

Concerns about Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is one form of educational provision that may be made for students with disabilities within the school system. In the context of your **expectations** regarding the school situation and/or your **personal experiences** indicate whether any of the following items will be a concern to you if a student with a disability was included in your class/school.

INSTRUCTIONS

Please indicate your level of concern by <u>circling</u> the most appropriate number that applies to you.

4	3	2	1
Extremely Concerned	**Very** **Concerned**	**A Little** **Concerned**	**Not at All** **Concerned**

1. I will not have enough time to plan educational programs for students with disabilities.   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

2. It will be difficult to maintain discipline in class.   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

3. I do not have knowledge and skills required to teach students with disabilities.   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

4. I will have to do additional paper work.   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

5. Students with disabilities will not be accepted by students without disabilities.   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

6. Parents of children without disabilities may not like the idea of placing their children in the same classroom with students with disabilities.   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

7. My school will not have enough funds for implementing inclusion successfully.   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

8. There will be inadequate para-professional staff available to support students with disabilities (e.g., speech pathologist, physiotherapist, OT)   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

9. I will not receive enough incentives (for e.g., additional remuneration or   **4**   **3**   **2**   **1**

allowance) to teach students with disabilities.

10. My workload will increase.	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
11. Other school staff members will be stressed.	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
12. My school will have difficulty in accommodating students with various types of disabilities because of inappropriate infrastructure (for e.g., architectural barriers).	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
13. There will be inadequate resources/special teacher staff available to support inclusion.	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
14. My school will not have adequate special education instructional materials and teaching aids (e.g., Braille).	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
15. The overall academic standard of the school will suffer.	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
16. My performance as a classroom teacher will decline.	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
17. The academic achievement of students without disabilities will be affected.	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
18. It will be difficult to give equal attention to all students in an inclusive classroom.	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
19. I will not be able to cope with students with a disability who do not have adequate self-care skills (e.g., students who are not toilet trained).	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
20. There will be inadequate administrative support to implement the inclusive education program.	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
21. The inclusion of a student with a disability in my class will lead to a higher degree of anxiety and stress in me.	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**

Part 4:

Self-efficacy in Implementing Inclusive Practices Scale

This survey is designed to help us understand the nature of factors influencing the success of routine classroom activities in creating an inclusive classroom environment.

Please circle the number that best represents your opinion about each of the statements.

Please attempt to answer each question

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly agree

SD D DS AS A SA

1	I can use a variety of assessment strategies (eg. Group work assignments).	1 2 3 4 5 6
2	I am able to provide an alternate explanation or example when students are confused.	1 2 3 4 5 6
3	I am confident in designing learning tasks so that the individual needs of students with disabilities are accommodated.	1 2 3 4 5 6
4	I can accurately gauge student comprehension of what I have taught.	1 2 3 4 5 6
5	I can provide appropriate challenges for very capable students.	1 2 3 4 5 6
6	I am confident in my ability to get students to work together *in pairs or in small groups*.	1 2 3 4 5 6
7	I am confident in my ability to prevent disruptive behaviour in the classroom before it occurs.	1 2 3 4 5 6
8	I can control disruptive behaviour in the classroom.	1 2 3 4 5 6
9	I am able to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy.	1 2 3 4 5 6
10	I am able to get children to follow classroom rules.	1 2 3 4 5 6
11	I am confident when dealing with students who are physically	1 2 3 4 5 6

aggressive.

12	I can make my expectations clear about student behaviour.	1 2 3 4 5 6
13	I can assist families in helping their children do well in school.	1 2 3 4 5 6
14	I can improve the learning of a student who is failing.	1 2 3 4 5 6
15	I am able to work jointly with other professionals and staff (e.g. helpers, other teachers) to teach students with disabilities in the classroom.	1 2 3 4 5 6
16	I am confident in my ability to get parents involved in school activities of their children with disabilities.	1 2 3 4 5 6
17	I can make parents feel comfortable coming to school.	1 2 3 4 5 6
18	I can collaborate with other teachers in designing educational plans for students with disabilities.	1 2 3 4 5 6
19	I am confident in informing others who know little about laws and policies relating to the inclusion of students with disabilities.	1 2 3 4 5 6
20	I am confident in adapting school-wide assessment so that students with all disabilities can be assessed.	1 2 3 4 5 6

Appendix 2

Parental Perspectives about Inclusive Education

Parental Perspectives about the Education of their Child with a Disability

Part 1: Background Information

Instructions: Please complete the following questions.

1.   Your Gender   ………………………………

2.   Your child's age………………………………

3.   Your highest level of education obtained

           Postgraduate Degree   Undergraduate Degree

                 Secondary School   T VET

           Other. Please specify …………………………………

4.   Type of school your child attends (please tick)

            Regular school

            Special school

            Other, please specify …………………………………..

5.   Please specify the nature of your child's disability (If applicable, you may tick more than one category).

                 Physical Disability   Visual Impairment

                 Severe Behaviour Disorder   Hearing Impairment

                 Intellectual Disability   Autism Spectrum Disorder

Severe Language Disorder   Others………………..

Don't Know

6.   Level of your child's disability

          Mild   Moderate   Severe   Profound   Don't Know

7.   Has your child changed school settings (ie from regular to special school or vice versa) ? If yes, please explain main reasons for change……………….

          …………………………………………………………………………

          …………………………………………………………………………

          …………………………………………………………………………

          …………………………………………………………………………

          …………………………………………………………………………

8.   If you think that a regular school is not the best setting for your child, indicate five reasons why you think so.

- …………………………………………………………………………..
- …………………………………………………………………………..
- …………………………………………………………………………..
- …………………………………………………………………………..
- …………………………………………………………………………..

9.   If you think that a special school is not the best setting for your child, indicate five reasons why you think so.

- …………………………………………………………………………..
- …………………………………………………………………………..
- …………………………………………………………………………..
- …………………………………………………………………………..

- ………………………………………………………………………………..

10. In your views what additional support your child's school requires to better educate your child?

- ………………………………………………………………………………..
- ………………………………………………………………………………..
- ………………………………………………………………………………..
- ………………………………………………………………………………..
- ………………………………………………………………………………..

Part 2: Parents' Attitudes towards Inclusion Scale

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about your attitudes towards inclusive education. The term inclusion is defined as the education of students with disabilities in regular classrooms, with the use of additional support and resources. There are no right or wrong answers. No identifiable information is asked thus your answers are completely anonymous. The questionnaire consists of two parts. Please complete all questions.

Instructions: Read each statement, and respond by ticking the most appropriate response using the six point ratings provided.

1.   The more time my child spends in a regular classroom, the more likely it is that the quality of his/her education will improve.

| Strongly | Disagree | Somewhat | Somewhat | Agree | Strongly |
| Disagree | | Disagree | Agree | | Agree |

2.   The more time my child spends in a regular classroom, the more likely it is that he/she will be mistreated by other non disabled students in that room.

| Strongly | Disagree | Somewhat | Somewhat | Agree | Strongly |
| Disagree | | Disagree | Agree | | Agree |

3.   The more time my child spends in a regular classroom, the more likely it is that he/she would end up feeling lonely or left out around regular education   students.

| Strongly | Disagree | Somewhat | Somewhat | Agree | Strongly |

Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree

4.   When a student with severe disabilities is enrolled in a regular education   classroom, the positive benefits to the regular education students outweigh any   personal problems that this practice may present.

Strongly   Disagree   Somewhat   Somewhat   Agree   Strongly

Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree

5.   It is impossible to modify most lessons and materials in a regular classroom to truly meet the needs of my child.

Strongly   Disagree   Somewhat   Somewhat   Agree   Strongly

Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree

6.   If my child was to spend a lot of time in a regular classroom, he/she would not end up getting the extra help he/she needs.

Strongly   Disagree   Somewhat   Somewhat   Agree   Strongly

Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree

7.   If my child was to spend much of his/her day in a regular classroom, he/she would end up becoming friends with non disabled students in that room.

Strongly   Disagree   Somewhat   Somewhat   Agree   Strongly

Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Agree

8.   The quality of a regular education is enriched when a student with severe disabilities participates in his/her class.

Strongly	Disagree	Somewhat	Somewhat	Agree	Strongly
Disagree		Disagree	Agree		Agree

9.   If my child was to spend much of the day in a regular classroom, he/she would end up not getting all the necessary special services that would be provided in a special education classroom.

Strongly	Disagree	Somewhat	Somewhat	Agree	Strongly
Disagree		Disagree	Agree		Agree

10.   A regular education classroom provides more meaningful opportunities for my child to learn than does a special education classroom.

Strongly	Disagree	Somewhat	Somewhat	Agree	Strongly
Disagree		Disagree	Agree		Agree

11.   The more time my child spends in a regular classroom, the more likely it is that he/she will be treated kindly by the non disabled students in that room.

Strongly	Disagree	Somewhat	Somewhat	Agree	Strongly
Disagree		Disagree	Agree		Agree

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND EFFORT IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.