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**Inclusive Education and Teacher Education in Fiji: The Case of  
Lautoka Teachers College**

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## **Dedication**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation is the first study in Fiji on *Teacher Education and Inclusive Education* and it hopes to create a welcoming space where issues and questions that have been raised can be further critiqued and debated. The study explored some of the key historical features of the development and position of teacher education in Fiji through a study of Lautoka Teachers College in Fiji. I approached this study from a number of vantage points both as an insider (a current lecturer at the case study college and a former student of the college) and an outsider (a researcher).

This involved the examination of historical records at the Lautoka Teachers College, the Fiji National Archives and official government reports such as the education commission reports and Ministry of education strategic plans, and other documents and relevant materials. Apart from this documentary research, evidence from interview with the Principal of the college and other staff members and teachers have also been drawn upon. Where relevant my own life stories and some oral evidence that have not been documented have also been drawn on to make explicit some parts of the discussions in this paper. The nature and purpose of inclusive education was also discussed through a critical review of the literature and the barriers to more inclusive relations and practices in teacher education have been identified and critiqued. Through this process, the challenges that Inclusive Education will raise for Fiji and its implication for Teacher Education have also been identified and possibilities and strategies for change have been raised including issues and questions for future examination.

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## Abbreviations

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BEMTUP	Basic Education Management Teacher Upgrading Project
CCTC	Corpus Christi Teachers College
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ECR	Fiji Islands Education Commission/Panel Report 2000.
EU	European Union
FC	Fulton College
FCAE	Fiji College of Advance Education
FESP	Fiji Education Sector Project
FTA	Fijian Teachers Association
FTU	Fiji Teachers Union
LTC	Lautoka Teachers College
LTCUP	Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project
MOE	Ministry of Education
NTC	Nasinu Teachers College
PMS	Performance Management System
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
SER	Special Education Review Report -2003
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
USP	University of the South Pacific

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 *Setting the scene*

Inclusive education is highly debated and has been described by many in the literature as a contentious issue. Recently, Inclusive Education has become an international buzz word that has found a prominent place in the education agenda of many countries. Many investigations carried out on the subject have been inconclusive in the attainment of a consensual meaning and it seems that ongoing research in the field has given rise to the discourses and terminologies that creates confusion and at times are counterproductive in clarifying conceptual understanding. Some in the field may find the idea almost Utopian as some countries struggle with real issues that need to be encountered and while millions of children all over the world are still out of school. By definition alone, there doesn't seem to be an agreement in the literature which has prompted educationists like Allan (2003) to ask what many have asked: What really is Inclusive Education and "What is the purpose?" (p.1)

However, the attainment of an inclusive society, which is the ultimate aim of an Inclusive Education system, is a worthwhile vision for countries embarking on inclusion. Like other developing countries, Fiji is



yet to embark on this journey to engage with the struggles of inclusive education like those experienced in the U.K, Ireland, Australia, India, Cyprus, Greece, France and the United States , just to name a few, who have legislation in place for its process. However, the republic of the Fiji Islands is a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and other Global conventions and declarations concerning social justice acts and the rights of ALL children which, in the context of this dissertation, spells a commitment to the attainment of an inclusive education system. The challenge of Fiji as a small developing nation with a venerable population of about 800,000 people with 330 islands, separated by masses of water, at the heart of the Pacific Ocean, may be far greater than most countries that have had legislation for Inclusive Education.

However, Fiji needs an Inclusive Education system for many reasons, as this dissertation will show, and it will have to begin with Teacher Education. It is an overriding argument that the realisation of the principles of inclusion and its implementation will be fundamentally up to classroom teachers therefore it is imperative for Inclusive Education issues to be addressed and be strengthened in Teacher Education courses. Never before in Fiji has there been a study on Inclusive Education specifically as there is no current legislation to guide its implementation. However, the government

of Fiji as part of the Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade programme(LTCUP) at the only government primary Teacher training college, the Lautoka Teachers College (LTC), introduced a course called *Inclusive Classroom* in its new diploma programme that began last year and will see its first graduates at the end of this year (2006). This course is expected to pilot the move towards Inclusive Education in Fiji by preparing beginning teachers as Change Agents.

This dissertation will focus on Teacher Education and Inclusive Education in Fiji with a major focus on LTC and its new role in preparing teachers to start to build inclusive classrooms. It is envisaged that once the changes are felt at every level of primary school, Government should be in a position to fully support the idea of Inclusive Education and in turn push for the necessary legislation and policies and guidelines for its implementation. The impact of this, it is hoped, will be a chain reaction of changes that will ultimately realise an inclusive education system that will lead to the realisation of an inclusive society that the Education Commission of 2000 talked about and envisaged in their report.

Fiji is not alone in its quest to improve the quality of education that it offers its citizens. Many countries are acknowledging that Inclusive Education is generally seen as a vehicle for change that can improve the

quality of education by making it more inclusive. Recently, the Ministry of Education has been focusing on the need to improve the quality of education in Fiji and finds it imperative therefore, as this dissertation will reveal that any change must begin with improving the quality of teaching. Consequently, any improvement in the quality of teaching must begin with Teacher Educators.

A major focus of this Dissertation therefore, is the exploration of some of the key historical features of the development and position of Teacher Education in Fiji. This will involve an examination of historical records, including archival records on the History of Lautoka Teachers College and education in Fiji in general, Government reports, official documents and other relevant materials. The nature of inclusive education will also be discussed and the barriers to more inclusive relations and practices in Teacher Education will be identified and critiqued. Possibilities and strategies will be highlighted including issues and questions for future examination. An overriding argument that underpins this dissertation is that Inclusive Education is not an end in itself but a means to an end. This depicts the important role that Inclusive Education plays as a conduit of change. The hope is to ultimately see the removal of all forms of discriminatory and exclusionary practices and policies in our education

system. All these places major responsibilities on those involved in education and in particular the demand placed on Teacher Education institutions to fully prepare teachers as change agents. It is envisaged that the attainment of an inclusive education system will in turn contribute to the development of an inclusive Fiji.

However, the move towards Inclusive Education is not without its challenges and I wish to begin by providing a background information of Fiji that will not only aid the reader in understanding the context of this dissertation, but also to show that Fiji's size, its ethnicity and geographical setting is in itself a major challenge in efforts to build an inclusive education system.

### **1.1 *Fiji at a Glance***

A glance at the world map can be misleading as the Republic of the Fiji Islands is represented merely by two specks on the map- the two main islands of *Viti Levu* and *Vanua Levu*. While it is a real representation of how small Fiji is compared to other countries of the universe, the realities of the geographical setting of the Fiji Islands is that it is made up of 330 islands spread out over 1.3 million square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean. Only one third of these islands are inhabited. Fiji has a land mass of 18,333 square

kilometres. The issue of size of Fiji’s population and its geography was highlighted by the Fiji Islands Education Commission Report (ECR) of 2000 as one of the most significant challenges that Fiji faces in its effort to provide a high quality education for all its citizens (ECR, 2000).

According to the ECR, Fiji has a “relatively low population of about 775.077<sup>1</sup> which makes it one of the 37 countries in the world with a population of less than 1.5 million” (ECR, 2000: p. 59). However, Fiji’s demographic information has shown relatively slight changes since the last population census of 1996 as shown below:-

Table 1: Ethnic Composition

	<b>Census 1996 [AUG]</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>Tot Population-&gt;</b>	775,077	825,349	831,171	838,088
<b>Fijians</b>	393,575	441,376	448,341	455,707
<b>Indians</b>	338,818	326,309	322,255	318,906
<b>Others:*</b>	42,684	57,664	60,575	63,475

\*Others is made up of Chinese and part Chinese, Europeans and Part Europeans, other nationalities and Pacific Islanders.

[Source: (<http://www.statsfiji.gov.fj/FjFacts&Figs05.pdf> , last retrieved on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2006]

According to the Report, the great majority of the population lives on the two largest Islands. Viti Levu, the largest, has about 57 % of the country’s total land area and about 76% of its population. Vanua Levu, the

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<sup>1</sup> Source: 1996 Population Census- Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics.

second largest island, has about 39% of the land area and about 18 % of the population. The remaining 6% of the population is distributed among the 97 small islands, the three largest are Taveuni, Kadavu and Ovalau. The Report further reported that “the limited size and scattered distribution of the population pose problems in terms of availability and access to certain basic services and facilities, including education ” (ECR, 2000: p. 59).

Fiji’s size is not the only challenge to Inclusive education in Fiji as this dissertation will indicate in a later chapter but first we need to look at how this study came about.

## **1.2 The Study**

This study will attempt to understand the values underpinning policies and practices in different historical and contemporary contexts of Education in general. The main approach adopted in this enquiry involves a brief research into the history of Lautoka Teachers College through an examination of archive material, personal historical accounts through an interview with the principal of Lautoka Teachers College and interviews with other staff members. It also draws its recommendations from the findings of three past activities/research carried out at LTC as part of

LTCUP. While this dissertation bases its discussion on issues raised and recommendations on the case of only one teacher's college (Lautoka Teachers College) the issues raised has implications for teacher education in Fiji in general as LTC is one of the biggest producer of primary school teachers in Fiji which has major implications for the preparation of teachers who will build the foundation of our basic education system – the primary schools in Fiji.

An examination of how the idea of special education was conceived within the education system is also part of these enquiry and historical research. Inclusive Education in its broadest definition is a new concept in Fiji. This dissertation stakes the claim to be the first study of its kind and it is hoped that it will provide a welcoming space for further critique and debate that will in turn build up the local literature on the subject. This enquiry /critical thinking approach to the study were interwoven with my own personal values and beliefs which I brought to the enquiries undertaken and the questions raised in this dissertation. Therefore a brief account of my position is imperative:-

### ***1.3 About Myself-Insider/Outsider***

Throughout my M.A course my views on inclusion went through phases. First, the state of confusion with mind boggling questions

looming as I left my country Fiji to study in London. I came with a very narrow meaning of Inclusion which meant for me the integration of children with special needs into regular classrooms- the move from special schools to regular classrooms which at the moment remains within the rhetoric of education stakeholders and politicians and the good intentions of the special education module at Lautoka Teachers College. This narrow meaning of inclusion meant for me the inclusion of people with disabilities only. I thus viewed inclusion in a very simple and restrictive way until Professor Barton, one of my Tutors, reminded me in our first study school that those who wish to embark on the move towards the attainment of an inclusive education system will undoubtedly find it to be a tall order:-

*If our desire is to understand, challenge and remove all forms of discriminatory and exclusionary policies, values and practices within a society then the position and purpose of educational provision and practice must be part of that critical examination. This entails more than a question of minor reforms, more efficient forms of management, or better forms of communication, but rather, it is about the transformation of the values, priorities and intentions of education. The question of **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION** thus becomes a fundamentally important factor in the pursuit of change. (Barton, 2005: p 2)*

[Bold and large case print added for emphasis]



Barton in the above quotation reminded me that the question of inclusive education is by no means simple. It is both complex and contentious, and the changes it will require will be fundamental and difficult to achieve particularly so for a small developing nation such as Fiji. This dissertation is informed by my experience as a primary school teacher and later as a lecturer at teachers college.

I conducted this study from a number of vantage points both as an insider (a former student and a current Lecturer at LTC) and as an outsider (as a researcher). As an insider I am an ex-student who was one of the first to have taken up the special education course newly introduced by the government in 1992. Part of the biases that I brought with me to my studies in London had probably stemmed from these past experiences: - I graduated receiving the Dux of the college Award for having scored the highest aggregate marks in examination for that year. I still hold the record as being the first indigenous Fijian student to have been the Dux of the college as well as the first graduate to have won all the awards during a graduation ceremony which also included the Principal's leadership award for that year. I am also writing from a view point of a current staff member of Lautoka Teachers College teaching the same special education course, that I enrolled in as a student nine years ago, for the past four years. I also

had the opportunity to have been a part of the teaching team of a temporary course that was introduced in 1999 to train in-service special education teachers. As a primary school teacher I felt that I knew the system well enough to be able to write something about it. However, Professor Barton helped me to change my attitude towards my studies from one that is based on “*I know it all*” towards humility and the acceptance that I am also a learner which is a position that I will need to take through out life. I saw this type of humility and life long learning attitude reflected by my teachers Len, Felicity and Barbra at IOE, University of London.

I was also a primary school teacher for six years before I attended Griffith University in Australia to do a degree in Education (Special Education) with particular focus on the inclusion of children with special needs in the regular classroom. It was from this course that I came to believe that inclusion meant integrating children with special needs in regular classrooms where they have previously been excluded. The knowledge gained from Australia, confirmed the notion of inclusion that had a narrow meaning that I had first learnt from LTC during my training as a pre-service teacher in 1992.

On my return from Australia, I was posted to be a Head Teacher in an isolated island school with an assistant teacher and seventeen

students. My duties were extraordinary as my views were often sort by the manager of the island on certain projects that involved the whole island. It is here that my teaching career was most challenging. Dual sessions<sup>2</sup> happened when my assistant went for shopping leave<sup>3</sup> and often I found myself in situations where I had to teach children at all levels. This was where I had a first hand experience of multilevel, multi-age teaching and where I put my inclusion training from Australia into practice though at a very small scale given the small community that I served in.

Moreover, my isolated, rural island experience also confirmed in me that primary school teachers need to be prepared to serve the community at large as the expectations from parents in isolated places as such are quite high. In these remote areas a teacher is much more than a teacher and has got to have the exceptional skill of working closely with the school committee and the members of the surrounding community. These were some of the assumptions and beliefs that I brought with me to Lautoka Teachers College when I was posted initially at the teachers college to be an acting lecturer in Special Education. This dissertation also holds my new found knowledge and views about what inclusive education is all about and

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<sup>2</sup>Dual Sessions:- where Classes 1,2 and 3 attended a morning session starting at 8.00am ending at 12.00pm and Classes 4,5 and 6 attended an afternoon session beginning at 1.00pm and ends at 5.00pm.

<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Education allows a special one day leave for those teachers leaving in isolated /remote areas in Fiji to enable them to travel to town centers or cities to do their monthly shopping. The one day leave is compensated by the teacher by having extra classes or any other way as agreed to with the Head Teacher of the school.

its implication for teacher education in Fiji particularly its implication for Lautoka Teachers College where I currently work as a lecturer. This dissertation is just as much about the study of the development of Teacher Education in Fiji and the implication of the introduction of Inclusive Education as it is about the summation of what I have personally learned from all modules in my MA in Inclusive Education Course at the IOE, University of London.

Lautoka Teachers College was chosen as a case because it is the biggest producer of primary school teachers and this has implications for its role in preparing teachers as change agents in the move towards inclusive education. This is the only government primary teachers college in Fiji and it is where I currently work as a lecturer in education. Also, for sometimes now, since 1992, to the time of writing of this dissertation, Lautoka Teachers College use to be (if not still is) the only Teachers College in the Pacific region that is offering a full course on Special Education focusing on teaching all children with special needs in the regular classroom. This project will re-examine our history in order to demystify particular changes and the implications for both the college and the education system more generally. A historical perspective will help us understand the place of inclusive education in Fiji and how it can possibly contribute to challenging

some long standing stereotypes and ramifications of colonization that has threatened and legitimated exclusive and segregational practices at Lautoka Teachers College.

The nature of inclusive education will be discussed and the barriers to more inclusive relations and practices in teacher education will be identified and critiqued. Possibilities and strategies will be raised including issues/questions for future examination.

# **Chapter 1: History of Teacher Education in Fiji**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Teacher education has long been recognized as having a crucial role in the development of Education in Fiji (ECR, 2000). A brief survey of key developments in Teacher Education in Fiji will serve to highlight that many of the concerns and issues of today have been historically derived. Historical perspective is important in this study as it will provide relevant information about teacher education and can help us to better understand the nature of teacher education today in order to find the place of inclusive education in Fiji's future educational directions. Paramount to this exercise is the need to reexamine the values underpinning policies and practices of today in terms of deconstructing how they probably were formed and what were the forces at work in their formations. It is not intended to provide solutions to challenges raised but rather to drop a small stone that will begin the ripple in murky waters representing the complexities and the many competitive and pressing issues challenging our current education system even without the inclusive education agenda.

This historical review is not linear in any way nor is it a detail account of the history of education in Fiji rather it is a collection of evidence from documents and archival records backed by some interviews as well as

the works of those that have contributed to the education literature in Fiji. Its purpose is to show evidence of the impetus to change in the development of our education system especially those that have been influential in shaping teacher education in Fiji.

## **1.2 *Learning from the Past: Brief History of Teacher Education in Fiji***

This section serves to highlight some of the important changes that have taken place and the major influences in the direction of Education in Fiji. These investigations are neither linear nor do they propose to be a sequential historical account. They have been grouped in era so that it is easier to see the influences that drove the education in Fiji in particular teacher education and in order to find the place of inclusive education and the challenges it is likely to face in its implementation. How special Education is conceived within the education system and in relation to LTC will also be briefly touched on in this chapter.

### **1.21 Traditional Education**

Kedrayate (2001) points out that in pre-colonial Fiji, there was a form of education which we now call ‘traditional education’. Bole (1972) described this traditional education as “practical, vocational and was

concerned largely in maintaining the status quo” (cited in Mangubai, 1997:p.1). The purpose of traditional education as suggested by Kedrayate (2001) is to maintain social and cultural life in the community. What is learned is confined within a particular cultural tradition. (ibid p.76).As a Fijian who grew up in a contemporary Fijian village, I can relate well to Kedrayate’s point; that parents and knowledgeable elders in a Fijian community shared their knowledge and skills for economic and social survival with children , to prepare them for adult life and their subsequent participation in community activities. I learnt the obligations and behaviour expected of me as a Fijian and my traditional roles to my relatives and members of my communities through oral instructions from my parents, grandparents and other elders of my extended family. These specific roles, norms and traditional obligations was never learnt from a written book although the culture periods during my formal schooling years sometimes reinforced what I learnt orally from my parents and elders. It is well understood that I am expected to teach my children my knowledge about our family obligations and traditional roles and customs and the generally expected norms of behaviour that comes with it. Kedrayate (2001) further noted that traditional learning was through observation, imitation or on the job experience and the skills learnt confined persons to their traditional roles



where boys learned skills in hunting, fishing , farming and other manual tasks and girls were expected and encouraged to learn only those activities traditionally assigned to females.

In the same vein, Francis Mangubai (1997) noted that with the arrival of the missionaries in Fiji in 1835, formal schooling was introduced into a society where learning previously had been integrated into everyday life of the people and where particular types of learning were prerogative of particular groups within a tribe. “One learned to become fishermen by going fishing with the fisherman and learning from the actual practice of fishing. One learned to be a canoe builder by working with canoe builders” (Mangubai, 1997: p.1). Contrary to the view that traditional education was rather informal and therefore not very well organized as opposed to the formal schooling introduced by the missionaries, Baba (1992) points out that some forms of organized learning were practiced in Fiji well before the arrival of missionaries. An example provided by Kedrayate (2003) is the “teaching of the traditional dance called the *meke* by specialized teachers called *daunivucu* which “was a highly organized and ritualistic and a potent form of traditional education.”(p.76). Kedrayate (2001) also stressed an important point that bears relevance to this dissertation:-

*It is important to note that, in traditional education, the content, method and direction were very much controlled by tradition. What was learned, although limited and confined, was relevant to the people's way of life, the resources available and their ability to meet extended family and community needs. Learning was an important process as it ensured continuity and sustainability of life and because it was community-based.(p.77)*

I share the views of Kedrayate in the above quotation that traditional education was relevant in those times and continues to influence the cultural and social life in contemporary Fiji. However, I am also of the view that over the years, traditional educational values have been undermined with the impact of overseas cultural ideas and practices from overseas.

This has implications for the kind of training that is suitable for teachers in order to break bearers of the traditional views of separate roles for males and females and whether or not most of the values discussed in this section needed to be upheld in teacher education programmes. Teachers need to be made aware of the clashes between the traditional educational values which many Fijians still hold dearly and the free and democratic education that inclusive education advocates. It is the view of this paper that inclusive education can help build bridges between the values of coteremporary Fiji and those of the traditional Fiji discussed in this section. According to Kedrayate (2001), traditional education has continued to

influence the cultural and social life in the community; however, its value has been undermined with the dawn of formal schooling introduced by the missionaries from the west.

## **1.22 Pre-colonial Era- Missionaries and Education**

The 2000 ECR reported that it is well documented that by 1874, when Fiji became a British colony, there was a fairly well established network of small village schools. Most of them under the control of the Methodist church, offering a four –year programme in which Fijian teachers taught basic numeracy and literacy using the materials printed in the dominant Bauan<sup>4</sup> dialect. Kedrayate (2001) noted the missionaries who came to Fiji about 160 years ago did not recognize or accept the traditional education system discussed in the previous section and introduced a new system of learning: formal education<sup>5</sup>. “In effect, the very foundation of Fiji’s early formal educational system was established with Christian conversion as its base.” (White, 2003:p. 346)

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<sup>4</sup> Bau is a small island that was home to the most powerful chief in Fiji at the time – Ratu Seru Cakobau who titled the King of Fiji at the time. He was instrumental in ceding Fiji to Great Britain in 1874. There are many dialects in Fiji but due to the power that centered on Bau at that time, the dialect of the island of Bau was used by the missionaries when they first translated the Bible from English to Fijian. Since then the Bauan dialect was considered to be the common dialect that all Fijians speak..

<sup>5</sup> Formal education as defined by Kedrayate (2001) refers to learning in specially built institutions with trained teachers and a written curriculum.

It is no surprise then that the missionaries and their religious organizations were influential in the formation of teacher training institutions in Fiji. A brief history of teacher training cited in the archive for example reported that as early as 1856 the missionaries trained teachers who went out to the villages and taught vernacular , reading and writing and arithmetic. Furthermore, White (2003) also agreed that Missionaries were influential in shaping the education system in Fiji then and provided useful accounts of the initial teacher training that happened in those times. White further noted that Mission schools using local vernaculars as a medium of instruction were set up in those days as conduits in the conversion process for the Wesleyans. So schools in those days were set up by missions; first by the Methodists and later some schools by the catholic missions, seventh day Adventists and the Anglican Church. The Methodists mission schools were mainly teaching literacy (mainly vernacular reading) to aid the church in teaching about the gospel through enabling Fijians to read the Bible which has by then, been translated into the Bauan dialect.

The founding of mission schools back then was not without its challenges as White reported:

*The founding of mission schools involved surmounting other challenges, including a lack of teachers, shortages of curriculum materials,*

*inadequate facilities and differences in dialect in particular locales. (White, 2003: p. 348)*

Some of these challenges still exist in Fiji today as Reported by the Education Commission Report of 2000. White's Report also gave us an insight at how students were assessed as "Vuku" Fijian word that means "wise" in a typical mission school in an Island called "Lakeba" in 1853:

*I said 'Jacob, I want to hear your wise children'. The nineteen were speedily assembled and I was highly gratified to find them vuku for they can all read well in the New Testament. (Calvert, 1985:p.148 as cited in White , 2003: p.348)*

This is evidence that intelligence was probably judged at the time on how well one read the Bible. A non Bible reader therefore would have been considered "*lialia*" meaning "unwise" which is the opposite of "*Vuku*".

White further reported that the indigenization of the Methodist church began with the training of pastor-teachers. This was probably the beginning of teacher education in Fiji in its very informal stage. In 1857, a central Training Institute was established in Fiji to "prepare Fijian teachers to serve in distant posts" (Mann, 1935 cited in White, 2003:p. 349). The Job of a 'Native Teacher' at the time was much more demanding than that of a 'native minister'. Duties of a 'pastor teacher' at the time apart from holding school three mornings a week for children and three evenings a week for

adults in their districts, includes delivering sermons, conduct morning and evening prayers, visit the sick, give advise on any number of subjects, bury the dead and travel once a week to report to the native minister (White 2003).

White further posited that the indigenization of the church provided cost saving measures for the Methodist mission:-

*Native teachers extended themselves far more for much less remuneration than missionaries. Additionally, villagers were responsible for subsidizing the maintenance of native teachers, with the provision of room and board –a condition for a mission teacher’s appointment to a village. Nonetheless, for many teachers, the status and prestige that accrued from holding these positions itself became a reward of significant value, particularly during the early period of indigenization of the church with its unprecedented opportunities for achieved status.<sup>6</sup> (White, 2003: p. 349)*

The issue of remuneration is a matter that is constantly debated about in modern day Fiji and an issue that the two teachers unions, the FTA and FTU have often taken up with the Government of the day. As a teacher in modern day Fiji and having experienced teaching in a rural village community, I know that the world of native teacher’s as reported by Mann

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<sup>6</sup> White (2003) acknowledged that these facts about perception of teacher status in Fijian villages were taken from the work of C.W.Mann, *Education in Fiji* (Melbourne University Press, 1935).

(1935) as cited in the above quotation is very different from the world we teach in now, however, the prestige and status of teachers in village schools may have changed very little. Many Teachers now in rural villages still enjoy the benefits that come with their appointment overseered by the village school committee. Teachers are provided with living quarters usually of a higher standard than houses in villages, some have a plantation initially provided for them and some even are automatically adopted in to a “*mataqali*”<sup>7</sup> or a clan and their needs and wants are the responsibility of that “*mataqali*” or clan. Some lecturers who were interviewed shared their experiences of this teacher prestige and status and some have agreed that little has changed on perception of teachers such as that shared by a teacher friend:

*One of the advantageous of serving in rural schools is that you get to save a lot of money. My school provided quarters and a plantation and the distribution of food after a village function or celebration such as weddings or funerals or other occasion feature teachers prominently with the higher ranks of the village second only to the village chief and church minister. (Teacher x, in an Interview: July, 2006)*

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<sup>7</sup> Mataqali- is a Fijian land owning unit. A few ‘mataqali’ make up the ‘Yavusa’ or the Clan.

This speaks volumes of the prestige and status accorded to teachers in a Fijian village. I was accorded the same respect when serving in Fijian rural schools and I found that villagers usually expect so much of me in terms of advice and other matters of importance and in village functions. In many occasions teachers are accorded the same respect given to those of chiefly status in the village.

This often contradicts with a teachers' own personal Fijian traditions and values for example, I recalled that I am usually invited to sit next to the chief at the top end of the village hall as a mark of respect from villages. However, being a Fijian there are protocols that I need to observe and usually Fijian customary rules come into play in those times where I have to explain to villages that I am merely a teacher and as a Fijian I have no right to sit next to a chief as traditionally I am not of high birth. By right according to Fijian traditions, only those of high birth such as *Turaga* (Chief) and those that belong to the '*Sau Turaga*' (chiefly clan) or the '*matanivanua*' (Village Herald) or the *Turaga ni Koro* (Village Head Man) have a right to sit at the top end of the village hall. Most of these clan obligations and rights and responsibilities stem from generations of oral instructions passed over from the elders to the young over many generations.



The great influence of traditional respect for people of high status such as chiefs and missionaries was also accorded to pastor teachers in this era and can still be deeply imbedded in Fijian village schools of today. This creates a clear bearer between teachers and their students where students are expected as tradition dictates that they respect their teachers and are frequently reminded to listen to their teachers therefore the Teacher is always right. Speaking your mind about issues in some village schools today or schools which promote cultural values, would be considered rude and students can be reprimanded for doing so. (Veramu, 1984)

Another view of the status of teachers that could have its roots in this era influenced by Christian values that the missionaries brought from the west is the view that: “teaching is a calling from God”. Pastor teachers as previously discussed often labour with the minimum of pay and most of their service is subsidized by the community such as the provision of food and housing. Some teachers in this era toiled in extreme conditions with poor facilities driven by their faith that teaching is a calling from God. This view is often upheld today in modern day Fiji as Puamau so boldly stated during a panel discussion at a conference for the Fiji Institution of Educational Researchers (FIER) held in Suva, Fiji when she made her contribution on the topic ‘Spirituality in Education’:-

*"I love god so much... he is the solution to all the issues and challenges that face Fijian education and society in general... Fiji can be a Canaan to its people...people in all walks of life must turn back to god; there is no other way... and Fiji will indeed be a blessed nation" (Puamau,2006)*

Puamau's comments above proves that the Christian values and beliefs brought by missionaries from the west in pre-colonial days are deeply embedded and held dearly by modern day Teachers. This has serious implications in a multicultural Fiji in trying to foster multiculturalism with many religions represented in society today. The issue on whether or not Fiji should become a Christian state is still being widely debated. While I understand Puamau's sentiments in the above quotation being a Christian myself with similar beliefs, I find that I am already stumbling on an issue that Teachers College will find to be a challenge in terms of making their extracurricular programme becoming more inclusive given the different religions and faith that student teachers bring with them to Teachers Colleges.

Moreover, Kedrayate (2001) argued that the missionaries were not only concerned about conversion but also improving the living standard

of the people. They made changes to the way of life and the system of learning in Fiji. She further noted that these changes impacted everyday life, practices and values of Fijians. Kedrayate(2001) also argued that although there was participation by the indigenous people, the content and direction of formal and other education was controlled by missionaries. This paper shares the views of Kedrayate (2001) that this probably saw the beginning of the community losing control of education since Traditional education was further undermined by schools in the colonial era.

### **1.23 Colonial Era-Colonization and Teacher Education**

An interview with principal of Lautoka Teachers College revealed that the education system in Fiji in 18 hundreds was influenced by colonisation.

He recalled that :-

*Prior to independence, our Education system was mainly influenced by colonization. There were a lot of expatriates taking up key strategic positions in our education system such as school inspectors and right up to the level of Director of Education. Our curriculum were English in the sense that we had the Cambridge Exams which required that we learn about the geography of New Zealand and social sciences and science that were foreign but we had to learn all these to meet the requirement for these foreign exams like the Cambridge Examination, the New Zealand School Certificate Exam and the New Zealand University Examination. So colonization had a major influence in our education system. English being the*

*main language of schools and the official language of our country. (Principal LTC, interview August,2006)*

The Principal was also of the opinion that White man education was a priority of the colonial government and locals had an adhoc curriculum. The instrument of cession and colonization was the driving force in our education system where the English education system and set up was adopted in our country.

He further stated that a major change came about during independence when the 1969 Education commission were commissioned to prepare our education system for changes in preparation for Fiji's independence. This commission laid the blueprint for major changes that took place after independence. One of the major changes is the setting up of the curriculum development unit that was responsible for the setting up of the national curriculum towards a more localized curriculum. The Principal of LTC further stated that:-

*Then a change in our examination was imperative – the replacement of overseas examination that saw the introduction of Fiji's intermediate examination based on local curriculum and the Eighth year examination as well as the Fiji junior examination. Later on the abolition of the New Zealand school certificate and the replacement of the New Zealand University entrance examination the Fiji sixth form examination and later the Fiji school leaving*

*certificate Exam.* (Principal LTC in an interview, August, 2006)

An examination of the Education Commission report of 1969 confirmed that the localization of the curriculum was recommended by the commission and was set up by the Alliance government that led us after independence. This government was instrumental in the setting up of Teacher Training which was recognized as a major change that needs to be carried out given the low number of qualified teachers. The commission noted that there were many licensed teachers then. Specifically teacher education was the emphasis in the 1969 education commission more so the need to have more quality teachers given the high number of unqualified licensed teachers as previously articulated in the brief history of Lautoka Teachers College .

Another important finding is that for some years Fiji's Education system or at least in the Education commission report of 1969, has recognised the importance of equal opportunities and rights of children. This is obvious or made explicit by the 1969 education commission when they posited that:

*The key question is not whether educational opportunity is a child's right but rather how the right can be translated into*

*an education that is meaningful for the child and productive for the country. An unplanned expansion of schooling, hours in a crowded classroom under the eyes of an untrained teacher, tedious instruction with a minimum of books- these are not the “right” to which the child is entitled. When they lead to “failure” for forty-nine children out of every hundred at the early age of thirteen<sup>8</sup>, or to a frustrating search for a job, they constitute a denial to the child of his right to an exciting creative experience.*(Education Commission Report, 1969, p.1-2)

There are a few important points that need to be made explicit from this quotation. This is where the first mention of Education for ALL was mentioned yet its full meaning and implications were not known until the UNESCO conventions and Declarations that lay a guideline for it in later years. The 1969 Commission in this report had recognised the importance of quality and equal opportunities for all its children, however, I doubt that the Education commission had children with disabilities in mind when they noted ALL in the above quotation in that report in 1969. As in the same era the special schools for children with disabilities were established but with little attention from government. Many were charity run and had ad hoc curriculum. Needless to say that it was not until the 1996 Population Census that questions about disabilities were addressed- the outcome of which was the “Disability counts in Fiji” written by Walsh (1999).Tavola (2000) in her contribution to the ECR of 2000 noted that the 1969 education commission

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<sup>8</sup> Some 49 per cent of the children who sat the secondary Schools Entrance Examination in Fiji in 1968 failed to pass it. (ECR, 1969: p. 2)

made no references to special education a fact that pointed to the little importance placed on special needs at the time.

Another significant development during the colonial era is the Introduction of the Indentured system put in place by the colonial government in the late 18 hundreds. This saw the mass immigration of Indians from India who were brought in to work in sugar cane farms by the colonial government. There is increasing evidence that racial disparity that is a highly politicised issue in Fiji's Multiethnic society of today , stemmed from the racially biased policies that the colonial government put in place in this era. Policies of protectionism that had the best of intentions of protecting Fijians as White argued:-

*..the colonial administration's heightened involvement in education further promoted uneven educational development as colonial educational policy intersected with colonial policies that restricted Fijian immigration into urban centres. (White,2003: p.346)*

In the same vein, Lal (1992) stated:

*...the Europeans insistence on social separation from Fijians and Indians led to "two government aided schools in Suva and Levuka to be reserved for children of full European parentage; part European children as well as those of non European descent were kept out. This policy was supported by colonial officials. Governor May, for*

*example, heartily endorsed segregated education, noting in 1911 the undesirability of contact with coloured children whose precocity in sexual matters and whose less careful upbringing at home is a real danger to white children. (Lal, 1992:p. 34)*

I attended the School in *Levuka* that is mentioned in the above quotation and I know the history of the racist policies that is part of the history of the school. I am aware that Levuka Public School enrolled only white children when it started in 1879. the white man at the time were viewed as superior and Master , the coloured their servant and were often devalued as human beings. There was a clear racial disparity amongst the whites and coloured but these did not continue into modern times in hegemonic forms. Even amongst the ‘white’ population there were differences and underlying negative beliefs and values as shown by an article found at the Fiji national Archives. For the purpose of confidentiality of the closed government record held at the archives the parent will be referred to as Mr. X who was of European origin. Mr. X applied had applied for admission into the ‘*Suva*’ government aided school that Lal(1992) was refereeing to in the above quotation. This is the reply that Mr. X was given:-

*The Suva School Committee refused the application for the admission of Mr. X's children to the Grammar Schools on the grounds that: the boy had previously been expelled from the Girls Grammar School for bad behaviour, as far as can be ascertained the mother is a full blooded islander, in general the children are not of the type that it is*



*desirable to have at the schools.*(cited in Colonial Secretary Office File, (1932), retrieved from Fiji National Archives closed Records, July,2006)

It was further noted in the record that the appeals committee that consists of the all White Education Board at the time upheld the Committee's recommendations. Such prejudiced decisions prevailed during colonization and ramifications of which may still be deeply embedded in our education system. This has implications for teacher education. The decision of the board at the time in the above case spoke volumes of the quality of teachers at the time. Cases such as this give us an insight into the way prejudicial values and beliefs influences teachers' decisions about the behaviour of children and the type of disciplinary measure that they favour. Discipline continues to be an issue that features prominently in Fiji's educational agenda today and has implications for Teacher Education in terms of the Disciplinary procedures and policies that they teach student teachers.

The ECR of 2000 also acknowledged that the development of education in Fiji has been the subject of a number of education commissions and education reports since 1909. These include:

- 1910 Fiji Education 1910: Fiji Education Report 1909  
Legislative Council Paper No . 30/1910*
- 1926 Fiji Education Commission Report 1926  
Legislative Council paper No. 46*
- 1936 Mayhew, A.T. Report on Education in Fiji*

*1955 Lewis Jones. W. W., Report on Education in Fiji*  
*1966 Morris, C., Report on Higher Education,*  
*Mission to the Southern Pacific, London*  
*1969 Fiji Education Commission: Education for Modern Fiji*  
(ECR,2000:p.i)

The Fiji Islands Education Commission Report of 2000 is the latest comprehensive report on education in Fiji since the Education commission of 1969. An important part of the current education system that was missing from these reports until the Report of 2000 is the provision of Special Education.

#### **1.24 The Birth of Special Education in Fiji**

According to the ECR (2000) Special Education delivery began in Fiji in the early 1960's following an epidemic of poliomyelitis. The Red Cross society operated a day care rehabilitation centre which was manned by wife of expatriates. Seven years later in 1967, the crippled children's society opened the first special school in Suva with support from the Ministry of Education which provided teachers. This school was initially meant to cater for children with physical disabilities however children with sensory and intellectual disabilities were also enrolled as there were no other facilities for them at that time. (Macanawai, 1998 as cited in ECR, 2000). As awareness of disability grew, non-government organizations were formed, such as the

Fiji Society for the Blind and the intellectually handicapped Children's Society. Special schools were established for children with these particular disabilities during the 1970s and 1980s. Some schools take children with a variety of disabilities while others are more specialized. Special Education was thus started as a charitable concern, a situation that still exists today. (ECR, 2000). As a key informant to the Education Commission of 2000 out it: "Kind ladies helping unfortunate children" (ECR, 2000: p 235)

There are currently 17 schools for disabled children, largely located in urban centers, catering for 8.4 % of the total disabled population (SER, 2000). Only 4 have boarding facilities. In addition there is a rehabilitation workshop for older children and a unit for deaf children within a mainstream school. All the schools are managed by societies, in partnership with the government. The smaller special schools have mixed grade classes with children with a range of disabilities. A relatively smaller number of children with disabilities attend regular schools. Only one of the regular special schools caters for post primary education. Secondary and tertiary education is still largely unavailable for disabled children. Within the Ministry of Education, Special Education is located within the Primary section. According to the SER while curriculum for special schools was

developed in 1995, mainly for used with severely disabled children, there is no curriculum guideline for children with other disabilities.

Civil servants teachers trained as general primary teachers have been posted to special schools. In addition, special schools engage untrained licensed teachers to make up the staffing ratios. The ECR 2000 noted that today one difference that sets the management committee of special schools apart from most other schools is that they are seen as charitable organizations.

### **1.25 Globalization and Education**

According to the Principal of LTC in the mid 1980s Tertiary levels of education have undergone drastic changes as well. Examples he gave are the Derrick Technical Institute that developed into what is now a much bigger Fiji Institute of Technology, the University of the South Pacific fully developed its Distance Education Programme and became more marketable as a high learning institution. He stated that even today there are other private universities like the Queensland University of Technology and Fiji's very own University of Fiji and the merging of Primary teacher training institution –the move from Nasinu Teachers Training institute to Lautoka Teachers College. There were other computing and technical

qualifications. The principal was of the position that Fiji's education system is beginning to be influenced by globalization and privatization "Privatization has influenced our education system as well with increasing and common to have vocational educational agencies and schools that contribute to up-skilling of our workforce" (Principal LTC, in an interview, August 2006). The Principal further stated that

*The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought winds of change - human capital becoming a driving force in our education system. Our market driven economy has had a major influence in our education system. it is a major impetus and almost dictates what our schools need to offer and what are some of the important things that our national curriculum and learning institutions need to offer to our future generation who are currently going through our education system.. (Principal LTC , in an interview, August 2006)*

The emergence of more private vocational training and tertiary institutions and enterprise education is evidence of these major influential changes. Another major change that is worth noting in our education system is the establishment of the unique partnership between government –the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the community. All primary schools in Fiji are now run by the school committee.

## **1.26 Development since independence in 1970**

Arya, (2004) while reviewing the history of education in Fiji in a conference highlighted that "education was evangelism" for Fijians but not for indo-Fijians in the pre-colonial era when the missionaries had a major role in shaping teacher education in Fiji. He was adamant that indo-Fijians (Fiji born Indians) didn't need education because they were useful in the field as history tells. A question that he posed in that FIER conference bears relevance to this dissertation in terms of the future direction of education in Fiji :-"forget what the missionaries brought, forget what the colonists did, what do we do?" This pointed to the important fact that teaching must be contextual.

In this regard the 1969 Education commission raised concerns regarding the need to localize the curriculum. This saw the beginning of the move towards decolonizing the education system. This started with the introduction of a local curriculum. It was for this purpose that the Curriculum development Unit (CDU) was set up in 1968. (ECR, 2000). The external examination of colonial times was being replaced with local examination. However, ECR (2000) reported that the three external examinations at Primary level and the three external examinations at the

secondary level quickly turned our education system into an examination oriented one.

These examinations tended to drive the teaching /learning process allowing little scope for broadening into non-examinable area. (ECR, 2000). Moreover, the partnership between the state (MOE) and the community has been noted by the ECR(2000) as one of the most distinguishing features of education in Fiji. This partnership was sealed with the introduction of the Education Act (1978) that sets out the key features of the education system and describes the areas of the system that are the responsibility of the state and those that are the responsibility of school committees. The Education ACT also instituted an Education Forum consisting of various stakeholders in Fiji who were meant to fulfill the role of a ‘Think Tank’ but it appears according to the ECR(2000) that it has become a forum for stakeholders to express grievances and the MOE to defend itself.

Another important point in the history of our education system is the impact of the political crisis of 2000. This was when the Fiji Labour Party won the general elections and it created history as it saw Fiji’s First Indo Fijian (Fiji Born Indian) Prime Minister. Their one year term in office was short lived by a coup where they were held hostage in parliament by the

perpetrators of the coup for 56 days. The events of 2000 affected our education system in many ways and this proves the fact that Education does not exist in a vacuum. (ECR, 2000). While I do not condone such inhuman and undemocratic acts of violence which obviously created racial tensions between the two major races (Indians and Fijians), I believe that the situation places a pointer at the inability of our education system to foster racial tolerance. The idea of building a multiracial society , using education as a tool to build tolerance and understanding must continue to be pushed and Inclusive Education as this dissertation argues can bring about changes that can foster these spirit of multiculturalism. This will have to begin with the preparation of teachers as change Agents in teachers colleges in Fiji.

### **1.3 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I have highlight major findings from a documentary historical research. The historical review discussed how our education systems have been influenced in different eras, first by tradition then the missionaries, the colonisers and later by globalisation and the various Education Commission, the latest being the ECR 2000. A section also discussed Special education and how it is conceived with in the general



education system. This review has been informed by a review of related literature which includes government reports and archival records. Findings have been supported by materials drawn from interviews with the Principal of LTC members of staff and other teachers interwoven with my own knowledge of the system. There are underlying values and beliefs stemming from various periods in our history that have been demystified and ramifications of these major influences are still felt in our general education system today. These have implications for teacher education and form a major part of the challenges that Inclusive education( which will be piloted as a course in Fiji at LTC) will face. Though the historical research may have been vague and somewhat obscure with its links to teacher education, the discussions have thrown a light onto the major implications of these historical findings on Teacher Education and how Inclusive Education will be a great challenge in Fiji. The fact that teachers colleges do not exist in a vacuum and what ever affects the general education system has implications for teacher education is a rationale for this approach. This dissertation proposes the importance of training of beginning teachers at teachers colleges to be more inclusive. They will be change agents in society who will in turn help eradicate some of these long standing stereotypical views, attitudes and beliefs that have been allowed and socially constructed over the

years. It can be deduced from this historical documentary research that there maybe some deeply embedded policies underpinned by values and beliefs that were dominant in the era they were introduced but are now found to be exclusionary . Inclusive Teacher Education as this dissertation proposes can help eradicate these. This agenda has been pushed greatly with forces in education pushing for its implementation and they have now being fought over as a human rights/ social justice issue. Before we explore what inclusivity will imply for teacher education at Lautoka teachers college and consequently its implication for what needs to be changed in our Education system, we need to clarify what really is inclusive education in the context of this dissertation.

## **Chapter 2: Inclusive Education**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This section serves to explore the meaning of inclusive education and its purpose and it will also discuss theoretical perspectives or conceptual models of educational inclusion. The models or perspectives provides a framework that can help us focus or limit our review to what is relevant in this wide and highly contentious field of Inclusive Education. Conceptual Models can help us in our understanding as they convey a particular view of the historical development of ideas and practices and can give us an insight to the ideologies that were prevalent in those times. Theoretical models will help us to better understand the challenges that are raised in this dissertation and consequently help us decide better on what to change and the strategies for change. The literature offers no consensual meaning of inclusive education- some writers portray inclusive education as a variant of education in general while there are others in the literature who argue that it should be the main or even the only form of education. It is clear from the literature that Inclusive Education has many meanings therefore it is imperative that we clarify the meaning of inclusive education in the context of this dissertation.

## **2.1 What is inclusive education?**

Underpinned by the philosophy that all students belong and can learn in regular schools and classrooms, inclusive education is one of the most dominant and controversial issues confronting policy makers and professional around the world today. (Mitchell, 2005). According to McDonnell (2000): “inclusive education may not mean the same thing from country to country; even within one country there may be differences among teachers, administrators and researchers as to what constitutes inclusive education” (P. 12).

Clough and Corbett (2000) noted that: “It (Inclusive Education) is a contestable term that has come to mean different things to politicians, bureaucrats and academics. Inclusion is not a single movement; it is made up of many strong currents of belief, many different local struggles and myriad forms of practice” (P. 6). Furthermore, Booth (1996) described inclusive education as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. Segal (2005) also wrote that Inclusive education has become an international buzzword and has been adopted in the rhetoric of many countries across the Globe. Also UNESCO (2003) defined inclusion as a developmental

approach that “seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion” (p 4)

Mitchell (2005) posited that which ever view is accepted, it is clear that all the issues that confront education in general must also be addressed in inclusive education: curriculum, assessment, school management teacher quality and pedagogy. I find the initial question raised by Mitchell (2005) in the book he edited: “contextualizing Inclusive Education” to be excellent questions we can begin to be engaged with at Teachers Colleges in Fiji: - what does inclusive education really mean? Who are the targets of inclusive education? Is it a western idea that would not work in developing countries? What factors make inclusive education seem to be accepted in some countries but not others? How can general educators and parents be persuaded to accept inclusive education? And what models are there for introducing inclusive education? In the light of these questions we can begin to understand the complexities and the many contentious issues surrounding Inclusion as Peters (2003) has reminded us:-

*In a rather detailed analysis of international research on policy and practice concerning inclusive education, that it is (inclusive education)*

*a complex issue and no coherent approach is evident in the literature. Not only is inclusive education implemented at different levels, but it also embraces different goals, is based on a range of varied motives, and reflects different classifications of special education needs and varied service provision in different contexts (cited in Singal, 2005)*

Furthermore, many international declarations have legitimated the idea of inclusion. The principle of inclusive education for example was adopted at the Salamanca world conference on special needs education (UNESCO, 1994) and was restated at the Dakar world education forum (2000). A significant point to note is that Fiji is a signatory to both these convention and declaration that reads:-

*“Inclusive education means that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.” (UNESCO, 2003: p 4)*

Clearly the UNESCO Education for ALL meaning is not just for students with disabilities, but for all other students who are categorized “special needs”. Furthermore, Visle (2003) noted that

*“Since Salamanca, inclusion has become a global descriptor and the international community by signing the declaration has adopted its usage; however, this does not mean that there is a formally fixed and stable use of terminology”*  
(cited in Singal, 2005: p?)

There are other terms that have been used by writers to describe a more narrow meaning of inclusive education for example integration (Ashman & Elkins, 1998), mainstreaming (Stainback, 1996) or inclusion (Doorlag & Lewis, 2003) and although there are many differing views on the real meaning of Inclusive Education in the literature, many agreed that inclusion will generally mean inclusion of those previously seen as being excluded from our education system. Wood (1998) explains the general meaning of these terms that are often used interchangeably very well:

*There are many opinions about inclusion globally: what it is, where it occurs, how it is implemented and so on. What ever the term, [**integration, mainstreaming, inclusion**<sup>9</sup>] it is a reality that students with special needs and those at risk will at some level receive instruction in the general education setting”. (p 15)*

Clearly Wood (1998) in the above quotation viewed ‘inclusion’ as the movement of children from segregated settings into general education

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<sup>9</sup> Words in bold pints have been added for emphasis

settings or from special schools into regular classrooms. Another term ‘full inclusion’ was introduced by professionals interested in students with severe disabilities in America. The full inclusion movement calls for a reform of practices that exclude and segregate individuals with disabilities (Stainback & Stainback, 1985; Thousand and Villa, 1990). However, Inclusive education has a much wider meaning than all the definitions previously discussed. For the purpose of this dissertation the meaning of Inclusive Education adopted lies in Barton’s wider definition of inclusive education which reads:-

*Inclusive education is not merely about providing access into mainstream school for pupils who have previously been excluded. It is not about closing down an unacceptable system of segregated provision and dumping those pupils in an unchanged mainstream system. Existing school systems in terms of physical factors, curriculum aspects, teaching expectations and styles, leadership roles, will have to change. This is because inclusive education is about the participation of ALL children and young people and the removal of all forms of exclusionary practice. (Barton, 1998: p. 84-85)*

Barton’s definition above supports the concept of inclusion as a process rather than a specific philosophy or set of practices. The process of inclusion in this case, requires an overhaul of current school cultures that are



often driven by deeply embedded negative values and beliefs. Felicity Armstrong (2003) and Ainscow (1999) also shared similar views:-

*“... Inclusion refers to a set of principles, values and practices which involve the social transformation of education systems and communities. It does not refer to a fixed state or set of criteria to be used as a blue-print, but seeks to challenge deficit thinking and practice which are ‘still deeply ingrained’ and too often lead many to believe that some pupils have to be dealt with in a separate way’ (Ainscow, 1999, p. 8 as cited in Armstrong, 2003)*

The many meanings and approaches highlighted how different ways of seeing the broad picture will influence the detail of practice and provision. Not only are interpretations of what inclusion means contentious, but there are also diverse and conflicting debates in which these different approaches are seen as detrimental to the effective development of this area (Clough and Corbett, 2000). Having looked at the meanings of Inclusive education discussed, it can be said that inclusion is not only about placement or the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular classrooms. This paper shares the views of Barton, Booth, Armstrong and others who believe

that Inclusive education must now stand alone<sup>10</sup> , only by definition at least, driven by social justice and the need to remove all forms of iniquities from our education system. It involves the changing of our current school cultures that are deeply embedded with exclusionary beliefs and values that need to be eradicated lest they remain a challenge to Inclusive Education. We will now look at theoretical perspectives of inclusive education.

## **2.2 *Inclusive Education – Theoretical Perspectives***

This dissertation favours a model of 5 key perspectives presented by Clough and Corbett (2000) as a historical interpretation of the development and interaction of ideologies and practice leading to present thinking in Inclusive Education as presented in the Table 2:-

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<sup>10</sup> This term is no longer associated with special education or about disability issues only. Tracing its history will not take us back to special education. It's now about the rights of ALL children.

**Table 2: Five key perspectives on educational inclusion**

**1) The Psycho-medical legacy (1950s-1960s)**

This is understood as the system of broadly medicalized ideas which essentially saw the individual as being somehow ‘in deficit’ and in turn assumed a need for a special education for those individuals.

**2) The sociological response (1960s-1970s)**

This position broadly represents the critique of the psycho-medical legacy and draws attention to a social construction of special educational needs.

**3) Curricular approaches (1970s-1980s)**

Such approaches emphasize the role of the curriculum in both meeting and for some writers effectively creating – learning difficulties

**4) School Improvement Strategies (1980s-1990s)**

This movement emphasizes the importance of systemic organization in pursuit of truly comprehensive schooling.

**5) Disability studies Critique (1990s-2000s).**

These perspectives often from outside education elaborate an overtly political response to the exclusionary effects of the psycho-medical model

Source: Clough and Corbett (2000) : pgs 8 and 9.

Clough and Corbett noted that the presentation of these perspectives is not a simple and linear development from one position to the next however, they emphasized that the 5 key influences are all ever present but certain perspectives have their moments and the eras in brackets (e.g. 1950s-1960s) is a rough estimate of the arrival of those moments within each perspective. (Clough and Corbett, 2000: pp 8-9). The model provides a useful framework that can help us to better understand the major ideologies behind exclusionary factors and policies that forms the challenges of Inclusive Education as the review in the next section will show.

## **2.3 Literature Review**

### **2.31 Rationale to Review Approach**

The purpose of this review is two fold: to show that inclusive education raises a challenge to dominant forms of thinking and policy making and secondly to allow us to better understand the exclusionary factors that exists in our education system in the light of the models or theoretical perspectives previously presented. This review has been informed by the literature of inclusive education, government reports and my own knowledge of as a teacher and Lecturer at LTC. This consolidated approach to the literature review will give us a clearer picture of the complexities of Inclusive education and also help demystify issues that will have implication for teacher training in general.

### **2.32 The Challenges of Inclusive Education**

If Fiji wishes to be serious about embarking on the journey to inclusion that it must begin with an analysis of underlying values and beliefs that shape current attitudes and practices and those that have informed the making of “disabling policies”(Fulcher,1989) that have legitimated the exclusion of people with disabilities and other minority groups for so long. This dissertation through a historical documentary research discussed in the previous chapter has attempted to do this. In this respect, Ainscow (2001)

has reminded us of the need to place the inclusion agenda at the heart of policy makers:-

*In placing the issue of inclusion at the centre of overall policy discussions, it is important to see how this contrasts with more traditional formulations of inclusion, many of which have been associated with the field of special educational needs. (Ainscow, 2001, Para. 6)*

The history of how people with Disabilities have been marginalised in education systems proves that we view them differently. Not too many years ago the physically and mentally ill were maltreated or the subjects of fear or derision in Fijian societies. (Walsh, 1999) They were therefore labelled and sent to special schools. Until recently, they have been called many names; ‘feble-minded’, ‘moron’, ‘imbecile’, ‘cripple’, ‘idiot’, ‘insane’, ‘mentally deficient’, ‘subnormal’. Barton (2003) argued that:

*“these categories are themselves a reflection of particular socio – economic and cultural development and the differential ways in which policy and service provision are associated with particular conceptions” (p 5).*

Most of these labels emanated from the *Psycho-medical legacy* or ‘medical model era’ of the 1960s when people with disabilities were viewed as

‘abnormal’<sup>11</sup>. The medical model (refer Table2) was an era where clinic-based assessment and intelligence tests involving, school doctors and psychiatrists prevailed. School problems were generally viewed as “within the child” rather than the “system” (Clough & Corbett, 2000).

In Fiji today much of the views and assumptions that stem from the medical model era still set some people apart from others. The existence of a separate special education school in education systems around the world says a lot about society’s current views. The medical model based beliefs may well explain why we can not view differences such as physical disability in the same light as we view colour of skin, height(tall or short), fat or skinny, brown eyed or black, red haired or black, Fijians or Indians. The issue of racial segregation and gender disparity in Fiji can be traced back in history in order to understand its nature as previously highlighted in the previous section of this dissertation.

The setting up of special schools can be placed in the same era but the attention drawn to special schools and the stigma and labels that come with it mostly negative, lays its origins in the medical model era. Evidently adhoc Curriculum and “watered down” programmes are still very much a part of special schools in Fiji today. (Fiji Education Commission,

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<sup>11</sup> Abnormal people are those that are viewed by society as different - esp. people with physical and mental disability.

2000) .People with disabilities were labelled with many names that depicted the stereotypical value and stigma placed on them from the past and are still being segregated in special schools that set them apart for the same reasons- society's concept of difference stemming from pathological point of view that continues to legitimate the existence of two track systems all over the world - one for the "special students" the other for the so called "normal" as is in the case of Fiji.

Barton (1996) posited that a *social model* on disabilities and school organisation may inform the process of change. "This is because the way teachers relate to teaching students with disabilities and special educational needs are influenced by their past experiences and by how they perceive and define difference and disability in society. Personal definitions and beliefs are crucial because they may legitimate certain assumptions about disability and associated discriminatory practices" (cited in Carrington & Elkins, 2002: pg 2) .

The sociologist approach to inclusive education that views Inclusive education as a 'process of cultural change'(Armstrong et al, 2000; Booth 2000; Corbett, 2001; Potts, 2003) will be a challenge to dominant forms of thinking as the process of inclusion suggests a new way of thinking that will change the way things are. A sociological perspective challenges

the existence of special schools and separate institutions for children perceived by society as being different. Inclusive Education is based on the principle of 'Inclusivity'. Inclusivity is an attitude or a belief system that is reflected in a range of inclusive policies, practices and processes. "Inclusivity is a way of life, a way of living together, based on a belief that each individual is valued and does belong." (Villa et al, 1995) The idea of Inclusive education challenges the existence of the concept of "special educational needs" (SEN) that is currently widely accepted.

*" I think the concept of 'special education Needs' particularly as it is seen in this country, becomes another barrier. I don't think it has a productive contribution to make to the inclusion agenda. If anything it is one of the major barriers to moving forward." (Cluogh and Corbett, 2000: p 41).*

Inclusive school cultures value diversity. There may be tensions between inclusive educational values and the current emphasis upon competition and selection. (Corbett, 1999). This will make inclusion a major challenge to teachers in Fiji where parents in rural village schools measure the quality of teachers by the quality of exam results (ECR, 2000). The pressure of exams encourages whole class teaching methods and many



teachers use drilling technique which pushes children to cram or memorize for competitive exams. The more children that pass external exams, the better they are according to parents views. (ERC, 2000)

Teachers in Fiji currently send students with epilepsy and mild disabilities to special schools, even children who have learning difficulties are being sent by mainstream teachers to special schools (ECR, 2000). The beliefs in Fiji have not changed much as reported by the education commission, teacher's attitude need to change and the stereotypes synonymous with disabilities as physically and mentally ill, and need to be isolated, may still form the value base of teachers in Fiji. These beliefs will continue to legitimate the existence of special schools as somewhere general classroom teachers can send students they can not cope with in the classroom, with or without disability. Situations such as this are prevalent in Fiji which needs to be challenged thus the need to push inclusive education agenda even more strongly as a Human rights issue.

### **3.33 Inclusive education as a human rights issue**

The fact that Inclusive education is now being agued as a human rights issue will be the biggest challenge to dominant ways of thinking and

existing policies in Fiji. Human rights agendas have been pushed all over the world in order to remove some of these underlying principles that set some people apart from others. History has proven that many causes of segregation have been fought and won under the banner of human rights. Humans thrive on differences that can be a cause of both celebration and conflicts. Ballard (1995) claims that a school with an inclusive orientation defines ‘differentness’ as an ordinary part of human experience.

The arenas where differences are first faced are generally schools. The right to a successful education in schools or learning institutions is a universal right and is provided in some form or another by all countries of the world, yet for some population of students education has not been a positive outcome. These students often from diverse backgrounds have been isolated from or left out of the advantages of receiving an education. Students with disabilities or with behavioural and emotional disorders, or who experience difficulty learning, have over the years been isolated from the benefits of an appropriate educational programme. This isolation can be attributed to:

*“ social expectations , fear and attempts to do good; isolation has been due to lack of appropriate education technology: isolation has arisen through the failure of governments, education systems and sectors to provide services that permit students to*

*access appropriate educational programs”*  
(Charles Darwin University, 2004: 5).

It is generally believed that the history that surrounds the Education of students with Special Education needs has been instrumental in molding the beliefs and attitudes of what is termed as ‘inclusion’<sup>12</sup>. These developments have also informed the development and implementation of education policies and acts of parliament that reflect society’s beliefs about the education of students with disabilities. In Fiji one such Parliament act is the Social Justice Act which has been a driving force in the formulation of various Educational Policy Objectives that promotes inclusion. Yet this remains at the level of rhetoric and is not happening in reality (Education commission Report, 2000).

The social justice act is a driving force in the paradigm shift towards equal opportunities in schools around the world. In America for example, the PL94-142, the American public law that ensured that students who are deemed eligible to receive an individual education program received appropriate education funding, was the result of legal action in the 1960s. This legal action resulted in minority student groups being given access to free and appropriate education programs (Foreman, 2001).

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<sup>12</sup> Meaning movement of children with special needs from special schools to general schools.

Barton's (1997) definition of Inclusive education clearly placed it as a Human rights issue;

*“Inclusive education is about confronting all forms of discrimination as part of a concern to develop an inclusive society based on social Justice, equity and democratic participation” (p233)*

The history of the struggle to recognise that people with disabilities have equal rights as human beings and to change society's views towards them has been a hard fought and long battle. Supporters of Inclusive Education need to learn from that part of our history. To this effect, Armstrong and Barton (2005) adds:

*“Understanding the issues surrounding inclusion involves a critical analysis of existing dominant forms of discourse and language. Historically these have often contained a deficit assumptions and stereotypes that have legitimated exclusionary practices and negative conceptions of difference” (p 7)*

However an historical analysis of the terms and language used “helps us to understand past values and social attitudes” (Digby 1996: p 3 as cited in Barton, 2003: p 5) and the ideologies or theoretical concepts that were prevalent in those times which the Medical Model or Social Model will help

demystify. A major difference between psycho-medical legacy approach (medical model) and the sociological approach (Social Model) is that the latter views special educational needs not as arising from children's own characteristics but rather the outcomes of social processes. Two researchers who were influential in shaping this perspective are Len Barton and Sally Tomlinson (Barton & Tomlinson, 1981; Tomlinson, 1982; Barton and Tomlinson, 1984; Barton, 1996). Their work challenged the existence of special schools, and placed special educational needs in a much broader context. They also introduced an explicitly political dimension (E.g. Barton, 1996) that had greatly influenced subsequent research in education that adopted a widely accepted view of Inclusive Education as a fundamental Human rights issue and a "process of cultural change" (Armstrong et al, 2000; Booth 2000; Corbett, 2001; Potts, 2003).

A further distinction to be made between these two approaches<sup>13</sup> is in terms of their identification of whose interests are served by special education. Critiques of segregated systems identified other beneficiaries. E.g. Tomlinson (1982) was amongst the first to see the advantages of this system for medical and psychological professionals with a vested interest in maintaining their own status and power. She argued that:

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<sup>13</sup> The psycho-medical legacy and the Sociological response perspectives (Clough and Corbett, 2000)

the answer to the question “what is” a child with special educational need will depend on the values, beliefs and interests of those making the judgment than on any qualities intrinsic to the child’ (Tomlinson, 1982, p.6).

This brings us to the important role that researching inclusive education plays. There is increasing evidence that a negative image of “Special educational needs” continues to be legitimated by research. In developing countries like Fiji, the language and discourse of Special Needs creates an image that these children are special and need to be treated separately. Teachers need to know how to “accommodate” (Wood, 1998) the educational needs of children with special needs as proven by research in order to be effective.

A concrete example is when the Fiji Government introduced in 1992 at the Lautoka Teachers College (LTC) ,a special education course which was made compulsory for all Teacher Trainee. I now realize that a major flaw with the course is that it does little to change the “negative attitude” and pathologising image that Fiji has on children with special needs (Fiji Education Commission Report, 2000). Slee (2001) argued on similar grounds when special education was first introduced as compulsory units of studies in Teachers Colleges in Australia:-

*First, the focus for inclusive education is narrowed to the traditional constituency of special education. We are told that teacher education students will need to become familiar with the range of syndromes, disorders and defects that constitute the population of special educational needs students. Inclusive Education is reduced to a default vocabulary for a Gray's Anatomy conception of educational inclusion. Knowing these students and how we have developed techniques of dealing with them through special educational practices will make the regular teacher more inclusive. Here lies a fundamental cultural flaw. Inclusive Education is about all students. (Slee, 2001:p. 168)*

Slee here, explained so well the same issues that LTC is still now facing with the introduction of a Diploma in Primary education course titled: "Inclusive Classroom". The special education course introduced in 1992 claims to be driven by outcomes of recent relevant research as echoed by the then permanent Secretary of Education:- "This course takes account of the findings of recent relevant educational research and attempts to address the needs of primary students who have learning difficulties" (Fiji Ministry of Education (MOE), 1992: p. Foreword). However, the Permanent secretary for Education fell short of cautioning pre-service teachers about the importance of contextualizing overseas based research to Fiji's situation. As a result every graduate since the beginning of the course in 1992 would

have embraced the absurd position that the course takes that problems lay “within” the child and they need to know the conditions well as teachers in order to help them learn. This example clearly demonstrated the risk that is there when outcomes of research are misinterpreted and not clearly understood. The risk can be catastrophic to a vulnerable education system of a small island nation such as Fiji.

Due to lack of knowledge and proper consultation with stakeholders, the Inclusive Classroom course, which marked a milestone achievement for Teacher Education in Fiji, has unconsciously further legitimated the pathologising image stemming from the medical model that serves to paint an image of children with disabilities as having diseases or conditions that need to be “fixed”. The special Education course at LTC as I now come to understand has been legitimating what Vulliamy & Webb, (1992) called the oppressive nature of dominant images and discourses of disability produced largely by non-disabled researchers.

The Medical model and Charity model<sup>14</sup> point of view prevails in Fiji today and form some of the principles underpinning policies that exist in schools. Special education in Fiji as outlined in the previous chapter started as a charitable concern and all are still managed by charitable

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<sup>14</sup> Also known as Tender Loving Care (TLC) Model –describes era in History where societies view students with disabilities as ‘special’ needing protection, tender love and care



organisations. The absence of policies to guide even the placement process in special schools as highlighted in the education commission report 2000 raises questions about current practice. What criteria or system is used to decide who is to enrol in Special education schools? Who decides the placement of children with special needs that are currently enrolled in these schools? It is not surprising then that the Education Commission (2000) reported that there are some students enrolled in special schools that have been wrongly placed. The reverse process of integration is happening and teachers and Head Teachers can not be blamed as the absence of guidelines and policies leaves them no choice and we have created a system that has allowed this practice for so long . “There is no referral system –referrals are made on adhoc basis because of the absence of clear policy (Fiji Education Commission, 2000: p 239).

Furthermore, Clough and Corbett (2000) named this era between 1990s to the 2000s as dominated by the *Disability Studies Critique* perspective. The knowledge that research has produced in disability studies have been written by many and has taught us a lot about Inclusive Education research. Kitchin (2000) for instance, conducted a research where he found that “ the opinions of disabled people mirror quite strongly the recent arguments forwarded by disabled academics concerning the need for

inclusive, action based-research strategies, where disabled people are involved as consultants and partners not just research subjects” (ibid: p.25). Furthermore there is continuing trend of Disabled people as well as researchers and academics who are unhappy at the widespread exclusion of disabled people from disability discourse and are calling for the adoption of research strategies that are both emancipatory (seeking positive change) and empowering (seeking positive individual change through participation).

Another reason why inclusive education would be a challenge in Fiji is due to power struggles between stakeholders where many push their own political agenda. For example the different views towards inclusion between people with disabilities (represented by the Fiji Disabled People’s Association (FDPA) ) who are pushing the agenda for more recognition of their rights in Fiji and other stakeholders especially head teachers and management of special schools who have build umpires over the years and would hate to disturb the status quo. The ECR also revealed an interesting point about school levels. Like all primary schools in Fiji, Special school levels are also judged by the number of students it enrols. The more the number of students, the higher the level. This means more funding from government and a higher salary for teachers. Since enrolment in special schools in not limited to only those with high support needs and special

children, Head Teachers can easily accept any student in order to increase the roll and thus the level of the school as it will also mean a raise in their salary. As a special school teacher stated:” we can accept students under humanitarian grounds- they don’t need to have a disability to attend this school” (Teacher Y: interview August 2006).

This could be one of the reasons why there are many students whose needs could be met in general education classrooms in Fiji are enrolled in special schools. (Fiji Education Commission, 2000). Examples such as this shows that the principles of inclusive education will disturb the status quos in Fiji and might upset some stakeholders and their own political agenda.

### **2.34 Review Conclusion**

This review concludes that the realisation of an inclusive society that thrives on equality and where diversity is respected and difference is valued must be nurtured from schools. The existence of two-track education system often referred to as mainstream or regular and special education in almost all parts of the world, if not all, is proof that there is inequality in our education system where some are devalued. Inclusive education though a great challenge to dominant thinking and a struggle for policy makers given its contentious and complex nature shaped by historical,

cultural, global and contextual factors as described by Barton (2003), is still one of the best answers to achieving the universal right to a successful education for ALL its citizen and ultimately to realise the ideal of an inclusive society free of all forms of exclusionary practices.

The review also found that the extent to which Inclusive education will be a challenge to current ways of thinking and to policy making in education is great as it challenges the very principles upon which our education system and policies are built. In addition, the review has shown that people with disabilities in Fiji may have been segregated into special schools due to underlying beliefs based on the “Medical model” that assumes that they needed special care and many have been stigmatized, marginalized and devalued in the process. If these underlying values and beliefs are not discarded, many other differences that are now being recognized such as learning difficulties, attention deficit disorder, autistic spectrum disorder and other children who may be at risk of failing in our current education system due to one reason or another may also follow the same trend.

## **2.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has explored the many meanings of Inclusive Education and has clarified the contextual meaning of Inclusive Education adopted. We have also explored a 5 key theoretical perspectives of Inclusive education. A review was also carried out relating how these conceptual models are used to provide a framework with which to review the literature and the outcomes is a better understanding of the complexities of Inclusion and the challenges that it poses for the world and more importantly for Fiji. Issues have also been raised in the process of review and some of these issues will be discussed further in the section where we look at our case study and consequently at the challenge that Inclusion will raise for Teacher Education in Fiji.

## **Chapter 3: Teacher Education- The Case of LTC**

### **3.1 About Lautoka Teachers College**

Lautoka Teachers College (LTC) is a *government* Primary Teacher training institution. It is located at *Natabua* (a Suburban area of Lautoka City) on the main island of *Viti Levu* in the Fiji Islands. The college Campus is about half a kilometer from the “*Nadi –Lautoka*” highway on *Natabua* Road and is about 4 kilometers away from Lautoka City, the second largest City in Fiji. LTC began as a teacher training institution in the colonial era, under British rule, in 1929 until teacher training was suspended in 1940 due to the Second World War. Teacher training then was shifted temporarily to the Capital city of Suva which is on the other side of *Viti Levu*. The decision to reopen the teacher training college at its present site was made in 1974 following the release of a government paper that highlighted the shortage of primary teachers. (LTC handbook, 2004)

The 1973 Job Evaluation Report was influential in this decision as it linked the shortage of qualified teachers at the time to the lack of training opportunities. (LTC Handbook Committee, 2004). This was seen as a key factor that needed to be rectified in the process of improving the quality of basic education in Fiji. Under-qualified licensed teachers at the time

comprised 20% of the teaching force. (LTC Handbook Committee, 2004). Therefore a major purpose for LTC's establishment in 1977 is to "train licensed teachers; that is, teachers who have Ministry approval to teach but who are not qualified to do so". (ECR, 200:p. 390). There has been a lot of significant development since 1977 including the provision of a two-year in-service training programme for a batch of licensed teachers in 1980-1981.

To meet the shortage of teachers following the events<sup>15</sup> of 1987, the intake of students at LTC doubled but the infrastructure at the college remained until recently. In 1992, a special education course was introduced

*to provide regular class teachers with the necessary attitudes, knowledge and skills to enable them to teach effectively and successfully ALL children in their classes, with particular emphasis on those students with special needs , who are slower to learn or have particular difficulties learning due to any one of a wide range of disabilities and handicapping conditions.*  
(Ministry of Education, 1992:p. 3)

I was one of the first students of this course in 1992 and having returned to Lecture in the same course after 9 years, I found the course to be

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<sup>15</sup> An Indian dominated party, the Fiji Labour Party won the election. There was a lot of resistance from Indigenous Fijians which culminated in a coup d'état staged by the commander of the Fiji military Forces at the time. It marked a very bleak era in the history of Fiji where racial disparity between the two major races reared its ugly head and the Indo-Fijians (Fiji Born Indians) faced a lot of insecurity, many fled the country at the time. The brain drain was felt in Fiji and it became a period of slow growth in terms of economic development.

the same with no major changes in its objectives. I found the course to be inadequate in its objective specified in the above quotation as it prepares students with the knowledge but fell short of helping them with their skills to be able to teach ALL children in their classes as there was no school available for practicum where student teachers could see best practices advocated in the course being modeled.

There were two new in-service programs that were introduced in 1999: the one year Early Childhood Teaching Certificate for Kindergarten licensed teachers and the one year Special Education Teaching Certificate program for licensed special education teachers. (LTC Handbook Committee, 2004). This was followed by a review and upgrading of upper primary pre-service curriculum courses through the Fiji Australia funded Basic Education Management and Teacher Upgrading Project (BEMTUP) in 1997 after 13 years since the last major course review in 1984. In 1998, bridging courses in Science and Social Science were introduced to strengthen the academic background of trainees in those areas. The college now has thirty four teaching staff and over three hundred students.

The college is currently on the threshold of major change. Two major projects commenced in 2003. The first, funded by the EU, saw the upgrading of the campus facilities including the construction of a new



Library, large Lecture theatre and teaching block, and additional dormitories. The second saw the closing of the 1 year certificate in special education programme at the end of 2003 and the introduction of two new programmes in 2005 – a Diploma of Primary Education, to replace the certificate in Primary Education, and an Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Education, to replace the Certificate in Early Childhood Education. The Special Education component was to be strengthened in other pre-service courses and the new course “inclusive Classroom” (part of the new Diploma programme) that will enable pre-service primary school teachers to teach ALL children in regular classrooms and also teach in special schools if the need arises after graduation. However, this remained at a level of rhetoric which is a part of the challenges that the new inclusive classroom course will face as this dissertation will reveal at a later chapter. These programmes and the resources needed to support them come through the AusAID funded LTC Upgrade project (LTCUP).

From humble beginnings in 1977, the college has changed dramatically .Of all the changes that have taken place at LTC; none is more liberating than that which is currently under way. The project LTCUP has upgraded its curriculum to Diploma level and the call for new pedagogies is

imperative as any significant reform in curriculum of any learning institution requires corresponding changes in instructional strategies.

### **3.2 *Synthesis of Research Findings***

This section will highlight the summary of some key findings from my research at LTC as well as key findings from a synthesis of three previous activities that were carried out at Teachers College as part of LTCUP that I participated in. They are the Special Education Review (2003) and The Teaching Strategies Committee Report (2004) and the Synthesis of Research into the relationship between Initial Teacher Education and Schooling Outcomes for Diverse Learners. This will reveal some of the challenges and issues at Lautoka Teachers College as a teacher training institution. These have great implications for teacher training in Fiji which will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

#### **3.21: Main issues from Interviews with principal and staff of LTC**

According to the Principal of the College, colonial structures and curriculum existed in LTC before and Lecturers have been left on their own with Ad Hoc curriculum in their efforts to mend the gap between what is taught at College and the real world that teachers would face when they graduate.

*Ad Hoc curriculum was prevalent at LTC before 1984. After the review, there were efforts to closely link CDU with LTC and to align our teaching here at the college with the national curriculum and with the goals and visions of the Ministry of education. Before, LTC, although a government teacher training institution, was rather independent and no clear boundaries and guidelines and policies were in place prior to the 1984 review in terms of its link with Curriculum development Unit. Therefore there was a gulf in teacher training and actual practice as we taught mostly theories in education with little emphasis placed on practicum. (Principal LTC in an interview August, 2006)*

However, all staff members who were interviewed also recalled that they had to prepare their own course outline even after the course review in 1984 referred by the principal in the above quotation, even up until 2004 before the course got upgraded to Diploma level. As one of them recalled:-

*When I started here in the 90's, there was no defined structure prepared. I had to prepare my own course outline. There was no orientation for me; I was completely on my own. My head of school took it for granted that I knew it all, I was just allocated the lectures to take and what I taught was entirely up to me so to speak. Broad topics were given but how you teach and the nitty-gritty part of what to teach was done on my own. I lectured and I set my own exam paper and I marked them all and gave the grades for them – all on my own. (Lecturer A, interview August 2006)*

As a Lecturer, I also share the same views as my colleagues on the curriculum and orientation programme for new lecturers at LTC. When I started as an acting Lecturer in 2003, I had to prepare a course outline that became a crash course in “Early Intervention” taken with Early Childhood in-service teachers and the 1 year special education course in-service teachers which culminated in 2003. Like other lectures that started before me, I was also expected to find my own way around how things worked at LTC as there was no orientation programme and what I taught was entirely at my discretion. There are many other exclusionary practices that will be a challenge to the implementation of Inclusive education and it calls for changes in the entire school culture of LTC. Some relevant issues and findings that bear relevance to this dissertation were highlighted by a Special Education Review (SER) of 2003 conducted as part of the AusAID funded Lautoka Teachers College Upgrade Project (LTCUP). I was a part of this review team and subject reference group that was instrumental in this review.

### 3.22 Synthesis of key issues and findings of SER (2003)

#### **3.221 Definition of children with special needs**

Children with special needs are defined as children who cannot access the curriculum without some assistance, due to a disability and

children who are gifted and talented. Children with disabilities maybe due to chronic health problems, emotional or behavioral problems, visions impairments, hearing impairments, physical impairments and /or developmental disabilities.

### **3.222 Location of children with special needs**

The majority of children with special needs are currently in mainstream schools and some of these children have been identified. Others will not yet have been identified. Many children with special needs will be found in the special schools. These children are likely to have a mild and moderate disabilities, with a few having severe disabilities. Children with special needs in rural areas are likely to be in mainstream schools or at home, if the school is not able to cope with their special needs

### **3.223 Current model of education in mainstream schools**

The current model of education in the majority of mainstream primary schools is to teach the strongly academic curriculum using a single teaching approach to a large class and focus on ensuring that as many pupils as possible pass the examinations . The curriculum must be covered in a set period. Therefore the curriculum areas that are not examined are rarely or infrequently taught. The responsibility of learning lies with the child, so a

child is punished for errors, and continued failure to make progress may result in a referral to a special school.

This model is in direct contrast to the Inclusive model of education taught in the special education course at the Lautoka Teachers College. In this model, the emphasis is on mainstreaming children with special needs. Yet, primary student teachers who undertake this course since it started in 1992, are perpetuating the traditional model of education when they take up teaching positions in mainstream primary schools.

### **3.224 Mismatch between teacher training and the model of education**

With an increasing emphasis with LTC programmes on inclusion and multilevel teaching and a continuation by mainstream schools of exclusion and single –level teaching, there is a growing mismatch between the training programs of the teacher education college and the practices in mainstream schools.

### **3.225 Training needs for mainstream and special school teachers**

Pre-service primary and secondary teacher education programs need to include substantially more information related to children with special needs. As well as a course providing information about teaching

strategies and specific disabilities, information needs to be included in courses in each curriculum area to ensure that teachers can manage pupils with special needs in every situation.

### **3.23 Synthesis of Research between initial Teacher Education and school outcomes for diverse learners.-SER(2003)**

This synthesis examined the research carried out as a part of LTCUP into the relationship between initial teacher education and schooling outcomes for diverse learners. The research concluded that the three most critical influences on student teachers classroom practices were their own experiences at school, their experiences on their practicum placements and the extent to which diversity was represented in the courses and the structure of the institution in which they were trained. The implication of this research for teacher training in Fiji is significant:-

### **3.24 key Findings from Report of Teaching Strategies Committee**

The key findings of the teaching strategies committee below were the result of a project activity that required that the teaching strategies committee under the umbrella of LTCUP find out the current practice or teaching pedagogies practiced by LTC lecturers with a view to improving them. The committee took videos of Lecturers during lectures that were

meant to be viewed by the lecturer and the LTCUP Consultant for feedback and discussions. The idea was to help improve teaching strategies for the delivery of courses at LTC in preparation for the implementation of the new Diploma Programme. Its findings have important implications for this dissertation in terms of the need to train teachers at LTC and introduce inclusive practices .

### **3.241 Resistance from Heads of Schools**

There were two cases where lecturers were angry with the idea of being video taped while lecturing even though all Heads of Schools were informed. The committee heard in one of their meetings that the lecturers concerned were both Heads of Schools that have been at LTC for longer than 10 years. The two that faced this challenge reported that they were told to leave in front of the student teachers which unprofessional. The committee agreed that resistance may have been due to their lack of preparation for fear of being criticized. One of the Lecturers told our project team members to return at a later date when they will get an invitation advising them when he would be ready for video shooting.

### **3.242 Resistance from Other Staff members**



The committee heard that some staff members were complaining about the idea of their lectures being recorded and observed. Some questioned the credibility and motive behind the project. They felt that project members were indirectly sending the message to them that we were better teachers and that we were experts in the best methods of teaching and teaching pedagogies. Some were suspicious and took it personally that the whole exercise was probably leveled at criticizing the way that they teach rather than a way of helping to improve the way they teach. The committee also took the comments negatively and it stirred a conflict that created a gulf between other lecturers and the education department.

### **3.243 Modeling Inappropriate Pedagogies**

The committee gathered that many lecturers observed were delivering straight 1 hour lectures and even lessons that could have been demonstrated were delivered in the Lecture mode.

### **3.244 Lack of Course Curriculum Knowledge**

The committee also gathered that some Lecturers lacked the in-depth knowledge needed to be able to contextualize the course curriculum which many students would find hard to understand in the present form they are delivered many curriculum lessons were quite theoretical lacking

exemplar for their practical use. Lecturers will not be able to self-reflect and select as well as justify what to teach if they do not know enough about what they are teaching.

### **3.245 Lack of use of Tertiary pedagogies**

Many Lecturers are treating students like primary school students forgetting that LTC is a tertiary institution and that they are teaching young adults who need to be taught and treated with respect. The relationship between Lecturers and students is not one of partnership but one where the power is with the Lecturer and the student is reduced to a learner and must listen at all times. Lecturers are treated with respect as is the norm and culture but this could be a barrier to learning in tertiary institutions. There is a need to treat students as pre-service teachers and not as student teachers.

### **Implications of Research for Teacher Education in Fiji**

The key findings discussed above confirms the need for reform at LTC and the call for reform did not just become pertinent when LTCUP started in 2003 at LTC. A review of Fiji's educational literature such as The Fiji Education Commission (1969); Baba, (1983, as cited in Puamau , 2001); and Bole (1989, as cited in Puamau, 2001) revealed a few

major works that linked the underachievement of Fijian students to institutional factors such as poor quality of teachers and lack of resources. Their findings have implications for Teacher Training Institutions and their role in preparing quality teachers. This is when the call for a Reform reaches the heart of the biggest producer of primary school teachers in Fiji - the government owned Lautoka Teachers College (LTC).

LTC now produces approximately 180 Beginning Teachers per year. This has significant implications for the College's role in preparing Teachers as Change Agents. Our graduates are automatically absorbed into the Civil Service after graduation and it is estimated that about 80% of them end up in rural areas of the main islands and even to remote schools spread across the Fiji islands every year. However, many of the schools that our graduates do end up have multi-class or mixed abilities settings that the college does not prepare them for. This in itself justifies the need to change the way 'teachers of teachers' teach as the Education commission Report of 2000 reminds us:-

*If Fiji teachers are to be familiar with and confident in using strategies identified as effective in the Multi-grade classroom and therefore all classrooms, both pre-service and in-service programs must focus on the development of these interactive and creative approaches. **This means that teacher educators must demonstrate such***

*pedagogies*<sup>16</sup>. (Education Commission Report, 2000:p.398)

The Education Commission's (2000) call for change, was echoed and substantiated by the findings of the Special Education Review (SER) (2003) commissioned by LTCUP discussed above. The implications of this research for teacher training in Fiji are significant and many issues warranted immediate attention that implicated Lecturer's attitudes, content and delivery of courses.(sections have been bolded for emphasis)

*Firstly as the experience of education students teachers had in their schools was one that was characterized by whole class teaching , an examination oriented curriculum and little obvious diversity in the pupils in the classroom, the education student teachers receive at LTC will need to have a high impact to counter the earlier student experiences of teaching.*

*Secondly, the practicum placements the student teachers at LTC currently experience are largely in a situation similar to that which the student teachers experienced as pupils. **There is a strong need to develop models of teaching to which all student teachers can be exposed, that demonstrate best practice in inclusive teaching.** The synthesis revealed that students need to apply the strategies they are learning immediately in a*

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<sup>16</sup> This sentence printed in Bold for emphasis.

*supportive environment in order to make these strategies part of their teaching repertoire.*

*Thirdly, although LTC demonstrates considerable racial diversity in the student population and the lecturer population, thought needs to be given to other areas of diversity such as physical and sensory impairment that do not appear to be represented by the lecturers at LTC at present. Furthermore, the degree of acceptance and co-operation demonstrated by the lecturers at LTC needs to be examined to determine whether the current models are those that the lecturers desire the student teachers to foster in their classrooms.*

*Fourthly, the extent to which inclusion and inclusive practices are included in the content and delivery of the courses at LTC will determine the extent to which student teachers engage in these practices in their classrooms.*

(SER unpublished Report, 2003: p.24)

Both the findings of The Education Commission Report (2000) and the findings of the Special Education Review (2003) called for the need to reform LTC. This dissertation suggests the full implementation of Inclusive Education at teachers colleges as a main part of this reform.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation began with a historical analysis where impetus for changes in our education system was demystified. The different eras had major influences with their myriad form of values and beliefs. There was the existence of traditional education system prior to the arrival of the missionaries that was community based which was rejected by the missionaries who introduced the formal education system. It was clear that the traditional education system was informal and quite inclusive in its approach. The arrival of the missionaries saw the setting up of formal schools mostly for their own purposes and agendas. Our Traditional Education that existed was slowly being undermined as discussed earlier on.

The ramifications of colonization can still be felt modern day Fiji in our schools and in Teachers Colleges. Though the review concentrated more on the underlying values and beliefs and policy making that affects or drives general education, it goes without saying that what ever affects general education also affects Teacher Education and this dissertation is also of the view that the same issues and problems and challenges that have been presented through out this dissertation affects Inclusive Education. This dissertation has also shown that Inclusive education is a highly debatable and contentious issue and has raised many issue in the

review sections which has shown the challenges that it poses for education in Fiji. One of the greatest challenges to the current government would be to put in place inclusive policies that will drive the move towards an inclusive education system. Especially the provision of equal educational opportunities in a multi-ethnic society and its 320 islands separated by masses of water and where current educational policies, incepted with the best of intentions during a period in history that they were thought of to be the best but are now considered to have some very negative underpinning values and cultural beliefs.

Amongst many other challenges raised In this dissertation that Inclusive Education faces, one of the greatest is the existence of what Fulcher labelled as “disabling policies” which exists with the most positive intentions of manning the gaps of disparity in our society in many aspects of life yet paradoxically the biggest challenge at all levels of our education system remains how to introduce policy without creating further divides and in many cases create positive discrimination for some in the name of equality yet marginalises others. Inclusive education is as in the words of Barton (2003), “the means to an end” and that end is an inclusive society free of all forms of exclusionary factors. This is challenging as we currently have a society where differences are more often a cause of conflict, such as

the may 2000 crises previously discussed, rather than a reason to celebrate in the richness that diversity brings.

The battle for the realisation of a truly Inclusive Society is yet to be won as our education system struggles with the tool to achieving it. Indeed as shown in this dissertation, the road down which we have travelled has never been easy and the policy making path ahead is more complex one given that Policy is not made in vacuum. It is embedded in a socio cultural framework.(Armstrong Felicity,2003) In this light, Barton is right when he describes the pursuit of Inclusive education as a “struggle” (Barton, 2003) and no doubt is a challenge and can be described in this period of our history as idealistic and illusive in its present form. A form that is contentious, complex and fragmented that may give an excuse to world leaders and decision makers of countries like Fiji, which have not yet built Inclusive education systems, to shelf the inclusion agenda and label it as ‘wanting’ therefore should, for the time being at least, remain at the level of rhetoric.

However, the implication for the findings of the researches at LTC revealed that the current philosophy of education in Fiji is one of inclusion however, there is a mismatch between policy and practice as this dissertation has revealed in its study of LTC and also there is clearly no government policy to guide the implementation of LTC. There is also a



mismatch between what is taught at LTC and the real classrooms that beginning teachers end up in. Many issues have been raised in this dissertation that it is becoming increasingly clear that LTC needs Inclusive Education in its broader meaning, “as a conduit of change”.

The implementation models are many which reminds us of questions posed earlier by Mitchell (2005):- What is the best implementation model for Inclusive education at teachers college like LTC? The literature provides many answers:- for example, Ainscow, Hargreaves & Hopkins (1995) suggested the use of Action Research as the best way to carry out teachers in-service programmes. LTC offers both Pre-service and In-service programmes for Teachers in Fiji. A most relevant work would be the work of Armstrong and Moore (2004) who suggested possible guidelines for action research “that can be adapted and used to advance an agenda for inclusion through the research process itself, as well as by bringing about changes to institutional cultures and practices”(p.7). More useful and relevant examples of good starting points for the Research Agenda at LTC would be found in the work of Bassey (1992); Elliot (1992); Ainscow (2002) and also the infamous ‘index of Inclusion’ (CSIE, 2002 ) that is widely used to encourage the development of Inclusive Education as a conduit of change.

The Index of inclusion widely used in the U.K will be a good starting programme. However, this needs to be contextualized and it raises the question of: - How can we contextualize the index of inclusion to meet the needs and context of Lautoka Teachers College? Maybe this can be the basis of another research. Inclusive Education course in LTC is well placed but much needs to be done to ensure that LTC practices what it preaches in the Inclusive Classroom course. The action research approach that matches the principles of inclusive education in many ways is recommended in order to remove the exclusionary practices, negative attitudes, and introduce inclusive pedagogies and practices that can help overcome many of the challenges and issues raised in this dissertation.

We can not continue to argue inclusion in its narrow meaning synonymous with children with disabilities. The inclusive education sociological perspective is a new breed of idea, at least in Fiji's context, that involves the changing of school culture in order to match practice with policies. It is not about special education or special need only. There is no doubt that Fiji will have to implement Inclusive Education as it is now a human rights and social justice act driven agenda. This calls for the Fiji Governments to be really committed to promoting social justice and equity as articulated in the 2006 MOE business plan. The pursuit of Inclusivity

requires that there is zero tolerance on all forms of exclusion. Policies must work towards ensuring that all students' needs are met and the responsibility extends to all. Teacher Education can not do it alone. If Inclusive education is to succeed in Fiji, then all levels of government machinery and all stakeholders must work together to achieve it.

**Number of Words: 19091**

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